The Korean Comfort Women Commemorative Campaign: Role of Intersectionality, Symbolic Space, and Transnational Circulation in Politics of Memory and Human Rights

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ABSTRACT

Since the end of WWII, Korea has experienced a miraculous economic development despite its devastated economic and political conditions originating from Japanese colonialism and the Korean War. However, while Korean society has concentrated on its socioeconomic advancement, few victims having traumatic memories of Japanese colonialism have been cared for by systematic and social treatment until recently. Especially, comfort women, who were sexually abused and exploited during WWII by the Japanese army, had not been able to testify their narratives in military brothels due to structural oppressions and distorted views against women in Korean society. In this respect, Wednesday Demonstration encouraged by feminist activists since the early 1990s can be seen as a protest against both the Japanese government and Korean society that had compelled comfort women to be marginalized for more than half a century. Paying attention to commemorative campaigns of comfort women, this study wanted to explore the strategies of marginalized females using symbolically-contested nature of space to memorialize the forgotten history of sexual slavery and restore their human dignity. Analyzing data collected through fieldworks and archived narrations of comfort women, I could draw significant implications regarding the reasons for marginalization of victims of sexual slavery and the diffusion of their traumatic memories. First of all, as comfort women had been located at intersectional margins during both Japanese colonialism and the postcolonial era in Korea, they could not obtain any opportunities and rights to representing their memories. To overcome this vulnerable status, comfort women and civic activists began to use sensory information produced by symbolic meanings of a comfort women statue constructed in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul. By doing so, marginalized experiences of comfort women could be handed over to the public, and eventually, conducted through scaled-politics in the US. By exploring commemorative campaigns of comfort women, this study could find out an example of strategies and practices that can be used by marginal subjects for human rights movements. Despite their vulnerable conditions and social status, it is notable that place-based politics provides them with a potential power to conduct scaled-politics and transnational memory work.

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INTRODUCTION

Toward a ‘memory-work’ of comfort women

The term “comfort women” is a euphemistic expression for females who were coerced into being sex slaves during Japanese imperialism (McKellar, 2011, p. 189; Soh, 2008, p. 69). The irony behind this name is that objectives of operating military brothels contrasted with what we ordinarily imagine with the word ‘comfort’. Even though many researchers have different ideas about the number of these sex slaves or comfort women, their estimates roughly range from 200,000 to 400,000 (Huang, 2012, p. 206; 정현백, 2003, p. 186). Japan enslaved females from various East Asian regions conquered by the Japanese imperial army, especially women from Korea due to its colonial status for 36 years (P. G. Min, 2003, p. 939). Those young women forced into being sex slaves were raped 10 to 20 times a day. As they had long been exposed to brutal rapes until the end of WWII, their bodies and spirits have seriously been damaged and would never return back to normal. Considering these inhumane aspects of Japanese military brothels, we can infer that the term ‘comfort women’ has been strategically and deliberately selected and used by the Japanese army and government to hide the war crimes inflicted upon those females. Their intention of removing the traces of sexual slavery can also be demonstrated by the fact that most comfort women were killed in military bases as the Japanese army recognized that defeat was well inevitable at the end of WWII (Yu, 1995).

Even though some comfort women survived and came back to their homes, they still had to suffer from both bodily disorders, mental anguish, and local people’s negative views of them (S. K. Min, Lee, Kim, & Sim, 2010). More seriously, at that time, the newly-established Korean government showed no interest in treating them with

appropriate care. On the basis of the negotiations in the Treaty on Basic Relations between Korea and Japan in 1965, the Japanese government also wanted to shift the responsibility to Korea by arguing that they had already provided reparations to the Korea government for victims of sexual slavery. The problem is that the Korean government had never given the money to surviving comfort women while spending all the funds for economic development in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to the scant attention paid to surviving comfort women at the governmental level, Korean society's criticism of the past experiences of comfort women in military brothels brought suffering and trauma to victims. Based on masculine aspects of Korean culture, neighbors and family members have had aggressive and offensive attitudes toward comfort women as they generally regarded the victims as prostitutes. Those biased and distorted perspectives continued until recently within Korean society.

Considering the hardships endured by comfort women, this dissertation investigates the social movements and conflicts over memorial space that surround the politics of remembering comfort women in both Korea and the US. As they had been marginalized by both Korea and Japan for most of their lives, former comfort women have historically not been able to raise their voices and assert their rights even though the two countries' governments should have taken more responsibility for addressing their victimization and trauma. Before the 1990s, most people of Korea and Japan were barely aware of the historical facts surrounding comfort women, due to institutional disinterest in and neglect of the issue. However, as comfort women gained considerable attention in the late 1980s after Korean society escaped from the military dictatorship, there were growing calls for remembering and recognizing publicly the victimized women.

Collaborating with civic activists, former comfort women started holding a rally called Wednesday Demonstration in front of the Embassy of Japan in Korea on January 8, 1992, which has been continued every week since then. The objective of the rallies has been to demand a sincere apology from the Japanese government as well as adequate government reparation for the injustices endured by comfort women.

The small rally that started in front of the Japanese Embassy 25 years ago has been expanded into an international political and commemorative movement, in which various social actors and groups participate with varying degrees of interest. Especially in the US, several statues for memorializing comfort women have started to be established by Korean immigrants, US activists, and politicians. Exploring these globalized social phenomena, the general goal of this study is to investigate the political development and spatial politics of the comfort women commemorative campaign within Korea, but also how this social movement uses symbolic space for expanding the scale of the comfort women issue internationally, including into the US. The politics of remembering comfort women provides valuable insight into an emerging landscape of memory and hopeful reconciliation.

In offering a framework for interpreting the protests of comfort women and their reconstruction of space and memory, I draw from the concept of “memory-work” as developed by Karen Till (2012). She focuses on memory-work as a tool for materializing invisible memories of trauma and discrimination in space and advancing human rights of marginalized and injured groups. In the commemorative campaigns of comfort women and civic activists, we can see that they strategically conduct memory-work to draw public attention to the issue of past injustices and to ask the Japanese government for

apologies and reparations for former comfort women. Through memory-work of comfort women and civic activists, many people can be aware of the tragic history of sexual slavery that former comfort women suffered from and support their demonstrations against the Japanese government.

Significance of dissertation

To date, few (if any) geographers have examined the comfort women campaign, which is surprising given the growing literature on the spatial politics of memory and social justice movements. I suggest that this dissertation can advance geographic knowledge in at least three key ways.

Firstly, the civic protests and demonstrations of comfort women in front of the Japanese embassy remind us of the symbolically constructed and contested nature of space (Harvey, 1990). As a political space, an embassy is granted to a foreign country to maintain diplomatic relationships, and the geography of embassies contains transnational characteristics and symbols of international politics. For this reason, there have been several struggles and protests around embassies to utilize those spaces in drawing international attention to certain political issues and struggles (Davies, 2009; Dudziak, 1994; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Perry, 2001; Weiss, 2013). Similarly, Wednesday Demonstrations in front of the Japanese Embassy can also be seen as struggles through which the comfort women cause can redefine the most dominant discourses that have marginalized them in both Korea and Japan, and even internationally. By using symbolic meanings of embassy that are obviously controlled by the Japanese government, these meanings are also open challenge by the country's detractors and critics.

Secondly, in addition to symbolic importance of embassy space in international politics, the civic movements of comfort women have geopolitical implications which are linked to the broader politics of public memory between Korea and Japan. With regard to this, many countries attempt to use public memory shared by their neighbors in controlling and legitimating wider geopolitical objectives (Hughes, 2006; Mangan, Kim, Cruz, & Kang, 2013; Zhurzhenko, 2007). In the case of the comfort women protests, even though demonstration participants do not intend to extend their issue to other geopolitical conflicts, the comfort women issue inevitably impacts each nation's position on other geopolitical struggles in Northeast Asia. Each country's legitimacy with Northeast Asian geopolitics is strongly interconnected with truth claims of history. The comfort women issue has had incredible influence on the geopolitical discourse of each country over the past several years. Furthermore, several events related to the comfort women social movement also have crucial contributions in forming ethnic identity in the immigrants' society of the US. This is because public memory collectively inspires people to give shape to a sense of community which is invisible and operates and moves transnationally (Mavratsas, 1997; Mitter, 2000; Nozaki, 2008; Zimmer, 2003).

Lastly, in studying the comfort women issue and its surrounding social movements and spatial conflicts, we should concern ourselves with the concept of 'intersectionality,' which was initially introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) when analyzing violence toward women of color (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 193). Because many researchers have tended to focus just on gender aspects while ignoring various identities and contexts females encounter, it is possible for feminist scholars to lose balance in understanding how women are marginalized and victimized by the violence of social

power. In the same manner, in comfort women studies, we should consider diverse power contexts that have forced the females of East Asia into being sex slaves and also how their identities have been influenced by specific narratives of Japanese imperialism. If comfort women issues are approached by relying simply on studies of gender inequality, which has been the tendency in the Western world, our researches could draw incomplete conclusions and interpretations.

Dissertation objectives and questions

This dissertation has three main objectives that are strongly linked to recent innovations in the study of cultural geography and social justice.

The first objective is to understand how the identities and rights of comfort women, as a historically exploited and ignored group, have been formed and have evolved through the specific geopolitical contexts and struggles between Korea and Japan. Although there is much research in feminist studies regarding how females have been marginalized, this work has failed to have a comprehensive understanding of sociopolitical contexts and narratives which are crucial in forming gendered identities and making them excluded from the mainstream of society (Crenshaw, 1989). With this in mind, the initial goal of this study is to understand the sociopolitical contexts and narratives surrounding the former comfort women to provide a basic understanding of their marginalization and why their suffering had been forgotten until recently. As I hope to demonstrate, exploring the intersectionality of comfort women identity is important to understanding the politics of public remembering.

The second objective is to investigate how former comfort women and civic activists use the space surrounding the Japanese embassy and its symbolically constructed and contested meanings to demonstrate against the Japanese government. Through this investigation it is expected that this study can provide an example of the capacity of protest to appropriate the symbolic power of spaces in producing counter-hegemonic discourses about the rights of marginalized social groups (Till, 2012). Key to this objective is understanding how comfort women movement leaders and workers think about and employ the space of remembering in front of the Japanese embassy as they struggle to make their interests as demands seen and heard.

The third objective is to explore how and why the comfort women movement has been diffusing within Korea and crossing international borders into the US. In memorializing the history of comfort women, the social activists have started constructing comfort women statues in several cities of Korea. As already noted, these movements to memorialize comfort women have also appeared in US cities. This is because these movements are not just confined to the issue of marginalized groups but are also linked to various social groups in Korea and the US. As one of those historical narratives and political concerns, the comfort women memory issue can be expanded into and contextualized within a general understanding of public memory of Korea and the US. By using symbolic meanings produced by comfort women statues, social activists and Korean-American activists attempt to connect the social memory of comfort women with the wider production of discourses on human rights issues and ethnic identity politics.

Since this study focuses on the comfort women campaign using the symbolically constructed nature of space (Harvey, 1990), the results of this research will help

understand what critical role place has in protest of the marginalized groups and asserting their rights in society. More broadly, this study aims to provide an example of how marginalized groups of females claim and use space as they conduct their social movements for advocating for human rights and addressing historical wrongs. With these significant contributions of this study, the research project aims to answer the following questions. These questions are addressed within the dissertation through the presentation of three stand-lane articles prepared for future submission to peer-reviewed journals.

Part 1: Why have the comfort women been marginalized in Korean society as well as both in feminist and human rights studies, especially since their story of victimization is so compelling? How have their intersectional status and identity affected their marginalization and neglect and thus the social movement they have created?

Before analyzing the protests of comfort women and the commemorative landscapes they have produced, this study investigates why the former comfort women have been marginalized both in Korean society and among human rights movements in the 40 years after the independence of Korea. This study is also interested in how the identities of comfort women have informed and influenced their protests against the Japanese government. Since independence from Japan, Korean society and government have focused memorial attention on the persons who contributed to the movement for Korean independence and the protests against Japan's colonial government. Consequently, the comfort women have not been included in any categories by which Korean government has had any legal or humanitarian basis for supporting them. The

comfort women issue was not deemed to be of significant interest among Koreans before the 1990s.

After the end of Japanese colonialism, Korea had to recover from collapsed and destabilized political conditions originating from the division of the peninsula into two Koreas. Importantly, as the Korean War fatally destroyed most facilities for manufacturing, transportation, and housing, Korea's primary focus concentrated on the economic development of the country while ignoring other social values that were important for the maturity of Korean society, such as sociopolitical justice. For this reason, the Korean government had little interest for several decades after independence in providing the victims of Japanese colonial rule with social benefits and addressing their indignity. However, as the Korean economy boomed and rose out of extreme poverty, Korean society could then afford to honor the protestors and victims of Japanese colonialism. As a result of this new trend in historical perspectives among Koreans, some of those persons who were mentally and physically damaged could be given reparations by some governmental programs and institutions.

Even though it is true that the memory of suffering of comfort women could be reappraised and recovered in part, most Koreans did not fully recognize that a majority of these victims had been ignored or even regarded as repugnant by local people due to their intersectional social status. In this regard, comfort women are a typical example of the ignored and marginalized victims both before and after the Japanese colonial era. In terms of their intersectional positions in society, comfort women have continuously been vulnerable to offensive treatments from almost every quarter of society. Most comfort women were poor, uneducated, young, and abducted from nations which were claimed as

Japanese territory during World War II (Hicks, 1997). The vulnerable socioeconomic status of comfort women contributed to their being lured into the military brothels run by the Japanese government and army. Because they were so poor and uneducated, it was relatively easy to trick them with false recruiting for factory jobs or educational opportunities. Even though there were comfort women from Japan, they were legally recruited as “working prostitutes” and their roles and working conditions were ultimately different than the conditions faced by females from the colonized territories (Lee, 2003, p. 512). This shows that economic, educational, and ethnic backgrounds of comfort women mutually impacted their marginalization and tragic experiences during Japanese colonialism.

Unfortunately, the intersectional status of comfort women negatively influenced not only their vulnerability to sexual abuses but also their post-war efforts to reclaim human rights and national attention for several decades in Korea. Traditionally, the social status of females is considered inferior to males in Korean society. Because of this patriarchal feature of Korean society, depictions of victims of Japanese colonialism tended not to focus on comfort women in the postcolonial era (Soh, 2008). Rather, until the 1990s comfort women were forced to hide their experiences of sexual slavery for fear of local people’s criticisms and attacks (Ibid, p.518). Under these conditions, comfort women have not been able to ask for a full recovery of their honor and an apology from Japan.

In addition to their gender identity, there are many other factors that have forced comfort women into vulnerable conditions that contributed to their sexual abuse by the Japanese army and which have oppressed their voices and calls for human rights after the

independence of Korea. As Crenshaw (1989, p. 140) explained, feminist studies have tended to focus on “single-axis framework” which “erases” women of marginalized social groups from academic interests. Without considering female’s ethnic group, economic level, and education, feminist studies have narrowed their interests just to “the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group” (Ibid). Likewise, comfort women also have been marginalized for a long time even from academic fields of feminism.

In the first article presented within this dissertation, I analyze the identity-related conditions that led comfort women to be forced into sexual slavery during Japanese colonialism and how their intersectional positions as Korean females have blocked them from receiving the attention and care they deserved and needed in post-independence Korea. Without understanding how their intersectionality is situated within the contexts of Korean society, we cannot understand why comfort women started their protests against the Japanese government and how they have made efforts to overcome their intersectional backgrounds through their social and commemorative movements.

Part 2: What impact has the demonstration and monument outside the Japanese embassy had on discourses about the trauma of comfort women and public memory of their sexual slavery? What role art and festivity within public spaces play in raising public recognition of comfort women identity politics?

Because of the conditions that former comfort women faced within Korean society, they had seldom argued publicly over their unfair treatments at the hands of the Korean and Japanese governments and they rarely publicized their memories in Korean society. However, in 1991, as one former comfort woman, Kim Hak-sun, publicly aired

her tragic memories of sexual slavery while in Japanese army camps, the comfort women issue started to hit Korean society, thus encouraging other former comfort women to begin a movement to protest against the Japanese government (Soh, 1996, p. 1236). It was a movement that sought to excavate suppressed and repressed memories while also creating symbolic forms that would mobilize moral responsibility.

In the second article presented in this dissertation, I primarily ask about the meanings of space in the comfort women protests and how their commemorative campaign's use of space near the Japanese embassy has redefined and produced new discourses about injustice and trauma. Regarding the strategies of the civic movements of comfort women, one remarkable thing is that they have chosen the space in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul as a primary place for long term protest. Historically, spaces of foreign embassies have held sensitive and critical meanings in geopolitics because space can convert intangible aspects of geopolitics into visible and materialized substance (Thrift, 2008) and eventually provide people a stage to draw public attention and express political views. For this reason, we can see several examples of people invading or occupying foreign embassies to appeal their arguments to public and fulfill their political objectives (Cole, 2002; Goodall, 2008). In particular, people who occupy or de-stabilize the spaces of foreign embassies are usually from marginalized or excluded social groups who have direct or indirect concerns with countries represented by those embassies. These excluded groups do not possess any effective means to express their political interests and the unfair treatments they have experienced to society other than utilizing the symbolically-constructed geopolitical meanings of embassy space for achieving what they want.

With official knowledge production systems and scientific fields getting more and more expertized, there is a huge disparity in modern society between the upper and lower social classes in producing discourses (Dittmer, 2010; Gramsci & Buttigieg, 1992; Lees, 2004; Waitt, 2010). In this respect, comfort women, who have been marginalized and assaulted for a long time due to their intersectional vulnerability, would have had no choice to defend themselves from oppressions and insults of society. Facing these significant obstacles, females sexually abused during the Japanese colonial era started to gather in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul with the aid of civic activists to draw public attention and with the hope of forcing a more responsible attitude of the Japanese government. Gathering in front of the Japanese embassy would mean that many comfort women who previously held a weak position in terms of producing their own discourses on sexual violence are now able to garner governmental attention and force public recognition of their cause. In doing so, they can utilize the space of a foreign embassy for their protests, and moreover, they can scale up their social movement to the level of historical debate between Korean and Japan by using the symbolically-constructed and contested nature of a foreign embassy space in foreign affairs.

In 2011, as the former comfort women marked the 1000th rally in front of the Japanese embassy, they faced an important point in their protest activities. With the aid of civic activists and a married couple of artists, the comfort women constructed a peace monument depicting a young girl looking straight at the Japanese embassy building. By installing this monument in front of the Japanese embassy, they could transform tragic memories of former comfort women from their own memories into common history shared by Koreans. As the statue of a comfort woman became exposed to the local,

national, and foreign press, the appropriation of the space in front of the Japanese embassy by comfort women gained momentum. This claiming and reconstruction of the landscape in front of the Japanese embassy prompted by the comfort woman statue had provided them a chance to re-tell their memories of abuse and exclusion to the public. The monument, as a strong tool for producing discourses on the issues of comfort women, can simultaneously represent the memories of comfort women, which symbolize the agonies of Koreans in the era of the Japanese colonial rule, and justify the protests of comfort women against a Japanese government that still hesitates to give comfort women official apologies and reparations.

Part 3: What processes and agents are responsible for diffusing or spreading monuments to comfort women politics within Korea and across international borders into the US? What conflicts or collaborations characterize the conversion of comfort women into a transnational memroy? How are Korean-Americans and other ethnic immigrant communities redefining the scaled politics of comfort women memory?

Interestingly, the statue of a comfort woman not has just been built in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul but is also spreading and being replicated in other cities in Korea and the US. As a symbol of the agonies of comfort women and their protests against the Japanese government, these nationally and transnationally migrated memoryscapes have given many Koreans and US citizens a motive to think about the importance of the issue in the context of advancing human rights. In this respect, it is interesting to see that some US politicians have become aware of and interested in comfort women memory (Sorrenti, 2015; Ward & Lay, 2015). The US cities that host

replicas of peace monuments or other memorials to comfort women have large Korean-American communities, which have drawn local public attention to this history of trauma. They give the comfort women campaign a symbolic and material power to draw massive media and public attention within an international society. This transnational process of creating memoryscape of comfort women has been examined through fieldwork in Korea and the US.

One reason that Korean immigrants and US citizens have developed sympathies with comfort women and their social movements is that they felt affection, if not empathy, and a strong sense of justice in advancing the human rights of these victimized women. Actually, emotions of affection, sympathy, and empathy have strongly and positively functioned in social movements of marginalized groups (Bosco, 2007; Fridman, 2006). In this respect, there is a need to analyze how and why social recognition among Korean-Americans and US citizens have been developed in building comfort women monuments and helping advance the social movements of comfort women in the US. In analyzing this issue, the third article within this dissertation examines the reasons behind this sharing of affection and empathy and its role in initializing social networks between Koreans and those in the US.

When considering the power and impact of US public opinions and media in international society, it is understandable why Korean and Japanese immigrant groups struggle with each other in justifying their positions on the comfort women issue in the US. For this reason, there is considerable pressure put on US politicians by Japanese immigrants and politicians. Many of these US politicians are interested in constructing comfort women statues in their local areas (Ward & Lay, 2015). Furthermore, as the

landscapes of the comfort women memorialization are drawing upon the social networks and conflicts among Korean, US, and other Asian ethnic groups, it is necessary to study how collaborations between Korean and US activists have been formed and how struggles between Asian immigrants have impacted the landscapes for remembering the trauma and abuse endured by comfort women.

In memorializing the history of comfort women, social activists have begun constructing peace monuments and statues in several cities in Korea. And was noted earlier, the comfort women campaign is increasingly evident and felt in the US, with memorials being constructed both in eastern and western cities. The public memory of this tragic history is not just confined within Korea and Japan but also circulates more widely throughout the world along with the rapid dissemination of news and views through the internet and people, especially Koreans, immigrating into foreign countries. Recognizing the ability of memory and politics to diffuse and take on different forms in other places, this project has been conducted in both Korea and the US to analyze how human networks of social activists and immigrants work to memorialize comfort women and produce commemorative landscapes.

Research methods and positionality

In investigating the politics of comfort women memory, my own positionality as ‘a Korean male’ has influenced research methods and structures. In structuring research methods, I had to consider how I am received by former comfort women and whether my positionality as a Korean male could help or hinder the investigation of comfort women’s identities. Because former comfort women have suffered from sexual crimes committed

by ‘males’, they might have generally negative stereotypes about the attitudes of males toward females. Furthermore, as comfort women had long been ignored and degraded by the masculine culture of Korean society after the independence of Korea, it is possible that they hold further negative ideas or anxieties about talking with and revealing their feelings to a man. For this reason, during the fieldwork in Korea, I could not meet with comfort women as civic activists would not allow me to talk with the victims of sexual slavery due to my positionality. Consequently, I had to change the research plan and instead collected various archived records of comfort women testimony and interviews, which were helpful but provided my only understanding of identity formation and attitudes among victimized comfort women.

In contrast, my positionality as a scholar from Korea also presented strengths and advantages in conducting fieldwork in Korea and the US. Specifically, my sympathy for and willingness to aid social movements of comfort women within the academic world was welcomed by civic activists and several participants in these commemorative campaigns. Moreover, as the generation of former comfort women lies exactly within the same timeline of my grandparents, their memories and histories are not unfamiliar and strange to me. The empathy that I sought to create helped me considerably to understand the directions and objectives of commemorative campaigns and analyze them in a culturally sensitive way. In addition, my bilingualism in Korean and English enabled me to interview people from both Korea and the US and use these conversations for analyzing the commemorative campaigns of comfort women in richer ways than a non-bilingual scholar could have done.

In the War and Women's Human Rights Museum, civic activists work to preserve the historical records of comfort women, which helped me analyze the narratives of Korean society and the legacies of Japanese colonialism that have impacted their identities. By investigating those records, I gained a better understanding of how comfort women have been marginalized in Korean society, even after the independence of Korea, and how their identities have been formed and how these identities then affect the social movement.

Relying only on archival research, however, I felt that it is difficult to fully understand the identities and thoughts of comfort women demonstration. To supplement the limits of the archival method, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the organizers of Wednesday Demonstrations, Korean-American activists, and artists who have constructed comfort women monuments and memorials in both Korean and US cities. Interviews with those civic activists and artists helped analyze their objectives and strategies in locating the place of comfort women demonstration and constructing the peace monument in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, a space with highly symbolic meaning in transnational politics and foreign affairs.

Since this dissertation's goal is to investigate the politics of landscape and memory practiced by comfort women and civic activists, participating in the Seoul demonstrations weekly enabled me to share the sense of protest with them and to observe some of the political meanings of the rallies. By doing so, I expected to develop a reasonably strong relationship with civic activists and artists, which was important to understanding their feelings in protest and for analyzing their movement to raise public awareness of comfort women. Furthermore, as protestors from abroad also participate in

the Seoul rallies weekly, I interviewed them to clarify how transnational public memory can be diffused through sociopolitical impacts of memoryscape and commemorative campaigns.

My fieldwork has also been conducted in the US. By interviewing social activists in the US and analyzing political processes at work in American cities, I expected to explore the transnational nature of social movements and public memory. Although several US cities have constructed monuments to comfort women and their numbers are increasing, I visited the Palisades Park and Bergen County areas in New Jersey, thus making the research doable and allowing me to explore the politics of those commemorative projects. To investigate a case in California, I conducted a Skype interview with a Korean-American civic activist in Glendale, which is one of the US cities having the largest Korean-American communities and important state politicians such as the Congressman Mike Honda, who collaborated with Korean social activists.

I primarily used a device for recording conversations with interviewees. Transcriptions of interviews were made and used in analyzing their ideas on the comfort women issue. When I finished collecting historical records of comfort women and found evidence relevant to forming their identity in archival research, I used these insights in interviews as the basis for asking questions and analyzing thematically the transcripts of interviews. When I was back in the US after the fieldwork, I transcribed the conversations of interviews and analyzed them. Through this work, I have focused on analyzing what things the interviewees emphasized in comfort women's identity and the role of space and memory and discourse in strategies of civic movements. By doing so, I attempted to draw important meanings from the transcripts regarding how identity of

comfort women has impacted their intersectional social status and social movement and why they have chosen the space of Japanese embassy for their protest. With records collected in archives, I have compared several contexts and narratives recorded in those materials and analyzed how political conditions of domestic and international society have hindered and helped the former comfort women in their protest and what conditions have enabled them to start demonstrations for their human rights.

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CHAPTER I

INTERSECTIONALITY OF COMFORT WOMEN

Abstract: The words “Comfort Women” refer to sex slaves forced into Japanese military brothels during WWII. Until the early 1990s in Korean society, the history of comfort women had long been forgotten and barely discussed due to masculine aspects of Korean culture. In this sociocultural condition, former comfort women had suffered from sexual slavery during Japanese colonialism and marginalized social status after Korea became independent from Japan. In this study, the focus will be on structural and multiple causes that had enforced numerous Korean females into Japanese military brothels and oppressed them to hide their memories until the early 1990s in Korean society. In doing so, this study expects to understand how former comfort women had endured the social status on intersectional margins and how identity formations of sexually exploited females have motivated commemorative campaigns with the aid of recognition change in Korea and memory politics.
Keywords: Intersectionality, Comfort Women, Sex Slave, Japanese Colonialism, Postcolonial Politics, Recognition Paradigm

Introduction

During World War II, the Japanese royal army had gone through tough situations as the war had continued longer than they expected (Feis, 2015). In this condition, Japanese soldiers frequently kidnapped and raped many female civilians near battle fields as they had felt fatigued and rage for the long period of war (Chang, 2012). Facing the collapse of morality in Japanese military bases, commanding officers had felt pressured to prepare any measures to prevent Japanese soldiers from raping civilians and settle their grievances (Yang, 1997). For this reason, ironically, the Japanese army launched and operated military brothels by abducting and enforcing young females from colonized countries into sexual slavery under the euphemism of “comfort women” (Hicks, 1997). Despite variances in estimating the number of forced females, many researchers agree

that there were over 200,000 comfort women, mostly from Korea, sexually exploited in Japanese military brothels (Min, 2003; Totsuka, 1999; Wawrynek, 2003). These brothels were sites of psychological and physical torture, with Japanese soldiers raping their sexual salves 10 to 20 times a day during WWII.

In addition to brutal crimes in Japanese military brothels, comfort women had also suffered from structural oppressions originating from the masculine culture of Korean society when they came back home. In cultural traditions based on Confucianism, every woman is required to keep virginity before getting married while men are relatively free from this expectation of sexual chastity. As former comfort women were scared by threats and slanders from their neighbors due to their forced involvement in sexual slavery, they chose to keep their memories of trauma from the public until the early 1990s. During those hard times, the victimized females have not had any opportunities to ask for improving human rights while Korean society had marginalized them socially and economically.

This paper focuses on the specific hardships faced by former comfort women. In particular, I examine the structural and systematic forces that had sent many young girls into sexual slavery as well as their extreme marginalization in Korean society. In order to analyze causes of their sufferings, this study will explore the concept of intersectionality discussed by Crenshaw and several subsequent scholars (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991, 1992; Davis, 2008; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Intersectionality allows us to understand that trauma endured by former comfort women had not just originated from a single root but was based on multiple sociocultural vulnerabilities such as race, ethnic identity, social class, gender, sexuality, and economic status.

With the analysis of multiple wounds and intersectional vulnerabilities that former comfort women had endured, this study aims to answer the three following questions.

Firstly, **how have multiple pressures and intersectional vulnerabilities of afflicted females affected identity formation of comfort women?** For eighty years since WWII, comfort women have gone through several historical events that have been an important source of their suffering. Enduring the oppressions of the Japanese army and social prejudices within Korean society, comfort women have internalized their sufferings in their emotions and bodies. Furthermore, it had been nearly impossible for former comfort women to testify about the brutality of militarism during WWII and remind common people of recurring human rights abuses after the independence of Korea. As they had long been ignored and even threatened by Koreans for their lost virginity, surviving comfort women could not expose their memories of sexual slavery to the public until quite late the early 1990s. When we consider the lasting sufferings that former comfort women had endured for decades, it is understandable that identities of victimized females formed by structural oppressions can be essential factor for studying how comfort women could not escape from the meshes of coercive social structure. Consequently, former comfort women had to overcome those oppressed identities to testify their memories and protest against all forms of afflictions.

Secondly, **how have comfort women been eventually encouraged to publicize memories of sexual slavery and protest despite oppressed identities and afflictions?** Intersectional vulnerability of comfort women tremendously affected the lives of comfort women during WWII and even after with the withdrawal of Japanese military forces from Korea. Even though there are several studies exploring intersectional vulnerability of

comfort women (Min, 2003; Yang, 1997), they have not attempted to find implications of intersectionality in human rights movements of victimized females. In addition to analysis of intersectionality of comfort women, this study is going to further its scope by connecting experiences of comfort women with identity formation. Due to recognition change of Korean society prompted by democratization and social movements of feminists, former comfort women have been inspired and encouraged to protest against the Japanese government. Until the early 1990s in Korean society, the military regime had regulated and controlled people's ideologies so as to rule the country according to aims of dictators (Yi, 2006). This political condition had also affected historical views and knowledge of Koreans because educational systems were under the supervision of military dictatorship and its ideologies (Ibid). In this oppressive environment of political and educational system, the ruling class actively ignored memories of marginalized social groups with manipulations of modern public history of Korea. For this reason, Korean society had institutionalized a forgetfulness of the history of comfort women until just a few decades ago. Ironically, this unfavorable condition for narrating memories of trauma to the public has led former comfort women to develop a new strategy using public memory activism and identity-building work. With regard to this politics of comfort women, this study seeks to analyze the impacts of intersectionality of victims on social exclusion and understand the political motives and actions of politics of comfort women to challenge their marginalized social status.

Thirdly, **how have comfort women used their memories in human rights movements and formed identities as victims and storytellers?** Even though experiences in military brothels were terrible and loathsome, former comfort women are

now willing to use those memories to let people realize the brutality of sexual slavery during WWII and remind them that the sexual crimes of military forces have still afflicted a large number of females throughout the world until recently. Thus, we can understand that a shared memory of marginalized social groups can be used for grouping themselves together and protesting against institutional and structural oppressions (Williams, 2000). To answer this research question regarding the use of memories and identities for politics of comfort women, this study will focus on connections between memories of sexual slavery and identity formation. Unfortunately, even though there are several studies exploring intersectionality of marginalized social groups and identity politics (Anthias, 2008; Cooper, 2006; Crenshaw, 1991; Harper, 2011; Hutchinson, 2000; Nash, 2008; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008; Shaun, Wardell, & McGuire, 2011), they have not tried to analyze how memories of social groups on intersectional margins have to do with identity formation and politics of memory. On the contrary, we can understand that memories of comfort women have taken an essential role in forming their identities as both victims and storytellers. By discussing topics of the third question, this study will analyze impacts of memories of sexual slavery on identity formation of comfort women as memory and identity work as key elements in protesting against institutional and structural oppressions.

In order to answer the aforementioned research questions, I conducted fieldwork in Korea from Dec 14, 2015 to Jan 10, 2016. During this period, I interviewed five demonstration organizers and participated in Wednesday Demonstrations in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul. The objective of this fieldwork was to understand grievances of comfort women originating from experiences of sexual slavery and to figure out the

use of memories in identity politics. In addition, I visited two memorial museums operated by civic organizations to collect narrations of comfort women describing their lives and sufferings since the 1930s. Before starting fieldwork, I had planned to interview surviving comfort women personally. However, I had to choose alternative methods, such as collecting secondary data and talking with civic activists rather than meeting former comfort women in person because many civic activists informed me that the aged victims are physically and mentally too weary to participate in interviews. Despite this disappointing situation, important conclusions can still be drawn because civic activists and volunteers supporting comfort women provided me with plenty of published narrations of victimized females. Moreover, organizers of Wednesday Demonstration helped me develop an empathy for the tragic experiences of abducted young girls by talking with me a lot. As those civic activists have worked with former comfort women for a long time, interviews with them could satisfy what I originally wanted, although it is important to recognize this limitation in the work. With those secondary data collected in the two examined museums, one is called the War and Women's Human Rights Museum, and the other one is the Museum of Sexual Slavery by Japanese Military, I strove to figure out identity changes of comfort women and how these changes were affected by experiences of marginalization and recognition change in Korean society. Through interviews with civic activists and demonstration organizers, I have tried to analyze relations between memories and identities, motivations for identity politics, and changing intersectional identities prompted by public respect for comfort women.

Comfort women's suffering in Korean society

As previously indicated, the suffering of comfort women originates from structural discrimination against females rooted in Korean culture. Traditionally, as Korean society had adopted Confucianism as a foundational philosophy of politics and social norms, cultural hegemony emphasizing social order and hierarchy has tended to compel marginal subjects to obey naturalized ideologies and commands of upper social classes regardless of their validity. Although this type of ruling system might be effective in stabilizing sociopolitical structure, it cannot be denied that Confucian thinking has been a coercive and totalitarian mechanism in Korean society. In this sociopolitical condition, the human rights of marginal subjects cannot to be guaranteed and protected as they are regarded as trivial and insignificant value.

Even though Korea has become democratized and people have begun to pay more attention to human rights issues recently, marginal subjects still suffer from structural and institutional neglect and exclusion. This is because discrimination against subordinate groups is rooted and practiced in a wide range of sociocultural layers in Korean society. Specifically, as social expectations of chastity are applied discriminately to males and females, Korean women are judged by a double standard in general. As this gender inequality is prevalent both in public and private sectors, Korean males do not usually mind that they are sexually served by young females while hoping their daughters or female family members keep their virginity. More seriously, this distorted perception of chastity sometimes affects public views on rape cases, which attributes causes of sexual

crimes to inappropriate behaviors of females. Actually, this can be demonstrated by the fact that court decisions are usually not strict about sexual crimes in Korean society.

In this respect, we can understand how comfort women had been viewed in Korean society. Actually, when former comfort women came back to their homelands after the end of WWII, they had to hide their experiences in military brothels as people recognized them as prostitutes and not as victims of sexual slavery system. From the perspective of Confucianism combined with sexist attitudes, the traumatic experiences of comfort women were not socially accepted but recognized as memories of sex workers who fooled around with Japanese soldiers and abandoned their virginity. These distorted public views were an important source of comfort women's suffering after they were emancipated from Japan's sexual slavery system.

In addition to the sexism rooted in Korean cultural practice, another sector has inflicted serious wounds on comfort women. In the 1960s, as the Korean and Japanese governments wanted to restore diplomatic relations after the end of Japanese colonialism, the two countries signed the Treaty on Basic Relations. The problematic content of the treaty was that there was no article that clearly stated who were victimized during WWII and to where the reparations of the Japanese government should be distributed and used. Without those statements in the treaty, the Korean government concentrated the money resulting from the two countries' treaty on the economic development of Korea, even though the reparations were supposed to be used for victims of Japanese colonialism. Although it can be said that the Japanese government is primarily responsible for the sexual crimes committed during WWII, the Korean government is also not free from responsibility for causing traumatic injuries upon comfort women. Since the treaty signed

in 1965, the Korean government has consistently neglected the narratives of comfort women and taken few steps if any to treat the victimized females with appropriate governmental care. This neglectful practice of the Korean government has been reiterated as the former president, Park, Geun-hye, inherited the authoritative and conservative stance of her father, Park, Chung-hee, the military dictator who reigned from 1963 to 1979. As Park, Geun-hye negotiated the comfort women agreement in 2015 with the Japanese government, many Koreans criticized the agreement for excluding comfort women from the negotiation. There were no practical advancements of the agreement when comparing it to previous statements addressed by the Japanese government before the 2010s. The Korean government has shown ignorance of the significant aspects of comfort women issues and attempted to use the contested nature of Japanese colonial history merely for obtaining economic and diplomatic advantages from Japan. Consequently, as explored previously, we can understand the sufferings of comfort women as multi-sourced and not confined to a geopolitical narrative of the immorality of Japan. Rather, the marginalization of comfort women is connected to a wide range of sociopolitical practices rooted in naturalized and institutionalized discrimination against females in Korea.

Intersectionality, identity, and memory

Before exploring the suffering and trauma experienced by comfort women, it is important to engage in a core discussion of intersectionality and its relationship to the identities of marginalized groups since these issues shape the politics of comfort women. According to several scholars who have investigated the history of comfort women,

comfort women had suffered from sexual exploitation by the Japanese army and social exclusion from Korean society until recently. Comfort women occupied a social status that placed them at intersectional margins which contributed to their exploitation and later alienation. With regard to any social identities such as ethnicity, sex, social class, education, or economic level, former comfort women had never been located in a prominent status that would have kept them from these human rights abuses. Enduring a long period of suffering, the memories of sexual slavery contributed to inflict an incredible amount of trauma, comfort women have made consistent efforts to overcome intersectional vulnerabilities and protest against the Japanese government. The second thing we should consider is that in this process, memories of comfort women have played an important role in forming their identities as both victims and storytellers and conducting their identity politics. Although many studies of intersectionality have not investigated relations between the intersectional identities of marginalized social groups and their memories in political activities, it can clearly be seen that memory has a crucial impact on identity and the politics of subordinate groups (Booth, 1999; King & Home, 2000; Moore & Whelan, 2007). With these ideas relating to intersectionality of comfort women in mind, this chapter will explore several concepts of intersectionality, identity, and memory and explain their relations with each other on a conceptual level.

The word ‘intersectionality’ was primarily used by Crenshaw (1989), who argued that women of color had been given little attention from both civil rights movements and politics of feminists (Crenshaw, 1989). Even though women of color should be approached and studied deliberately due to their most marginalized and excluded social status in the US, the study of civil rights movements and feminist politics have tended to

ignore marginalization of lower social groups (Crenshaw, 1989). Because of marginal locations both in antiracism (black-male oriented) and feminism (white-female oriented), women of color in the US have suffered from multiple vulnerabilities and structural exclusions. Moreover, even as academic dimensions such as antiracism and feminism theories have focused less on the intersectionality of women of color (Crenshaw, 1991, pp. 1242-1243), many activists and researchers have failed to approach the real problems experienced by marginalized social groups at the intersectional margins.

Consequently, Crenshaw's discussions on intersectionality gave rise to scholars paying closer attention to the neglect of "intragroup differences" in academic traditions and the necessity of understanding marginalized individuals according to details of their identities (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). Because many theories of antiracism and feminism have failed to discern the subtle differences of individuals, it remains controversial to develop principles in studying various types of marginalization.

Although Crenshaw brought up critical issues of intersectionality, she did not discuss research methods relating to future studies of intersectionality and social exclusion. Thanks to Crenshaw, we are aware that there are numerous differences in personal experiences of marginalization. However, her studies also left us several works to develop research methods for discerning intersectionality of marginalization and its impacts on social movements of subordinate groups. Even though it is somewhat vague to establish fundamental methods for investigating intersectionality of marginalization, Crenshaw has occasionally suggested the significance of "identity" in both studying intersectionality and politics of subordinate social groups (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991, 1992). But the problem in identity politics of the past originated from the fact that what "many

women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). In other words, many scholars of social studies have perceived unique experiences of subordinate groups such as women of color in the US without distinguishing them from metanarratives and communal experiences of roughly categorized social groups.

All of this is to say that studies of intersectionality need to escape traditional research categories such as race, sex, gender, and class to embrace diversified experiences of marginalization. With regard to this, it is important to optimize the use of methods for understanding the complexity of intersectional identity in the real world. For doing this, we should be aware that "intersectional identities are defined in relation to one another" (Shields, 2008, p. 303). In addition to this, Spelman (1988) helps us understand contradictions in bundling intersectional identities into a single dimension by stating that they are not a "pop bead metaphysics" (Spelman, 1988, p. 136). That is, intersectional identities are not like "a set of discrete beads on a string" but "relationally defined and emergent" (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983; Collins, 2002; Shields, 2008, p. 303). Those ideas of relationality remind us of the dynamic ways that intersectional identities form among social groups. Furthermore, with this nature of intersectionality, we can infer that intersectional identities are corresponding to and contextualized within specific historical, social, and spatial conditions.

With regard to this relativity of intersectional identity, recent studies of geography try to estimate and demonstrate the validity of intersectionality in understanding of situated identities (Hopkins & Noble, 2009; Nightingale, 2011; Valentine, 2007). In particular, feminist geographers consider the concept of intersectionality to connect

women to a more complex range of identities (Valentine, 2007). Actually, as marginalized experiences of women can be diversified and fragmented in specific contexts, intersectionality studies explore how women's experiences are connected to various conditions and identities that they encounter in everyday life and which impact their welfare and vulnerability to exclusion. This is because if a feminist research is too obsessed with general aspects of inequality, it would omit details of each contextualized situation where specific identities and experiences of women are combined and intersected to augment the degree of marginal status.

This contradictory situation in feminist practices had also occurred in Korea, even before comfort women issues were initially addressed in the 1990s. The birth of feminist movements in Korea can be traced back to the 1920s while Koreans were still ruled by the Japanese colonial government. However, due to oppressive and coercive sociocultural conditions under Japanese colonialism and chaotic political environments after the Korean War, feminist movements were not actively conducted until the 1960s and the 1970s. As there had been media sources reporting that factory workers were extremely exploited and wounded in their work places as a result of the rapid economic development during those decades, Korean feminism was initially associated with labor movements and extended to general human rights issues of females during the 1980s (Ching & Louie, 1995). However, because Korean feminist movements tended to deal just with gender inequality within institutionalized and systemized dimensions, they had not taken steps to explore a broader range of marginalized experiences of women located at intersectional margins. With regard to this, we can understand that comfort women had

been marginalized and excluded even from an academic sector of feminism not prepared to embrace the complexity of women's identities and experiences.

To overcome the limited access of feminist studies to address the complexity of intersectional vulnerabilities, Nightingale (2011) explains that geographic thinking can help understand intersectional identities of marginal subjects formed in geographic contexts. Criticizing the existing categories for identifying each identity, Valentine (2007) also considers significant implications of 'lived experience' given in specific spatial and temporal dimensions. Even though Valentine (2007) acknowledges the complicated process of identity formation in which different experiences mutually strengthen exclusion of marginal subjects, she also indicates a possibility that each geographic context can group certain individuals who share common marginalized experiences into a collective identity. Despite the potential validity of a common identity for group politics, Valentine warned that this type of identity formation can also exclude others who do not have similar memories and identities from political activities. Therefore, considering those ideas asserted by feminist geographers, we need to maintain a balance between identity politics and complexity of intersectional identities of excluded marginal subjects who do not belong to formerly established categories of identity and lived experiences. Through this effort to keep balanced views, we can see how commemorative campaigns of comfort women have tried to embrace other types of victims from sexual crimes even though they do not have a common identity originating from lived experiences in Japanese comfort/sexual slavery stations.

At this point, in spite of the dynamic processes behind the formation of intersectional identities, we should pose a question about potential factors that make

certain social groups have a common sense of identity. As the main interest of this study is the formation of a collective identity of comfort women and their politics based on memories of sexual slavery, it is first necessary to discuss intersectionality in relation to identity formation and identity politics. In addition, there is a need to extend discussions on intersectional identities and identity politics into the memories of trauma of marginalized social groups. As many scholars have frequently pointed out, there are strong relations between identity and memory (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997; Longman & Rutagengwa, 2004; Megill, 1998; Moore & Whelan, 2007; Norval, 1998). And this certainly holds true in the case of comfort women and their social movements. As memories of sexual slavery have had a huge impact in establishing identities of comfort women and their experiences of marginalization, discussions of memory cannot be detached from identity and historical politics of subordinate groups.

Before exploring the implications of intersectionality within identity politics, we should be aware that there have been many controversies over research methods using set social categories in intersectionality studies (Brah & Phoenix, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2008; Hancock, 2007; Harper, 2011; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008; Phoenix & Pattemana, 2006; Shields, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006). With respect to conventional antiracism and feminism, it has been pointed out that predetermined identities such as ‘blackness’, ‘womanhood’, and ‘working classness’ have distracted many activists and scholars from looking into the dynamic processes behind identity formations (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 195). Even though categories of identity such as sex, race, social class, ethnicity, and nationality can partly tell us about social status or affiliation of individuals, it is not appropriate to explain various aspects of marginalization only with those

categorical identities. As identities are not fixed and stable but diversified and contextualized within the dynamics of historical and sociopolitical circumstances (McCall, 2005, p. 1777; Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 205), studies of intersectional identities need to develop alternative non-categorical dimensions by analyzing individual narratives of subordinate groups as a means of containing and explaining various degrees of social exclusions.

Even though predetermined identities cannot correctly reflect actual experiences of marginalization, some scholars indicate that identity itself is necessary in grouping together those who share common experiences and perspectives in certain sociopolitical contexts (Calhoun, 1994; Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005). Especially within the identity politics of subordinate groups, common identities formed by collective memory can help individuals recognize and represent themselves and suggest consistent directions for their social movements (Calhoun, 1994; Diawara, 1994; Wiley, 1994). In spite of this necessity of identity, feminists associated with poststructuralism have tended to reject common identity in their discussions since they consider categorization of identities as a misleading methodology that ignores varying degrees of contexts and depends on “overly fixed essentialist notion of society or culture” (Calhoun, 1994, p. 14). On the one hand, it cannot be denied that the concept of intersectionality itself has been affected by poststructuralism or postmodernism when we think about deconstructive and reconstitutive aspects of intersectionality studies (McCall, 2005). Based on this perspective, it also makes sense that scientific research methods using analytical categories have failed to grasp the complexity of identity formation (Brah & Phoenix, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2008; Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008; Yuval-

Davis, 2006). In this regard, feminism associated with poststructuralism has contributed to providing a new perspective on intersectional identity and thus sheds light on marginal subjects ignored by antiracism and feminism discourses. Actually, discourses of poststructuralism are valid in part to explaining unstable and dynamic aspects of intersectional identities in the postmodern era. Many scholars of poststructuralism have been critical of identity politics due to the exclusion of "those who are different" and forcible unification based on predetermined categories such as gender, sex, race, and social class (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242).

Yet, as mentioned earlier, identity itself takes an important role in conducting identity politics. That is to say, subordinate social groups need a somewhat consistent and solid identity, as it can be "a source of strength, community, and intellectual development" for an advance in identity politics (Crenshaw, 1991). Despite this contradictory condition between identity politics and intersectional identities, to guarantee the success of the politics of marginal subjects, we need to consider both varying degrees of individuals' identities and a sturdier construction of collective identities of marginalized groups. The aims of these considerations are for marginal subjects to recognize their intersectional social status and utilize that self-recognition for inspiring a sense of protest consistent with those identities (Honneth, 1992).

The use of self-recognition, or Honneth's (1992) word, "self-respect", for beginning politics of marginalized social groups strongly relates to formation of a consistent identity that helps call them together and encourages them to protest against structural coercions. In order to understand identity politics fully, we should not just rely on conventional categorizations such as sex, race, and social class, but also refer to

historical and sociopolitical contexts in which varying degrees of individuals encounter their own sufferings and compose a series of memories. Considering identities embedded in certain sociopolitical contexts, McCall (2005) provides us a useful means to understand and analyze intersectional identities by using the expression “lived experiences of subjects.” In human history, structural pressures and unequal sociopolitical conditions have given birth to certain social groups who share common experiences of inequality and collective memories of coercive social power. Whereas conventional academic practices using categories are still wielding incredible influence on knowledge production, studies of identity politics need very different approaches to understand better the use of experiences and memories of marginalized subjects for successful social movements. With these experiences and memories generated in certain spatiotemporal contexts, marginalized subjects can recognize the sociopolitical nature of their own identities and consider other individuals who have gone through same difficulties as colleagues for conducting social movements. And eventually, their history and arguments can be recognized by the public as identity politics of marginal subjects proceeds (Calhoun, 1994; Honneth, 2004).

According to discussions of the memory and recognition paradigm, identity formation depends directly or indirectly on sociopolitical contexts, self-respect of subjects, and recognition change within the public. Actually, sociopolitical conditions for identity formation are not usually favorable to those who have long experienced marginalization and exclusion from the main stream of society. As Honneth (1996) noted, “social recognition” must be achieved by “struggle for recognition” and “its starting point” should be initiated from “moral feelings of indignation” (Honneth, 1996, p. 161). In spite

of the need for moral obligation of society to support the right of subordinate groups, it is probable that the social status of those who are located at intersectional margins cannot bring public attention to their experiences and memories. This is because issues of marginalized social groups tend to be ignored and barely discussed within conventional standards of morality. In order to overcome this unfavorable condition for social recognition, subordinate groups have to prove that their experiences of injustice are linked with "moral doctrines or ideas" of social community (Honneth, 1996, p. 164). With regard to this, Calhoun (1994) and Honneth (1996) agree that self-recognition and identity formation are prerequisite to identity politics and struggles for social recognition. Warning of "radically liberal indivisualism" in postmodernist perspectives, Calhoun argues that identity formation should emerge from "socially nurtured and constructed" recognition as well as "reflections of each individual's inner (natural) truth." (Calhoun, 1994, pp. 24-25) That is, even if individuals have different inherence and belongingness in terms of biological and social categorizations, they need to gather and coherently act within organized bodies to share and achieve common political aims. As Calhoun (1991) pointed out, individuals and social groups incessantly encounter various internal and external tensions in choosing and defining and debating identities. Despite this instability of identity formation, political movements require collective senses of belonging formed through historical and sociopolitical experiences to some extent with mediation of these differences of identities to fulfil their political aims (Calhoun, 1994, pp. 27-28). In the process of mediating between heterogeneous natures of identities, intersectional identities of subordinate groups need to be discussed in collecting political power and ensuring inclusion of various identities of individuals.

While Calhoun (1991, 1994) emphasizes collective interests of individuals and alludes the necessity of reconciling intersectional identities in identity politics, Honneth (1996) primarily focuses on “respect” and “morality” to explain motives behind the resistance of marginalized social groups who have long felt disrespected by society. In certain sociocultural contexts, there are moral expectations necessary for eliminating social inequity imposed on certain social groups. However, if society does not reach any consensus on morality and respect, “victims of disrespect” start feeling the necessity to struggle for social recognition (Ibid). In addition to social recognition, Honneth also emphasizes “self-respect” with which marginal subjects can change negative recognitions formed and strengthened by perverted social views (Ibid). Without having self-respect for their experiences of the past, marginalized social groups become self-humiliated and feel frustrated in claiming social recognition. In order to overcome this vulnerable condition, those who have been socially ignored and disrespected need to assemble institutionally and form “mutual recognition” with others who share the same experiences of social disrespect (Honneth, 2004). By doing so, “identity formation”, which is a precondition for enabling marginalized social groups to participate in collective actions, can be fulfilled to lead common people into recognizing subordinate groups located on intersectional margins (Honneth, 1992, 1996, 2004).

In exploring identity formation, we become aware that the identities of individual persons are associated not with traditional categories emphasized by academic fields but with lived experiences in sociocultural process. Identity itself strongly relates to personal emotions and is dependent upon personal choice based on experience in the past. Due to this nature of identity formation, memory can take an important role in constructing and

developing the identities of individuals and social groups (Booth, 1999; Lowenthal, 2015; Robertson & Hall, 2007). That is to say, choice of identities is a political action aiming at articulating the origin of subjects and reconstructing the past according to their political objectives. Identity can be chosen and intensified by subjects in certain historical contexts, thus it is suggested that social groups tend to strategically and selectively memorialize specific events or persons that are deemed important for their identity formation (Liu & Hilton, 2005; Robertson & Hall, 2007). Because memory is used not just for representing the commonly shared identity and history of a community but also for fulfilling political goals of those who are sympathetic, collective activities for keeping memories should be considered as identity politics directed toward the improvement of human rights.

In discussing intersectional identity, identity formation, and memory, we have explored how they have so much to do with each other within the realm of identity politics. To analyze the identity politics of comfort women and the trauma that is rooted in intersectional margins, the concepts discussed in this section help us understand the implications of comfort women issues as they are associated with human rights of marginalized social groups and collective protest. As indicated earlier, the marginal status of comfort women has thwarted several attempts to assert and recover the human rights of the victims of sexual slavery. In this condition, structural oppressions have excluded and marginalized former comfort women suffering from intersectional vulnerabilities. To overcome these unfavorable conditions, comfort women began in thereby 1990s the process of recognizing the importance of their memories and using the memory-work to construct a consistent identity and conduct identity politics. Thus, the next section will

analyze the historical trauma of comfort women and their identity politics, using the theoretical concepts introduced in this section.

Comfort women on intersectional margins

When the academy first focused on issues of intersectionality, most discussions were concentrated on women of color in US society. These intersectionality studies allowed us to open new perspectives into the varying degrees in which subjects are situated in intersectional margins. Actually, in several articles on intersectionality, Crenshaw reminds us of the fact that those who are hardly defined by traditional categories have often been far from the attention of civic activists and feminist scholars (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991, 1992).

Yet, as discussions of intersectionality have primarily dealt with cases from the Western world, feminist scholars have confined intersectionality studies within limited perspectives that they have wanted to escape. For instance, Harper's (2011) study suggests how the concept of intersectionality can be applied to varying degrees of identities such as ethnicity, race, nationality, sex, gender, and social status other than women of color in US society. To extend the scope of intersectionality into varied contexts of social exclusion and marginalization, it is necessary to have in mind that numerous subjects with different identities suffer from a social status located at intersectional margins and that scholars and civic activists have not explored these margins until recently.

With this in mind, this section will examine how the sufferings of former comfort women originate from intersectional vulnerabilities experienced during and since

Japanese colonialism. One of the most notable issues of comfort women is that their agonies and traumatic legacies of sexual slavery did not end during Japanese colonial era but lasted more than 70 years even after Korea became independent. Even though there are many other reasons why comfort women have long endured structural oppressions, this study will concentrate on the specific sociocultural contexts of Japanese colonialism and Korean society to fully map and analyze the marginalization of comfort women. By doing so, it helps to understand core reasons of sociocultural oppressions faced by comfort women and which informs their socio-spatial activism.

Due to growing academic discussions and ongoing efforts of civic activists, many Koreans have recently become aware of the brutality of sexual slavery perpetuated by the Japanese army during WWII. Although there are some variations in estimating the number of comfort women, many scholars and civic activists agree that the Japanese army had forced approximately 200,000 women, mostly from Korea, into comfort stations spread over East and Southeast Asia (Choi et al., 1997; Kang, 2003; Min, 2003; Totsuka, 1999; Wawrynek, 2003). According to testimonies of former comfort women, their ages ranged from mid-teens to early twenties when they were drafted into sexual slavery (Hicks, 1997; Min, 2003; Soh, 2008). More seriously, as young girls were coerced into serving Japanese soldiers up to 30 times per day in comfort stations, their bodies had become violence and abused. Their emotional, physical, and psychological health expectedly suffered and deteriorated (Min, 2003, p. 941).

To understand more completely the cause of this horrific crime, we should attribute it to specific sociocultural contexts in Korea under Japanese colonialism. The most eccentric aspects of sexual slavery in comfort stations was that it was confidentially

and strategically organized and operated by one military group of a colonial power, Japan (Park, 2002; Yoshimi & O'Brien, 2000). There have been many cases of females being sexually abused and raped by soldiers as political groups or communities are defeated and subjugated to their conquerors. Yet, these sexual crimes arguably happened accidentally due to personal desires for sex or within the aim of maintaining control over the conquered (Card, 1996; Hague, 1997; NICHOLAS, 1977). In the case of Japanese colonialism in Korea, there was no need to fulfill those objectives by committing systemized sexual crimes. Nevertheless, the Japanese army and government were strongly engaged in institutionalizing the human trafficking of young girls and operating comfort stations wherever they constructed military bases in East and Southeast Asia.

There are some analyses suggesting that comfort stations were constructed because Japanese army leaders wanted to soothe the grievances of Japanese soldiers by providing regulated places for prostitution at military bases rather than letting soldiers to indulge in the raping of civilians. Specifically, during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-38), as Japanese soldiers had indiscriminately raped Chinese civilians in Nanjing, Japanese military officers had begun considering means of preventing rapes on battlefields (Chung, 1997; Ishikane, 2006). This idea ironically resulted in systematic sexual abuse and rape as the Japanese army started operating comfort stations. Furthermore, even though the cause of operating military brothels was to protect local civilians from sexual advances of Japanese soldiers, it eventually sacrificed and exposed other young females mostly from Korea to this violence and trauma (Soh, 1996).

Thus, we need different approaches to understand core reasons for the human trafficking and sexual slavery of Korean comfort women at hands of the Japanese army

other than the cause of protecting local civilians and relieving complaints of Japanese soldiers. That is to say, we have to ascribe the reasons for the sexual slavery enforced by the Japanese army to the social structure of Japanese colonialism and Korea's subjugation that made those young girls located in intersectional vulnerabilities. In doing so, we can understand that sociocultural web that inexorably enmeshed young girls of colonized countries, a web that exploited women who were unprotected without any place to take refuge and who were already situated at intersectional margins. No matter where they were located in Korean society under Japanese colonialism, social hierarchy had put young Korean females in the lowest and most inferior place. With all the conditions comfort women encountered during Japanese colonial rule, we can be aware of the roots of massive human trafficking and state-sponsored rapes inflicted on females suffering from this marginal status.

One of the principal reasons that the Japanese army and government could commit human trafficking of young girls into military brothels originates from the brutality of the Japanese colonial regime (Hicks, 1997; Min, 2003). As plebs ruled by the relentless colonial power, Korean civilians had suffered from varying degrees of exploitations by the Japanese colonial government. Especially as the Sino-Japanese War and World War II had lasted much longer than the Japanese officials expected, Japanese colonialism had become more brutal and ruthless in exploiting labor forces and plundering resources and human capital from Korea (Barnhart, 2013). In the same manner, the Japanese officers and military executives started forcing Korean young females into sexual exploitation as the regime would exploit any supply to assist Japanese soldiers with enduring the long brutal years of WWII (Yoshimi & O'Brien, 2000).

Another reason for the massive human trafficking of comfort women was rooted in the poor socioeconomic status of Korean young females under Japanese colonial rule (Min, 2003; Soh, 1996). Actually, most females coerced into Japanese military brothels were uneducated, unmarried, teen-aged, and economically poor (정진성, 1998). Due to the marginal and vulnerable conditions experienced by these young girls, most neighbors of comfort women – even their family members – paid scant attentions to the fact that these women were abducted by Korean and Japanese brokers who worked with the Japanese government and military. The business of human trafficking of comfort women was organized and conducted confidentially and sneakily to allure victimized women into military prostitution. The following narration of a former comfort woman testifies to the deceptive strategies practiced by the Japanese army in collecting sexual slaves.

> One day I was in the market place, when they (the middlemen) told me to come to their house. I asked why. They said that if I go to a cotton yarn factory in Manchuria, I can rake in money. I told them that if I make money in that factory, my family would have a better life. I needed to make money. I had younger siblings. So I told them OK… I was only 14-year-old. – *from an interview with AOO (Yoon, 2014, p. 83)*

This strategy using deception to enslave comfort women is also documented in Chung's study (정진성, 1998). According to the data of surviving former comfort women in the 1990s, 153 out of the 175 interviewed comfort women answered that they were forced into Japanese military brothels by inhumane methods, such as human trafficking, kidnapping, threats of violence, and fake employments (Ibid, p. 208). Furthermore, the reason that many young girls could be allured to military brothels was strongly related to

the collapse of rural farming class in Korea (Ibid). As they suffered under extreme poverty stemming from exploitations of Japanese land owners, young girls of the farming class were eager to accept the fake job and education offers of brokers with the hope of sustaining the living of their family members. Consequently, this example indicates that the economically vulnerable status of young Korean females forced them into unwanted engagement in prostitution.

Korean young girls had also suffered from patriarchal aspects of Korean society that helped drive the human trafficking conducted by Korean and Japanese brokers for military brothels. As sociocultural features in Northeast Asia are associated with Confucian philosophy, cultural and social affairs were male-oriented. Even though Confucianism had contributed to keeping social orders, its emphasis on masculine power over females had seriously endangered and threatened the human rights of women in East Asia. In this respect, sociocultural environment of Korea during Japanese colonialism was the worst time and place for keeping Korean young girls from forced military prostitution because the ruthless patriarchal culture of Korean society combined with brutal power of Japanese militarism (Soh, 2004, 2008; Yang, 1997). In this sociocultural environment and the complicity of Koreans in this inequality, their young girls were seriously exposed to varying but nonetheless brutal degrees of violence and exploitation during Japanese colonialism.

> I know Japanese did something really bad to me, but I hate Koreans who let them take me to military brothels more than the Japanese. – from an interview with Kim, D. J. (pseudonym), translated by author (*한국정신대문제대책협의회정신대연구회*, 1993, p. 57)

After I escaped from the comfort station in China, I returned to my home… I know that my father was already aware that I was forcibly brought to military brothel because he allowed the officer to bring me there… Can you imagine how bitterly I blamed him for what he did to me? – *from an interview with Kong, J. Y., translated by author (한국정신대문제대책협의회부설전쟁과여성인권센터연구팀, 2004, p. 49)*

I think Koreans were as bad as Japanese were because they also put others [comfort women] to deadly place for their living… I just hope now that my country become stronger not to experience this tragic history again. – *from an interview with Lee, Y. S., translated by author (한국정신대문제대책협의회정신대연구회, 1993, p. 71)*

According to the interviews of former comfort women, we can understand that Korean males – even those close to these women – were also responsible for human trafficking of young Korean girls. This indicates that masculine aspects of Korean society had negatively impacted the human rights of Korean females and resulted in terrible sexual crimes committed by the Japanese military group. With the patriarchal environment of Korean society, the brutality of Japanese colonial rule had devastated the rest of former comfort women's lives as the cartel of Japanese militarism had madly indulged in the war and human rights abuses.

As discussed this chapter, the reasons behind the human trafficking of comfort women and the trauma they experienced in military brothels cannot be reduced to a single dimension or perpetrator. A civic activist interviewed as part of this research project reaffirms the complexity of issues surrounding the sexual exploitation of Korean women in military brothels.

> It would be right to think that every young girl in Korea was in the list of military sexual slavery except for daughters of pro-Japanese collaborators… Actually, they are mostly illiterate, which means they were uneducated. In masculine culture, once one girl was asked for working in Japanese factories with good educational opportunities and decent salaries or their brothers should have been coerced to battlefield or heavy labor, who could reject this deceitful enticement while suffering extreme poverty? – *from an interview with a civic activist, Kim, D. H., recorded, transcribed and translated by author*

These comments demonstrate that even within one category of social identity there are varying degrees of identity and marginalization larger than the sum of their parts. Despite the masculine aspects of Korean culture, not all Korean females were threatened or forced to face the cruelty of Japanese colonial rule. The preceding interview indicates, for example, that certain Korean females were protected by the ruling class in the Japanese colonial era. Furthermore, despite the extreme exploitation committed by the Japanese military group, we can infer from the interview that Korean civilians attempted to protect at least their sons at the expense of their daughters' insecurity. In light of concepts of intersectionality, Korean females forced into comfort stations had never been given a place to take refuge because no matter categories to which they belonged, they were regarded as the inferior subjects, as women of color were in US society (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

In addition to intersectional vulnerabilities from which comfort women suffered in Japanese colonialism, they forced different types of oppressions after the independence of Korea. The fact that these women had been violated and raped in military brothels was a trauma that continued to torment them even after they returned to their homeland. The

social prejudice imposed on former comfort women within a conservative and male-dominated Korean society negatively affected their identity formation and resulted in distorted and damaging public perspectives on their experiences of sexual slavery (Yuval-Davis, 2006). From the theoretical perspective of Crenshaw (1997), the agonies of comfort women originating from their sexual slavery and Korean's stigmatization of their lost virginity can be seen as the outcome of 'structural intersectionality' as "violence toward" victimized females coincided with "the location of women at the intersection of" economic level, ethnic group, sex, and social class (Crenshaw, 1997, pp. 3, 249).

While 'structural intersectionality' helps us understand the reasons behind the human trafficking of comfort women and Korean condemnation of their past forced prostitution, 'political intersectionality' helps understand "the different ways in which political and discursive practices" converge to marginalize and exclude those who are at intersectional margins from social movements and political activities (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 250). In the case of comfort women, both structural and political intersectionality can explain marginalized experiences of comfort women similar to the agonies experienced by women of color in US society. For the rest of comfort women's lives since the return to Korea, structural intersectionality had also placed obstacles in front of exercising a politics of comfort women identity. Public criticism of comfort women and, more importantly, social taboo on addressing the history of sexual slavery in Korean society were key parts of this intersectional violence (Hicks, 1997). We can consider these structural oppressions as the principal reason for political intersectionality imposed on the females having horrible memories of sexual slavery. In the next section, I will explore in detail how the political intersectionality experienced by comfort women worked as an

obstacle to addressing comfort women issues and protesting against the coercive social structure. In addition to this analysis, identity formation of comfort women will also be explored to understand the use of memories in identity politics and their strategic use for overcoming intersectional vulnerabilities.

Escape from intersectional vulnerability

Even after comfort women escaped from the daily rapes of Japanese soldiers, their suffering did not end but actually continued as they encountered different types of oppressions in Korean society. As mentioned previously, Korean society has long been associated with masculine culture and a strict social hierarchy. For females of lower social classes, this sociocultural environment has shown them contempt and at the same time, applied strict norms on the interpretation of their traumatic experiences in the past. Actually, one of serious concerns of comfort women when they returned to Korea was about keeping the memories of sexual slavery hidden from their families and neighbors (Soh, 1996, 2000; Yang, 1997). In Korean society based on Confucianism and the male-dominated culture, comfort women's fear of being criticized for lost virginity was not only a matter of reputation but also expanded to whether they could sustain their relationships and livelihoods with their family members, friends, and neighbors. In accordance with this, the following collected narrations of comfort women testify to how the crippling affect of the fears.

> Actually, I was reluctant to confess my experience because that put me to shame… but that became eventually known to people. I am still feeling frustrated and sad because neighbors mocked me while not regarding me as a human being. – *from an interview with*

Kim, B. Y., translated by author

(한국정신대문제대책협의회부설전쟁과여성인권센터연구팀, 2004, p. 269)

My mother kept pestering me to get married but I never had that in mind. Due to my experiences in comfort stations, I could not stand marrying anybody. I could not even talk to my mother that I served in the military brothel… I had to keep roaming and wandering because I had been so worried that people recognized my past in comfort stations. – *from an interview with Mun, P. G., translated by author (한국정신대문제대책협의회정신대연구회, 1993, p. 118)*

Two years later, I got married as my acquaintance introduced him to me since I returned home… I liked him first but he began to abuse me because I could not bear a son so I became sick of him. My husband surely did not know the agonies that I suffered from in Taiwan. How could I talk to him about it? – *from an interview with Park, D. R., translated by author (한국정신대문제대책협의회정신대연구회, 1997, p. 40)*

As identified in the preceding comments, the sufferings of comfort women after the military brothels originated from sociocultural oppressions within Korean society. Due to the cultural norms and values emphasizing the purity and reproductive responsibilities of females, Korean society was not ready to accept former comfort women and come to terms with their experiences in military brothels. That is, the intersectionality of comfort women still afflicted them even after they left the throes of sexual slavery and induced the marginalization of these victims in postcolonial Korean society. In this respect, the comfort women found it difficult to escape their trauma.

As comfort women long suffered from mental illnesses and physical wounds, they have tended to internalize those sufferings and accept them as their own fate. In this process, former comfort women have formed low self-esteem. In other words, the cultural norms and values on virginity have influenced identity formation of comfort women. Eventually, disrespect for their own identities made them unable to protest against structural and institutional oppressions. The desperation and anxiety felt by comfort women is illustrated well in the following interview excerpts.

> Actually, I had been detained in the military brothel for six years. But as I felt shameful and disgraceful, I just deceived the investigators by telling that I had been there just four years… Oh my! How could I talk to them that I served the men so frequently? – *from an interview with Kong, J. Y., translated by author*
> *(한국정신대문제대책협의회부설전쟁과여성인권센터연구팀, 2004, p. 48)*

> Truly when I think why the Japanese had harassed my body inherited from my untainted parents, (with deep breath) phew… I go as far as to hope to cut my legs by myself. However, I could not even die for my damned life. I had no hope for doing anything without any choices. – *from an interview with Lim, J. J., translated by author (Ibid, p. 206)*

Due to the internalization of their trauma, former comfort women could not be motivated to protest for reclaiming human rights and asking for reparations from the Japanese government heavily involved in operating the military brothels. With regard to self-recognitions and self-respect of comfort women, it is necessary to recall what Honneth (2004) explains about links between recognition and social movement. According to his discussions, “self-realization” or “self-respect” enables individuals of a

protesting group to form their own identities and make clear their goals for improving human rights (Honneth, 2004, p. 356). By forming a common identity, subjects of a certain group can mutually recognize each other to drive social movements. Therefore, "mutual recognition" is to have subjects see themselves "from the perspective of their partners to interaction as a bearer of equal rights." (Honneth, 1992, p. 194) However, due to intersectional vulnerabilities and structural oppressions imposed on former comfort women, it has historically been difficult for them to construct a common identity based on their common experiences. As former comfort women have feared mocking eyes and criticisms from their neighbors and family members, they were forced to hide the memories of sexual slavery from common people. As a result, their memories had to be fragmented and scattered so that there has been no chance for them to recognize fellow victims, sympathetic allies, and civic colleagues for organizing protest, identity politics, and requests for Japan's legal responsibility.

In academic discussions of intersectionality, there have been debates over the need for common identity in conducting the politics of marginalized subjects (McCall, 2005). As the idea of intersectionality began with the idea that conventional academic fields have failed to identify various fragmented identities in analyzing social marginalization, many poststructuralists have tried to deconstruct categorical approaches in order to look at fragments of individual experiences (Ibid). With the core concepts of intersectionality, poststructuralism points out that analytical categories established by "the traditional metaphysical understanding of identity as unity" have distorted and camouflaged the complexity of marginalized experiences and social phenomena (Fuss, 2013, p. 103; McCall, 2005, p. 1778). In accordance with this, we should note that studies

of intersectionality must pay attention to the possibility of coercive categorizations being misused for representing only the relatively privileged subjects rather than the marginalized social groups suffering from intersectional vulnerabilities.

Even though studies of intersectionality tend to deconstruct collective aspects of individual identities, they should not ignore collective identity formation process, which allow subordinate social groups to recognize partners who share common experiences and who can assist in conducting politics of identity. As suggested by McCall (2005) and Harper (2011), even though the academic field of intersectionality should consider dismantling predestined categories of traditional academic analysis, the identity politics of subordinate groups needs a different approach rather than simply a heterogeneity of identity (Harper, 2011; McCall, 2005). With regard to this, McCall and Harper provide an additional clue for studying and conducting the identity politics of marginalized subjects. In spite of the complexity of marginalized experiences, people can recognize others who share the same sufferings generated by structural forces and the oppressions of the ruling class. With the recognition of others having the same “lived experiences”, they can be inspired to protest against oppressions of structural power and prepare themselves for conducting identity politics (Ibid). This is also supported by Calhoun (1994) and Honneth (1996, 2004), who emphasize the importance of identity formation based on collective experiences and a sense of shared morality among victims (Calhoun, 1994; Honneth, 1996, 2004). Ultimately, by exploring several ideas of intersectionality and identity formation, we can understand that common experiences of various individuals can provide them a solid base for formation of collective identity and protest among subalternate groups.

With respect to common experiences of sexual slavery, former comfort women could have formed and constructed a collective identity earlier than expected by recognizing other victims having common memories of trauma in comfort stations. Actually, it is also a well-known fact that the Japanese army and government had forced not just Korean women but also many young girls from all conquered regions of East Asia into military brothels. On the one hand, it is true that sociocultural affiliations and nationalities of comfort women from East Asia are tremendously varied, which would limit commonality among them in terms of a sense of belonging. However, as they all have the common experiences of being raped and persecuted by Japanese soldiers, it is possible for these females to form a common identity as victims and hence promote solidarity movements across the borders of East Asian countries. Before forming an international network and working with other victims from East Asia, Korean comfort women had to construct a collective identity and protest movement based on common memories. Moreover, Korea had the largest number of victims of sexual slavery during WWII, which would have satisfied the precondition for a minimum number of protestors to raise public attention to comfort women issues.

Yet, the sociocultural environments within Korea had oppressed former comfort women and convinced them not to expose their memories of sexual slavery and humiliation to the public. For this reason, until recently, Korean former comfort women have not dared to talk about their past to the public and to have an identity of protestors and narrators of a new vision of self-esteem. There is an established history of Korean society concealing the shameful history of Japanese colonialism and overlooking the sufferings of victims originating from the violent rule of Japanese imperialism. Under

these circumstances, memories of comfort women did not fit within wider framings of Korean history or identity, thus silencing their trauma and even denying their existence. This is described by a former comfort woman.

> The story of comfort women, we misunderstood that it was not known to people. On the contrary, we should notice that their memories were forced to be silent… Many Korean females demonstrated that even though they worked in manufacturing facilities in Japan, their husbands and family members were suspicious of what they did in Japan or anywhere else in Asia, which produced violence and curses considering them 'dirty bitches'. As a result, they got divorced and went through difficult times. That is, like I said before, in Korean society which kept silent in addressing comfort women issues, those families of victims and people of the previous generations were already aware of the history of comfort women… and we used to consider them as taboo. – *from an interview with a civic activist, Kim, D. H., recorded, transcribed and translated by author*

Structural oppressions of Korean society had thwarted identity formation among comfort women and development of self-esteem. As evident in the discussions of recognition paradigm, identity politics needs public awareness of certain memories and demonstrations of respect for them (Calhoun, 1994, 2010; Honneth, 2004; Honneth & Farrell, 1997). Nevertheless, with former comfort women pessimistic about their experiences and accustomed to internalizing the public perception that they were 'dirty bitches' rather than victims, they could not subjectively recognize the significance of their memories and construct a collective identity based on a still unrealized self-respect. Actually, we should consider that the negative recognition of their memories is attributed not to comfort women themselves but to structural oppressions of Korean society and

distorted and stigmatizing views of the public. Due to the massive pressures from social structures in Korea, comfort women could not overcome the barriers of traditional norms and values that had afflicted them for more than half a century. Because of this serious disadvantage in Korean society, comfort women could not see viable opportunities to challenge and change the biased views of fellow Koreans and their efforts to ostracize this form of victimization from prevailing discourses on human rights. This reminds us of the fact that society without morality is harsh for subordinate groups so that they cannot be encouraged to recognize their partners' sorrow and build up considerable momentum toward human rights (Calhoun, 1991, 1994; Honneth, 1992, 2004). To overcome this vulnerable condition for politics of marginalized subjects, Axel Honneth (2004) argues that 'recognition' should come before 'participation'. More specifically, he emphasizes that social movements of a certain social group should guarantee reciprocal emotions with other social groups and draw 'respect' for demonstrators from common people (Honneth & Farrell, 1997). That is, social movements and politics of identity have to satisfy the preconditions of 'self-recognition' and a level of 'morality and respect'. Without these cognitive preconditions, even if demonstrators attempt to protest, they are likely to fail due to the absence of social consensus that helps people understand specific contexts of demonstrations and causes of their social movements.

In the case of comfort women, public prejudices had prevented the victims of sexual slavery from developing self-esteem and wider respect in Korea until the early 1990s. To change the condition that had long afflicted comfort women, they needed to obtain support from the public and a new social discourse that saw the testimonies and memories of former comfort women as legitimate. Before the 1990s, Koreans had not

reached a consensus about shared respect for former comfort women, and thus these women still not had been collectively encouraged to disclose their memories and start public demonstrations. As for the lack of a public understanding and recognition of marginalized social groups, Honneth concludes that "the absence of such recognition relations will be followed by experience of disrespect or humiliation that cannot be without damaging consequences for the single individual's identity formation." (Honneth, 2004, p. 354)

Despite this pessimistic condition for comfort women in Korean society, what explains the change in Koreans' recognition of comfort women and their positive discourse about comfort women commemorative campaigns? In order to understand this cognitive and social change, we should be aware of the fact that collective requests for human rights of the marginalized are accompanied by public anger at contradictions of social structure and ideological change of society:

> The significance of the 1960s is that it represents the moment at which the pressures for both socio-political and personal transformation came to consciousness. Typically the trigger was provided by political issues. In the United States, the racial oppression of African-Americans and moral outrage at the Vietnam War together stimulated movements which sought, in however confused a way, social revolution, but within which all sorts of other demands were raised – for example, for a more expressive and less instrumentally rational culture, and for the liberation not merely of blacks, but of women, lesbians and gays, and Native Americans. *(Callinicos, 2007, p. 259)*

As explained by Callinicos (2007) with the case of US society in the 1960s, increased attention to marginalized social groups tends to coincide with public desires for social justice and structural change in general. This fact also can be supported by Honneth's explanation that "the content of such expectations of social recognition can alter with change in the structure of societies." (Honneth, 2004, p. 355) During the sociopolitical struggles for democracy in the late 1980s, Koreans extended their attentions to human rights abuses of subordinate groups traditionally excluded and marginalized by ruling class and elite groups. Although many feminist activists and scholars in Korea tried as early as 1980s to introduce to common people the tragic history of comfort women through news articles and letters to the government, they failed to form and increase public attention due to Korean political turmoil prompted by the military dictatorship and mass resistance against ruling class (한국정신대문제대책협의회 20 년사편찬위원회, 2014, p. 32). However, as human rights issues had been raised and accompanied by democratic movements around the late 1980s and the early 1990s, a feminist scholar, Yoon, Jung-ok, wrote a series of four news articles documenting the lives and memories of surviving comfort women in 1990. These articles made a strong impression upon the public (Ibid, p. 41). This demonstrates a change in Korean society as it becomes more tolerant in accepting the past experience of former comfort women and recognizing them as the victims of Japanese militarism. Even though Koreans once considered comfort women as the shame of Korean history and rejected them, the significance of comfort women issues was eventually recognized more prominently as part of remembering the atrocity of war crimes and the necessity of protecting human rights of vulnerable groups. With the change in recognizing comfort

women issues, collective morality in Korean society has transformed and subsequently supported the identity politics of comfort women, although there are still limits to this remembering.

Due to the cognitive change in Korean society, comfort women could encounter a critical turning point in identity politics and start to recognize themselves as social activists to undermine the conventional discourse that denies and stigmatizes the victims of Japanese colonialism. This change can be understood in terms of comfort women forming and developing a collective identity with the modification of a moral and social standard (Honneth, 2004, p. 355). In this process, the excluded and marginalized subjects can realize that they are “able to appear in public without shame” and fulfill “successful identity formation” through which they can take part in mutual and shared works for improving human rights (Honneth, 2004, pp. 355-358; Smith, 1976, pp. 869-870).

With the personal story of Kim, Hak-sun, who first gave a public testimony of sexual slavery on August 14, 1991, we can identify how former comfort women can internalize this change in collective morality and respect for comfort women. Before she narrated her memories to the public, many feminist activists already realized the significance of comfort women issues and launched on November 16, 1990 a communal organization called The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, commonly abbreviated to ‘the Korean Council’ (한국정신대문제대책협의회 20 년사편찬위원회, 2014). With 37 feminist associations and communities affiliated with the Korean Council, the feminist scholars and activists began to undertake several projects to increase public awareness of comfort women, improve the welfare of these victimized females, and ask the Japanese government to

acknowledge its involvement in operating sexual slavery stations, and providing surviving victims with appropriate reparations and apologies (Ibid). As public morality and recognition of comfort women issues has grown in Korean society, the substantial efforts of feminists resulted in the public testimony of Kim, Hak-sun. Her comments with a feminist when she first showed up in the Korean Council demonstrate how her decision to disclose the experiences of sexual slavery is directly connected with recognition and morality change in Korean society:

> Reading the news articles [written by Yoon, Jung-ok], I could not endure what those damn liars [Japanese officials] falsely mentioned although persons like me still survive… Despite my wretched life, God saved me until these days. As I think that is because he wants me to do this, I will tell everything. – *quoted from talks of Kim, Hak-sun, translated by author (한국정신대문제대책협의회 20 년사편찬위원회, 2014, p. 58)*

Inspired by the efforts of feminist activists and scholars for scrutinizing and reporting the history of comfort women, Kim, Hak-sun could commit herself to conducting protests against injustices that had afflicted upon victims of sexual slavery half a century ago. In this case, we can understand how cognitive change in society can encourage marginal subjects to recognize their colleagues and allies and jumpstart civic activities by overcoming shameful experiences (Honneth, 2004).

Through the broadcast of Kim, Hak-sun's testimony in 1991, the brutality of sexual abuse committed by the Japanese military became known to Korean society. Korean citizens were shocked by her testimony describing the details of how young girls had been sexually violated and exploited by Japanese soldiers every day (윤미향, 2010, p.

126; 한국정신대문제대책협의회 20 년사편찬위원회, 2014, p. 59). Since her brave decision to provide public witness to these memories, many broadcasting companies and media sources started reporting what happened to the same comfort women who had previously been regarded as repulsive and rejected within Korea. As her public testimony spread in Korean society, it subsequently inspired other surviving comfort women to report their past experiences to the Korean Council and change the negative self-recognition that had afflicted them during their entire lives:

> I watched the testimony of Kim, Hak-sun and several broadcasts of comfort women in TV. Until recently, I had hidden the bitterness and resentment in my mind alone. Once I watched them, however, I could not sleep at all… Now I feel more comfortable as I talked all the things that I should have told before. – *from an interview with Kim, D. J. (pseudonym), translated by author (한국정신대문제대책협의회정신대연구회, 1993, pp. 56-57)*

As indicated in the recorded comments above, surviving comfort women who hid away their past from Koreans for several decades could collectively start testifying to the history of sexual slavery and further increase public attention. Since Kim, Hak-sun's painful narration in 1991, the total number of former comfort women who reported their past experiences of sexual slavery increased to 234 by 2009 (윤미향, 2010, p. 132). In this process, segments of Korean society realized that many surviving comfort women can potentially work together for collective acts against the Japanese government. Actually, comfort women's increasing awareness of other victims helped them develop self-recognition and thus prove their personal experiences within the context of general

human rights issues (Honneth, 2004). As Honneth explains, realizing the ‘societal public side’ of personal memories is a critical point for starting collective acts (Ibid, p. 355). We can also see successive testimonies of formerly hidden and forgotten comfort women as the initiative movements for identity formation and collective resistance.

Despite this growing sense of the identity politics and historical struggles of comfort women, they still encountered the prejudices of family members and neighbors toward experiences of sexual slavery. The following excerpt from an interview captures how people continued to cast distorted views on comfort women, including those people close to these victimized women:

> Before reporting to the Korean Council, I talked with my sister but she excessively told me not to do it for sake of my nephews. I called the Korean Council after painstakingly thinking for several days… She has never visited me again since then. Due to the TV broadcast of what I did in Japan a while ago, my nephews also came to know all about it. They have not come see me, too… Since the reporting, I have kept living much more alone.
> *– from an interview with Kim, B. D., translated by author*
> *(한국정신대문제대책협의회한국정신대연구회, 1997, pp. 98-99)*

In this respect, despite the growing respect for former comfort women in Korean society, they still had to struggle, not just with reclaiming human rights but also with removing the stigma embedded in masculine culture of Korea. As suggested by Honneth (1992), the underlying disrespect toward subordinate groups could be a potential threat to identity politics. Without emotional support or empathy from the public, identity formation for marginalized social groups can be negatively influenced by unfavorable

social recognition (Honneth, 1992, p. 190). Internalizing the underlying disrespect of the public, marginalized groups are "deprived of that form of recognition that takes the shape of cognitive respect for moral accountability." (Ibid, p. 191) This vulnerable condition underlying formation of identity and self-esteem can have negative impacts on two aspects of the identity politics of subordinate groups. First of all, various types of disrespect give rise to a destruction of 'self-respect' and a loss of the ability to interact with other individuals having common experiences of marginalization (Feinberg, 2014). Secondly, as a result of this inability to construct shared and collective identity, subjects of marginalized groups can become reluctant to show up and demonstrate in public due to feelings of shame and anxieties over public abhorrence (Honneth, 1992). At the beginning of Wednesday Demonstrations organized in thereby 1990s, by the Korean Council in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, former comfort women indeed felt this kind of underlying disrespect within the Korean social structure:

> In those days, there were not many young participants working with former comfort women and neither were Wednesday Demonstrations known to common people. So, thinking about those days around 1995 or 1996, while former comfort women participated in the campaigns, people passing by looked at them in a very different way than these days, which had continued even after the early 2000s though. Occasionally, former comfort women got angry and yelled at them, "Why do they look at us in that way!" There were those mocking former comfort women "just old women" in their way. Even in some cases, their faces looked like, "What's up again? Those old women asking just for money…" As a result, some former comfort women who actively attended the demonstrations in early days started lowering their heads down in shame at some point. Furthermore, their family

members asked them not to demonstrate in public as they got to know their collective acts via the broadcasts of Wednesday Demonstrations. – *from an interview with a civic activist, Kim, D. H., recorded, transcribed and translated by author*

The interviewee points to the fact that due to negative views rooted in Korean society, civic activists of the Korean Council were thinking of even quitting the Wednesday Demonstrations. However, if they had stopped these public campaigns, it would have meant conforming to structural oppressions facing comfort women. In order to overcome the obstacle of reclaiming human rights of the victims, it was necessary to root out the prejudices of Koreans with strategies available to marginal subjects. Absolutely, it was tough for former comfort women and allied feminists to cope with both the Japanese government and prejudices of Koreans. Despite the vulnerability inflicted on grieving females, former comfort women chose to strengthen their common identity based on experiences of sexual slavery rather than hide and curse them. The way chosen by former comfort women has crucial meaning in the politics of social groups experiencing multiple layers of structural pressures. Even though traumatic memories of comfort women had not been respected and discussed until the early 1990s in Korean society, they could eventually be used for forming a collective identity and conducting identity politics on a grand public scale (Lowenthal, 2015; Robertson & Hall, 2007). As former comfort women started looking at memories of sexual slavery not as just the shameful history but as experiences to inform and drive human rights movements, they became encouraged to show up in public and demonstrate against the Japanese government.

> My face was the shame, but now I go here and there without pretending to feel shame. Because now I know, it was not the shame… Even after the independence, I had long refrain from meeting people as I thought it was the shame. But I testified all the things by having courage… It is hard work for me, but through my experiences, I should let you know what Japanese had done to us and how they are treating it now. – *From a testimony of Gil, W. O. speaking in a campaign held in the US, 2006, translated by author (윤미향, 2010, pp. 138, 145)*

This considerable stride in the identity politics of comfort women could increase social recognition of their trauma and victimization. As clearly indicated in narrations of former comfort women, their fear originated from personal experiences with their families and friends humiliated by them. In this respect, memories of comfort women that once destroyed and harmed their sense of self-respect and identity formation was now used for the purposes of protest.

As Korean society began to recognize and reexamine the history of comfort women in the early 1990s, the females oppressed and humiliated for half a century could eventually be inspired to bring their painful memories into the public arena and participate in protests with the aid of feminists and civic activists. The dramatic change of recognition suggests that the history of sexual slavery began to function as a catalyst for identity formation of comfort women. As comfort women started using their experiences of sexual slavery for identity politics, they could eventually remind people of the brutality of war crimes and address marginalized human rights.

Even though it was difficult for former comfort women to recollect their experiences especially in public, they have participated in as many campaigns and rallies

as they could. With regard to this, we should note that former comfort women who had ordinarily refrained from talking about their experiences of sexual slavery are now strategically using their memories as a foundation for participating in social movements and advocating for the human rights of other females who also suffered from systematically organized rapes. As they have kept working as storytellers for passing their memories to as many people as possible, their efforts eventually resulted in two legislative actions in 2007: (1) United States House of Representatives House Resolution 121 and (2) European Parliament Resolution on Justice for the “Comfort Women” in 2007. The resolutions signal that the memories of comfort women began to be recognized across international borders drawing a global sense of justice for marginalized social groups around the world. Those resolutions were the outcome of commemorative campaigns carried out by former comfort women and their allies, who worked to raise public recognition of their memories using a variety of representations such as oral testimonies, memorials, and artistic works. Even though most surviving comfort women are now too old to move around, they are willing to narrate their experiences in as many campaigns and assemblies as they can participate in. Furthermore, some comfort women have learned painting with the aid of civic activists and left many great works representing their tragic experiences with sexual slavery and the emotions originating from this painful history. In particular, one former comfort woman, Kang, Duk-kyung, was known for her artistic talent and paintings before she passed away in 1997. Even though she and many of former comfort women rest in peace, their paintings are now showing the bitterness of their memories and helping people feel the sense of justice for comfort women.

As shown in art works of comfort women (Figure 1.1: all tables/figures can be found in the appendix), their strategic use of memories of sexual slavery is not confined to oral testimony but open to varying types of representations. We should note that these representational works are the efforts to visualize and materialize their memories in a bid to remember the historical impact of war crimes on females and thus justify the cause for social movements for comfort women. The ‘Comfort Women’ Statue constructed in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul has taken an important role in solidifying and grounding the identity of comfort women as civic activists and inspiring people to identify with the critical aspects of comfort women grievances. In this respect, the ‘Comfort Women’ Statue and its subsequent replicas are the catalysts, by which comfort women not only memorialize their experiences of sexual slavery but also represent and plant their sense of protest in public space (Figure 1.2).

As discussed in this chapter, even though Koreans have long marginalized and excluded comfort women from the mainstream of Korean society for more than half a century, some crucial changes in the country’s democratic system and involvement in human rights movements of females have enabled former comfort women to break through in protesting against structural oppressions. With these changes in sociocultural environment of Korea, these victimized women and their allies could be inspired to adapt a new identity of civic activist, start demonstrating in public space, and represent the memories that had been ignored and repudiated earlier. Many scholars in the academic fields of sociology and geography commonly agree that memory can be used by social groups for representing and constructing a group identity (Crang & Travlou, 2001; Dwyer, 2000; Edensor, 1997; Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004, p. 348; Till, 2001). In conducting

identity politics, marginalized social groups strategically deploy representations of memory to strengthen their sense of collective identity and to justify the cause of their social and political movements. As seen in most societies, ruling class and expert groups usually dominate written histories by using their social power and authority to produce discourses favorable to keeping their hegemonic social status and worldview (Dittmer, 2010; Hall, 2001; Lees, 2004; Lefebvre, 1991; Waitt, 2010). In this vulnerable condition for memorializing marginal subjects' history, a feasible strategy that former comfort women and feminists have chosen is to represent and utilize memories with varying practices and places such as public testimony, artworks, and memorials. This memory-work not only helps the public remember comfort women but is part of their efforts to escape from multiple layers of structural oppressions and restore justice for the victims of war crimes.

Even though most comfort women passed away sometime ago, identity politics conducted in their memory have affected broader discourses about comfort women in Korea and beyond the country's borders in communities of Korean immigrants. These outcomes of identity politics resulted from the persistent efforts of former comfort women and their supporters to rehabilitate and represent oppressed and repressed memories. With regard to this, identity politics of former comfort women provides us an example of how subordinate social groups located at intersectional margins subjectively appropriate their own memories and strategically utilize them for reviving discourses on human rights issues of the afflicted.

Conclusion

This chapter first tried to understand intersectional vulnerabilities suffered by comfort women during the Japanese colonial era and even after Korea became independent. As many feminist scholars have pointed out, roughly established academic traditions have tended to ignore and exclude the fact that certain sub groups of females have drawn little attentions due to intersectional identities that are not adequately captured by existing classifications (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Davis, 2008; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). While *white* females or African-American *males* have received considerable attention in academic fields, feminist scholars have tended to ignore *women of color* in discussions of social justice. Consequently, these negative traditions of feminist studies have resulted in failure to include extremely marginalized bodies that actually need the most attention. As of late, many scholars have realized feel the necessity of considering the intersectional identities of marginalized subjects suffering from multiple layers of oppressions (Grzanka, 2014).

The academic trend of studies neglecting subjects of intersectional identities has had disruptive impact on our understanding of comfort women, whose identities had been based on intersectional vulnerabilities in Korean society. While most public memory has concentrated on historical figures who fought for the independence of Korea, the victims of Japanese colonialism have tended to be ignored and forgotten by the mainstream of Korean textbooks and media sources. In particular, the intersectional vulnerabilities of comfort women have made them unable to appeal their sufferings to the public due to the distorted views of Koreans based on traditional prejudices against marginalized groups.

As Korea has long been obsessed with the masculine culture of Confucianism, every woman in Korean society has been and is still asked to keep their virginity until marriage. The problem is that this tradition's obsession with female sexual purity has worked as a structural oppression upon former comfort women, even though they were not voluntarily involved in military prostitute but forced into massive rapes committed by Japanese soldiers and the colonial government. When considering all of the sufferings endured by former comfort women during and since the Japanese colonial era, we can infer that their marginalized status has originated not from a single cause but from multiple layers and periods (and places) of oppressions related to their intersectional vulnerabilities. The intersectionality of former comfort women has limited their ability to escape from the tragic experiences of sexual slavery and public ignorance. That is to say, the tragedies of former comfort women have mostly consisted of their vulnerable socioeconomic status such as poverty, low education level, colonialism, and inferior position within the masculine culture of Korean society. All these unfavorable factors have comprehensively disrupted the victims of sexual slavery into forming a sense of self-respect and a consistent shared identity necessary for drawing social movements.

Although the intersectionality of social exclusion has started to be reconsidered and discussed by scholars of feminism and poststructuralism, their focus has tended to be biased toward atomized identities and diversified aspects of individual experiences. On the one hand, it is true that studies of intersectionality have contributed to scrutinizing varying ways that subjects are marginalized and excluded within existing analytical categories. In developing potential strategies for advocating for their intersectional identities, however, the views of poststructuralism have encountered limitations because

they have few paradigms for collecting scattered identities and strengthening the magnitude of social movements of marginalized groups. Even though the growing emphasis on intersectional identities has inspired efforts to diversify the academic spectrum for social justice, intersectionality studies need to develop more practical aspects of identity politics than what is currently offered by poststructuralist perspectives.

In this viewpoint, several scholars discussing intersectionality have indicated that subordinate groups located at intersectional margins need to form a common identity based on their lived experiences (Harper, 2011; McCall, 2005). Feminist scholars associated with poststructuralism are primarily concerned about the fact that rigid positionality tends to "reflect hegemonic discourses of identity politics" and "construct an homogenized 'right way'" regardless of differences among members of certain social categories (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 195). However, if we consider identity formation in different ways other than traditional social categories, it is possible to provide marginalized groups with driving forces in identity politics while preserving diversified aspects of intersectional identities. In this respect, the common experiences and memories of marginalized groups in identity politics have been discussed in several studies to make up for the deficiency of poststructuralist views of identity and self-respect formation in social movements (Booth, 1999; Calhoun, 1994; Honneth, 2004).

In the case of comfort women, we should agree that the concept of intersectionality helps us understand the fact that numerous subjects such as former comfort women could not expose themselves to the public due to their complex social location at intersectional margins. That is, structural oppressions toward former comfort women have not originated from just a single dimension of social exclusion. On the

contrary, since the tragic experiences of sexual slavery, the sufferings of former comfort women have become intertwined with multidimensional coercions of sociocultural contexts in Korea. Absolutely, those multiple oppressions had been associated with intersectional vulnerabilities of former comfort women. Structural ignorance originating from deep-rooted contradictions of Korean society resulted in little attention from academic fields – especially in Korea – for former comfort women, even among feminist scholars until the early 1990s.

Even though studies of intersectionality have helped us understand the complexity of intersectional vulnerabilities of comfort women, it is necessary for us to consider identity formation and memory politics in addition to intersectionality to figure out the actual motives of human rights movements of comfort women. On the one hand, as many scholars studying intersectionality are concerned, it is true that rigid categorization of identities might cause misunderstandings of real aspects of marginalization and mislead researchers into ignoring other differences among marginalized subjects. However, without a common identity within a marginalized social group, a consistent direction of social movements cannot be guaranteed. Although it does not make sense to collapse all former comfort women to one category, we cannot deny that collective memories and shared identity formation of comfort women have been the driving forces for conducting a series of commemorative rallies since the early 1990s. In particular, given the protesters having the memories of sexual slavery are not just from Korea but also from East and Southeast Asian countries, we can understand that identity politics should be based on recognition of other victims and allies as well other collective memories despite different sociocultural backgrounds of marginalized subjects.

This study has sought to examine how former comfort women and their supporters have used changes in social attitudes and conditions for their commemorative campaigns. Before the 1990s, Koreans had tacitly seen the history of sex slaves as repulsive and refrained from discussing or adequately memorializing it. Moreover, public testimony was seen as potentially threatening the security of former comfort women. As identified in interviews with former comfort women and civic activists, Koreans may not have wanted to remember the dark side of Korean history although they have been aware of the sufferings of Japan's former sex slaves and the complicity of their own people in serving as brokers.

As Korean society has become democratized and attentive to the human rights issues of marginalized social groups since the 1990s, feminist scholars and activists have begun to study the history of sexual slavery during WWII and remind the public of the importance of comfort women issues. The recognition changes in academic fields and Korean society encouraged the afflicted females to make public their tragic experiences and recognize other victims of sexual slavery. As indicated in Honneth's articles, self-recognition and identity formation of the afflicted should be associated with moral conditions of society to draw public respect for marginal subjects (Honneth, 1992, 2004; Honneth & Farrell, 1997). Changes in morality in Korean society are significant for former comfort women seeking to form a common identity based on their memories and fulfill collective movements for protest. In this process, they could overcome the intersectional vulnerabilities that had long afflicted their entire lives and conduct an identity politics that uses the memories of sexual slavery to justify the cause of commemorative campaigns.

In this study, we have examined how marginalized subjects located at intersectional margins overcome vulnerable conditions for raising human rights issues by exploring the identity politics of comfort women. In order to understand the motives of social movements for comfort women, this study has explored discussions of identity formation and recognition paradigm. With social morality change in Korea, former comfort women are more likely to be able to claim public respect for themselves and form a collective identity as storytellers and protestors. The most important reason for this process was that former comfort women have a common memory and utilize it for identity formation and politics of memory. With outcomes of this study, it is hoped that more scholars will discuss further the importance of memory and identity formation as part of the political strategies of marginalized social groups.

While conducting fieldwork in Korea, I met and talked with several civic activists who work on behalf of the commemorative campaigns of comfort women and collected testimonies of sexual slavery victims archived in the comfort women museum. Even though it is notable that those interviews and materials helped me analyze the marginalized experiences of comfort women and track the paths of their identity formation, I had to accept that there were limitations in obtaining other data that could be used for exploring opposition against comfort women's social movements originating from structural and institutional oppressions in Korea. Actually, the original plan for the fieldwork in Korea was to meet and interview Korean officials and politicians who had made several decisions related to memorials of comfort women. However, whereas civic activists and other participants in Wednesday Demonstrations were willing to contribute to this study by responding to the request for interviews, it was much more difficult to

receive responses from government officials. Although there would be various reasons for the lack of response from public officials, the most probable cause that I consider is that they would not feel any benefits from participating in this research project. Furthermore, since the news about the agreement made in 2015 between the Korean and Japanese governments to deal with comfort women issues has fueled public anger against Japanese far right conservatives, Korean government officials had to care for the increasing public attentions received by comfort women and refrain from revealing their unfavorable opinions and decisions on several projects for memorializing comfort women in public space.

It is generally argued that the conservative political climate in Korea for the last several years has made the government officials more conscious of and concerned with the friendly relationship between Korea and Japan than paying attention to marginalized experiences of comfort women. With regard to this, we can understand the reason why the agreement between the Korean and Japanese governments in 2015 had been led and made only by political elites while excluding civic activists and comfort women from the process of negotiation. This disadvantageous and vulnerable condition for human rights movements of comfort women affected this dissertation's fieldwork since government officials refused to meet with me and talk about political decisions on comfort women memorials. As the plan for interviews with government officials has been thwarted, I had to miss an important opportunity to hear a greater variety of opinions from subjects of ruling class and incorporate them into the analyses of this study. For future studies regarding dynamic process of sociopolitical struggles between protesters and opponents of the commemorative campaigns of comfort women, there is a need to prepare more

deliberately-invented strategies to make government officials and other civic organizations unfavorable to social movements of comfort women feel that there is a benefit to participating in interviews. I think those strategies can also be advantageous to future studies of comfort women as they will contribute to documenting and analyzing more diverse thoughts about memory politics and drawing more significant implications by exploring detailed aspects of commemorative campaigns of comfort women.

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CHAPTER II

MEMORY-WORK AND PLACE-BASED POLITICS OF COMFORT WOMEN ACTIVISM

Abstract: Since 1992, there have been commemorative rallies held by civic activists and "Comfort Women", victims of sexual slavery during WWII, on every Wednesday in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. The protesters against the Japanese government fight for: a sincere apology from the Prime Minister, provision of reparations with legal responsibility to the victims, and education of the history of sex slaves to next generations. In this study, I explore the "memory-work" of comfort women, specifically their place-based politics. In doing so, I analyze how marginalized social groups develop strategies of place-based politics and use collective memories for human rights movements.
Keywords: comfort women, memory-work, place-based politics, war crimes

Introduction

On December 14, 2011, a statue depicting a teenage girl was constructed in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul by artists and feminist activists to mark the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration. The protest seeks to remember the history of war crimes committed by Japanese military forces during WWII and re-assert the human rights of "Comfort Women", a euphemism to refer to those women sexually exploited in Japanese military bases. Displaying a young Korean girl sitting on a chair with eyes gazing toward the Japanese Embassy, the statue represents the anger and grief of former comfort women against the Japanese government. As Korea and Japan announced an agreement in December of 2015 to provide surviving victims of sexual slavery with financial support, the Japanese government addressed at the press conference its hope that the "Comfort Women" statue in front of the embassy would be removed. By asking the Korean government to eliminate the memorial, the Japanese government sought to push out of sight a reminder of a dishonorable history and move past discussions of its legal

responsibility for the past crimes inflicted upon comfort women. The demand of the Japanese government to remove the statue in return for financing drew fierce anger from Korean citizens and actually intensified the controversy over the history of comfort women. The situation also illustrates the power that memorials, when occupying certain places of visibility, can have in shaping the politics of social protest.

This study focuses on symbolic meanings attached to the “Comfort Women” statue and Wednesday Demonstrations as they are used to raise public attention to human rights issues of the marginalized subjects. It is interesting to see that a large political body such as the Japanese government becomes so concerned about a tiny monument constructed by civilians in Korea. To understand the sociopolitical meanings of the statue, this study begins with a discussion of the critical role that memory plays within the politics of social groups. As stated by Lowenthal (1985, p. 210), “the prime function of memory… is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present." That is, people tend to remember the past selectively and rely on their own ideas for past history to fulfill their political objectives. Sometimes, heterogeneous interpretations and understandings of a historical event can arouse serious emotions and conflicts among and between social groups. This is because historical records of the past can have positive or negative impacts on the social positions and reputations of certain social groups. In this regard, memory is not just linked to the matter of archived documents but it is also related to helping drive political movements.

Based on the controversial nature of memory, this study will explore “memory-work” (Till, 2012) conducted by former comfort women and feminist activists and the sociopolitical meanings of this memory-work in the struggle of social justice. On January

8, 1992, The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, commonly abbreviated as the “Korean Council”, launched the very first Wednesday Demonstration in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. Since then, the rally has been held every Wednesday in the same place for 25 years. The principal aim of the rally is to ask the Japanese government to acknowledge its involvement in the operation of military brothels during WWII and to accept a legal responsibility for the victims of this sanctioned sexual slavery. As past research on comfort women has found, the Japanese army and government forced about 200,000 young females, mostly from Korea, into military brothels (called comfort stations) located throughout East and Southeast Asia (Hicks, 1997; Min, 2003; Totsuka, 1999; Wawrynek, 2003). Comfort women were raped 10 to 20 times a day by Japanese soldiers during WWII, inflicting serious physical and psychological wounds. Even after Korea became independent from Japanese colonialism in 1945, former comfort women had to suffer from stigma and shame of their victimization and social exclusion at the hands of a masculine Korean society.

These structural oppressions forced the victims of sexual slavery to suppress memories of comfort stations until the early 1990s. However, with the democratization of Korean society and increased public attention of human rights issues, feminist scholars and civic activists established in 1990 the Korean Council for the purpose of recovering the history of comfort women and initiating human rights protests on behalf of the victims (한국정신대문제대책협의회 20 년사편찬위원회, 2014). These efforts resulted in the first public testimony of a former comfort woman, Kim, Hak-sun, on August 14, 1991. Since the broadcast of her testimony to the public, a growing number of comfort women

began to report their experiences of sexual slavery to the Korean government and participate in Wednesday Demonstrations. Furthermore, public interest in the issue has dramatically increased since the “Comfort Women” statue was unveiled to the public in honoring the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration. Inspired by this statue to comfort women in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, replicas of the original monument and other types of memorials have spread within Korea and even moved across international borders to other countries.

To understand significant aspects of the commemorative campaign, this study will explore the concept of memory-work and the importance of place-based politics. Since the emancipation of Korea from Japanese colonialism, memories of the violence against comfort women have encountered two different responses from common people in Korean society. Before the early 1990s, memories of sexual slavery had been a principal source of affliction and trauma for comfort women in post-colonial era. In contrast, since the 1990s, those memories later became the basis for bringing attention to comfort women issues and the construction of an identity politics campaign. Important to the social movement of comfort women are the place-based politics associated with memory-work. This can be realized when we look at the impact and role of the “Comfort Women” statue on the commemorative campaign held every Wednesday and the changing recognition of the wounds and rights of comfort women in Korean society.

Even though scholars of feminism and social justice have shown interest in exposing the true history of comfort women, there have been few studies of the current strategies used in social movements of comfort women. On the one hand, revealing the truth of the past is significant in producing discourses of human rights movements.

However, if studies of human rights stay in the past, they cannot explore the significant implications of social movements within the present. In this regard, the primary aim of this study is to understand how memories of sexual slavery during WWII are represented in space and actively employed to facilitate the human rights movements of comfort women. Moreover, it will examine the diffusion of those memories and political struggles through the materialized form of the "Comfort Women" statue. Although marginalized social groups do not usually have sociopolitical power, visualized memory can function as an alternative strategy in affecting discourses about human rights and social responsibility for trauma.

To achieve the objectives of this study, I have conducted field work for four weeks (from December 2015 to January 2016) in Seoul, Korea. During this period, I conducted semi-structured interviews with protestors and artists who contributed to the construction of the comfort women statue. These interviews were analyzed to understand the reasons behind the creation of the statue and its placement specifically in front of the Japanese Embassy as well as the primary goals of the comfort women commemorative campaign. Additionally, I sought to understand the place-based politics of the comfort women campaign by meeting with the organizer of the Wednesday Demonstration and participating in rallies. In the demonstrations I attended during the fieldwork, I met several participants of different nationalities, ages, and genders. By talking about their thoughts on the commemorative campaign, I could understand the symbolic meanings contained in the comfort women's memory-work and how activists sought to draw spiritual and practical support from common people. In addition to the participation at Wednesday Demonstrations, I visited two memorial museums established and operated

by the Korean Council and the House of Sharing, which are the civic organizations devoted to caring for surviving comfort women and supporting their social movements. While at the museums, I collected archived testimonies of comfort women and several books about the history of the commemorative campaign. Drawing from the data collected during the fieldwork, this study discusses the politics of comfort women, situating their struggles within the theoretical concepts of memory-work, the protests of marginalized social groups, and place-based politics.

Memory-work and place-based politics

Because of the sexual trauma inflicted upon them, former comfort women had long been marginalized and excluded within Korean society. Due to the cultural traditions of Confucianism which emphasized the virginity of females, they had hid away the memories of rape for fear of criticism from neighbors (Soh, 1996, 2000; Yang, 1997). However, many historical records demonstrate that comfort women had not voluntarily gone into military prostitution but had been trapped in systemic exploitation by the Japanese army. Because of their marginalized and excluded social status within independent Korea, former comfort women had few opportunities to testify about their experiences during WWII or to conduct social movements for recovering human rights. Consequently, we can infer that the marginalization of comfort women in the postcolonial era was connected to unequal distribution of social power in the production of discourse.

Before exploring the commemorative campaign of comfort women, we need to understand the mechanisms of discourse production discussed by Foucault and other

scholars in social sciences (Dittmer, 2010; Foucault, 1980a, 1980b; Hall, 2001; Waitt, 2010). By doing so, we can understand how systematic oppressions tied to authoritative discourses have historically impacted the identities and dignities of comfort women in negative ways. In resisting these oppressive discourses, however, we find that comfort women and civic activists have developed alternative strategies that employ memory-work to produce counter-discourses of human rights. The core reason for the marginalization of comfort women originates from the fact that they had been exposed to multiple oppressions and vulnerabilities both in Japanese colonialism and postcolonial Korean society (Min, 2003). In these sociocultural conditions, comfort women could not possess the minimum social power necessary for discourse production and political activities even after the independence of Korea.

In addition to those vulnerabilities, the public education system in Korea had largely emphasized those historical figures who fought against the Japanese colonial rule. The cognitive imbalance in learning this version of Korean history had also led common people into widespread ignorance about most victims suffering from the war crimes of the Japanese army. In this respect, we can identify that discourses produced by institutionalized entities can be a coercive mediation against marginal subjects in forming public recognitions (Hall, 2001). As Foucault (1980a) discussed, social structure organized in expertized knowledge tends to rely on language-oriented practices rather than physical senses and emotions to construct an efficient and dogmatic ruling system. With abstract and ideological nature, knowledge production systems strengthen their scientific and authoritative power to marginalize and exclude the corporeal needs and emotions of common people from public discourses (Cosgrove, 1985; Gregory, 1994;

Lefebvre, 1991, 2000). As authoritarian politicians and expert groups appropriate a primary means of knowledge production with language-based practices, their hegemonies can be easily naturalized and realized with interests of ruling class (Waitt, 2010). By validating linguistic skills in public discourses, elite groups can produce the colonizing hegemony to govern lower social classes efficiently (Dittmer, 2010).

Without authoritative mediating institutions such as media sources and publishers, marginalized social groups encounter hardships in producing discourses that recognize and assert the legitimacy of human rights and social justice. Due to the absence of available sources of discourse production, marginalized groups need to develop alternative strategies to raise public recognitions of their struggles and needs. Potential strategies available to marginal subjects should cope with the authoritativeness of knowledge production system, challenge the social exclusion of disadvantaged social groups, and transform unjust social structures.

To produce discourses of social justice and protest against authoritative social structures, several scholars in geography and the social sciences emphasize the significance of memory and place (Courtheyn, 2016; Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004; Till, 1999, 2001, 2008, 2012; Williams, 2000). Particularly, with regard to women's human rights, scholars from the academic fields of psychology, sociology, and geography have found memory to be important to these identity politics (Berg, 2008; Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Benton, 1992; J. A. Tyner, Alvarez, & Colucci, 2012). Actually, as one of the most marginalized social groups, females from colonized territories or countries face political turmoil and hence lack efficient access to discourse production tools and power of mass media. In this vulnerable condition for human rights movements, the

alternative strategies exercised by subordinate groups tend to rely on corporeal senses and emotional appeals to social justice. Describing social exclusion and marginalization of women in machoism-oriented society, intersectionality studies provide us with a conceptual foundation for understanding multiple sources of women's suffering and exclusion (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; McCall, 2005; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). However, because those studies have insufficiently offered practical strategies for carrying at women's human rights movements, it is necessary to discuss the place-based politics of marginal subjects as they face intersectional vulnerabilities.

Even though history is recorded and archived by historians as if the past was an objective resource, the memories of social groups can vary depending on their understandings, social backgrounds, and personal experiences. With regard to this, we should note that public memory can be used strategically and subjectively for validating and supporting political aims of social groups (Lowenthal, 1985). In space of protest, we can see that different social groups make efforts to materialize and visualize their memories in order to fulfill political objectives. Social groups sometimes debate or dispute how historical figures and events should be represented in public spaces because they recognize the power that historical representation plays in establishing the legitimacy of social movements.

At this point, we need to explore conceptual features of memory-work and the significant role of memory as an alternative or counter political practice. Without influential sources for discourse production, disadvantaged social groups are reliant on sensory information and subjective interpretation of the past to cope with "objective" knowledge produced by elite groups. Because institutionalized education systems tend to

be biased toward the interests of ruling classes, the memories and lived experiences of marginalized social groups are usually ignored and excluded from the mainstream of society. To overcome the obstacles of commemorating unofficial history, subordinate groups concentrate their efforts on forming a “counter-memory” that defies what the upper social classes want to represent and naturalize in public (Foucault, 1980a, 1980b). Even though it is hard for counter-memory to be demonstrated in a language-based knowledge production system, collective feelings and emotions about the lived past enable marginal subjects to represent counter-memory in public space. With its rebellious nature, counter-memory can provide subordinate subjects with the sense of protest and clarify unjust discrimination endured by victims of structural violence. As human beings have carved memories into space, landscape is the outcome of the visualization of lived experiences (Tuan, 1977). Due to the socially-contested nature of landscape, however, there will no doubt be conflicts and struggles over memorial construction between social classes (Till, 2012).

“Memory-work” is a way of reconstructing histories of violence and exclusion and recovering from that pain in a socio-psychological way. In spite of contestation over landscape and memory, Karen Till (2008, 2012) discusses the significant aspects of artistic works to make memory-work a plausible practice for subordinate groups. With symbols produced by artistic works, marginalized social groups can represent and visualize memories of their victimization in space. To validate counter-memory in place-based politics, protestors need to help common people feel and learn about their wounds and desires for justice (Till, 2008, p. 108). To realize the emotional appeal in place-based politics, memory-work should focus on “everyday routine” and “ask viewers to move

between past and present spaces." (Ibid, p. 104) Artistic works can satisfy these requirements as strategies of memory-work are reliant "upon embodied encounters with the everyday to explore intrasubjective relationships and knowledges not easily captured through language." (Ibid, p. 106) While language-based knowledges and discourses depend on logical positivism to justify and naturalize ideological hegemony in the notion of people, memories represented with aesthetic forms can raise a collective sense of empathy for victims' emotions (Bennett, 2003). The emotional aspects of artistic works can bring collective commitments and solidarities to support social movements of marginalized social groups. As several scholars have indicated, human rights movements need to create social and spatial conditions in which common people understand and empathize with feelings and emotions of protestors (Calhoun, 1994, 2010; Honneth, 1992, 2004; Honneth & Farrell, 1997). With regard to this, place-based artistic works can function as mediating tools for bringing memories of past injustices in spaces of everyday life. Actually, given the way aesthetic practices approach lived space and familiarize people with common issues, strategies of artistic works can be valid to resist expertized knowledge and moral hegemony with social respect toward protestors.

The aim of memory-work is to help individuals to be "in the presence of a place that was important in the lives of loved ones" and to "work through feelings of incompleteness – spectral traces that are passed through generations." (Till, 2008, p. 108) With regard to this, it is natural to see that memory-work is prevalent in places where violence against marginalized social groups was pervasive in the past (J. Tyner & Henkin, 2015; J. A. Tyner et al., 2012). Commonly, memory-work of marginalized social groups is associated with counter-memory and opposed to institutionalized historical

perspectives that have tended to forget or minimize violent and unjust pasts. With the contested nature of memory-work, “landscape memorialization” can be seen as dialectical process of place-based politics and one of the controversial fields between social classes (J. A. Tyner, Inwood, & Alderman, 2014).

To understand contentious aspects of memory and landscape, we need to analyze the dialectical relationship in space discussed by Henri Lefebvre (1991). According to his discussion, the more society has become reliant on scientific skills and rationalism, the more human beings have been marginalized and excluded from the process of spatial formation (Ibid). As space becomes dominated and modified by rational economic decisions and metadata analysis, physical senses and ontological perspectives are alienated from examining and changing the memorial landscape. With regard to this, Lefebvre calls this biased process of spatial formation “abstract (Euclidean) space” to analyze spatial practices conducted and structured by the upper levels of society (Ibid, p. 236). Even though abstract space is ideally meant to pursue the common good for human beings by implementing efficient managerial practices in spatial formation, it strengthens its contradictory aspects by oppressing difference and otherness which represent ‘real’ lived experiences and personal emotions (Ibid, p. 287). To validate every decision made by upper social classes, the social structure is delicately developed for naturalizing and implanting hegemonic practices in everyday lives with the power of scientific knowledge and discourse (Foucault, 1980b). In this oppressive social condition, public space ruled by naturalized norms does not tend to allow counter-memory to be represented and visualized by marginalized social groups.

Even though spatial formation is primarily dominated by rationalism in modern days, we have to recognize that space is also organized and produced by more complicated and dialectical process rather than unilateral impacts of elite government actors and interests. Actually, spatial formation led by capitalist values restrict numerous attempts to overcome contradictory and unjust outcomes of capitalism (Lefebvre, 1996). At the crisis of *difference* and *otherness*, the monotonous process in spatial organization should be challenged to guarantee the participation of marginalized social groups in modifying biased spatial formation (Lefebvre, 1991). That is, Lefebvre has actually considered the possibility of a place-based politics to escape and overcome social structures ruled by ideological hegemony.

In his book called *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991) continually raises the significant aspects of 'festivity' in space of protest. Festival usually consists of cultural heritages in the continual process of reinterpreting collective values such as belief, memory, philosophy, and ideology. Explaining the unstable nature of using space, Lefebvre points out that socioeconomic change at either macro or micro level sometimes evicts some residents while drawing new migrants who appropriate and utilize space for their objectives (Ibid, p. 167). As the use of space becomes unstable with dynamic change in social structures, the distinction between objective and subjective, or formal and informal uses of space also becomes unclear (Ibid, p. 231). For instance, the Halles Centrales in Paris has shown how people appropriate and change the nature of space based on subjective tastes and objectives (Ibid, p. 167). Originally, it was designed in 1969 to serve merchandising activities for food distribution. As the needs of the youth for this space had increased to facilitate amusement and entertainment, however, it was

transformed into “a gathering-place and a scene of permanent festival” (Ibid). With the case of the Halles Centrales, we can see that the reinterpretation and reappropriation of space led by common people can be the core reason for structural and practical changes in spatial forms.

At this point, we should think of potential forces that drive the appropriation of space to figure out the mechanisms of memory-work and place-based politics. As discussed in *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 1991), people inscribe their own feelings and emotions into certain spaces and landscapes. Based on those spiritual legacies imposed on spatial forms, common people develop ways of organizing and signifying space with subjective memories and experiences. Due to unequal power balance between institutionalized authoritative entities and common social groups, however, they will no doubt encounter sociopolitical conflicts originating from different social identities and tensions that underlie the process of modifying space. Defended by rationally-produced knowledge and discourse, social practices of authoritative groups proceed with massive executive and entrepreneurial projects opposed to concerns of real users of space. To cope with coercive practices of ruling classes, a potential strategy employed by subordinate groups is to appropriate space for the purpose of representing memories and feelings of marginalization which captures well the context behind the claiming of urban public space by comfort women activists in Seoul. By doing so, they can produce space of protest based on counter-memory and discourse of human rights ignored and forgotten from the mainstream of society. In producing space for protest, artistic works are the essential tool for representing counter-memory and sense of marginalization. Even though Lefebvre (1991) does not directly and clearly use the word

‘protest’ to discuss human rights movements, he alludes to the significance of art and festivity as tools for resisting destructive discourses of rational practices that produce in space. In conducting protest for human rights, therefore, appropriation of space provides people with an unusual stage for their voices to resonate in society.

At this point, we should explore how Lefebvre’s (1991) concepts of appropriation of space, spaces of representation, and festivity of protest function as the root of memory-work. It is notable that Karen Till’s writings on memory-work (Till, 1999, 2008, 2012) have many junctions with Lefebvre’s ideas. The emphasis on artistic works frequently mentioned in Karen Till’s articles is linked to what Lefebvre frequently implies in his writings on space and human rights. The nature of artistic works leaning on physical and emotional senses can be efficiently utilized for representing the memories and feelings of marginalized social groups in and through spatial expression. As the sense of art is linked to the human search for pleasure, artistic works and performances can bring the protests of subordinate groups into festive gatherings in which a larger public participates in and sympathizes with the emotions of demonstrators (Dutton, 2009). In particular, the memories of marginalized subjects previously forgotten from the public can be remembered again over generations if they meet “new forms of public memory” symbolized in space through and within artistic works (Till, 2012, p. 7). In protesting against authoritarian power, commemoration of forgotten memory is important to coping with oppressive institutionalized systems of history education, since awareness of historical truth is the starting point for resisting violence of unjust social structures. Thus, memory-work can be seen as the collective project conducted for “creating group myths about the past” and letting them be “understood, interpreted, and negotiated by a society”

(Till, 1999, p. 255). As memory-work is a variation of a political activity narrating “pasts through legal and material means” (Till, 2012, p. 8), it inevitably calls for mutual works of visualizing invisible memories with the appropriation and reconstruction of space. In the process of materializing a sense of bitterness, space becomes a stage for conflicts between social classes due to different understandings of historical events. To overcome the collision with structural oppressions, protestors form and develop memoryscapes with lived experiences and counter-memories to argue for the significance of forgotten history in forming human rights movements. The resistant aspects of memory-work draw artistic works and performances from subjective ideas of common people, which are driving forces for producing spaces of representation.

> [*Spaces of representation*]: space as directly *lived* through its associated **images and symbols**, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than *describe*. This is the dominated - and hence passively experienced - space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus [spaces of representation] may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of **non-verbal symbols and signs**. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39) – *bold words highlighted by author*

As indicated above, the basic concept of spaces of representation fits into the nature of memory-work as it is also open to participations of a broader community which is willing to recognize and identify with counter-discourses with aesthetic symbols of memory. Considering its emphasis on encouraging the representation of forgotten

memories with artistic desires, we can infer that the space of memory has a potential for converting protest movements into festive gatherings in which a wider public participates in and generates discourses that recognize human rights for marginalized social groups.

In the next two sections, I analyze the commemorative campaign of comfort women based on the aforementioned theoretical discussions of memory-work. As memories of comfort women had been ignored and oppressed until the past couple of decades, activists needed a breakthrough to escape the structural oppression originating from a masculine Korean society. In this vulnerable condition for former comfort women, the experiences of sexual slavery had to be re-discussed and re-read in different directions rather than through the hegemony of a female's lost virginity. Based on several concepts we have discussed above, I am interested in what implications and meanings that memory-work and memoryscape have for the commemorative campaign of comfort women and draw broader theoretical ideas about the place-based politics of public memory.

Brief history of comfort women and Wednesday Demonstration

To understand the commemorative campaign conducted by civic activists and former comfort women, it is important to be aware of the grief and pain that these victimized females felt, historically and still today. The term "comfort women", referring to sex slaves during WWII was first invented and used by the Japanese army to disguise its brutal crime committed against young women. Even though the women from the conquered regions of East and Southeast Asia were forced to occupy military brothels, the Japanese colonial government and military sought to represent this participation as

voluntary, military prostitution by using the euphemistic term “comfort women”. However, as many scholars have already found, the Japanese government engaged in swindling, human trafficking, and kidnapping to supply sex slaves for military bases (Hicks, 1997; Soh, 2008; Tanaka, 2002; Yoshimi & O'Brien, 2000). Approximately 200,000 young girls, mostly from Korea, were repeatedly raped and some were killed by Japanese soldiers at the end of the war as they could possibly bring shame on the Japanese royal army (Min, 2003; Totsuka, 1999; Wawrynek, 2003).

After Japan was defeated by the Allied Forces in 1945, some surviving comfort women came back to Korea. However, misunderstandings and insensitivities of Korean civilians about comfort women put the victims of this sexual slavery into a position of being stigmatized and excluded in Korean society. Although nobody would deny that comfort women had been enforced into bondage and sexually exploited every day, masculine aspects of Korean culture had led the Korean public to consider them just as prostitutes throwing away virginity rather than victims of sexual slavery. Due to the distorted viewpoints prevailing in Korean society, comfort women had to hide their memories in Japanese military bases from the public and endure scorn from neighbors and family members until the early 1990s (Min, 2003).

As Korean society has become democratized and more attentive to human rights issues since the late 1980s, however, comfort women were encouraged by civic activists to disclose their memories to the public and gather in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to ask for an apology and reparations from the Japanese government. The rally commemorating the history of sexual slavery, commonly called Wednesday Demonstration, was first held on January 8, 1992. As former comfort women and

feminists from civic organizations have continued to gather together since then every Wednesday in the same place, they held the 1,000th meeting on December 14, 2011 with a statue constructed in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. The statue describing a young girl gazing the Japanese Embassy is now symbolically contested and controversial between Korea and Japan since it is regarded by Japanese right wing politicians as a reminder of the shame on the Japanese history. Especially, as the statue stands noticeably in front of the Japanese Embassy for the wider public to see and question, it has become a diplomatic issue between the two countries. After Japan agreed in 2015 to provide surviving comfort women with financial aids through establishing a foundation, Japanese leaders called for a permanent removal of the statue by the Korean government in return for the agreement. However, the news about the Japanese demand ignited a sense of protest among Koreans and resulted in significant efforts among the public to protect the statue and in fact establish replicas of the statue within other Korean cities and the Korean communities of foreign countries.

The sociopolitical conflict between Korea and Japan originates from different viewpoints on the memory of sexual slavery. On the Japanese side, the history of comfort women should be disposed of in public discussions. On the other hand, comfort women activists and some Korean civilians want the memory of Japan's sexual slavery and the rights of comfort women to be remembered permanently over generations over the cause of history between Korea and Japan. The Wednesday demonstrations and the statue have become essential elements to settle the conflict over the memory of sexual slavery. As a protest for commemorating the tragic and long repressed experiences of comfort women, the demonstration held in front of the Japanese Embassy can be conceptualized as

memory-work aimed at recovering human rights of the marginalized subjects and establishing a form of symbolic reparation. By exploring the case of the comfort women commemorative campaign, we can explore the role of memory-work in human rights movements and social justice. To achieve this goal of the study, we need to understand the implications of the comfort women protest, its strategic use of space, and the symbolically contested nature of the statue standing in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

Based on the theoretical concepts we have already discussed and the relatively recent and still hotly contested development of the comfort women commemorative campaign, this study seeks to address the following issues. Firstly, looking into the early phase of human rights movements of comfort women, it is necessary to understand the hardships encountered by protestors. When former comfort women and civic activists started gathering together in front of the Japanese Embassy in the early 1990s, social recognition of the history of comfort women was not fully grown enough to accept the demonstration as an attempt to correct the distorted view of modern history prevailing in Korean society. At this point, we might assume that the process of overcoming several obstacles in the initial phase of the demonstration helped protestors establish the direction of their struggle for social justice and human rights of comfort women. With regard to this, the first issue that my study attempts to analyze is the difficulties that comfort women and feminists might have faced in protesting against the Japanese government. By doing so, we can advance understanding of the practical challenges to memory-work originating from structural oppressions and potential solutions to these efforts to limit the place-based politics of comfort women.

Secondly, the analysis of memory-work is focused on the critical aspects of symbolism formed through the employment of materialized memory and artistic works in human rights movements. As briefly mentioned above, the protestors and artists constructed the monument of a comfort woman in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to commemorate the 1000th meeting of Wednesday Demonstration. The symbolic meaning and controversial location of the comfort women statue is now working to catalyze public attentions toward the memories of sexual slavery and to raise the sense of protest against the structural oppression of the commemorative campaign of comfort women. Considering the rebellious aspect of the symbolized memory, this study discusses and analyzes the role of the statue in producing a space of protest and developing the cause of counter-memory against historical discourses formed by those traditionally in power. The comfort women statue derives its power from the various civic activities conducted by numerous participants around the statue. Exploring and analyzing the social movements occurring around and in front of the Japanese Embassy will help us consider the implications of memory-work and spaces of protest formed by symbolized counter-memory.

Thirdly, as the materialized memory of sexual slavery raises public attentions to the issues of comfort women in Korea, this study looks into the spread of sexual slavery memories through collective movements to construct statues of comfort women in several Korean cities. Recognizing that the statue's influence over space is not confined to one location, we can imagine the strong impact of the original statue constructed in front of the Japanese Embassy in conducting memory-work and human rights movements across scales and boundaries. When I conducted fieldwork in Korea in December 2015

through January 2016, there were many people of different ages and nationalities participating in the Wednesday Demonstrations. Some of them would protect the statue out of defiance to the demand from the Japanese government for removing the memorial. Some participants brought their children to the statue and the Demonstration to teach them about the previously dismissed and disregarded history of comfort women. Drawing from these behaviors of participants, this study examines the possibility that memory-work can contribute to the spread of social recognition with a memoryscape. Based on the three approaches mentioned above, this study explores and analyzes the inner-workings of the memory-work and place-based politics of comfort women activists and the larger public geography of support.

Memory and space of protest

Drawing from the effort and practical assistance of feminist scholars and activists, some of surviving comfort women were encouraged to come out and testify about their experiences in the military brothels during World War II. As the history of comfort women started attracting public attention in the late 1980s in Korea, several feminist organizations established a unified body called 'The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan', commonly abbreviated as 'The Korean Council', to support social movements of surviving comfort women and protest for social public recognition of the sexual exploitation experienced by young women under Japanese colonialism. With the aid of the Korean Council, more surviving comfort women could venture out into public view and register in the list of sexual slavery victims managed by the Korean government since the early 1990s. Furthermore, the

Korean Council helped and worked with comfort women to sue the Japanese government for its operation and sanctioning of military sexual slavery in the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) located at The Hague, Netherlands and several courts of the US and Japan (한국정신대문제대책협의회 20 년사편찬위원회, 2014). However, the biggest stride made in the social movements of comfort women was the Wednesday Demonstrations. Even though other civic activities conducted by comfort women with the Korean Council have critically impacted the visibility and perceived legitimacy of comfort women issues, the Wednesday Demonstrations have realized an amazing power through their continuity for over 24 years greatly enhancing the symbolic and political significance of the commemorative campaign and discourses of victims exploited during Japanese colonialism.

Although most Koreans today tend to honor comfort women and encourage their alliance with feminist activists, this favorable reaction was hardly seen in the 1990s. Actually, the negative perception of comfort women prevailing in Korean society was difficult to shake because of the entrenched cultural traditions of masculinity. Despite the increasing sense of democracy and human rights in Korean society by the early 1990s, there were still many people who viewed former comfort women as prostitutes who willingly lost their virginity and dignity rather than having it forcibly taken.

> Several victims of military prostitution got eventually divorced when their husbands knew everything about their past…… "Ah, those women went to military brothels and sold their bodies." The truth is that they never sold their bodies but got raped. But our society has placed a taboo on talking about comfort women…… Thinking of '95, '96, or even in the 2000s, eyes of passers-by toward the comfort women were not that kind of ones in these

days. Some of former comfort women shouted at them, “Why do they look at us in that way!” – *From an interview with the civic activist, K, transcribed and translated by author*

The above comments of this feminist activist working with the Korean Council, we notice social recognition and acceptance of the history of sexual slavery had not yet fully formed in the beginning of Wednesday Demonstrations. Actually, the interviewee K said that the contemptuous look from passers-by deterred several comfort women from showing up in the public due to the shame they endured. This case demonstrates that Korean society struggled until recently to reach the “socially nurtured and constructed” recognition that is the prerequisite for raising collective support and attention to human rights movements of marginalized social groups (Calhoun, 1994, pp. 24-25). Furthermore, the comments of interviewee K reminds us of the fact that former comfort women themselves also had not yet formed the “self-respect” and “mutual recognition” needed to inspire the “victims of disrespect” to participate in collective activities and protests (Honneth, 1996, 2004). Consequently, through hardships encountered in the early days of the Wednesday Demonstration, we can see how the cultural practices of masculinity structurally oppressed and deprived those victims of sexual slavery the opportunity to challenge and change unjust social conditions.

The difficulties of the commemorative projects conducted by former comfort women and their civic activist allies affected not only Wednesday Demonstrations but also any attempt to construct memorials of comfort women in public spaces. For example, on January 23, 1991, one of the feminist organizations associated with the Korean Council asked the Korean government for permission to build a monument to comfort

women at the site of the Independence Hall, which is the national museum for memorializing the struggles and hardships experienced by Korean civilians during Japanese colonialism (한국정신대문제대책협의회 20 년사편찬위원회, 2014). Despite the seemingly appropriate use of space at the Independence Hall, the Korean government and the museum director refused to accept the request from the feminist group, claiming that "it would harm the beautification project of the Independence Hall." (Ibid, p. 66) This case exposes the huge gap between the perspectives drawn from the counter-memory of comfort women and the production of an official expertized discourse by the authoritarian government (Foucault, 1980a). The historical view of Korean society has traditionally concentrated not on Korean civilians victimized by the harsh rule of the Japanese colonial government but on several well-known historical figures and their anti-Japanese movements. This bias in the production of discourse about Korean history has also negatively affected the project of building the 'War and Women's Human Rights Museum'. The museum was originally planned to be constructed at the site of Seodaemun Independence Park, Seoul in the late 2000s; however, it encountered extreme oppositions from 32 private organizations commemorating Korean independence movements (한국정신대문제대책협의회 20 년사편찬위원회, 2014, pp. 252-253). Their reasons for the opposition focused on concerns that the planned women museum would bring a shame on the honor of Korean independence activists (Ibid). Eventually, facing several practical challenges, the 'War and Women's Human Rights Museum' project had to be moved to and constructed in another less controversial location. In this instance, we can identify how discourses on the history of Japanese colonialism have traditionally been prejudiced against the experiences of victims such as comfort women who have

long been forgotten in Korean society. That is, the distorted public recognition of comfort women can be seen as the outcome of “naturalized” knowledge and hegemony as it infiltrates into collective consciousness (Dittmer, 2010; Lees, 2004; Waitt, 2010). Eventually, the prevalent ignorance of comfort women both in the Korean government and public recognition had resulted in driving out most attempts to memorialize comfort women in public spaces.

Ignorance of comfort women in the education system can also be identified in the conversation between a representative of the Korean Council, identified as K, and two female high school students, identified as G1 and G2, who participated in Wednesday Demonstrations. They actually visited the rally to do homework of modern Korean history class.

> K: How have you learned about “Comfort Women” of the Japanese army in your school?
> G1: Just learning simple things…
> G2: Let’s see, grannies who worked in Japan…… they were taken and endured hardships.
> K: Isn’t there any difference between females who worked in military factories and comfort women who got raped every day in military brothels?
> G1 & G2: Yes, we feel like there is a little bit of difference…… *translated by author* (윤미향, 2010, pp. 25-26)

The critical thing we should catch in this conversation is that even though many students have paid attention to comfort women issues and the commemorative campaign, the formal education system of Korea has been lukewarm in teaching the frank and the significant aspects of the history of sexual slavery. Eventually, this ignorance of human rights issues perpetuated by the government and the scientific academy conflicts with the

memory-work of marginalized social groups (Foucault, 1980a, 1980b; Hall, 2001). With regard to the vulnerable condition for social movements of excluded and ignored subjects, we should be aware of the fact that attempts to develop discourses of counter-memory can be and often are thwarted and oppressed by formalized and institutionalized systems of discourse production. Furthermore, there is a huge gap in the way discourses and knowledge are produced and protected between political and academic elite groups and those very social classes neglected and overlooked within main stream society.

To overcome this vulnerability in discourse production of subordinate groups, several scholars in geography and sociology argue that subjects distant from social power need to develop and utilize alternative means of being heard and seen based upon corporeality and the aesthetic sense rather than linguistic and scientific practices (Gregory, 1994; Lefebvre, 1991; Rovisco & Ong, 2016; Shields, 1999). Even though comfort women and civic activists have protested weekly since 1992 in front of the Japanese Embassy and actively inserted themselves within the geography of diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan, they have gradually encountered the limits of place-based politics by being so dependent upon the symbolically-contested nature of space in producing discourses that remember the brutality of sexual slavery and assert human rights.

> When Kim, Hak-sun first testified [about] her experience of military brothels in 1991, Korean society and civic organizations in Japan got shocked for the brutal crime committed by the Japanese army and government. Thinking of its critical impact on both societies of Korea and Japan, I expected it would soon be resolved. But in 2011 when I walked by here, I saw former comfort women still protesting against the Japanese government…… The

> thing that made me sad was that when I was passing by the rally in 2011 there were few participants. Even though these days many people are participating in the rallies, several weeks ago before the 1000th meeting in 2011, the atmosphere of the protest had withered and lessened, just with 20 to 30 participants. – *From an interview with the artists, W & S, transcribed and translated by author*

Given that Wednesday Demonstrations have lasted for 20 years by 2011, it was true that public attention to the commemorative campaign had diminished with the absence of new strategies for carrying out place-based politics of comfort women. With regard to this, it is necessary to discuss multiple practical approaches for realizing and intensifying the impact of social movements based on counter-memory and place-based politics. And while the hard work and endurance of comfort women and their supporters shown in rallies should be respected, the commemorative movements had to develop further in producing discourses about human rights and the public's memory of the war crimes committed by Japan. This idea of asking for additional strategic approaches to place-based politics and protest by subordinate social groups can be assisted and explained by the concept of 'site' (Price & Sanz Sabido, 2016). Although the main purpose of Wednesday Demonstrations was to speak directly to the Japanese government about its legal responsibility, the direction of the protest also had to pose a direct challenge to the biased and marginalizing perspectives of comfort women that were predominant within Korean society. This task is significantly linked to the matter of social recognition that boosts the collective sense of protest and strengthens the voices of protestors who have not been adequately heard and respected in the public realm (Calhoun, 1991, 1994, 2010; Honneth, 1992, 1996, 2004). According to this reasoning, to

raise the stakes of place-based politics on social recognition of sexual slavery, we should think about the power of 'site' in producing symbolic meanings of space and representing the narratives of protestors. Commonly, 'site' can be seen as "the product of an actual or symbolic connection between the perceived worth of a place and some significant occasion, physical ritual or environmental marker." (Price & Sanz Sabido, 2016, p. 1)

Given the symbolic meanings and narratives produced at and through sites, there is a possibility of creating alternative strategies of resistance not based solely on the signified associated with the signifier but on counter-memory being subjectively interpreted and represented through appropriation of space (Lefebvre, 1991, 2000). Protestors can recognize the potential for converting space into a site of memory and use this site as a mediator between public display of respect for victims and a collective sense of protest. In doing so, protestors from marginalized social groups can create feasible strategies to utilize space for producing new discourses about human rights which are hardly realized in formalized knowledge production owned and controlled by ruling class and expert groups. Hence, potential approaches to protest of subordinate groups whose stories have gone unheard in society can include infiltrating, materializing, and visualizing counter-memory in space through commemorative movements oriented to recovering previously lost symbolic and social meanings of the past.

Based on the reconsideration of alternative directions of place-based politics mentioned above, we are now looking at a critical moment in the Wednesday Demonstrations when the comfort women monument was built to memorialize the 1000th rally on Dec 14, 2011 and its political implications for realizing the memory-work of comfort women. One of the critical implications generated by the statue was that it

provided a turning point in memory politics of comfort women by creating a permanent commemorative landscape in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. Actually, the installation of the statue was not permitted by authorities in Jongno-gu, which refers to a borough of Seoul where the statue of a comfort women was planned to be located, as the Jongno-gu Office regarded it as inappropriate to occupy the public road (한국정신대문제대책협의회 20 년사편찬위원회, 2014, pp. 260-261). Furthermore, as the news of the project was communicated to Japan, the Prime Minister and far-right politicians of the Japanese government intensified diplomatic pressure on the Korean government and demanded the withdrawal of the plan to build the monument in front of the Japanese Embassy (Ibid). In spite of these obstacles, civic activists and artists constructed the monument as planned in front of the Japanese Embassy on the day of the 1000th meeting of Wednesday Demonstration in 2011 (Ibid).

Despite the conflicts with and pressures from authoritarian political bodies in Korea and Japan, feminists and comfort women have shown their passion for representation and preservation of the memory of sexual slavery by occupying the Embassy space and protesting against the attempt to nullify the construction of the statue. The struggle to have the monument installed has demonstrated its critical power of site to undermine the imposing discourses and coercive power of authoritative groups. The statue issue forced authorities to confront comfort women's counter-memories, challenging a tendency among upper social classes to ignore and marginalize the experiences and sufferings of subordinate groups that are seen as potential risk to justifying their high social standing (Dittmer, 2010; Gramsci, 1992b; Hall, 2001; Lees, 2004; Waitt, 2010). In other words, because the tragic experiences of subordinate groups

are commonly the results of historical events associated with coercive political decisions, exploitations by the bourgeoisie and war crimes committed by militant groups, people in higher positions within the social hierarchy tend to be reluctant to let victims of historical offences represent their memories publicly and spatially visible. Past research has suggested that the commemorative landscape, as materialized and visualized memory of marginalized social groups, can create controversial moments in raising objections to naturalized hegemony (Alderman, 2003; Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004).

The installation of the comfort women statue thus was envisioned as a significant advance in protest against the structural oppressions formed by neo-imperialistic Japanese hegemony and restrictive Korean moral traditions dominated by masculinity and gender inequality. Simultaneously, the statue depicting a young girl could provide a critical moment to raise public support for the commemorative campaign of comfort women by producing symbolic meanings of the memories of sexual slavery. Conversations with artists involved in the statue's creation point to the great thought and decision-making that went into the process of creating a 'site' of comfort women memory.

> The original plan for the statue was that it should depict a woman who has her revenge on Japan. So, we expected it would look like a kind of tough and anxious girl. But, if we made it that way… uh… it would have been too strong and there would have been no repeatedly-produced symbols in it. So we decided to produce it in the way of giving emotional resonance with full of suggestion. Accordingly, we formed the appearance and motion of the young girl into like calmness…… Fortunately, that kind of our aim to do so was handed over to people and then the number of participants in the rallies has increased a lot. – *From an interview with the artists, W & S, transcribed and translated by author*

As indicated in the interview above, the statue of a young girl was expected to prompt and give to the public an emotional sense of justice over the history of sexual slavery to the public. Even though Jongno-gu authorities and the Korean government regarded the statue as inappropriate and an obstruction to diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan, politicians and city officials could not prevent protestors and artists from installing the monument in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul without invoking ferocious feelings from a sympathetic public (한국정신대문제대책협의회 20 년사편찬위원회, 2014, p. 261). In accordance with aims of Wednesday Demonstrations, the construction of the statue can be seen as a pioneering project in developing memory-work of comfort women and forming the space of protest through and within artistic works (Till, 2008). With the growing sense of protest in the site of comfort women memory, we can find a significant phase of the memory politics of comfort women enabled by the statue. The crucial meanings of the statue and the role of space within the memory-work of comfort women can be supported by Lefebvre, who states that "[spaces of representation embody] complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art." (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33) As illustrated in the comfort women statue, the place-based politics of marginalized subjects is an aesthetic corporeal struggle that relies "upon embodied encounters with the everyday to explore intrasubjective relationships and knowledges not easily captured through language." (Till, 2008, p. 106) That is, artistic works and performances can bind common people together with symbolic and subtle meanings of historical truth not commonly taught in systematically operated educational systems. Consequently, the installation of the statue can be interpreted as a collective

protest against the coercive structure of discourse production led by authoritative social classes.

Given that the commemorative campaign of comfort women has been strengthened by the monument constructed in front of the Japanese Embassy, some Japanese citizens and political leaders expressed concern and posed challenges to the legitimacy of the location of the statue. Even though conflicts and controversies over the statue have arisen between Koreans and Japanese since it was constructed in 2011, the rallies of comfort women have been directed at facilitating a range of participatory, enjoyable, and festive ways in which the public can engage with the symbolic meanings produced by the comfort women memorial. As a result, symbolism of the statue has gathered more attention and intensified as various types of artists began gathering together and performing in front of the Japanese Embassy to draw emotional sympathy and support from the public.

> Meeting face to face, we can work together for these kinds of activities here in this place of Wednesday Demonstration. With the genre so called art, I think it can become softer and more enjoyable for us to solve this problem…… Uh, about the world where I am living now and the things that I am concerned about, we can talk and share those issues with others through artistic performances. I think that's the thing we as artists should do…… With the symbolic meanings formed here in this place, we should collect more energy of the people and form the space where everybody can talk about this. – *From an interview with the director of an acting troupe, K, transcribed and translated by author*

> Even though I am a singer, I am also a Korean. I should be involved in the things that happened in this land and I think they are linked to my life…… Here is the symbolic place

where the Japanese Embassy is located and the statue of a young girl funded and produced by donations of the people is at. Protecting and staying around the monument, many citizens and artists can share the hope for peace together. – *From an interview with a singer (anonym), transcribed and translated by author*

As artists participate and express the memories of comfort women in the form of art and performance, the demonstrations are conducted in peaceful and festive ways. Actually, as reflected in the interviews with artists above, the "softer" atmosphere generated by artistic works and performances has contributed to increasing public participation and sympathy as well as spreading memories that had previously been neglected. The common thing found in interviews with artists is that they recognize the significance of the statue and attempt to harness and use the symbolism produced in this space of protest for reinforcing and diffusing anger against the Japanese government and the traditional Korean society. With this increased public support and social respect created at Wednesday Demonstrations around the statue, former comfort women have resiliency to continue the protest. Even though the commemorative campaign would not heal all wounds, it is true that former comfort women could feel the consolation and emotional care from the space where symbolism drawn from memories of sexual slavery is produced.

You are our hope and dream. And our kind of health supplement. We old folks don't have power. Because you guys are with us, we are encouraged and uplifted. The police force guarding the Japanese Embassy also did a great job. We know they have the same heart with us. – *A comfort woman's remark at Wednesday Demonstration, translated by author (윤미향, 2010, p. 233)*

> At first, I was worried about how to give consolation, what words of encouragement I can give. As I participated, I realized I was even encouraged more. The demonstration was peaceful, and protestors looked happy. I think this is not that kind of protest but a festival demonstrating that values of peace and human rights are still alive. – *From an interview with a male college student, K, translated by author (윤미향, 2010, pp. 27-28)*

The space of Wednesday Demonstration, where the memories of comfort women are merged with the symbolism produced by the statue and surrounding artistic performances, demonstrates that memory-work can be extended to enact a "place-based practices of care" (Till, 2012, p. 7). As indicated in the preceding interviews with a comfort woman and a demonstration participant, memories of sexual slavery have not just left comfort women severe wounds but also inflicted a collective trauma on the wider Korean citizenry. That is, by participating in the commemorative campaign, former comfort women and citizens seek to satisfy a healing of the wounds and trauma originating from the history of Japanese colonialism. Consequently, the space where every rally has been held since 1992 has had critical meanings and contributions to social movements of comfort women functioning as both the stage of protest and the symbolic center for caring for wounds of historical trauma.

As the comfort women statue has become a central spot from where commemorative discourses of sexual slavery victims are produced and diffused, more people have joined the work of memorializing the traumatic experiences of comfort women and raising public attention to human rights. In doing this work, an emotional public appeal on behalf of comfort women has grown, reproduced, and returned to the space where the statue stands. On every Wednesday Demonstration, artists and protestors

sing, dance, and perform plays to close the distance between attention of citizens and emotions of comfort women. Korean citizens treat the comfort women statue as if it were a person alive. They put clothes on the monument and stay by its side to repulse demands for the removal of the statue by the Japanese government (Figure 2.1). By doing so, citizens bring a social and spatial solidarity to memories of comfort women and reproduce the symbolic meanings of protest inherent in the space across from the Japanese Embassy.

> It never makes sense to tear down the statue of a young girl…… I think, even if it [the Japanese government] apologizes and takes legal responsibility, we should leave this statue here, because this is linked to the matter of containing the meanings of apology for their sins and Japanese also should feel and learn it for peace…… We should never forget. – *From an interview with a participant in the demonstration (anonymous), transcribed and translated by author*

The discourses associated with memories of comfort women is now intensifying and diffusing with the mediation of symbolism generated in the site of the Wednesday Demonstrations around the statue. Although the bitterness and resentment endured by comfort women are barely discussed or sympathized with expert within the language of Korea's knowledge and histories, we find at Wednesday Demonstrations that the memories of marginalized social groups represented through forms of materialized imagery and metaphor can raise public recognition and inspire collective commitment to support human rights movements (Dittmer, 2010; Foucault, 1980b; Lefebvre, 1991; Till, 2008, 2012; Waitt, 2010). The subsequent outcome achieved from the place-based

practices of comfort women is that their sense of protest has reached and touched the emotional fields of foreigners who commonly have little but simply a superficial connection with the history of Korea, including those who identify themselves as Japanese.

> I think it is one of the saddest things that the deal between the Korean and Japanese government has ignored and excluded the victims of sexual slavery. Demolishing the statue of comfort women… I think that's the intention that Japan settles and throws away its debts left in the Japanese history, like Kim, Bok-dong [a surviving comfort woman] said once before. I, as one of the Japanese citizens, am so sorry for that, and came here to participate in Wednesday Demonstration with anger at the Abe administration. – *From an interview with a female Japanese participant (anonymous), transcribed and translated by author and Jiyoung Yoon (bilingual in Korean and Japanese, author's older brother)*

> I've come here to the Wednesday Demonstrations because the lesson that the grandmothers are trying to teach the world about war and violence against women is something that… I think… also people in the US must hear and learn from… ah… because they connect their pain and suffering to the pain and suffering of all women… suffering under all wars… including wars that the US military is waging around the world. My feelings were sadness… ah… some anger… but also… later when I heard [interruption] that they were reaching out to women in another situation of war… to say 'we can work together', I was filled with hope actually, and I was taught an important lesson about the power of survivors to transform the world… ah… to connect to each other… to build relationships of peace in the midst of war and violence. – *From an interview with an exchange student from the US (anonymous), transcribed by author*

In the two interviews, one with a female from Japan and another with a male from the US, a sense of anger can be easily found. Simultaneously, those interviewed state that they have been emotionally affected by the social activities of comfort women and their spirit of resistance to any violence against women brought on by war. Eventually, the emotional sympathy felt by the two international participants resulted in their visits to the space where the rally of comfort women is held weekly. The emotions of protest can circulate widely to the world by "mediated dissent" and then return to the concentrated space of protest again (Rovisco & Ong, 2016).

The reproductions and circulations of comfort women memory are also found when examining patterns of social unrest within Korean society and the growing diffusion of comfort women memorials. Currently, copies or replicas of the comfort women statue and other types of comfort women memorials are being constructed or planned for construction in other Korean cities and around the world (Figure 2.2 & 2.3, Table 2.1).

Interviews conducted as part of this dissertation's fieldwork suggest that the comfort women statue is intensifying the symbolic meaning of the comfort women's cause and developing discourses of counter-memory to which people are identifying and sympathizing with. These conversations reveal that most participants and protestors have started to regard the narratives of comfort women as a collective trauma to be overcome. In particular, it is notable that the movements for constructing comfort women memorials are primarily led by females such as feminists, young high school students, and college students who would be more understanding of the bitterness and sadness felt by comfort women (refer to Figure 2.4 and an interview with a high school teacher below).

> As of the past history of Korea getting closer to the Japanese colonial era, I would tell them 'their stories [war crimes inflicted on Korean victims] are not different and isolated from your own lives.' So, actually, girls and I can talk with each other about them with stronger ties to emotions of comfort women. – *From an interview with a teacher at Ewha Girls' High School, transcribed and translated by author*

Furthermore, because comfort women's desire for commemorative justice has been embraced by an international public, memorials of comfort women are being constructed around the world in collaboration with Koreans and Korean immigrants. This transnational circulation of memory-work across the borders to several countries demonstrates that social movements for justice can draw broad support from subjects in similar situations and jump into spaces and places where people are suffering under the same kind of crime or violence (Alexander, 2011; Bosco, 2007; Snow, Zurcher Jr, & Ekland-Olson, 1980).

> Those persons [a Chinese-American documentary film maker and Chinese historians] also could find their wounds left in the Chinese history again [with inspiration from the comfort women statue]. So they started filming a documentary on comfort women and producing the Korean and Chinese comfort women memorials in the two countries. – *From an interview with artists, W & S, transcribed and translated by author*

Consequently, we can be aware that the driving force for the diffusion of comfort women memorials is formed by emotional understanding and public sympathy and even empathy. By participating in the construction of their own comfort women memorials, the public can never forget the wounds endured by the victims. In many cases,

remembering the tragedies from inhumane war crimes results in a realization of the need for social movements for peace. Actually, memory-work is about caring not only for the wounds of victims but also the collective trauma suffered by members of other social groups (Till, 1999, 2012). In this respect, space functions as a core stage or arena for conducting memory-work. Place-based politics is strongly related to human rights to urban space by which common people can freely express their feelings of dissent and work for preventing the past tragedies from happening again (Harvey, 2003; Lefebvre, 1996; Mitchell, 2003).

Concluding remarks

When the agreement on comfort women issue between the Korean and Japanese government was announced on Dec 25, 2015, many Koreans expressed anger over the humiliating and unreasonable details of the negotiations. Many problems can be found in the agreement, such as the "Comfort Women" debate excluding comfort women from the process, but the worst statement drawn from the talks was 'the final and irreversible resolution' proclaimed by the Japanese government. The real intention of the Japanese government was unmasked when it asked for the removal of the statue in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. We can infer that the primary objective of the Japanese government through the negotiations was to leave no space for former comfort women and Koreans to dispute past war crimes and the legal responsibility of Japan rather than truly coming to grips with the pain of sexual slavery. More seriously, the Korean government has not shown any diplomatic and political will to assist comfort women in resisting the Japanese government for fear of creating diplomatic unrest. The lukewarm

stance of the Korean government is also demonstrated in its education curriculum, which barely addresses the history of comfort women. The wounded minds and bodies of comfort women are in effect defined as being outside the interests of expertized and formalized systems of knowledge and discourse production in Korea or Japan.

Although the biased and arbitrary actions of the ruling classes provoke public anger and resentment, these unjust social conditions have constantly been anticipated and observed by several scholars in social sciences (Ball, 2012; Foucault, 1980b; Gramsci, 1992a; Hall, 2001). As many of these scholars have suggested when offering potential solutions to overcome authoritative discourses and knowledge, there have been many discussions on the validity of each argument in the interdisciplinary field of social justice. With the flow of academic calls for an equal society, this study has suggested a practical approach to social justice with geographical perspectives. In accordance with this objective, I have explored the commemorative campaigns of comfort women to demand the possibility of an equal society in which marginalized social groups can express and talk about their sociopolitical needs.

In this process, several concepts related to protest, spaces of representation, counter-memory, and human rights have been introduced and discussed to understand the birth of the commemorative campaign of comfort women, its reliance on memory-work and place politics, and the spread of memory and sympathy inspired by the comfort women statue. With discussions of authoritative discourse production system primarily explored by Foucault and other scholars, this study's analysis began by identifying the difficulties that former comfort women and civic activists had encountered in the early days of their human rights movement. When we think about masculinity in Korean

traditions, it is clearly demonstrated that comfort women continued to suffer and be victimized even after they had become emancipated from Japanese sexual slavery. The perverse and distorted perspectives on virginity within a male dominated Korean society had introduced more stigmas to the lives of former comfort women. As many Koreans had seen comfort women as simply prostitutes who voluntarily went to military brothels during WWII, the victims of sexual slavery were forced to hide their past experiences for fear of not being mocked and ostracized. These vulnerable conditions for comfort women had thwarted in many ways their efforts to form social recognition of the history of sexual slavery and raise public attentions to the commemorative campaign until relatively recently. In the midst of official state histories education system, and memorials that ignored the history of sexual slavery, the rallies of comfort women could not make considerable impacts on public awareness until the 2000s. With regard to this unfavorable situation against comfort women, it can be interpreted that as cultural practices based on masculinity have been naturalized and domesticated in Korean society, discourse production system has tended to keep up with the cultural hegemony that ignored and excluded the resentment of disadvantaged groups (Foucault, 1980b; Hall, 2001). Due to the sociopolitical limitations that comfort women had encountered in their human rights movement, the commemorative campaign needed to enter a new phase with different strategies to attract public attentions to the plight of comfort women.

To overcome authoritative social structures associated with expert-led discourses and knowledge, subordinate subjects without social power can and do develop alternative methods that rely on emotional aspects of symbolism in producing new discourses about human rights and social justice. One alternative strategy is to symbolize collective anger

with the landscape and accumulated traces of memory, thus raising the public recognition and emotional sympathy necessary for coping with socially-structuralized hegemony (Lefebvre, 1991; Till, 2012; Tuan, 1977). Because place-based practices associated with symbolized memory are basically dependent on emotional and corporeal senses and activities, they are strongly linked to desires for aesthetic and artistic development (Antze, 2003; Bennett, 2003). In contrast to knowledges and discourses produced in language-based academic traditions, subjective understandings and interpretations of past experiences are inclined to use materialized and visualized symbols of memory in space to boost public recognition and support. As a result of art-oriented tendencies found in these place-based politics, social movements associated with memory-work tend to evolve into a mode of protest that can be festive as well as somber and angry (Lefebvre, 1991).

Based on theoretical concepts of memory, artistic works, symbolism, and place-based politics, this study has sought to explore the significant role of symbolism in producing counter discourses about the human rights of comfort women and geographically diffusing the memory of sexual slavery. In analyzing the social activities and ideas of participants at Wednesday Demonstrations, it is notable that there was a critical moment on Dec 14, 2011 when the statue of a comfort woman was built in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. As it became a focal point for those who are moved and touched by the memory-work of comfort women, the statue began to accumulate symbolism of war crimes in the space of protest and attract more interests and participants to the rallies. One of the most important driving forces for the growing number of protestors and social recognitions was the resistant festivity of the

demonstrations that drew heavily from the symbolized history of comfort women and aesthetic practices of artists. With symbolism and festivity found in Wednesday Demonstrations, people of different ages, genders, and nationalities could attend the rallies and learn the desires of comfort women for peace and the campaign against violence toward females. At this critical point in the memory-work of comfort women, it cannot be denied that the statue played a major role in expanding the spirit of resistance to common people, including non-Koreans, and strengthening the collective awareness of comfort women issues. Also of importance is its catalytic role that the statue and its replicas have had in spreading the memory politics of comfort women within Korea outside of Seoul and across the country's borders into other countries. The diffusion of comfort women memorials has demonstrated the fact that the symbolized memory contained in the statue has the capacity to evoke sympathetic feelings from the public and reproduce discourses about human rights for marginalized social groups. Consequently, with the commemorative campaign of comfort women and the iconic images of the demonstration produced by the statue, we understand in new ways how the memory-work of a victimized social group can be circulated in and through symbolic memoryscapes thus illustrating further the power of materiality and place within memory-work.

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CHAPTER III

WHEN MEMORYSCAPES MOVE: COMFORT WOMEN STATUE AS A TRANSNATIONAL CIRCULATION AND RETRANSLATION OF COMMEMORATIVE AND IDENTITY POLITICS

Abstract: “Comfort Women” is a euphemistic term for the women and girls forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army before and during World War II. As many as 200,000 women endured daily, state-sanctioned rape, with most of them being Korean. Until recently, this history of trauma and violence was actively forgotten within Korean society and ignored by the Japanese government refusing to issue an official apology or reparations. However, as the US Congress adopted in 2007 the resolution 121 urging the Japanese government to take appropriate actions based on a legal responsibility for war crimes against comfort women, several follow-up activities were initiated by Korean-Americans with increased attention to sexual slavery during WWII. As one of the outcomes of that resolution, a monument commemorating the comfort women was constructed in Palisades Park, New Jersey, where Korean-Americans have formed a large immigrant society. As reflected in New Jersey, the contested nature of the comfort women commemorative cause is not limited to South Korea but spread out around the world. “Comfort Women” statues can now be found in several Korean and US cities with large communities of Koreans and Korean-Americans. This paper focuses on the appearance of these monuments in the United States as a theoretical and empirical moment to reflect on how memoryscapes, despite their obvious weightiness and fixity, can circulate or move transnationally as they materialize and re-scale the geography of remembering war crimes and female subjugation. My work explores the rise of the “Comfort Women” monument in the United States, the forces and actors responsible for its diffusion, challenges to these transplanted memoryscapes by Japanese citizens, and how these transnational circulations of memory open up new lines of activism and debate beyond their point of origin.
Keywords: Comfort Women, Memoryscape, Public Memory, Feminist Movement, Transnational Commemoration

Introduction

Geographers increasingly suggest that memory is the main source of landscape transformation (Alderman, 2003; Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004; Lowenthal, 1985; Robertson & Hall, 2007; Schama & Porter, 1995; Till, 1999; Tuan, 1977). By representing memory within and through space, people desire that their experiences are recognized and acknowledged by others. As memories and interpretations of historical events vary between social groups, landscapes of memory sometimes bring about controversies over the truth of past historical struggles and the political interests that accompany those claims on the past. The political nature of commemoration was clarified by Lowenthal (1985, p. 210) saying that "The prime function of memory… is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present." Taken together, landscape transformation should be seen as a key political activity to achieve social recognition of memory and inform specific narratives about the status and legitimacy of social groups.

Building upon this contested nature of memoryscapes, we should recognize that there have been numerous efforts and struggles on the past of marginalized social groups to use memory to address and improve human rights (Alderman, 2003, 2008; Bosco, 2004; Jelin, 1994; Levy & Sznaider, 2010). As it is hard for marginal subjects to access appropriate means to produce authoritative knowledge and discourse (Foucault, 1980b), they tend to be reliant on corporeal senses and subjective emotions to raise public attention of the unjust social conditions they suffered from and sought to overcome (Foucault, 1980a; Lefebvre, 1991). In this way, memory can be considered as a counter-

hegemonic tool to remind the public of the experiences of subordinate groups, recognizing that many of these experiences have been ignored in society. Specifically, given that the landscape provides a stage for permanent forms of visualization and representation, the memory of marginal subjects can be remembered through symbolic images and meanings produced in space and thus inspire people to have a more socially responsible sense of history (Till, 2008, 2012).

Recognizing the potential contribution of memory politics to human rights movements, this study extends the scope of our understanding of commemorative activities by exploring the transnational mobility or movement of memory. Even though close relations between commemorative politics and space are frequently mentioned and analyzed in the academic fields of geography and sociology, the mobile nature of memory has not been widely recognized and discussed despite its significance and pervasiveness. This study investigates the transnational circulations of comfort women commemorative politics to understand intricate webs of interests surrounding memory issues and its implications for human rights representation. A distinctive aspect of the transplanted memory of comfort women is that the politics of remembering sexual slavery during WWII is being appropriated and led by Korean-Americans in the US. Unlike other localized movements transnationally connected and associated with larger human rights movements (Bosco, 2007; Smith, 1998; Smith, Chatfield, & Pagnucco, 1997; Snow, Zurcher Jr, & Ekland-Olson, 1980), Korean-American civic activists have made their commemorative activities in the US independent from protests conducted in Korea. Even though social movements commemorating the history of comfort women in the US are distant from existing transnational networks of human rights movements,

Korean-Americans have made significant progress in remembering and strengthening the cause for comfort women since the 1990s. The process of explaining this unique diffusion of memories of sexual slavery into the US will help us understand the complicated mechanisms of memory politics, transnationally-migrated memory, and localized social movements in immigrant societies.

"Comfort Women", referring to sex slaves raped daily during WWII by Japanese soldiers, is the euphemistic words used by the Japanese army and government to camouflage their savage war crimes. The term also alludes to voluntary prostitution despite incontrovertible evidences of forced service (Choi et al., 1997; Chung, 1997; Hicks, 1997; Ishikane, 2006; Yang, 1997). Due to inhumane treatments in Japanese military brothels, most comfort women spent their entire lives suffering from serious levels of mental and physical illnesses. With the Japanese government's reluctance to assume legal responsibility for the victims and address the history of war crimes committed by Japan, surviving comfort women and their allies have grown angry over these unreconciled injustices.

Since Kim, Hak-sun, a former comfort woman, had first testified her memory in military brothels publicly in 1991, other comfort women joined the protest against the Japanese government. Even though the comfort women had conducted their human rights movement in numerous forms such as public testimonies, commemorative campaigns regularly held in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, and legal appeals to the International Court of Justice, their protests have been met with cynical attitudes within Korea recently (윤미향, 2010; 한국정신대문제대책협의회20년사편찬위원회, 2014). Those lukewarm, or even oppositional views of the campaigns of comfort women can be seen as

an outcome of the cultural traditions of Korea based on masculinity and patriarchalism (Min, 2003). Due to this structural limitation in Korean society, social movements of comfort women had encountered numerous difficulties and obstacles to obtaining notable public visibility for many years.

In spite of those hardships originating from structural pressures of Korean society, it is worth noting that comfort women have continuously tried to share their memories with people not only in Korea but also to those overseas. Former comfort woman, Hwang, Geum Joo, gave testimony about her experiences in Japanese military brothels during WWII on the live US TV show in November 1992, which led to increased American recognition of the issue (한국정신대문제대책협의회20년사편찬위원회, 2014, pp. 290-291). Since the first public testimony of Hwang, Geum Joo in the US, Korean-American civic activists have conducted follow up work to raise public awareness about comfort women issue in US society and apply pressure on the Japanese government to accept legal responsibility for their war crimes. As a result of those activities, on 30 July, 2007, the US Congress adopted unanimously the H.Res.121, asking the Japanese government to make permanent efforts to apologize for government-sanctioned sexual slavery and "educate current and future generations about this horrible crime."[1] To maintain the momentum generated by the resolution, a civic organization of Korean-Americans based in the New York metropolitan area constructed the first comfort women monument in Palisades Park, New Jersey in October 2010. Korean-Americans in several US cities have built comfort women memorials.

[1] https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-resolution/121/text

On the surface it would seem that the tragic experiences of comfort women have little to do with Korean-Americans, some of whom settled down in the US generations ago; however, it is notable that the transnational spread of comfort women memory has increased the momentum behind this human rights movement. Another aspect found in the civic activities of Korean-Americans is the varying degrees of ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds of those activists, despite the fact that the issue of sexual slavery is seemingly confined to comfort women in Korea. With regard to this, we note that the past history of certain regions can be widely remembered through various mediating sources and connected to many different interests and senses of social justice (Bosco, 2004, 2007; Honneth, 2004; Rovisco & Ong, 2016). Recognizing the importance of understanding the complex and comprehensive aspects of this diffusion of memory, identification, and activism for comfort women, this study examines the sociocultural and political implications of social movements conducted by Korean-Americans within the contested memory politics of remembering and reclaiming the dignity and rights of this previously marginalized group. By observing and analyzing the civic activities of Korean-Americans that have been conducted, my paper seeks to address the following three issues regarding this transnational circulation of memory into and within the US.

First, it is necessary to understand how the grief and sadness of comfort women have been handed over to US society and used by Korean-Americans for vindicating the cause of social movements of comfort women. The analysis of this process is important because it can tell about the mobile nature of memory and its significant contributions not only to human rights movements at the initial place of origin but also to the empowerment of an ethnic immigrant group who appropriates and uses a transplanted

memory for their own objectives. Actually, through this work, I explore how Korean-American civic activists have approached the comfort women issue to develop belongingness and encourage political participation in their Korean communities in the US. This indicates that memory is moving transnationally and being adopted by an immigrant group in another region and transplanted to satisfy local strategies and needs (Fortier, 2000). Importantly, the transnational diffusion or circulation of traumatic memory is not a monolithic process of simply relocating political concerns. Rather, the moving memory undergoes a translation and territorialization specific to receiving group and place.

The second issue that this study addresses is the efforts of Korean-Americans to publicly spread and advocate for the memory of comfort women with using political strategies grounded within the grass roots US experience. An expected outcome from the analysis is that we can find clues to appropriate and effective approaches to memory politics outside of Korea and within a transnational immigrant society. In particular, the commemorative projects conducted by Korean-Americans should be seen as struggles to scale up the comfort women issue, transforming it from a regional issue to a multinational one. Actually, modification of geographic scale has been discussed by several scholars examining its impact on human rights movements of marginalized social groups (Alderman, 2003; Herod, 1997; Kelly, 1997; Post, 2011). As these scholars note, marginal subjects are prone to be ignored and excluded without public recognition and attention and the process of redefining the spatial and social extent to which their cause resonates. Nevertheless, when strategies for expansion of geographic scale meet with artistic works, experiences of subordinate groups can attract public attention as art can “serve part of the

larger public landscape, bringing increased accessibility and interaction to its interpretation of past events" (Post, 2011, p. 45). In this respect, we can infer that the diffusion of comfort women monuments in the US is one of the strategies adopted by Korean-Americans to use artistic forms and political practice to change the geographic scale of discourses that surround the remembering of comfort women. The unusual aspect found in this movement is that the memory of comfort women has been brought and transplanted primarily by Korean immigrant communities without visible connections to civic organizations or activist political bodies in Korea. Investigating the transnational movement of comfort women commemoration, this study discusses potential impacts of this unprecedented approach to memory politics at multiple geographical scales.

Third, given past and ongoing geopolitical struggles between Korea and Japan, this study traces and analyzes how varying social actors and groups have sought to utilize the human rights issue of comfort women for their own sociopolitical advantage. My fieldwork in the US unexpectedly encountered several important struggles and debates underlying the political activities behind comfort women commemorative projects. Even though diffusions of comfort women monuments have been led by Korean-American civic activists collaborating with US politicians, I was told many times during my fieldwork that numerous larger issues from Korea and Japan have intervened in these commemorative projects in the US. From the perspective of politicians and activists from Korea, construction of a comfort women monument in a US city represents a good opportunity to enhance public awareness of their political achievements, given the media attention that it attracts. On the other hand, as some Japanese politicians and immigrant communities consider monuments to comfort women as a threat to national identity and

personal prestige, we have seen continuous attempts to thwart plans to build comfort women memorials by lobbying US politicians. In extreme cases, several artists and musicians who are in favor of the far right in Japan have responded by producing online images and songs depicting comfort women as prostitutes. This illustrates that the transnational movements of memory is not an exclusive property of a certain social group but a common heritage that competing subjects utilize for maintaining or defending their current social status and strengthening the cause of their social movement and world view. Memoryscapes are adopted and transformed by "the concerted efforts of memorial entrepreneurs" who seek to realize their sociopolitical hopes and ideals connected to the past (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008a)[2]. That is, memoryscapes should be seen as the result of struggles and conflicts between social groups who appropriate and deploy sociocultural capital to maintain their hegemony (Alderman & Inwood, 2013). Exploring these involvements of numerous social groups in constructing comfort women memorials in the US, this study discusses the extended effects of memory politics and memoryscapes on the politics of identity and status of ethnic groups in immigrant society.

To allow me to discuss and analyze these three aforementioned themes as they impact the globalized memory of comfort women, I conducted fieldwork in Oct 2015 in Bergen County, New Jersey where the first comfort women monument was constructed in the US on Oct 23, 2010. In this period of fieldwork, I met several people who contributed to the construction of the memorial such as a painter, Korean-American activists, and local politicians. To talk with other Korean-Americans involved in similar

[2] Quoted from Figure 17, no page number

commemorative projects in other areas of the US, I conducted Skype interviews with activists in California, specifically the city of Glendale. The data collected through those interviews have been used to help me understand the process and politics of transplanting memory of comfort women in the US, the implications of comfort women memorials in scaling up public recognition of this human rights issue, and the extended impacts of this memory politics as it originates from and involves people outside of Korea. Before examining the details of the civic activities behind commemorating the history of comfort women in the US, I explore several important concepts related to memory, memoryscapes, and belonging of ethnic group to provide the basis for understanding the geographic and social unbounding of comfort women memorials within immigrant communities.

Memory unbound

To understand the transnational movement of memory of comfort women in the US, it is necessary to explore the mobile nature of memory, which is increasingly discussed and examined by scholars. One of the several subjects we should consider in this section is the potential reasons that lead memory to be circulated transnationally. Traditionally, memory had been considered as a legacy "firmly embedded within the 'Container of the Nation-State'" (Levy & Sznaider, 2002, p. 88). Especially, if a certain memory was confined to the matter of a subordinate social group, it has usually been ignored and forgotten due to its faint impacts and influences in a society. In such cases, those memories are likely to be more limited to local and regional issues and identities. To form a social consensus about public care for dismissed memories, many scholars

agree that those neglected experiences of marginalized subjects ought to be represented in space and diffused into a broader collective awareness (Alderman, 2003; Alderman & Inwood, 2013; Bennett, 2003; Bosco, 2004; Calhoun, 2010; Coombes, 2003; Courtheyn, 2016; Dwyer, 2000; Dwyer & Alderman, 2008b; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Stewart, 1995; Till, 2008). As of late, we have seen the diffusion of public sentiment with memory spilling over into transnational regions outside the origins of the commemorated atrocity (Assmann, 2014; Levy & Sznaider, 2002). Particularly, victims of the Holocaust and their allies have established a precedent for the diffusion and transformation of memory of the Nazi persecution across the international borders. By expanding the memory politics of the Holocaust beyond the nation-state to make it a global concern, numerous social actors, groups, and whole countries have redefined anti-Semitism as an international human and civil rights issue.

As for the forces that transform memories of local communities into transnational ones, Levy and Sznaider (2002, p. 91) point to the significant contribution of "technological changes in the means of communication" to diffusion of memory. No doubt, media sources can expose hidden aspects of marginalized experiences to the public "through a constant repetition of images and words" (Ibid). Actually, Korean-American civic activists say that the broadcast of Hwang, Geum Joo's public testimony in Nov 1992 in Washington D.C. was a catalyst for some of the cognitive change among US citizens in acknowledging the history of comfort women during WWII (한국정신대문제대책협의회20년사편찬위원회, 2014, p. 290). At the same time, the strides of the US 1950's and 1960's civil rights movement among African-Americans were propelled, in part, by gaining public sympathy through the televising and reporting of racism against protestors. Yet, at

this point, we should extend the scope of potential reasons for the worldwide movement of public memory beyond technological advance of communication, as it is expected that there are subjects who spontaneously appropriate and transplant the memory of others into their communities to serve their own specific purposes. Technical support of media sources should rather be regarded as the minimum requirement for the transnational migration of memory, not as the sole cause.

The first clue to the current trend of transmigrated memory can be found in the fact that "the coupling of state and nation was gradually replaced by the coupling of state and society" (Nora, 1989, p. 11). That is to say, the spectrum of public attentions to memory has been getting more and more unbound from national hegemony and ideology. As collective values have become increasingly deterritorialized and reterritorialized, the memory of certain social groups and their struggles can be diffused to external communities although ideals of nation-state were still alive enough to govern people with an illusion of totalitarian ideologies. Given the current prevalence of diaspora around the world, ethnic groups tend to bring and transplant memories of their relatives and families into their new local destination communities (Jacobson, 2002; Novick, 2000; Shirinian, 1998). As these transnationally-migrated memories often appeal to the sense of human rights among local residents, public memory should not be approached as a legacy only appropriated within and confined to national and ethnic boundaries any more (Levy & Sznaider, 2002).

As many studies have already explored and found relations between transnational memory and ethnic migration, we need to focus on potential causes of migrated memories to explain how narratives of comfort women have been appropriated and

represented by Korean-Americans in the US. Although there could be many other reasons for the transnational movement of memories, this study strives to explain the significant role of memory in forming ethnic belongingness, identity, and empowerment to uncover the initial objectives of Korean-Americans who transplanted comfort women commemorative issues in the US.

In the face of globalized capitalism, the developed world such as the US and Western Europe has become the destination of immigrants from all around the world (Borjas, 1990; Brubaker, 2001; Bundred & Levitt, 2000; Glazer & Moynihan, 1963; Joppke, 1998; Khadria, 2008; Zúñiga & Hernández-León, 2005). As we know, the integration and assimilation of immigrant groups into mainstream of society is more difficult socially and spatially than initially expected. As Glazer and Moynihan (1963, p. 290) asserted, “The point about the melting pot is that it did not happen.” Moreover, with postmodernist viewpoints, many social studies have emphasized the anti-assimilationist movements based upon multiculturalism in immigrant society (Glazer, 1998; Howe, 1999; Kleivan & Brøsted, 1985; Kymlicka, 1995; Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 2000). Underlying the conceptual basis of those studies, poststructuralist and postmodernist critiques insist that indigenous power of subordinate groups should lead to autonomous political status of those who have been marginalized to escape from foundational and universal hegemony of social structure (Hollinger, 2006; I. M. Young, 2011). Seemingly, those arguments focus on pluralist and particularist viewpoints that have been valid to understanding the superficial aspects of multicultural and multiethnic society formed by transnational migration.

With the help of poststructuralist perspectives, we have gained a greater

understanding of how an immigrant group develops and maintains its cultural heritage and identity without integration or assimilation into a wider 'host' society. In reality, however, ethnic groups have constantly invented various strategies to communicate with other racial and ethnic groups and survive unfavorable conditions of immigrant society (Brubaker, 2001). By reexamining the validity of poststructuralist critiques, Brubaker sheds light on the 'return of assimilation' in destinations of immigrants such as Germany, France, and the US (Ibid). Whereas conventional approach to assimilation has been centered on pure and total integration in social, cultural, political, and economic realms, he introduces the current trend of academic interests "to consider multiple reference populations and correspondingly segmented forms of assimilation" (Ibid, p. 540). That is, people of immigrant communities selectively appropriate and utilize human and social capital embedded in the host society for improving their economic and sociopolitical status rather than collectively focus on a unitary movement. In this respect, Brubaker (2001, p. 535) refers to the process of assimilation as one of varying degrees of strategies adopted by immigrants to be similar to '"host" populations' and escape sociopolitical marginalization.

Even though Brubaker (2001, p.539) provides a useful frame for understanding "immigrant integration" even when sociocultural conditions seem controlled by postmodernist perspectives, one thing he appears to overlook is that ethnic groups in immigrant societies continue to excavate and develop a common identity rooted in their origins. This seemingly contradictory condition is supported by the fact that 'even theories of nomadic rhizomes include "nodes" – those sites of intersecting movements or "lines of flight"' (Kaplan, 1996, p. 143). This metaphor used by Caren Kaplan raises our

understanding of the dual aspect inherent in immigration, namely that immigrant populations take root in indigenous soil without losing their distinct sociocultural identity. With regard to this, a notable fact we obtain from the work of Fortier (2000) is that social groups do not abandon a collective identity but rather utilize it for preserving their social status in the process of integrating themselves into upper political and economic system.

In Fortier's (2000) discussion on ethnic belongingness, however, relations between assimilation and identity formation are omitted despite the significant role of identity in raising public recognition in the eyes of the host population. Her partial explanation based on multiculturalism reiterates the similar error of biased views found in Brubaker's work (2001), both of which lead to an incomprehensive understanding of the politics of immigrant memory and cultural identity. Concentrating on the internal process of group identity formation, she misses the importance of "the moral integration of society" that can be achieved by immigrant groups collaborating with host populations (Honneth, 2004, p. 354). Even if an ethnic community deliberately constructs a collective identity that is appealing to a host society, it would not contribute to politics of retaining immigrant identity without "socially standardized recognition reactions" from local people and political groups (Ibid). In this respect, it can be said that Fortier (2000) has left open an academic void in the task of bridging the gap between identity politics and social integration of immigrants. Not only the work of Fortier (Ibid), but also most studies of memory politics and ethnic identity have not identified immigrants' strategies of using public recognition of host society for sociopolitical and economic assimilation (Benmayor & Skotnes, 1994; Blunt, 2007; Carsten, 1995; Chang, 2005; Fortier, 2000; Ganguly, 1992). With all of this in mind, the one of this study's aims is to find the clues

that link the transnational migration of memory and the political and social empowerment of ethnic communities, using the representations of comfort women memory in the US.

Even though Fortier (2000) does not give much attention to the assimilation of immigrants into ‘core culture’ and its implications for identity politics, her study contributes to our understanding of appropriation of memory and its implications for identity formation among immigrant groups. To substantiate her idea about memory and identity formation, she adopts the concept of ‘performativity’, a term used to describe the structural forces formed by “stylized repetition of acts” (Butler, 2003, 2011a; 2011b, p. 192). Influenced by Judith Butler, Fortier poses a challenge to “performative acts” (2000, p. 5) that “perform a certain action and exercise a binding power” (Butler, 2011a, p. 171). Based on the nuance found in Fortier (2000) and Butler (2011a), we can notice that both feminist scholars criticize the coercive aspects of common identity and unified ideals inherent in the collectivity of performative acts. Actually, Fortier (2000) warns of the potential risk originating from excessively-secured identity as it would ignore ‘difference’ existing in a social group. Despite her critical view of a group identity, however, what we can adopt from Fortier’s discussion is the concept of “collective performances of belonging”, which helps us understand the significant aspects of identity politics and commemorative activities of subordinate subjects (Ibid, p. 6). It should be noted that “performative memory” is formed by “bodily” adoption of spiritual heritage which is distinctively inherited from generation to generation in a social group (Connerton, 1989, p. 71). On the one hand, there is a potential risk in collective identity as performative memory can be used for naturalizing the hegemony of a social group that Fortier criticizes. On the other hand, however, we should remember the fact that if public

memory is appropriated, performed, and represented within the lived experiences of marginal subjects, it can contribute to forming and increasing social recognition of human rights issues that have been excluded from language-based knowledge production system (Bosco, 2004; Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004; Jelin, 1994). As this contradictory nature of collective memory is also found in the contested memory of comfort women among and between ethnic groups in the US, this study analyzes how public memory is differently appropriated to varying degrees by social groups and thus has the potential contribution of raising global attention to marginalized experiences through memoryscape or commemorative landscape construction.

Although the commemorative geography of comfort women in the US was initiated by Korean-Americans with strategic objectives of developing and advancing a shared sense of Korean ethnicity and drawing public attention to Korean communities in US society, it has an even broader range of implications relating to the symbolically-contested nature of space in the diffusion of comfort women memory. Actually, we can find several cases in which the narratives of a certain community are appropriated and dramatized by another social group according to their sociopolitical status and objectives (Hoskins, 2010). Especially when those narratives are materialized and visualized in various forms of public recognition and commemoration, different social classes and ethnic groups come into conflict and debate over hegemony and ideology (Bosco, 2004; Paez & Liu, 2011; Robertson & Hall, 2007). Depending on how subjects interpret and utilize discourses created within and through the memoryscape of historical sites, they can raise public recognition and social respect for their political objectives and social movements. With regard to this, Hoskins (2010) uses the term “narrative economy” to

indicate the significant impact that stories of ethnic identity and suffering at historical sites have on memory and identity politics. When we adopt this idea of narrative economy, we then understand how memoryscapes should be seen as “symbolic capital” that can be utilized for heterogeneous sociopolitical objectives (Rose-Redwood, 2008). More specifically, “places of memory… may be symbolic spaces where officials and other social groups express their contemporary political agendas to a larger ‘public’” (Forest, Johnson, & Till, 2004, p. 358).

Inevitably, the potential political impacts realized through memoryscapes can compel different social groups into more intensified struggles. These struggles originate from heterogeneous interpretations of a historical event depicted in spaces of memory. Particularly, if memoryscapes are formed in places where various ethnic groups converge, tensions between those groups can increase as they compete with each other and struggle for raising public recognition within the host society. In immigrant societies, the fundamental aim of ethnic groups with respect to memory politics is to validate a common identity that can challenge the hegemony. Hegemony operates “by acknowledging the needs and ideas of subordinate groups and then seeming to incorporate the interests of subordinate groups into the national collective identity” (Alderman & Inwood, 2013, p. 191). For the immigrant community, they may see some dominant ideas and values retained in public memory while more radical and traumatic chapters in the lived experiences of immigrant subjects are silenced or reframed (Ibid). To fulfill this objective of claiming control over their own memory politics, ethnic groups residing in immigrant society strive to appeal to the sense of public morality “on the basis of specific forms of reciprocal recognition” since moral obligation can be the most

important and effective cause for political agendas of each social group (Honneth & Farrell, 1997, p. 17). For this reason, political activists among immigrant groups utilize mediating sources and symbolic forms that can be encountered in everyday lives such as memorials and cultural representations to force mutual recognition with local dominant political groups.

Despite the significant need for bilateral cooperation in memory politics, however, the political strategies of ethnic groups to work with host populations within public commemoration have not received much scholarly attention, especially in geography. In the case of conflicts over memory, much academic work has been concentrated on immigrants versus nativists (Anderson, 2006; Roudometof, 2002; Weiner, 2015). On the one hand, it is true that the cultural norms and values of immigrants tend to conflict with perspectives inherent in an indigenous society. Nonetheless, as seen in the case of comfort women memorials constructed in the US, it is important not to ignore the fact that an immigrant community often needs to work with local people and join in the political activities of host society to boost public recognition and draw collective commitment to support their own immigrant memory politics. This political direction to transform local people's remembrance may take a hint from the Holocaust memory represented in the US. There have been many studies that explore how Holocaust memory has been transnationally remembered with varying degrees of cultural collaboration and shared symbolic forms (Langer, 1991; Levy & Sznaider, 2002; Linenthal, 2001; Rothberg, 2009; Stier, 2009; J. E. Young, 1993; Zelizer, 1998). Commonly, those studies have analyzed and accepted the significant role that the mass media and the contents of cultural products have on infiltrating and naturalizing the sense

of social justice into the larger public sphere. Moreover, those studies point out that the memory of the Holocaust has been transnationally dispersed by the diasporic migration of survivors and their efforts to "transform the transitory embodied or communicative memory into a long-term cultural memory based on monuments and museums" (Assmann, 2010, p. 98). As indicated in Assmann's work (Ibid), the transnational diffusion of the Holocaust memory has been progressed simultaneously with diaspora of Jewish migrants who have made efforts to construct their identity based on victimhood of the Holocaust (Fogel, 2000, p. 3). As descendants of those immigrants have learned and internalized the history of victimhood, the traumatic memory experienced by their ancestors can be inherited and take root within immigrant societies from generation to generation (Ibid). These collective movements for ethnic identity and remembrance of traumatic memory can be brought into social morality by various types of "sites of memory" such as museums, monuments, and remains of past history (Blickstein, 2009).

In the process of deterritorializing and reterritorializing traumatic memories of an ethnic group, we note that there are many complicated circumstances and sociopolitical procedures that need to be analyzed for understanding transnational circulation and diffusion of commemorative values and forms. Synthetically, all those collective practices such as migration, identity politics, and formation of moral obligation are centered on public memory and, consequently, "scaled performances of memory" (Bosco, 2004). As explained by Butler (2003) and Fortier (2000), "performative acts" comprehensively focus scattered political power on unitary goal by reiterating collective practices and textual discourses. Even though these two scholars use the term "performative acts" in pessimistic nuance, it cannot be denied that everyday performances for creating different

scales of remembering and memoryscapes contribute to transnational movement and migration of human rights discourses and memory politics. Furthermore, with regard to its impact on memory politics, the memoryscape or commemorative landscape can be the primary source for reminding common people of marginalized experiences as it is repeatedly accessed and referenced in everyday lives and exposed to a large crowd, thus reproducing the sense of moral obligation and respect (Bosco, 2004; Dovey, 2001; Jelin & Hershberg, 1996; Till, 2003). Consequently, through a comprehensive discussion on memory, identity, and migration, we can better understand how the identity politics of ethnic groups intersect with and depend upon a re-scaling of memoryscape and human rights issues as they impact marginalized subjects with traumatic memory (Assmann, 2010; Withers, 1996).

Transnational migration of comfort women memory into the US

As explained above, identity formation among migrant populations inevitably results in appropriating and deploying collective memory of homeland to strengthen the common sense of belonging (Fortier, 2000). However, there are specific conditions for suitable types of memory to conduct identity politics in immigrant communities. Above all, memory of the home country should be broadly and mutually accepted by people from both the mother country and the immigrant communities. According to Hall (1990, p. p. 223), “cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes.” If memory used for identity formation has “traumatic character”, it can achieve “the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalization” (Ibid, p. 225). The sense of bitterness retained in traumatic memory can be easily infiltrated into

the emotions of the immigrant ethnic group who have also been marginalized and excluded from mainstream of host society. For this reason, many ethnic groups tend to use traumatic history to induce people to form a common sense of belonging (Crowley, 2007; Hall, 1990; Waxman, 2006; Winter, 2007).

In exploring the diffusion and circulation of comfort women memory into the US, I found evidence of Korean-American activists adopting and appropriating the history of sexual slavery imposed by Japan to develop and disseminate a common sense of ethnicity among Korean communities. When we think about the primary aim of identity formation led by Korean-American activists, the issue of integration unavoidably appears. Several studies have demonstrated that the identities of immigrants considerably influence their ability to integration (Cooper, 2005; Nandi & Platt, 2014; Rumbaut, 1994; Sandberg, 1974). However, most studies of integration show limits within the spectrum of analysis as they primarily focus on fragmented identities between generations and conflicts of intrinsic cultural identity within the process of Americanization. That is, these studies tend to exclude the possibility that innate cultural instinct sustained in ethnic identity can contribute to raising the degree of integration into immigrant societies consisting of different races and ethnic groups. At this point, we need to pay attention to comments of a Korean-American civic activist who initiated the project of comfort women memorials in the US.

> In the midst of confrontation between white policemen and African-Americans in 1992, the most vulnerable group was Koreans around the neighborhood of Olympic Blvd…… In spite of mass murder and arson attacks, they were absolved since political power of Blacks and Hispanics was strong, and politicians were in the forefront to defend

> them. [Interruption] Actually, we did not want to put human rights issues and Japanese war crimes first. For the last 30 years, we have constantly made efforts to strengthen political power of Korean-Americans. But as Koreans got obsessed with internal issues of Korean community ignoring participation in US politics, we decided to bring the contested issue, the history of comfort women, to raise public attentions to a common sense of ethnicity among Koreans and US citizens. We expected that if this is successful, then Koreans will be politically involved in civil society of the US. – *From an interview with the Korean-American civic activist, D.S., transcribed and translated by author*

As mentioned in the conversation above, the primary interest of Korean-American civic activists was about sociopolitical integration of Korean-Americans into US civil society. Since there had been great property damage and physical injury within Korean-American communities during the 1992 Los Angeles riots, Korean immigrants felt they needed to build human networks in US society and strengthen their political influence, especially relative to other historically marginalized groups (blacks and Hispanics). While the US police forces had concentrated their efforts on protecting white communities and suppressing the riots, Korean-Americans were experiencing a lack of protection from government authorities. Since the Korean immigrant community had experienced severe damages and sociopolitical exclusion during the riots, Korean-American civic activists engaged in several activities to encourage voter registration with the aim of forming a common identity and integrating Koreans into the mainstream of US society (Lien, 2010, p. 183). However, the Korean-American civic activist, D.S., indicated during an interview that the political participation of Korean immigrants had fallen short of expectations, even after the traumatic experiences of the Los Angeles riots.

Indeed, several studies of political activities among ethnic groups in the US show that Korean-Americans have until recently been less active in voter registration than other ethnic communities (Collet, Wong, & Ramakrishnan, 2001; Uhlaner, Cain, & Kiewiet, 1989; Wong, Lien, & Conway, 2005). According to civic activist, D.S., Korean-Americans have tended to concentrate more on individual businesses to survive in US society rather than community-based political issues. With regard to this unwillingness of Korean immigrants to integrate into the host society, Korean American civic activist, D.S. also mentioned that their passive attitudes result from their obstinacy and self-esteem. Actually, even though many Korean immigrants conventionally operate small businesses in the US, their former jobs and careers in Korea were located at a relatively high level such as professors, doctors, and lawyers. As a result, comparing their current lives in the US with previous social status in Korea, many Korean immigrants are unwilling to expose themselves to the public and are indifferent to political participation in Korean communities.

Through my interview with D.S., I began to understand that Korean-American civic activists adopted the traumatic memory of comfort women to form a common sense of ethnic belonging and overcome indifference of Korean-Americans to political participation (Brubaker, 2001; Fortier, 2000). At this point, we need to explore the core reasons why Korean-Americans selected the horrible experiences of comfort women as a mechanism to raise public recognition and political participation of the Korean community. As I have suggested before, the traumatic character of comfort women history has cognitive impacts in forming a common sense of social justice and brings about emotional appeal to people who have also experienced marginalization even if that

marginalization was not sexual slavery at the hands of the Japanese. This can be explained by the fact that people who have undergone their “own marginalizing experiences” can feel an emotional shift toward the identity of “others” who have gone through similar types of disenfranchisement and discrimination within the same imagined social community (Villenas, 1996). According to this logic, we can understand the linkage between the adoption of comfort women memory in Korean-American communities and the process of overcoming the trauma of the 1992 Los Angeles riots that was commonly felt (and perhaps continues to be felt) by Korean-Americans. In escaping from the traumatic experiences of the riots, the memory of comfort women could be the symbolic source for grouping and developing the collective sense of ethnicity because Korean-Americans could emotionally be connected to comfort women with their own marginalizing experiences and build solidarity with cultural power inherent in the history of sexual slavery. Consequently, it can be said that the emotional link originating from the two traumas has encouraged Korean-Americans to select the memorializing of comfort women as they (re)construct an ethnic belonging and use it for enhancing political engagement and a declaration of legitimacy within US society.

Simultaneously, from the perspectives of US citizens, the comfort women issue can be regarded as a contested but invaluable topic for convincing common people of universal values of human rights. Furthermore, given that US society consists of multi-ethnic and racial groups, it is possible that there are many ethnic communities and social classes who understand the sadness, injury, and indignity felt by comfort women due to their own political biographies (Villenas, 1996). An interview with a Korean-American civic activist who led the construction of the comfort women statue in Glendale,

California in 2013 vividly demonstrates that the emotions retained among comfort women could easily penetrate other ethnic communities that had also experienced human rights abuses. The interview illustrates clearly how this activist framed seemingly un-related ethnic struggles alongside with the comfort women issue.

> One thing notable in Glendale is that there are many Armenians living in the town. Armenians had experienced the ethnic cleansing…… but the Turkish government still denies the crime [like the Japanese government]. So, Armenians understand the sadness of comfort women better than anyone. [Interruption] Armenians had gone through the time of silence for decades too [like comfort women] because the survivors could not explain the genocide to their children as it was too horrible to tell. But their descendants started to report the genocide to remember the history. They said, "If we had let the world realize the inhumanity of ethnic cleansing in a louder and clearer voice, the Holocaust would have never occurred." [Interruption] So, when we brought this issue [of comfort women] to city council members and Armenian-Americans, they understood very well. [Interruption] When they [freeholders] received many letters of complaint from Japanese politicians and citizens, they told them, "Enough of your nonsense." – *From an interview with the Korean-American civic activist, P. in CA, transcribed and translated by author*

From the interviews with the two Korean-American civic activists that I have provided here, we can infer that the transnational migration and circulation of comfort women memory into the US has been facilitated to form a shared sense of ethnic belonging and thus encourage Korean-Americans to be more involved in US politics, and thus has built up its momentum with the aid of sympathetic support from inside and outside of Korean-American communities. This reminds us of the fact that public

memory can function as “performative acts” to refresh the collectivity of an ethnic community through “a repetition of [symbolic] images and words” (Butler, 2003, 2011a; Fortier, 2000; Levy & Sznaider, 2002). This in turn encourages us to consider how the transnational diffusion of memory politics is not a direct copying of politics from Korea but a complex translation and appropriation of that memory in the destination.

We should also explore the sociocultural environments of the immigrant society consisting of these different races and ethnic groups to understand further reasons for expanding the commemoration of comfort women and controversies over the history of sexual slavery into the US. Because of the cultural character of immigrant societies, different ethnic groups should expect to encounter alien environments and heterogeneous values and norms. In this milieu, the most desirable condition for a nationwide campaign is that there is a social consensus for “collaboration, integration, and coalitions” among marginal subjects and host populations (Bradshaw, 2000, p. 134; Hopkins, 2006). Despite the disparate cultural characters of each social group, if there are “collective attitudes to the extent to which various subjects become aware of the commonality of their social status” and “come to see themselves as confronting similar tasks of reproduction,” social groups can align themselves with other racial, ethnic, and religious communities (Honneth, 1996, p. 165). In the process of collaborating with other ethnic and racial groups, marginal groups can find “the collective interest… within a horizon of moral experience that admits of normative claims to recognition and respect.” (Ibid, p. 166) According to this argument, morality can be the most common and acceptable matter around which social groups can build up a collective sense of social justice and work towards a common goal of human rights. In this respect, commemorative campaigns of

comfort women could provide motivations for collaboration with others who feel indignation and have discriminatory experiences in the US.

> I have a lot of feelings about human rights and social justice. And it has nothing to do with opinion of Americans. It has to do with things that exist in the world. I've studied international human rights abroad at Temple University in the law school. When I was actually working toward the international organization, the food and agricultural organization in the United Nations, I worked for them, in my junior year abroad, in law school, and I was a consultant to them, the following 25 years. [Interruption] We are… those of us who have voted for comfort women memorial [in New Jersey]. We were determined that we are not gonna let people ignore history. They may repeat it anyway, but it isn't gonna be because they didn't know about what happened, and they didn't know about how wrong it was. [Interruption] We had slavery in this state of New Jersey up until 1845. [Interruption] Mason-Dixon Line was drawn in the 1760s. [Interruption] It draws a line below which slavery was permitted, up which slavery was prohibited. [Interruption] So it's very appropriate to have monument [in New Jersey] to those who were in slave, same concept, as comfort women were just different… different day and in different side… a matter of degree. – *From an interview with the city council member, G, in Bergen County, NJ, transcribed by author*

> People said to me, "J. [the interviewee's pseudonym], you know… you're a politician. Why would you want to alienate? You know, because we do have a pretty good population here of Japanese people there in Bergen County as well." And I said, "That doesn't matter. You know, this is not about blanketing, [Interruption] this is about doing right thing. This was a right thing to do." [Interruption] It's human rights, and particularly, the issue of sexual slavery. The sexual slavery is still a major issue today in 2015 as well as in the 1930s and

> 1940s. [Interruption] You cannot bury what happened seventy years ago. You can't minimize what happened seventy years ago. Uh… you know, people do that what the Jewish Holocaust, people do that well… slavery wasn't that bad. Those were bad things. Those were very bad things. – *From an interview with the city council member, J, in Bergen County, NJ, transcribed by author*

Based on discussions with two city council members in Bergen County, New Jersey, it is notable that they voted for the comfort women monument to be constructed in front of the courthouse in 2013 as they had been inspired by "the normative content of morality on the basis of specific forms of reciprocal recognition" (Honneth & Farrell, 1997, p. 17). Even though these officials are not directly involved in the experiences of comfort women, the most important motive driving them to work for comfort women memorial originates from the sociocultural character of US society, which consists of various racial/ethnic groups and various histories of marginalization. In particular, they encountered frequent opportunities to hear the stories about human rights abuses and war crimes in Bergen County, where various immigrant groups settled down. These government authorities joined a common sense of morality and could invest in a memorial to report on and bring recognition to the marginalizing experiences of subordinate subjects. As both interviewees mention, the experience of comfort women is not the sole concern among them or other US citizens. Rather, the power and mobility of comfort women comes from how it can resonate and become connected with human rights issues experienced by various racial and ethnic groups such as African-American slavery, the Irish Famine, the Holocaust, and the Armenian Genocide (Figure 3.1).

Consequently, one should be aware of how the sociocultural environments of a destination country can form a favorable milieu for increasing social recognition of human rights issues and “moral motivation” and thus set the stage for a successful transnational spread of memory politics (Honneth, 1992, p. 196). But simply setting the stage is not enough to facilitate a circulation and translation of memory from one country to another. In the case of comfort women memory migrating into the US, there have been several pioneers or “memorial entrepreneurs” (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008a) who have influenced commemoration of the history of sexual slavery, taking advantage of comfort women testimony spread through media sources within the US in the early 1990s (한국정신대문제대책협의회20년사편찬위원회, 2014). Motivated by public testimony from surviving comfort women, Korean-American civic activists have conducted a wide range of social movements, such as sponsoring exhibitions of comfort women history, producing and distributing documentary videos, and hosting an international symposium on WWII sexual slavery (Ibid). With the momentum created by these commemorative campaigns in the US, Korean-American civic activists were successful in bringing the comfort women issue to the US Congress and the aforementioned adoption of House Resolution 121 (Ibid). As part of this process, many Congressional Representatives were inspired by the narratives of comfort women and committed to pass the resolution.

> Dana Rohrabarcher, a member of the Congress from CA, asked “Now we have too many tasks to do. In this situation, why do we have to discuss the contested issue between Korea and Japan here in the Congress?” And then, Tom Lantos, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said to him in a firm voice, “As human rights issues are the most fundamental matter to deal with, we have to propose the adoption of the resolution and

be involved in this matter." – *Translated by author (한국정신대문제대책협의회20년사편찬위원회, 2014, p. 303)*

This congressional victory was achieved by the efforts of Korean-Americans to utilize discourses of comfort women for strengthening the collectivity of Korean ethnic communities (Fortier, 2000) and concentrate their political power on collaborations with US politicians (Brubaker, 2001). Furthermore, since many US politicians were touched by the stories of human rights violation as they adopted the resolution, we see how a creation of public recognition and "moral responsibility" is an essential condition for memory politics to advance and spread across a host society (Brubaker, 2001; Honneth, 1996, p. 162).

On the one hand, this circulation and official acceptance of comfort women memory might not fit into Villenas' argument (1996) that only those who have similar types of marginalizing experiences share a common sense of emotional and political alliance with other victimized groups. In the case of the H.Res.121, it would suggest that even if members of a social group do not have marginalized experiences, they can be spiritually and politically connected to marginal subjects with moral motivation. Although it is true that US politicians were not directly linked to the traumatic memory of sexual slavery, the immigrant character of American society would not allow them to ignore the marginalized experiences of racial and ethnic minorities within the US and thus situate comfort women within that larger historical and moral worldview. Rather, we should understand the H.Res.121 as the outcome of political integration practiced by an immigrant community in US society. In this process, memory politics was strategically used by Korean-Americans to collect the scattered senses of a Korean community, and

consequently, became the political bridge to connect US citizens to a human rights issue long unknown to many Americans.

Since the H.Res.121 in 2007, Korean-Americans have sought to keep the momentum to commemorate the history of comfort women in the US. For this purpose, they have been involved in building memorials to address the physical and cultural wounds endured by comfort women. This approach to memory politics can frequently be found in the US such as the Holocaust museums and memoryscapes devoted to African-American slavery (Alderman & Campbell, 2008; Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Levy & Sznaider, 2002; Linenthal, 2001). As Till (2008) indicates, experiences of racial and ethnic minorities are hardly accepted and acknowledged by official, language-based knowledge production systems. In contrast to authoritative system of discourse production, artistic performances and visual arts can be utilized by marginal subjects to maximize the impacts of "sense-memories" on public recognition and provoke moral indignation of those who have not directly experienced marginalization but who are confronted with the memory-work of dealing with trauma (Ibid, pp.106-107).

To proceed with this strategy, Korean-American civic activists have approached local officials in US towns having large Korean populations to prepare public land on which a comfort women monument can be built under local legislation. Even though the H.Res.121 was the valuable outcome to commemorate the history of sexual slavery, Korean-Americans needed to conduct more civic activities to obtain a wide range of public attention for the comfort women cause. In this respect, forming local memoryscapes could be a prospective strategy that ethnic minorities to "re-scale" comfort women memory in a way in which it can be accessed on a daily basis and provide people

with routine impressions of human rights issues (Alderman, 2003; Till, 2008). By the way, before doing this, Korean-American activists strove to prepare the foundation of memoryscape by keeping in touch with artists and politicians in the US, and inducing them to feel the seriousness and moral gravity of war crimes committed against comfort women. This was the strategy described by one such activist and artist during interviews.

> Usually, in US towns where many Koreans are living like New York, Philadelphia, and L.A., Korean-American politicians work for obtaining broad support from US politicians. [Interruption] With that momentum formed by that political support, we got in the election campaign and contributed to the election of the female executive director in the county. Subsequently, we let her to visit the House of Sharing [the center for taking care of surviving comfort women in Korea] and persuaded politicians to vote for construction of the monument in Bergen County. – *From an interview with the Korean-American civic activist, D.S., transcribed and translated by author*

> I had never heard the term [before], as most Americans would say. So I heard [first] the term Comfort Women… and I researched that a little in those days… [Interruption] She [an author of a book about comfort women] spoke of the slavery here and gave and talked about comfort women, and helped me to get some ideas for paintings [depicting comfort women] that I was doing. [Interruption] And I believe it was KBS [a national broadcasting company in Korea]… uh… that did spot her on the news and someone had seen that on the internet from the House of Sharing, and I said, "We would like to meet the [comfort] women." Then I met the women and everything was changed. – *From an interview with the Painter who produced the monument in Palisades Park, S, transcribed by author*

As several US politicians and citizens encountered the truth of sexual slavery, they

began to be inspired by the civic activities of Korean-Americans and participate in building public approval for the constructions of the first comfort women monument of the US in Palisades Park, New Jersey and the replica of the comfort women statue in Glendale, California (Figure 3.2). As the memory of comfort women began to appear visually and spread across US cities where these and other monuments have been constructed or planned, other ethnic groups have also been encouraged to join the commemorative projects of Korean-American civic activists and collaborate with other immigrant communities to diffuse comfort women memorials throughout the US (Figure 3.3, Table 3.1). The interview below discusses these inter-ethnic group collaborations focused around comfort women.

> There was not a general consensus about the history of comfort women in San Francisco. [Interruption] We got a call for our helps from SF before. [Interruption] In SF, the construction of the comfort women monument was initially led by Chinese community. Also in China, a new research announced a few years ago that more than 200,000 girls were victimized just within China [during WWII]. [Interruption] So we decided to assist them as much as we can, and then, invited a former comfort woman from Korea to public testimony held in San Francisco. She testified on the voting day and it [the statue construction] was unanimously approved. [Interruption] CWJC was established in SF… consisting of Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Jews… from religious figures to scholars… people from various groups work together in CWJC… worked for textbooks in which comfort women issues will be addressed. Students in CA will use it from this fall semester. – *From an interview with the Korean-American civic activist, P. in CA, transcribed and translated by author*

From the interview with the civic activist who led the campaign for the approval

of Glendale comfort women memorial, I found several notable things. First, as the comfort women monument becomes known to other ethnic communities in the US, especially the Chinese community that also carries the wounds from sexual slavery during WWII, these non-Korean communities join the campaign themselves and work together with Korean-American civic activists. This demonstrates that the memoryscape creation process has the symbolic power to draw emotional and political supports from those who share the same kind of traumatic memory, which is hardly found in language-based discourses (Alderman & Campbell, 2008; Till, 2008, 2012). In addition to this, we can also infer that public memory symbolically represented within an immigrant society can lead to "scaled performances of memory", which can expand the memory politics of comfort women to globalized and transnational scale (Bosco, 2004; Kelly, 1997; Post, 2011).

Appropriation of comfort women memory

The core reason for the diffusion and public recognition of comfort women memory in the US is that the commemorative campaign of Korean-Americans seeks improvements in the general human rights of females who are still suffering from structural pressures of a masculine and sexist society. As suggested in the previous interview with K, various ethnic groups, even Japanese immigrants, joined and established the civic organization called CWJC to commemorate all forms of human rights abuses oppressing marginalized females throughout the world, not necessarily confining themselves to the matter of comfort women issues. This is because the campaign of Korean-Americans primarily appeals to and draws strength from the moral

indignation among human beings. It does so by using symbolic meanings visually produced within and through comfort women memorials (Honneth & Farrell, 1997; Till, 2008). The participants in this memorial construction clearly recognize the power of these symbolic forms.

> If you don't have memorials like this, people will never learn enough to even ask questions. [Interruption] This is humanity arisen from a particular event, and saying, "We are not gonna let this happen this again." And here's why. "Here're the facts, and you can't deny them. Because if you want to deny them, we approve them. We approve them with live witnesses, we approve them with photographs. And, we're just telling you, it's not acceptable. And, it seems to me that, that really hasn't been done before." – *From an interview with the city council member, G, in Bergen County, NJ, transcribed by author*

> Americans used to blame for the plan of the monument constructed in public land, saying, "This is just a Korean issue." So we told them, "This is, the original aim is not to construct a monument itself but to educate." And I kept saying, "I told you, you don't know about this history, even though this is a serious human rights issue that should be known to everyone." – *From an interview with the Korean-American civic activist, D.C., in New York, transcribed and translated by author*

As my interviews consistently revealed, Korean-American civic activists and elected officials in the US who helped construct comfort women monuments approached the history of sexual slavery as a general human rights issue that had to be addressed and remembered so that those war crimes do not happen again. The primary reason why other ethnic groups in San Francisco have participated in the campaign for the installation of the comfort women statue on public land is that they have considered the experiences of

comfort women as their own issues, not just a geopolitically-contested narrative between Korea and Japan. This shows a good example of a scaling up of the politics of subordinate social groups, as the marginalized experiences of comfort women have been raised to the level of globalized and transnational memory with the inclusive political activities of immigrant groups (Assmann, 2010, 2014; Blickstein, 2009; Bosco, 2004; Levy & Sznaider, 2002; Linenthal, 2001). The strong connection between diaspora and globalized memory has already been demonstrated in several studies of the Holocaust memory (De Cesari & Rigney, 2014; Levy & Sznaider, 2006; Rothberg & Yildiz, 2011). With regard to the diffusion of the Holocaust memory, we can also compare the memoryscape of comfort women to the expansion of Holocaust museums across the US as they both strategically utilize mediating sources of materialized memory with political activities of immigrant groups. Also like Holocaust memory, the memoryscapes of comfort women in the US have also made considerable leaps by Koreans collaborating with other ethnic groups. The significant difference between the traumatic memories of comfort women and Holocaust victims is that the victimized females of the sexual slavery during WWII are widely distributed throughout the East and Southeast Asian countries and the Netherlands whereas the Holocaust issue has primarily been considered as the traumatic history of a single ethnic group, although clearly the Holocaust made victims of many different groups (gay people, intellectually disabled, etc.). Even though the history of the Holocaust is now regarded as a worldwide human rights issue due to political activism and alliance building of Jewish populations, it can be said that the traumatic memory of comfort women has a broader range of ethnic communities and potential impacts on human rights movements. This potential power of comfort women memory

has already been demonstrated in the case of San Francisco as several Asian communities have appropriated the narratives of sexual slavery and lent their support to fulfilling the installation of the comfort women statue in downtown San Francisco.

While the memory of comfort women has been appropriated by non-Korean social actors and groups who have similar experiences of marginalization, it also can be used by those who want to reproduce dominant memory narratives and in contest the legitimacy of remembering more socially justice ways from the symbolically-contested nature of memory (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007; Forest et al., 2004; Hoskins, 2010). As Alderman and Inwood (2013) suggested, social groups tend to selectively put emphasis on certain narratives of historical truth and appropriate them for their own objectives. By doing so, they can produce specific forms of discourses fitting into their ruling system or political agendas. Actually, this variation on memory politics is the most serious concern of Korean-American civic activists in conducting the commemorative campaigns of comfort women history. These activists recognize that it is the interest of many Japanese officials to discredit the movement to memorialize WWII atrocities against women. As interviewed activists stated:

> Japan is now arguing, "Political role of Japan is really important to cope with China and keep peace in East Asia, so, in the US Congress, this is not the time for being concerned about comfort women which is seriously handled in Korea and China." Plus, they continue, "See, this is not the works of American citizens, this is done by the Korean government." [Interruption] Now, if the Korean government is getting involved in construction of comfort women monuments in US cities and this is known to US society, this can be nullified and the spirit of the H.Res.121 will be damaged. [Interruption] I think only comfort women

should be invited to the US Congress, not the representative and staffs of the House of Sharing [the center for taking care of surviving comfort women in Korea]. But he [the representative of the House of Sharing] does not accept that. He may be ambitious to get a political position [by using the cause of human rights movements of comfort women]. – *From an interview with the Korean-American civic activist, D.S., transcribed and translated by author*

Korea tends to bring the comfort women issue into anti-Japanese feelings. – *From an interview with the Korean-American civic activist, D.C., in New York, transcribed and translated by author*

Because this is the general human rights issue of all females, I think it is wrong to approach the comfort women issue with the political frame of conflicts between Korea and Japan. So, the Korean government is not an appropriate subject to deal with this issue. [Interruption] I argue that this should not be approached with nationalism. [Interruption] Congressmen from the Korean National Assembly and local government heads sometimes come and get involved in construction of comfort women statues by donating some money and inscribe their names on the monument…… I have negative feelings about them. It is possible that US citizens may think, "Ah, this is for Korean's benefits, Korean politicians' desire for giving some influences on it." This is variation. American citizens may say, "Why do we get involved in conflicts between Korea and Japan?" – *From an interview with the Korean-American civic activist, P. in CA, transcribed and translated by author*

Putting all those interviews together, we realize that some Korean politicians, and even some civic activists from Korea, have attempted to access and engage in the process of grass root memory-work conducted by Korean-Americans in the US. By doing so, they

might obtain political support and public attention back in Korea as comfort women issues are acknowledged as a top priority within diplomatic matters and problems with Japan.

Yet, as interviews with Korean-American civic activists suggest, the intervention of Korean political figures within US memorial politics can have a negative impact on the sociopolitical meanings assigned to comfort women monuments and thus harm practical outcomes. Even though politicians and civic activists from Korea usually claim to advocate human rights improvements of comfort women, their main focus is on the geopolitically-contested issues between Korea and Japan because it helps provoke public indignation against Japan and grow the strong sense of nationalism and patriotism within the home country of Korea. This type of hegemony and national ideology manipulated and prompted by collective traumatic memory runs the great risk of compromising productive approaches to human rights movements of marginalized social groups (Anderson, 2006; Forest et al., 2004; Hafner-Burton & Tsutsui, 2005; Howe, 1999). More seriously, as several members of the National Assembly of Korea plan to build a statue of comfort women in Dokdo Islets[3], there is a risk of spoiling the original intent of the commemorative campaigns of Korean-Americans. Dokdo Islets, located on the East Sea (Sea of Japan), is now under dispute between the Korean and Japanese governments although its sovereignty belongs to Korea (Figure 3.4). With this plan, Korean politicians intend to appropriate and utilize the contested nature of comfort women memory for constructing national hegemony and securing its territory by invoking the historical

[3] Lee, Han-soo (2017, January 17). Japan blasts S. Korea's plan for 'comfort women' statue on Dokdo. The Korea Times. Retrieved from http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2017/01/120_222229.html

suffering of women at the hands of Japan during WWII.

However, there is a serious problem in this plan because in the view of US citizens, the commemorative campaign of comfort women is seen as a deliberately organized and institutionalized project of the Korean government with the aim of holding a dominant position in diplomatic conflicts with Japan rather than prioritizing the human rights issues of females. The transnational circulation and diffusion of comfort women memory to the US has been seen publicly as valid not because it has advanced the geopolitical interests of Korea, but because it successfully appeals to a collective, inter-ethnic sense of social justice and the general human rights of traumatized females.

Concluding remarks

Paying attention to the traumatic memory of comfort women has moved across international borders into the US, this study has theorized and empirically examined the re-scaling of the politics of memory by Korean-Americans. Through this study, I realized that comfort women memory in the US has a broader range of socially-contested issues than I had initially expected. Even though I have not studied or explained all of the commemorative campaigns of Korean-Americans, I established three approaches to analyzing how and why memory moves transnationally and sought to answer each research question.

Firstly, wondering why the memory of comfort women moved to the US, I uncovered several clues to this question from interviews with Korean-American civic activists. Even though there are several other reasons for the transnationally-migrated memory of comfort women, I focus on the marginalizing experience of Korean-

Americans during the 1992 Los Angeles riots and connect it with desires for political consolidation and activism among Korean ethnic communities. As Korean-American leaders realized that they had been situated in a marginal status during and in the wake of the riots, they pursued political collaboration with mainstream US society. As Brubaker (2001) explained, ethnic communities in an immigrant society develop several strategies to assimilate and integrate themselves into mainstream of society rather than just investigate internal recognition based upon postmodernist perspectives. As a strategy to fulfill this goal, some might think that immigrant communities abandon their own cultural identity and heritage while adopting sociocultural values of host society. However, Fortier (2000) demonstrated that immigrant groups actively utilize and develop their own cultural identity to survive vulnerable condition in the host society. With Fortier's explanation, we can understand that Korean-American communities paid attention to the history of comfort women to develop the collective sense of ethnic community and use this memorial issue as momentum for integrating themselves into US society.

Secondly, although the memory politics of Korean-Americans was initiated with the aim of raising public attention to the struggles of Korean ethnic communities, it has inevitably recognized the general human rights issues faced by females. Because of sociocultural character of an immigrant society that consists of various racial and ethnic communities, there are numerus marginal subjects in US society who can understand and identify with the sadness and injury of comfort women (Villenas, 1996). From interviews with Korean-American civic activists, I found that people from other ethnic groups such as Armenian, Jewish, and Chinese paid great attention to the history of comfort women due to sympathetic feelings originating from their marginalizing experiences and thus

participated in the commemorative campaigns led by Korean-Americans. Furthermore, their social movements have evoked moral indignation among US citizens and politicians (Honneth, 1996; Honneth & Farrell, 1997) and resulted in the adoption of the H.Res.121 in 2007. As the traumatic memory of comfort women is visualized and diffused through constructions of comfort women monuments in US cities, more people become aware of the inhumanity of war crimes inflicted upon women by the Japanese during WWII. This reminds us of the fact that memoryscapes or commemorative landscapes provide common people with ‘sense memory’ and public recognition of moral obligation (Honneth & Farrell, 1997; Till, 2008).

Finally, this study focused on the odd use of comfort women memory to serve the political objectives of Korea. As Alderman and Inwood (2013) pointed out, public memory can be appropriated, and even in extreme cases, manipulated by other social groups to realize their sociopolitical goals. From this perspective, we understand that several visits of Korean politicians and civic activists to the US have been prompted by their seeking political populism, and more seriously, their activities in the US could become hazardous to the civic activities of Korean-Americans. In particular, the history of comfort women has been used by Korean politicians to apply pressure and indict Japan in ongoing geopolitical conflicts. There is a risk that people will become suspicious of the original intent of the commemorative campaigns led by Korean-Americans.

As briefly explained in this final section, a transnational conception of memory politics can connect with a wide range of sociopolitical issues within immigrant society. Moreover, there are more areas of memory politics not discussed in this study. The most important thing to remember is that immigrant groups can play a significant role in

scaling up the human rights movements of marginal subjects. As demonstrated by the memory politics of the Holocaust, we can expect that the traumatic memory of comfort women can also contribute to remembrance of marginalized social groups victimized by brutal war crimes.

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CONCLUSION

Dissertation Approach

When I started developing ideas for this project in 2015, I had not expected that the comfort women issue extended far beyond Korea. More females had been victimized during WWII than people usually recognize, and a great number of young women are still suffering from sexual slavery across the globe. The fact that a modern-state and its military forces would conduct a massive scale of human trafficking, force more than 200,000 women to participate in daily system of sexual exploitation, and then try to hide its war crimes by killing the enslaved victims toward the end of WWII should never be forgotten. The reason for remembrance of comfort women should be obvious. Needlessly to say, it is to remind people of the brutality of war crimes and prevent the same history from happening again. But remembrance is also necessary for granting rights and dignity to comfort women. Unfortunately, violence toward females and degradation of them can still be found all over the world. In this desperate situation, some hope in raising public recognition can be found in the transnational commemorative campaigns conducted by comfort women and allied civic activists. And important to geographers, we find that human rights movements and memory politics of comfort women has a key spatiality at work. With regard to this, geographic meanings underlying the commemorative campaigns of comfort women need to be explored and understood to develop prospective strategies of memory politics and further its impact on human rights improvements.

This dissertation project approached a study of the comfort women social movement in three major directions to gain a comprehensive understanding of its memory and identity politics. The first theme examined in this study explained the

intersectional vulnerability of comfort women and the social and spatial forces driving their identity formation as both victims and narrators of traumatic memory. The aim of that chapter/article was to point out and understand core reasons behind the marginalization and exclusion endured by comfort women after Japanese colonialism and how this marginal status had blocked them from publicly testifying about their experiences of sexual slavery until the 1990s. With this objective, I sought to extend the range of comfort women issues to general experiences of marginalized social groups. By doing so, I strove to explore how comfort women have overcome intersectional oppressions to narrate their past experiences and connect themselves to other females suffering from structural violence.

The second chapter/article focused on the strategic use of place-based politics within the commemorative campaign of comfort women. While analyses of the first chapter concentrated on the underlying reasons behind the development of comfort women's collective identity as protestors, the second chapter, as an extension of the previous one, highlights and analyzes how marginal status of comfort women has resulted in alternative strategies of protest that used symbolic forms and meanings to raise public attention to their traumatic memories. In doing so, they could represent and materially inscribe their grief and wounds within spaces and thus form memory spaces. These memoryscapes are dependent on the emotional senses of marginal subjects and seek to raise moral responsibility among the public.

Considering the significant meanings produced through place-based politics, the third chapter explores the memory of comfort women's sexual slavery as it is moving across international borders into the US. Given that the history of comfort women has

circulated within and beyond the Korean peninsula to become a globalized and transnational memory, we need to understand the primary forces that have shaped this transnationally-migrated commemorative campaign and its relationships with ethnic community identity and the wider campaign for human rights.

To work in addressing these objectives, I explored and discussed a number of articles and books regarding a wide range of concepts, such as intersectionality, power and discourse, recognition paradigm, memory-work, spaces of representation, and politics of immigrants. Based on implications and analytical frames acquired from the conceptual discussions, I have tried to extract valuable meanings that not only advance our understanding of the commemorative campaign of comfort women but also our general understanding of human rights movements of marginalized social groups. It is noteworthy that while the study of memory politics and social (in)justice are now well established in the geographic literature, there has been little work among geographers on memoryscape within Korea or the role of gender and sexual violence within commemorative political movements. To date, this dissertation represents the first and only study of comfort women within geography.

As I conclude this dissertation, it is important to note that I have thought about my positionality as a human being and as an academic researcher and how this positionality has shaped my approach to the subject. As a Korean, I used my political empathy and my language of homeland to understand the ideas of civic activists and participants within the comfort women campaign. However, I need to recognize the limitations that I should and did encounter as a Korean male, which no doubt posed several obstacles in meeting and talking with former comfort women. Indeed, my positionality as a Korean ‘male’ might

have repulsed some comfort women since there is a painful history of Korean males during Japanese colonialism watching young women being forced into military brothels and in some cases Korean men even helped the Japanese colonial government in the area of human trafficking. For this reason, I used interview scripts of comfort women previously recorded and archived by feminist scholars and civic activists in Korea. In conducting field work in the US, my bilingual ability enabled this project to include both Korean-Americans and other US citizens as interviewees. Field work conducted in Korea and the US has provided me with valuable data for exploring the sociopolitical implications and geographic dimensions of the comfort women commemorative campaign and human right.

The Two governments' approaches to comfort women issues

Actually, the sufferings experienced by comfort women originate not only from sexual slavery system initiated and organized by the Japanese army but also from the Korean government that has been indifferent to comfort women issues until recently. To understand this, we should explore negative impacts generated by the agreement called *Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea*. The treaty was established in 1965 to recover the suspended diplomatic relationship between the two countries and settle a matter of reparations for victimized civilians during WWII. The problematic aspect found in this treaty is that the Korean government had not distributed the reparations to victims of Japanese colonialism while spending them instead on economic development of Korea. As the reparations provided for the treaty could be regarded as the outcome of the Japanese government's efforts to accept its legal

responsibility for the victims, it can be said that the Korean government had left room for disputes over the treatment of comfort women by misusing the funds for victims of war crimes. With regard to this, it is possible to think that comfort women and their fellow demonstrators need to ask the Korean government to come to terms with this past misconduct and deliberate on appropriate way of dealing with comfort women issues.

From the view of the Japanese government, it can be said that Japan has already taken proper steps to settle the disputes over its past war crimes as it provided reparations through the treaty established in 1965 and issued the Kono Statement in 1993 addressing the fact that the Japanese army, directly or indirectly, was involved in operating sexual slavery system during WWII. Despite these political measures, the reason why comfort women and civic activists continue to protest against the Japanese government is that leading politicians such as the prime ministers of Japan have kept denying the spirit of the Kono Statement and the continuing legal responsibility of the Japanese government for the sexual slavery system it sanctioned and operated in military brothels. In the process of providing financial aids for comfort women since the 1990s, the Japanese government has chosen the form of voluntary donations rather than direct government budget allocations. Some civic activists in Korea have criticized the Japanese government for not assuming moral responsibility. Japan considers the history of sexual slavery as simply an outcome of the brutal period of WWII, thus avoiding the fact that the Japanese army was the main perpetrator and not simply a bystander in the operation of comfort/sexual slavery stations. However, it is also possible to see that it was inevitable for the Japanese government to use voluntary donations since Japan had already paid the reparation to the Korean government in 1965. Consequently, at this point, we can infer that the Korean

government has also committed an incredible error in approaching and treating comfort women issues as it distorted the aim of the Japanese reparations originally designed to help victims of Japanese colonialism.

Even though the Japanese government decided to provide 1 billion yen in 2015 according to the comfort women agreement, we can see that the agreement does not address the legal responsibility of Japan and does not guarantee to educate the larger public about the history of sexual slavery, which can be seen as a step backward from previous statements. Furthermore, as the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe firmly stated that the agreement is "the final and irrevocable resolution"[4], the Japanese government has asked the Korean government for permanent removal of the protest statue constructed in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul in return for the latest reparations. With regard to this, we can infer that the 2015 comfort women agreement was established without careful approaches to comfort women issues and the fact that the Korean and Japanese governments simply wanted to settle a diplomatic crisis and not really include the opinions and participation of comfort women in the negotiation process. Through this case, it is notable that even human rights issues can be appropriated and distorted through political calculations, which arouse public anger against the coercive decisions of government officials.

[4] Choe, S. H. (2015, Dec 28). Japan and South Korea Settle Dispute Over Wartime 'Comfort Women'. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/29/world/asia/comfort-women-south-korea-japan.html

Significance of Dissertation

Admittedly, a full study of comfort women cannot be done within just one dissertation. While partial, this project is seen as a significant contribution to the academy. First I have sought to identify and analyze the structural causes for the sufferings of comfort women and their process for overcoming coercive barriers to identity politics. Even though it is true that several academic fields have discussed intersectionality vulnerabilities afflicting marginalized females (Crenshaw, 1989), there have been limits in these studies as most of them have stayed at conceptual level. This dissertation contributes to our understanding of how intersectional vulnerability can be overcome and how marginal subjects establish practical strategies for struggling against coercive social structures. As Crenshaw (1989) indicates, even studies of social justice have been guilty of bias when examining the civil rights movements of the US and have tended to ignore the fragmented experiences of the most marginalized subjects such as black-females. Those who are located at these intersectional vulnerabilities have been excluded from both civil rights movements primarily led by African-American males and feminist movements more representative of white-females. Crenshaw (1989) suggests the need for subdividing the marginalizing experiences of subordinate groups. The concept of intersectionality has provided us with an opportunity to expand our views to more diversified forms of social exclusion. However, given that many studies of intersectionality have been obsessed with postmodernist perspectives, they have lost the academic momentum to develop practical strategies of social movements for marginal subjects situated at intersectional vulnerabilities.

An important path to escape from this contradiction can be found in an idea of 'lived experiences of subjects' (Harper, 2011; McCall, 2005). To collect fragmented and scattered identities of marginal subjects and raise their political capability, a focal point of social movements needs to be established by which subordinate groups share a common goal and jointly recognize structural oppressions that they protest against (Calhoun, 1994). Establishing a collective identity is related to specifying the lived experiences of different social groups. By doing so, marginalized groups can perceive the cause of their social movements and form the self-respect essential for them to increase public recognition of the human rights issues they embrace and advocate (Honneth, 1996; Honneth & Farrell, 1997). Despite differences in social, political, economic, and racial/ethnic backgrounds, common experiences generated by unjust social structure can be an effective motive for the identity politics of heterogeneous subordinate groups.

By using comfort women as a lens for conceptual discussions of intersectionality and identity politics, we are better able to understand that there had been multiple layers of structural oppressions afflicting former comfort women and long preventing them from publicizing in Korea their experiences of sexual slavery. A coercive social structure – namely the masculine cultural traditions, post-colonial legacies, and systematic educational ignorance prevailing in Korean society – had put those females victimized by Japanese sexual slavery during WWII into socially and culturally marginalized status. In the process of escaping from the hold of this status, there has been a critical moment for identity politics of comfort women as Korean society became democratized in the late 1980s. With sociopolitical change in Korea raising public recognition of human rights issues (Honneth, 2004), comfort women eventually became able and willing to testify

their experiences of sexual slavery to the public and establish a common identity as a protester and narrator of these experiences and how we remember them. More importantly, their identity politics collected public interest of other comfort women from East and Southeast Asian countries. Even though there are significant differences in sociocultural backgrounds, it is notable that identity formation of comfort women has validated a globalized scale of commemorative campaigns and memory-work based on lived experiences of heterogeneous social groups.

The understanding of intersectionality and identity formation has enabled my dissertation to proceed with the next chapter/article regarding memory-work. This part of the research project started with explaining unequally-distributed opportunity between social classes in discourse production systems (Foucault, 1980b). As marginal subjects encounter hardships to obtaining an influential means to raise public recognition of their experiences of exclusion and discrimination, they tend to be reliant upon corporeal senses to produce discourses about human rights (Foucault, 1980a; Lefebvre, 1991a, 1991b). To maximize the impact of sensory information within human rights discourses, traumatic memories and the wounds endured by subordinate groups need to be materialized and visualized in space (Till, 2003, 2012). Given symbolically-contested nature of space, this memory-work often faces severe conflicts between social classes with different historical perspectives and claims on the past. However, by using controversial aspects of memoryscape, marginalized social groups can diffuse symbolic meanings of traumatic memory and boost public attentions of their human rights issues.

During my field work in Korea, I met and talked with civic activists and artists who have produced the famous comfort women statue and its replicas. The significant

lesson I gained from interviewing them was that comfort women and allied civic activists have encountered a critical moment in their commemorative campaigns by constructing the highly visible and evocative monument in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul when they held the 1000th rally in 2011. The monument combined with the Wednesday demonstrations has grown enough to collect public attention to the comfort women protest and its momentum could not be ignored anymore by the Japanese government. Furthermore, by meeting with participants from varying sociocultural backgrounds, I was able to understand that the symbolic meanings produced by the statue had been broadly accepted and acknowledged within society due to the intuitive aspects of visualized memory (Till, 2008). In particular, some participants from the US and Japan, who had never heard about the history of comfort women within institutionalized education systems, told me that they could recognize the brutality of sexual slavery during WWII by encountering the symbolic images of comfort women statue. Consequently, the field work in Korea enabled me to reflect on the potential impact of place-based memory-work on human rights movements and realize the possibility of diffusing moral obligations to a wide range of social groups with traumatic memory of marginal subjects. This importance of symbolic space creation to the comfort women movement is of critical significance to our understanding of the political dynamics of historically marginalized memories and identities.

The last chapter/article of this dissertation was initiated from understanding the massive and mobile influence of symbolic images on commemorative campaign. Looking at the traumatic memory of comfort women adopted by Korean-American communities in the US, I felt the need to explore some of the core reasons behind these transnationally-

migrated memories and the sociopolitical implications resulting from this process. Building upon past conceptual discussions, I found that immigrant groups tend to use public memory of homeland populations for strengthening their collective sense of ethnicity and raising their political status within immigrant societies (Levy & Sznaider, 2002; Linenthal, 2001). Due to this strategy practiced by members of immigrant communities, traumatic memories of marginalized groups can be recognized and accepted globally or transnationally as a critical example of human rights violence. However, memories of marginal subjects can also be manipulated and utilized for different political objectives not necessarily related to human rights issues (Alderman & Inwood, 2013; Forest, Johnson, & Till, 2004). This variation on memory-work should be taken seriously as a threat to the spirit of resistance and a compromising of the original objectives of commemorative campaigns. Given this type of risk can be transnationally diffused and grow with the transplanting of memory in immigrant society, we should remain alerted to the appropriation of human rights issues for the sake of national hegemony.

Significant findings resulted from my field work in the US. I constantly heard the hope for general human rights improvements from Korean-American civic activists, US politicians, and other interviewees. They showed expectations about the significant role that scaled politics could play within the process of transforming comfort women from strictly Korean memory politics to transnational memory culture. Needlessly to say, this study has confirmed that immigrant communities can contribute to human rights movements by assisting in the diffusion and re-translation of memoryscapes. The notable implication produced by this dissertation is that transnationally-migrated memories of

war crimes should be approached as valuable to human rights struggles, although these memories are prone to be (re)claimed for purposes that may or may not support original intentions of memory-workers.

Future research agendas

Even though this study has focused on several significant aspects of memory politics, there remain unexplored areas important for future commemorative campaigns in the post-colonial era. As the traumatic memory of comfort women has moved across the international borders to the US, this study has found evidence of collaborations between ethnic groups who have once experienced varying forms of genocide and human rights abuses. Especially in the US, which consists of various ethnic communities, there is a possibility of further developing the political impact of these mutual works in public memory and human rights movements. With regard to this, a future research agenda should be focused on further explaining the collaborative memory-work between ethnic groups, and in particular the commemorative projects of comfort women in San Francisco, California. By doing so, this study expects that the influences of scaled performances can be illustrated even more and maximized to protect global peace and their hope for educating future generations will be realized.

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APPENDIX

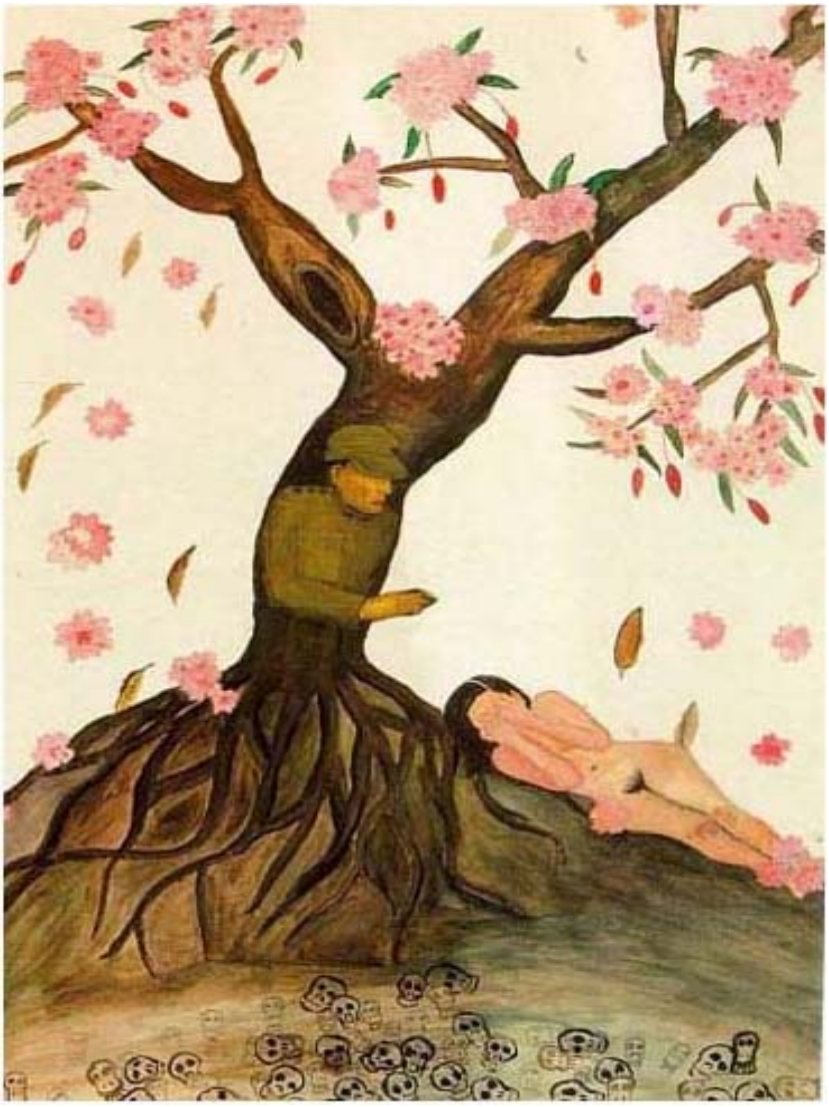

Figure 1.1. "The Devastated Virginity (빼앗긴 순정)", A Work of Kang, Duk-kyung

Figure 1.2. The Statue of 'Comfort Women' cared for by protestors in front of the Japanese embassy (photo by author)

Figure 2.1. The Comfort Women Statue protected by demonstrators (photo by author on Dec 30, 2015)

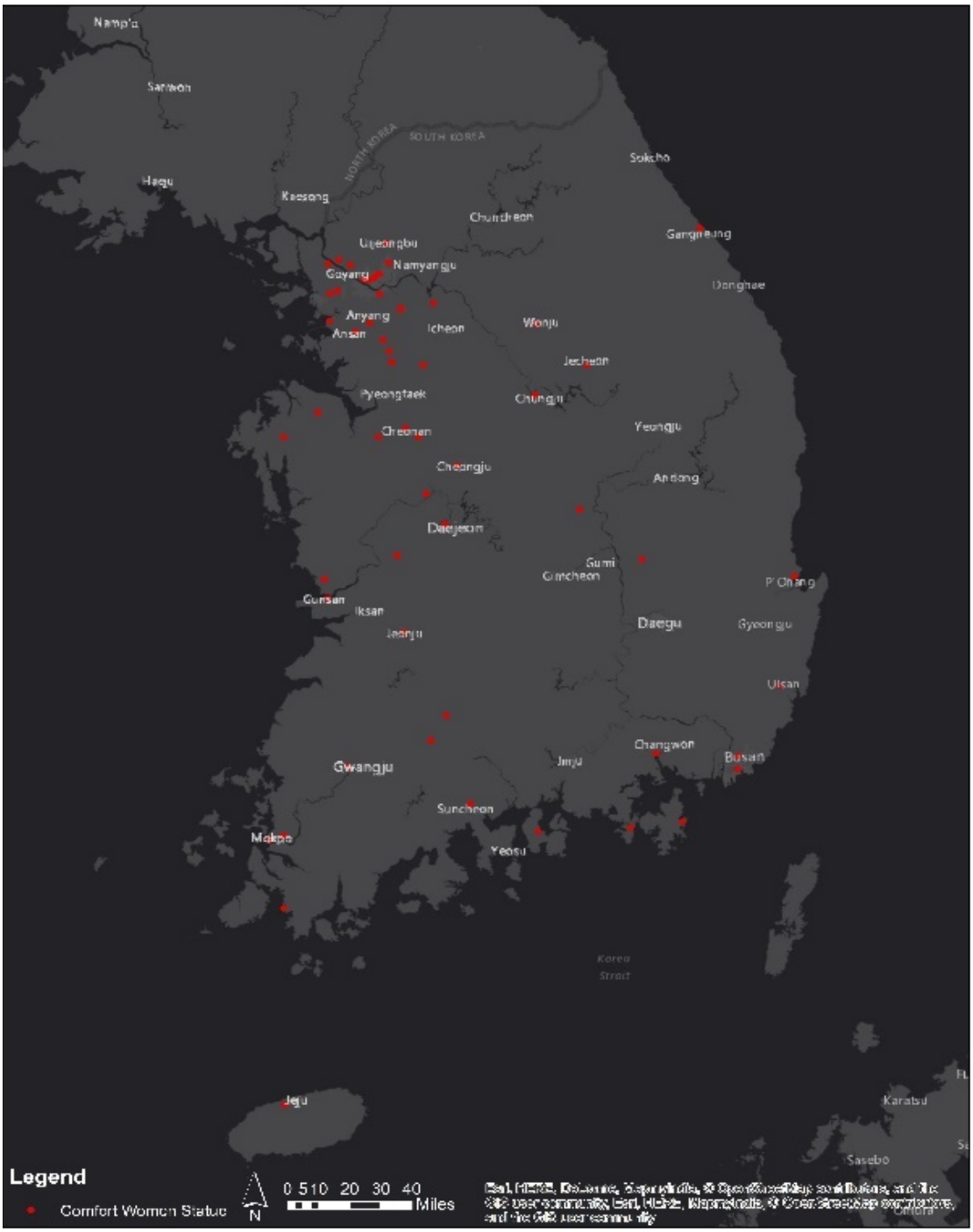

Figure 2.2. Distribution of Comfort Women Statues in Korea (red dots)

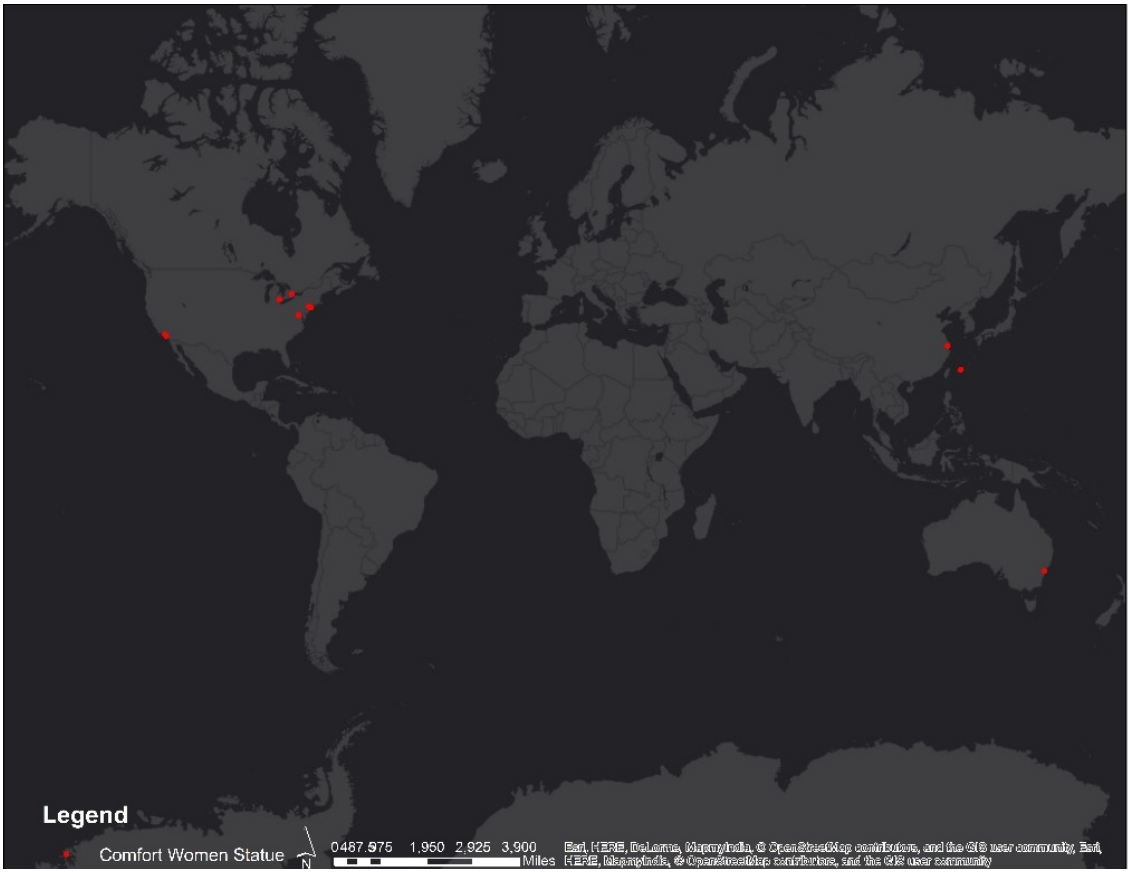

Figure 2.3. Distribution of Comfort Women Statues around the World (red dots)

Table 2.1. Distribution of Comfort Women Memorials (as of Jan, 2017)

Country	City or State	Administrative District	Note
Korea	Seoul City	Nowon-gu	
		Mapo-gu	
		Seodaemun-gu	
		Seocho-gu	
		Seongbuk-gu	
		Jongno-gu	The Japanese Embassy
		Jung-gu	
		Dongjak-gu	
		Guro-gu	
	Gyeonggi-do	Gwangmyeong-si	
		Gwangju-si	
		Goyang-si	Goyang 600th Anniversary Museum
			The National Women's History Exhibition Hall
		Seongnam-si	
		Suwon-si	
		Anseong-si	
		Uijeongbu-si	
		Hwaseong-si	
		Bucheon-si	
		Gunpo-si	
		Gimpo-si	
		Osan-si	
		Ansan-si	
		Siheung-si	
	Incheon City	Bupyeong-gu	
	Gangwon-do	Gangneung-si	
		Wonju-si	
	Chungcheongbuk-do	Chungju-si	
		Cheongju-si	
		Jecheon-si	
	Chungcheongnam-do	Asan-si	
		Seosan-si	

Table 2.1. Continued.

Country	City or State	Administrative District	Note
		Cheonan-si	Mokcheon High School
			Sinbu Park
		Dangjin-si	
		Nonsan-si	
		Seocheon-gun	
	Daejeon City	Seo-gu	
	Sejong City		
	Jeollabuk-do	Gunsan-si	
		Jeonju-si	
		Namwon-si	
	Jeollanam-do	Haenam-gun	
		Muan-gun	
		Mokpo-si	
		Gokseong-gun	
		Suncheon-si	
	Gwangju City	Seo-gu	
	Gyeongsangbuk-do	Gunwi-gun	
		Pohang-si	
		Sangju-si	
	Gyeongsangnam-do	Geoje-si	
		Namhae-gun	
		Changwon-si	
		Tongyeong-si	
	Busan City	Busanjin-gu	
		Dong-gu	The Japanese Consulate
	Ulsan City	Nam-gu	
	Jeju-do	Jeju-si	
USA	California	Glendale	
		Garden Grove	
	Michigan	Southfield	
	New York	Nassau County	
	New Jersey	Palisades Park	
		Bergen County	
		Union City	
	Virginia	Fairfax County	
Japan	Okinawa	Miyakojima	
Canada	Ontario	Toronto	
Australia	New South Wales	Sydney	

Table 2.1. Continued.

Country	City or State	Administrative District	Note
China	Jiangsu province	Nanjing	Nanjing Museum of the Site of Lijixiang Comfort Stations
	Shanghai City	Fengxian Qu	

Figure 2.4. Comfort Women Statues planned and constructed by female students (Produced by, L: Ewha Girls' High School, R: Pyeonghwa Nabi Network, referring to a female college student association, photo by author)

Figure 3.1. Memorials of the Great Hunger of Irish People, the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, the African-American Slavery are standing shoulder to shoulder next to the memorial of Comfort Women in front of the Courthouse, Begen County, New Jersey (photo by author)

Figure 3.2. The first Comfort Women Monument in Palisades Park, NJ (left: photo by author) and the replica of the Comfort Women Statue in Glendale, CA (right: http://www.koogle.tv)

Figure 3.3. Distribution of Comfort Women memorials in the US (red dots, as of 2017)

Table 3.1. Distribution of Comfort Women Monuments in the US (as of 2017)

State	Town	Date
California	Glendale	7. 30. 2013
	Garden Grove	12. 1. 2012
	San Francisco	To be constructed (2017)
Georgia	Atlanta	To be constructed (2017)
Michigan	Southfield	8. 18. 2014
New York	Nassau County	1. 19. 2014
New Jersey	Palisades Park	10. 23. 2010
	Bergen County	3. 8. 2013
	Union City	8. 4. 2014
Virginia	Fairfax County	5. 30. 2014

Figure 3.4. The Comfort Women statue and Dokdo: variation on memory politics (photo: www.koreatimes.co.kr)

VITA

Jihwan Yoon was born in Seoul, Korea, and moved with his family to Incheon, where he graduated from Seo-Incheon High School in 2001. He began to study in the Department of Geography at Kyung Hee University, Seoul, in the same year. In 2005, he took time off from the school to enter the South Korean Army. After completing the military service for two years, he resumed the college course and obtained the Bachelor of Science degree in 2008.

While preparing for graduation from the college, he decided to study more about human geography. In 2008, he entered the master's program at the same school to study and work with Dr. Sungjae Choo. Based on knowledge of social theories and urban politics, he wrote a thesis about urban ecology by exploring an industrial district of Seoul where artists began to occupy some vacant spaces and create artistic works.

Hoping to work in academic fields, he determined to study abroad in the US. In 2012, he started a PhD program at the University of Tennessee Knoxville. Studying public memory and social justice with Dr. Derek Alderman, he finished writing a dissertation about victims of sexual slavery during WWII and their memory politics in 2017. He will continue his geographic career once he completes all requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.