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Transnational Perspectives on the #MeToo and Anti-Base Movements in Japan

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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Abstract

This thesis examines the connections between the #MeToo movement and the anti-base movement in Japan regarding transnational activism and Japanese feminist activism. As both movements have focused on sexual violence and the impacts on victims, the movements are strongly linked in their goals. While the anti-base movement in Okinawa has a long history, the #MeToo movement is a relatively new movement, therefore these connections aid in establishing the #MeToo movement as a part of a history of feminist activism in Japan. There is a limited amount of English language scholarly work done on the #MeToo movement in Japan and the movements connections to historical Japanese feminism and this thesis aims to address some of these gaps. To make these connections, I use transitional feminist theory and a variety of scholarly literature and activist perspectives to establish the goals of both movements and their connections. The #MeToo movement is seen as a primarily U.S. based movement. Therefore, by making connections between the Japanese #MeToo movement and the anti-base movement in Okinawa, I argue that the #MeToo movement in Japan should be considered a uniquely Japanese feminist movement.

Introduction

My thesis shares the goals of the #MeToo movement in Japan and analyzes the critiques of the current situation in Japan by the activists who are driving the movement forward. By discussing the goals of the movement, as well as the activist critiques, my thesis positions Japanese activists at the core of this study while also providing these views to an English-speaking audience. I also historically contextualize the #MeToo movement by examining the anti-base movement, thereby connecting two disparate Japanese feminist movements. The connection will position the #MeToo movement as a Japanese movement using a hashtag that connects it to other #MeToo movements transnationally while asserting that it is still fundamentally an integral component of Japanese feminist anti-sexual violence history. By bringing both of these movements to an English-speaking audience I am addressing a lack of research in English on Japanese feminist movements and the Japanese #MeToo movement in particular. My thesis answers the question, “How do the connections between the #MeToo and the anti-base movements establish the #MeToo movement as a part of a larger history of Japanese feminist activism?” I include information on Japanese culture and language to give the necessary background to understand the #MeToo movement in Japan.

The #MeToo movement has been a far-reaching movement, one that has made a mark in virtually every country on earth, despite its origins as a U.S. movement (Saar, 2018). The movement has adapted to the different cultural and political environments in each respective country, thus making it a transnational movement. I define transnational feminism as focused on the ways that feminist activism occurs across national boundaries and often in ways that cross

cultural barriers. Transnational feminism is especially relevant in our increasingly global world, where technology has increased our ability to organize and pursue a feminist agenda outside of our own nation's borders. At the same time, transnational feminism can over emphasize the role of Western nations in "saving" women in the nations outside of the West and can eliminate a space for cultural diversity in activist goals (Grewal & Kaplan, 2002). The #MeToo movement also been adapted based on the history of activism in each country and can be seen as a part of the local culture of activism as well as a part of a history of feminist activism in Japan. In particular, the ways that the anti-base movement, especially in Okinawa, has focused on concerns of sexual assault is deeply connected to the contemporary #MeToo movement (Johnson, 2019). The anti-base movement is also a transnational movement. Given the anti-base movements' history in Japan, this movement provides a lens through which the #MeToo movement can be viewed as part of ongoing Japanese feminist activism. In so doing, the #MeToo movement can be seen as uniquely Japanese, rather than merely a Western import, since transnational feminism creates a space for the movement to be placed in context.

Transnational feminism provides a unique apparatus to examine the ways that the #MeToo movement in Japan has been adapted for the Japanese cultural moment. I deploy a glocal perspective which supports the critiques made by transnational feminism in key ways. This lens allows for the history of the anti-base movement to be connected to the #MeToo movement by centering the cultural particularities of the movements' goals. Transnational feminism allows for there to be a space for acknowledging power dynamics that occur in movements that either have influence or are involved in cross cultural exchange (Conway, 2017; Falcón, 2016; Grewal & Kaplan, 2002). In this thesis I establish how transnational feminism creates a space for the #MeToo movement and the anti-base movement to be identified as a part

of an interconnected history of feminist activism in Japan by engaging with cultural particularities and power dynamics. I start with an overview of my methodology which deploys activists' critiques and a scholarly literature review through the lens of transnational feminist theory. Then, I discuss the #MeToo movement's history of anti-sexual violence in Japan and the critiques of governmental and societal norms made by activists about the current situation in Japan. Next, I give an overview of the anti-base movement in Japan, which similarly addresses sexual violence and critiques governmental policies. Using these two discussions, I connect the two movements by comparing their goals and organizational structures to make the case for the #MeToo movement to be included in Japanese feminist activism lineages. The connection is necessary to view the #MeToo movement as culturally important to Japan, rather than merely a U.S. import with little cultural relevance. Finally, I discuss the limitations of my study, including the necessarily narrow scope of this comparison and the possibilities for future studies. I suggest that a broader comparison would enable the #MeToo movement to be even better positioned in the anti-sexual violence activist lineage in Japan.

Methodology

As a white woman from the U.S. writing about Japan and Japanese feminism, I am critically aware of my ability to slip into language and understanding of Japanese feminism and culture that reproduce stereotypes. To address these concerns, I asked my Japanese colleagues to read and comment on my work, and I center Japanese activists and their goals for the movement rather than my own. My Japanese colleagues consist of graduate students and teachers in Japan. We all meet once every two weeks on Zoom and discuss our research, current Japanese activist movements, and exchange current projects to get multiple perspectives on our work.

I frame #MeToo activists at the center of my analysis, as they are the ones most impacted by the current system, as well as any changes that may occur. By focusing on the activists' experiences and their critiques of the system that they experienced, I am amplifying their voices, especially for an English-speaking audience (Lunny, 2019). Since my thesis is centering activism in Japan and the connections between historical and contemporary activism, by including activists I create a space for their voices to also connect movements across the years. In addition, the inclusion of these voices allows for activists to be the ones informing English-speaking audiences of the movement and its goals (Falcón, 2016).

I have found Japanese activists' critiques and experiences through memoirs and interviews conducted by journalists. I analyzed 26 interviews with #MeToo activists, 14 of which were in Japanese, with the remaining 12 in English. Of these interviews there were 9 distinct activists interviewed, with the majority of pieces focusing on Ito Shiori. The interviews were gathered by searching common Japanese news sites: The Mainichi, Asahi Newspaper, The

Japan Times, and BuzzFeed Japan and searching for #MeToo and #WeToo on the respective newspapers' sites. The interviews that I use in this article are from both Japanese and English news media, though they are almost entirely conducted by Japanese journalists and are focused on the 2017 to 2020 period. These interviews were translated by me and generously checked by my Japanese colleagues to ensure that I interpreted the Japanese used in the Japanese newspapers properly. The central voice of the #MeToo movement is Ito Shiori, who is considered the face of the movement and has been the focus of most reporting on the #MeToo movement in Japan. Her memoir, *Black Box*, has become a cornerstone of the movement as it documents not only her personal case, but also the larger systemic issues in Japan that have created a need for the movement. Her memoir has been published in both English and Japanese and I use both versions in this thesis.

As for the anti-base movement in Japan, I utilize a variety of scholarly works that examine the movement and its foundations in feminist beliefs to highlight the ways that the movement can be read as a feminist movement. I focus on *Night in the American Village* by Akemi Johnson because of her time spent with activists and non-activist Okinawan women and through her engagement with the historical and political particularities of the anti-base movement. Through doing a literature review of the various pieces written in English about the anti-base movement, I place the anti-base movement in its historical context. These scholarly pieces often include first-person accounts and statistics that are useful in positioning the movement as a part of a larger feminist history in Japan, although the discussion of the anti-base movement includes some activist voices, most of the sources used are academic. Since the anti-base movement continues today, these works are also used to show how the anti-base movement and other feminist movements in Japan have adapted over time and the ways that the #MeToo

movement similarly fits in this historical narrative. Through a literature review of the anti-base movement and a contextualization of the #MeToo movement in Japan using an activist lens, I establish both movements as connected to a history of Japanese feminist activism that are transnationally focused, which creates space for cross-cultural coalition building.

To connect the #MeToo movement with the anti-base movement in Japan, I establish both movements' goals and experiences to highlight the connections of these movements. I use both Japanese and English sources that establish the goals and experiences of those in the #MeToo movement. I also use these sources to address the current cultural moment in Japan to situate these experiences in their contemporary position. The Japanese materials are approached through the lens of activist critiques, where I focus specifically on what activists have either experienced or are working to change. To gather data, I scanned the texts looking for the following key words in Japanese, #MeToo, Ito Shiori, *sekuhara*, *reipu*, to find the critiques I am looking for. My Japanese colleagues aided me by checking my translations for the specific sections that I used in my thesis rather than the entire text. These reviews were done during our bi-weekly meetings so that they were able to discuss with me as well as each other how to translate more culturally specific terms most accurately. I also utilize an intersectional lens when addressing the critiques raised by both the #MeToo and anti-base movements about the socio-political position of women in Japan. I connect the ways that gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity intersect and how that impacts individuals who are in precarious positions. I find this use of intersectionality to be most useful in a transnational approach, as it establishes intersectionality as connected to the cultural context in a specific location and how those positions are connected to marginalization (Falcón & Nash, 2015; Soto, 2005).

Transnational Feminism

Transnational feminism is a particularly useful lens to examine Japan's #MeToo and anti-base movements because of transnational feminist theory's abilities to identify the complications in cross cultural activism. I refer to transnational feminism as a set of theories given the ways that transnational feminist scholars have theorized complex cross-cultural relations and exchanges. Grewal and Kaplan state, "'Transnational' as a term is useful only when it signals attention to uneven and dissimilar circuits of culture and capital" (73). As such, many transnational feminists work to increase these transnational efforts for feminist activism while also acknowledging the variety of ways that inequitable power dynamics can be reproduced. Many transnational feminist scholars have brought attention to the ways that global power dynamics between nation-states are often reproduced in transnational feminist organizing and, as such, these scholars' works are especially useful for my thesis (Conway, 2017; Lunny, 2019; Pardy, 2017).

Transnational feminism came to the forefront of feminist discussions during the 1980's due to a divide between Western feminists and feminists from the Global South (Conway, 2017). The discussion focused on the ways that Western feminists universalized women's experiences while also creating a homogenous "third world woman" who needed to be rescued by her more liberated Western sister (Mohanty, 2003). The critiques of how Western feminists addressed women from the rest of the world brought transnational feminism to the forefront of academic scholarship as a means of engaging with power dynamics between nations but in a transformative manner rather as a means of reproducing harmful dynamics (Grewal & Kaplan,

2002). It is important to critique the unequal power dynamics given transnational feminism's importance in feminist thought in the West and the Western-centered focus of transnational feminist scholarship (Conway, 2017). Given both Japan's existence as an East Asian country and the history of the U.S. as an occupying power in Japan, Japan is never quite perceived as an equal by the U.S. Though, considering Japan's colonial history and current position on the world stage as an economic force, the country is often included in critiques of "Western" imperialism and perceived superiority (Kingston, 2013). However, this simplifies Japan's position in transnational interactions, specifically interactions between Japan and the U.S. (Johnson, 2019). Transnational feminism can be deployed to deconstruct the oversimplification and universalization of culture and dominance for the nations being discussed (Oza, 2016). This complication of power dynamics is essential in understanding not only U.S.- Japan relations, but also in understanding how transnational feminism can illuminate the adaptation of the #MeToo movement by Japanese activists. Japanese activism's focus on critiquing these power dynamics, while also drawing attention to the possibilities of cross-cultural solidarity, enables transnational feminism to function between these two spaces, rather than become an either/or dichotomy that limits opportunities for radical change.

Transnational feminist scholars have increasingly drawn attention to the ways that Western feminists can replicate stereotypes and inequitable power dynamics in transnational feminist organizing, often to the detriment of those who are supposedly being aided. As such, the focus on international women's rights and the involvement of bodies such as the UN has increased concerns of universalism and colonial narratives (Pardy, 2017). With an increasing focus on international and larger global communities, empathy for women in other nations struggling with inequity have come to the forefront of feminist conversations. Given the

complications of cross-cultural understandings, emotions have often been used to create these larger communities, with empathy being a central component. However, this is a flawed method, as empathy cannot do the work of listening to feminist concerns in other nations or of deconstructing racist stereotyping of other nations (Pardy, 2017). Transnational feminist scholars have critiqued the ways that feminists in the U.S. have replicated essentialized understandings of non-Western women and positioned their struggles as worse than U.S. feminist struggles, often by establishing non-Western cultures as inherently more repressive (Fernandes, 2013). The positioning of non-Western women as suffering worse treatment based on culture has been used to center the voices of Western feminists and position them as the ultimate knowers of feminism and therefore responsible for educating all non-Western women. This works to discredit non-Western feminists in transnational conversations around movements and shape caricatures of non-Western women as in need of protection (Mohanty, 2003). This is often even though issues visible in the West, such as sexual assault, are also visible in non-Western countries, albeit in culturally specific ways (Fernandes, 2013). Transnational feminist scholarship has struggled with eliminating either universalizing experiences as all a part of a collective experience of being a “woman,” usually requiring the same responses, or as so culturally specific that it separates everyone into “us” and “other,” often through replicating colonial narratives (Grewal and Kaplan, 2002). Staying aware of the similarities between #MeToo movements globally is important but so is contextualizing the cultural specificities of the Japanese #MeToo movement to avoid creating a universalized image of “Japanese women” and sexual violence in Japan.

The term glocalization can be helpful in positioning transnational movements as existing both in the global and local spheres. The term glocalization was developed by Roland Robertson and was coined following research in Japan where companies were seen to be developing

products that would be easily adapted to different cultures and therefore fare better internationally (Robertson, 2020). Though the term was originally used to describe business practices, it has been adapted in a variety of ways, including activism. One such broad description by Roudometof states, “In glocalization, the global and the local shape the end state. The result is heterogeneity; just like light that passes through glass radiates an entire spectrum, so does globalization passing through locales radiate a spectrum of differences” (2015). In this way the #MeToo movement can best be seen through the lens of a glocal formation of a global movement, one that has roots in transnational feminist activism and its interconnected cultural exchanges, but also is original to Japanese feminist activists. Therefore, interpreting the movement through a glocal lens allows for a transnational feminist critique of the ways that power dynamics existed within the movement from its formation.

Transnational feminism is better able to address concerns of either universalizing or othering non-Western women by using strategies such as acknowledging imperial privileges, researching with a community outside of traditional academic situations, and working multilingually (Falcón, 2016). These three strategies allow for avoiding speaking for a group outside of one’s own, often by utilizing sources that are not in the language of the community being researched and challenging from the beginning the narrative that Western feminists are sole knowers of feminist practices. Thus, they enable transnational feminism to be applied in ways that create more equitable research. Similarly, being critical of the ways that U.S. feminists and U.S. foreign policy can impact feminists outside of the U.S. creates opportunities to deconstruct the naturalization of U.S. feminist movements as uniquely liberatory (Conway, 2017).

There are similarly calls to recognize English speaking privilege, as it enables Western English speaking transnational feminists to work as the default and requires extra labor from non-native English speakers to engage in transnational feminist discourse. English privilege also limits the amount of attention paid to movements outside of the English-speaking world and can force more complex ideas to be compressed when translated into English. As such, citation practices have also become a way to challenge Western concepts of feminism, especially with an increasingly digital world (Lunny, 2019). My research addresses some of these concerns by working in both Japanese and English. I focus on a non-English speaking movement and use my space as a Western scholar to bring attention to a movement that may otherwise be ignored in English academia. I use my knowledge of the Japanese language to engage with Japanese sources and activism while also doing the labor of translating which would normally be forced on non-English speakers. I also include the Japanese text in my thesis to draw attention to the original citation while not privileging English. Transnational feminism can replicate the systems that it claims to challenge. However, there are ways to utilize transnational feminism in productive and decolonial ways, since, “Decoloniality requires that scholars destabilize dynamics that, for instance, privilege English, liberalism, the global North, and so-called objectivist scientific modes of knowledge production” (Falcón, 176). By centering activists and doing so in ways that position their experiences in their cultural and historical particularities, I avoid speaking for a group of individuals or positioning them as a monolith. I use the more equitable and decolonial strategies that I have discussed transnational feminism offering to combat the stereotyping of Japanese feminist activism in Western spaces while bringing attention to two Japanese feminist movements that deserve more transnational attention.

Japanese Language

To address the cultural uniqueness of the #MeToo movement in Japan it is necessary to have a background in Japanese culture and specifically the ways that activists discuss the issues. One cultural aspect that this paper holds to is the usage of the Japanese naming system wherein the family name appears first, and the given name appears second. Another is in acknowledging that the language around sexual assault in Japan can vary widely with each word having its own connotations, and each represents a different cultural understanding of the issue of sexual assault. The words are written in one of four alphabet systems: (1) *katakana*, which is most often used for loan words that cannot be translated into Japanese so are left in their original language and adapted to the Japanese pronunciation system; (2) *Hiragana* is seen as the original Japanese system as it was created in Japan and is used for Japanese words; (3) *Kanji* is Chinese characters that have been adapted to Japanese language and is often used to represent Japanese words; and (4) *Romaji* which is the Romanization of Japanese words for foreigners to read the term.

There are three words that get used to discuss sexual assault in Japanese, with varying connotations due to the alphabet that the word is written in and the way it is used. セクハラ (*sekuhara*) or セクシャルハラズメント (*sekusharuharazumento*) both mean sexual harassment, although *sekuhara* is the version most often used. *Sekuhara* is mostly associated with the workplace, as there is a power dynamic implied by the word. Someone's boss or coworker can commit *sekuhara* because of the power dynamic in the workplace. So, the word is not used as an all-encompassing word in Japanese as it is in English. The use of *sekuhara* has been critiqued by activists as removing the seriousness of the word because it is the shortened version of the

complete word. The word also is written in *katakana* and therefore its relevance to Japanese culture is seen as minimal. By keeping the word in *katakana*, the word remains foreign and gets pushed aside as an issue that does not really concern Japanese people or that it is created by foreign influence (Saunders, 2021).

The other two words most often used in assault cases, are 暴行 (*boukou*) meaning violation or レイプ (*reipu*) meaning rape. The word *boukou* is most often used by police in situations where an adult is the victim. It is hardly ever used by activists as it is seen to be too indirect to properly convey the harm that is experienced. The use of *boukou* has been critiqued by those in the activist community for being indirect about the crime that has been committed, instead trying to use discrete language to describe the offense. The term is also seen as very official as it is written in kanji, which minimalizes its effectiveness in activist communities because it is not the term used by those who experience sexual violence. The term *reipu* is seen most favorably by activists as it does not try to minimize the effect of the crime and it is more direct (伊藤, 2017). I include the various ways that Japanese culture is important to understanding the critiques made by activists in my thesis findings so that they can most effectively support the activists.

#MeToo in Japan

The Japanese #MeToo movement has developed in distinctly different ways from the U.S. movement. The Japanese movement uses a variety of hashtags both in English and Japanese, some of which are #MeToo, #WeToo, #WithYou, #私も . By using both Japanese and English hashtags the Japanese movement has taken the original movement in the U.S. and expanded it to meet the needs of Japanese activists. In the early stages of the movement the language activists used was centered on *sekuhara* and *reipu*, *sekuhara* because of its connections to workplace critiques and *reipu* because it clearly conveys the severity of the rape (伊藤, 2017).

The movement also focused on *sekuhara* as well as sexual assault as both were connected to larger issues of gender inequity in Japan (Ito, 2021). Another way that the movement has adapted is by increasing anonymity for those who chose to come forward by normalizing only identifying by your given name which makes people harder to recognize. The Japanese #MeToo movement is credited as starting in 2017 when the freelance writer Hachu accused Kishi Yuki, the creative director at Dentsu, of *sekuhara*. Dentsu is an important advertising and public relations company in Japan. Hachu posted her story on Facebook and later interviewed with BuzzFeed News Japan, and the increased pressure caused Kishi to resign. Hachu's interview with BuzzFeed News Japan discussed the ways that *sekuhara* in the workplace can often go unnoticed and unreported. Hachu's choice to use only her first name allowed her to remain mostly anonymous while also creating a space for victims to discuss their own experiences without giving identifying information. Chino who came forward in 2018, was the next woman who chose to come forward at first using only her first name. Chino posted her story on Twitter, and she accused Ichihara

Mikiya, the director of a theater group, of *sekuhara*. Chino faced a significant amount of backlash as there were those who questioned the validity of her claims and this pressure made it difficult for others to come forward (Hasunuma & Shin, 2019).

The freelance journalist Ito Shiori came forward in May of 2017, and she has become the face of the #MeToo movement in Japan. She has used her position as a journalist to research and report on the variety of barriers that victims in Japan face when choosing to report a sexual assault and/or harassment (Hasunuma & Shin, 2019). Ito Shiori held a press conference in May of 2017 to inform the public of what had happened after she attempted to file charges and the Tokyo Metropolitan Police chose not to pursue her case. Ito alleges that she was raped by Yamaguchi Noriyuki after she had met with him to discuss her being offered a position as a journalist with Yamaguchi at TBS. Yamaguchi is a famous journalist and the biographer for the former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. Ito was a relatively new journalist and was hoping to receive mentorship and guidance in her path to working at TBS, a prominent news company in Japan (伊藤, 2017). Ito and Yamaguchi met to have dinner at which point Ito claims that she was drugged. She does not remember leaving the restaurant or making it to the hotel where she alleges the assault happened. This is a claim supported by the taxi driver and hotel lobby video that witnessed her being dragged through the hotel.

Upon regaining consciousness, Ito was in a state of shock and went home and later to an OB/GYN to report what had occurred as she believed that they would have a rape kit. She was able later to determine through researching online that the only way to receive a rape kit was to go to the police station to file a report. When she went to the police she was told that she had to go to the police station in the district where the crime took place to report the crime; the police offered to have an officer from that district come and she was ultimately able to report the rape

and press charges. After several hours of interrogation, where she was required to reenact the night's events and was told by police that she would be ruining her life by coming forward, the police finally agreed to pursue the charges. However, before the arrest warrant for Yamaguchi could be carried out, orders were given from the top of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police department to void the warrant, and the charges were dropped. Ito was not given an examination or a drug test that would help substantiate her claims despite her repeated attempts to request both. The police's argument was that too much time had passed, as the assault had occurred approximately 6 days earlier (伊藤, 2017).

Ito Shiori's decision to hold a press conference to tell her story and bring attention to the systemic issues in Japan, as well as file a civil suit against Yamaguchi Noriyuki, created an opportunity for discussions about assault in Japan. There was an increase in news articles covering the #MeToo movement in Japan, and Twitter in Japan also saw conversations about the claims made by Ito, as well as the #MeToo movement more broadly. While she brought attention to the issue, she also faced heavy criticism for any and all perceived wrongdoings. She was harshly criticized for her clothing, which the public and news reports claimed was revealing, and she was painted as having actively encouraged the assault to increase her likelihood of being hired. After receiving death threats and being harassed by the media, Ito left Japan for the U.K. though she later returned to Japan in 2020. The same year that she came forward, 2017, she wrote *Black Box*, a memoir detailing her experiences not only with the police but also with the media and culture in Japan (伊藤, 2017). The title of the book comes from an interaction with the prosecutor during Ito's attempts to have the case pursued. The prosecutor stated, "We still don't really know what happened; only you two know that sort of thing" (Ito, 2018). The prosecutor stating this makes it seem as if these situations exist in some unknowable other place,

causing Ito to choose the title *Black Box*. Ito Shiori has since continued her activism in Japan, repeatedly doing interviews, continuing her research and journalistic efforts on gender inequity in Japan, and eventually pursuing civil suits against Yamaguchi Noriyuki and several other media and political figures. In 2019, Ito won her civil case against Yamaguchi and was awarded 3.3 million yen in damages, or approximately 28,500 U.S. dollars (McCurry, 2019). Yamaguchi appealed the decision and filed for damages stating that Ito's claims had caused undue harm. In January of 2022 the Tokyo High Court upheld the lower court's decision and the damages granted to Ito, though the judge also awarded Yamaguchi 550,000 yen in damages, or approximately 4,680 U.S. dollars, which Ito will have to pay, due to the claims Ito has made about being drugged (The Japan Times, 2022).

The news that discussed the #MeToo movement in Japan was often focused on the perceived wrongdoings by those who came forward, specifically Ito. The increased negative attention caused fewer people to come forward with their own experiences. Due to this, the movement ultimately remained focused on Ito and her critiques of the gender inequity in Japan (Hasunuma & Shin, 2019). The media and societal pressure caused Ito to move to the U.K. and reinforced for other victims that remaining anonymous was the best option available to them, which the use of the various hashtags on Twitter enabled. Causing the #MeToo movement to see a bit of stagnation. There was an increase in well-known authors coming forward with their own accounts to bring attention to the systemic nature of sexual violence and in the hopes of keeping the movement going (Ito, 2018). For those who still wanted to come forward they often chose to do so in settings that offered support rather than in environments that put them at risk. One such public way they did this was by attending events held by the Flower Demo group who hold signs

that say #MeToo and #WithYou with flowers to draw attention to Japan's rape laws¹. The group holds demonstrations in major Japanese cities at different times and days and allows those who have been harassed or assaulted to tell their story to others who have gathered in support (Flower Demo, 2019). Activists have also attempted to change directions by reframing the movement with the hashtag #WeToo in 2018 to refocus the discussion on the challenges that victims collectively face rather than individuals. The usage of #WeToo became more popular in Japan as it gave more anonymity to those who came forward and decreased instances of victim blaming². This change in hashtag also shows how the #MeToo could be adapted to a more collectivist culture, such as Japan, despite its creation in a more individualist culture, such as the U.S. (Caputo, 2018). Ito states that the hashtag was updated to reflect, "... the attitude that we cannot be passive bystanders, that we cannot tolerate any harassment or sexual violence" (Ito, 221). The ability to identify *sekuhara* and sexual assault as a concern for all of society, not just those directly impacted by the crime, is one of the most prominent ways that the movement was adapted by Japanese activists, and the hashtag usages exemplifies this difference in cultural values.

The Japanese #MeToo movement has worked as a transnational movement from the beginning as it uses both English and Japanese hashtags in its self-identification, including that

¹ Japan has two rape laws, one that addresses rape, which is defined as, "A person who, through assault or intimidation, forcibly commits sexual intercourse..." (Penal Code Article 177). There is also quasi-rape, which is defined as, "A person who commits sexual intercourse by taking advantage of a loss of consciousness or inability to resist, or by causing a loss of consciousness or inability to resist..." (Penal Code Article 178). There is currently no law in Japan that addresses *sekuhara*; it is left up to individual businesses to decide how they handle any cases that arise (Itakura, 2020).

² To my knowledge, there is no word in Japanese that is equivalent to the English phrase "victim-blaming."

the movement is recognized in Japan as #MeToo in English rather than as #私も . By utilizing the original hashtag as well as the Japanese language hashtag activists can better connect to others outside of Japan. The movement has also worked to gain international recognition, as the face of the movement, Ito Shiori, has discussed the movement in several English language news publications, has had her memoir published in English, and has even produced and appeared in a documentary for the BBC on her case (Ito, 2021). This has created unique opportunities for English speaking feminists outside of Japan to connect to the Japanese #MeToo movement and for concerns raised by the movement to receive international attention. In addition, the movement being originally from the U.S. and having it go through the process of glocalization before being introduced to those outside of Japan has created a kind of cross-cultural dialogue that makes the movement a unique example of transnational feminist praxis.

Contextualizing #MeToo in Japan: Gendered Work Culture

The critiques of the government and social norms surrounding sexual violence that have been made by Japanese #MeToo activists are closely linked to informing the public of the issues that exist in Japanese society. While there have been organizations created, and there have been protests and demonstrations held to bring change for the various concerns activists raise, much of the work being done is focused on informing the public of the issues. Ito has stated, “In my ongoing work to represent the truth, I want to continue to make things visible, to bring them into the light. Because that’s how they will change” (Ito, 2021). Ito’s memoir, as well as her future planned works, such as a documentary about the impacts of Japan changing its rape laws, have been largely targeted towards demonstrating the various ways that systemic inequity impacts those who face *sekuhara* and sexual assault. Others, such as Hachu, the first person to come forward under #MeToo, have similarly stated that they wanted to inform others of the hazards of

the current system (播磨谷, 2017). Activists are doing the hard work of informing others through sharing resources more frequently and creating space for these discussions to occur. For example, the resources page on the Flower Demo website is easily accessible, and the discussion of *sekuhara* and sexual assault is increasingly becoming more normalized than it was prior to the #MeToo movement. One way that information sharing has played an important role is in highlighting the ways that inequities that seem separate from *sekuhara* and sexual assault claims are actually a part of a larger systemic issue of gender inequity.

Ito Shiori, as well as several others who have come forward, have been temporary workers in Japanese media. As such they have faced challenges that are specific to their position in the Japanese media landscape. One way that this can be seen is in the backlash that Ito faced when she held her press conference. Ito was harshly critiqued for her choice of clothing at the press conference; the top button of her shirt was undone, and she was seen as having attempted to sleep her way to a better position (Ito, 2021). As other women who worked as journalists in Japan came forward with similar stories, the Japanese media began to classify these experiences as 女性問題 (*jousei mondai*) or women's problems. The use of *jousei mondai* is significant because it minimizes the importance of the *sekuhara* and sexual assault, instead of acknowledging the systemic inequities in the workforce that put women in a vulnerable position. *Jousei mondai* similarly places the blame for these inequities on women and makes it their job to address these systemic inequities. The term also creates a barrier and makes no space for anyone who does not identify as a woman to come forward and report *sekuhara* or sexual assault. The media's focus on *sekuhara* and sexual assault being a "women's problem" is of significant concern given the number of journalists and others who work in the media who came forward through the #MeToo movement to make claims like those Ito has made (Duramy, 2020). Media

companies in Japan have women working in freelance positions, especially freelance writers, while those who are in positions of power in these companies are often men. The men who run these companies can create barriers for those who want to report *sekuhara* or who see value in pursuing stories about the #MeToo movement. This environment is troublesome as it is an industry norm to use young women journalists to elicit better interviews from government officials and other important sources which can leave women in unequal power dynamics (Kingston, 2018).

Various organizations have come about in support of the #MeToo movement to address specific concerns that a large society-wide movement may struggle to address. Often, these organizations do so by using the language of the movement and by positioning themselves as a part of addressing these same concerns. One such organization that aligns with #MeToo is the WiMN organization. In May of 2018 following a claim of *sekuhara* from a young woman journalist who was harassed by the finance minister during an interview, an organization called “Women in Media Network Japan,” WiMN, was founded to support women journalists who face challenges in the male dominated workplace. WiMN’s members are almost entirely anonymous (similar to #MeToo) to ensure that they do not face any repercussions in their companies, especially as their main efforts include holding protests and other events to support those who have experienced *sekuhara* and sexual assault while working in the media. Hayashi Yoshiko is one of the only members who is open about their involvement in the organization. Hayashi believes that the best way forward is for the companies to protect their journalists and take the claims that come forward seriously. As such, her work often focuses on the challenges that women in media face as she documents the experiences of those she meets through the organization (Itakura, 2020). Another organization that was founded in 2018 is #WeTooJapan

which Ito Shiori, as well as the former UN Women Asia and Pacific regional director Kato Miwa are a part of, as well as a few other journalists. #WeTooJapan similarly works towards researching ways to support victims and encourages companies to release public plans to address *sekuhara* and sexual assault in their workplaces (Mainichi, 2018). The organizations highlight the importance of #MeToo and the experiences of journalists in drawing attention to *sekuhara* and sexual assault in Japan and of the steps being taken by activists to draw attention to the issue to put pressure on companies and the government to address these societal issues in a systemic manner, such as implementing policies to address *sekuhara*.

The precarious nature of temporary work in Japan is essential in understanding the ways that *sekuhara* is addressed. Japan's work culture is well known for requiring long hours and for being a system that relies heavily on mentorship for advancement. Even though Japan is part of the G20, a group of nineteen nations and the European Union who are considered highly economically developed, gender equality is one of the areas in which Japan is repeatedly ranked near the bottom; Japan ranked 121st out of 153 countries in terms of gender equality by the Global Gender Gap in 2020. Gender equality is measured by the World Economic Forum by considering political representation, pay gap, and connections to societal mobility (Zahidi & Eda, 2020). The Japanese government has taken steps to address the gender gap, such as incentivizing companies to increase the number of women in managerial positions, but many of those steps have been criticized as not addressing the cultural barriers that often exist for women.

Japanese women often work in precarious positions, such as in corporations as temps, where they are expected to work long hours without being given any of the benefits of male employees at the same company. During the post-World War II period in Japan, many companies re-structured to provide benefits to those who worked there, including steady pay

increases, ability for upward mobility in the company, vacation time and paid leave, and a system for long term employment that made being fired more difficult. This system was created with men in mind and as more women entered the work force during the 1980's the gap between men and women worsened (Kingston, 2013). The current structuring of the corporate world allows for women, who are seen as essential to the daily workings of the company, to be hired on a temporary basis and therefore without any of the benefits of the company system allotted to men. This is often justified by company hiring managers and corporate leaders by stating that once women get married and have children they will stop working and any money the company has put into her will be wasted. These kinds of justifications often keep women in precarious work and vulnerable to the abuses of those who could offer them long-term employment (Allison, 2013). Hachu has mentioned this as a reason for withstanding the *sekuhara* that she faced for as long as she did at Dentsu. Hachu states:

何の後ろ盾もないフリーランスの私が、こういったことを訴えると、普段お仕事を
をして相手にも迷惑をかけてまうし、まるで復讐をしているみたいで、パブリッ
クな印象も悪くなる。また、私の書いている本やコラムもまっすぐな気持ちで受
け止めてもらえなくなる可能性もあるし、最悪、お仕事もなくなるだろうと思っ
て迷いました³ (播磨谷, 2017)

³ This translates to “I am a freelancer with no backing, and when I complain about this, it bothers the person I usually work with, and it seems like I am taking revenge, which is the public impression. Also, the books and columns I am writing may not be taken as honest and at worst, I am going to lose my job.”

Hachu has said that it is important to understand how the corporate environment plays a role in *sekuhara* in the workplace, as the precarity of temporary work and the harsh conditions often make an unsafe environment for women (播磨谷, 2017). The fear of losing their current employment or from facing an increased struggle to find work in the future acts as a significant barrier for those who are working as freelancers and experiencing *sekuhara* as it increases their precarity as temporary workers.

One barrier to securing long term employment is the process of job hunting that occurs during the last year of college for many students. Finding a job is a yearlong process and it consists of attending multiple company gatherings, attending multiple exams, multiple interviews, and signing up for unpaid internships, all of which are required by companies for students to be hired for long term positions. The job-hunting process is required, and, for almost all companies, the process must happen while students are still in school. Those who miss the job-hunting season at the end of their last year of college or are unable to secure a job at the end of this season, are almost completely unable to secure long term work (Allison, 2013). Women face increased barriers during this process as employers often favor male applicants and, while it is impossible to know how companies score women during this process, women in the Japanese workforce make up 70% of temporary workers (Allison, 32). An essential part of the job-hunting process that has been critiqued by #MeToo activists has been the OB/OG visits. OB/OG stands for “old boy” and “old girl” visits which is when alumni from a university meet one on one with current college students looking for positions in a company; these meetings often occur at restaurants and other informal locations. They have been a site of critique because the unequal power dynamic creates a situation for abuses, so much so that Asahi Shimbun, one of the largest newspapers in Japan, published a set of tips for students to avoid experiencing *sekuhara* during

the job-hunting process. The article states that, “何らかの被害にあった、あるいは被害に
いそうになった場合でも、できればその企業の人事部に連絡通報するようにしましょ
う。「#MeToo」運動でも言われましたが、泣き寝入りが新たな被害者を生みかねませ
ん”⁴ (木之本, 2019). The focus of the advice is on self-protection rather than addressing
systemic changes. This is likely due to the hope that until the job-hunting process can be altered,
students will be able to at least have an idea of how to address the problem in their own
experiences. The article does include resources for reporting, as well as reminds students that
working for a company that does not take *sekuhara* and sexual assault seriously can lead to
future issues, so there is some engagement with critiquing those who have power in these
situations (木之本, 2019). The #MeToo movement has been able to bring enough attention to the
issue of *sekuhara* and sexual assault in the job-hunting process that a major newspaper has
published an article with resources for students going through the process. The accessibility of
knowledge for what to do to in these positions is an essential step in removing the barriers for
reporting, as it works towards destigmatizing the issue and gives students the tools to recognize
what behaviors to lookout for.

#MeToo activists have also played a central role addressing these issues themselves by
providing resources when they can. One such activist was a college student, Yoshida Tatsuki,
who developed a website and a startup that allows for people to anonymously report harassment
to employers. The website is called *Sorehara* which is Japanese for “that’s harassment.” It allows

⁴ This translates to, “If you have suffered or are about to suffer any harm, try to contact the
personnel department of the company if possible. As discussed in the #MeToo movement, falling
asleep can create new victims.”

for victims to anonymously send a report via email that details the experience and gives the alleged offender an opportunity to acknowledge the claim or not. The website allows for victims to delay when the report is sent for up to two months if they are concerned that they will be recognized as having sent it. While there are concerns that the website can be used to harm the person who is being accused, the developer believes that it is being used in good faith. Yoshida states that, “Sorehara says it sends about 50 complaints a day. Most people who get them accept or at least acknowledge them, suggesting most claims are genuine” (Mainichi, 2018). The recipient of the email is able to select that they acknowledge the claim to varying degrees, and the website records these responses. While there is no way for the victim to know the result of these claims, as the website does not ask for any identifying information, the hope is that by bringing the issue to the attention of the recipient, behavior will change. The website came about to address harassment while minimizing the risk for the victim, such as losing their job. These kinds of websites have become popular following the #MeToo movement as it is a way that victims can let their feelings be known while remaining anonymous, similar to the intentions behind #WeToo. The website is also in development for an English and Korean language version that would allow for the ethos of the #WeToo movement to extend beyond Japan (Mainichi, 2018).

#MeToo: Going Forward

While the Japanese #MeToo movement still has many goals left to address the systemic inequities that are at the root of sexual violence, the movement has increased discussions around a topic that is largely considered a taboo. The movement has worked tirelessly to begin to destigmatize experiencing sexual violence and they have increased the amount of information and resources available to victims. These efforts have been hard-won by those who have brought

attention to this issue, whether they have done so anonymously or in a public manner, such as through publishing a memoir. The steps taken by the #MeToo movement to address *sekuhara* and sexual assault are vital to challenging the Japanese government's lack of effort to address the systemic inequities that activists have brought attention to, though this is not a new approach in Japanese feminism. The anti-base movement aids in establishing the #MeToo movement as a part of historical Japanese feminist activism that addresses sexual violence by connecting their similar goals and critiques of the systemic barriers to addressing sexual violence.

Japanese roots of #MeToo: The Anti-Base Movement

The anti-base movement in Japan has a long history, one that continues to the present and, as such, is difficult to discuss in overarching terms. For the purposes of this thesis, the anti-base movement being discussed is particular to Okinawa, where the majority of U.S. bases in Japan are located (Cockburn & Ikeda, 2012). Approximately 20% of the land in Okinawa is designated as U.S. bases representing all four branches of the military (Arasaki, 2014). The anti-base protests in Okinawa have also gained the most international attention and are transnational by design because of the need for the Japanese and U.S. governments to agree to close the bases (Vine, 2019). The Okinawan anti-base movement is also best suited to a feminist historical lineage given the large number of women and women's movements that have been involved in the organization of protests over the years (Takazato, 1997). This creates a unique opportunity for the movement's history and current activism to be connected to the #MeToo movement in Japan. The history of Okinawa is also a complex topic, though a quick overview is necessary for a complete understanding of the current anti-base movement there.

Okinawa is a chain of islands to the far south of the mainland of Japan and, as such, is the most southern prefecture in Japan. Currently, Okinawa bears the brunt of the U.S. military

presence in Japan and has since the end of World War II. Okinawa was originally the Ryukyu kingdom, an independent kingdom separate from Japan. However, in 1879 it was officially absorbed by the Japanese government and given the name Okinawa and made a prefecture. The Okinawan people are not ethnically Japanese and did not speak the Japanese language and as such were forced to assimilate by the Japanese government (Cockburn & Ikeda, 2012).

The battle of Okinawa during World War II was one of the bloodiest and marked the beginning of U.S. occupation in Okinawa (Arasaki, 2014). While U.S. occupation ended for the rest of Japan in 1952, Okinawa was not returned to Japanese control until 1972. Even after reversion, the majority of bases remained in Okinawa and today the Japanese government in Tokyo continues to pay large sums to the U.S. government to maintain the bases. Okinawa plays an important role in the U.S.-Japan security alliance as the Japanese constitution, article 9 specifically, prohibits the Japanese government from maintaining a military. Despite this, Japan does have the Self-Defense Forces which is a formidable military power (Johnson, 2019). The bases in Okinawa are unique for not being in disparate locations but rather are in residential neighborhoods in Okinawa and in the major cities (Takazato, 1997). As such Okinawans have a complicated relationship to the U.S. military bases, as they provide some economic advantages but also represent the loss of land, environmental degradation, noise pollution, and sexual violence.

The anti-base movement in Okinawa has been a continual movement since the 1950's with ebbs and flows depending on the circumstances at the time. When the bases first started there were protests over the land people lived on being claimed for the construction of the bases. While there was continued resistance there was also hope that reversion back to Japan would mean that the bases would decrease. Therefore, the calls from the various anti-base movements

at the time were focused on reversion rather than removal of the bases (Spencer, 2003). Upon reversion there was an uptick in protests as the assumption had been that the burden of the bases would be shared amongst all Japanese prefectures. When it became clear that the government in Tokyo had no intention of lessening the burden for Okinawa many felt abandoned by the Japanese government (Johnson, 2019). The movements continued until there was another major uptick in 1995, which is also when the women's organizations in Okinawa got involved (Spencer, 2003).

In September of 1995 a twelve-year-old girl was raped by three U.S. service members who were stationed in Okinawa. The girl and her family reported the crime and feminist activists in Okinawa responded quickly, making a statement, and holding a press conference with the vice governor of Okinawa. The rape occurred a week before the international women's conference in Beijing and that enabled the feminist activists from Okinawa who returned to the news of the assault to organize quickly. The crime brought to the surface all the anger that had been building towards the U.S. bases in Okinawa (Johnson, 2019). The assault saw the Okinawan Women Act Against Military Violence and the League of Okinawan Women's Groups hold protests and sit-ins, especially at the refusal of the U.S. military to hand over the three men responsible. The protests and rallies called for the number of U.S. service members to be reduced and for there to be harsher penalties for service members found to have committed a crime. These calls pulled attention to the sexual violence that was perpetuated by the bases. The anti-base movements' rhetoric also changed as the focus came to be on rape and exploitation by the U.S. military (Yeo, 2011).

One activist, Takazato Suzuyo, came to represent the third wave of anti-base protests in Okinawa, especially as the focus shifted to the U.S. military and violence against women. She

became the co-chair of the Okinawan Women Act Against Military Violence in 1995 and started the first rape crisis center on the island in 1995 in response to the rape of the young girl. The organization has set out to document all instances of U.S. personnel violence against women dating back to Commodore Matthew Perry and his attempt to create a U.S. military base in 1853, when one of the first cases was recorded (Johnson, 2019). Takazato was especially determined to record the cases of U.S. military violence against women as she had worked as a social worker and found that there were numerous stories from clients who had personally experienced sexual violence at the hands of U.S. service members. She learned that the period of U.S. occupation was especially violent, as was the period during the Vietnam War when the death of several sex workers was connected to U.S. service members (Takazato, 1997). The connections between militarization and sexual violence are also important to activists, as the hyper-masculine culture of the bases shapes how the Okinawan women are seen and plays a central role in the ways that the crimes are addressed (Enloe, 2014).

Takazato Suzuyo has discussed that a large barrier for victims to seek justice is that crimes are often tried through the court martial process or the Japanese court process. The court martial process was especially common during occupation and was shrouded in mystery for the victims. As for the rapes that are tried through the Japanese court are often difficult to prosecute (Takazato, 1997). This has also led to statistics being inaccurate, as the U.S. government has not kept records of these assaults and the Japanese government records only those who have filed charges, rather than the actual number of assaults committed.

Takazato and other feminist activists have largely addressed these issues internationally, working in connection with anti-base organizations in other countries and utilizing the foreign press to bring attention to these issues outside of Okinawa and Japan. The focus is on bringing

awareness of these crimes to U.S. citizens, as Takazato believes that it is essential that we are aware of the harm the bases bring (Johnson, 2019). One of the common protest signs and stickers that are found around Okinawa is the phrase “No Rape, No Base, No Tears,” always in English (Johnson, 2). To keep attention on the movement abroad, anti-base activists always use English and often use the word rape to best convey the severity of the violence that surrounds the bases (Johnson, 2019). The 1995 rape caused outrage and saw ninety-thousand people protesting the bases in Okinawa. This protest had some limited success as the U.S. agreed to close one of its bases, the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. However, the Futenma base remains open and will continue to be active until a new base on a less populated section of the island is built to compensate for the loss of Futenma and this new base has seen its own protests (Johnson, 2019).

Akemi Johnson, whose research on the anti-base protests and their gendered components is essential to understanding this topic, summarizes why the third wave of anti-base protests has been so focused on rape and violence against women. While the movement emphasizes sexual and other forms of violence surrounding the bases and is being pursued by activists who have a strong feminist and focus on sexual violence perpetrated by U.S. service members, the weaponization of these crimes via protests is also essential in the movement’s push against the U.S. bases themselves. Johnson states:

When a U.S. serviceman rapes a woman in Okinawa, Okinawa becomes the innocent girl- kidnapped beaten, held down, and violated by a thug United States. Tokyo is the pimp who enabled the abuse, having let the thug in. Soon, no one is talking about the real victim or what happened; they’re using the rape as the special anti-base weapon that it is (Johnson, 12).

While the anti-base movement is a feminist one, with feminist activists at the center of the organizing, there is also a possibility that the victims get lost during this rhetoric. For anti-base activists who are not feminist or focused on keeping victims at the center of this discourse, there is a possibility for the rhetoric to actively harm victims. Due to the strength of the third wave activists who are more focused on the removal of the bases than on sexual violence, the movement can lose the importance of a victim-centered approach to structural violence. In this way the focus on rape and sexual assault and the critiques of the systems that enable these crimes can leave out the victims themselves. For this reason, it is essential that feminist organizers and activists who are focused on violence against women remain central to the movement.

Discussion

Connecting the Movements: #MeToo and the Anti-base Movements

The #MeToo movement and the anti-base movements highlight the transnational aspect central to Japanese feminist movements, as well as establish a longer history of Japanese feminists addressing concerns about *sekuhara* and sexual assault in Japan. The #MeToo movement has been a global movement and, as such, when the hashtag moves from country to country and culture to culture a certain amount of transnational solidarity takes place. The movement began in the U.S. which has a more individualistic culture than nations like Japan, hence the hashtag being “Me” (Caputo, 2018). So, when the hashtag was adapted by Japanese feminists, there was a bit of cultural exchange, with the Japanese movement also originally focusing on individuals’ experiences.

However, to become more culturally relevant within Japan, #MeToo shifted the discourse towards the collective and systemic barriers that are revealed when these individual experiences are examined at a macrolevel. #WeToo became the center of the movement, though #MeToo was also still used to build activist coalitions. With the adaptation of the hashtag and the differing focus of the movement in Japan, the attention tended to be on *sekuhara* of temporary workers and those in journalism. This resulted in the movement becoming a uniquely Japanese feminist movement, rather than merely a U.S. export. The transnational nature of the movement can also be seen in the fact that English was used alongside Japanese in the hashtags. This made Japanese experiences more readily accessible to English speakers in other countries. All of these

components make the movement a glocalized form of a Japanese feminist formations, as it differs significantly from U.S. feminist formations.

The #MeToo movement similarly is an important continuation of the anti-base movement in Japan. While the anti-base movement is easy to brush aside as a singularly anti-militarism movement, it would be a disservice to view the movement in such a lens. There have been three waves of the anti-base protests in Japan, and while each wave has brought differing concerns about the impacts of the bases in Japan, and Okinawa specifically, the latest wave is inherently feminist in its formations. The movement was sparked not only by the rape of a young girl but also by the feminists who had attended the international women's conference in the weeks following the assault and who quickly acted to frame the problem as the bases and as a failure of the U.S. and Japanese governments to act. This immediate response by feminists who had used a transnational conference to build up their activist networks reinforces the transnational basis of the anti-base movement as well. Given the target for change is the U.S. government, the protest signs in English and in the movement's engagement with foreign news organizations are targeted ways to engender international support. The movement also has worked to highlight the power dynamics between the U.S. and Japan in ways that utilize transnational feminist critiques of Western imperialism and perceived superiority. The calls by activists for U.S. citizens to better understand what is occurring around the bases is also an example of non-Western feminists calling on feminist activists in the West to support decolonial transnational feminist from other nations. There is also the inherent transnational nature of the anti-base movement itself, given they are U.S. bases and the nation that they are in is Japan.

Both the Japanese #MeToo movement and the anti-base movement have seen individual women come and/or cases come to represent the respective movements as a whole. Ito Shiori and

Takazato Suzuyo have been willing to do the difficult work of mobilizing people to address the issues of *sekuhara* and sexual assault in Japan. Ito has shared her own experiences unyieldingly, willing to write what she experienced in not only her memoir but in various news articles and interviews over the last several years. This has made her life and her family's lives extremely complicated and yet she has managed to bring attention to the #MeToo movement in Japan both domestically and internationally. Similarly, Takazato has been able to sustain the anti-base movement since 1995 and bring international attention to an issue that otherwise may not have gotten much attention outside of Japan. She has continued her work as a city council member in Naha, the largest city in Okinawa. Her continued efforts to record all the assaults linked to U.S. military bases has created statistics and information that otherwise would never have existed. Both women have used their positions as the face of these movements to further feminist causes and work to bring attention to sexual violence in Japan.

The history of the anti-base movement also helps establish the #MeToo movement as a part of a larger history of Japanese feminist movements as both movements address sexual violence in Japan, and yet the #MeToo movement can be seen as a furthering of feminist concerns that the anti-base movement is not able to address. Given the historical and contemporary nature of the anti-base movement and the refocusing of the movement in 1995, the anti-base movement has become a historical feminist movement in Japan. The anti-base movement is also necessarily focused on the ways that militarization hurts those who are in the areas near military bases and the ways that the U.S. and the Japanese governmental relations are impacted by unequal power dynamics. The movement, then, is less focused on sexual assault in Japan that is not connected to militarization. This has enabled the #MeToo movement to bring new attention to a different set of experiences, particularly related to *sekuhara* in the workplace.

There is also a sustained critique by both movements regarding global power relations. The #MeToo movement has contextualized the U.S. #MeToo movement and challenged the focus on “I” by adapting the #WeToo and in so doing challenges the U.S. as the “ultimate knower” of feminist practices. Similarly, the anti-base movement critiques U.S. overseas military bases and the assertion that U.S. military presence is inherently positive. We see similar focus on the power of language to convey the severity of sexual violence as both #MeToo activists and anti-base activists use the term rape or *reipu* to bring attention to sexual violence. The anti-base movements usage of the term in English highlights that the target audience is the U.S. military and U.S. citizens, whereas, the #MeToo movement uses the term in Japanese as the focus is on changing conditions within Japan. The similarity of language highlights shared values in increasing awareness of sexual violence, even if the targets are different. As the #MeToo movement engages more directly with the societal barriers that enable abusers and make it difficult for victims to feel able to come forward, expanding on the Japanese cultural concerns that the anti-base movement is less suited to critique.

Similarly, the #MeToo movement can bring more attention to individual experiences of sexual violence in a way that the anti-base movement has struggled to do. While the #MeToo movement has shifted to using more societal critiques to address the ways that sexual violence is a cultural rather than individual issue through #WeToo, there is still a focus on individuals sharing their experiences. Ito’s memoir is an ideal example of this, as her book discusses her own experiences but frequently cites statistics and other information to position her experiences as a part of a larger set of issues. This creates a space for the individual victims to not be lost in the rhetoric of the movement or lose focus on the systemic inequities that need to change. The #MeToo movement can be seen as a continuation of the work done by anti-base activists as they

enable Japanese feminist activists to focus on a larger issue of sexual violence in Japan, beyond the scope of militarization. While it would be understandable to see the Japanese #MeToo movement as not an original Japanese feminist movement, the movement's connection to historical Japanese feminist movements and the continuation of these concerns places the movement as a specifically *Japanese* feminist movement. The importance of the movement being a Japanese feminist movement is because it allows for the movement to be seen as a representation of Japanese feminist activism rather than as a movement from another culture that has little relevance to Japanese feminist concerns. The #MeToo movement in Japan adapted the movement and hashtag to be better suited to Japanese culture and, as such, is no longer a replica of the U.S. movement, instead finding itself a part of both historical and contemporary Japanese feminist activism.

Limitations of Study and Future Study

This thesis is by no means a complete history of the anti-base movement and is limited in its engagement with larger Japanese feminist trends. There are many Japanese feminist archives and activist organizations that are only accessible in Japan and my position as a scholar who is in the U.S. has limited the kinds of materials I was able to access for my study. Similarly, since Japanese is my second language rather than my first, there was a limit to the amount of Japanese material I was able to engage with and include in my study. I also did not engage with the entire history of Japanese feminist activism, choosing instead to select a single movement for comparison to the #MeToo movement. I also did not fully explore all of the various cultural and societal concerns raised by #MeToo activists in Japan; instead, I focused on the most common issues raised. Given that this study was focused on linking two Japanese feminist movements and identifying their transnational nature, there were limits to what was central to the thesis of this piece.

In future studies it would be best to actively engage with Japanese feminists who are currently doing the work of organizing in Japan. This would enable for a deeper analysis of the issues that activists raise regarding the Japanese legal system and the connections that have been made across movements. There are also several other movements that have been started in Japan since the #MeToo movement that are addressing various aspects of sexual violence in Japan, and an in-depth analysis of these movements and their connection to #MeToo and other historical Japanese feminist movements would be incredibly useful in establishing the lineage of Japanese feminist activism. Similarly, an analysis of Japanese feminist engagement with activists in

countries other than the U.S. would be a valuable contribution to Japanese transnational feminism and further establish the transnational nature of Japanese feminism both historically and currently in a manner that decenters the U.S.

Conclusion

This thesis examines the ways that the #MeToo movement in Japan can be connected to a larger understanding of Japanese feminist activism. The anti-base movement provides a unique opportunity to connect the #MeToo movement to historical and broader Japanese feminist practices, given the third wave's focus on sexual violence related to military bases. As both movements deal with similar critiques of the Japanese legal system, and both movements have had one woman and one incident considered the face of the movement, the movements also can be seen as having been established in similar manners. The importance of positioning the #MeToo movement as a Japanese feminist movement cannot be overstated as it removes the focus on the U.S. as a unique knower of feminist activism and instead recenters the history of Japanese feminism as being separate from U.S. feminist practices.

Both the anti-base movement and the #MeToo movement are important Japanese feminist movements that few outside of Japan are aware of, especially given the limited amount of English-language literature that focuses on the #MeToo movement in Japan. By writing this thesis and discussing the cultural and societal particularities of the Japanese #MeToo movement and its connections to the anti-base movement, there is an opportunity for more English-speaking feminists to become aware of Japanese feminist movements and their cultural positionality. This enables more cross cultural and cross lingual coalition building and aids in activists' awareness of what is occurring elsewhere, especially around the U.S. bases. There should be more attention given to movements in different countries in ways that enables English-speaking feminists to engage with the movements' goals and values in an equitable manner. By paying attention to

other cultures movements, we can increase awareness of feminist critiques and achievements and create space for English speaking feminists to support those actions. The importance of Japanese feminist movements being acknowledged as uniquely Japanese is also essential as it addresses the power imbalance between the U.S. and Japan, even in transnational activism. The Japanese #MeToo movement and the anti-base movement in Okinawa are essential Japanese feminist movements and those who have worked for years to address sexual violence in Japan deserve to have their voices heard by those who are concerned with these issues, especially as their work continues every day.

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