DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIETY
Volume 47 | Number 3 | September 2018, 401-421
DOI 10.21588/dns/2018.47.3.004 **Special Issue**

Same Despair but Different Hope: Youth Activism in East Asia and Contentious Politics*

Yunjeong Joo | Seoul National University, ISDPR

This study attempts a comparative analysis of the social movements of young people in East Asia. Since the 2000s, young people in East Asia have been coined as the "Three Give-up Generation" (South Korea), "Bomb Generation" (Taiwan), and "Loss Generation" (Japan), suggesting that they are in despair and lacking visions and hope for their future. However, the youths have been expressing their opinions on multiple issues in the form of organized action, such as the Anti-Constitutional Movement (Japan), the Sunflower Movement against China in the case of Taiwan, and the candlelight demonstrations and feminist protests in Korea. Though they share similar problems of youth unemployment, job insecurity, social inequality, their activism directed towards diverse issues and agendas reflecting each society's contexts and situations. Therefore, such differences created multifaceted issues and agendas for future visions of youths.

In this paper, I examined the similarities and differences of youth activism in East Asia and how they are related to the youth situation and politics in each country concerning frames and repertoires of movements. Also, based on research, I argue that young people developed their way of political engagement and contentious politics reflecting their context and conditions; therefore it is necessary to debunk 'youth deficit model,' which regards youth as mere victims of the society. Despite visible differences in issues and frames of contentions, East Asian youth politics share many commonalities regarding repertories such as frequent use of digital media and connections to youth cultures. First of all, the prevalent use of SNS made youth activists able to organize the boundary of campus activism reaching wider public. Secondly, the exposure to SNS and online media decreased the repressive violence towards demonstrators and created peaceful demonstrations. Therefore, diverse groups could participate in activisms and contentions. However, there are differences of critical issues in three countries' contentions reflecting youth's situations. Overall, the similarities and differences among the youth activism in East Asian countries

*This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2017S1A3A2066155).

revealed that, despite the shared problems of East Asia's youths, they conjure visions and hopes for society in multifaceted ways.

Keywords: *Youth, activism, contentious politics, repertoire, digital media, youth culture*

Youth in East Asia and the Rise of Activism

This study attempts a comparative analysis of the social movements of young people in East Asia. Since the 2000s, young people in East Asia have been coined as the "Three Give-up Generation" (South Korea), "Bomb Generation" (Taiwan), and "Loss Generation" (Japan), suggesting that they are in despair and lacking visions and hope for their future.

> "In all three cases, economic factors including youth unemployment, job insecurity, wages, and social inequality are critical motivators driving the younger generation's political actions. In a region with the fastest-aging population and the lowest birth rates in the world, it is possible that young people will increasingly find themselves at the bottom of an upside-down pyramid, holding up or held down by the size and weight of the older generations. Most likely, generational politics will become a sharper and more potent force in northeast Asia."[1]

In a sense, the activism of youth groups in Northeast Asia was somewhat inevitable. Since the beginning of 2010, various social movements have developed and become mobilized in East Asian countries. The youths have been expressing their opinions on multiple issues in the form of organized action, such as the Anti-Constitutional Movement (Japan), the Sunflower Movement against China in the case of Taiwan, and the candlelight demonstrations and feminist protests in Korea, which are not necessarily related to economic issues. The activism of the young people in East Asia take diverse directions that reflect each society's contexts and situations, and such differences have given birth to a variety of multifaceted issues and agendas that concern the future visions of youths.

In this paper, based on a comparative research on the youth activism in

[1] Katharine H.S. Moon, Paul Park, and Maeve Whelan 2016 "Youth & politics in East Asia", Brookings East Asia Commentary June 30, 2016. Retrieved August, 2018 (https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/youth-politics-in-east-asia).

three different East Asian countries, I argue that the young people in East Asia have developed their own ways to engage in and contend with national politics that reflect their contexts and conditions. Moreover, I counter the 'youth deficit'[2] model, which regards youths as being incapable of changing their own situation and social conditions and suggest that, despite many differences in youth politics, there arises the political aspirations and contentions of youth groups to reflect their contexts and conditions in East Asia in diverse forms and contents. For them, political contention is a way of expressing their anger and despair about their current situation as well as their hope for the future.

In particular, based on Tilly's contention theory, this paper assumes that the method of contention is defined by the limitations of historical conditions, so that movements that occur during the same period have a similar repertoire of contention (Tilly 2008). In line with this view, I compare the frames of activisms (contents) and repertoires of contentions (forms) of the youth activism in East Asia to investigate their similarities and differences. This analysis will deepen our understanding of the young people in East Asia by examining whether the young people of East Asia constitute a coherent framework or repertoire in their mobilization. In what follows, the youth movements of the three East Asian countries are introduced, then examined through a comparative analysis.

The purpose of this study is to analyze what commonalities and differences exist in the language and repertoires that constitute resistance, that is, whether they share similar issues or similar methods, forms, and repertoires of contention. I will analyze the structures of political opportunities, core agendas, and issues of the youth social movements, and compare their frames, representative slogans, repertoires, organization method, use of media. Through this comparative analysis, I aim to gain better understanding of the youth activisms, especially on how the frames and repertoires of the movements are composed. This examination will uncover how the youth's utopian and value-oriented ideals are structured and what strategies are taken by the young people in different countries to achieve these ideals. Especially, as numerous scholars have pointed out, the influence

[2] This apathy to politics is not only claimed in East Asia but is acknowledged as a worldwide phenomenon, where "young people are not deterred from voting in local elections because it is difficult or awkward, but because they cannot be bothered" (Pirie and Worcester 2000, p. 13). It is often said that young people have little time to think about the future of political processes from a national perspective or to participate at a local level, thereby regarding young people as lacking the power to change their fortunes and society.

of the digital media is becoming a critical aspect in academic research, so much so that a methodology to collect and understand digital media is currently under development. This research recognizes the essential role of digital media in the construction and performance of youth activism.

Thus, to understand the effects of the use of digital media on youth activism, digital media, including Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, and internet cafés, are reviewed along with pamphlets and documents produced by the relevant youth organizations were reviewed to collect the data for analysis. For comparison, I selected most representative youth activism in East Asia, which were mainly organized by youth groups such as SEALDs (Japan), Sunflower Movement (Taiwan) and Feminist Movement (South Korea).

Youth activism and contentious politics

Throughout history, the youth has always been regarded as the harbinger of radical social change. Today, however, young people are not seen as political actors but are rather understood as the victims of society who are unable to change their own fortunes nor the social structures that shape them. However, after the financial crisis in 2008, this representation of youths as victims came to be challenged, as exemplified by the "Occupy" Movement and the Jasmin Movement in Arab world (Castells 2015). The interest in youth activism has renewed globally since the advent of these movements. Manuel Castells conceptualized youth activism as the politics of 'hope and rage' based on network behind the youth movements. This rise of youth contentions begs a re-evaluation of the frame of youth engagement debunking a "youth deficit" model which assumes that young people need to be politically socialized by adults. However, some argue that "young people are politically active and actively involved in their own political socialization, which is evident when examining youth participation in protest, participatory politics, and other forms of noninstitutionalized political participation (Earl et al. 2017, p. 1)." A new type of engagement model for youth participation was conceptualized as "engaged citizenship" (Shea and Harris 2006) which assert that the youth can be engaged to participate in politics by embedding politics in their daily lives. Moreover, the line with the research on overcoming the "youth deficit" model conceptualizes the positive side of "ephemeral, sporadic, episodic, or enduring nature of contention"(Earl and Kimport 2011, p. 186) and emphasizes the use of media and networks by

youth activism.

The research on youth movements have mainly examined the differences between existing social movements and youth movements, with special emphasis on the different forms of youth movement. and their mobilization styles. For example, a study on the influence of popular cultures on activism reported that the Harry Porter stories and super heroes are linked with youth activism. For instance, fan culture is changed into a sort of activism, making fans into activists and draw activism through "cultural acupuncture" which recruit activists through fan activities(Bird and Maher 2017), sometimes incorporating hip hop culture or fan culture into activism (Earl and Kimport 2009; Clay 2012). Some people argue that in the politics of youth activism, engaged citizenship tend to increase, but at the same time, so does contentious politics. Other studies have delved into the use of digital media in social movements, especially in terms of how 'hashtag activism' builds a "shared political temporality" (Bonilla and Rosa 2015, p. 4).

A number of studies have investigated the youth movements around the world. For example, there exist abundant literature, both academic and documentary, that describe Japan's Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy (SEALDs) and their relation to social movements (Alison 2017; Cho 2016; Shin 2017; Slater 2015). These studies point out that SEALDs should be understood in the context of youth culture rather than being simply isolated as a grand social movement. In the case of Taiwan's Sunflower movement, existing research has more or less emphasized the issue of nationalism and Taiwanese identity, mainly understanding the movement in relation to the China-Taiwan relations without touching much upon the problems of youths (Hioe 2015; Brading 2017). Concerning the new feminism movement in Korea, Lee (2018) studied the movement in relation to media ethics.

Even though there has been extensive research on individual movements, however, studies presenting comparative perspectives on this rise of youth movement are extremely scarce. This research mends this gap by comparing the youth contentions in three East Asian countries, focusing on their frames and repertoires. In doing so, I employ the concept of contention, performance, repertoire, which is defined by Tilly as "claim-making routines that apply to the same claimant-object pairs: bosses and workers, peasants and landlords. Rival nationalist factions, and many more" (Tilly 2008, p. 14). This theatrical metaphor calls attention to the clustered, learned, yet improvisational character of people's interactions as they make and receive each other's claims. The set of tactics available for use at a given historical moment as well

as the characteristics that those tactics fundamentally share constitute what scholars have called the "repertoire of contention" (Tilly 2008). "The motivating idea behind a repertoire of contention is that would-be organizers and activists don't exist outside the historical moment that they are living in; they are not blank slates, nor do they choose from an infinite array of tactical options. Instead, they must learn how to perform protest, and they therefore choose tactics from a culturally and historically specific set: the repertoire of contention. The tactics included in a repertoire may change over time as people innovate and develop new tactics, and/or as older tactics fall out of fashion." (Earl and Kimport 2011, p. 179). These days, the realm of repertoires has expanded to include the digital media. For the study of frames, Benford and Snow (2000) pointed out that framing and framing process is important in understanding social movements and collective actions.

Youth Movement in East Asia

Aspiring for Peace and Democracy: SEALDs of Japan

The most prominent youth activism in Japan is the Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy (SEALDs), which is defined "as an urgent action by students to defend free and democratic Japan."[3] When the current Abe administration in Japan set out to rewrite the constitution of Japan to allow for more military armament, the young people of Japan felt a threat to the nation's democracy and freedom. Students rose to fight against this perceived threat and insisted that "the political situation in Japan continues to deteriorate. In 2014, the Constitutional Protection Law and permission to exercise collective self-defense rights were forced, and the philosophy of the Constitution is being hollowed out. The problems of poverty and the declining birth rate and aging population are also serious, and a new framework for living security is required."[4] Basically the goal of SEALDs constituted three agendas: the protection of constitutionalism, social securities, national security. In sum, they "the actions of each of us should be a shield to protect Japan's freedom and democracy."[5]

---

[3] SEALDs Homepage. Retrieved August 1, 2018 (http://sealdseng.strikingly.com).

[4] SEALDs Homepage. Retrieved August 1, 2018 (http://sealdseng.strikingly.com).

[5] SEALDs Homepage. Retrieved August 1, 2018 (http://sealdseng.strikingly.com).

Participation in SEALDs connected to the experiences of 311 Fukushima Incident and the feelings the Japanese people had held since then, that their daily life had been destroyed (SEALDs 2016A, p. 15) In the Japanese society, since 311, many people participated in anti-nuclear power plant and anti-discrimination movements and various people, including the young people, had started to make voices in Japanese society. "They have learned from and built up the post-3.11 anti-nuclear movements, expanding its base beyond nuclear issues (Slater 2015, p. 1). SEALDS should be understood in relation to the 311 that citizens are infuriated that the government undermined "transparency, accountability and democratic values" and even show "inaction in the face of racist assaults on the rights of resident ethnic Koreans and rightwing vigilantism targeting the liberal media."[6] They realized that it was critical to "reach a wider demographic in order to make their voices heard. 'Therefore they created "a message that communicated in ways that made sense to younger people" (Slater 2015, p. 6). They held regular protests around Japanese Diet in Tokyo and sometimes even occupied the streets lasting almost one year between 2015 and 2016. On August 30, 2015, the SEALDs was among protesters who surrounded the National Diet Building in Tokyo. Estimates of the size of the crowd ranged from 30,000 to 120,000.

Use of media such as blogs and webpages was very important in propagating the message of SEALDs and mobilizing young people to participate. In understanding SEALDs, it is important to relate to the legacy of student movement. In Japan, up until the 1960s and 1970s, there existed strong contentious students politics. But such movement went in decline and little success was to be found in recruiting the younger generation to social movements. Therefore, the rise of SEALDs movement was enthusiastically accepted by the older generation of students movements and applauded by many famous scholars who were prominent activists in their youth.

The organizational structure is not a top-down approach. The repertoires of SEALDs was organized by each member, who made their own flyers and videos. One of the participants, Ryu Yuki said that "I now have to insist on my own language and voice, not following the meaning given by others, the voice of others" (SEALDs 2016A, p. 69). Sharing of the posts, understanding the issues, and participating in the demonstrations were for them a process of building a community. "Social media can connect people who are otherwise often isolated, in terms of political mobilization, unaware of the potential of

[6] Kingston, Jeff. 2015. "SEALDs: Students Slam Abe's Assault on Japan's Constitution." September 7, *Japan Focus* 13(36-1) Retrieved August 1, 2018 (https://apjjf.org/-Jeff-Kingston/4371).

common interests and thus for collective action" (Slater 2015, p. 14).

Ushida, who participated in SEALD said, "Imagination is better than thoughtfulness." It was argued that imagination can bring people who have done similar things before us, who have constantly fought for freedom and peace(SEALDs 2016A, p. 170). Okuda, one of the core members of the SEALDS talks about Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" and insisted that he did not set a concrete plan for a successful civil rights movement. Instead of talking about specific plans to deter the law, he emphasized abstract and ideal slogans that can bring universal ideals to people to make them realize and recognize that "that person's dream is also my dream" (SEALDs 2016A, p. 172). Likewise, instead of planning specific details, SEALDs wanted to share their thoughts and visions on democracy and freedom with the other youths of Japan.

Young people who participated in SEALDs say their protest is like a "music video," and they yelled in a hip hop-like fashion, calling out, "I say Abe!, You say Yamero (Go Away)! Abe Yamero, Abe Yamero."[7] SEALDs' demonstrations were edited like music videos and uploaded on Youtube. Their demonstrations were staged around National Diet and Shibuya to mobilize many young people who had been rather indifferent to politics, thanks to their hip cultures of contentions. The success of SEALDs was derived from the connection to fashion, design, hipster culture, which were their way of connecting to the contemporary youth. However, there were lots of criticism that this movement, despite being led by Japan's youth, lacked awareness of the problems faced by the young people, and they are rather alienated from the cause of the movement (Cho 2016). Some criticized the activism of SEALDs was too hip and therefore lacked the seriousness of activisms.

Despite such charges, for young people, the experience of collective activism that SEALDs provided offered them a chance to practice democracy in real life. "I learned for the first time that how pleasant it can be to talk and share my thoughts with others. The Youtube video showed us at a glance how obvious we were to stand and act. Until then, we have been oppressed to prevent such actions. But it was good to break the oppression at once" (SEALDs 2016A, p. 56). "I feel that participation in such demonstrations is 'enjoyable' and such feelings are that I have never felt before. So I thought what a new sensation, feeling like that. I felt a kind of shared sense of

[7] SEALDs Japan. SEALDs "TO BE" August 14 2016 Retrieved August 1 2018 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xl6GtoAb_dM).

emancipation that I have never experienced before; I assume that this feeling of emancipation from oppression is what 'democracy or freedom' is and recognize it as a kind of style" (SEALDs 2016A, p. 57). In other words, young people shared their feeling about freedom and democracy together by participating in demonstrations, and this offered them a chance to experience democracy and freedom in reality, not just as abstract values taught in textbooks. After the end of demonstration, there were several elections in Japan, but the SEALDs movement was not able to bring about the change of political power. What is more, SEALDs had been criticized that the activism itself did not substantially representing youth's issues and sometimes exploited male-centered hip cultures.

Sunflower Movement for Taiwan's Identity

In Taiwan, massive students movement erupted in early 2014 "in protest against the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) that proposed to widen the range of industries open to potential investment and to liberalize trade between the Taiwan and Chinese and mainland Chinese states." (Au, 2017). This was called the Sunflower Movement, which was the largest mobilization in Taiwan since 1980s. This was mainly organized by young students who occupied the streets and the Legislative Yuan in March 2014. "More than 200 (mostly college) students broke through the police line guarding Taiwan's Legislative Yuan and occupied the Legislative Chamber. Students wanted to lodge a protest against the KMT's cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (STA) bill. The next day, approximately 20,000 gathered outside the Legislative Yuan to support the student protest" (Braiding 2017, p. 133). This movement lasted more than one month, and hundreds of thousands of young Taiwanese stormed the streets and occupied the Legislative Yuan (Au, 2017). This activism, now known as the Sunflower Movement, became the largest mobilization in Taiwan, as street demonstrations had not been common way of contention under the influence of authoritarian regime. After Taiwan's democratization, the Sunflower Movement is very distinct, according to Ho (2015), in that, "generally speaking, Taiwan's society was not a fertile ground for radical protests. According to a comparative study on East Asian countries, the Taiwanese showed only slightly more willingness to participate in social movement activities (signing a petition, joining boycotts, and attending demonstrations) than the renowned law-abiding Singaporeans, and much less than the Japanese and South Koreans" (Ho 2015, p. 73). However, the

Sunflower movement somehow overcame the anti-disruptive politics of Taiwan.

The Sunflower movement received such wide popularity due to its anti-China tendency and Taiwanese nationalism. Jamie, a Taiwanese student, explained the motivations for the protests as being "to do protest and try to remind the government that *we want our own identity*." (Au, 2017). Contemporary forms of anti-Sinoism was pivotal in the constructions of Taiwanese national identity. Before Sunflower movement, Taiwan had taking a relatively friendly policy toward China under the KMT regime. However, as the economic situation gradually worsened, bringing a stagnation in Taiwan's economy, the anti-Chinese sentiment in Taiwan increased. Young people saw that their economic difficulties and problems stemmed from the expansion of Chinese hegemony. So, in addition to the protests against a government that was rather pro-China, the Sunflower movement was also an anti-imperialist and anti-China protest.

In Taiwan, the student movement of youth was intense in the 1980s, which was called the Movement of Wild Lily at the time and played a major role in the abolition of martial laws. Like Japan's SEALDs, the Sunflower movement was in some sense a succession of the strong campus activism of the 1980s and 1990s, thus the movement received abundant support from academics and activists of those periods. Student activism aimed to deter and delay the passing of the law regarding trade with China. During the occupation, the most representative slogan was "Taiwan not for Sale," making claims for Taiwan's identity. Students widely utilized SNS to reach out the wider population and communicate with the diverse groups within Taiwanese society. For instance, many of scenes from occupation was uploaded as videos on YouTube and Facebook as well as other discussion forums, and the videos were widely and quickly circulated (Chao, 2014). "Over the course of the movement, dozens of such videos would be shot and distributed on Youtube; some on behalf of the organizers, most others being messages of support from around the world. 'Don't let Taiwan become the next Hong Kong' said students from Hong Kong swaying to the tune of John Lennon's Imagine. While none of the videos would come anywhere close to the success of the Ukrainian clip, Youtube, unfiltered and not subject to commentary from the media, was about to become a defining medium in how the revolution was to be shared." (Chao, 2014)

As for the repertoires of the demonstration, the Sunflower movement had strong connection to the youth culture of Taiwan. For instance, fashion was employed as a way to connect youth. "I wanted to create a fashion brand

that would make protesters cool and trendy," (Laskai, 2015) said Chung Ch'en-wei, the founder of Radicalization, a fashion company. *Gongsheng*, the fashion designers in attendance including the street wear group Revolt, were famous for popularizing a black t-shirt written with the slogan "f*** the government (Laskai, 2015). In this regard, the Sunflower Movement offered young people the experience of demonstrating using the language of hip and cool youth cultures.

After the demonstration and occupation, the young people of Taiwan felt that "this occupation has awakened our strategic vision, raised the Taiwanese voice to Chinese society, and allowed the world to see Taiwan. This occupation was an act of finding their own voices and made people aware of the 'democratic rights' of the constitution, turning ideals into reality, and our generation of Taiwanese experienced all of this. We tried to dismantle the Communist infrastructure, the (Chinese) anti-colony world power's domination of Taiwan, tried our best to break from the empire's oppression, the underhanded dealings among those in power." (Au, 2017). The Sunflower Movement offered Taiwanese students a chance to experience the value of their identity and of their democracy.

The Taiwanese young people's movement influenced the result of local and presidential elections. The elected Mayor of Taipei and also the President of Taiwan are very friendly to the cause of youth politics. So, unlike Japan's SEALDs which failed in the change of the regime, Taiwanese youth activism contributed to changing the national government and continues to produce significant political effects. After the demonstration, young people organized and created their own political party named the New Power Party, which succeeded in gaining five seats in the National Legislature.

Intersectionality of Gender and Youth, South Korea's New Feminist Movement

In South Korea, the most prominent large-scale street activism was the candlelight demonstrations of 2016, but the youth did not organize systematic activities or have representative voices in these demonstrations. Instead, the most visible achievements in the current Korean youth movement are the so-called "new feminist movements" which are mainly organized by young women and girls. Women are actively appearing in these demonstrations to raise their voices against gender-related crimes and Korea's abortion law. The youth movement in other East Asian countries, as discussed above, dealt with structural problems in society with themes such as peace and democracy, neoliberalism and nationalism, and fought for

alternative visions. However, in the case of South Korea, gendered movements that focus on the specific issues of gender violence and emphasize the dimension of intersectionality of gender and youth is at the center of youth activism. This absence of a grand vision such as democracy and peace might be due to South Korea's experience of relatively peaceful democratization and recent change of government. That is, in South Korea, there is no need for countering the ruling party or asking for a radical social change.

In Korea's street movements, the legacy of student movements is quite strong as well. However, there exist a clear generation gap between the current youths and the older generation of student movements. This new feminist demonstrations are composed of various young women, who are not only university students, but women and girls from broader backgrounds. Therefore, this movement is a more diverse movement that is not confined to 'campus activism.' To some extent, in South Korea, after the experiences of the candlelight demonstration, the methods of contention have become very popular to all walks of life. Young girls and women came to be unafraid of street contention, and moreover, the political situation is now friendly to demonstrators. Therefore, because the culture of peaceful demonstrations has been successful in regime change, various groups of people began to make their voices in streets and the methods and repertories came to be democratized to all walks of life in the society.

The feminist protests started as a protest against a police incident investigation that unjustly treated female violators. They were mainly staged on Hyehwa Station, which is called the streets of youth, and Gwanghwamun area, a symbolic place for democratic uprising. Women protested against gender polarization, gathering every Saturday and make their voices heard wearing red T-shirts. Demonstrations have been held more than five times so far from the summer of 2018, and in one demonstration, it was estimated that more than 70,000 participated.[8] The protests by young girls can be traced back to the anti-US Army demonstrations triggered by the deaths of two young girls, as well as the anti-Mad Cow's Disease candlelight demonstrations and the Ewha Womans University student demonstrations. The new feminist movement also coincided with the #Metoo activism. Through these demonstrations and movements, women are emerging as important actors in street politics and are becoming empowered to make their voices through

[8] "'Gong-gyeog' a-nin 'yeon-dae' gang-jo-han gwang-hwa-mun 'bul-pyeon-han-yong-gi' 4cha jib-hoe [Gwanghwamun stressed 'solidarity' rather than 'attack']." Jungangilbo[JoongAng Daily Newspaper] August 5, 2018 Retrieved August 6, 2018.

large-scale street demonstrations.

Rather than claiming abstract ideas and grand visions like Japanese or Taiwanese youths, these demonstrations are being organized in ways that emphasize victimization and make specific claims for women's justice. At the Hyehwa Station Square and Gwanghwamun Square, rallies were held for the protests against illegal hidden cameras that take and spread inappropriate photos of unsuspecting women and the end of the abortion crime. The network for this demonstration, called "Uncomfortable Courage," calls out the slogan, "Our life is not your pornography." They also state that "The Uncomfortable Courage will change the world." In a related statement, it is said that, "As of June 9, 2018, the Republic of Korea treats women as second-class citizens, and women are not enjoying the rights guaranteed by the Constitution."[9]

The Ewha Womans University protests of 2016 and the way current feminist demonstrations are organized resemble the idol fan culture in some respects.[10] Participants are recruited through feminist internet cafes just as local fans are invited to performance halls through internet cafes for idol group fans. Basically, the mass rallies are organized through SNS, through which many new members who do not know each other directly nor have previous connections through existing organizations or schools are recruited. Thus, complete strangers gather together in the name of women's rights and make their voices heard in Korean society. In other words, these feminist protests are characterized by the fact that anonymous people gather via the Internet and not through any existing organization. In this sense, the new feminist movement exhibit the typical form of a network as a temporary and episodic movement.

The new feminist movement is also similar to the idol fan club culture in terms of organization and repertoire. This activism began with demonstrations related to the issue of fairness at Ewha Womans University, but it has since expanded to protests against hidden cameras (known as "molka" in Korean) and protests for the abolition of abortion crime. Participants are mainly young women and girls who are mobilized through Twitter, Facebook, Internet cafes, hash tags, and so on. There are also cases where popular entertainers join the public gatherings or show their support through SNS. When the protests are held, certain words or phrases are used to expose the

[9] "'Gong-gyeog' a-nin 'yeon-dae' gang-jo-han gwang-hwa-mun 'bul-pyeon-han-yong-gi' 4cha jib-hoe [Gwanghwamun stressed 'solidarity' rather than 'attack']." Jungangilbo [JoongAng Daily Newspaper] August 5, 2018 Retrived August 6, 2018.

[10] Interview with a participant of Ewha and other feminist demonstrations.

search terms on Twitter or the next Internet space. The words 'uncomfortable courage' are used to increase exposure through hash tags. Uncomfortable Courage produced webtoons and implemented various media strategies, and the frequent use of SNS media enabled the activists to reach a wider population even including middle and high school students.

One high school girl who attended these demonstrations professed that she felt empowered through the demonstrations. Overall, young women struggling with strong social competition and low self-esteem gained the opportunity to voice their opinions and speak to society through the demonstrations. However, South Korea's new feminist demonstration does not look very cool or hip as SEALDs and the Sunflower movement did. In some sense, this feminist movement is against such hip cultures, since such cultures also exploit women's bodies and trigger voyeurism. Rather, intense slogans and militant gestures stripping lookism are emphasized. This women's movement emphasizes that women must escape the male-centered view; it is a movement that is faithful to the feminist position rather than following commercial fashion or hip cultures. Moreover, in the process of movement, serious conflicts between women and men have risen, and the youths in Korea are now extremely divided by their gender politics.

Compared to other East Asian movements, the movement of Korea is gendered and heterogeneous, centering on a certain group of youth and a specific issue without being confined to the macro politics of state or nations. This movement is not aimed at setting a grand social vision but concentrates on solving current contradictions with specific goals. It is very rare for young women to reveal their existence in the public sphere and to make their voices as a political subject, but the street protests continue to bring women together to voice their various problems. And through this movement, the street politics of the young people in Korea are becoming heterogeneous and diversified. That is, in Korea, the intersectional identities of youth (Earl et al. 2016) are becoming more prominent beyond the general model of youth activism.

Media, Youth Cultures and Divergent Issues

The youths' aspiration and dreams for futures are contingent upon social conditions and their own political opportunities. The situations of the young people in the three countries reviewed herein were evaluated to be quite similar even just three to four years ago. They were called the "Bomb

generation" in Taiwan, "Loss Generation" in Japan, and in Korea, the discourse of the "Three Give-up (Sampo)" generation has been prevalent to increase the popularity of the discussions on the youth in despair. The problems of the macro social vision, the so-called universal problem, were important in Japan and Taiwan, and the youth reflected a strong desire for a change in society. However, in these two countries, the problems faced by the youth were not revealed in full scale, or the macroscopic theme and the young peoples' problems were unrelated but somehow acted as the catalyst of social change regardless of results. In Korea, however, specific issues faced by the women in Korea were emphasized.

Against the expectations of similar generational politics, there is little commonality among the three countries' activism in terms of the issues and frames of the movements. Instead, there exist similarities in terms of repertoires and forms of contention such as the use of SNS and the connection to youth cultures. It is also true that youth activism seems "ephemeral, sporadic, episodic," sometimes lacking in coherent identity and goals. The youths move in a networked way rather than through the solid organization found in the existing social movements.

As I analyzed above, there is a difference in the frames of issues but many similarities in constructing and performing contentions. As Tilly explained, each performance of contention is limited by historical conditions and imagination. Accordingly, the methods of communication and organization through media is very similar. The youth activism heavily depend on SNS for organizing and also propagating their messages, which has had the following effects. First, the use of SNS in social movement resulted in a decline in repression. In the three cases, there is a prominent decrease in the level of repressive violence, with no physical violence leading to the deaths or casualties of the protesters. This decrease of repressive violence is partly due to the use of SNS and Youtube. As in the case of Taiwan's Sunflower movement, the government could not use violence since it was broadcasted online, curtailing violent repression.

Second, the use of SNS and various online platforms gave the youth to power to reach out a wider population without being confined to the narrow network of student organizations. Thus, they were able to connect with wider publics and mobilize diverse groups of people beyond campus activism. For instance, the new feminist movement of South Korea is not confined to campus activism but mobilized diverse group of women and young girls.

Third, this kind of reaching out to wider public is possible since, in terms of repertories, the young protesters actively utilize the methods of

TABLE 1
Similarities and Differences of Youth Activism in East Asia

	SEALDs(Japan)	Sunflower (Taiwan)	Uncomfortable Courage (South Korea)
Political Opportunity	Against Ruling Party / Decline in Repression	Against Ruling Party / Decline in Repression	Pro Ruling Party hospitable to activism/ no repression, protection
Location	National Diet/ Shibuya	National Legislature	Hyehwa(Street of Youth)
Time	2015	2015	2017-2018
Slogan	Democracy/Peace	Taiwan Not for Sale	My life is not your porn
Organization	SEALDs/ Mainly University Students	Mainly University Students	'Uncomfortable Courage' (Young women and girls)
Participants	Campus activism	Campus activism	Non-campus activism
Performance/ Repertoire	Hip-hop, slogan	Singing songs, Rephrasing famous musical scores	Singing songs, Rephrasing famous musical scores
SNS	Facebook	Facebook	Daum Café/Instagram
Youth Culture	Strong Connection: Fashion, Hipster	Strong Connection: Fashion, Hipster	Weak Connection Against Lookism Counter Culture
Continuity	None	Political Party	Continue
Future Prospects	Peace and Democracy	Independence for Taiwan	Gender equality

youth cultures and connected with their peers and the public utilizing the familiar language of fan culture and youth culture. Many forms of youth culture, such as fan activism, idol culture, hip-hop, and fashion, were incorporated as the repertories of activism and translated into the language of social movement, thereby increasing the relevance of contention to youngsters. However, in the South Korean feminist movement, the lookism of cool youth cultures were disfavored unlike in Japan and Taiwan

However, despite many similarities of three countries, there also exist differences. In the case of the young people in Japan and Taiwan, they actively

promoted international solidarity. However, in the case of South Korea, such exchanges and solidarity were somewhat left apart from the flow. This difference may have risen from the difference in agenda setting, and because, as in the case of Japan and Taiwan, international solidarity is basically based on the campus activism linking leaders of students movements. In contrast, the youth activism of South Korea is more divergent and anomalous with more diverse groups.

In the case of Taiwan, Japan, and Hongkong, the youth activist have shared many discussions on their prospects and futures, including whether or not it will be possible to envisage more engaged politics such as the foundation of political parties. After SEALDs and the Sunflower Movement, the youth activists of Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong gathered together to discuss their commonalities and differences. In this context of East Asian youth solidarity, South Korean youth movement is rather estranged; this may be due to the fact that their concern is not directed toward macro social changes such as the regime change or democracy. Also, Korean youths do not share the anti-China sentiments prevalent in Taiwan, Hongkong, and Japan, in which young leaders regard China as threat to democracy and progressive politics.[11]

Moreover, the movements in Japan and Taiwan were mainly organized by young male student leaders with clear visions, while the demonstrations in South Korea are organized by young women whose identities are not known to the public. From this difference, the organization and target of Korea's new feminist movement diverges greatly from the movements of the other two countries. In some sense, Korea's new feminism movement creates counter cultures to hip and cool youth cultures, indicating that such youth cultures are rather smeared with lookism and male voyeurism. Among the three cases of social movements, the intersectionality of youth activism in South Korea is the most conspicuous. In the other East Asian countries, it is not possible to locate the intersectionality of youth activism, whether it be the topics of gender, race, disability, or any other forms of minorities.

Conclusion

In this study, I analyzed the similarities and differences of the youth

[11] This paper does not deal directly with Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution. The Umbrella Revolution, like Taiwan, is based on the anti-Sinoism and can be seen as an expression of the Hong Kong's nationalism.

movements in East Asia, focusing on Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. In particular, by drawing on Tilly's contentious politics and the concept of repertoires, I examined the similarities and differences among the frames and repertoires that formalize the contents of the youth activism in these countries. First of all, East Asian youths created different frames and agendas for their movements based on the structures of political opportunity in their respective countries. The agendas include democracy and peace, such as the pursuit of abstract ideals and a grand vision (Japan), nationalism and anti-China (Taiwan), and women's rights (Korea). These frames were related to the young people's desire and hope for their futures and their present social standing. In the case of Japan, the youths opposing the Constitutional Amendment emphasized the macro issues of society and the universal values of democracy and peace, rather than revealing their own problems. In Taiwan, the youth movement claimed to protect Taiwan against China and Taiwan's independence, which is also related to the perception that the depressing situation of young people is exacerbated by the expansion of the Chinese hegemony. In contrast, Korea's peaceful regime change achieved through candlelight demonstrations have moved the focus of youth movements to specific problems faced by the young rather than macro problems creating more heterogeneous political citizenship. For example, Korea's new feminist demonstration concentrate on the specific topics of women's rights and identity politics, while the SEALDs in Japan have excluded the inherent problems of the youth from their frame and agenda that they were criticized for not substantially representing youth issues. In Japan and Taiwan, young people acted as a kind of social advocate that represents the voice of the whole nation, but in Korea, the youth only made their own voices on gender problems heard. This difference can be attributed to the political opportunity structures (regime, movement generation) of each country and the situations of young people.

Sometimes they occupied the streets and national assembly, and sometimes they performed street demonstrations. The protests were mostly held at streets that are politically symbolic, where many young people gather together in the location. The organizations are flexible and loosely operated, consisting of an open network that is easily accessible to everyone, not just those members of the organization. Their activism looks "ephemeral, sporadic, episodic" to some extent. In terms of repertoire, those of youth cultures were utilized to gain more popularity and to reach out to the more people. The use of digital media was found to be largely prevalent in connection with hip youth cultures. Also, many theatrical performances are

incorporated to make their claims clear such as hip-hop music performances. However, in South Korea, the intersectionality of gender and youth was very critical and thus, this aspect also influenced the forms of repertoires by putting the focus to countering prevalent male views of demonstrations. This study found many similarities in the social movements of the young people in East Asia in terms of the formal aspects of the youth movements despite the differences in situations and problems in their respective countries, which is expected as we live in a globalized media world. Young people of East Asia located the sources of despair to different causes sometimes unjust government, Chinese hegemony and patriarchal society. Overall, the similarities and differences among the youth activism in East Asian countries reveal that, despite the shared problems of East Asia's youths, they conjure visions and hopes for society in multifaceted ways.

(*Submitted*: September 10, 2018; *Accepted*: September 20, 2018)

References

Allison, Anne. 2017. "The Cool Brand, Affective Activism and Japanese Youth." *Theory Culture Society* 26(2-3): 89-111.

Au, Anson. 2017. "The Sunflower Movement and the Taiwanese National Identity: Building an Anti-Sinoist Civic Nationalism." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 27.

Benford, R. and D. Snow. 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 611-639.

Bonilla, Y. and J. Rosa. 2015. "# Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States." *American Ethnologist* 42: 4–17.

Brading, Ryan. 2017. "Taiwan's Millennial Generation: Interests in Polity and Party Politics." *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 46(1): 131–166.

Bird, Jackson and Thomas V. Maher. 2017. "Turning Fans Into Heroes: How the Harry Potter Alliance Uses the Power of Story to Facilitate Fan Activism and Bloc Recruitment." Pp. 23-54, in Jennifer Earl and Deana A. Rohlinger (ed.) *Social Movements and Media (Studies in Media and Communications, Volume 14)* West Yorkshire: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Castells, Manuel. 2015. *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Chao, Vincent. 2014. "How Technology Revolutionized Taiwan's Sunflower Movement." April 2014. The Diplomat. Retrieved August 1, 2018 (https://thediplomat.com/2014/04/how-technology-revolutionized-taiwans-sunflower-

movement/2/).

Cho, Gyeong Hui. 2016. Jeon-hu il-bon 70nyeon-gwa bog-su-ui pyeong-hwa-ju-ui: SEALDsui un-dong-gwa jeong-dong [Plural Pacifism in 70 Years of Postwar Japan -SEALDs Movement and the Affect]: Sa-I. 20. 267-299.

Clay, A. 2012. *The Hip-Hop Generation Fights Back: Youth, Activism, and Post-Civil Rights Politics*. New York: NYU Press.

Earl J., Maher TV and T. Elliott T. 2017. "Youth, Activism, and Social Movements." *Sociology Compass* 1(4): 11:e12465.

Earl, J. and K. Kimport. 2009. "Movement societies and digital protest: Fan activism and other nonpolitical protest online." *Sociological Theory* 27: 220–243.

_____. 2011. *Digitally enabled social change: Activism in the internet age*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Hioe, Brian. 2015. "A Changed Hong Kong and Taiwan One Year After the Umbrella and Sunflower Movement." *New Bloom Magazine*, September 30.

Ho, M. 2015. "Occupy Congress in Taiwan: Political Opportunity, Threat, and the Sunflower Movement." *Journal of East Asian Studies*.15(1): 69-97.

Kingston, Jeff. 2015. "SEALDs: Students Slam Abe's Assault on Japan's Constitution." September 7, *Japan Focus* 13(36-1) Retrieved August 1, 2018. askai, Lorand. 2015. "A Taiwan Where Politics Is Cool." *Foreign Policy*. March 18, 2015. Retrieved August 1, 2018 (https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/18/a-taiwan-where-politics-is-cool-sunflower-anniversary).

Lee, Heeeun. 2018. Pe-mi-ni-jeum un-dong-gwa mi-di-eo yun-li. eon-lon-jeong-bo-yeon-gu [Feminist Activism and Media Ethics - Exploring the Relationship between #MeToo Movement and Media]. *Eonlonjeongboyeongu* [Journal of communication research]. 55(3): 120-157.

Moon, Katharine H.S., Paul Park, and Maeve Whelan-Wuest. 2016. "Youth & Politics in East Asia." *Brookings Institution* June 30.

Pirie, M. and Worcester, R. M. 2000. *Facing the Future*. Adam Smith Institute. 1-46.

SEALDs. 2016A. Minshu shugi wa tomaranai [Democracy cannot stop]. Kawadeshobōshinsha.

_____. 2016B. Nihon × Honkon × Taiwan wakamono wa akiramenai [Japan × Hong Kong × Taiwan Young people will not give up]. Ōtashuppan.

Shea, D.M. and R. Harris. 2006. "Why Bother? Because Peer-to-Peer Programs can Mobilize Young Voters." *Political Science and Politics* 39: 341-345.

Shin, Hyeona. 2017. "Ssaeng-hwal-in/si-min' un-dong-ui gye-bo-hwa-wa 'bul-on-han geos' [Genealogization of 'living people/civil' movement and 'rebellious things']." Cha-se-dae in-mun-sa-hoe-yeon-gu (The Journal of Next-Generation Humanities and Social Science) 13: 81-97.

Slater, David. 2015. "SEALDs (Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy): Research Note on Contemporary Youth Politics in Japan." *The Asia Pacific Journal, Japan Focus*. 13: 37.

Tilly, Charles. 2008. *Contentious Performances*. Cambridge and New York:

Cambridge University Press.

YUNJEONG JOO holds a doctorate degree in Sociology from Seoul National University. She now works as a senior researcher at the ISDPR. She has research interests in social movement, minority, youth and disability. *Address*: The Institute for Social Development and Policy Research, Seoul National University. Office #540, Building 220. 1 Gwanak-ro, Gwanak-gu, Seoul, Korea. 08826. [*E-mail*: araby3@snu.ac.kr]