# Contextualising ‘Comfort Women’

## A Critical Analysis of Knowledge Production and Transfer Across Disciplines

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# Introduction

A 2021 publication by Mark J. Ramseyer on ‘comfort women’ challenging the dominant consensus caused controversy among scholars. Despite the increasing amount of attention to ‘comfort women’ since the 1990s, this shows that the debate on this historical topic is still going strong three decades later. In those three decades, there has been a significant amount of academic research on the topic within various disciplines. With such recent academic controversy in mind, combining with the historical turn in academics starting around the 1980s, it becomes clear that the research on ‘comfort women’ is at risk of ‘misuse’ of historiography. Before delving into this, I will provide a brief explanation of the ‘comfort women’ issue.

The ‘comfort women’ originate from the Asia-Pacific War (1941-1945) and were part of the ‘comfort system’. Despite a plethora of research, the details and circumstances of this system remain uncertain. Thus, an introduction of the history of the ‘comfort women’ and the related social movement encounters its own issues. Despite the ongoing disagreements, most academics agree upon a general historical outline which can be described as follows: The ‘comfort system’ was established by the Imperial Japanese government and military during the Asia-Pacific War. This system involved the creation of military brothels also referred to as ‘comfort stations’ and the recruitment of females to be stationed there. They became known as the ‘comfort women’. The conscription process is characterised by the deception, coercion and abduction of young girls and women from various Asian countries: Japanese colonies and occupied territories. Historians estimate the total number of ‘comfort women’ to be between 40.000 and 200.000 of which an estimated 80-90% were Korean.

The recruitment of ‘comfort women’ and the working and living conditions in the ‘comfort stations’ are a point of contention. Specifically, right-wing academics (and politicians) question the validity of the women’s testimonies due to the limited number of available documents on the ‘comfort system’. Many sceptics argue that the women had contracts and knew what was expected of them. Nevertheless, based on testimonies and supporting documents, the majority of the academic community agrees that ‘comfort women’ were involuntarily recruited and forced to serve as prostitutes for the Japanese military. Additionally, they often did not receive any form of compensation. Briefly put, the conclusion that many academics come to is that the ‘comfort women’ were forced into sexual slavery.

Moving into the 1990s, the ‘comfort women’ case enters public awareness after the testimony of Kim Hak-Sun in 1991. As a result, a social movement seeking redress for ‘comfort women’ develops. The rise of this movement and the public discourse revolving around the issue are well-documented in academic publications. Such research often centres on representations and narratives employed in the public realm. Academics usually analyse ideological discourses within the context of politics, feminism, nationalism and activism.

While the redress movement has garnered international attention and support, primary sources for historians are limited to Japanese documents and testimonies by

‘comfort women’. The majority of these testimonies are by Korean women who do not speak English. Certain publications and testimonies have been translated into English, however there are plenty of academics who do not have access to primary sources. Thus, the English academic debate faces limitations which in turn provides an added dynamic.

Furthermore, there is a notable scarcity of English publications by historians. Whether the focus is on the actual history or the social movement, there is a limited amount of historical research to refer to. Scholars investigating the topic from different disciplines often have to rely on a relatively small sample of secondary sources to provide historical background. Finally, the contested use of personal testimonies as historical evidence constitutes another barrier.

In the analysis of the social movement around ‘comfort women’, scholars note the narratives used on a national and public level to promote certain agendas. Within their own work however, scholars are less concerned with the narratives they use, aside from when they disagree with the framing of fellow scholars. The case of Ramseyer goes a step further, where academics directly take issue with the historical basis that Ramseyer lays down to argue his case. However, there seems to be a lack of self-reflection concerning historical basis, similarly to the dominant narratives within the academic discourse itself.

This thesis sets out to provide such a reflection on the academic debate on ‘comfort women’. In a case with limited historical research, what kind of narratives are produced and reproduced? How have these narratives evolved or changed in the last three decades? Do different disciplines show different (re)productions of and changes in narratives? Who creates nuance and/or shifts in the dominant narratives? Additionally, how do scholars build their argument and lay down a historical basis, if at all? How does an academic position themselves? Most importantly, does it always matter? While such reflections on the public discourse exist already, there is a lack of self-reflection in the English academic discourse.

Self-reflection in this area is imperative on several levels. Within the academic realm itself, it is necessary to understand and examine one’s own assumptions, limitations, and historiographical basis–all of which impact the eventual argument one makes. Moreover, the activist and social movement around ‘comfort women’ have made the topic a public and political issue. Thus, the academic debate is unequivocally tied to the public discourse. Both sides inform and influence each other. The academic output feeds the public discourse and in turn, the public debate influences the academic debate. In short, a reflection on the academic level has not only academic relevance, but also social relevance.

This analysis aims to provide an examination of the academic discourse on the comfort women issue, spanning from 1993 to the early 2020s. Specifically, who contributes to the discourse and in what way? What narratives are used, how are they used and how does the academic discourse evolve? Through an investigation of the research on ‘comfort women’, this analysis seeks to shed light on the ways in which knowledge and information is transferred and translated across time and disciplines.

# Methodology and Framework

The first step of establishing an analysis is the selection of sources. This process is formed by accessibility and relevant criteria. All sources are taken from the Leiden University Library catalogue. The catalogue includes a physical and online collection, as well as publications available through databases and online journals. Next, the parameters for search and selection are set: The first criterion is that a publication must be either originally published in English or translated into English. The second criterion is that the term ‘comfort women’ must be included in the title, abstract, and/or keywords of the publication. Thirdly, testimonies are excluded as they are biographical accounts. They might be utilised within academic discourse but they do not engage with it. Fourth, a publication must present an original academic argument, supported by multiple relevant sources. This excludes a number of book reviews which do not cite any additional sources. Lastly, only originally text-based publications are included, thus excluding transcribed interviews, lectures, presentations and other non-text-based sources.

Based on the limited accessibility of sources, it is uncertain how many publications would otherwise qualify based only on other criteria. Nevertheless, these parameters of relevance ensure a clear delineation of what is considered to be part of the ‘academic discourse’. Inevitably, the selected publications represent a limited sample of this discourse. Consequently, this analysis might provide insight into academic debate on a broader scale with the understanding that the sample size is not comprehensive. That being said, the sample size comprises of a total of 411 sources.

The next step is to gather information in order to investigate patterns across disciplines and time, figure 1 in the appendix shows the distribution of publications as such. The categorisation into disciplines is based on the author’s academic background. A large variety of specialised disciplines has been narrowed down to ‘overarching’ disciplines. For example, instead of making a distinction between Korean Studies, Japan studies, East Asian studies, etc., the overarching category of Area Studies is used for clarity. Likewise, instead of distinguishing between International Relations, Global Studies, Peace Studies, Conflict Studies, War Studies, Public Administration etc. these sources have been grouped under Political Science. The entire list of disciplines can be seen in the legend of figure 1.

Finally, each publication is sorted into one of three different categories. Each category and their selection criteria will be further explained in the following chapters. To briefly explain, the different categories are associated with different anthropologies of scholars. The first category is for the specialists, those who define the field through complex examinations of the history of ‘comfort women’. Subsequently, the second category is for publications with a successful transfer of knowledge, as opposed to the third category. Finally, there is a category that is not included in any of the analysis. This is the category containing all publications related to the controversy caused by Mark Ramseyer.

Regarding the qualitative analysis, a combined narrative and discourse analysis is used through sampling across different disciplines and throughout the years. This

consists of a close reading of the sampled publications, with a focus on the given ‘historical context’, allowing the identification of specific narrative elements, themes, terms and definitions. As a result, an overview of narrative and discursive frameworks can be established, along with the evolution of these frameworks. In other terms, the combination of a qualitative and quantitative approach provides an outline of the trends and changes across disciplines over the last three decades. Consequently, it is necessary to reflect on the outcome and how this might affect or inform the current understanding of existing research.

# Literature Review

The discipline of history has an interesting relationship with theory and methodology. Theorists and philosophers of history have commented on ‘the historian’s task’, the scientific-ness of history and the (lack of) self-reflection of historians. Additionally, in the past few decades, historiography has received criticisms from e.g. colonial and gender studies. The entry of these into the academic sphere resulted in the exposition of historiography’s shortcomings regarding the inclusion and consideration of related topics and issues. Altogether, historians have had to confront and critically examine the discipline of history. As with any philosophy or theory on a discipline, such an internal examination constitutes an ongoing process. The identity and potential shortcoming of history as a discipline and a science remains fertile ground for debate and investigation.

On the external, historians encounter another contentious front related to their internal struggles. Some scholars speak of the ‘historical turn’ in the social sciences, indicating a crossover from historiography into other disciplines. The associated risk lies in the misunderstandings or shortcomings that other disciplines might run into when making use of historical research, let alone when attempting to conduct it. Considering the internal struggles of historiography, it is no surprise that there is a potential for disaster when other disciplines employ historiography for their own purposes. Especially if such ‘outsiders’ do so without considering the caveats and pitfalls which historiography has been and is still dealing with.

Alternatively, any non-historian who calls upon historiography for authority or justification of their argument could be confronted with a myriad of competing interpretations and narratives produced by historians. Whether consciously or without a second thought, they choose certain interpretations and narratives either to connect their research to the past, or to conduct their research within a historical context. Either way, relying on second-hand observations, risking misinterpretation or inconsideration of how those second-hand observations came to be.

Both of the issues outlined above are relevant in the academic discourse on “comfort women”. On the one hand, the topic is a present-day issue, stirring up debate and activism in political, public and academic spheres. The roots of this issue on the other hand, trace back to the historical events and actions. Any historian delving into this has to (or at least, should) confront the two-fold internal problem of historiography. Naturally, the scientific-ness question permeates all historiography, but the “comfort women” specifically provokes considerations of colonialism and gender. Additionally, there’s a plethora of research on ‘comfort women’ produced by a variety of disciplines, which inadvertently relies on historiography.

The writing of history is, according to Prasenjit Duara, antitheoretical. In saying this, Duara refers to the lack of reflection on how historical knowledge is established. Initially, the ‘profession’ of history-writing was shaped by the scientific model and the ideological underpinnings of the nation-state (Duara 1998, 105-10, 118n2). Meaning that historiography was concerned with uncovering the ‘objective truth’, as Peter Novick describes it (1988, 1-2). Additionally, historiography was limited – to an extent

– due to its role in nation-building and justifying national identities and categories. Both Duara and Novick emphasise the nationalist underpinnings of history as a profession and as a discipline, specifically referencing a general lack of self-reflection by historians in terms of methodology and theory (Duara 1998, 105-10; Novick 1988, 1-2). Sarah Maza's (2017) *Thinking About History* is a more recent publication concerning itself with the discipline of history. From her assessment it becomes clear that historians have been occupied with questions and challenges related to the field itself. Not only in recent decades, but also preceding Duara and Novick's publications, historians have been critical of their own craft. James W. Cook gives examples of self-reflection within cultural history specifically dating back to the 1960s (2012, 758-61). Nevertheless, as Maza argues, historians often leave theory an implicit part of their work; "in part because of the discipline's strong empirical bent, and in part because of a traditional commitment to narrative and to an ideal of evocative writing." (2017, 4) I would argue that, as it stands today, history as a discipline has become as self-reflective as any discipline. Which means that there are many different ways to 'do' history, there are many competing, as well as co-existing views, approaches, and methods of historiography.

As mentioned above, the discipline of history has had to critically examine its own practices in terms of colonialism and gender. Stoler and Cooper describe how historians have broadened their understanding of history and historiography to account for the diversity of local contexts. Still, they remain critical of the developmentalist framework which still permeates both historiography and anthropology (1997, 15-6). This developmentalist framework is closely tied to Edward Said's (1978) concept of 'Orientalism' and a more general 'Othering'. Additionally, Stoler and Cooper emphasise the need to break out of binary oppositions of colonised versus colonizer or oppressed versus oppressor. This dichotomy is detrimental to historiography of a postcolonial world which is complicated, fragmented and blurred (25-29).

As shown in the following chapters, many scholars have observed how the 'comfort women' issue has been integrated, even 'hijacked', by South Korean politicians and activists into a nationalist framework as a *pars pro toto* victimization of South Korea. In turn, the issue is often thought of as a South Korean one. Additionally, the majority of 'comfort women' did come from Korea, when it was still unified and under Japanese colonial rule. Most historians who deal with the challenges and caveats of (post-)colonial history, or Eurocentrism/Imperialism in national history, focus on European imperialism in Asia (e.g. Partha Chatterjee). Thus, former Japanese colonies occupy a rather unique position in this regard. I would argue that observations about (post-)colonial historiography such as those mentioned earlier, still apply.

In her article on gender as a category of analysis, Joan Scott (1986) offers insights similar to the considerations of colonialism within historiography. She argues that the study of women not only adds new subject matter to historiographical research, but it also provokes the re-examination of the discipline and its products so far. In doing so, Scott emphasises the need to move beyond the binary opposition between 'male' and 'female'. This means analysing the way any binary opposition and its related

hierarchy operates. Scott revisits the topic in her 2010 article, insisting that the use of gender as a category of analysis is useful only in terms of the critical uses that it enables. Academic inquiry – not only historiography – should go beyond assumed fixed meanings of 'men' and 'women' and instead critically examine how such meanings are deployed and changed (Scott 2010, 10). Another observation Scott (2010) makes is that feminist politics – within academia and outside of that – have created a collective subject of 'women' or 'feminism' which tends to blur the lines of difference between the temporal, cultural, and social. In a sense, this is one of the ways in which the meaning of 'women' as become fixed. In terms of historiography and academic inquiry, Scott thus highlights the need to think critically about such meanings within their proper context.

As shown above, the discipline of history has had to confront several challenges. Consequently, any historian inquiring into the "comfort women" case has – or at least, should have – a certain level of awareness of these specific disciplinary issues. The problem that arises however, is that research on and about historical topics isn't exclusively done by historians. This is not to say that non-historians should be barred from such research. On the contrary, disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, law, political science, and others which often research topics situated in history produce insights which historians might not be able to. Such research of a multi- or interdisciplinary nature is invaluable in its own right. Instead, crossovers between history and other disciplines should prompt an examination of how historiography is used or misused, accompanied by a discussion what constitutes a responsible use of historiography.

Stoler and Cooper mention "the historic turn in the social sciences" (p17) in relation to the opening of colonial studies in the 1980s (1998, 17). Robert Gordon, despite focussing on legal history, makes the same observation that law – and other social sciences – experienced a turn toward history in the 1980s (2017, 2). Such a turn reaffirms the necessity of considering the ways in which other disciplines make use of historiography. Sarah Maza discusses the differing roles and purposes of historiography in the social sciences and historiography in its own discipline. The former, she argues, formulates generalizations from one or more historical situation, which can then be applied more broadly. Historians on the other hand focus on making sense of a set of events, diving into the details and specifics of a historical situation (2017, 162-6). Paul Schroeder (1997) makes a similar distinction between historians and specifically, political scientists and the field of international relations. He emphasises that the nature and goals of the two fields lead to different uses of historiography. Finally, Gordon (2017) too distinguishes the different purposes of legal and historical research. While Gordon does not elaborate much on what this difference entails, Schroeder's analysis parallels Maza. His explanation also comes down to a distinction between historians interest in the details and the particular, whereas social scientists are concerned with broader patterns and generalizations (Schroeder 1997, 65).

In making this observation, Maza does not offer any specific judgement on the phenomenon of historiography crossing over into other disciplines. Schroeder, however, do address the criticisms – primarily from historians – on the (mis)use of

historiography in other disciplines. As does Gordon, but more briefly. He points to a common defence given by lawyers in response to such criticisms; lawyers use of history has a different purpose, thus criticising it is beyond the point. He argues however, that while a lawyer's history is explicitly different from that of historians, this does not mean that it is excluded from evaluation by historians (Gordon 2017, 7). In regards to a remedy, or a caution, to the misuse of history comes down to one particular observation which can be applied to all disciplines; "The choice of which fragments of the past, which narratives connecting that past to the present, which competing interpretations of those fragments and narratives, we wish to claim as our authoritative antecedents, is a political choice, and one best made candidly, in full awareness of the alternatives." (9).

Schroeder looks more broadly at whether or not history and political science 'fit' or not, which he argues it does. In the process, he touches upon common misuses of history. The most common being the 'garden variety' of bad history, a widespread problem of inaccuracy, ignorance and misinterpretation. Schroeder attributes this to inadequate knowledge and research. Additionally, he states that this is often due to social scientists relying on the historical research of others within their field, rather than the work of historians. Beyond this, Schroeder emphasises that social scientists need to understand and keep in mind the nature of historiography is different from their own work. Consequently, historians' analyses and judgments are of limited use as data for social science (Schroeder 1997, 71-3).

As previously mentioned, academic research on 'comfort women' encounters all of the challenges stated above. Thus, on top of facing these challenges, scholars inquiring into this topic have to do so while navigating a contentious historical topic, further complicating the process. Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, handling the corresponding historiography in a responsible manner becomes all the more imperative.

# Category One

## Introduction: Criteria & Description

The first typology of academic publications is characterised by its strong and lasting impact on the academic discourse on comfort women. These are the academics and publications that laid the foundations on which many of those in the following two categories build upon. In this category, we're looking for academics with a 'relevant' background, using primary sources and preferably having multiple publications on 'comfort women'. With these restrictions, we can filter the dataset to look for solid research from academics with appropriate training and an affinity for the subject. Lastly, authors or publications need to be cited in multiple following publications to ensure a selection with significant relevance to the field/dataset.

Not only will this delineate the group of scholars at the core of the research field concerned with 'comfort women', but it will also facilitate the constatation of – however tentative – an academic consensus on the topic. Quantitatively, it will uncover how many or how few scholars create the consensus and the distribution of (relevant) disciplines among them. Additionally, we can see the distribution over time, showing when the core consensus was established and when it might have been adjusted or altered.

Through the qualitative analysis, we can then establish the baseline discourse and narrative elements. The discourse elements provide a more explicit way of 'testing' the transfer of information as they are more concrete and easier to pinpoint than narrative elements. Still, the narrative elements are a valuable source of information and later comparison, as this is where nuance can be maintained in a complex retelling of the historical context or lost in an essentialist portrayal of historical background.

## Quantitative – Category Composition

As seen in figure 3, category 1 makes up 15% of the entire dataset with a total of 61 publications, with some authors contributing multiple entries to this group. Figure 4 shows the distribution of disciplines in this category. History and anthropology make up almost half of this category with respectively 14 and 13 publications each (23% and 21%). After that, area studies is most represented at 10 publications (16%), followed by 8 publications from sociology (13%) and gender studies with 7 publications (12%). Next is law with 6 publications (10%) and lastly there are 2 publications (3%) in education and 1 (2%) in political science. While these last three disciplines might not be immediately obvious as 'relevant' disciplines, they have been included based on how well they meet the other criteria with special attention to their content, multiple publications on the topic and how often they have been cited in other publications.

To briefly explain, out of the six law publications there are four entries by Ustinia Dolgopol. She was part of an investigation into 'comfort women' by the International Court of Justice, additionally, her various contributions to the field have often been

cited in following publications. Next, Carmen M. Argibay (2003) has a background in law and served as a judge on the [Tokyo Tribunal], combining this information with the valuable content of her contribution made her publication eligible for category 1. Finally, Hyunah Yang (1997) has a background in sociology in addition to law and has contributed her fair share of publications on the topic, this particular article has been cited many times and was one of the earlier in-depth articles on the subject in English.

The two publications in education are courtesy of Yoshiko Nozaki, not only has she written multiple articles on the topic, but she also provides valuable insights on the relevance of testimony and oral history. Lastly, political scientists Thomas J. Ward and William D. Lay are responsible for a number of publications on comfort women of which their 2019 book is included in category 1. Despite it being published very recently, the frequency with which it has been cited in following works and its inclusion of valuable historical insight prove its eligibility for this category.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of category 1 publications per year, per discipline. Focussing only on the total publications per year, it is interesting to note that this category is fairly evenly distributed across time, especially compared to the steady rise in comfort women publications seen in figure 1. This could be the result of a 'core group' of academics who consistently publish category 1 research on the topic, though it should be noted that the distribution of disciplines does show some variation over the years. From 1993 to 2010 publications are predominantly from anthropology, sociology, area studies and law. Whereas from 2010 onwards there are mainly contributions from gender studies and history.

# Qualitative

## Surface-level[1]

Based on the contents of category 1 publications a set of markers emerges; this provides a baseline consensus of historical insights which can be used to test the retention of nuance and complexity in the following categories. To begin, there are three specific topics/points of information that commonly appear in these publications, thus forming as the most straightforward way for any author to indicate or convey a level of contextual awareness.

### *Terms and Definitions*

The first being the term used to refer to 'comfort women', and its given definition/explanation. Originally, the Japanese term *jūgunianfu* translates to "military comfort women" or *chonggun wianbu* in Korean. Several publications refer to this and provide the English translation.[2] Additionally, the term 'comfort women' is generally explained to be euphemistic. A more accurate description would be 'forced

[1] All references in footnotes provide examples, they are not exhaustive or definitive but rather to illustrate the point made.
[2] Alice Yun Chai, 1993 (67-68); Kazuko Watanabe, 1994 (3); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 1996 (1227); Norma Field, 1997 (46n45); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 1998 (451); Laura Hein, 1998 (343); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 2000a (59); C.S. Soh, 2004a (178); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005a (2); C.S. Soh, 2006 (67); Yonson Ahn, 2008 (33)

prostitutes' or 'military sex slaves'. Nevertheless, many scholars still opt to use 'comfort women', citing reasons such as it being common usage, there being a broad understanding and it being the English translation of the official Japanese terminology.[3] Though it should be noted that in this category, there is always some type of disclaimer or discussion on the meaning and connotation of different terms.

Conscription efforts in colonial Korea further complicate the possible given designations for 'comfort women'. The Korean term *chŏngshindae* (women's volunteer corps), or *teishintai* in Japanese, refers to women who were drafted to aid the war effort through manual labor. While some *chŏngsindae* might have also become 'comfort women' at some point, this was [certainly] not the norm. As a result, some authors clarify that 'comfort women' and *chŏngsindae* should not be conflated.[4]

Finally, some scholars focus on the description sexual violence in general, especially in early publications. In doing so, they raise issues with definitions such as 'sex slaves'.[5] As Laura Hein (1998) notes: "Descriptions of sexualised violence have a disturbingly pornographic quality even when a critique of violence against women is intended." (Hein 1998, 343n26). In closing, as Norma Field (1997, 46n45) emphasizes, it requires continuous efforts to prevent terms such as 'comfort women' from losing their significance. Category 1 publications are diligent in upholding this necessary effort, making it a clear marker to test the retention of such nuances in following categories.

### *Numbers and Estimations*

It is uncertain how many women were involved in the 'comfort system', making it a recurring topic of discussion. Due to the lack of conclusive documentary evidence, the exact numbers remain subject to speculation, but estimates can vary from 20,000 to 200,000 victims.[6] Most, if not all, publications specify this uncertainty, though few include explanations of the rationale and calculations behind the abovementioned estimations. It is worth noting that an overwhelming amount of academics rely on (and sometimes refer to) Yoshimi Yoshiaki's[7] calculations.[8]

### *Origins*

In addition to the total number of victims, the ethnic background of the victims is another point of contention. Discussions of 'comfort women's' origins often coincide with estimations of total numbers. Some scholars include that around 70 to 90% of

[3] Kazuko Watanabe, 1994 (4); Ustinia Dolgopol, 1995 (n3); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (57); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2003 (248n1); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005a (12n7); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2006 (475n1); Yuki Tanaka, 2017 (180-181n1); Pyong Gap Min et al, 2020 (1n1)
[4] Alice Yun Chai, 1993 (67-68); Kazuko Watanabe, 1994 (3); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 1996 (1277); Katharine H.S. Moon, 1999 (310); Yonson Ahn, 2008 (33-34)
[5] Norma Field, 1997 (46n45); Laura Hein, 1998 (343n26); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 2000a (65-66)
[6] Alice Yun Chai, 1993 (70); George Hicks, 1996 (311-312); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (57); Laura Hein, 1998 (336, 339); C.S. Soh, 2003 (212); 2004a (178); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005a (3); C.S. Soh, 2006 (67); Hyunah Yang, 2008 (80); Pyong Gap Min et al, 2020 (1); Yoshiaki 2000 p91-95; Yoshiaki 2018, (28); Ustinia Dolgopol, 1995 (137n23); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 1996 (1226)
[7] Yoshiaki 2000, pp. 91-94
[8] Laura Hein, 1998 p366n10; CS Soh, 2000a (63); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (940); CS Soh, 2006 (67); CS Soh, 2007 (86); Nishino Rumiko, Kim Puja and Onozawa Akane (eds.), 2018 (10)

the victims were Korean.[9] However, with any mention of ethnicity, the significance lies in inclusivity/transparency. Despite a majority of Korean women, there were victims from plenty of different origins. Many publications mention a scala of countries, including e.g. Japan, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia (including Dutch women).[10] In brief, the 'comfort women' came from Japan, its colonies and its occupied territories. This provides a relatively overt indication of broader understanding and nuance; if an academic focusses on one country, mentioning the varied origins of the 'comfort women' is a minor effort with major contextual implications.

While the abovementioned arises from this category as a whole, a few scholars add another layer to this. Whereas the Korean 'comfort women' are often emphasized, Japanese and Chinese women occupy an interesting [space] in the discussion on the victims' origins. Japanese 'comfort women' are scarcely mentioned, in part due to their relatively smaller numbers and because many of them were registered prostitutes.[11] Nevertheless, this should not be confused with a willing or voluntary participation in the brothels of the 'comfort system'. Japanese registered prostitutes were often sold into prostitution by their families or tricked into debts and contracts forcing them into this line of work. (Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2015 (8))

Furthermore, something that many scholars seem to overlook is the underrepresentation of Chinese 'comfort women'. Ustinia Dolgopol (1995, 133n19) rightly points out that the rapid establishment of the first 'comfort stations' in China would suggest that many of the (early) victims were Chinese.[12] Similarly, Laura Hein (1998, 339) notes that the estimated numbers of Chinese 'comfort women' have probably been understated relative to women with other nationalities. According to Hein, many Chinese women were captured and used as sex slaves thus, they were part of a more informal system of military sexual slavery leading to them being overlooked more easily.[13] The leading scholar on Chinese 'comfort women', Su Zhiliang, estimates that 200,000 Chinese women were part of the 'comfort system', in addition to existing estimations (Qiu, Zhiliang and Lifei, 2013, 18).

## Narrative

Next, there is the overall historical background wherein nuance and complexity becomes covert. Compiling the information from this category into one narrative reveals five themes, each with their own motifs. Altogether, this forms a basic outline

[9] Alice Yun Chai, 1993 (70); Kazuko Watanabe, 1994 (4); George Hicks, 1996 (311-312); C.S. Soh, 1996 (1226); George Hicks, 1999 (113); Hyunah Yang, 2008 (80)
[10] Kazuko Watanabe, 1994 (4); Ustinia Dolgopol, 1995 (e.g. 131, 133); Kazuko Watanabe, 1995 (e.g. 503-504); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 1996 (e.g. 1226, 1237); George Hicks, 1999 (e.g. 122); Norma Field, 1997 (24); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (57); Hyun Sook Kim, 1997 (102n2); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 1998 (451); Laura Hein, 1998 (8); Chizuko Ueno, 1999 (131); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 2000a (63); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 2000b (124); Puja Kim, 2001 (612); Nakahara Michiko, 2001 (582); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (941); C.S. Soh, 2003 (212); Carmen Argibay, 2003 (378); C.S. Soh, 2004a (178); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005a (4); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2006 (477); Hyunah Yang, 2008 (80); Caroline Norma, 2018 (115); Margaret D. Stetz, 2020 (213); Pyong Gap Min et al, 2020 (2)
[11] Hyunah Yang, 1997 (60); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (944); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2015 (8)
[12] Ustinia Dolgopol, 1995 (133n19)
[13] Laura Hein, 1998 (339)

of the dominant narrative within academic discourse, thus providing a baseline for [deeper comparison] in the following categories. On the one hand, it shows the authoritative works' context and nuance against which other publications can be tested. On the other hand, it will elucidate what the prevailing academic discourse might be missing out on. I.e. other academic additions, interpretations or lesser-circulated ideas – specifically from category 2.1 – that aren't part of this dominant narrative are overlooked.

### *1. Discovery of Victimhood*

Generally, the narrative starts with what can be characterised as the 'discovery of victimhood'. The 'comfort women issue' didn't enter public (and academic) consciousness/discussion until about 50 years after the war ended. This prolonged 'silence' is then usually explained in terms of various factors. First, there is the lack of documentary evidence of the 'comfort system' due to the Japanese military's efforts to destroy incriminating documents upon capitulation.[14] Additionally, documents which remained were buried and hidden in the archives and treated as top secret.[15] Secondly, surviving victims kept silent due to social stigmas and patriarchal values. With an emphasis on female chastity and purity, rape and sexual abuse was not only an accepted part of the wartime experience, but victims of it were (disgraced,) shamed and faced dishonour from families and society.[16] By extension, Hyunah Yang (2008: 82-83) aptly links these social conditions to elite male historians and social scientists in their (deliberate) disregard of this "shameful chapter in Korean national history" as it signifies the 'defilement' of Korean women. Lastly, since many women likely came from poor lower-class families, they lacked the social capital to speak up and risk ostracization.[17]

Subsequently, the end of '50 years of silence' is introduced in terms of changing social conditions. Globally, as the Cold War ended, the increasing emphasis on the importance of human rights alongside emergent feminist movements created new social climate in which the 'comfort women' could gain public consciousness and be problematised.[18] Focussing on South Korea, the rising criticism of Japanese 'sex tourism' and associated protest groups played an important part in this.[19] This eventually led to the first public testimony of a former 'comfort woman' in 1991 by

[14] Chunghee Sarah Soh, 1996 (1229); George Hicks, 1996 (305-306); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (232); Carmen Argibay, 2003 (377); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2003 (249n43); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005a (5); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005b (221); Hyunah Yang, 2008 (83); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2012 (4); Nishino Rumiko, ed. Onozawa Akane, 2018 (43); Su Zhiliang, 2020 (6)
[15] Hyunah Yang, 1997 (55); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2003 (245); Hyunah Yang, 2008 (83); Nishino Rumiko, 2018 (43); Su Zhiliang, 2020 (6)
[16] Chunghee Sarah Soh, 1996 (1229); George Hicks, 1996 (305); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (65-66); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (233); George Hicks, 1999 (114); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 2000b (124); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (947-949); Hyunah Yang, 2008 (82-83)
[17] George Hicks, 1999 (114); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (952)
[18] George Hicks, 1996 (306-307, 323); George Hicks, 1999 (114); Norma Field, 1997 (23); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (54); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (938-939); C.S. Soh, 2003 (215)
[19] Norma Field, 1997 (23); Laura Hein, 1998 (347); Katharine H.S. Moon, 1999 (311); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (938-939)

Kim Hak Sun.[20] Consequently, this culminated in 1992 as Japanese historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki discovered documents on “military comfort women” in the Self Defense Force Library.[21]

Finally, some publications specify the fact that the existence of ‘comfort women’ wasn’t so much forgotten or ignored as there is ample evidence of prior knowledge. Directly after Japan’s capitulation, the Allied forces often encountered ‘comfort women’ but they were disregarded as camp followers. [22] Moreover, the ‘comfort system’ was remembered among men of the wartime generations and a common subject of memoirs and war reminiscences.[23] Aside from this, ‘comfort women’ were discussed in publications well before 1992.[24] The most notable example is journalist Senda Kako, who started researching ‘comfort women’ as early as 1962 and subsequently published one of the first comprehensive studies on the topic in 1973.[25]

## *2. Establishment*

The second theme revolves around the creation of the ‘comfort system’. There is some doubt around when the first ‘comfort station’ (or *ianjo*) was set up. Those who assert that the first documented *ianjo* was established in 1932, concede that the [systematic] expansion and coordination efforts forming the ‘comfort system’ started from late 1937 onwards.[26] Others simply state that it was created in 1938.[27] The latter view seemingly prevails, seeing as the system is often cited to be a direct response to mass rapes during the Nanjing Massacre and subsequent international criticism.[28] [written 12-07 – 847] Aside from this, the institutional roots of the ‘comfort system’ are commonly traced back to the existing system of licensed prostitution in Japan.[29]

Moreover, this category provides multiple additional justifications for the system. For one, the stations could facilitate rest and recreation as way to raise morale and provide a distraction from the hardships of war.[30] This in turn was intended to help

[20] George Hicks, 1996 (307-308); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (235); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005 (3); Hyunah Yang, 2008 (81); Margaret D. Stetz, 2010 (299); Caroline Norma, 2018 (131); Margaret D. Stetz, 2020 (213)
[21] Kazuko Watanabe, 1994 (11); Ustinia Dolgopol, 1995 (132-135?); Kazuko Watanabe, 1995 (504); George Hicks, 1996 (308); George Hicks, 1999 (117-118); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (235); Laura Hein, 1998 (341n17); C.S. Soh, 2003 (209); Carmen Argibay, 2003 (377); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2003 (249n44); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005a (3); Yonson Ahn, 2008 (35); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2015 (3); Caroline Norma, 2018 (131); Pyong Gap Min et al, 2020 (2)
[22] Ustinia Dolgopol, 1995 (135, 148)); George Hicks, 1996 (305-306)
[23] George Hicks, 1996 (321-322); Norma Field, 1997 (23); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005a (2); Caroline Norma, 2018 (133-134)
[24] George Hicks, 1996 (305-306); Norma Field, 1997 (23); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (52); Laura Hein, 1998 (341n15); George Hicks, 1999 (121); Caroline Norma, 2018 (121)
[25] George Hicks, 1996 (305-306); George Hicks, 1999 (121); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005a (2)
[26] Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (223); Laura Hein, 1998 (338n5); Ikeda Eriko (ed. Onozawa Akane), 2018 (65); Onozawa Akane (ed. Onozawa Akane), 2018 (71);
[27] Alice Yun Chai, 1993 (69); Ustinia Dolgopol, 1995 (132n17); George Hicks, 1996 (313-314)
[28] E.g. George Hicks, 1996 (313-314); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (52); Carmen M. Argibay, 2003 (376); Ikedar Eriko (ed. Onozawa Akane), 2018 (65)
[29] George Hicks, 1996 (313); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (58-59); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (948); C.S. Soh, 2004a (177); CS Soh, 2009 (46); Onozawa Akane (ed.), 2018 (16)
[30] George Hicks, 1996 (310); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (63); Puja Kim, 2001 (615); Ikeda Eriko (ed. Onozawa Akane), 2018 (65)

maintain discipline, thus preventing soldiers from raping local women and by extension, preventing anti-Japanese sentiments among locals.[31] Furthermore, it kept soldiers away local establishments, serving a dual purpose. Regulating medical checkups and employing young (read: virginal) girls would protect soldiers from venereal diseases.[32] The other benefit was maintaining secrecy by avoiding the risk of spies in local brothels, whereas 'comfort women' were isolated from possible communications with the enemy.[33]

## 3. *Functioning*

Following the inception of the system, this theme focusses on how the 'comfort system' functioned. The highly controversial topic of accountability is essential to this. Discussions of who bears responsibility for the operation of the 'comfort system' have become a fundamental issue in (international) political discourse on 'comfort women'. After Kim Haksun's public testimony and consequent surge in media attention and public interest, the Japanese government put together a fact-finding committee. Their report demonstrated the official government's involvement in operating the system.[34] In addition to military-run 'comfort stations', there were also plenty of establishments under civilian management with permission and supervision from the army, they received support in logistics, transport, and health services.[35] Moreover, local collaborators, especially in Korea, were involved in the recruitment of women.[36]

Another aspect of this heated debate are the recruitment methods themselves and whether the army was involved in this. In occupied areas, varied tactics were applied in different circumstances. For example, women came from existing brothels, or they went into military prostitution as an alternative to existing hardships, like in internment camps.[37] Nevertheless, the dominant narrative emphasises the use of deception, coercion, ~~force,~~ and even abduction.[38] As mentioned earlier, many 'comfort women' likely came from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Hence, they were more susceptible to (e.g.) false promises of employment or, in some cases, impoverished families would sell their daughters to recruiters. [39] Conversely, scholars

[31] George Hicks, 1996 (310); Puja Kim, 2001 (615); Nakahara Michiko, 2001 (582); C.S. Soh, 2003 (212) Carmen Argibay, 2003 (377); Ikeda Eriko (ed. Onozawa Akane), 2018 (65)
[32] George Hicks, 1996 (310); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (63); Puja Kim, 2001 (615); Nakahara Michiko, 2001 (582); Ikeda Eriko (ed. Onozawa Akane), 2018 (65)
[33] Carmen Argibay, 2003 (377)
[34] George Hicks, 1996 (309); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (228); George Hicks, 1999 (122); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2003 (245); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005b (221-222); Yonson Ahn, 2008 (34-35); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2012 (3-4); Pyong Gap Min et al, 2020 (2-3); Su Zhiliang, 2020 (8)
[35] George Hicks, 1996 (317); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (226); Su Zhiliang, 2020 (8)
[36] George Hicks, 1996 (313); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (226); C.S. Soh, 2004a (178-179); C.S. Soh, 2006 (75); Yonson Ahn, 2008 (34); Su Zhiliang, 2020 (8)
[37] George Hicks, 1996 (314)
[38] George Hicks, 1996 (314); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (60); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (228); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (944); C.S. Soh, 2003 (212); Carmen Argibay, 2003 (377-378); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2003 (244); C.S. Soh, 2004a (178-179); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2005b (221-222); Hyunah Yang, 2008 (80, 87); Yonson Ahn, 2008 (34-36); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2012 (3-4); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2015 (9); Onozawa Akane, 2018 (7); Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, 2020 (17, 25); Su Zhiliang, 2020 (9)
[39] George Hicks, 1996 (312); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 1996 (1226); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (61, 65); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (228, 232); George Hicks, 1999 (114) Carmen Argibay, 2003 (378); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (951-952); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2003 (244); C.S. Soh, 2004a (178-179)

such as CS Soh (2004a, p185) emphasise(/imply) that middle-class women pursuing independence from dysfunctional or oppressive societal and familial spheres were equally vulnerable to deceptive tactics.[40]

Once inside the 'comfort station', conditions could vary greatly. For instance, experiences differed based on location, proximity to the frontline and ethnic background. Hierarchies of race or nationality not only dictated fee structures, but women who ranked lower in this hierarchy often also faced worse treatment.[41] Nonetheless, all 'comfort women' were subjected to repeated acts of violence, including rape and other forms of sexual abuse.[42] Acts of resistance or attempts to escape were met with punishments and women were under close supervision.[43] This also included regular physical examinations meant to reduce risks of venereal disease. Condoms were also provided to the women for this purpose, although supplies were often inadequate and as a result, the women resorted to washing and reusing them.[44] Consequently, there were still plenty of outbreaks of venereal diseases among 'comfort women' and the troops.

Along with regular risks of health hazards, which were thus exacerbated by the women's 'occupation', 'comfort women' often faced the same dangers as the troops due to their proximity to the frontline. Besides, medical care and supplies were usually reserved for combat personnel, especially during scarcity in the later years of the war. Combining this with the everyday violence inflicted upon them by *ianjo* patrons and operators, many 'comfort women' did not survive the 'comfort station'.[45]

Finally, despite paid patronage, the 'comfort women' received little to no monetary compensation. While theoretically, a percentage of the earnings was supposed to be allocated to them, their 'wages' were usually withheld, for example to cover costs for food, clothes, medical treatments and other necessities or as part of compulsory saving schemes.[46]

### *4. Aftermath*

Moving on, the fourth theme deals with the plight of 'comfort women' after the war ended. In the immediate aftermath, the women were sometimes massacred or forced to participate in mass suicides. Others were simply abandoned as troops retreated. Those who left behind or able to flee faced hardships in foreign or uninhabited territory as they tried to return home.[47] Upon returning home, their prospects didn't necessarily improve as many survivors dealt with social isolation

[40] Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (232); CS Soh, 2004a (185)
[41] George Hicks, 1996 (318); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (944); C.S. Soh, 2006 (78); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (228)
[42] Yonson Ahn, 2008 (36); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2012 (3-4); Onozawa Akane, 2018 (7); Su Zhiliang, 2020 (9); Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, 2020 (25-26)
[43] George Hicks, 1996 (315, 317); Yonson Ahn, 2008 (36); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2015 (8); Su Zhiliang, 2020 (9)
[44] George Hicks, 1996 (319); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (229); Su Zhiliang, 2020 (9-10)
[45] George Hicks, 1996 (319); Yonson Ahn, 2008 (36); Hyunah Yang, 2008 (102); Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, 2020 (25-26); Pyong Gap Min et al., 2020 (1)
[46] Hyunah Yang, 1997 (60); Yonson Ahn, 2008 (40-41); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2015 (8)
[47] George Hicks, 1996 (320); Hyunah Yang, 2008 (102); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2015 (10); Onozawa Akane (ed.), 2018 (13); Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, 2020 (23)

and poverty, on top of long-term physical and mental issues due to their traumatic experiences.[48]

As mentioned earlier, the Allied forces were aware of the existence of 'comfort stations', though it is unclear why the issue wasn't pursued at post-war tribunals. [49] Only at the Batavia tribunal several Japanese officers were prosecuted and convicted on charges of 'enforced prostitution', relating to Dutch 'comfort women'. [50] Some authors pose that, with the Cold War on the horizon, the Allies rushed through war crimes trials and 'went easy' on Japan in order to establish a buffer against rising communism. [51]

Starting from the 1990s, surviving 'comfort women' became entangled in a heated public debate which has become highly politicised, effectively re-aggravating their traumatic experiences. Within the discourse surrounding the redress movement, the women themselves confront exploitation and re-victimisation in ongoing ideological warfare and historical revisionism.

### *5. Contextualisation*

Finally, the last theme is where the history of 'comfort women' is contextualised in a larger framework of wartime sexual violence. As a continuation of the following theme, several authors emphasise that such practices did not simply end after the Pacific war. Most notably, military prostitution continued in both Japan and Korea, this time in service of U.S. military forces and other foreign stationed troops.[52]

On a larger scale, when comparing different instances of wartime sexual violence, some describe the 'comfort system' as a unique operation. Others argue against this, citing other instances of sexual atrocities during conflict as equally devastating. Such juxtapositions remain a topic of discussion with no real consensus.[53]

## Conclusion

To many who are interested in the history of 'comfort women', the academics included in this category will or would quickly become recognisable as specialists on the subject. With a near monopoly on publications in the 90s, bleeding into the early 00s, they established a solid scholarly footing for others to come. Although these foundations were built early on, this category is not at all limited to this timespan. As the academic landscape broadened, there remained a steady addition/stream of 'core' contributions throughout the last decade and a half. Such publications can

[48] George Hicks, 1996 (321); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (66); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2003 (244); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (941); CS Soh, 2004a (193); Ustinia Dolgopol, 2006 (477n11); CS Soh, 2006 (67-71); Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, 2020 (17)
[49] Ustinia Dolgopol, 1995 (148)
[50] George Hicks, 1996 (315); George Hicks, 1999 (113); Norma Field, 1997 (35); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (233); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 1998 (453-454); Carmen Argibay, 2003 (382-383); C.S. Soh, 2006 (78n2); Yuki Tanaka, 2017 (181n15)
[51] George Hicks, 1999 (113); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (232)
[52] Kazuko Watanabe, 1995 (505); Pyong Gap Min, 2003 (948); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 2006 (69); Tessa-Morris-Suzuki, 2015 (14)
[53] Alice Yun Chai, 1993 (71, 84); Kazuko Watanabe, 1995 (510-511); Norma Field, 1997 (23); Hyunah Yang, 1997 (61-63); Chin Sung Chung, 1997 (244); Chunghee Sarah Soh, 2000a (64);

offer new insights or newly discovered materials, or they can come about in response to other publications.

To date, the most in-depth historical account (on a broad basis) remains Yoshimi Yoshiaki's. Many, if not all, of the publications in category 1 refer to his research. Factual information from archival documents and the interpretation of these documents in a majority of publications can be traced back to his book, whereas interpretations and debates on personal narratives and testimonies stem from a variety of academics in this category. Similarly, motivations (surface level as well as justifications outside of the 'official' reasonings) of the Japanese imperial army are subject to speculation. The academic framing, closely tied to political and public framing, is where most points of debate come up. Another contentious point, which I think is understated in most sources (especially since Yoshimi *does* emphasize this) is the probability of the gross underestimation of Chinese victims.

Due to the nature of this category, the reoccurring discursive and narrative elements discussed above provide a guide on what to expect and look for in other publications/categories. Type 1 scholars handle the topic with nuance and provide relevant context wherever necessary. Using this as a 'baseline' for the following categories, we can learn something/discover more about the process of information transference across disciplines in academic circles. Which narratives and nuances persist or transform? What gets 'lost in translation'?

# Category Two

## Introduction: Criteria and Description

For the second category, the criteria become more subjective in comparison to the other categories. The main prerequisite involves demonstrating an understanding of the foundations laid by the preceding group. A publication should clarify or signal – in any capacity at all – to the *readers* that there is a complex historical debate surrounding the topic. Objectively, this requires references to (multiple) other publications on comfort women, preferably including any 'foundational' publication(s). Finally, a publications' primary focus should be on comfort women; this can mean the historical details, the redress movement, political or public debates surrounding the topic etc. etc.

When moving from the first category's criteria to the second, there is a selection of 'in-between' publications. Those who fall short of the first category in one or two aspects, though the authors contribute to the academic debate with innovative, transformative theories or analyses. [Unique perspectives.] Though these publications also belong to the second category, there is a distinction to be made. Thus, the second category comprises two subcategories. First, the transformative (2.1): those who meet many C1 criteria (in addition to the C2 criteria), they build upon the core debate and provide it with novel insights and unique perspectives. Second, the reproductive (2.2): those who meet the main criteria by doing their due diligence in researching and adding a nuanced 'historical background' to their publication.

The 'aim' or goal of identifying category 2.1 and 2.2 as separate lies in the fact that category 2.1 can help understand and support the 'consensus' as formed by category 1. In addition, while category 2.1 might not be as immediately influential, this is still decided based on a limited dataset. Including category 2.1 publications are mainly informative regarding the shifts or adjustments that are made to the 'consensus', which can add relevant insights in addition to what can be gleaned from category 1.

## Quantitative – Category Composition

Category 2 makes up 38% of the entire dataset with a total of 158 publications, as shown in figure 3. About a third of these (37%) fall into subcategory 2.1 and the remaining 63% naturally belongs in 2.2. Figure 6 shows the distribution of disciplines. It is more diverse, seeing as the number of represented disciplines is doubled compared to category 1. Nevertheless, all the 'bigger' disciplines also appear in the previous category. Most notably, there is a strong increase in the number of Political Science contributions, making up almost a quarter (23%) of this category. Combined with the runner-ups, history and sociology, they constitute around half (49%) of category 2.

Regarding the distribution over time, figure 7 shows the total category 2 publications per year, per discipline. Overall, the gradual increase over time is more in line with

the whole dataset (see figure 1), as opposed to the steady category 1 output. Focussing the 'bigger' disciplines, fields such as history, sociology, law, and gender studies provide the earliest contributions and are subsequently spread out over the years. Interestingly, the first political science publication is relatively late, in 2006. Other than that, the distribution of disciplines over time is quite steady.

# Qualitative

## Surface-level

Similar to the previous category, the first step is to check for some of the baseline criteria that immediately signal the level of nuance or complexity within a publication. In addition, it is necessary to look at the use of citations and sources in this category. Doing this will provide some insight into how knowledge travels.

### *Terms and Definitions*

As in category 1, the publications in this category provide some context and explanation on the terms that they use to refer to 'comfort women'. For example, the Japanese term *jūgunianfu* and the Korean term *chonggun wianbu* are often explained.[54] Aside from translations and the use of original terms, the use of 'comfort women' is usually explained as a euphemistic term. [55]

Some interesting elaborations are added in 2020 publications. First, Xiayang Hao, (2020, 534) is the first to mention the Chinese term *weianfu* which is also used by Yang Li (2020, 41). These two publications are part of a special issue on Chinese comfort women which provide new historical information and research on the topic, solidifying them into the 2.1 subcategory.

Another specific addition can be attributed to Angella Son, she uses the term *comfort girls-women*. She highlights three aspects of the term she created as a replacement of the wide-spread 'comfort women'. First, the italics should imply that 'comfort' has a different meaning than usual. Secondly, adding 'girl' signifies the young age of many of the victims. Finally, 'women' is meant to reflect the long period of suffering without a proper resolution. (Angella Son (2020, vii))

Most commonly though, these publications provide an explanation of the euphemistic term and add a disclaimer that they use the term 'comfort women' in quotation marks in order to signify its complex connotations.

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[54] Shin Young-sook and Cho Hye-ran, 1996 (52); Jordan Sand, 1999 (125n10); Katharina Mendoza, 2003 (247); Andrea Germer, 2006 (51); Aniko Varga, 2009 (289); Shigeru Sato, 2014 (389); Kan Kimura, 2015 (815); Thomas J. Ward, 2018 (1); Erik Ropers, 2019 (112); Maya Dania and Nichan Singhaputargun, 2020 (80); Yang Li, 2020 (41); Li Hongxi, 2020 (28)

[55] Shin Young-sook and Cho Hye-ran, 1996 (52); Jordan Sand, 1999 (125n10); Pamela Thoma, 2000 (47n1); Yumiko Mikanagi, 2001 (48-49); Yoshiko Nozaki, 2002 (612n13); Katharina Mendoza, 2003 (247, 250); Hank Nelson, 2008 (20); Kimura Maki, 2008 (19n1); Aniko Varga, 2009 (289); Sel J. Hwahng, 2009 (1779); Joshua D. Pilzer, 2012 (xi, 7); Joshua D. Pilzer, 2014 (3); Bang-Soon Yoon, 2015 (460); Yoshikata Veki, trans. Julie Higaishi, 2015 (4); Norma Field and Tomomi Yamaguchi, 2015 (1); Yonson Ahn, 2019 (361); Orhon Myadar and Ronald A. Davidson, 2020 (78); Q. Edward Wang, 2020 (101); Maya Dania and Nichan Singhaputargun, 2020 (80); Yang Li, 2020 (41); Sachiyo Tsukamoto, 2021 (1); Seunghyun Song, 2021 (160)

As a final note, in the first category there is a clear distinction made between the 'comfort women' and the *chŏngsindae*. Some publications in from category 2 still highlight the difference.[56] Nevertheless, there is less and less mention of the *chŏngsindae* and concurrently there is less and less explanation of the difference between the two. Especially in later publications and in fields that are well represented in the academic debate on 'comfort women', there seems to be an implied assumption that 'comfort women' are common knowledge. Consequently, the difference between them and the *chŏngsindae* is also implied as such. This is especially evident in the fact that those publications from later years which do provide an explanation, or a distinction, are from 'outlier' disciplines, see for example Joshua D. Pilzer, 2014, which falls under art studies.

### *Numbers*

When talking about the number of victims, the scholars in this category generally the lack of conclusive evidence. Meaning that, any stated numbers are estimations. Similar to the previous category, the given estimates vary from 40,000 to 200,000.[57]

Shigeru Sato (2014) is one of the first to include a more liberal estimate. He puts together two extremes, ranging from 20,000 to 410,000 victims. The first number comes from the Japanese historian Hata Ikuhiko, the second from the Chinese scholar Su Zhiliang who specialises in research on Chinese comfort women. Sato also includes the estimates by Yoshimi Yoshiaki (45,000-200,000).[58] As with the previous category, the publications in category 2 usually cite Yoshimi Yoshiaki when referring to the calculations or estimations on the number of victims. Another publication that mentions these estimations is by Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel Sneider (2016), they also make the observation that most international media relies on Yoshimi's estimations, which reflects this trend in academia where scholars fall back to his initial calculations.[59]

### *Origins*

As is to be expected, category 2 publications also focus on the assumption that the majority of victims were Korean. [60] Though, Pamela Thoma (2000) is an early example of a scholar pointing out the issue with this. Her article focusses on the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery in 2000, which was a symbolic people's tribunal. Thoma argues that the emphasis on

[56] Shin Young-sook and Cho Hye-ran, 1996 (52); Aniko Varga, 2009 (302n20); Shigeru Sato, 2014 (401n7); Bang-Soon L. Yoon, 2015 (467); Pyong Gap Min and Hyeonji Lee, 2018 (142-143)

[57] Pamela Thoma, 2000 (52n28); Katharina R. Mendoza, 2003 (248); Aniko Varga, 2009 (290); Sel J. Hwahng, 2009 (1771); Shogo Zuzuki, 2011 (232); Joshua D. Pilzer, 2012 (7); Shigeru Sato, 2014 (391); Joshua D. Pilzer, 2014 (3); Bang-Soon L. Yoon, 2015 (463); Kan Kimura, 2015 (815); Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel Sneider, 2016 (198); Thomas Ward, 2018 (5); Erik Ropers, 2019 (112); Angella Son, 2020 (vii); Maya Dania and Nichan Singhaputargun, 2020 (80); Orhon Myadar and Ronald A. Davidson, 2020 (78)

[58] Shigeru Sato, 2014 (391)

[59] Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel Sneider, 2016 (198)

[60] Shin Young-sook and Cho Hye-ran, 1996 (64); Yumiko Mikanagi, 2001 (50); Sel J. Hwahng, 2009 (1771); Joshua D. Pilzer, 2012 (8); Thomas Ward, 2018 (5)

Korean women in the Women's Tribunal obscured the diverse ethnic origins of the victims.[61]

Nevertheless, scholars and publications in this category generally emphasise that 'comfort women' came from many different countries and ethnic backgrounds.[62] Interestingly, Yumiko Mikanagi (2001) specifically includes a new suggestion: that Australian nurses and (white) Russian women may have also been made into 'comfort women'.[63]

Furthermore, there are quite a few examples of scholars pointing out the plight of the Japanese 'comfort women'. For example, Yeong-ae Yamashita (2009) states that, while there were also many Japanese victims, they have not been included in identification or redress efforts and that no historical research has been conducted in this specific area.[64] As for the Chinese victims and survivors, there are a few examples of scholars mentioning the possibility that they have been overlooked in estimations. Those who do touch upon this usually regurgitate Yoshimi's speculation that the number of Chinese 'comfort women' may have been grossly underestimated. Though, this is where the work of Su Zhiliang often comes up too.[65] As Shogo Suzuki states, the issue of Chinese 'comfort women' in particular has not attained a high level of international or national attention.[66]

Finally, while most category 1 publications focus on Korean survivors, there are quite a few publications in this category focussing 'comfort women' from different countries. Most of these are concentrated on China[67], but there is also research on Taiwan[68], Indonesia[69] and New Guinea[70], all of which are relatively recent publications.

## Narrative

Seeing as the dominant narrative has already been established in the previous chapter, this chapter will focus on the deviations from this narrative. Broadly

[61] Pamela Thoma, 2000 (37)
[62] Shin Young-sook and Cho Hye-ran, 1996 (51); Pamela Thoma, 2000 (52n28); Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, 2003 (226); Katharina R. Mendoza, 2003 (248); Sidonnie Smith, 2005 (158); Hank Nelson, 2008; Kimura Maki, 2008 (5-6); William Bradley Horton, 2008 (141); Aniko Varga, 2009 (290); Yeong-ae Yamashita, 2009 (209); Sel J. Hwahng, 2009 (1791); Shogo Suzuki, 2011 (225); Mayumi Yamamoto, 2012); Shigeru Sato, 2014 (391-392); Bang-Soon L. Yoon, 2015; Yoshikata Veki, trans. Julie Higaishi, 2015; Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel Sneider, 2016 (198); Pyong Gap Min and Hyeonji Lee, 2018 (164); Thomas Ward, 2018 (1); Edward Vickers, 2019; Erik Ropers, 2019 (112); Maya Dania and Nichan Singhaputargun, 2020 (80); Xiaoyang Hao, 2020; Li Hongxi, 2020; Yang Li, 2020; Wang Siyi, 2020
[63] Yumiko Mikanagi, 2001 (50)
[64] Yeong-ae Yamashita, 2009 (208-211); Other examples mentioning Japanese 'comfort women' include Shin Young-sook and Cho Hye-ran, 1996 (64); Sel J. Hwahng, 2009 (1791); Shigeru Sato, 2014 (391-392) and Edward Vickers, 2019 (181).
[65] Yumiko Mikanagi, 2001 (54n10); Shogo Suzuki, 2011 (232); Shigeru Sato, 2014 (391-392); Bang-Soon L. Yoon, 2015 (463n19); Thomas Ward, 2018 (1); Seunghyun Song, 2021 (160).
[66] Shogo Suzuki, 2011 (232)
[67] SinCheon Lee and Hye-in Han, 2015; Edward Vickers, 2019; Xiaoyang Hao, 2020; Li Hongxi, 2020; Yang Li, 2020; Wang Siyi, 2020
[68] Shogo Suzuki, 2011; Thomas J. Ward, 2018
[69] William Bradley Horton, 2008; Mayumi Yamamoto, 2012
[70] Hank Nelson, 2008

speaking, the criteria of this category ensure that the basic nuances provided in the dominant narrative are retained, especially in the second subcategory. The deviations, which can take on different forms, for example as criticism or simply added information, thus come from the first subcategory.

### *1. Discovering victimhood*

Within the first theme, the nuance from the dominant narrative stays intact in the second category. That is to say, the basic historic background touches upon the 50 years of silence due to the destruction of documents at the end of the war and the social stigma preventing victims from telling their stories. Following this is the changing social climate leading to Kim Hak-Sun's testimony and the rediscovery of archival documents by Yoshimi Yoshiaki. It should be emphasised again that this is the first *public* testimony by a former 'comfort women'. Kian-Woon Kwok and Roxana Waterson (2001) add that the first occurrence of a Korean 'comfort woman' speaking out was already in 1979, namely, Pae Ponggi who appeared in a Japanese documentary film. They further highlight that several other survivors already published testimonies in the 1980s.[71] This is reinforced by Maki Kimura (2008) who states that women who came forward before the 1990s were met with little interest.[72]

When it comes to prior knowledge in a general sense, Kan Kimura (2015) conducted an elaborate study on prior knowledge and media coverage of 'comfort women' in Japan, South Korea and international media.[73] These kinds of studies fall into category 2.1 because they are not circulated throughout the dataset, other publications rarely –if ever– cite these works. Consequently, the popular narrative prevails in its implication that Kim Hak-Sun's testimony was the first, and that there was little attention to or knowledge of the existence of 'comfort women'.

### *2. Establishment*

The establishment of the 'comfort system' is presented in the same way in this category. It is interesting to note that, regarding the different dates of the first *ianjo*, 1932 or 1937-'38, Shin Young-sook and Cho Hye-ran (1996) specifically mention these two dates and state that depending on the exact definition and characteristics of 'comfort women', either date could be correct.[74] Though they do not specify the difference.

Aside from that, this category maintains the nuance surrounding the different justifications behind the establishment of the 'comfort system'. For example, the international outrage after the Nanjing massacre and the pre-existing system of licensed prostitution. The latter of which is elaborated upon by some scholars, one being William B. Horton (2008), who emphasises the persuasion and coercion that these women are subjected to make them cooperate.[75] Other justifications include that the 'comfort stations' were meant as rest and recreation to boost morale and maintain discipline, as well as preventing soldiers from raping local women and to

[71] Kian-Woon Kwok and Roxana Waterson, 2001 (370-371)
[72] Maki Kimura, 2008 (13)
[73] Kan Kimura, 2015
[74] Shin Young-sook and Cho Hye-ran, 1996 (72)
[75] William Bradley Horton, 2008 (150n2)

prevent outbreaks of venereal diseases. These are all elements of this theme that reoccur in the second category.

### *3. Functioning*

In this theme too, the key elements are presented with the same context and subtlety as in category 1. Yet again, some new perspectives arise from category 2. Regarding the question of accountability, there are plenty of examples where scholars highlight the involvement of the Japanese government as well as local collaborators.[76] In extension, the use of questionable recruitment methods is another returning topic.[77] This is where category 2 provides a new insight, namely that the political and public debates' focus on these issues ignore the intricacies of the 'comfort women' issue. They argue that there are multiple systems of inequality at the root and discuss the intersections of sexism, racism, nationalism, colonialism and socio-economic classes.[78] Takashi and Yamaguchi (2015, 3) clarify: while public discourse fixates on the recruitment process, this is not the fundamental reasoning behind the statement that the 'comfort women's' human rights were violated; "as if, absent proof of the role of military in violent abduction, Japan has nothing to be apologetic about."[79]

As for descriptions of the conditions within the 'comfort stations', category 2 repeat the same elements as before.[80] Yonson Ahn (2019, 361) adds onto this, bringing up the complicated subject of personal relationships between 'comfort women' and Japanese military men. She highlights the lack of academic works which mention this, both in- and outside of Korea, and argues the importance of addressing the juxtaposition between affection and abuse in such cases.[81]

### *4. Aftermath*

Focussing on the aftermath of the war, this category brings up the same elements as seen in the first. After Japan's capitulation, many 'comfort women' were murdered or abandoned and those who survived faced social isolation as well as long-term physical and mental trauma.[82] The 'comfort women' were not mentioned in any tribunals, except for the Batavia tribunal which only focused on Dutch victims.[83] Regarding the increasing public attention, this category brings up not only the rise in revisionism, but also a nationalist tendency to subsume the 'comfort women' into a

[76] Shin Young-sook and Hye-ran Cho, 1996 (72); Yumiko Mikanagi, 2002 (48); William Bradley Horton, 2008 (146); SinCheon Lee and Hye-in Han, 2015 (32); Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel Sneider, 2016 (206); Li Hongxi, 2020 (39)
[77] Pamela Thoma, 2000 (37); Yumiko Mikanagi, 2001 (52); Maki Kimura, 2008 (7, 16); William Bradley Horton, 2008 (146); Aniko Varga, 2009 (294); Yeong-ae Yamashita, 2009 (213); SinCheon Lee and Hye-in Han, 2015 (31)
[78] Sidonie Smith, 2005 (160); Andrea Germer, 2006 (68); Shigeru Sato, 2014 (401); Uemura Takashi and Tomomi Yamaguchi, 2015 (3); Bang-Soon L. Yoon, 2014 (460); Whi Chang, 2018 (141)
[79] Uemura Takashi and Tomomi Yamaguchi, 2015 (3)
[80] Shin Young-sook and Hye-ran Cho, 1996 (68); Yumiko Mikanagi, 2001 (52); Yumiko Mikanagi, 2002 (38, 45); Yeong-ae Yamashita, 2009 (213-214); Sel J. Hwahng, 2009 (1770n3, 1784n17); Bang-Soon L. Yoon, 2015 (464, 473); Orhon Myadar and Ronald A. Davidson, 2020 (82)
[81] Yonson Ahn, 2019 (361-362)
[82] Yumiko Mikanagi, 2002 (45); Sel J. Hwahng, 2009 (1779); Yeong-ae Yamashita, 2009 (210); Bang-Soon L. Yoon, 2015 (474); Sung Hyun Kang, 2019 (173-174)
[83] William Bradley Horton, 2008 (147); Aniko Varga, 2009 (290); Sel J. Hwahng, 2009 (1769); Seunghyun Song, 2021 (162)

narrative of national victimhood.[84] As Aniko Varga (2009, 294) puts it, their individual sufferings are turned into a collective victimhood in which Korea's national pride was harmed.[85]

### *5. Contextualisation*

This category emphasises the same issues differently compared to category 1 within the final theme. When it comes to the continued military prostitution during the US occupation, Yuki Tanaka's 2002 book is often cited with little to no new insights.[86] On the other hand, the discussion on whether the 'comfort system' was unprecedented or unique as an operation of sexual violence remains a lively one in this category.[87] William Bradley Horton (2008, 150) observes that the politicisation of such discourse, specifically in how it emphasises the difference from prostitution, has limited the discussion and excluded women who did not fit a specific narrative.[88] Lastly, the question of the 'comfort system' being genocidal in nature is almost entirely absent from this category.

## Conclusion

Considering the transfer of information, publications in this category were selected based on their retention of nuance and complexity. Therefore, it is no surprise that the basic elements and narrative themes are presented in a similar manner compared to category 1. The distinction of two subcategories consequently provides a means of analysing the substantive differences between category 1 and 2. Where subcategory 2.2 adequately recounts the historical context without any significant deviations, subcategory 2.1 provides new perspectives in different areas. A particularly interesting example of this is the focus on the 'comfort women' issue in different countries, whereas category 1 generally concentrates its research on Korea.

Though it should be noted that many publications refer to the research produced by category 1 academics, there are also instances of criticism and reflection on the overall (academic) discourse on 'comfort women'. Moreover, plenty of examples highlighted in this chapter showcase a successful information transfer allowing for more in-depth analyses. In a sense, this is the core of what academics should strive for. Reaching further insight into a topic, which is only possible by building upon previous research, or through the discovery of new sources. Strictly speaking, this means that only subcategory 2.1 significantly contributes 'comfort women' studies. While subcategory 2.2 merely reproduces knowledge, usually with a different academic purpose, it does so with proper consideration.

As established in the introduction of this chapter, subcategory 2.1 publications generally fail to meet only one or two category 1 criteria. This often includes that there are little to no scholars citing these publications, meaning that they are excluded from category 1 because of their lack of impact or influence within the

[84] Aniko Varga, 2009 (294); Bang-Soon L. Yoon, 2015 (478-479)
[85] Aniko Varga, 2009 (294)
[86] Andrea Germer, 2006 (61); Yeong-ae Yamashita, 2009 (214); Shigeru Sato, 2014 (400)
[87] Yumiko Mikanagi, 2001 (52-53); Katharina R. Mendoza, 2003 (248); Andrea Germer, 2006 (60); Sel J. Hwahng, 2009 (1776n9); Edward Vickers, 2019 (191)
[88] William Bradley Horton, 2008 (150)

dataset. Consequently, despite subcategory 2.1 scholars offering valuable insights, their additions to ‘comfort women studies’ are not widely circulated or included in the overall discourse. In conclusion, while this category succeeds in reproducing and transforming knowledge, it is uncertain if it subsequently transfers that knowledge into different discursive arenas.

# Category Three

## Introduction: Criteria & Description

In examining the transfer of knowledge, this final category provides an invaluable insight. Simultaneously, it is a catchall category for the remainder of publications which do not meet the criteria of categories 1 and 2. For this reason, category 3 is also divided into two subcategories. First, the superficial (3.1), whose primary focus is still on ‘comfort women’. Unlike category 2, these publications fail to provide an adequate representation of the historical background. They include a limited overview of historical context, disregarding the necessary nuance and inherent complexities. As such, these authors imply that the historical research thus far is uncomplicated and conclusive. Alternatively, an explanation might be omitted entirely. In such cases, the reader is tasked to figure out the historical background themselves based on context clues that might be scattered throughout the text or tucked away in the footnotes.

The second subcategory, the unrelated (3.2), consists of publications where ‘comfort women’ are only briefly mentioned. In establishing the entire dataset, these publications were included when searching for ‘comfort women’ in the title, abstract, or keywords related to the publication. Upon further examination however, it is clear that these scholars did not intend to focus their research on ‘comfort women’. For example, the ‘comfort women’ issue is often mentioned in passing when examining international relations or analysing fictional works. As a result, this chapter will mainly focus on category 3.1.

The nature of this category also calls for a different approach compared to the previous ones. Whereas category 2 provided ample examples of successful information transfer and additions to the debate, within this category it is difficult to look for what is missing. Therefore, the setup of this chapter will be slightly different from the previous ones.

Finally, I do not mean to blatantly discredit the publications in this category as bad works of research. There are plenty of sources in this category that may provide a valuable contribution to their respective field or, specifically, to the study of the comfort women redress movement. Nevertheless, this does not mean that their representation of historical research is infallible when judged by historiographical standards.

## Quantitative – Category Composition

The entirety of category 3 makes up 42% of the dataset, with a total of 174 publications. As seen in figure 3, it is the largest category, covering almost half of the entire dataset. Additionally, category 3 is split almost down the middle into the two subcategories with 3.1 at 53% and 3.2 at 47%. Regarding the different disciplines, the four largest make up 66% of the entire category. As figure 8 shows, political science makes up 24% with 41 entries, followed by law at 17% with 29 publications,

next is literary studies with 14% or 25 in total and finally, 11% or 20 publications are from the field of history.

It is somewhat surprising that history is this well-represented in this category, however it becomes less egregious when pulling apart the two subcategories. Comparing figure 10 and 12, showing the disciplinary makeup of category 3.1 and 3.2 respectively, the share of history publications in 3.1 drops to only 6% with 5 entries. The other three disciplines remain relatively similar in size.

Looking at the distribution of publications over time, figure 9 shows a steady rise over the years, similar to the overall dataset as seen in figure 1. The one outlier is in 2009, yet here too it is useful to move to the subcategories. Figure 11 and 13 tell a slightly different story. Category 3.1, seen in figure 11, follows the same pattern as the total dataset. On the other hand, figure 13 shows that category 3.2 remains relatively steady in its output over the years. Regarding specific disciplines output over time, figure 11 shows that in category 3.1, most publications before 2013 are from the field of law. From then onward political science and literary studies publications become a steady presence as well.

## Qualitative – Surface-level and Narrative

As mentioned earlier, the setup of this analysis is slightly different. Most notably, there will be less examples to refer to as it is impossible to reference something that is missing from a text. Instead, I will mainly rely on the observations that I made when scanning through these publications and the reasons for assigning them to this category.

Starting with the three most salient markers of nuance and complexity, terms and definitions, numbers, and origins. First, while some publications do provide a disclaimer when first mentioning the term ‘comfort women’, this is not by any means the standard for category 3. More often than not, it begins and ends with the explanation that it is a euphemism for sexual slavery. While the previous categories referred to translations from Japanese or Korean, as well as sometimes engaging with the challenge of the most respectful way to address survivors, this does not return in this category. Furthermore, the ongoing uncertainties around estimations of the total number of victims are often disregarded. In extreme cases, the estimated upper limit of 200,000 victims is given as a simple fact. Lastly, the origins of the ‘comfort women’ are narrowed down. While some scholars retain some nuance in stating that the majority of victims came from Korea with little or no attention to victims from other countries, others do not even allude to the existence of survivors outside of the Korean ones.

Moving on, it is interesting to reflect on a point of criticism from the previous chapter. Namely, the constatation that accounts of the lives of victims are expected to follow a specific narrative.  As far as narrative descriptions go in this category, this is also the case with how historical context is provided. Without delving into details, category 3 scholars present a standardised version of the ‘comfort women’ narrative. Not all publications include all elements, but those who diverge do so through excluding certain themes or elements altogether.

The first step is the breaking of 50 years of silence through the first testimony by Kim Hak-Sun. Little to no attention is given to instances of prior knowledge or a changing social climate allowing for the reframing of women's experiences. On the other hand, the decades of silence are usually attributed to a patriarchal society valuing female chastity, as well as the mass destruction of documents at the end of the war.

Next, the establishment of the 'comfort system' is often placed in the aftermath of the Nanjing massacre. The 'comfort stations' were a means of preventing venereal diseases and to ensure that Japanese soldiers would not terrorise the local population.

Regarding the functioning of the system the main focal point is in the recruitment process and the lives of 'comfort women' in the stations. Sometimes bordering on sensationalism, some publications emphasise the use of force and coercion in the recruitment process, followed by the description of repeated rapes and extreme violence. Discussions on accountability and collaborators are usually absent, as well as the racial dimensions of the issue.

After the war, many 'comfort women' lost their lives in massacres or mass suicides. The victims who survived faced social stigmas and had to deal with life-long physical and psychological traumas without receiving any justice. Issues regarding their possible re-victimisation due to the rapid increase of public attention and political debate are neglected in this category, as are any mentions of nationalist or revisionist narratives within public discourse.

Finally, this narrative 'template' is not very concerned with placing the 'comfort women' issue within a broader international context. The only element of this last theme that does survive is the insistence that the 'comfort system' was unique in its scale and functioning.

# Conclusion and Discussion

Briefly put, the above chapters have shown that the transfer of information is more often unsuccessful than not. Category 3 publications make up the largest share of the entire dataset. Despite the fact that category 2 is not far behind, and even larger if category 3.2 is disregarded altogether, I would argue that this is still a major issue. There are still too many cases where the inclusion of this sensitive, complex historical topic means that the history is simplified into a flat, essentialised narrative lacking the necessary nuance. This becomes especially evident when looking at the usage of historical research in the fields of law or political sciences. Despite there also being successful and even transformative publications, the issue lies in there being any unnecessary inaccuracies within academic works at all.

While this may sound extremely strict, it is impervious for academics to hold themselves to such high standards. The academic sphere as a whole commands and inspires a level of trust regarding academic integrity. Most people, whether they hold only a high school diploma or a PhD, will take an academic article published in an academic journal at face value because of our faith in 1. academic institutions; 2. the academics such institutions produce; 3. the academic research and subsequent articles that such academics produce. Unless someone holds a master's degree or a PhD in the specific discipline, specialisation and/or area of research, they likely won't check the references after reading an article to see if an academic used reliable sources and if they made 'proper' use of them (making logical conclusions, not taking anything out of context or stripping it of nuance or misquoting anything etc.).

Zooming in on history as an inherently conservative discipline–meaning that when historians judge histories of fellow historians on the proper way of 'doing' history–their standards of good historiography are (or were) conservative in nature. Historiography's inception lies within imperial and archival 'state-owned' history-writing. As a result, there's always been an emphasis on the 'superiority' of primary sources that are written, archival, official documents, objective etc.

The rising presence of, for example, feminist awareness and sensitivity in academia challenges this traditional conservative tendency of historical research. As a result, there is an increased amount of attention to the value of oral history, unofficial accounts and histories coming from 'unofficial' sources.

The politics of academics is a combination of these two. On the one hand it is a philosophy of the sciences; a constant internal debate and self-reflection on the way 'we' *do* research, these introspections are largely confined within the major faculties (e.g. Law, Social Sciences, Humanities, Natural Sciences, etc.) and even then, there is limited interaction between more specialised disciplines. When narrowing down to any single discipline or specialisation, almost every one of them has their own specific subject of study, which incentivised the development of their own methodologies and in turn, their own validity as a 'science'. Not to mention that some sciences have existed for centuries, while others are merely a few decades young.

Then what about interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary research? Such academic fields are a relatively new 'invention', mostly stemming from the second half of the 20th

century. Do interdisciplinary fields really equip their academics with the tools to overcome and combine all these philosophies of different sciences or all these methodologies?

Without time machines, it is impossible to definitively capture historical truth. Even so, chronicling a dry, objective timeline of events is what historians have traditionally attempted. Still, one can easily say that historians have oft made assumptions about underlying mechanics or motivations in history. In the past few decades, historians have come to recognise this more and more. Recognition is followed by or paired with challenging this. If history is subjective, then all 'objective' presentations of history are only one side of a multifaceted story: ergo, other perspectives need to be told to approximate any real 'objective' history. Or perhaps, we should abandon the idea(l) of objective history altogether and simply appreciate the (educational) value of different perspectives and experiences. Most importantly, this thesis has shown that there is plenty to work and improve upon within the workings of the world of academic research. Simultaneously, there are ample examples of scholars who are already concerning themselves with this which is a hopeful outlook for the future of academia.

# Appendix

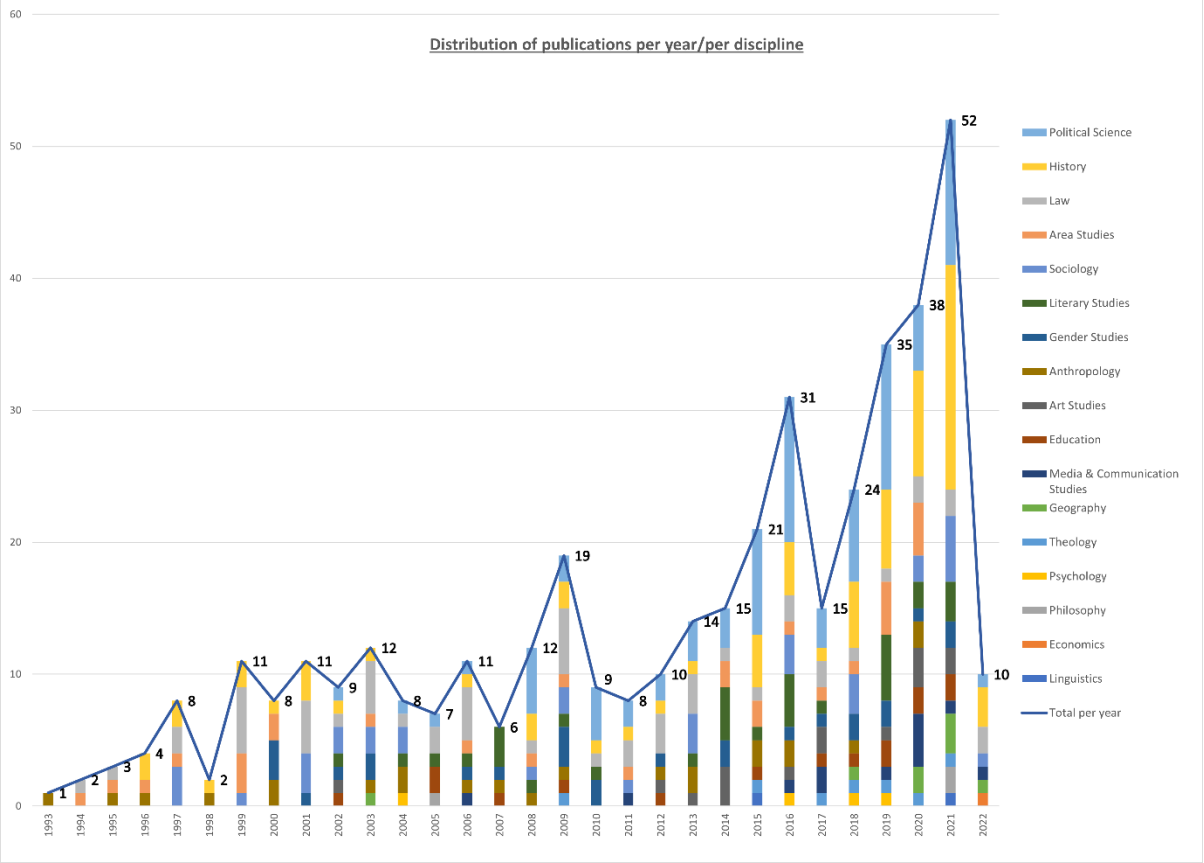


Figure 1. Distribution of publications per discipline, per year.

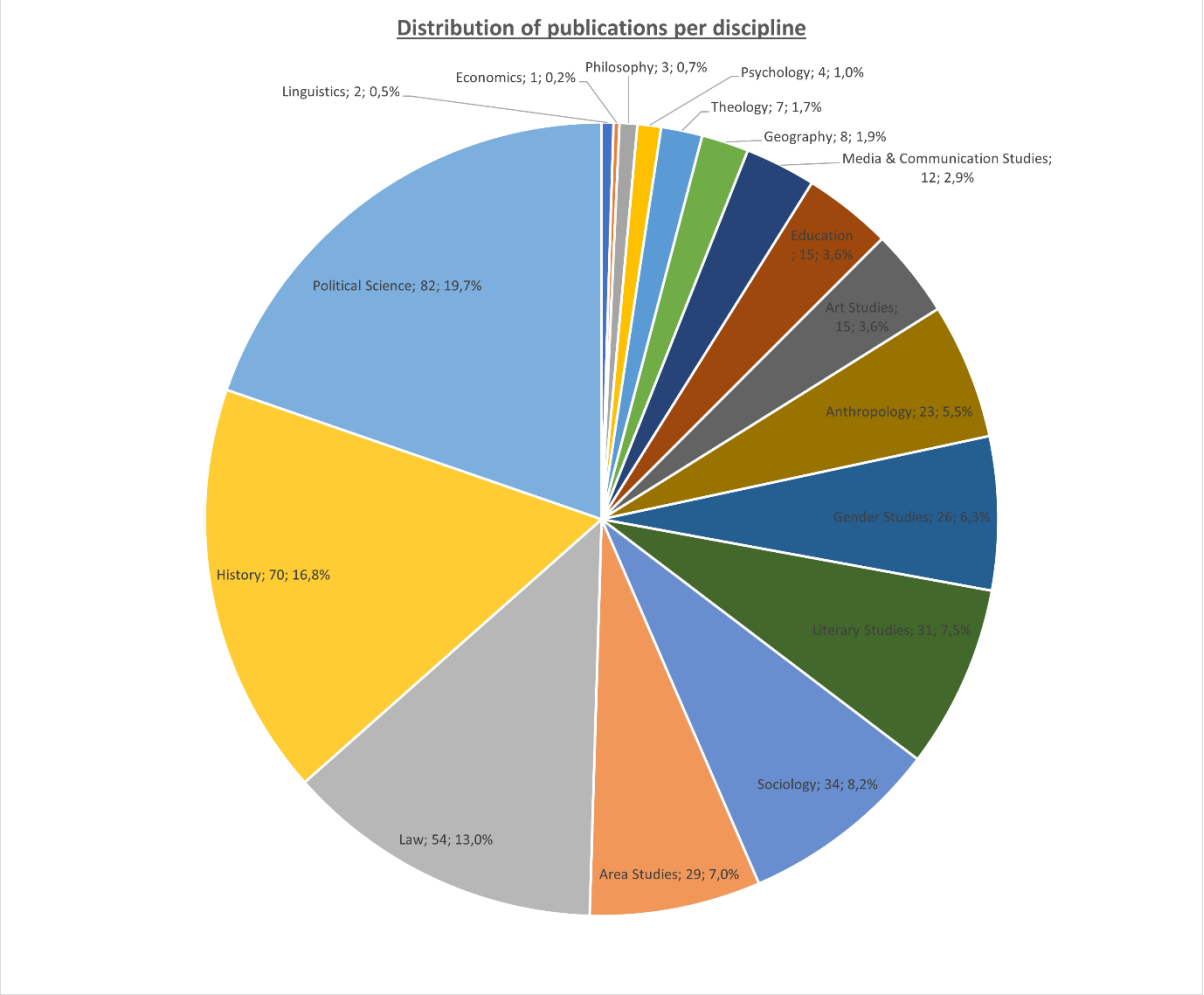


Figure 2. Distribution of publications per discipline.

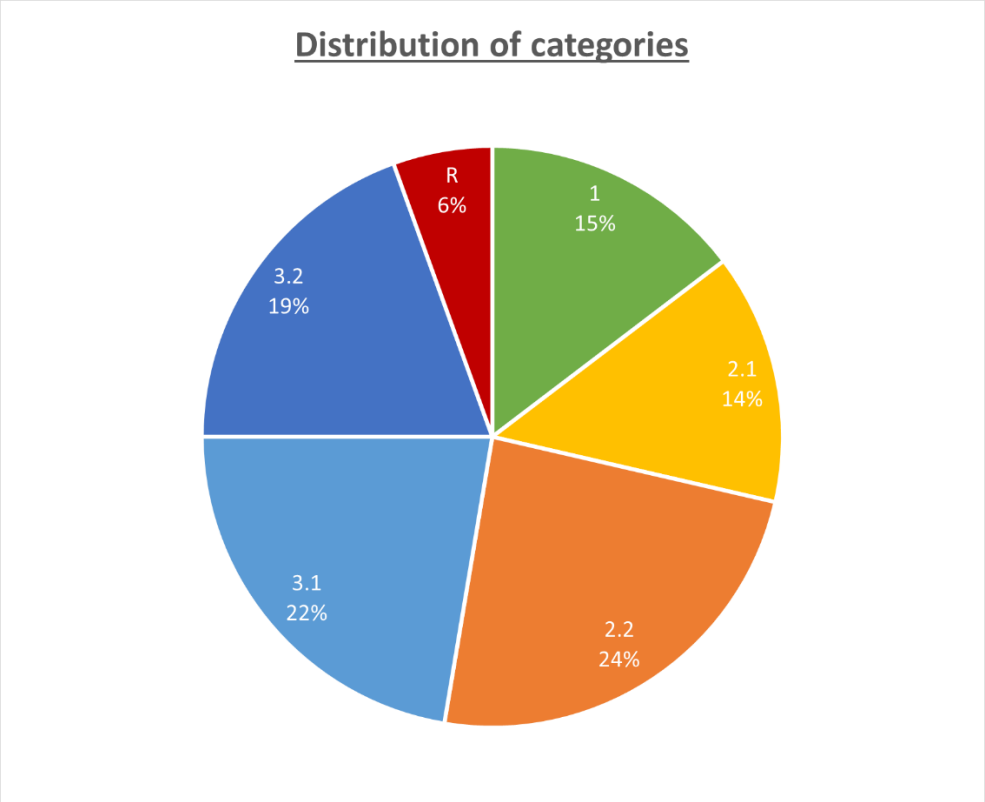


Figure 3. Distribution of publications per (sub)category.

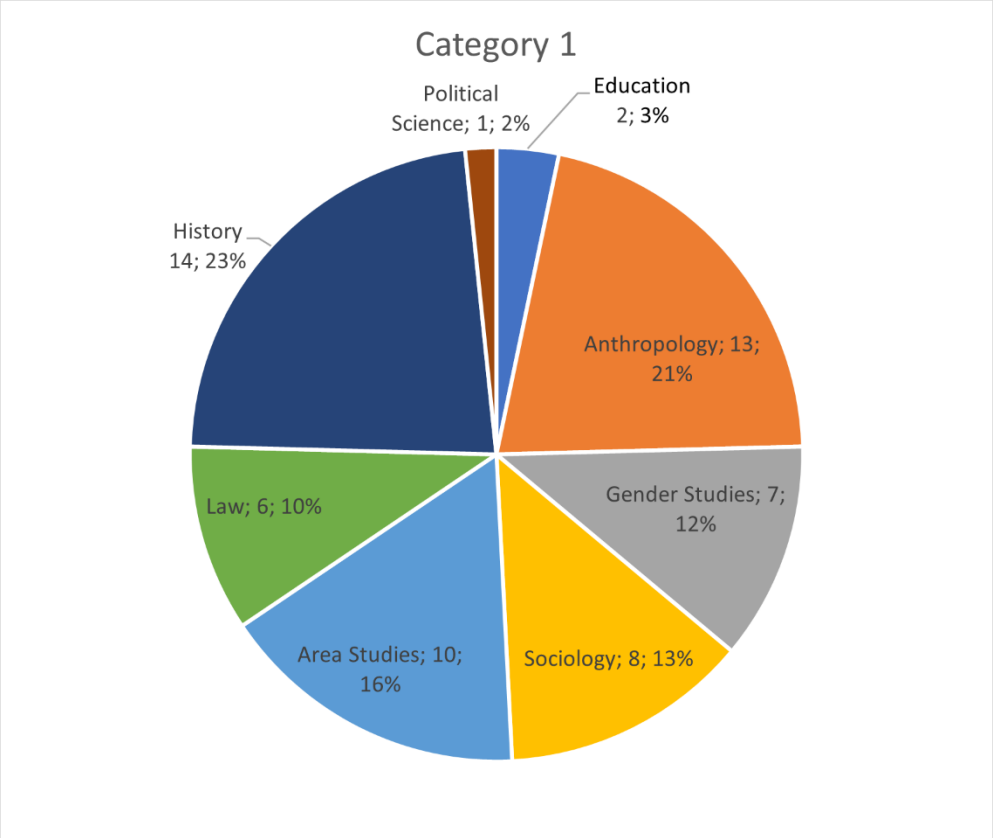


Figure 4. Distribution of publications per discipline in category 1.

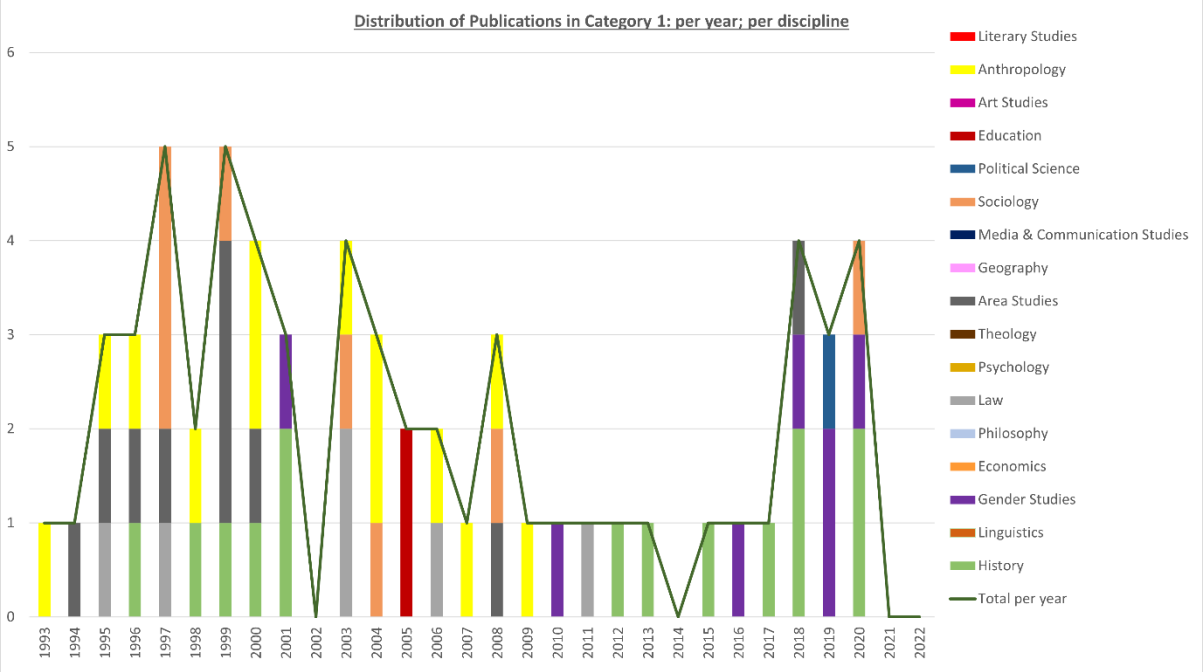


Figure 5. Distribution of category 1 publications per discipline, per year.

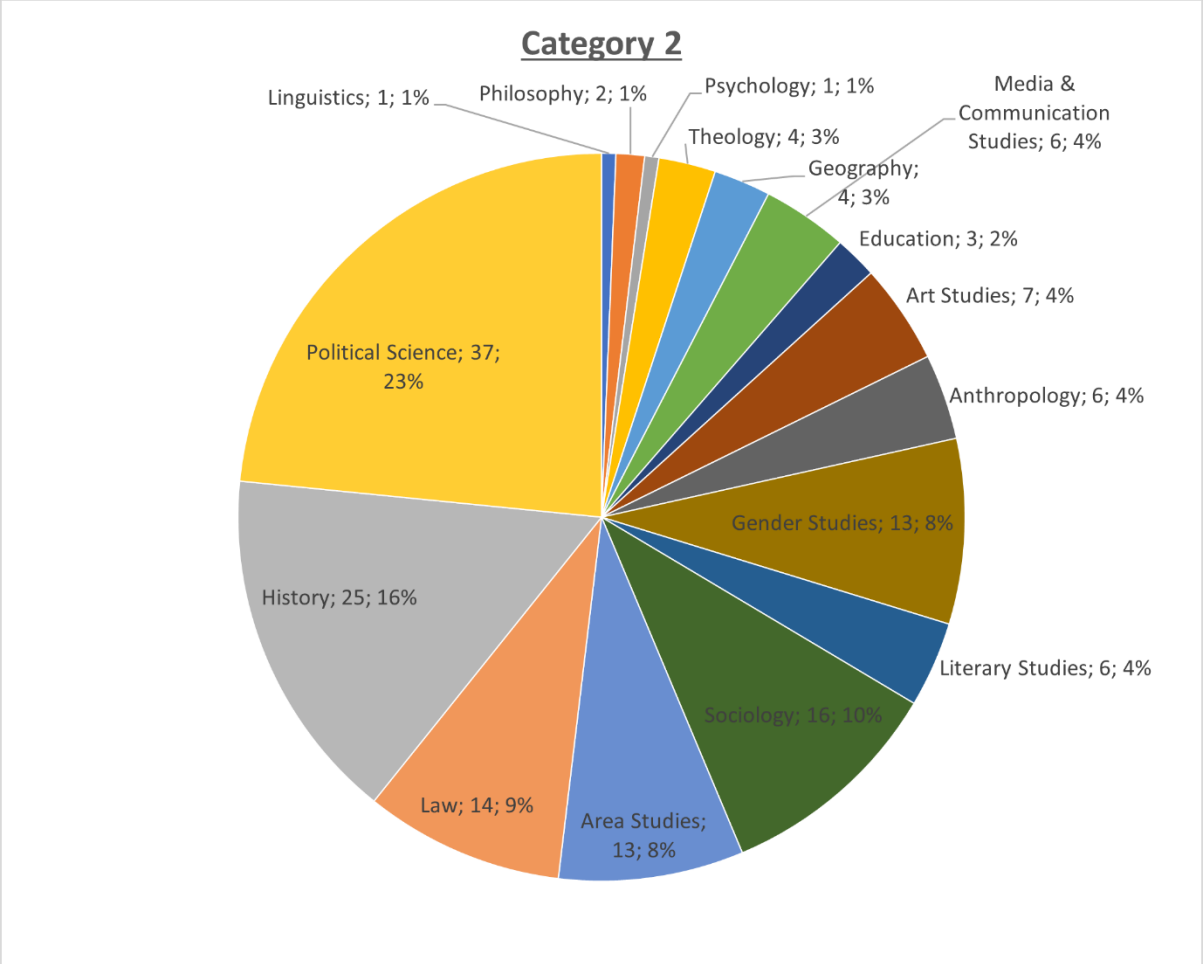


Figure 6. Distribution of publications per discipline in category 2.

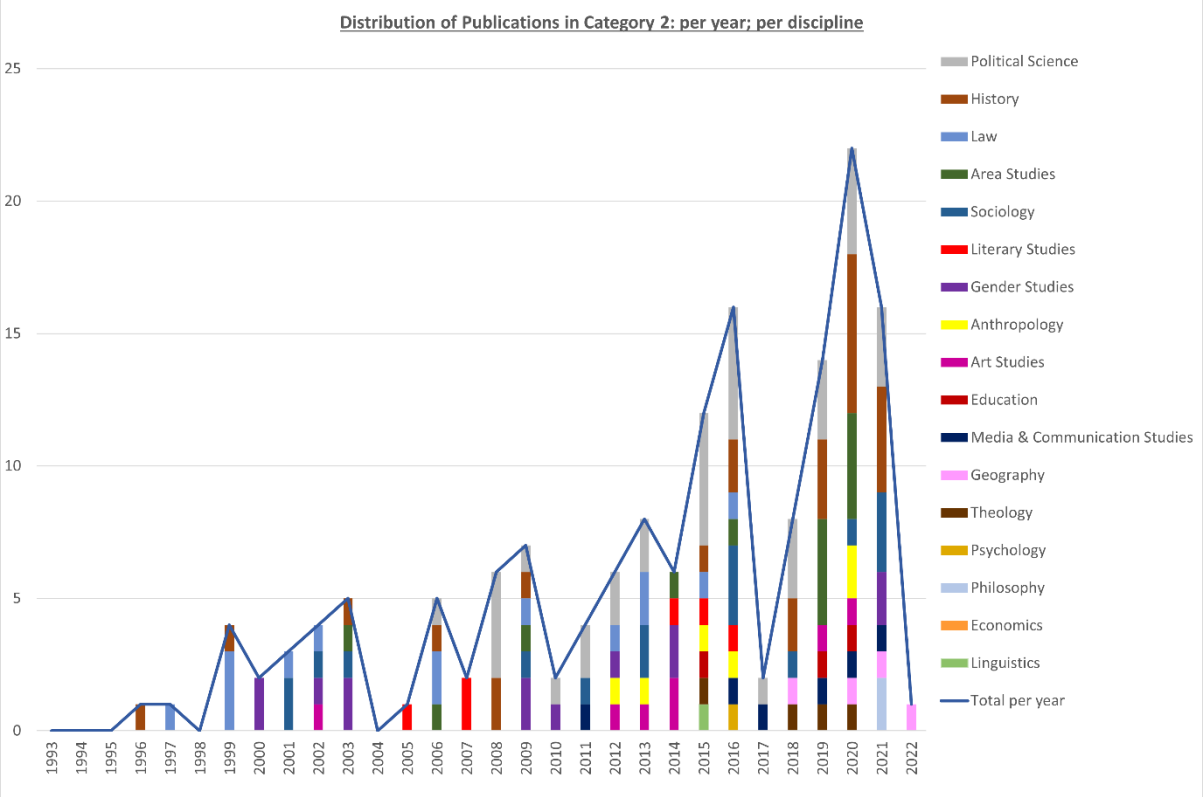


Figure 7. Distribution of category 2 publications per discipline, per year.

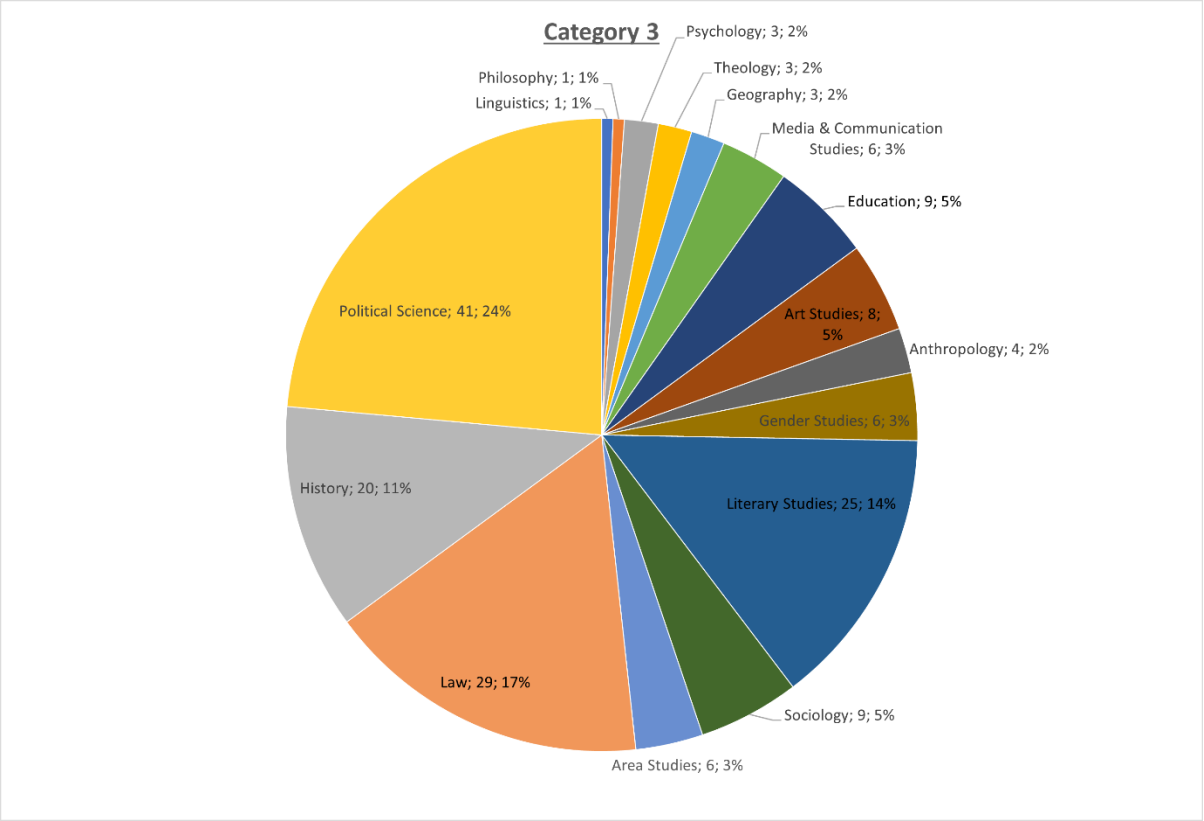


Figure 8. Distribution of publications per discipline in category 3.

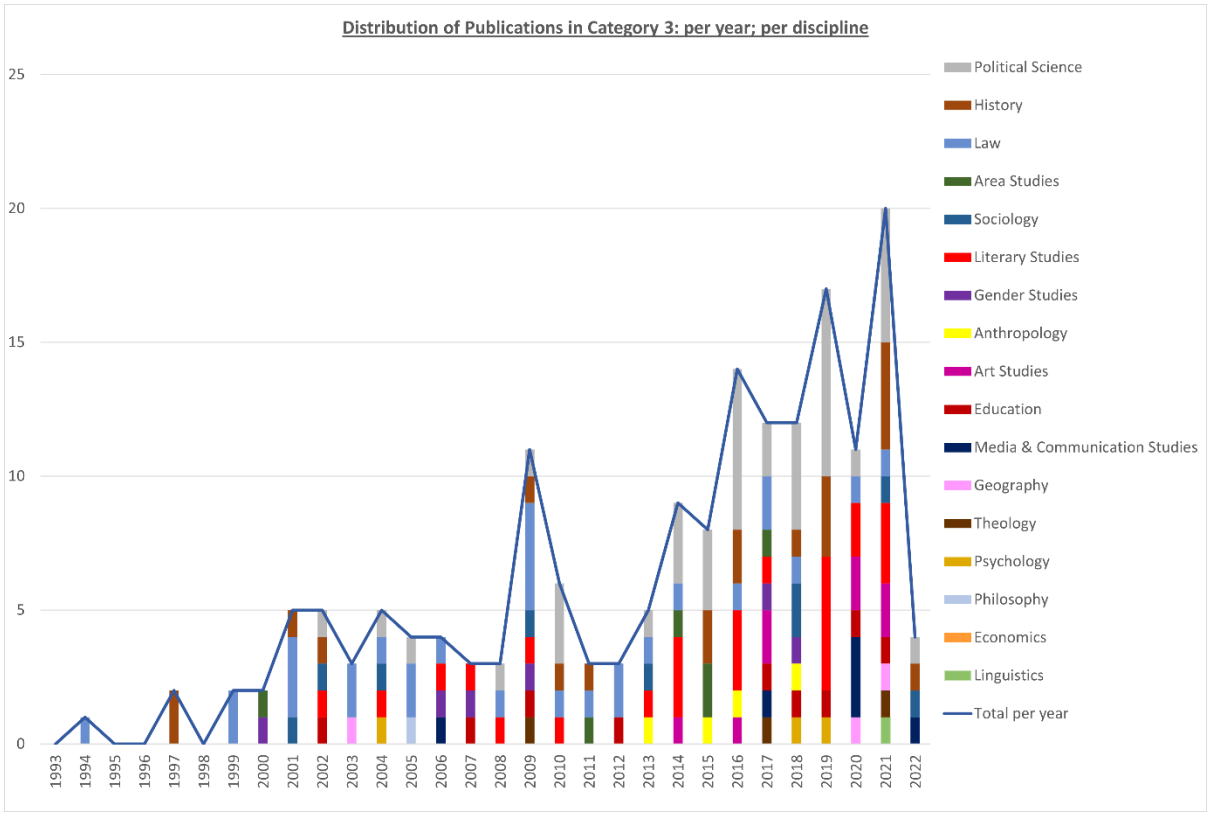


Figure 9. Distribution of category 3 publications per discipline, per year.

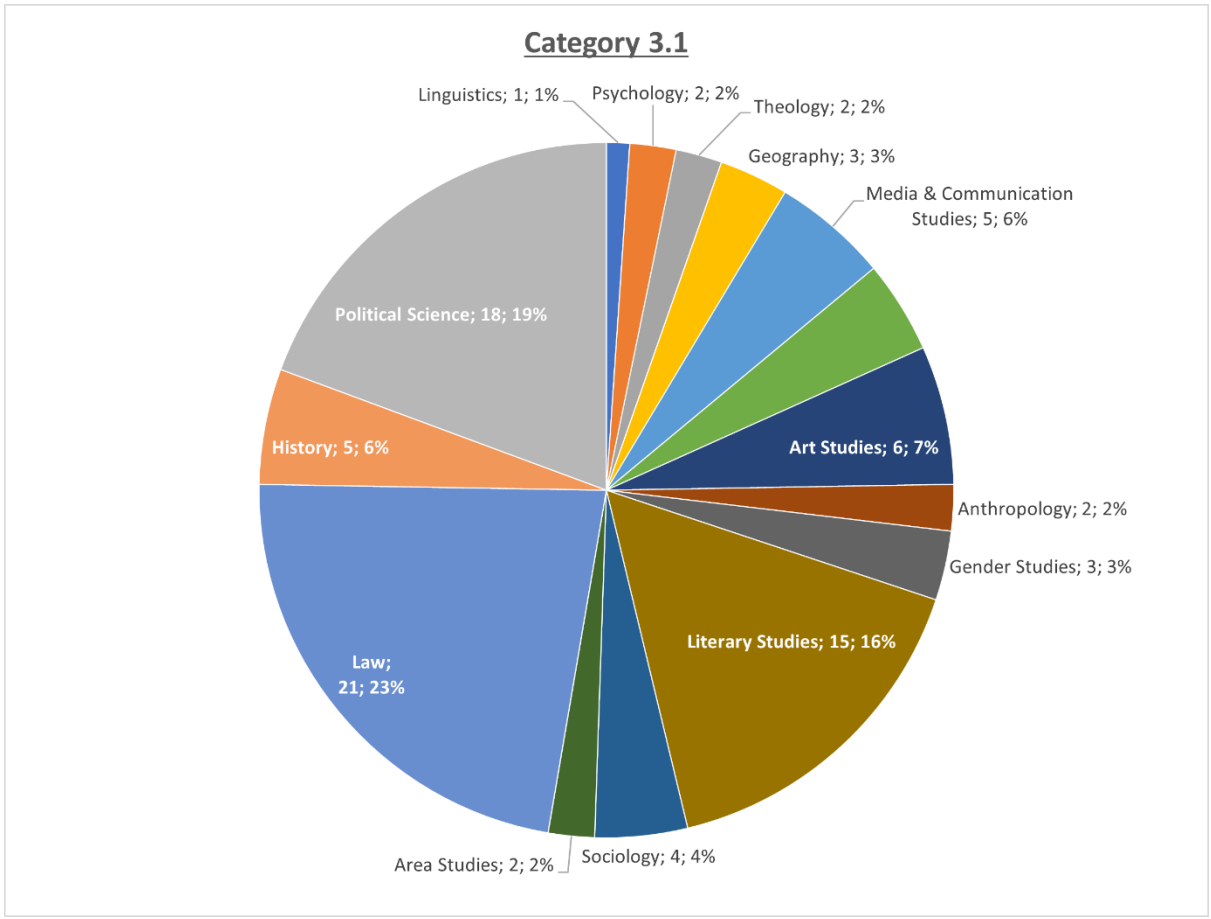

Figure 10. Distribution of publications per discipline in category 3.1.

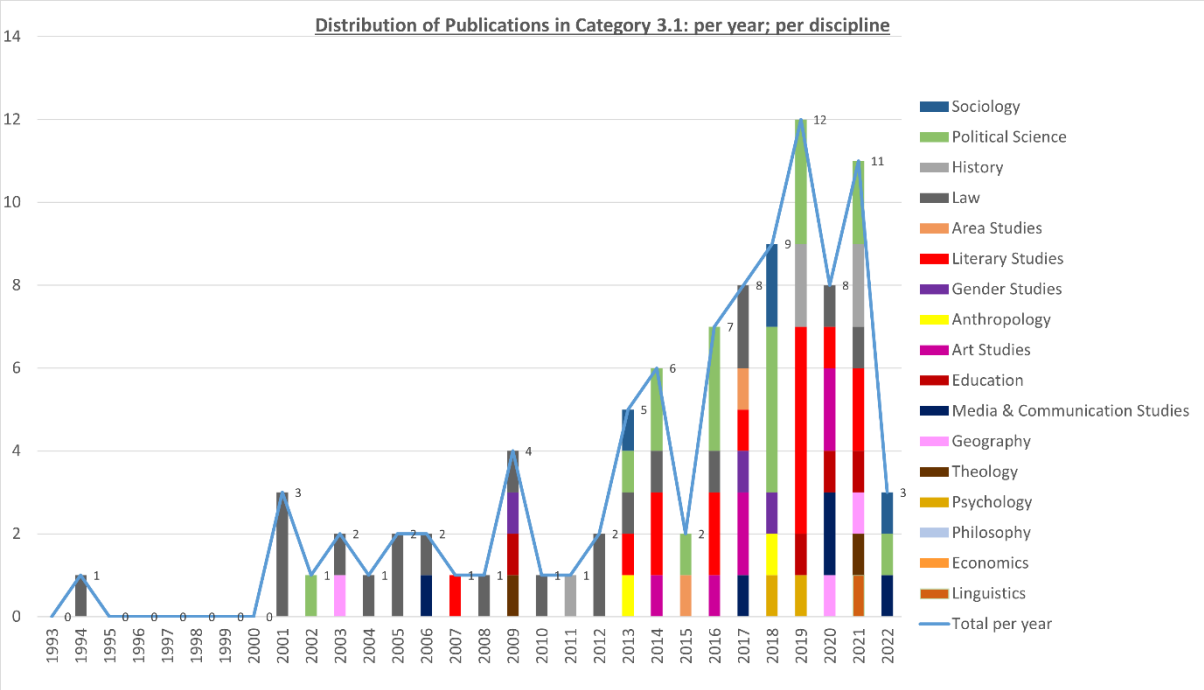


Figure 11. Distribution of category 3.1 publications per discipline, per year.

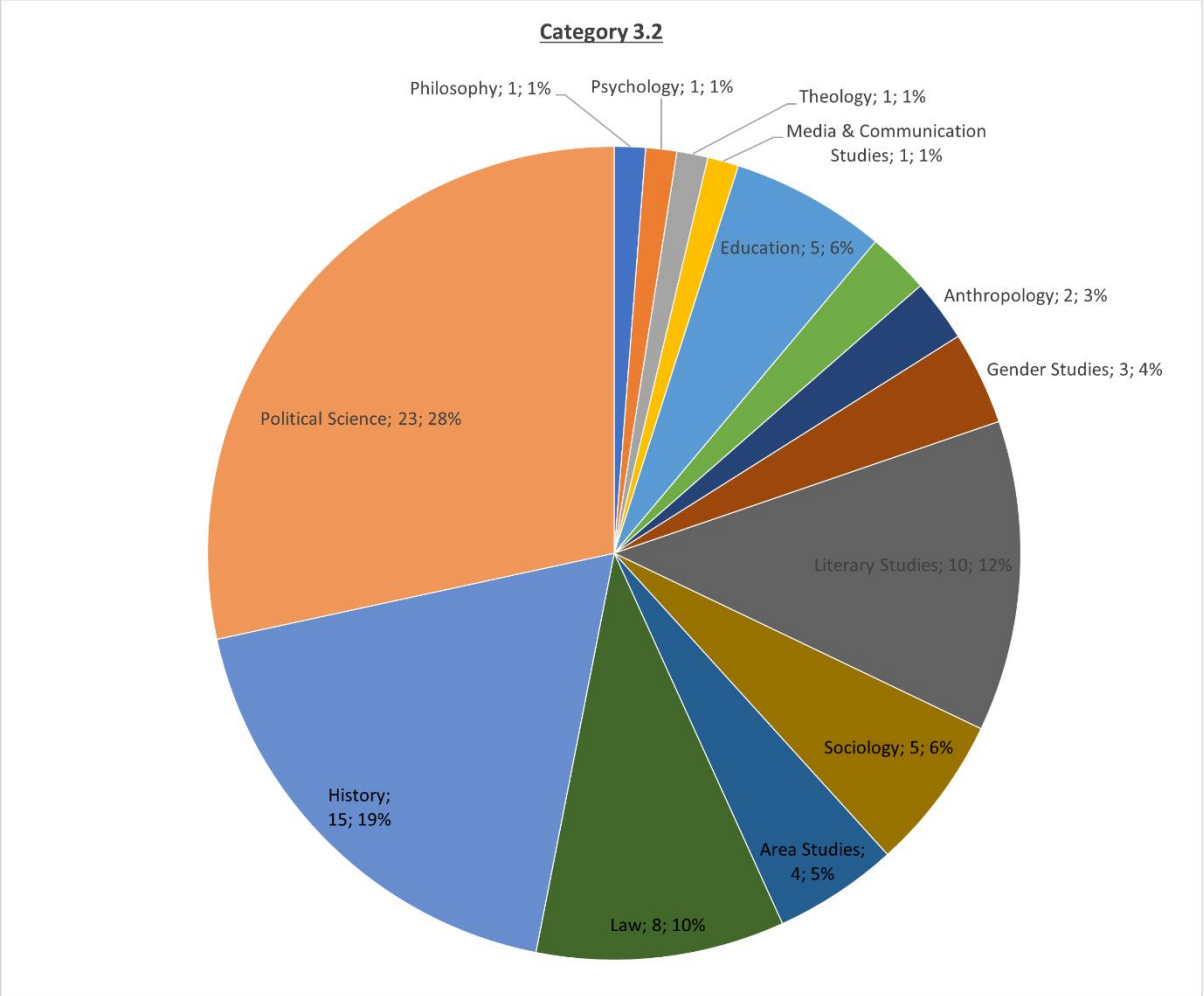

Figure 12. Distribution of publications per discipline in category 3.2.

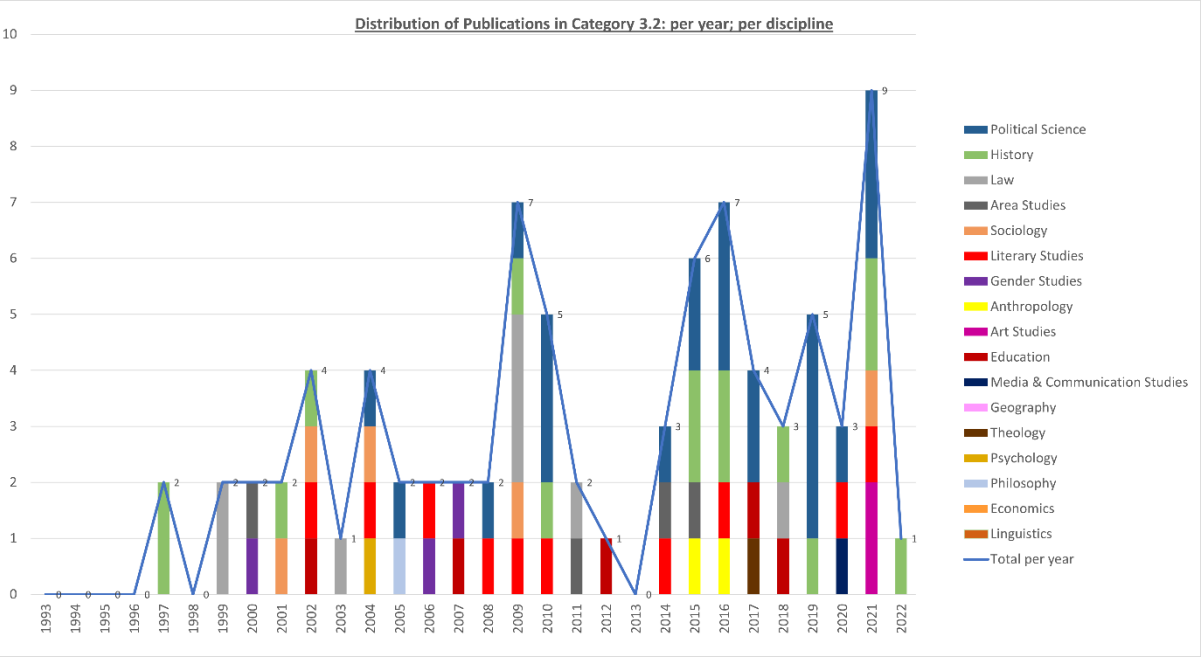


Figure 13. Distribution of category 3.2 publications per discipline, per year.

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