

Who is in Charge of Making Gender Related Policy? :

Institutional Change and its Influence on Gender Legislation in Korea

Eun-Sil Oh<sup>1</sup>

Yonsei University, South Korea

November, 2008

## ABSTRACT

This paper is consisted of three parts. Firstly, I address the policy reforms that had occurred in Korea and moreover the reasons to such institutional changes. . Under the advent of reformative regimes since 1998, the women's movement has succeeded in dramatically increasing the number of women legislators in the National Assembly and in establishing a formal political institution, the Ministry of Gender Equality (MGE), which represents their cause. Secondly, I show how the institutions had impact on the gender related legislations. The institutional changes were crucial causes of the drastic increase on gender related legislations. Last but not least, brief description is done on gender-relevant legislation inside the National Assembly. Overall, I argue that it is time to pay attention on the political structure that influences gender policy and legislations.

*Keywords:* gender policy, legislation, movement institutionalization, policy reform

## INTRODUCTION

In 2006 and 2007, a Gender Gap Index was built and the evaluation of gender issues in 128 countries was done by a group of scholars<sup>2</sup>. Measuring the equality level on the zero to one scale, the countries were graded by four categories: economy, health, education and politics. In the average, health and education showed high equality level in gender gap. Relatively low score was shown in the economy category which was about 0.60. However,

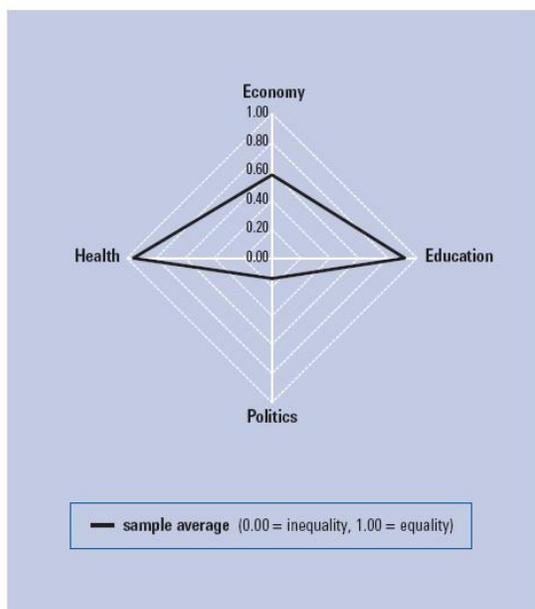
---

<sup>1</sup> All questions directly to [ohesunil@naver.com](mailto:ohesunil@naver.com) Department of Sociology, Yonsei University, 134 Shinchon-dong, Seodaemun-ku, Seoul, Korea 120-749. This work has been supported by Brain Korea 21 grant to sociology department at Yonsei University, Korea. I appreciate the comments of Chanung Park, Chan Seok Seo, and my colleagues at Yonsei University.

<sup>2</sup> The Global Gender Gap Report 2007 Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi. *2007 World Economic Forum*

among everything, the gender gap in politics was very high resulting below 0.20 on the equality score. According to figure 1, this in numbers show that women are not in the politics and policy making sector. Political empowerment includes mainly measures of the gap between men and women in political decision-making at the highest levels. This concept is captured through the ratio of women to men in minister-level positions and the ratio of women to men in parliamentary positions. In addition, the ratio of women to men in terms of years in executive office (prime minister or president) in the last 50 years is included.

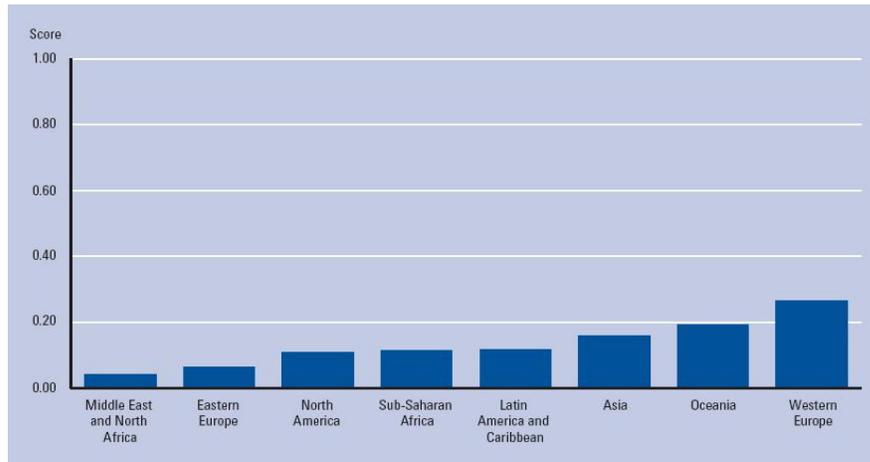
Figure 1. Global Patterns 2007



Source: Gender Gap Index 2007; scores are weighted by population

Not only from this data on 128 countries, but also from the data and observation done in one specific country, one question rises, “Then, who was and is making the policy for women?” The answer can be ‘male politician’ or ‘no one’. Figure 2 addresses regional performance on political empowerment. This shows that Asia, where the main subject of this paper is located in, is upper level but still in a bad shape.

Figure 2. Regional Performance on Political Empowerment Sub-index (Source: Gender Gap Index 2007)



With the overall phenomenon kept in mind, this paper deals extensively on Korean society. After the democratic transition in 1987, a rich array of social movements arose out of and came to fruition through the large democratization movement of the time. With civil society's consolidation after 1987, various social movements have raised a wide variety of issues including environmental concerns, gender equality, economic justice, political corruption, and others. Social movement organizations within civil society were important social actors that provided important checks and balances on the institutionalized political system from outside the realm of institutional politics.

Social movements were faced with significant political transitions during the successive reformative regimes of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun. In contrast to previous regimes, both of these governments gained great political support during their presidential campaigns from people who participated in democratization movements and the social movements that followed the democratic transition. Consequently, after the elections of Kim Dae-jung in 1998 and Roh Moo-hyun in 2002, social movements started to regard political institutions as potential allies rather than repressive antagonists. Beyond providing checks and balances on political institutions from outside the realm of politics, social movements endeavored to actively intervening in institutional politics. Former activists in social movement organizations successfully won political posts such as legislators in the National Assembly. Social movements were also successful in establishing political institutions inside the administration that could represent their causes, including the National Human Rights Commission in the case of the human rights movements and the Ministry of Gender Equality (MGE) in the case

of the women's movements.

The women's movement in South Korea is an archetypal case of social movement institutionalization. The women's movement succeeded in dramatically increasing the number of woman legislators in the National Assembly and in establishing a formal political institution, the Ministry of Gender Equality. The MGE has represented the women's movement's cause under a favorable political atmosphere since the democratization in 1987, especially since the introduction of reformative regimes in 1998. Previous studies, however, lack an empirical and systematic examination of the actual outcome or the impact of political institutional change in South Korea.

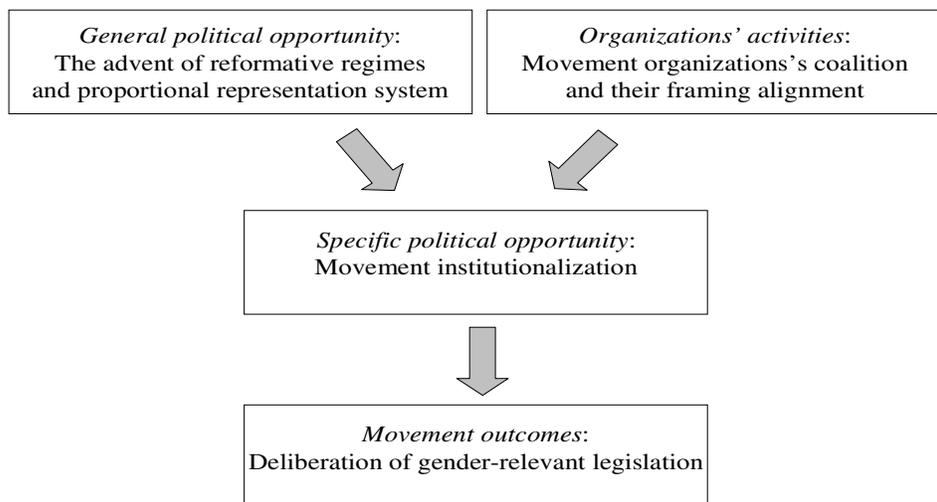
Thus, in this paper, I empirically illuminate the causes and consequences of the institutionalization of the women's movements. The causes of the institutionalization of the women's movement are investigated in terms of the opening of general political opportunity and its success in mobilizing resources in terms of a framing process. Institutionalization, then, is measured by the number of female legislators and the establishment of the MGE once it is seen as a issue-specific favorable political opportunity. As for the consequences of policy institution change, I assess the positive impacts of institutionalization on the deliberation of gender-relevant legislation. The paper first shortly shows the theoretical frame of the argument and then deals with causes of policy reform. After specifying what the policy reforms are, the impact of the policy reform on gender related legislations is addressed. On the last part of the paper, the contents of the gender related legislations are discussed and briefly described.

## THEORETICAL FRAME

Most scholars agree to varying degrees that both political opportunity structures and movements' organizational characteristics influence movement outcomes. Moreover, several scholars have introduced a systematic theoretical model into their movement research (Cress and Snow, 2000; Soule and Olzak, 2004; Amenta, Carruthers, and Zylan, 1992; Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein, 1994). My theoretical model on political mediation was first introduced by Amenta and his colleagues. According to Amenta and his colleagues, the political mediation model sees political opportunity structures as a mediating factor between social movements and their outcomes (Amenta, Carruthers, and Zylan, 1992; Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein, 1994).

Political context as a mediating factor deflects or intensifies the impact of movement organizations or activities on their goals. In my analytic model, the institutionalization of women’s movement is the factor that mediates the relationship between women’s movement organizations and movement outcomes. *Movement institutionalization or policy reform* is assessed in terms of the increasing number of favorable legislators in the National Assembly and the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality in the Administration. The causes of movement institutionalization are investigated in view of the movement organizations’ activities and, again, favorable political circumstances, *i.e.*, the advent of reformative administrations since 1998 as well as the proportional representation system in place since 2004. While the institutionalization of the movement is a *specific political opportunity* related to the women’s movement, the advent of reformative administrations is the broader *general political opportunity* (Meyer and Minkoff, 2004). Figure 3 depicts my systematic theoretical model for the causes and consequences of policy reform.

Figure 3. Theoretical model of the causes and consequences of policy reform(movement institutionalization)



Finally, movement outcomes or consequences have been defined in a variety of ways in previous studies. In this study, the focus is on the relatively direct and intended outcomes of social movements, rather than those outcomes that are more indirect or unintended. Specifically, movement outcomes is measured using data on the deliberation of gender-relevant legislative bills at both the proposal and passage stages in the National Assembly

after the democratic transition in 1987.

## CAUSES OF POLICY REFORM

The women's movement in South Korea succeeded in intervening in institutional politics and achieving the institutionalization of its movement. This achievement seems to be a natural outcome of the political and economic modernization of South Korea and the resultant improvement of women's social status. The institutionalization of the women's movement, however, cannot be called as a natural process since a huge gap between genders still exists in contemporary South Korea. According to the Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum, South Korea ranked 97th among 128 nation-states in its gender gap between genders in 2007. This chapter illuminates the organizational and political factors that led to the women movement's institutionalization despite the low social status of women in South Korea.

### Women's Movement Organizations' Coalition and Frame Alignment

The history of women's movement organizations dates back to 1959 when conservative movement organizations such as the Korean National Council of Women (*Han'guk yŏsŏng tanch'e hyŏpŭihoe* or *Yŏhyŏp*) and the Korea Wife Association (*Han'guk puinhoe*) were established. Then, in 1977, feminism was started to be introduced to university students through the establishment of the first department of women's studies in Ewha Women's University. When the labor movement flourished in 1970s, the labor unions were run by female workers in manufacturing companies such as Dong-il Textile, Nam-young Nylon, Hae-tae Confectionary, and YH trade (Chang, 2005).

Only after the democratic transition in 1987 did an array of women's movement organizations such as Korea Women's Association United (*Han'guk yŏsŏng tanch'e yŏnhap* or *Yŏyŏn*), Korea Women Labor Association (*Yŏsŏng nodongja yŏnmaeng*), and Korea Women's Hotline (*Yŏsŏng ūi chŏnhwa*) appeared in the realm of civil society to raise gender issues to the fore. In the 1990s, these women's movement organizations began to cooperate with one another in support of diverse gender-related issues. From the Parents' League on educational issues to collective action on historical issues of Japan's sex slavery to the childcare issues during

the legislation of the Infant and Childcare Act, movement organizations made alliances in order to place their gender concerns on the political agenda.

One dramatic coalition among women's movement organization was made prior to the Beijing Women Conference. After several preparatory meetings in 1993, Women Korea (*Yösöng yöndaë*) was established as a coalition organization to increase the proportion of female politician. The co-representatives of this organization were Lee Yeon-sook and Lee Mi-kyung, the presidents of two representative organizations in the women's movement, Korean National Council of Women (KNCW; *Yöhyöpp*) and Korean Women's Association United (KWAU; *Yöyönn*). KNCW, established in 1959, stood for the conservative agenda while KWAU, founded in 1987, represented the reformative agenda in the women's movement. Both organizations, however, united under the umbrella of Women Korea to make concerted efforts to improve the political participation of women in the National Assembly.

In 1994, 56 women's movement organizations joined Women Korea in demanding a quota for female legislators. Along with Women Korea, Women Politic Network (*Yösöng chöngch'i net'üüöök'ü*) established in 1998, argued for the increased engagement of women in institutional politics from 1998 to 2002. Moreover, in 2004, just before the general election, 321 organizations including the reformative movement organization, Clean Politics Women Network (*Malkün chöngch'i net'üüöök'ü*), made a coalition for a quota system.

The women's movement's demands for political engagement did not set a limit to increasing legislators in the National Assembly. After the Beijing Women Conference, where 96 women's movement organizations and approximately 600 movement representatives participated, the women's movement in South Korea changed their paradigm from *politics of influence* to a more active *politics of engagement*. The slogans of both KWAU and KNCW contained women's involvement in the political process, women's achievement of political power, and legislation of gender-relevant bills. Another goal that the women's movement pursued was the establishment of a formal administrative body that represents their causes.

In January of 1998, Eun Bang-hee, the president of KNCW, announced that Kim Dae-jung's reformative administration should establish a ministry focusing on gender issues. In 1998, KWAU made a similar proposition demanding an administrative body for gender issues (Han'guk yösöng tanch'e yönhap, 1998). These requests of women's movement for a gender-relevant ministry did not cease even after the Kim Dae-jung

administration established the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs, a special committee on gender policy, in 1998. A wide array of women's movement organizations, including KWAU with its 29 affiliated movement organizations and KNCW and its 35 affiliated organizations, came together with a single demand, the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality. This coalition among KWAU, KNCW, and various other women's movement organizations persisted even after the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality. Since 2003, the coalition has turned to the project of enlarging the ministry by broadening it to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

The coalition of women's movement organizations and their alignment of prognostic frames was a significant driving force in achieving movement institutionalization. It was the demands and specific propositions of the women's movement that led the government into fixing gender imbalances within political institutions in specific and concrete ways.

#### Opening of General Political Opportunity

The cooperative effort of the women's movement was combined with a favorable political atmosphere during the reformative regimes of Kim Dae-jung and Rho Moo-hyun. General political opportunity was open during this period in two senses: First, both reformative administrations had gained support from reformative movement activists and supporters in the presidential election so that they had to be responsive to these constituencies after their election; second, the judicature's decision regarding the unconstitutionality of the national election system brought about a partial change in that system – the introduction of a proportional representation system – that turned out to have unintended consequences.

The Kim Dae-jung administration announced a baseline focus on “mainstreaming” gender in public policy (Hwang, 2001). The mainstreaming of gender included the representation of women in politics and a national-level educational effort to enhance women's competitiveness. The mainstreaming also highlighted the fact that government should make a close connection with women's movement organizations for a successful gender policy. The Korean Women's Development Institute (*Han'guk yŏsŏng kaebalwŏn*) would act as a mediating organization for this connection. The institute adopted the same demands of the women's movement and then advised the administration on certain issues. The institute, for example, consistently reported the

ineffectiveness of the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs and proposed the establishment of ministry-level machinery (Kim, 2000).

As a result, the reformative regimes positively responded to the united claims of the women's movement. After the movement's demand for gender-relevant institutional machinery from 1995 to 1998, the Kim administration introduced the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs in 1998. After the movement's call for a ministry-level administrative institution in 1999 and 2000, the administration established the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2001. The enlargement to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family during the Roh administration in 2005 also followed the demands of the women's movement.

The introduction of a new proportional representation system also provided a favorable political atmosphere for the women's movement in terms of increasing the number of female legislators. After the judicature decided in July of 2001 that the previous national constituency election system violated the constitution, a party-registered proportional representation system replaced the previous system beginning with the 2004 general election. Although only 54 of the 299 legislators were elected from this proportional representation system, the partial change in the system provided an opportunity for the women's movement to insist on a 50% quota for proportional representation candidates. As major political parties had to gain direct votes from both male and female constituencies under this new system, the movement's demand for a 50% quota was accepted. The decision of the judicature led to the unintended consequence of increasing the number of women legislators, as will be seen in the next chapter on movement institutionalization.

The achievements of women's movement were due not only to the concerted efforts of women's movement organizations, but also to the opening of the general political opportunity structure. The favorable political atmosphere was a significant factor in explaining the successful institutionalization of the women's movement. The conservative Lee Myung-bak administration's 2008 move to shrink the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family to the Ministry of Gender Equality ran counter to the united demand of NKCW and KWAU to maintain the ministry. Although changes after the advent of the Lee Myung-bak administration are beyond the scope of this study, this reactive move shows that the women's movement cannot sustain and achieve its institutionalization without a favorable political atmosphere.

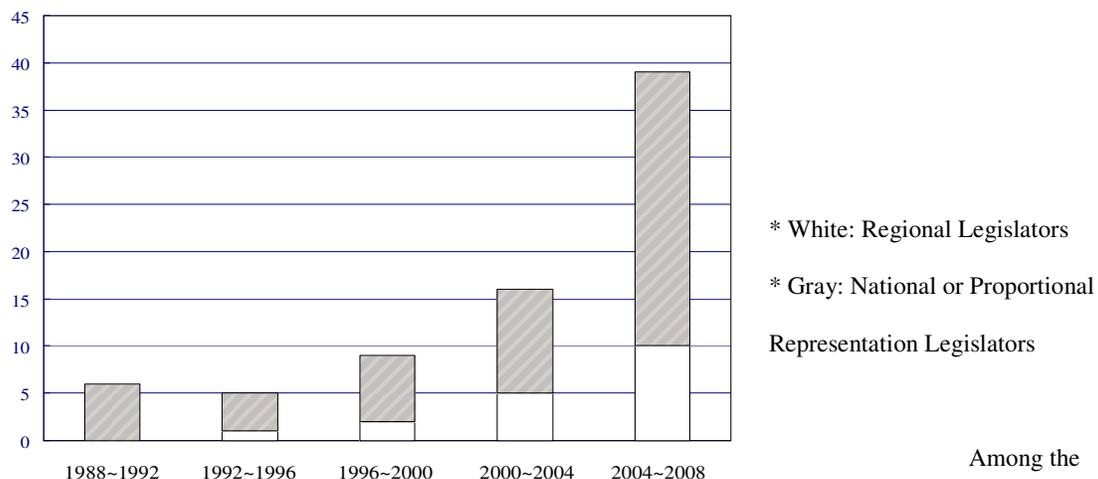
## POLICY REFORM: TWO CHANGES

Movement institutionalization, which was an outcome of movement activities and favorable general political opportunity, itself functioned as a specific political opportunity for the women's movement after this institutionalization was established. Before investigating the legislative outcomes of this movement institutionalization, an accurate measure of institutionalization is needed. In this paper, institutionalization of women's movement is measured by political elite allies in the National Assembly and institutional access to administrative officials in terms of the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality.

### Increasing Number of Female Legislators

The number of female legislators has steadily increased since 1992. There were only five female legislators in the 14th Assembly, a number that almost doubled in the 15th Assembly and tripled in the 16th Assembly. Then, in the 17th Assembly, the number remarkably rose to 39. This remarkable increase in the 17th Assembly resulted from the united efforts of women's movement organizations for a women's quota and the introduction of proportional representation system. The female legislators elected from proportional representation system reached 29 in the 2004 general election.

Figure 4. The increasing number of female legislators.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Data is from the webpage of Korean Women's Development Institute. The number indicates the female legislators elected from the general election and does not include those who joined during the Assembly.

female legislators elected in the 2000 and 2004 general election, the proportions from conservative and reformative parties were nearly equivalent. In 2000, 8 legislators were affiliated with the reformative New Millennium Party while 7 legislators were affiliated with the conservative Grand National Party. In 2004, 16 belonged to the reformative Uri Party while 17 belonged to the conservative Grand National Party.

#### Establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality

The Ministry of Gender Equality traces back to the creation of the Ministry of Political Affairs II. However, the first independent machinery for gender policy was the Special Committee of Gender Equality, established in 1998. The Ministry of Gender Equality was founded under the Kim Dae-jung administration in 2001 and enlarged into the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family under the Rho Moo-hyun administration in 2004. Once again, though it is beyond the scope of my study, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family was minimized to the Ministry of Gender Equality under the Lee Myung-bak administration in 2008. Under this change, childcare affairs were taken over by the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

The number of officials in the Ministry of Political Affairs II was 20 in 1998 and increased to 41 following the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs in 1998. In 2001, the number expanded to 102 with the three departments of the Ministry of Gender Equality, and expanded again to 176 officials with the four departments of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in 2005. The establishment and enlargement of the ministry provided leaders and activists in the women's movement an entry into the administrative body (Kim, 2005; Chang, 2005).

The ministers of the Ministry of Gender Equality have mostly consisted of past activists in the women's movement. Yoon Ho-jung, the first minister of the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs, was a former activist in KNCW. The second minister, Kang Ki-won, had no past record of engagement in the women's movement. However, the third minister, Baek Kyung-nam, was previously involved in the Korean Women's Development Institute. The first minister of the Ministry of Gender Equality was Han Myung-sook, a representative activist in the women's movement. Han was a former member of the Christian Academy and a former leader of KWAU (Han, 2001). During her term, KWAU and KNCW functioned as advising associations to the ministry. The second minister, Ji Eun-hee, was involved with both KWAU and Women

Link (Yösöng p'yönguhoe). And the first minister of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Chang Habin, was a former member of the Korean Women's Development Institute.<sup>4</sup> These ministers' prior experiences with the women's movement helped facilitate communication and cooperation between women's movement organizations and the administrative body.

## CONSEQUENCES OF POLICY REFORM ON LEGISLATION (1) : OVERALL CHANGE

As is seen in the previous chapter, movement organizations' coalitions and frame alignments, along with the general opening of political opportunity, generated the institutionalization of women's movement. In this chapter, I investigate the consequences of such policy reforms in terms of gender-relevant legislation.

In examining the legislative outcomes of various bills, all gender-relevant bills were analyzed subsequent the democratic transition, from the 13th Assembly in 1988 to the 17th Assembly in 2008. Data were collected from the webpage of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.<sup>5</sup> In defining the gender-relevance of bills, a two-step method was undertaken. First, legislative bills under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Gender Equality or the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family were sorted after examination. Then, bills that had been proposed before the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality were examined using previously-sorted bills as reference bills. Bills that had a vocabulary in common with the reference bills were chosen and sorted. Among the assorted gender-relevant bills, those that were abrogated because of alternative bills were eliminated so as to avoid any overlapping of the same bill. The final number of gender-relevant bills from 1988 to 2008 which were *passed, revised and passed, or abrogated because of termination* was 123.

### Committee Change concerning Gender-Relevant Bills

Legislative bills are generally distributed to related committees in the National Assembly. The committees of the National Assembly are a reflection of the ministries in the Administration. Therefore, since the Ministry of Gender Equality was established and then enlarged into the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the committee taking charge of gender-relevant bills was correspondingly changed.

---

<sup>4</sup> Data is from People Search Service in Chung-ang Ilbo, the website of which is <http://www.joins.com>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://likms.assembly.go.kr/bill/jsp/main.jsp>.

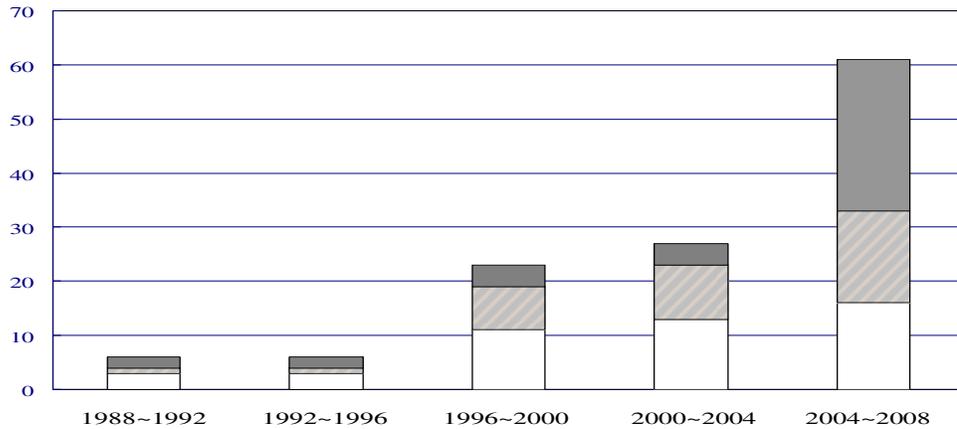
Before 1999, gender-relevant bills had been under the jurisdiction of diverse committees such as the Health and Welfare Committee, the Legislation and Judiciary Committee, the Environment and Labor Committee, and others. Since the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality, however, gender-relevant bills were taken under the jurisdiction of the Gender Equality Committee, a committee of the Ministry of Gender Equality.

The change of committees was influential to the legislative outcomes of gender-relevant bills in the sense that gender-relevant bills had previously been regarded as relatively subsidiary bills for committees such as the Health and Welfare Committee, the Legislation and Judiciary Committee, and the Environment and Labor Committee. As gender-relevant bills were regarded as the primary bills of the Gender Equality Committee, the number of gender-relevant bills that were proposed and passed increased following the establishment of MGE. In addition, during the legislative procedure, the minister and her secretaries mostly participated in the investigation stage of the Gender Equality Committee, and by and large facilitated the legislative process for gender-relevant bills.

#### The Proposal of Gender-Relevant Bills

Though the convergence of gender-relevant bills with the Gender Equality Committee has affected the legislative outcomes of such bills, examining changes in the early stages of proposals is also important. Figure 5 demonstrates both the increasing number of gender-relevant bills proposed from 1988 to 2008, as well as changes in the subjects who proposed these bills.

Figure 5. The increasing number of gender-relevant bills, 1988-2008



\* White: the number of bills proposed by the Administration

\* Gray: the number of bills proposed by male legislators

\* Dark gray: the number of bills proposed by women legislator

The number of gender-relevant bills proposed shows a dramatic increase from the 13th Assembly (1988-1992) to 17th Assembly (2004-2008). Only six bills were proposed in the 13th and the 14th Assemblies, but this number increased to 23 in the 15th Assembly and 27 in the 16th Assembly, and then rose to 61 in the 17th Assembly. The number of bills proposed in the 17th Assembly was over 10 times the number of bills proposed in the 13th or 14th Assemblies.

Figure 5 also shows the proportional change in female legislators proposing gender-relevant bills. Along with the gradual increase in the number of bills proposed by the Administration and male legislators, the number and the proportion of bills proposed by the female legislators increased significantly from 2004 to 2008. During the four years of the 17th Assembly, 45% of gender-related bills, or 28 out of 61, were proposed by female legislators.

Surprisingly, the partisanship of these female legislators was proportionate between the conservative Grand Nation Party and the reformative Uri Party. Although the MGE and MGEF were established during reformative regimes, female legislators from the Grand Nation Party comprised 7 out of the 15 female

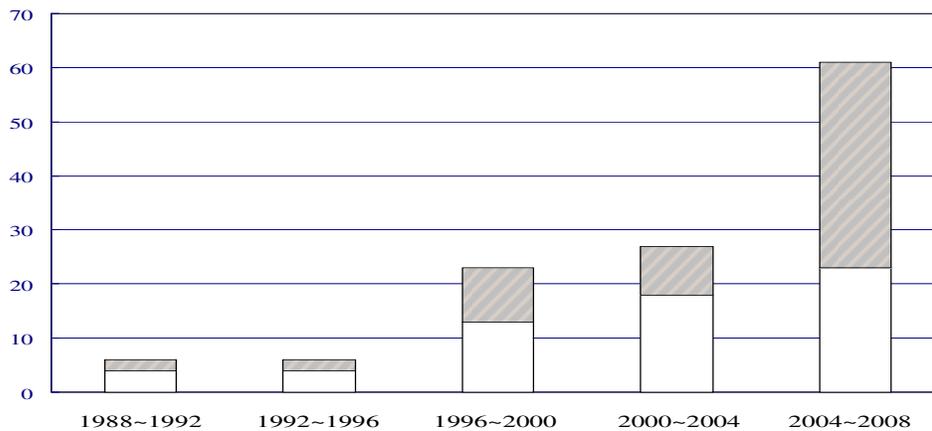
legislators who proposed gender-relevant bills during the 17th Assembly. 6 legislators were affiliated with the Uri Party and 1 with the Democratic Labor Party.

The increasing number of bills proposed by female legislators supports the idea that the increasing number of female legislators increases the number of gender-relevant bills proposed in the National Assembly. On the other hand, the fact that a high proportion of the female legislators who proposed bills were affiliated with the conservative Grand National Party implies that the proposed bills were not always particularly reformative or revolutionary.

### The Passing of Gender-Relevant Bills

Examining the passage of previously proposed bills is essential in understanding the legislative outcomes of gender-relevant bills. The following figure exhibits the passing rate of gender-relevant bills under each Assembly, from 13th to 17th.

Figure 6. The passing rate of gender-relevant bills, 1988-2008



\* White: the number of bills passed

\* Gray: the number of bills abrogated because of termination

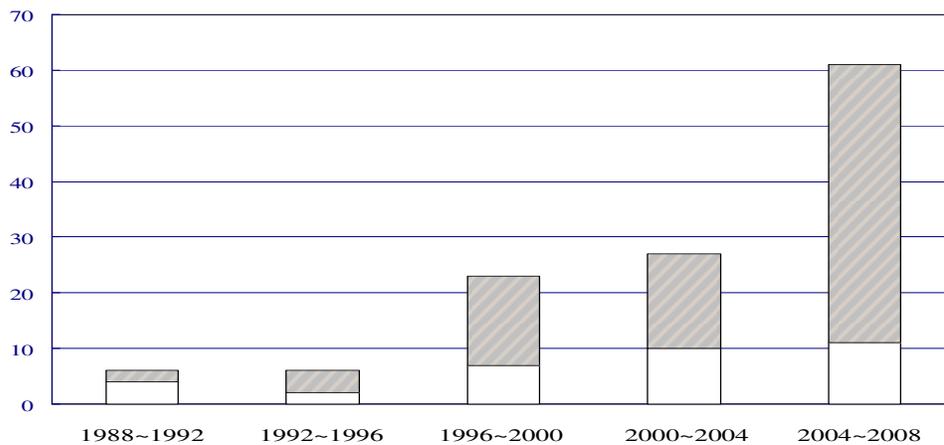
Along with the increasing trend of bill proposals, Figure 6 demonstrates that the net number of gender-relevant bills gradually rose from four in 1988-1992 and 1992-1996 to 13 in 1996-2000, 18 in 2000-2004, and 23 in

2004-2008. The passing rate, however, was at its highest (66.7%) in the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 16th Assemblies, which decreased to 36% from 2004 to 2008 in the 17th Assembly.

The unexpectedly low passing rate in the 17th Assembly results from the advent of the conservative Lee Myung-bak administration in 2008. After the regime change to a conservative in 2008, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family was again reduced to the Ministry of Gender Equality. And during the period between the election of President Lee Myung-bak and the 18th general election in May 2008, 47 gender-relevant bills which had been pending were more or less abrogated because of the termination of the 17th Assembly. Only 9 out of 47 could be passed in this period after the Lee Myung-bak administration announced the reduction of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

Finally, the characteristics of the gender-relevant bills are examined in two ways: First, by distinguishing between enactment bills and revision bills; and, second, by categorizing bills by their specific subjects. The following figure displays the proportion of enactment bills and revision bills.

Figure 7. The proportion of enactment and revision bills, 1988-2008



\* White: the number of enactment bill

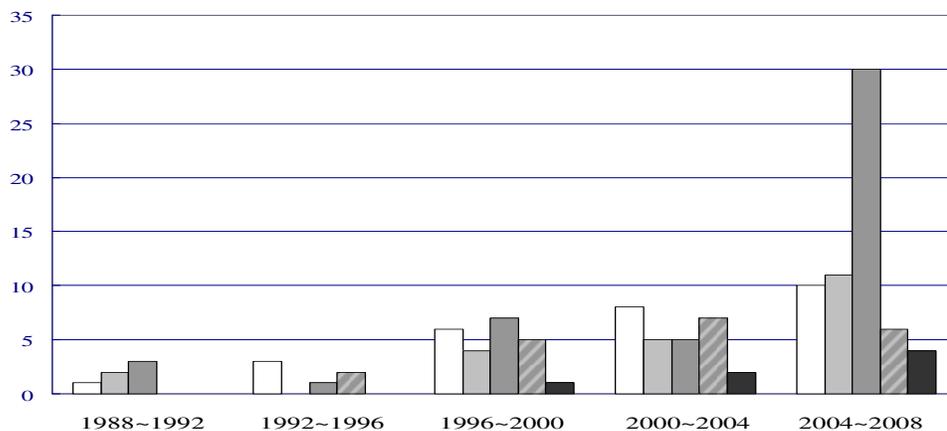
\* Gray: the number of revision bills

Enactment bills are legislative bills that introduce a new law, while revision bills are those that amend previous laws. The extent to which the bills have a reformative impact on law and the society cannot simply be judged by whether the bills are enactment or revision bills. At the same time, however, the impact of revision bills

may be limited, as revision bills cannot introduce any radical or revolutionary change but can only bring about gradual change to prior law. The high proportion of revision bills since 1996 implies that a large number of bills proposed and passed during this period were geared toward gradual reforms of gender problems in South Korea.

Gender-relevant bills fall under the following five categories of specific subjects: Economic issues, including economic support for women or a ban on gender discrimination; family issues, including domestic violence; childcare issues; prevention of sexual harassment and prostitution; historical issues, especially Japan's sex slavery issue.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 8. The Issues of gender-relevant bills, 1988-2008



\* White: Economic Issues\* Light gray: Family Issues

\* Gray: Childcare Issues\* Stripe: Prevention Issue

\* Black: Historical Issue

These data show that most of the issues addressed by bills have increased since 1988. Economic issues have predominated since 1992. Childcare issues showed a dramatic increase in bills proposed from 2004 to 2008 during the 17th Assembly. This increase is due to the fact that the Ministry of Gender Equality expanded into the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, and then took over the childcare portion of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The Ministry then made efforts to raise new childcare issues from a gender perspective.

<sup>6</sup> This categorization is based on Chung's four-type categorization in her thesis on female legislators (2004).

## CONSEQUENCES OF POLICY REFORM ON LEGISLATION (2) : CONTENTS OF THE PASSED BILLS

In this part, I will describe briefly about the legislations passed during the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly. There are twenty bills passed and 60 bills proposed. Among 21 bills passed, 12 were the bills proposed by the minister, 4 by the government, 3 by female key actor legislators and 2 by male key actor legislators. The contents of the legislations can be divided into six categories. Six bills were on the child care issue and among those, two bills that were proposed by the male key actors who were proposing to the government to give official authority in building child care center to local politician instead of minister of ministry of gender equality. The rest three bills were from the government proposing to use easy Korean words in the legislation and from the minister suggesting to build more child care centers in the rural areas.

One bill was on the sexually harassed women from Japanese soldiers suggesting to give financial and social support for the women. Six were bills against the discrimination of women in work place and education. This dealt with the issues of daily harassment, and TV shows showing women not working but staying at home. Three legislations were on building local centers for the sexual harassed women and sexual labor worker. The centers include the medical service and sheltering service. Three bills were on building new idea and laws for the one parent family and various race families. These also included laws for child and the mother support. Last two were bills against domestic violence.

This trend in the bills' content started from the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly and continued to 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly. Almost half of the bills passed were proposed by the female minister of the Ministry of Gender Equality and other half were the ones proposed by legislators. The contents showed that the bills proposed by the minister were more pro women and asking for support from the government. The bills passed by the legislators showed two aspects. One, the bills by male key actor had mostly the argument about giving less political rights to the minister of the Gender Equality Ministry whereas the female key actors focused on the protecting human rights for women. Two, among female key actors, one group followed the similar contents with the Ministry of Gender Equality and the other group focused on preserving basic human rights of the women regardless of the reinterpretation of family, women's issue, gender equality.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The coalition of women's movement organizations, and the convergence of their framing alignments, along with the opening of general political opportunity after 1998, has led to a successful institutionalization of the women's movement in South Korea. Movement institutionalization was reflected in the increasing number of female legislators and the establishment and enlargement of the Ministry of Gender Equality. Thereafter, the causal link between institutionalization and legislative outcomes was demonstrated in terms of the proposal and passing of gender-relevant bills. The results suggest that the numbers of bills proposed and passed showed a dramatic increase since 1996 and, especially, from 2004 to 2008 in the 17th Assembly.

My results do not suggest that a definitively reformative or revolutionary change was brought about by virtue of the women's movement's institutionalization. Rather, the legislative bills proposed and passed were moderately reformative in the sense that a large number of bills were revision bills and a large proportion of the female legislators who proposed bills were affiliated with the conservative Grand National Party. This paper, nevertheless, suggests that the increasing number of female legislators and the establishment of the MGE, which partially resulted from the efforts of the women's movement, had an effect on the legislation of gender-relevant bills at the proposal and passing stages.

Female legislators positively proposed gender-relevant bills especially since 2004. Gender Equality Committee also regarded gender-relevant bills as primary ones and facilitated their legislative process. As a result, the number of gender-relevant bills proposed and passed showed a gradual increase from 13th to 17th Assembly. Therefore, the results empirically support the previous argument that the women's movement, along with a favorable political opportunity, led to positive outcomes within the realm of institutional politics (Kim, 2007). The women's movement in South Korea has succeeded in institutionalizing itself within the political system, and has made a positive impact on legislation.

Among 128 countries, Asian countries<sup>7</sup> on average ranked 75 in the equality on gender gap part. For the political empowerment score, the Asian countries were at the lower bottom. After the Beijing Women's

---

<sup>7</sup> In Asian category, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Thailand, Mongolia, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic, China, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Rep., Cambodia, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Nepal, and Pakistan are include.

Conference in 1995, many movements and policy reforms occurred in Asia<sup>8</sup>. However, none of the Asian countries built such a ministry like Korea. The size, funding, structure, ability, politicians of the women specialized institution are all important in developing better political setting for gender equality. Therefore it is important to analyze and find the consequences of the ministry level policy making institution in order to learn and take action in making change in means to protect women in Asian society.

## REFERENCES

### *English References*

- Amenta, Edwin, Bruce G. Carruthers, and Yvonne Zylan. 1992. "A Hero for the Aged? The Townsend Movement, the Political Mediation Model, and U.S. Old-Age Policy, 1934- 1950." *American Journal of Sociology* 98: 308-39.
- Amenta, Edwin, Kathleen Dunleavy, and Mary Bernstein. 1994. "Stolen Thunder? Huey Long's "Share Our Wealth," Political Mediation, and the Second New Deal." *American Sociological Review*: 678-702.
- Cress, Daniel M. and David A. Snow. 2000. "The Outcomes of Homeless Mobilization: The Influence of Organization, Disruption, Political Mediation, and Framing." *American Journal of Sociology* 105: 1063-104.
- Hausmann, Ricardo, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi. 2007. "The Global Gender Gap Report 2007" *World Economic Forum*
- Meyer, David S. and Debra C. Minkoff. 2004. "Conceptualizing Political Opportunity." *Social Forces* 82: 1457-92.
- Snow, David, E. Burke Rochford, Jr, Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Process, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review* 51: 464-81.
- Soule, Sarah A. and Susan Olzak. 2004. "When Do Movements Matter? The Politics of Contingency and the Equal Rights Amendment." *American Sociological Review* 69: 473-97.

---

<sup>8</sup> "National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) Philippines , "The Ministry of Women's Affairs Sri Lanka , "Office of National Commission on Women's Affairs Thailand, "Ministry of Health and Social Welfare Mongolia , "Ministry of Women's Role Indonesia , Office for Gender Equality, Prime Minister's Office Japan , Women's Affairs Department Malaysia , "Ministry of Gender Equality Seoul, Republic of Korea , "Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs Cambodia , "Ministry of Women and Children Affairs Bangladesh , "Department of Women and Child Development India , "Center for Women's Participation Iran , "Ministry of Women's Development Pakistan

*Korean References (Titles translated into English)*

- Hwang, In-ja. 2001. "Outline for Women Policy in People's administration." *Ministry of Gender Equality*.
- Kim, WonHong, Kim, HaeYoung & Kim, EunKyoung. 2001. "Assignment and Present Face of Korean Women's Political Participation after independence." 『Korean Women's Development Institute, Research Paper』
- Chang, Mi-kyoung. 2005. "Now and Then: Korea Women's Movement". *New Feminism Lecture*. Korea Women Research Center Publication.