

President Park Geun-Hye of South Korea: A Woman President without Women?

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INTRODUCTION

This article explores the first female president of South Korea, Park Geun-Hye, and her substantive representation of women. How does this compare to previous administrations led by men? While Park's election is not groundbreaking, since she is one of many Asian women executives taking the family route to power, her presidency still may lead to the implementation of women-friendly policies once elected. Park's conservative party affiliation may counter expectations that she promotes policies related to gender equality. We hypothesize, however, that as the first female president of South Korea, Park expands women's substantive representation.

Park's case shows a mixed record in promoting women's substantive representation; her government has extended women-related policy areas first developed by previous progressive governments but has not done so consistently. Though her performance is uneven, it shows improvement

Published by Cambridge University Press 1743-923X/17 \$30.00 for The Women and Politics Research Section of the American Political Science Association.

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doi:10.1017/S1743923X17000204

over the previous conservative administration. Her immediate predecessor Lee Myung-Bak emerged from the same party Park is affiliated with, and his government reduced the women's policy agenda and cut funding for the Ministry of Gender Equality. As the immediately preceding administration was also conservative, Park could have easily toed the party line. Compared to him, however, Park's government has actively pursued gender equity policies. While impossible to know the motivations, Park's promotion of women's rights may be attributable to her gender. Since we control for partisanship, Park's efforts on behalf of women prove particularly compelling. While advantaged by her political lineage, her government offers important policy benefits to women.

By connecting the presidency of Park with substantive representation, this article adds to literature about women's substantive legislative representation (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012; Schwindt-Bayer 2010). As more women gain executive offices, scholars must explain their effects on women's representation. We contribute to the literature on women's substantive representation through emphasizing the role women presidents take in establishing policy priorities and women-related policies using President Park as a case study. Given the importance that South Korea plays on the world stage and the vital role the president plays in politics, the continued oversight regarding women executives is problematic.

The first part of this article situates Park's election in light of women's executive advancement around the world and in Asia. The second section briefly describes Park's political résumé prior to becoming the president in 2012 and the political backdrop of South Korea. The third portion examines Park's governance, particularly whether she offers women substantive representation compared to her predecessors. We then offer conclusions and suggestions for future research.

TRENDS IN WOMEN'S EXECUTIVE ADVANCEMENT WORLDWIDE

The 1990s were a watershed decade in terms of women's advancement into national executive office. The number of new women leaders nearly quadrupled in the 1990s, and did so again in the 2000s (Jalalzai 2013). As of August 2017, 114 different women have served as executives of their countries. A total of 49 have been presidents (43%) and 65 ascended as prime ministers (57%). They have governed 74 countries. In fact, 39% of countries where women have governed have seen at least

two different women executives take power. Twenty-six of the 114 women served in the capacities of “Acting” or “Provisional” leaders (13 presidents and 13 prime ministers). This leaves 88 of the 114 being noninterim, 52 of whom are prime ministers (59%) and 36 (41%) who are presidents.

Research reinforces the importance of political institutions to women gaining executive power, while structural variables exert mixed findings. Power imbalances often relegate women to weaker positions (Jalalzai 2010; 2013) and parliamentary systems (Thames and Williams 2013). Women’s percentages in the legislature, though not cabinets, explain their eventual rise to presidencies and premierships (Jalalzai 2013; Krook and O’Brien 2012; Thames and Williams 2013). Women disproportionately gain power through family links (Jalalzai 2013). Between 1960 and 2010, nearly one-quarter of women executives hailed from political families (Jalalzai 2013, 92). Nine out of ten female presidents/prime ministers of South Asia and Southeast Asia have familial ties to former male national executive leaders (Brooke 2002; Jalalzai 2013; Thompson 2002). Name recognition, press coverage, networks, political socialization, and public trust for well-known families are benefits to these linkages (Derichs, Fleschenberg, and Hüstebeck 2006; Hinojosa 2012, 119–20).¹ Since Sirimavo Bandaranaike became the first female prime minister worldwide in 1960 following her husband’s assassination, the family trajectory remained virtually unchallenged for years in Asia (Thompson 2002, 545). Of the 18 Asian women executives through August 2017, 13 women, or 72% of the Asian women leaders, have family links (see A1 in the supplementary material). Major electoral defeats or scandals also open up political space to women (Campus 2013; Jalalzai 2013) who can use gender stereotypes of being healers, unifiers, or reformers, when the window of opportunity opens in postconflict societies (Jalalzai 2013; Thompson 2002).

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF SOUTH KOREA AND PARK’S PATH TO POWER

Following South Korea’s 1987 democratic transition, the Constitution created a five-year presidency prohibiting reelection. Presidents gain

1. Men’s predecessors have also hand-picked men for office. Men also possess familial ties, though the proportion of leaders with family connections is greater for women: only 1% of all male leaders but one-quarter of the total cases of women leaders enjoy family ties to former leaders (Jalalzai 2013, 110).

power through plurality votes. Executives worldwide diverge tremendously. Siaroff (2003) parsimoniously classifies South Korea as a dual executive system with a dominant president and weak prime minister. In this system, presidents serve as head of the state and commander in chief (Siaroff 2003). The South Korean presidency is distinctly “masculine” in the prominence of national security issues relating to North Korea. Presidents appoint prime ministers subject to congressional approval. Akin to vice presidents, they assist presidents and control cabinets following presidents’ orders. Perhaps unsurprisingly, South Korean women made inroads as prime ministers first.²

All past presidents after South Korea’s democratization hailed from two major parties. In December 2012, Park ran for the conservative *Saenuri* Party and won 51.5% of the votes; Moon Jae-In of the main opposition Democratic Party garnered 48% of support (Korean National Election Commission 2016). Park owes her political success to kinship ties to her father, the late authoritarian president Park Jung-Hee who led a military coup in 1961. When Park’s mother Yook Young-Soo was assassinated in 1974, Park assumed the role of Acting First Lady, giving speeches and receiving foreign political leaders (Park 2007). She served in this position for five years until her father’s assassination, abandoning politics following this tragedy.

The Asian Financial Crisis hit South Korea in 1997. The ruling Grand National Party (GNP, which later became the *Saenuri* Party in 2012) suffered from plummeting support from voters who held the party responsible for the economic crisis. Party leaders approached Park to revive the “wave of nostalgia of good ol’ days of economic prosperity during the Jung-Hee Park regime” (Brooke 2002; Yang 1997; Lee 2016). She joined the presidential campaign eight days before the election (Park 2007, 173). Though her party lost the election, she won a seat in the Assembly in 1998 through the by-election, serving five terms until she resigned to run for president in 2012 (Park 2007). She was elected to be GNP’s vice head in 2000 and served as its leader in 2004 for 15 months (Park 2007). Park’s subsequent presidential campaign rightly emphasized her diplomatic credentials as Acting First Lady (Kirk 2001; Park 2007) and her extensive legislative and party experience (Lee 2016).

2. In 2002, President Kim Dae-jung appointed the first woman, Jang Sang, as prime minister; the National Assembly failed to confirm her. Han Myoung-Sook briefly served as the first female prime minister under President Roh Moo-Hyun.

Women from political families are discounted as anomalies lacking independent political skill (Genovese 2013b, 5). Opponents likewise identify Park's kinship as her sole political credential. Undeniably, she inherited her father's strong regional and generational support base and frequently relies on his political legacy and her mother's image. As a party leader, however, she repeatedly demonstrated political agility in gaining electoral support from the voters even when her party suffered from the image of the corrupt establishment. Absent these crises, it is unlikely that Park would have emerged as a party leader (Kim et al. 2010, 38). Park's case shows how women politicians and their parties utilize gender stereotypes to their advantage during opportune political moments.

PARK'S SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION

Scholars generally view substantive representation as responsiveness to women's interests and issues (Beckwith 2014; Escobar-Lemmon, Schwindt-Bayer, and Taylor-Robinson 2014). Dodson and Carroll (1991) define women's issues as "of direct concern to women generally . . . or in terms of their special concerns as wage earners . . . balancing home and work or marital partners" (Dodson and Carroll 1991, 38).³ Scholars assess under which circumstances women act on behalf of women's interests (Bratton and Ray 2002; Celis et al. 2008; Childs 2002; Childs and Krook 2009; Dodson 2006; Squires 2008; Swers 2002). Legislators hailing from liberal parties and espousing feminist views emphasize women's substantive representation (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012). While growing research acknowledges that women's representation transpires in myriad political settings and among diverse actors (see Beckwith 2014, 32), examinations of women executives offer mixed findings regarding substantive representation (Anderson 2013; Col 2013; Everett 2013; Genovese 2013; Genovese and Steckenrider 2013; Jalalzai 2016; Jalalzai and dos Santos 2015; Wiliarty 2010). We expect several factors, including partisanship, mitigate President Park's representation of women. Given the authority she exerts as the dominant president with her party's support in the legislature, Park can act on behalf of women's interests, regardless of her political lineage. Her

3. Dodson and Carrol (1991) consider legislation combatting rape, teen pregnancy, women's health, and wage earning, including pay equity laws, and balancing home and employment, such as maternity leave and daycare programs.

conservative partisanship, however, may complicate this. We now discuss her policy proposals as a legislator, a presidential candidate, and policy outcomes as president.

PARK'S POLICY PROPOSALS

While focusing mainly on Park's presidency, we begin by analyzing her as a legislator since her political experience prior to the presidency shapes expectations about her eventual executive representation. During Park's 14 years as a national legislator, she proposed 15 bills as a main sponsor, lower than the average legislator (The National Assembly Information System 2016). None related to women's issues, which is not unusual, as 71% of legislators never proposed bills addressing women's issues. However, the majority of women legislators who served with her did.⁴

Given these findings, we may expect Park to stay silent on women's issues, yet she proposed several women-related policies on the campaign trail, including shortening working hours for pregnant employees and offering maternity and parental leave. She advocated providing small subsidies to women giving birth and increasing the share of women managers and commission members within government organizations (Go and Sohn 2012). Park emphasized these policies during the last month of the campaign, and developed the campaign slogan "the prepared first female president."

The Korean National Election Commission requires presidential candidates to submit their campaign platforms. Park and her main opponent, Moon Jae-In, proposed policies directly affecting many women's lives, covering similar issue areas including childcare and daycare and women's labor participation (Korean National Election Commission 2012). Table A2 in the supplementary material examines their proposals. However, their policy priorities were slightly different. Moon Jae-In actively promoted women-related policies and sometimes proposed more progressive policies that did not contradict his leftist party ideology. His center-left Democratic Party tends to focus on welfare and social justice policies, while Park's *Saenuri* Party prioritizes economic

4. From the 16th to the 18th National Assembly (2000–2012), 970 legislators were elected, including those through by-elections, and 733 women-related bills were proposed. Thirty-four members of the 16th Assembly proposed 315 women's issue bills; 93% of men and 43% of women never proposed women friendly bills. In the 17th Assembly, 72.3% of men and 17% of women never proposed women's issues bills. In the 18th Assembly, 65.7% of men and 23.9% of women also failed to sponsor women's policies (Author analysis of Assembly data).

growth and national security; therefore, Park's support for women-related policies stood in contrast to the conservative party. Park proposed to increase the number of children enrolled in public daycare facilities by 30%, whereas Moon proposed an increase by 50% (*Chamyeo-yeondae* [People Power 21] 2012, 8). However, Park's campaign proposed policies for pregnant women, including providing nutrition programs and reduced working hours for women in the third trimester. In contrast, Moon did not promote such policies even though his party took more progressive stances on women's status (*Chamyeo-yeondae* [People Power 21] 2012, 8).

In the 2012 presidential election, women showed the highest voter turnout since 2002 and surpassed male voters' turnout for the first time. Women showed up to polling places in the local, national legislative, and presidential elections at a slightly lower rate than men. In this election, however, 76.1% of eligible women voters turned out to vote, higher than the 74.8% of men's turnout rate (Kim 2014, 81). Moreover, some exit poll data show that women voters supported Park over Moon: for example, among women in their 40s, support for Park was about 12% higher than that for Moon. Among *Saenuri* supporters, 95% of men supported Park, while 96% of women did. Even among the Democratic supporters, 7% of the men and 10% of the women Democratic supporters favored Park over Moon, implying the gender affinity effect (Kim 2014, 82–83). Park's electoral success may be partly attributed to her appeal to women voters, though we do not firmly know whether women's support is linked to the above policies or their slightly greater conservatism.⁵ Still, with Park's claims making we see signs of her acting on behalf of women's interests as a candidate. What has she actually delivered on in office?

To make clear assessments, we need to compare her actions to three previous administrations since 2001, both conservative and progressive. We primarily analyze official government documents such as annual policy objectives reports, gender-sensitive budget estimates and closing balances, and data related to women's status in Korean society. We analyze the three administrations prior to Park's on all relevant issues, though cannot always do so since some policy areas were not dealt with until later. Even these policy silences, however, are worth mentioning. All the policies investigated fall under "women's rights/equality issues" (Escobar-Lemmon, Schwindt-Bayer, and Taylor-Robinson 2014). We

5. Korean women are slightly more conservative than Korean men: men's mean political ideology is 5.27 and women's 5.45 with 1 representing left and 10 right (World Values Survey 2015).

can trace the majority of women-related policies of the Park administration to previous progressive governments, but her government expanded their scope. We see her actions as mixed, even though spending on women-related issues has continually increased and various indices assessing gender equality in Korean society have improved. We examine support for the Ministry of Gender Equality (hereafter, MGE), daycare, parental leave, employment, and increasing women appointees in a variety of positions.

SUPPORT FOR THE MINISTRY OF GENDER EQUALITY (AND FAMILY)

We begin by assessing the administration's support for the MGE. The Kim Young-Sam administration (popularly called YS, 1993–1997) enacted the Women's Development Act in 1995 and established the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs in 1998, laying foundations for gender equality. Influenced by the Beijing Platform for Action, the progressive Kim Dae-jung administration (1998–2002, hereafter, DJ) amended laws and institutions for which subsequent governments built their policies. His government prioritized gender mainstreaming and preventing gender discrimination in employment, education, and sexual harassment. The DJ government created the MGE in 2001, which expanded the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs from 49 personnel to 102 and \$3.18 million budget.⁶ The Ministry planned, synthesized, evaluated and implemented policies such as women's labor (Ministry of Gender Equality 2001, 1).⁷

Roh Moo-Hyun's progressive administration (2003–2007, hereafter Roh) continued this legacy. Between 2003 and 2006, the share of the gender equality program budget in GDP increased to .25% in 2003, .69% in 2004, .92% in 2005, and 1.21% in 2006 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2007, 52). Though the total national budget decreased slightly in 2004, funding for women's development plan increased (Lim et al. 2007, iv). Roh's government also devised gender-sensitive budgeting and gender impact assessments (Ministry of Gender Equality 2002, 7). The MGE expanded in size and budget in 2005 as it integrated public-financed daycare facilities, which expanded

6. 1 US dollar = 1000 Korean won.

7. Numerous policies classified as "women's" or "gender equality" are undertaken by other ministries. Under Park's government, the Ministry of Health and Welfare is in charge of maternal and child health policies, free school lunch programs, and childcare facilities.

dramatically over this time. The budget of the ministry increased about 28 times from 2003 to 2007 (see [Figure 1](#)).

Conservative Lee Myung-Bak's government (2008–2012, referred to as MB) reduced the budget and organization of the MGE, in keeping with the preference for small government. Since women's organizations did not support him, he did not have to provide "rewards" to them in return (Lee 2013, 70). MB berated the ministry as a "bastion of feminists" and proposed to change the status of the MGE into a subdivision of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. After heated discussions in the National Assembly and strong objection by women's groups and opposition parties, the MGE remained as a stand-alone ministry even though it underwent a big budget cut and the Ministry of Health and Welfare overtook family welfare and daycare policies from it.⁸

Even though MB government's total government spending and the welfare spending were bigger than during Roh's government and increased steadily during his presidency (see Table A3 in the supplementary material), MGE's budget shrunk from around \$1.19 trillion in 2007 to \$43.85 million in 2008, mainly since daycare policies occupied the lion's share of the budget (see [Figure 1](#)). As predicted by opponents of this transition, these programs lost momentum once transferred to the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The MGE regained its control over some of the family welfare programs and adolescence policies in 2010, changing its name to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. The budget and personnel increased almost twice after the integration (Ministry of Gender Equality 2008).

Park's administration (2013–2016) focused on increasing women's labor participation, especially those experiencing career interruptions for marriage and childbirth. Relatedly, the government implemented policies to improve daycare and childcare services to enable work and family balance and has supported diverse family structures including single parents and multicultural households. Compared to the MB administration, the Park government provided clearer policies for the MGE to implement. Her government also offered more structured annual reports, and the MGE assured quality control over each ministry's gender sensitive budget report (Government of Republic of Korea 2013, 6). The MGE continued to grow in size and scope in Park's administration, with 235 personnel and a \$284.21 million budget. Policy

8. See the 271st, 272nd, and 284th Gender Equality and Family Congressional Committee minutes for detailed discussions.

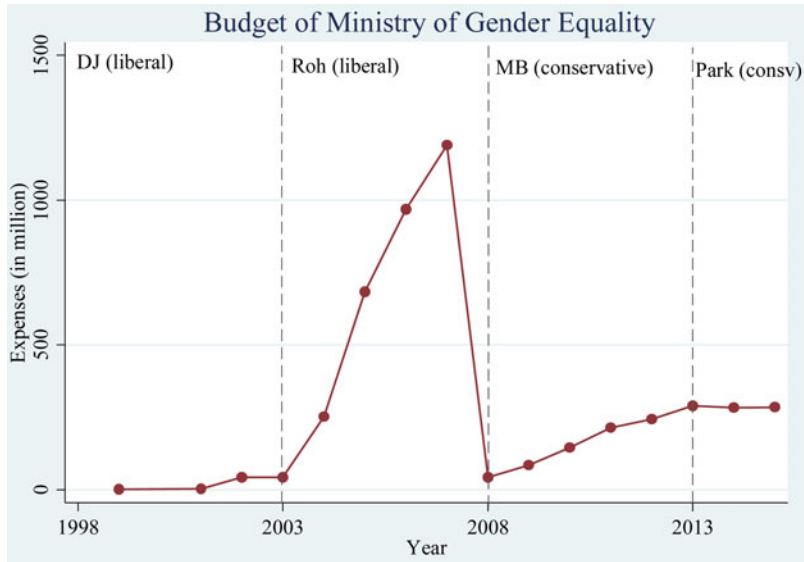


FIGURE 1. Organization and budget of MGE, 1998–2015.

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2015). Expenses in million USD.

silences on abortion remained, suggesting important limitations. Each administration's policy outcomes are summarized in Table 1. Even though each administration adopted and amended policies reflecting changes in society, the framework on women's development has altered little. Provisions for daycare and maternity/childcare leave and measures to improve women's economic, political, and social status and curbing violence against women constitute major policy areas of all four administrations.

DAYCARE PROGRAMS

Before Roh's administration, the government's support for publicly sponsored daycare facilities in workplaces was almost nonexistent: between 1996 and 1999, the YS and DJ governments subsidized the building of only 37 daycare facilities in workplaces (Ministry of Gender Equality 2003b, 91). Roh mandated installing or subsidizing daycare facilities in workplaces with more than 300 women or 500 men and women workers (Ministry of Gender Equality 2005, 10). It spent most of the women development policy budget on daycare facilities and

Table 1. Major Women-related policies, 1998–2016

<i>President</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Major Policy Highlights</i>
DJ	1998–2002	Launched the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2001 Amended laws and customs (e.g., the family law, inheritance rights for women, gender quotas for election) Laid foundation for gender mainstreaming Gave little support for public daycare facilities Extended paid maternity leave from 60 days to 90 days Established gender quotas for public office, business, and public universities
Roh	2003–2007	Increased budget for MGE and women-development fund Started gender sensitive budgeting and gender impact assessment for government's budget Mandated installing daycare facilities in workplaces with > 300 women employees Tripled the share of women in government commissions
MB	2008–2012	Reduced budget for MGE Provided subsidies to families not using public daycare service Institutionalized paid paternity leave Created job referral service for career-interrupted women
Park	2013–2016	Increased public spending on public daycare programs Extended parental leave for men and women Diversified job referral and vocational training programs to support career-interrupted women

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality and Ministry of Gender Equality and Family's annual reports between 2001 and 2013. See the references for the detailed bibliographical information.

maternity leave: 67% in 2005, 66% in 2006, 89% in 2007, and 89% in 2008 (Kim and Song 2008, 1). Roh aimed to publicly finance childcare services and facilities rather than make individual families bear all the responsibilities. However, the share of public/national childcare facilities did not grow much.

Compared to the preceding MB administration, Park's administration almost doubled the spending on the daycare programs and those for children aged three to five (Ministry of Health and Welfare 2016; disaggregated budget spending data on daycare is not available). Park's presidential transitional committee initiated policies to encourage childbirth and women's employment by providing daycare programs and extending parental leave for men and women. Park pledged to continue and expand more publicly and nationally run daycare facilities and monitor the quality of these services (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2013b, 5). She also proposed diverse types of daycare services and extend hours of the service to fulfill the needs of diverse family structures

(Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2013b, 17–27). Compared to 1998, the starting year of DJ presidency, the number of daycare facilities tripled in 2014, but the increase in the share of national/publicly run facilities was slow and the ratio of national or public facilities remained almost the same. The portion of children enrolled in public and national childcare facilities remained around 10% in 2014 (Ministry of Health and Welfare 2016).

In 2009, MB initiated subsidies to parents of children under 24 months, foregoing government-sponsored daycare (Yoon 2014, 100). Families also had to be among the lowest and the second lowest income tiers to be eligible for the subsidies. Park's government expanded the pool of families receiving home daycare subsidies and lowered the criteria. Households with kids under five years old, regardless of family income, were eligible. As of 2014, families with infants under 12 months receive about \$200; 1–2 years, \$150; and 24–84 months, \$100 on a monthly basis (Lee and Lee 2014, 58). During the last year of MB's presidency, 92,818 families benefitted from the program whereas 1,053,071 families did in the first year of Park government (Lee and Lee 2014, 60).

Critics raised concerns that subsidies lowered reliance on daycare services and decreased women's entry into the workforce. Since women's income earned from outside employment relative to daycare costs is so meager, women from low-income families are disproportionately affected, possibly widening disparities between classes (Lee and Lee 2014, 18; Yoon 2014, 104–105). Park also constantly changed daycare subsidies due to budget constraints as well as in response to strong opposition arguing the policy deters stay-at-home mothers from using childcare facilities (Jung 2015). We therefore question whether subsidies promoted gender equality but acknowledge that these policies concern women's interests (see Beckwith 2014).

MATERNITY/PARENTAL LEAVE

The DJ administration created a momentum in family policies. One example is extending paid maternity leave from 60 days to 90 days (Ministry of Gender Equality 2001, 2–8; 2002, 4). President Roh placed supervision of parental and maternity leave under MGE. As seen in Figure 1, the total budget of the ministry increased during this time (Ministry of Gender Equality 2003a, 2), and support for maternity/parental leave and daycare facilities increased dramatically: \$210 million

in 2002, \$312 million in 2003, \$405 million in 2004, \$600 million in 2005, and \$791 million in 2006 (Ministry of Gender Equality 2006, 3).

Laws to expand maternity and paternity leave were adopted in 2008, during the MB administration. The number of men on leave increased by 40 million in 2009. However, the “expanded” paternity leave, which has been in effect since August 2012 for workplaces with more than 300 workers, is only three days (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2016).

During Park’s presidency, the MGE expanded the program by increasing the budget and lowering the eligibility criteria, which increased the size of the pool who were eligible for the benefits. Park’s government proposed to improve parental leave and expand paid paternity leave, as well as to increase the amount of leave payments (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2013a, 12). In 2013, her government expanded the paternity leave so that it applied to smaller workplaces, but benefits still last only three days (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2016).

Park’s administration continued to implement policies helping families to balance work and family life, extensively focusing on addressing women’s career interruption (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2013b, 12). South Korean women’s labor participation rate is lower, and the gender wage gap is significantly higher than the OECD average. As of 2014, 58% of women of working age population in all OECD countries were employed whereas only 55% of South Korean women were (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2016a).⁹ In the same year, women’s median wages for full-time employees was 16% lower than that of men in all OECD countries. In South Korea, the gender pay gap was 36.3% (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2016b). Some comparative studies on OECD countries found that increased workforce participation of women leads to higher birth rates and positively contributes to economic growth (Hyundai Research Institute 2013, 5), which are two primary concerns for the South Korean government.

The effort to integrate women into the workforce had been a focus of the MB government and his government proposed a law promoting career-interrupted women’s labor participation in 2008 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2013a, 12). The government provided job referral services to women, and 289,000 women entered the workforce between

9. Compared to 74% for men in all OECD countries and 76% for South Korean men.

2009 and 2011 (Ministry of Gender Equality 2012, 3). The increase, however, came mainly from 40- and 50-year-old women while their younger counterparts still struggled to work (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2013a, 15). In 2014, about 1.9 million women, or about 20% of all married women aged between 15 and 54, experienced career interruption (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2015). Among those who do not work outside of their household, 32% cited childcare and 43% cited childcare and marriage, respectively, as the main reason for leaving their jobs (Ministry of Employment and Labor 2015).

Park's government expanded the previous government's focus on job referral service and vocational training. MGE and the Ministry of Labor jointly provided programs tailored to the various skills and educational levels, such as career development for the highly educated, providing resources and training to start-ups and providing vocational training for immigrant and physically challenged women (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2013a, 12). The labor participation of women increased steadily from 50% in 2011 and 52% in 2015 (Statistics Bureau 2016a, 28).

INCREASING THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL POSITIONS AND OTHER SECTORS

The DJ administration set a target to increase women's participation in public office and implemented a 20% quota for women professors at four-year national and public universities (then 9% of faculty were female) and women principals in K-12 (Ministry of Gender Equality 2001, 2–8; 2002, 4). The administration sponsored campaigns to raise awareness on gender equality in leadership positions and provided leadership training programs. It also proposed electoral law changes that included a 50% gender quota for PR seats in local elections and expanding quotas for women candidates for SMD seats and enforcement measures for the existing gender quotas (Ministry of Gender Equality 2002, 10). Additionally, the DJ government reviewed laws for potential gender discriminatory effects (Ministry of Gender Equality 2003b, 10–13).

Encouraging and setting quotas for women in underrepresented areas — decision making positions, professorships, scientists, engineers, and managers — continued in the Roh administration. The share of women commission members in governmental organizations almost tripled during

Roh's presidency.¹⁰ In 1998, 1896 women or 12% of governmental commission members were women. In 2007, 7715 women or 33% of the governmental commission members were assumed by women (Statistics Bureau 2016b).

Setbacks, however, occurred during MB's tenure. The share of women commission members slightly decreased. This administration favored a smaller government, so the total number of government commission decreased from 30,134 to 8875 in 2010. The number of women commission members decreased from 8048 to 1983, which accounts for 22% of the total commission members (Statistics Bureau 2016b). Although the share of women commission members is higher than during the DJ presidency, the MB administration no longer prioritized encouraging and setting quotas for women in under-represented areas such as faculty positions at public universities (Ministry of Gender Equality 2003a, 14; Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2013b, 14).

Even though the number and share of women commission members in government increased again during Park's presidency, Park nominated few women to high-profile political posts, contrary to her campaign pledge, drawing heavy criticism from women's organizations (Kim and Kim 2012). Her presidential transition committee included only two women committee members out of 28 total members (18th Presidential Transition Committee 2012). As of March 2016, Park's cabinet (first organized in March 2013) included only 4 women out of 42 ministers.¹¹ These four included three ministers of the MGE and one minister of the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, who left office after only 10 months. As of 2014, only three women deputy minister-level officials were women, out of a total of 55 (5%). Only 3 of 53 high-ranking officials in the presidential office are women (6%) (Democratic Party Women's Committee 2014, 5). The lack of women in high-ranking governmental offices led Korean scholar Yoo-Seok Oh to state that Park's first year was "a woman presidency without women" (Oh 2014, 201). When Park's first cabinet drew criticism that she initially had only two women ministers, her government nominated six women at the vice minister

10. Government commissions include organizations and councils to consult, advise, deliberate, and vote on the matters related to the national or local governments. Based on the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, the South Korean government tracks the number of women holding appointed commission positions (Statistics Bureau 2016b). As of June 2015, 547 committees are organized (Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs 2016).

11. MB had 6 women out of 50 (12%); Roh had 5 women out of 76 (7%), and DJ had 5 out of 103 ministers (5%). All calculations are based on author's analysis of previous ministers on each ministry's website.

level in a couple of weeks (Lee 2013, 70). Park's party commanded a majority in the legislature: Upon Park's election, the majority of legislators were from her own *Saenuri* Party.¹² Therefore, she did not need to nominate cabinet members who are affiliated with other political parties to balance her coalition. The lack of women cabinet members can be attributed to decisions made by President Park rather than external constraints. As such, we argue that Park could have appointed more women, if she so desired.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we asked what substantive difference, if any, Park's presidency offered women compared to previous administrations. While Park owed a great deal of her political success to kinship ties to her father, the late authoritarian President Park Jung-Hee, she seized many opportunities to represent women substantively. While the majority of women-related policies of the Park administration can be traced back to liberal governments, her government expanded their scope. The DJ government laid the foundation for gender and women policies by amending laws and institutions, and Roh's administration continued the legacy and enacted policies to make a tangible difference in women's lives. The market-oriented conservative MB government receded progress on women-related policies, but Park's government reinvigorated them, in spite of sharing the same conservative party affiliation with MB. Spending on women's policy issues has continually increased, and various indices assessing gender equality in Korean society have improved. Increased funding is evident in daycare and maternity/parental leave. All of these developments indicate that Park's government enhanced women's substantive representation in some aspects. President Park, however, nominated few women to high-profile political posts, contrary to her campaign pledge that she would select women to important governmental positions, drawing criticism that she offered "a woman presidency without women" (Oh 2014, 201).

As Park's impeachment is still recent at the timing of this writing, this assessment is preliminary. Future research should address an important question of her impeachment and its impact on the symbolic and

12. Through the 19th legislative election in 2012, 152 out of 300 national legislators are from the *Saenuri* Party, and the main opposition Democratic Party has 127 national legislators (Korean National Election Commission 2016).

substantive representation for women, as well as how the traumatic experience of removing the first high-profile woman leader impacted the prospects of electing other female political leaders in the future. A qualitative examination of the substantive impact of these policies on women's lives should be endeavored in the future in addition to examination of additional quantitative indicators of policy impacts over time. Despite these limitations, this research fills some of the gap of the current literature on the role that women presidents play in establishing policy priorities and women-related policies. It also offers one of the first attempts to examine Park's performance in light of continuity and changes of government policies on women and gender equality in South Korea.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X17000204>

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