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Working for Change: Gender Inequality in the Labor Force in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan

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Working for Change

Gender Inequality in the Labor Force in Japan,
South Korea, and Taiwan

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Presented to the International Studies Program, Trinity College

May 2, 2011

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Abstract

Gender inequality in the labor force is a persistent global problem. Because equality in labor is thought to be key to reversing overall gender inequality, attention to factors affecting the status of women in the labor force (the gender wage gap, female labor force participation, occupational sex segregation, etc.) is crucial to addressing overall gender inequality. Though the effects of labor force inequality are more visible in the culturally similar, highly industrialized, and otherwise highly developed countries of East Asia than in the West, the contrast in the conditions of these indicative factors among Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan may provide important insights into narrowing the gender gap. Significantly, Taiwan, with an economy dominated by small and medium sized enterprises, political gender quotas, and an active women's movement, is found to have relatively more success in eliminating inequality and possesses a more gender equal labor force.

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Abbreviations

DGBAS – Directorate General of Budget and Statistics, Republic of China (Taiwan)

GDI – United Nations Development Program’s Gender Development Index

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GEM - United Nations Development Program’s Gender Empowerment Measure

KMT – Kuomintang (Chinese nationalist party)

LDP – Liberal Democratic Party (Japan)

LE – large private enterprise

OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PPP – purchasing power parity

PRC – People’s Republic of China (mainland China)

ROC – Republic of China (Taiwan)

SME – small or medium sized enterprise

UNHDR – United Nations Human Development Report

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Program

WVS – World Values Survey

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Chapter I

Introduction

When Lee Yuan-chen, a new professor of Chinese literature at Tamkang University in Taipei, Taiwan, married a former classmate in the early 1970s, she thought she was entering a partnership of mutual love and respect; the pair described themselves as a “modern couple.” With the birth of their daughter, however, the family moved in with Lee’s husband’s parents, and she began to experience the pressure of traditional gender roles. She divorced her husband in 1973, and her appeals for custody of their child were denied by the patriarchal judicial system then operating in Taiwan. She left her home the following year to start a new life in America, where she began her struggle for gender equality. She returned to Taiwan, and in 1982 she founded the journal *Awakening*, which became a focal point for the women’s rights movement through the 1990s. Lee’s personal experience of injustice based on gender led her to become an outspoken activist for women’s rights in Taiwan and throughout East Asia (D. Chang 2009).

Lee Yuan-chen’s story demonstrates the difficulties faced by many women in the industrialized nations of East Asia, and is all the more remarkable when considering that working women in Taiwan face less discrimination in the workplace than do their counterparts in Japan and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). Confronted by a traditional culture with limiting expectations, women in industrialized East Asia are often forced to choose between career and family, or are shunted into low-paying jobs with little chance for promotion. Recent reforms

have eased the burden somewhat in Japan and South Korea, but it is in Taiwan that the most progress toward gender equality has been made. Despite the cultural similarities between the three nations, Taiwan possesses several unique features that have fostered equality to a much greater extent: an economy dominated by smaller businesses, a well-established gender quota in its national assemblies, and a flourishing women's activist movement. This paper will examine the current differences in gender equality in the labor forces of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan and explain the causes of the disparities – in particular, Taiwan's relative success in achieving gender equality.

Women are a vital part of the global economy, but their labor is often ignored, overlooked, or undervalued. In almost every country in the world, women earn less than men for doing similar work. They are often marginalized into lower-paying, less prestigious jobs, passed over for promotions, and in many cases sexually harassed by coworkers or supervisors. Women's entry into the public sphere of paid employment has been increasing over the last few decades, but in most societies gender equality has been slower to arrive.

The industrialized nations of East Asia provide an illuminating case study of the forces behind gender inequality in developed nations. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan each underwent a period of rapid economic growth and internal development, and are now categorized as highly developed nations by the United Nations Development Program. Japan and South Korea are ranked extremely high on measures of human development, and their national wealth is distributed relatively equitably. But on measures of gender empowerment, their scores are abysmal. Table 1 shows the rankings for selected countries, including Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, on the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index (HDI) (which measures quality of life without taking gender differences into account) and Gender

Empowerment Measure (GEM) (which accounts for the percentage of women in positions of political and economic power, as well as differences in income between women and men) for 2009.

Table 1. Comparison of HDI and GEM rankings of selected countries, 2009

Country	2009 GEM Rank	2009 HDI Rank		Country	2009 GEM Rank	2009 HDI Rank
Sweden	1	7		Portugal	19	34
Norway	2	1		Austria	20	14
Finland	3	12		Taiwan	22	25
Denmark	4	16		Kyrgyzstan	56	120
Netherlands	5	6		Japan	57	10
United Kingdom	15	21		Suriname	58	97
Singapore	16	23		Philippines	59	105
France	17	8		Russian Federation	60	71
United States	18	13		South Korea	61	26

Sources: UNDP 2009; DBGAS 2010 (data for Taiwan)

Comparing the HDI and GEM rankings of both Japan and South Korea reveals a disturbing gap between these countries' developmental achievements and their efforts toward true gender equality. Despite their wealth and health, women in Japan and South Korea are not empowered.

Taiwan's figures¹ tell a different story. Its HDI and GEM rankings are comparable, and Taiwan's labor force is more gender equal than that of Japan or South Korea in almost every respect. The reasons for this difference between countries that are in other respects so similar will be illuminated through an analysis of each country's historical development, economic structure, measures of workforce gender inequality, and prevailing attitudes about gender.

Chapter II provides a summary of the existing literature on economic gender inequality and

¹Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations and is therefore not included in Human Development Index and other rankings; however, the Taiwanese government annually calculates its score on each of the UN's development indices and ranks itself based on the appropriate criteria; it publishes these results in government reports. For 2009, it reported that Taiwan ranked 25th on the HDI and 22nd on the GEM (DGBAS, *Women and Men in R.O.C. (Taiwan): Facts and Figures*, 2010).

previous studies on gender disparities in the economies of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Chapter III begins with a historical overview of the economic development of each country, followed by an analysis of their current economic conditions with regard to gender equality, specifically the gender wage gap and female labor force participation rate. Chapter IV deals with cultural norms and beliefs about gender currently prevalent in the three countries. Chapter V discusses the three reasons Taiwan exhibits more gender equality than its neighbors, and Chapter VI concludes the discussion with a summary of the findings and their implications for working towards change in labor force gender inequality.

Chapter II

Background

Past research on gender inequality in the labor forces of the industrialized countries of East Asia has focused on the unique labor institutions in place in these countries that work to disadvantage female employees; for example, the tax system in Japan that subsidizes housewives and disadvantages working married women (Kitamura 2008) and the long working hours required of full-time employees at many companies in both Japan and South Korea (Chang and England 2011). Studies focusing on such economic inequalities as the gender wage gap in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have suggested a number of underlying causes, including different education levels for men and women, the prevalence of women in part-time employment, sex-differentiated occupational choices, and sex discrimination (Chang and England 2011; Berik 2009). Others have identified culture as a primary cause of both unequal gender attitudes and the economic institutions that perpetuate them (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Iversen and Rosenbluth 2010; Yu 2009). Previous studies comparing the industrialized countries of Western Europe to those of East Asia have focused on the greater prevalence of patriarchal gender roles and attitudes toward women in the latter (Cho 2007; Kumlin 2007; Parboteeah, Hoegl, & Cullen 2008), in addition to differences in economic structures and policies, as major factors determining gender inequality in the workforce. This study will compare both the economic and political institutions and the cultural attitudes of the three countries; despite the cultural similarities between them, significant

differences in economic gender inequality persist, suggesting that the causes are largely institutional.

In their seminal work on the links between modernization and gender equality, Inglehart and Norris (2003) present the theory that “human development brings changed cultural attitudes toward gender equality in virtually any society that experiences the various forms of modernization linked with economic development” (10). The cultural background of a society influences both its economic development and its gender values, which are inextricably linked. The authors find that there is a broad trend worldwide toward greater gender equality; however, “culture” – defined as “the social norms, beliefs, and values existing in any society, which in turn rest on levels of societal modernization and religious traditions” – has a profound effect on the speed with which such change can occur (8). Inglehart and Norris further emphasize that the interaction between institutions and values shapes the degree of gender equality of a society:

[...] culture matters: where there are more egalitarian attitudes, these are systematically related to the actual conditions of women’s and men’s lives. We acknowledge that this is not a simple one-way direction of causality; rather, it is an interactive process, because changes in our lives affect our underlying attitudes and values. (10)

Building on the work of Inglehart and Norris, Iversen and Rosenbluth (2010) offer a comprehensive examination of the major factors contributing to women’s political and economic inequality. They find that women’s historic subordination has economic roots: in agrarian societies, men have a comparative advantage in field labor, and women in child-rearing, so that a gendered division of labor became increasingly advantageous. These norms became codified in morals and religion, and have persisted even in industrial and service economies. As women have entered the labor force in industrial, and especially service economies where male brawn is not a competitive advantage, their bargaining power in the household has increased because of expanded outside options. As female labor force participation increases, divorce rates rise, and

the household division of labor becomes more gender equal, which in turn leads to female children “being taught independence over subservience” (164). However, in economies that value long-term labor contracts and invest heavily in human capital, women are disadvantaged because of the perception that they are more likely than men to take time off for child-bearing and rearing. In contrast, economies with high employee turnover rates allow for more equal treatment of women because companies invest less in human capital. Iversen and Rosenbluth conclude that “there are in fact multiple gender equilibria corresponding to distinct varieties of capitalism” (164), a factor which is vital to an analysis of the differences in labor force inequality in the industrialized East Asian countries: the structure of the economy produces a distinct effect on the gendered division of labor.

Other scholars have focused on the complex interactions of institutions and attitudes in explaining economic gender inequality. In their volume on institutions and gender empowerment, Roy, Blomqvist and Clark (2008) focus on institutions - social, political, and economic - as the driving force behind gender equality. They argue that the institutions created in a country as it develops, whether legislated from within or imposed from without, play a vital role in determining the empowerment of the people, particularly women. Discrimination against women, which the authors term “cultural poverty,” is “created by social institutions such as social customs, taboos, [and] rules of ‘patriarchy’” (Roy et al. 2008, 19). They assert that women’s empowerment is intrinsically linked to the reduction of poverty:

The alleviation of economic poverty provides women with some economic independence which is crucial for their fight against unfreedom, including deprivation, voicelessness, and helplessness. What is needed first is making women economically independent. (19)

In a later section of the same work, Clark and Clark (2008) discuss the effects of industrialization and democratization on gender equality. During the early years of development in emerging economies, these two processes were widely expected to bring about greater social,

political, and economic equality for women. Industrialization was assumed to bring greater affluence, education, and changes in economic structures that would lead to cultural changes favoring women's empowerment. Democratization, too, was expected to open doors for women by allowing them to express their will through voting and running for office, leading to women-friendly reforms. Of course, the actual processes of industrialization and democratization in many developing countries did not proceed as expected, in many cases resulting in the further marginalization of women. Clark and Clark make the claim that it is the institutional context of development which determines the level of women's empowerment in a given country (and that Taiwan provides an example of a country in which institutions had a favorable effect on gender equality) (Clark and Clark 2008). Acknowledging that many factors affect the creation of institutions, Roy et al. and Clark and Clark both focus on the power of institutions in determining gender inequality.

Similarly, Yu (2009) finds that economic factors, social processes, and political institutions interact to affect the gender attitudes that influence women's relative status in a society. She sees economic change as a social process that depends in large part on societal norms and values. According to Yu, "gender inequality in the labor market is a result of a long-term social process that involves both market forces and institutional responses to the market" (Yu 2009, 13). Social values and institutions change over time, reacting to one another and to market forces, leading to societal transformations that either "accelerate or hamper further transformations of women's labor market opportunities" (13). Thus, in her comparison of gender inequality in the labor markets of Japan and Taiwan, she focuses on social change over time as a primary explanation.

Many researchers have focused on the effect of norms and attitudes on gender inequality. In their study of sex stereotyping and sex discrimination in the American workplace, York et al. (2008) note the importance of beliefs about gender roles in discrimination. The authors find that stereotypes negatively impact women's careers in a variety of subtle ways: women are more likely to receive negative performance evaluations, are less likely to be promoted, are seen as aggressive when they attempt to assert themselves, are placed in positions of less responsibility, and their contributions are devalued. Managers' and coworkers' gender stereotypes influence their perception of women employees in ways that have a significant impact on women's working life:

Sex stereotypes contain gender status beliefs that create a network of constraining expectations and interpersonal reactions, and these beliefs shape the attention and evaluation of employees' job performance, the ability attributed to employees on the basis of their performance, the influence that they achieve, and the likelihood that they will emerge as leaders. (York et al. 2008, 127)

Although this study focuses on gender discrimination in the American labor market, its findings are relevant to studies of gender inequality in other post-industrial economies as well. The beliefs about gender held by managers and employers are a major factor in women's labor force participation in all service economies; women's career advancement is largely dependent on how they are perceived by (mostly male) managers. This is perhaps particularly true in East Asia, where traditional gender roles tend to predominate despite high levels of industrialization (Parboteeah, Hoegl and Cullen 2008).

In an age-cohort study of gender beliefs in Japan, Ui and Matsui (2008) focus on the importance of experience in the determination of sex role attitudes. They determine that women are more likely than men to have egalitarian attitudes toward gender, and that people in their thirties and forties are more likely to have egalitarian attitudes than those in their fifties and sixties. Surprisingly, however, they also find that men in their fifties are more likely than women

in their fifties to put more consideration on individual traits than gender traits when looking at equality. They attribute the results of their study to the different experiences of age cohorts in their youth: “The findings on age group differences are consistent with other cohort studies [...] and imply that social events experienced before early adulthood affect an individual’s perspectives on gender equality” (Ui and Matsui 2008, 420). Thus, the social atmosphere of an individual’s youth determines their beliefs about gender.

In a similar age-cohort study, Lee, Tufiş, and Alwin (2010) find that social trends explain age-cohort differences in sex role attitudes in Japan, as well as differences in attitudes about gender between Japan and other industrialized countries. Noting Japan’s anomalous position among postindustrial countries,²the authors posit that social-institutional factors such as the “symbolic value” of the housewife role and “social and institutional constraints on married women’s employment” may account for Japan’s relatively low levels of gender-equal attitudes (Lee et al. 2010).

Broadly, previous research shows that political and economic institutions influence gender values and vice versa; as women enter the work force, social acceptance of women working increases, and more women are thus able to enter the workforce. In this way, economic development and increasing gender equality are fundamentally intertwined. However, entrenched cultural attitudes can hinder the progress of gender equality even in societies with high levels of economic development. Such attitudes may account in part for the relatively high levels of gender inequality in the labor forces of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, but they cannot be the only explanation. Comparative studies within East Asia (e.g. Yu 2008; Berik 2009; Cong 2008; Lin and Lee 2010) have generally found negligible differences in gender role

²“Japan is the only postindustrial country that did not display high levels of gender equality in Inglehart and Norris’ (2003) analysis, and Japan is the only exception to Inglehart et al.’s (2002) finding that in stable democracies, the majority of the public rejects the belief that men make better political leaders” (Lee et al. 2010, 187).

attitudes between East Asian societies, while economic, political, and social differences in institutions play a greater explanatory role. In particular, these institutional factors can account for much of the difference between the relatively high levels of economic gender equality in Taiwan as compared to its East Asian neighbors. Following on these studies, I will examine development, economic structure, the gender wage gap, and female labor force participation, as well as gender norms and values, in analyzing the differences in gender equality among Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Chapter III

Gender and the Economy

Historically, the gendered division of labor formed the basis of economic activity. Men and women specialized in different spheres of production to provide maximum advantage to the household. This led to the traditional role of woman as homemaker that is prevalent in most societies (Iversen and Rosenbluth 2010). As the global economy outgrew its agrarian roots, gender norms began to shift, and are slowly changing to reflect the new economic reality (Inglehart and Norris 2003). International laws and treaties on the rights of women, like the 1985 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (which was signed and ratified by both Japan and South Korea), demonstrate the widespread global support for women's equality that characterizes the postmodern era (UNDP 2009). But the transition toward equality has been slower for some. Women in Western European, and particularly Scandinavian, nations enjoy high levels of freedom and equality, while women in equally developed East Asian countries face significant barriers to economic and political advancement (Inglehart et al. 2002). This section will outline the historic and current conditions of women in the labor markets of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan in order to identify the causes of gender inequality.

Economic Development in the Post-War Era

Imperial Japan colonized Taiwan in 1895 and Korea in 1910. Although the colonial regime in both territories was brutal and the atrocities it committed horrific, it is undeniable that the industrial modernization imposed on Korea and Taiwan during the colonization period was instrumental in their rapid postwar economic development (Grabowski, Self and Shields 2007). In Korea, Japan built railroads, factories, roads and schools, and mandated the use of modern agricultural techniques and equipment. The real GDP of the Korean peninsula approximately tripled during the 40-year period of colonial rule (Chung 2007). The textile factories built in South Korea formed the basis of its export-led economy after the Korean War (Cumings 1997). Furthermore, the establishment of “state bank and corporate, or *zaibatsu* [Korean *chaebol*], financing at preferential rates, as a means to shape industrial development and take advantage of product-cycle advantages in the world market” in Japanese-ruled Korea in the 1930s created a lasting financial infrastructure. This pattern of financing, which has been described as “a peculiar quality of Japanese and South Korean development,” was utilized by an independent South Korea in the 1960s to hasten economic development (Cumings 1997).

In colonial Taiwan, light industry and agriculture were developed to create goods for export, mainly to Japan. Taiwanese sugar and rice farms were of particular value for fueling the imperial army’s exploits in mainland Asia (Muraoka 2002). Taiwan maintained a successful export-driven development strategy in the postwar period. Its new rulers, the remnants of the Kuomintang (KMT) nationalists who lost the Chinese civil war, also appropriated the Japanese imperialist style of governance for their system of repressive one-party rule. Unlike in Japan and South Korea, state control over the economy in Taiwan was maintained through direct ownership

of firms in key industries and restrictions on the scale of private corporations, rather than state cooperation with private business conglomerates (Wu 2005).

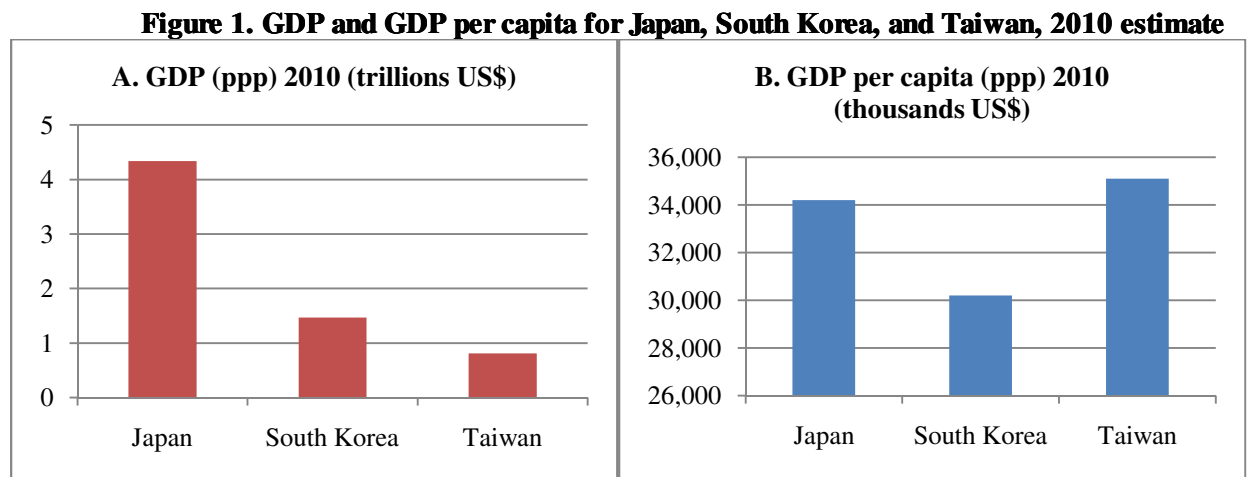
Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan pursued generally similar strategies of economic development after the Second World War. Japan had begun directed industrialization during the Meiji era (1868-1912); despite the destruction of most industrial urban areas during the war, by 1945 its economic infrastructure far surpassed those of its Asian neighbors. This industrial head start, combined with significant economic assistance from the United States and the boost to its industry prompted by the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, allowed Japan to outpace not only its nearest competitors, but also most Western powers, in real GDP growth and economic output through the next four decades (Chung 2007).

South Korea and Taiwan, also financial beneficiaries of the American campaign to halt the spread of communism in East Asia, began industrialization on a large scale in the 1960s. All three nations invested heavily in export-oriented manufacturing, and their governments took a hand in directing economic development by providing support to key industries – the so-called “developmental state”(Berik 2009). Japan quickly moved from an industrial to a service economy, while South Korea and Taiwan (two of the four “Asian Tigers”) managed to develop from agrarian to industrial to service economies in a matter of decades. In all three societies, gender discrimination in employment was not prohibited, and in many cases was standard practice, until the 1990s (Yu 2009).

Despite the three nations’ similarities in development, some key differences have emerged. Taiwan, unlike most developing nations, managed to achieve high economic growth without much income disparity – including gender inequality in earnings (Clark and Clark 2008). South Korea’s gender wage gap, although declining, has been relatively high throughout its

development (Turner and Monk-Turner 2006). Much of Japan’s success in its peak years of economic growth was built on the segregation of male and female labor, with the majority of Japanese women serving as housewives while their husbands worked full-time (Yu 2009).

Currently, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are all ranked in the category of “very high human development,” according to the UNHDR’s Human Development Index; they are also extremely well-developed economically (UNDP 2009). Japan and South Korea are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the political status of Taiwan prevents its membership despite its high development (Taiwan’s indeterminate status also excludes it from many international economic measurements and rankings, making data comparisons between the three somewhat problematic). Figure 1 shows the estimated gross domestic product (GDP) at purchasing power parity (PPP) (A) and the GDP per capita at PPP (B) for the three countries in 2010. Japan far outweighs both South Korea and Taiwan, and is currently ranked fourth in the world, in terms of absolute GDP. However, in terms of GDP per capita, arguably a more accurate measure of a country’s wealth, Taiwan surpassed Japan for the first time in 2010 (CIA World Factbook 2010).



Source: CIA World Factbook 2010

Current Economic Structure and Women's Employment

Japan

During Japan's peak growth years, its industrial relations were based on three "pillars:" lifetime employment, seniority-plus-merit pay, and enterprise unionism (Sako 1997). The first of these pillars proved particularly harmful for women's economic participation. Men, not women, were hired for life, as women were expected to stay home and raise children; in fact, women who were hired as temporary or part-time employees often served as a buffer to protect full-time male workers when layoffs were necessary during economic downturns (Boling 2007). Women in Japan, as in many other economies, have thus been disproportionately affected by changes in the international economic environment (Seguino and Grown 2006). Although these employment policies are now changing, lifetime employment in a major company remains the ideal for most male workers.

Japan's current labor force is characterized by high rates of full-time male employment and part-time female employment – in 2009, 70% of part-time workers were women (United Nations Statistics Division 2010). Japan's male breadwinner model of employment values men's full-time labor as the primary income in a household, with women's income seen as supplementary (Boling 2007). Women are generally expected to stay home and raise the children, a norm enforced by the competitive education system (Hirao 2007). These social norms were likely initially shaped by cultural values, but they have become codified through the institutions of the labor market in Japan (Kitamura 2008).

Japan has a unique family tax policy in place: if one spouse earns less than 1,030,000 yen (about \$12,500, much lower than a living wage) per year, the family receives a significant tax deduction, and the dependent spouse (almost always the wife) is entitled to pension and

medical insurance (Kitamura 2008). This system provides a major financial incentive for married women to either stay at home or engage in low-paying part-time work, rather than take a full-time job that might deprive her family of tax benefits.

Japan also has a well-documented workplace culture of devotion to the company. Full-time employees are often expected to work late hours with no pay, a practice known as “service overtime” (Kawanishi 2008). Furthermore, workers in many companies are also expected to go out drinking and to karaoke late at night with their co-workers and managers, further reducing the amount of time they can spend at home: a 1999 Japanese government survey found that fathers on average spent only 17 minutes a day with their children (Kitamura 2008). This results in a highly gender-segregated workforce, because women who want to have careers simply don’t have time to raise a family. Thus, most working women, whether by choice or necessity, take on part-time, temporary, or clerical jobs, exempting them from long hours and mandatory displays of “company loyalty” (Boling 2007).

Although Japan has enacted laws for maternity, parental, and childcare leaves, they are only sometimes taken by women, and almost never by men – in 1999, the uptake rate for the year-long protected parental leave at 40% pay for parents of infants was 56.4% for eligible female employees, and in 2002 it was 0.33% for eligible males (Boling 2007; Kitamura 2008). The work culture of company loyalty discourages both women and men from placing such a burden on their employers and coworkers, and despite laws prohibiting the practice, some men who take parental leave are discriminated against or harassed. In one well-publicized case, a man who took leave was transferred to China immediately upon his return to work (Kitamura 2008).

The Japanese government has adopted a variety of measures to increase gender equality. These include the 1985 Equal Employment Opportunity Law, revised in 1997 and 2007; the

Childcare Leave Law in 1992; the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society in 1999; and the creation of a new government post, the Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs, in 2005 (Kitamura 2008). But despite prolific equality legislation, the level of gender equality in Japan remains extremely low for a developed country. This results in part from weak government enforcement of these laws, a problem which also plagues South Korea and Taiwan (Berik 2009). Japan's bureaucratic enforcement mechanism is based on the principle of "administrative guidance," in which government agencies issue recommendations and guidelines to corporations to bring them in line with government policy on an issue; in the case of gender equality in employment, recommendations are generally not followed in the absence of substantial punishment (Kobayashi 2004).

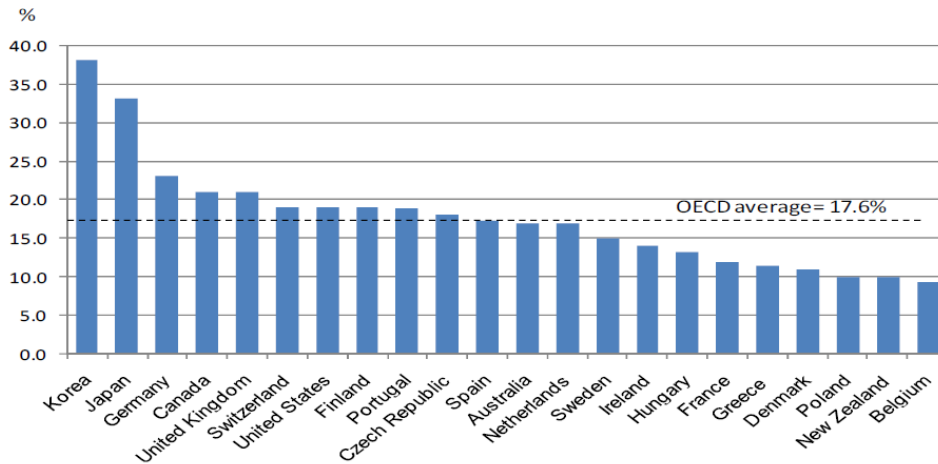
Women's status in the labor force in Japan remains low despite various laws and initiatives. Its gender wage gap is one of the highest among OECD countries (in 2006, it was topped only by South Korea; see Figure 2), and gender differences in occupational status disadvantage the women who do participate in the work force. Women are denied equal opportunities, and men are often overburdened with the stress of being the sole provider and working excessive hours.

South Korea

Beginning in the 1980s, South Korea shifted from an export-oriented manufacturing-based to a high-tech and service-based economy; in 2004 services generated 56.4% of South Korea's GDP. The switch has largely benefited women, who entered the service sector in large numbers, decreasing the gender wage gap in South Korea during the 1980s and 1990s (Berik 2009). Like Japan, South Korea has enacted a number of laws and policies over the past two decades designed to help women in the work force: the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1987, revised in 1989 and 2001; the establishment of a "quota system for employing women and

a pooling system of preferential hiring for qualified women in government positions” in 1997; the Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Law in 1996; the Framework Law on Women's Development in 1999; the creation of the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2000; and the abolition of the patriarchal “family-head” system in 2005 (Tuten and August 2004; Kim and Kim 2010). Again, as in Japan, enforcement has been weak and sporadic: “In Korea a similar reluctance on the part of the state to enforce its own laws is suggested by the very low female share of employment in the higher-paying public enterprises and government offices” (Berik 2009).

Figure 2. Gender gap in median earnings of full-time employees, 2006 or latest year available



Source: OECD Social Policy Division, © OECD 2010

South Korea has one of the most highly educated workforces in the world: 42% of Korean men and 37% of Korean women have completed a college education (Chang and England 2011). Indeed, the country is consistently ranked one of the top 10 nations in higher education by the World Economic Forum (Chung 2007). Unsurprisingly, in their wage gap decomposition Chang and England find that 14-18% of South Korea’s gender wage gap is attributable to educational differences between men and women. Higher education leads to better-paying jobs, particularly for women, but in line with the human capital explanation of

gender differences in employment, women in Korea as elsewhere are less likely to invest in education and the accumulation of specific skills because of their home responsibilities (Berik 2009; Chang and England 2011; Estevez-Abe 2007; Iversen and Rosenbluth 2010).

Like Japan, work culture in Korea is characterized by long working hours. In 2008, South Korea ranked first out of all OECD member states in its annual list of longest working hours, with an average of 2,256 hours per year (43.4 hours per week, not including holidays) (Rampell 2010). For the same reasons that apply in Japan's case – namely, women's inability to balance the extreme time commitments of a full-time career with raising a family – Korean women are severely disadvantaged in the labor market.

Overall, the problems faced by women workers in South Korea are very similar to those faced by women in Japan. A cultural emphasis on men as breadwinners and women as homemakers, weak enforcement of equal employment laws, exhaustive work hours, and limited social services for childcare combine to form a labor environment that is distinctly unfriendly to women.

Taiwan

Taiwan's economic development was similar to South Korea's in that it moved from export-based manufacturing to services after a period of phenomenal growth. Increasing education for women allowed them more access to manufacturing jobs – one major difference between South Korea and Taiwan is that the gender wage gap in manufacturing has been consistently lower in Taiwan throughout its economic development (Berik 2009). The expansion of the service sector afforded women even greater employment options, further reducing the gender wage gap in Taiwan.

Like Japan and South Korea, Taiwan has recently passed a number of measures regarding gender equality. The 1985 Employment Promotion Measures Law was the first to promote gender equality in the workforce, by funding vocational training for women and providing daytime childcare services. The 1992 Employment Services Act also attempted to ensure equal employment opportunities for all. By far the most important gender-related legislation in Taiwan is the 2001 Gender Equality in Employment Act, which mandates maternity and paternity leave as well as employer-provided child care in large firms, and prohibits sexual harassment and discrimination based on marriage or pregnancy (D. Chang 2009; USAID 2009).

Currently, Taiwan has achieved far more equality in terms of gender integration of occupations and industries than either Japan or South Korea (Berik 2009); Chang and England (2011) find that none of the gender wage gap in Taiwan is explained by occupational differences. Similarly, women's educational achievement in Taiwan is actually higher than men's – 27% of women and 24% of men have completed a college education (Chang and England 2011). The KMT government mandated universal (and free) primary education for all children in the 1950s, and expanded compulsory education through junior high in 1968 (Clark and Clark 2008). Clark and Clark (2008) note the importance of education in women's advancement in Taiwan: “the tremendous expansion of educational opportunities for women during the postwar era is widely seen as making a major contribution to women's empowerment in Taiwan” (141-142).

In contrast to Japan and South Korea, Taiwan's employment environment is dominated by smaller firms – small and medium enterprises (SMEs) employ about 77% of all workers in Taiwan, whereas employment in Japan and South Korea is dominated by large corporations (Berik 2009). Chang and England posit that Taiwan's situation has a positive effect on gender equality: “As the majority of Taiwanese workers find employment in small-and-medium

enterprises (SME), the pressure on women to quit might be lighter than in Japan” (Chang and England 2011, 2).

Taiwanese women are more likely than their Japanese and South Korean counterparts to continue working after childbirth:

Given that the vast majority of women experience childbearing from their late twenties to early thirties in Japan and Taiwan, it is reasonable to argue that the difference in the employment rates among women in their thirties between these countries reflects women’s different tendencies to remain in their jobs upon marriage and childbirth. That is to say, Taiwanese women seem more likely to continue their employment careers than Japanese women during their childbearing and early child-rearing years. (Yu 2009, 6)

This finding implies that Taiwan’s labor market is much more women- and family-friendly than Japan’s; considering the predominance of SMEs in the Taiwanese market, this is perhaps unsurprising.

Although the gender wage gap is lower in Taiwan than in Japan and South Korea, and has been declining in recent years, its continued presence marks the ubiquity of gender discrimination in Taiwan. Berik (2009) notes that unexplained differences in the gender wage gap – most likely caused by discrimination – actually increased during the rise in women’s wages due to expanded service sector entry:

However, during this period [1980-1999] the gender earnings differential that could not be explained by women’s education or work-experience-related qualifications also increased. In other words, part of this wage gain was eroded by what is presumed to be discrimination against women. As a result, the earnings ratio rose more slowly than would have been the case had there been no increase in discrimination. (Berik 2009, 22)

Similarly, Chang and England find that comparatively little of Taiwan’s gender wage gap is explained by the economic factors they employed, and suggest discrimination as a possible explanation for “a higher portion of the smaller gap” (Chang and England 2011, 10).

Nonetheless, the overall status of women in Taiwan’s labor market is higher than in Japan or South Korea. The gender wage gap is smaller, there is less occupational segregation, women have more education, and career-child balance is less of an issue. Although

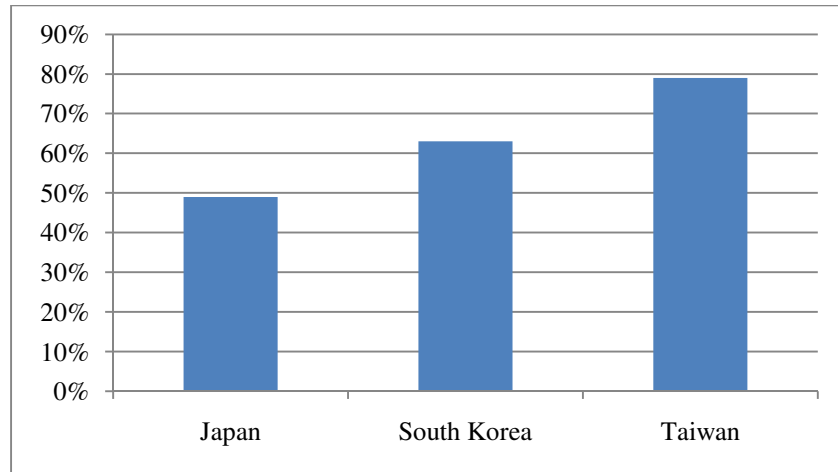
discrimination remains a problem, it is hardly more prevalent in Taiwan than Japan or South Korea.

The Gender Wage Gap

In almost every nation on earth, women as a group earn less money than men. A number of factors account for the gender wage gap: occupational and vertical sex segregation, educational differences, differences in potential experience, employment status, discrimination, and others. The difference in mean wages among women and men in a society is often used as an important measure of gender inequality. It is an indicator in most measures of gender parity, including the UN's Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Rankings (UNDP 2009). Examining the composition of the gender wage gap can illuminate the causes behind gender inequality more generally (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi 2005).

In a study of the gender wage gaps of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, Chang and England (2011) decompose the gaps of each country and provide explanations of each factor. Figure 3 shows the gender wage gap for all three countries. Chang and England, using data from the 2006 East Asian Social Survey, which was administered similarly in all three countries, determine the percentage of the gender gap that is accounted for by education, employment status, potential work experience, and occupation in each country. In Japan, much of the gap (between 18% and 28%) is explained by differences in occupational status: many more women than men are employed as part-time workers with lower wages and less benefits.

Figure 3. Ratio of women's to men's average hourly wage

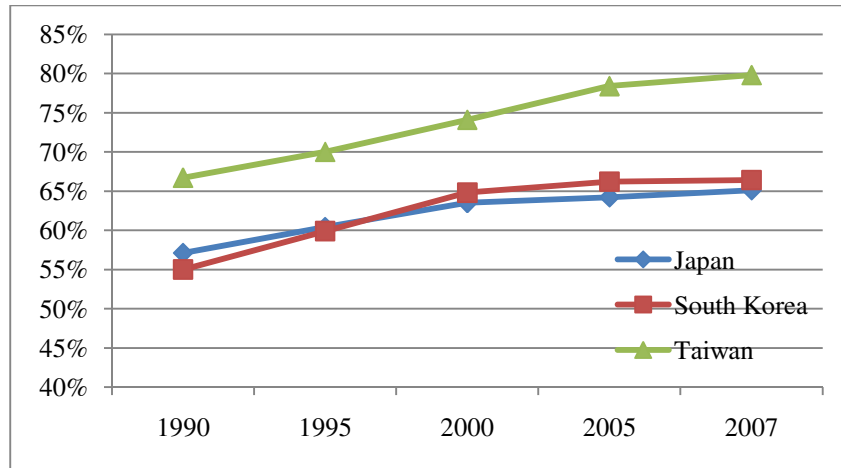


Source: Chang and England 2011

In Korea, educational differences are paramount: more men than women have completed a university degree or higher, affording them access to higher-paying and more prestigious jobs; 14-18% of Korea's wage gap is explained by educational differences. In Taiwan, which has the lowest wage gap of the three, none of the explanatory factors seems to account for a large portion of the wage gap; these supply-side factors account for only between 8% and -10% of the wage gap, leaving room for speculation that as-yet unobserved factors – almost certainly discrimination – may play a large role in the gender wage gap in Taiwan (Chang and England 2011). Another decomposition study of Taiwan's wage gap supports the notion that discrimination plays a relatively large part in Taiwan's smaller wage gap:

Additional evidence for the prevalence of discrimination in Taiwan during the 1978–2000 period is provided by Zveglic and Rodgers (2004), who show that most of the overall wage discrepancy between men and women was due to pay differentials within similar occupations, rather than gender wage differences across occupations. (Berik 2009, 22)

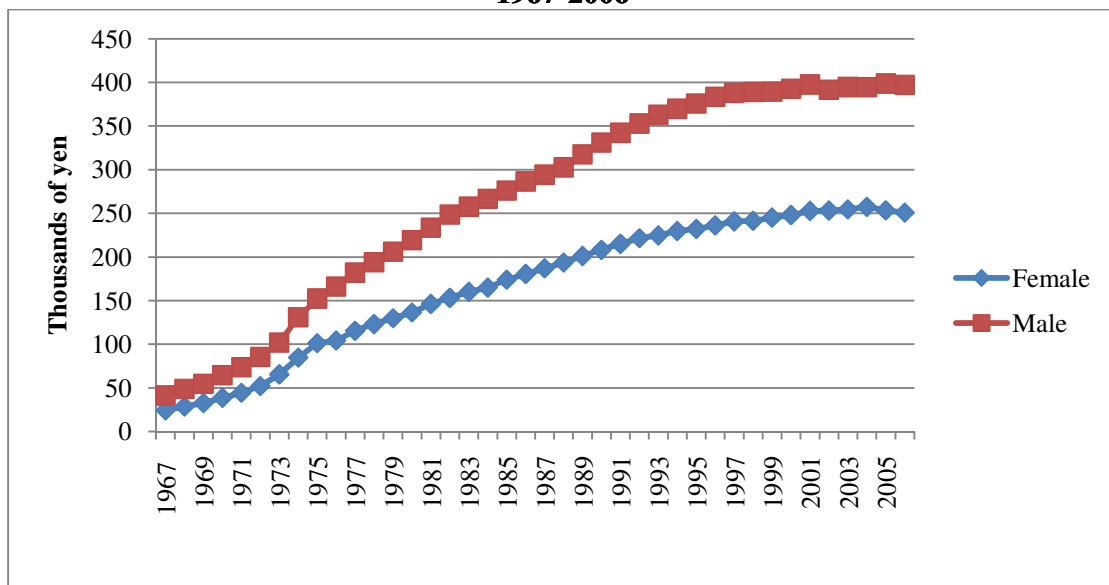
Figure 4. Ratio of women's to men's monthly wage, 1990-2007



Source: DGBAS National Statistics 2010

Figure 4 shows the average monthly wages of female employees as a percentage of male wages in the three countries from 1990 to 2007. It is evident that the wage gap is decreasing in all three, and that Taiwan has the smallest gap; these recent figures from Taiwan’s national statistics bureau are consistent with Chang and England’s findings based on 2006 survey data.

Figure 5. Average regular monthly earnings of general employees in large firms in Japan, 1967-2006



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (Japan) Statistics Bureau 2008

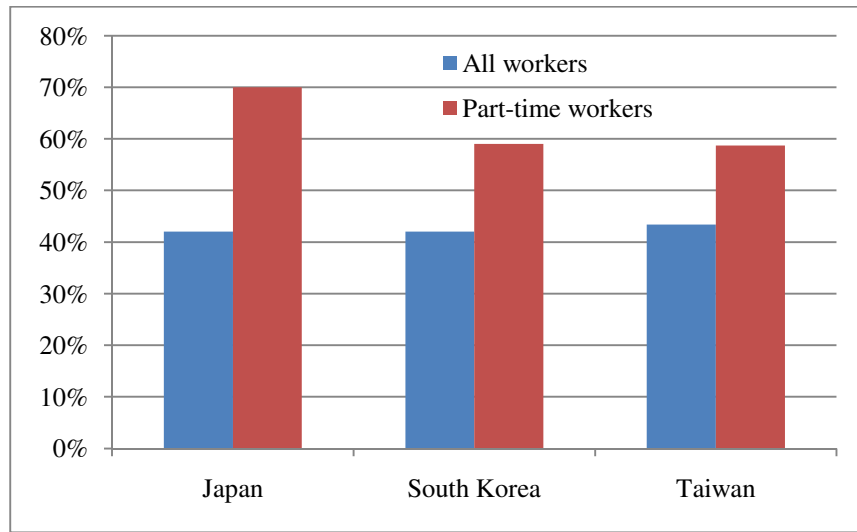
Figure 5 shows the average monthly earnings for men and women employees of large firms (1000 or more employees) in Japan from 1967 to 2006, using data from the Japanese

government statistics bureau. These figures are averages and are not adjusted for differences in age, tenure, or position among employees. Most striking is the increase in the difference in earnings of men and women over time; in 1967, women seem to have earned only slightly less than men in large firms on average, but by 2006, men earned 146.3 thousand more yen per month than women. Thus, despite the increasing importance of services in the Japanese economy, women's wages did not become closer to men's, as might be expected.

Female Labor Force Participation

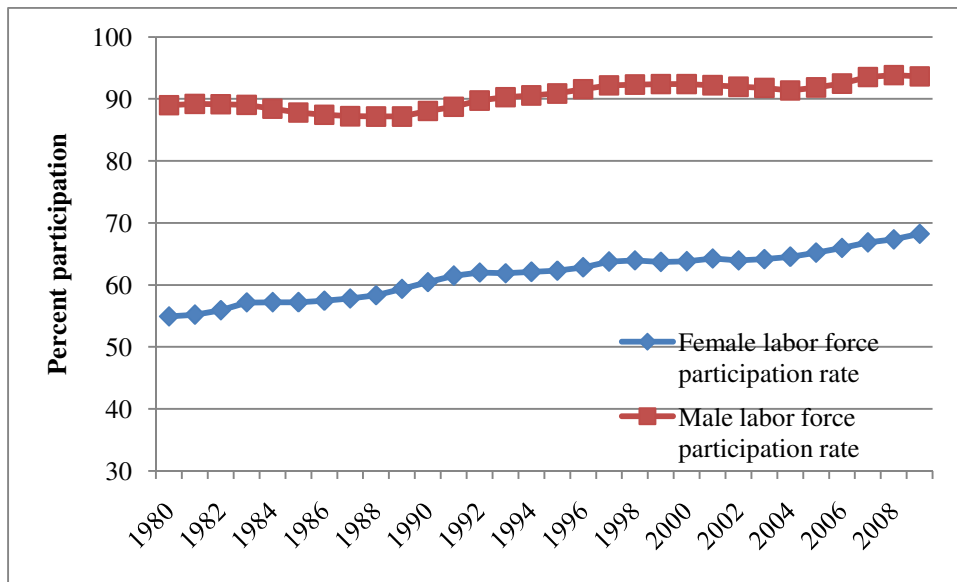
The participation of women in the paid work force is a necessary but not sufficient factor in achieving gender equality in a society (Iversen and Rosenbluth 2010). The female share of the workforce in all three countries increased over the course of their development, but levels of gender equality differ. As shown above, Taiwan has a smaller wage gap and more occupational integration, while Japan and South Korea have higher gaps and higher levels of occupational segregation and employment status differences. Figure 6 shows the percentage of the total work force that are women, as well as the percentage of the part-time labor force that are women, for each country in 2009. All three countries have a similar gender breakdown in their overall labor force, although Taiwan's female percentage is slightly higher at 43%. Japan's heavily female-dominated part-time labor is evident. It is interesting to note that women make up less than half of the total labor force and much more than half of the part-time labor force in each country.

Figure 6. Women's Share of the Total Labor Force and Part Time Labor Force, 2009



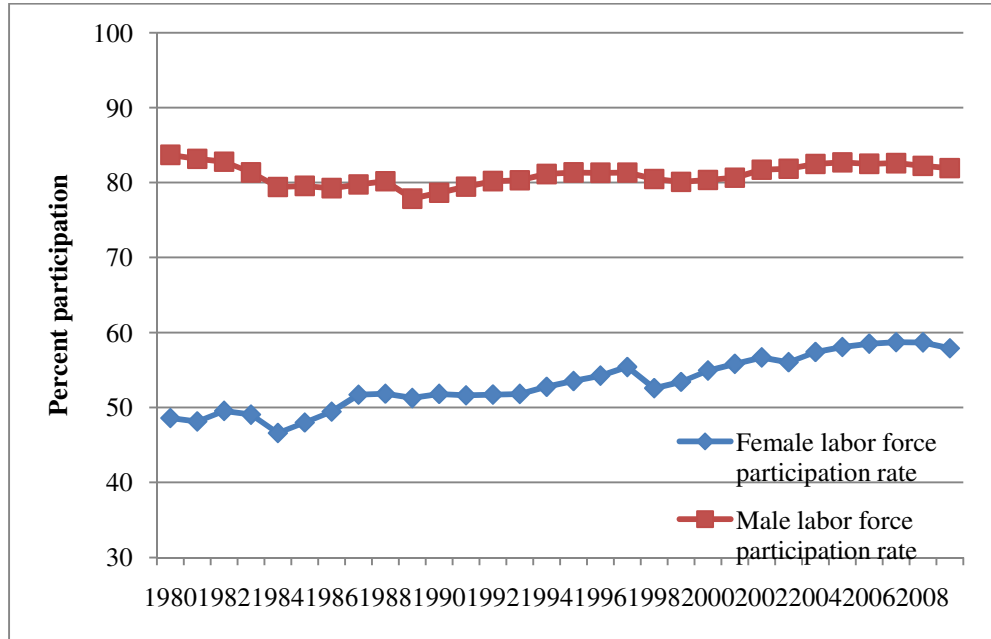
Sources: United Nations Statistics Division 2010 (data for Japan and South Korea); DGBAS National Statistics 2010 (data for Taiwan)

Figure 7. Labor Force Participation Rates in Japan, 1980-2009



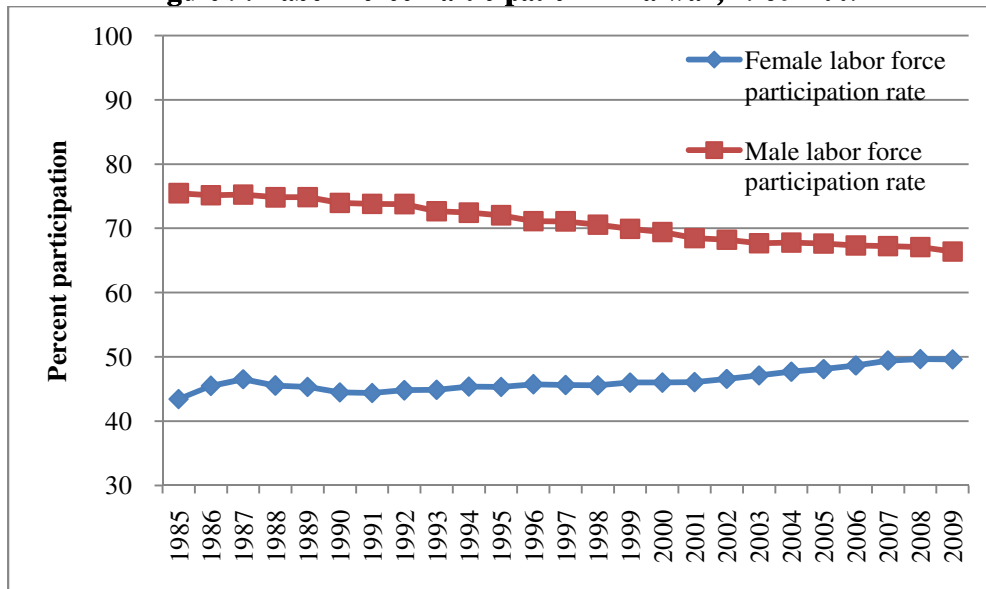
Source: OECD Statistics 2010

Figure 8. Labor Force Participation in South Korea, 1980-2009



Source: OECD Statistics 2010

Figure 9. Labor Force Participation in Taiwan, 1985-2009



Source: DGBAS National Statistics 2010

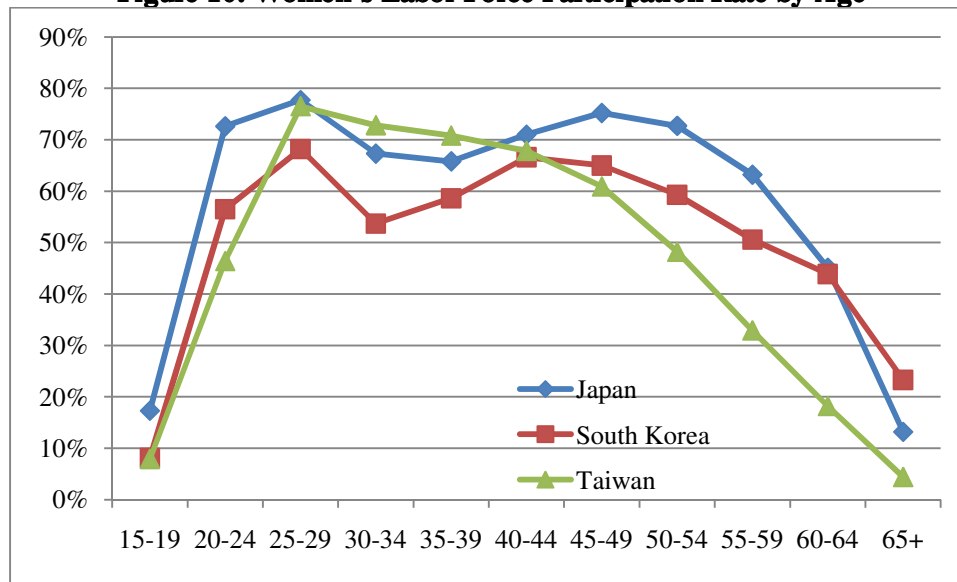
Figures 7 and 8 show the labor force participation rates of Japan and South Korea, respectively, from 1980 to 2009, as percentages of the total male and female populations. Figure

9 shows the percent labor force participation rate for men and women in Taiwan from 1985 to 2009. In Japan and South Korea, both men's and women's labor force participation has increased over time, but in Taiwan, it seems, men's participation rate falls as women's rises. This could indicate a more equitable division of labor; perhaps more men are staying home to raise children while their wives work. More research is needed to draw definite conclusions about this phenomenon. Another interesting feature is the distinct dip in female labor force participation in South Korea in 1998, echoed by a much shallower dip in male participation. It would seem that the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis affected women's employment prospects far more than it did men's.

One of the most fascinating and avidly investigated aspects of female labor force participation in East Asia is the "M-shaped curve:" when plotting the percentage of women participating in the labor force by age group, a peculiar "M-shape" arises, indicating a sharp drop-off in women's labor force participation during childbearing years, and then a return to the work force when the children become independent. This unique curve is found only in Japan and South Korea; most other countries, including Taiwan, exhibit a more normal "inverted U-shape" – increasing female labor force participation, plateau, and then a decline as women retire (Berik 2009). Figure 10 shows women's labor force participation rate by age in each country; the M-shaped curves of Japan and South Korea are obvious.

The implications of the M-shaped curve are several. There is a cultural belief in both Japan and South Korea that a mother must take care of her child herself, at least for the first three years, in order for the child to be well-adjusted. There is a stigma against hiring babysitters and leaving a young child at daycare, so a woman must quit her job and care for her child full-time (Boling 2007).

Figure 10. Women's Labor Force Participation Rate by Age



Sources: Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office (Japan) 2010 (data for Japan and South Korea); DGBAS National Statistics 2010 (data for Taiwan)

For this reason, babysitting services and daycares in both countries are uncommon, and quite expensive; even if a woman wanted to continue work after pregnancy, she would have few alternative child-care resources. Furthermore, employers are aware of this tendency and thus have reason to discriminate against women in hiring for career-track positions; they are not likely to waste valuable training and wages on an employee whom they can be reasonably sure will quit as soon as she becomes pregnant and not return for several years.

Significantly, Berik (2009) notes that Taiwan's female labor force participation curve also displayed the "M" shape in the early 1980s, but shifted to the inverted U-shape by the early 2000s. She attributes this change to Taiwan's industrial structure, in particular the prevalence of SMEs: "the preponderance of small and medium sized firms offered relatively flexible work schedules for married women that helped make housekeeping and employment outside the home compatible" (Berik 2009, 14).

Taiwan is not significantly ahead of Japan and South Korea in terms of female labor force participation – its female share of the total labor force surpasses the others by only one percentage point. However, the age distribution of female labor force participation indicates the greater ability of women to combine work and child-rearing in Taiwan than in Japan or South Korea.

Chapter IV

Gender Norms and Attitudes

The Importance of Culture

Culture plays a major role in influencing the relative status of women in a society – indeed, the various social positions of men and women are part of what defines a culture. Gender roles, and the status and occupations seen as acceptable for men and women that follow from them, are inextricably linked with the culture of a society, making it difficult to establish a causal relationship between “culture” and gender differences in economic status. Nonetheless, Ronald Inglehart and his colleagues have rigorously examined the links between economic development and cultural shifts, including changes in gender attitudes, defining culture as “the social norms, beliefs, and values existing in any society, which in turn rest on levels of societal modernization and religious traditions” (Inglehart and Norris 2003, 8). Acknowledging that the relationship between cultural gender values and the economic, social, and political positions of men and women in a society is complex and deeply interconnected, Inglehart and Norris posit that along with economic development level and political system, a nation’s cultural background is one of the most significant determinants of women’s economic and political participation.

Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are generally seen as inheritors of the semi-religious Confucian philosophical and ethical tradition. Confucian values emphasize patriarchal gender norms: filial obligations are paramount, inheritance is based on primogeniture, and women exit the family upon marriage, lessening their value to parents (Lee, Tufiş and Alwin 2010). In the

Confucian tradition, women are expected to submit to male authority throughout their lives: they must be obedient to their father while a child, to their husband when married, and to their son in old age. Although recent studies suggest a shift away from traditional attitudes about gender in many East Asian societies (e.g. Ui and Matsui 2008; Parboteeah, Hoegl and Cullen 2008), examples of traditional beliefs abound. As recently as October 1, 2010, Japanese Vice-Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Yoshikatsu Nakayama said at a conference on female entrepreneurship: “Japanese women find pleasure in working at home and that has been part of Japanese culture,” sparking outrage and the formation of a protest group by Japanese women; the Vice Minister publicly apologized several weeks later (Japan Today 2010). The fact that some women took exception to this statement shows progress toward gender equality, but it is evident that many in Japan, including women, hold the same views as Vice Minister Nakamura:

As mentioned above, these traditional ideas are still dominant among Japanese people, despite the economic advancement made since World War II. It seems that traditional ideas about the responsibilities of men and women hamper gender equality in Japan, leading to a declining birth rate. (Kitamura 2008, 73)

In South Korea, traditional attitudes about gender are also transforming slowly. In 2006, the Ministry of Education took steps to remove encouragement of traditional gender roles from its primary and secondary school textbooks, in which “women have long been depicted as housekeepers and men as the breadwinners.” A comment by Education Minister Kim Soon-ju at the time reveals the mixed feelings of many Koreans about changing social norms: “I personally don't believe there's anything wrong with a mother cooking a meal. But there's imbalance about gender roles still in our textbooks that should look undesirable to anybody” (TVNZ 2006).

In Taiwan as well, patriarchal gender attitudes are quite common; some studies have shown Taiwanese to be *less* open to gender equality than Japanese:

The responses suggest that the predominant gender attitudes in Taiwan are actually more consistent with the separate sphere ideology³ than those in Japan. A greater proportion of Taiwanese people reported agreeing with the statement that a man's job is to earn money whereas a woman's job is to look after the home and family. (Yu 2009, 9)

However, gender attitudes in Taiwan may be changing at a faster rate than those in Japan or South Korea. Yu's study used data from the 2002 International Social Survey Programme; slightly more recent data can be found in the World Values Survey (WVS), some of the results of which follow.

East Asian societies are generally viewed as less gender egalitarian than those in the West (Cho 2007; Parboteeah, Hoegl and Cullen 2008), a stereotype that is borne out in empirical studies. Inglehart et al. (2002) found that nations with a Protestant or Catholic religious heritage tend to hold more gender-equal attitudes than all others, including those with Confucian or Buddhist traditions. Indeed, in their 2003 cross-national analysis of culture and changing gender norms, Inglehart and Norris found that Japan was the sole exception in the category of postindustrial societies, which otherwise held highly gender-equal values, with a middling value on the gender equality scale (South Korea and Taiwan were classified as industrial societies in this study).

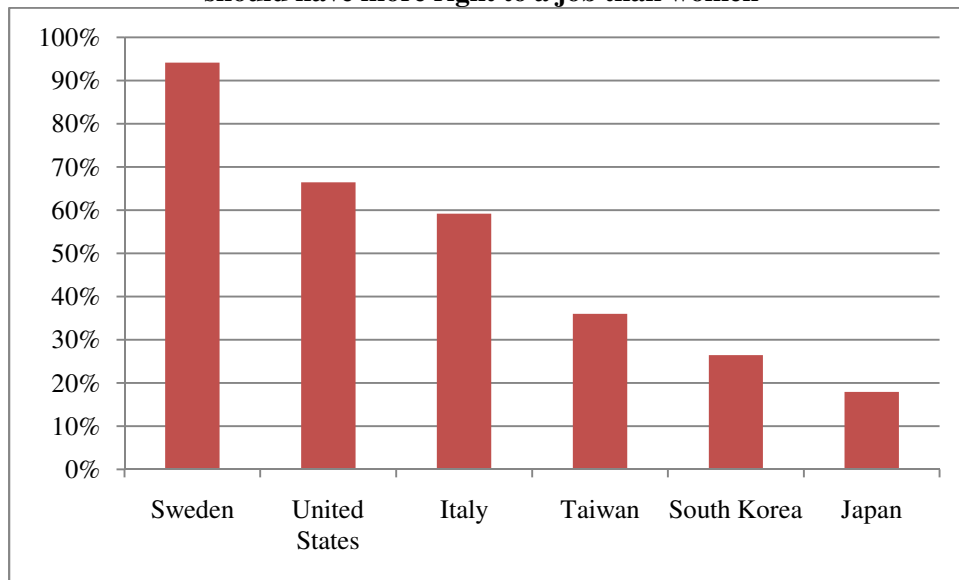
In order to demonstrate the gender-related norms and attitudes currently held by Japanese, South Koreans, and Taiwanese, recent data from the World Values Survey and the Pew Global Attitudes Project will be used. I will examine these countries' attitudes through their responses to questions about gender, and analyze them relative to other nations. I will also compare recent responses with previous responses to the same questions in order to gauge the change in gender attitudes over time.

International Comparison

³ I.e., the ideology that men and women should naturally occupy different "spheres" of social life: women in the home and with the family, and men in public life.

Figure 11 shows the percentage of respondents who disagreed with the statement “When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women” in each of six countries, three Asian and three Western. (I selected the United States, Sweden, and Italy for comparison because they are Western countries with very different economic policies, thereby controlling for the effect of economic institutions on gender attitudes; for a full cross-tabulation of the data, see Appendix A.)

Figure 11. Percentage of respondents disagreeing with the statement “When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women”



Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Fifth Wave)

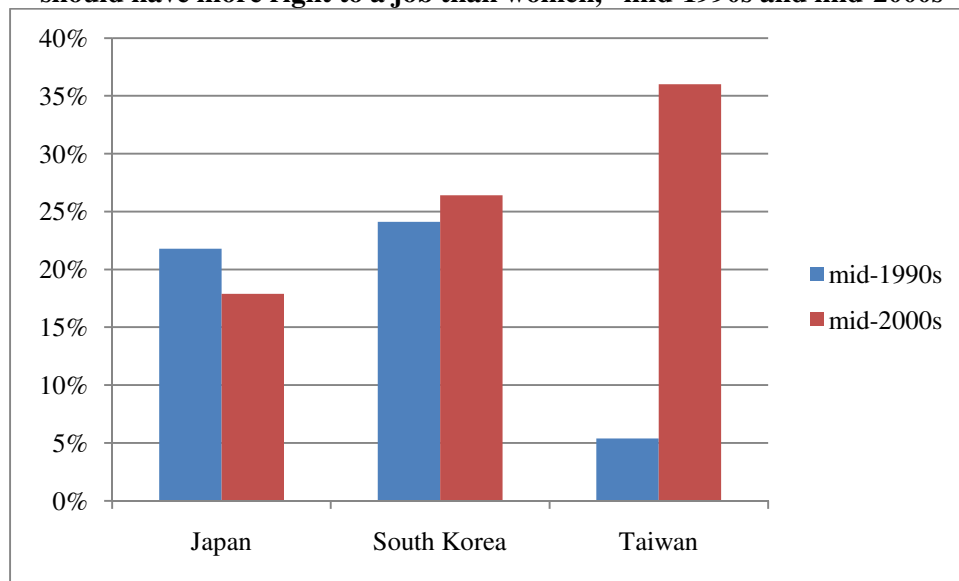
Respondents in each of the Asian countries disagreed with the statement significantly less than those in each of the Western countries, even Italy, which has a relatively low level of female labor force participation (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi 2005). The differences in values between the three Western and three Asian countries are therefore highly likely to be based in culture.

However, even within the group of Asian societies, there are vast differences. Given the cultural similarities between these industrialized East Asian countries, what accounts for the differences in attitudes between them? Following Inglehart et al.’s (2002) cultural divisions, all

three nations have the same Confucian background. Why, then, did 36% disagree in Taiwan compared to only 18% in Japan? The differences in responses to this question on gender roles and labor roughly mirror the gender wage gap differences in the three countries as well: Japan with the largest gap and Taiwan with the smallest. This implies that a factor other than “culture” may be at work in shaping the gender attitudes held by the people of these societies.

Changes over Time

Figure 12. Percentage of respondents disagreeing with the statement “When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women,” mid-1990s and mid-2000s



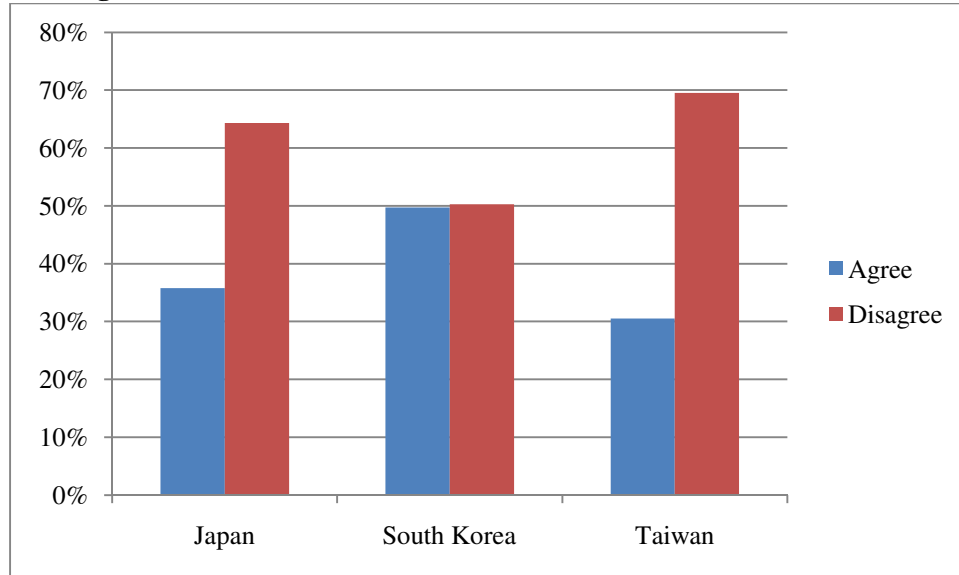
Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Third and Fifth Waves)

Figure 12 shows the percentage of respondents who disagreed with the statement from the same survey question in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan in the mid-1990s and mid-2000s. In Japan, surprisingly, fewer people disagreed in 2005 than in 1995, with most of the respondents actually choosing “neither,” perhaps indicating an increase in apathy on the subject of economic gender equality (for the full cross-tabulations for this item, see Appendix A). In South Korea, as might be expected in a society slowly undergoing a transformation of cultural attitudes, about 6% fewer respondents agreed while 2% more disagreed. But in Taiwan, disagreement soared with an

increase of over 30%. A major shift in gender attitudes has occurred in Taiwan over the past fifteen years, but not in Japan or South Korea. The possible reasons for this discrepancy will be discussed at the end of this section.

Current Attitudes

Figure 13. “Men make better business executives than women do.”⁴

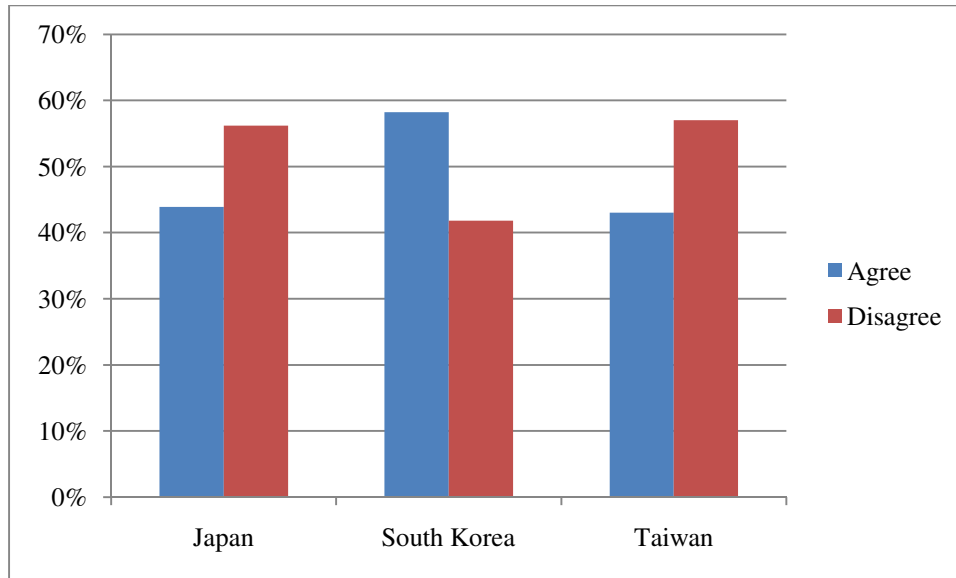


Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Fifth Wave)

Figure 13 shows the results of the question “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘Men make better business executives than women do’” from the 2005/2006 World Values Survey for the three countries. Figure 14 shows the results of the question “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘Men make better political leaders than women do.’” Figure 15 shows responses to the question “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.’”

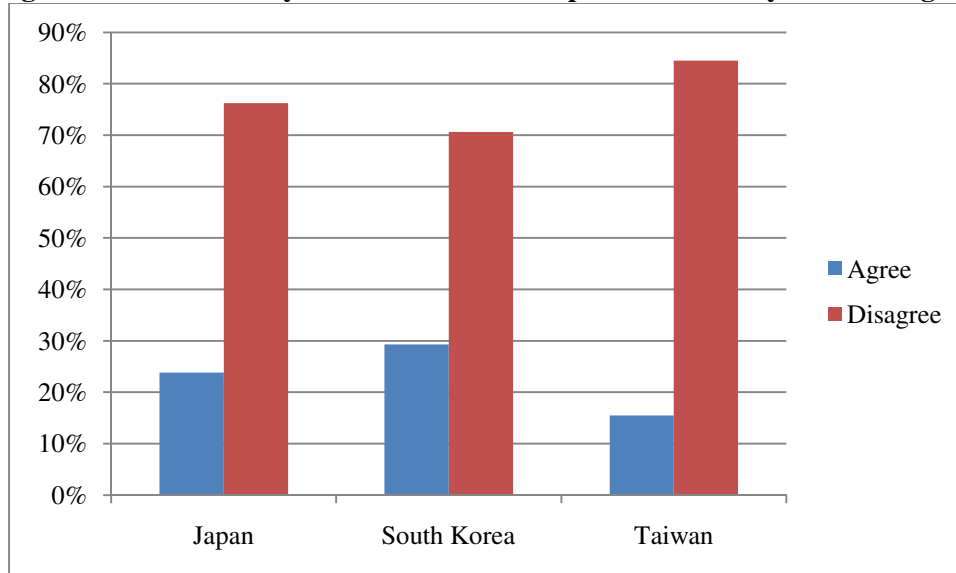
Figure 14. “Men make better political leaders than women do.”

⁴ The “agree” and “disagree” values in Figures 13, 14, and 15 were created by aggregating the values for “agree strongly” and “agree,” and “disagree” and “disagree strongly” respectively. For tables displaying the original values, see Appendix A.



Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Fifth Wave)

Figure 15. “A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.”



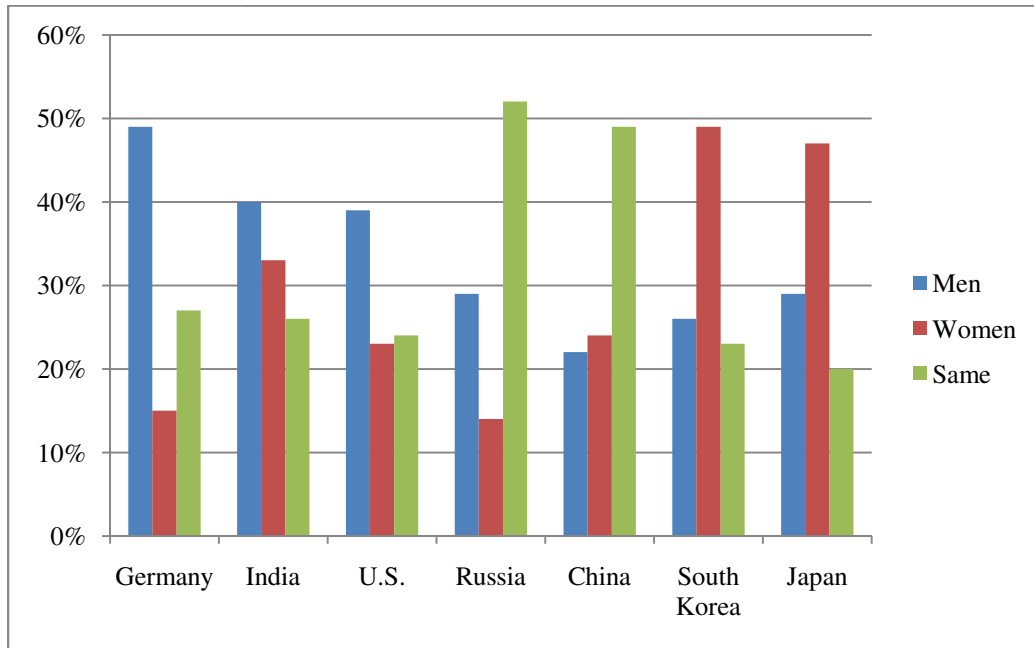
Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Fifth Wave)

Again, Taiwan shows the most egalitarian attitudes of the three. This time, South Korea appears to be the least egalitarian, with its population divided on the question of women business executives, and a surprising majority believing that men are better at politics. All three societies are much more egalitarian when it comes to education than to business or politics; over 70% of

respondents for each country disagreed that college is more important for boys. As expected, Taiwan is in the lead on this issue as well.

One interesting finding about gender attitudes in East Asia was revealed in the Pew Global Attitudes Project’s 2010 Report “Gender Equality Universally Embraced, But Inequalities Acknowledged.” In response to the question “Who has a better life, men or women?” Japan and South Korea were the only societies in which a plurality said that women have the better life. Figure 16 shows the answers to this question for Japan and South Korea, as well as a few other countries for comparison (Taiwan was not included in the study).

Figure 16. “Who has a better life, men or women?”



Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project 2010

The anomalous responses of Japan and South Korea can be tentatively attributed to these societies’ workplace tradition of long working hours and sacrifice of leisure time to the company, mentioned in Chapter III. Women are often exempt from these expectations, as part-time or non-career-track workers, and are seen as having more freedom and leisure time in their lives.

Interestingly, both women and men in these countries were more likely to say that women have

better lives. However, in South Korea 10% more women than men said that men have the better life (21% of men and 31% of women) (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2010).

The Differences

Compared to Japan and South Korea, Taiwan's population in general has more egalitarian attitudes about gender. This is a somewhat surprising result given the cultural similarities between the three. Along with economic development (in which Japan is further along than Taiwan), cultural background determines the pace and path that gender equality follows in a society: "cultural norms, values, and beliefs also shape the transition to gender equality" (Inglehart and Norris 2003, 149). Why, then, does Taiwan consistently demonstrate more gender egalitarian values than its nearest neighbors?

The difference can be accounted for by an unexpected byproduct of Taiwan's democratization. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, martial law was ended and legislative elections became competitive. During the same time period, Taiwan experienced a surge in the number of feminist groups actively campaigning for women's rights. Perhaps as a result, patriarchal family law was reformed in the mid-1990s, making child custody and divorce laws more gender equal (Clark and Clark 2008).

South Korea, although it experienced a similar political liberalization in the late 1980s, did not undergo a shift in gender attitudes. Unlike those in Taiwan, feminist groups in South Korea did not emerge in great numbers to take advantage of the more open political environment (Moon 2002). In Japan, no such sudden liberalization occurred, so it is unsurprising that a shift in values is not in evidence; feminists in Japan have rarely achieved widespread mobilization (Tsujinaka, Choe and Ohtomo 2007).

It is likely that the presence of active feminist groups in Taiwan in the years following democratization spurred this increase in egalitarian gender attitudes. This is in line with previous research which suggests that one of the most important factors in successful women's empowerment is the active involvement of women's groups and individual women in pushing for change (Clark and Clark 2008). The relative dearth of effective women's activist groups in both South Korea and Japan, therefore, helps explain these countries' inegalitarian attitudes toward gender; this difference is one of three key factors that make Taiwan's labor force more gender equal than Japan's or South Korea's.

Chapter V

Discussion: What Makes Taiwan Different?

The previous sections have shown, almost without exception, that Taiwan is more gender egalitarian in its labor force than Japan and South Korea. This difference is difficult to account for: the three countries have similar cultures and development histories, and their labor policies and equality laws are largely equivalent. Yet Taiwan has a smaller wage gap and a more egalitarian labor distribution, and its population has more egalitarian attitudes. (Its government statistical agency also provides gender breakdowns on all national statistics, which is not the case for Japan or South Korea.)

Three basic differences exist between Taiwan and its neighbors that can account for its greater gender equality in labor. First, in economics, its employment environment is dominated by small and medium sized enterprises, rather than large companies as in Japan and South Korea. Politically, Taiwan has had a gender quota for legislative assemblies in place since 1946, compared to no gender quota in Japan and a new quota established in 1995 in South Korea. Finally, Taiwan has seen greater activity in women's and feminist groups than either of the other two countries. These factors account for much of the difference in gender equality observed between Taiwan and its East Asian peers.

Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises

As mentioned in a previous section, employment in Taiwan is provided mostly by smaller companies: 77% of workers in Taiwan are employed by SMEs (Berik 2009). In Japan, large

corporations like Toyota, Sony, and Mitsubishi, heirs to the former *zaibatsu* monopolies, dominate the employment sphere; in South Korea, multi-firm conglomerates called *chaebols* provide the backbone of the industrial structure (Lin and Lee 2010; Chang and England 2011).

The success of SMEs in Taiwan's economy has its roots in the island's unique postwar history. The nationalist KMT party fled across the strait after its defeat by the Communists in 1949 and established a one-party regime that held absolute power over the former Japanese colony. The new rulers, as immigrants, did not have a social base in Taiwan or support from native Taiwanese, who constituted the majority of the island's population. They appropriated the Japanese system of direct rule and generally kept locals out of government, controlling the public instead through a "clientelist" system of distributing rewards to loyal followers, and creating business associations to "control capitalists, workers, farmers, students, and other social forces" (Wu 2005, 38). This peculiar political structure led the regime to limit the accumulation of private capital in large firms. Smaller corporations – SMEs – were thus free to dominate the critical export market:

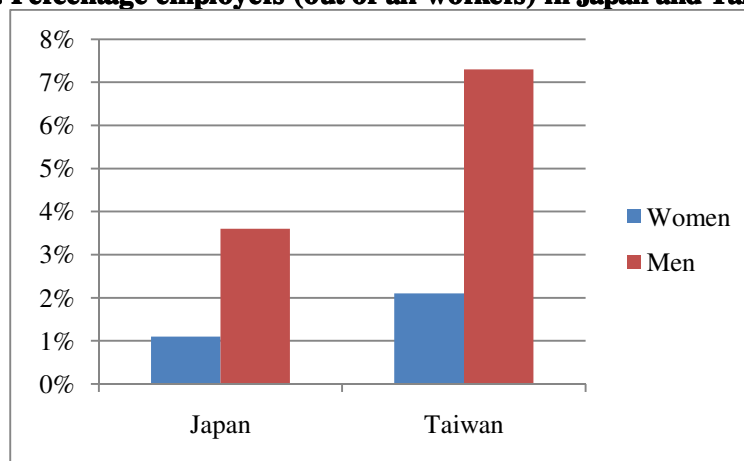
Although it was economically irrational for the KMT to limit LE [large private enterprise] exports, it was politically expedient. ... Because of their size and fragmentation, the SMEs had little political might and presented no threat to KMT rule. Their treatment by the state matched their political and economic status: they were neither protected nor restricted. (Wu 2005, 2-3)

SMEs were ignored by the regime until the mid-1970s, when the PRC became recognized internationally and Taiwan lost its seat in the United Nations. This triggered a crisis of identity among the KMT, which then looked to SMEs to fuel the economic growth it needed to shore up its flagging legitimacy, as well as to check the growth of politically significant large enterprises. Economic policy from this period on was aimed at promoting SMEs (Wu 2005).

An economy dominated by SMEs is friendlier to women in several ways. First, in an environment in which small businesses are easy to start and maintain, entrepreneurs, whether

male or female, are more likely to become successful (European Commission, Enterprise and Industry 2010). With the expanded opportunities for leadership and managerial roles provided by the volume of small but important companies, women have a greater chance to rise through the ranks in the Taiwanese labor market than in an LE-dominated market like Japan's which has a limited number of leadership positions. Second, SMEs provide a more relaxed working environment for women – in large corporations, there is more pressure on employees to perform, and this contributes to the long working hours that are seemingly mandatory in Japanese and South Korean firms. In SMEs, women face less pressure to work long hours, and can take parental leave without fear of censure from supervisors and fellow workers (Chang and England 2011). Furthermore, institutional practices are less firmly embedded in SMEs than in large corporations – the culture and atmosphere of a company with only a handful of employees is more adaptable than one with thousands. A woman entering a small firm with a dozen employees is able to change the predominating workplace environment, whereas a woman joining a multinational conglomerate must adjust to the structures already in place.

Figure 17. Percentage employers (out of all workers) in Japan and Taiwan (2007)



Sources: United Nations Statistics Division 2010 (data for Japan); DGBAS National Statistics 2010 (data for Taiwan)

Figure 17 shows the percentage of working women and men who are employers in Japan and Taiwan. Interestingly, Japan has a smaller gender gap as well as a smaller absolute number of employers. This reflects its large-corporation-dominated labor force; it is harder to become an employer in Japan than in Taiwan. The gender gap in employers is larger in Taiwan, but a larger percentage of women are employers than in Japan; this is undoubtedly due to Taiwan's SME-based labor market, which makes it easier for individuals of both genders to become business owners.

Gender Quotas

Women's participation in the political process has a substantial effect on their status in a society. The enfranchisement of women was the first step in reforming patriarchal social structures in the West and around the world, and the level of women's political representation is an indicator of gender empowerment (UNDP 1995). Women face a variety of barriers – structural, institutional, and cultural – in being elected to public office, and these are more stringent in some societies than others (Inglehart and Norris 2003). East Asian nations as a group have a relatively low level of female parliamentary representation, with a regional average of 14% female representatives in parliament (United Nations Statistics Division 2010).

Gender quotas are widely acknowledged to be a successful means of increasing women's political participation, and have been legally mandated by over 50 countries (Dahlerup 2008), including, since 1995, South Korea (Jeon 2007). Quotas ensure that women are given a voice in national decision-making, especially in areas where they might not be elected otherwise due to cultural or other biases. According to the UN, 18 out of the 23 nations with over 30% female representation at the national level have enacted some form of gender quota (United Nations Statistics Division 2010).

Taiwan has had relatively high levels of female representation for a developing country since the 1950s, due largely to its early adoption of a gender quota system. Taiwan's 1946 constitution guarantees a minimum level of representation of about 10% for women in legislative assemblies at all levels of government (Clark and Clark 2008). Before the recent electoral reform, Taiwan employed a mixed system of multimember districts and proportional representation; the terms of the gender quota mandated that some of the seats in the multimember districts were to be set aside for women:

In practice, this has meant that one or more seats are "reserved" for women in Taiwan's multimember electoral districts, with the number of "reserved seats" being determined by the size of the district. When a sufficient number of women candidates get enough votes to be elected, they are considered to have met this quota. However, when no or not enough female candidates get enough votes to be elected, those with the most votes are awarded the seat or seats reserved for them. (Clark and Clark 2008, 144)

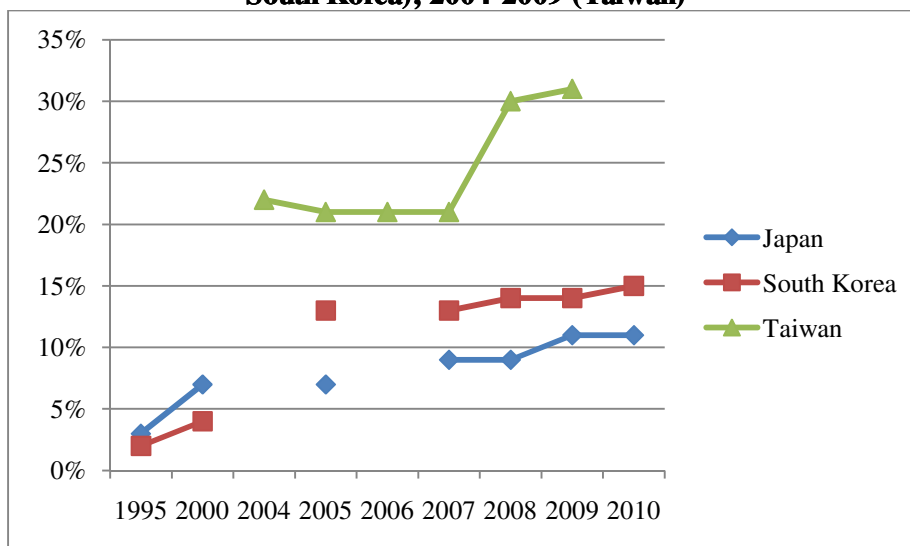
Although the national government remained authoritarian until the late 1980s, local elections were relatively competitive, and the quota system ensured women's involvement in the political process. The first women elected under the quota system were seen as mere "tokens" for their parties, or were selected to run because of family connections, but over time increasingly educated and skilled women became political leaders in their own right (Clark and Clark 2008).

The political liberalization of the late 1980s and early 1990s hastened the advent of equality for women in government. The equality legislation mentioned in a previous section removed legal discrimination against women in the areas of divorce, property, and inheritance. In 2000, Lu Hsiu-lien (Hsiu-lien Annette Lu), a leader in Taiwan's feminist movement, became the first woman vice-president of the Republic of China; her term lasted until 2008 (D. Chang 2009).

Taiwan's reformed electoral system, which came into effect with the 2008 elections, demonstrates an apparently sincere dedication to gender equality in government: party lists, from which the 34 proportional representation seats are filled, must be 50% women (Government

Information Office, R.O.C. (Taiwan) 2010). As a result, the 2008 election created a Legislative Yuan comprised of 30.1% female legislators (see Figure 18) (DGBAS, *Women and Men in R.O.C. (Taiwan): Facts and Figures*, 2010).

Figure 18. Percentage of female legislators in the main legislative body, 1995-2010 (Japan and South Korea); 2004-2009 (Taiwan)



Sources: United Nations Statistics Division 2010 (data for Japan and South Korea); DGBAS National Statistics 2010 (data for Taiwan)

Figure 18 shows the percentage of female legislators in the lower or single national legislative assembly for each country. Even before its adoption of mixed single-member-district and proportional representation seats with a 50% female requirement in its Legislative Yuan in 2008, Taiwan outranked Japan and South Korea, but after the electoral reform, its proportion of female legislators soared to over 30%. South Korea was trailing Japan until 2005, when it expanded the scope of its 1995 gender quota and introduced proportional representation; it also introduced penalties for party non-compliance with the quota in 2006 (Jeon 2007). Japan still has no form of gender quota in its political system (Eto 2010).

Taiwan's success in achieving relative gender equality in labor is mirrored by a similar success in politics: in both cases, Taiwan is not yet at the level of gender equity currently seen in Western Europe, but it consistently outranks its East Asian competitors.

Women's Activism

Activism is a vital part of any civil society, and women's activism is imperative in enacting structural gender reform. Women themselves must make their voices heard in demanding equal rights if true gender equality is to be achieved in any society. A robust women's or feminist movement is a telling indicator of the level of gender equality in a society, and, not unexpectedly, of the three countries examined here Taiwan's women's movement is the most engaged.

Autonomous women's and feminist groups in Taiwan became increasingly active during the mid-1980s, when the authoritarian regime began to decline. Until the succession of Chiang Kai-shek's son Chiang Ching-kuo in 1972 and his softening of the KMT's hard authoritarian policies, women's activism was limited to involvement in government-affiliated nationalist women's organizations (D. Chang 2009). Beginning in 1972, however, "the younger Chiang's greater tolerance for social and political dissent in Taiwan created some limited space [...] for the emergence of an autonomous women's movement," epitomized by Lee Yuan-chen's Awakening Foundation (D. Chang 2009, 4). This initial phase laid the foundation for the flourishing of women's activism after the dissolution of martial law in 1987. Since that time, female groups have expanded in number and type, and have demonstrated their concern over a variety of issues, from child care to nuclear development; women participated in protests and made their voices heard through lobbying and political activism. Feminism also gained popularity during this period: "Somewhat later in the 1990s, the Feminist Movement in Taiwan began to expand as well. In particular, the diversity (as well as the number) of feminist groups increased to meet the needs of particular groups of women" (Clark and Clark 2008, 146-147). The strength of the revitalized women's movement in post-martial-law Taiwan can be observed through its success in achieving its central goals: "The revision of family laws and the enactment

of the Gender Equality in Employment Law also significantly enhanced women's rights and status. To a large extent, these changes fulfilled the autonomous women's movements' goals for gender equality" (D. Chang 2009, 157).

Like Taiwan, women's activism in South Korea was limited to government-affiliated organizations until the political liberalization of the late 1980s (Kim and Kim 2010). South Korea also experienced an expansion of the women's movement during its own democratization in the 1990s, but on a much smaller and less effective scale:

The 1990s have witnessed the revitalization of the women's movement, in tandem with other citizens' voluntary associations, sustained by diverse and autonomous women's associations. ... On the other hand, lacking any grassroots base, the women's movement has relied heavily on a small number of devoted activists, most of whom were already participating in social movements under authoritarian rule. (Moon 2002, 474)

Furthermore, unlike in Taiwan where the feminist movement maintained a coherent and effective policy strategy after liberalization, Korean women's activist groups, which had been united in the fight for democracy, "splintered into a multitude of single-issue organizations" (Kim and Kim 2010, 203). From 1998 to 2007, the women's movement, though divided, nonetheless helped to promote a surge in gender-equal policy changes due to the close ties of individual groups and prominent feminist activists with the liberal Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008) administrations. During this period, the President's Special Committee on Women's Affairs was established in 1998, elevated to the cabinet level as the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2000, and expanded to include child care and services in 2006; gender policy specialists were assigned to each government ministry; various affirmative action laws were passed to increase women's involvement in the government; and the Confucian family-head system was abolished (Kim and Kim 2010). However, with the election of conservative Lee

Myung-bak in 2008, the women's movement lost its government ties, and some of the gender-equal policy initiatives of the previous governments were reversed.⁵

Women's groups in South Korea were successful for a time in advancing legal and political gender reform, but this was due to their ties with the government, not with the Korean people as a whole. The election of a conservative administration in 2008 slowed the momentum for change, and highlights the fact that the Korean women's movement is a movement of the elite, without much popular involvement. As they do not have a broad base of support among South Korean women, their success in policy reform has not had a major impact on the values and beliefs of South Korean society as a whole.

As was the case in South Korea after the end of military rule, "women's movements in Japan have been characterized by decentralization, fragmentation and a single issue focus" (Gelb 2003, 21). The majority of women's organizations in Japan are local groups of concerned housewives, who come together to lobby for "consumer and environmental rights, for peace, and against nuclear power" (Gelb 2003, 28). This unique type of activism has been characterized as "housewife feminism," and is more prominent in Japan than Western-style feminist activism:

While unemployed married women's grassroots groups are widespread, women's movements influenced by the second wave of Western feminism— which focused on securing equal rights and opportunities for women— have been less prevalent in Japan than in North America and Europe. (Eto 2001, 243)

These groups, while popular in their communities, are not linked, and no umbrella organization for women's activism has emerged in Japan (Gelb 2003).

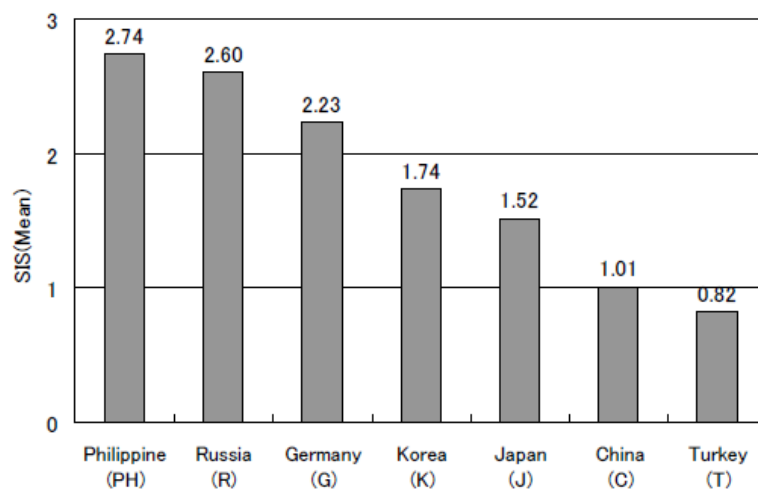
Unlike those of South Korea, Japanese women's groups have not enjoyed any kind of close relationship with the government or political parties,⁶ and their influence has generally

⁵ In 2008, childcare duties were transferred from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, which was downsized to the Ministry of Gender Equality; women's activists in government posts, including the Minister of Gender Equality, were replaced with career bureaucrats and Lee supporters; and "the promotion of gender equality no longer was at the top of the administration's agenda" (Kim and Kim 2010, 202).

been limited to local concerns. This inability to garner national support through a widespread, unified women’s organization or through connections with the government has left the Japanese women’s movement far behind its counterparts in the West and even its neighbor South Korea in terms of influence over policy-making.

Japan has one of the least active civil societies in the world, and its women’s groups are no exception (Tsujinaka, Choe and Ohtomo 2007). Figure 19 shows the mean subjective influence score of social organizations by country. Social organizations were asked “How much influence does your organization think it has when policy issues arise in the geographical area in which it is active?” The mean response for organizations in each country is its subjective influence score.

Figure 19. Mean subjective influence score by country (2006)



Note: SIS = subjective influence score

Source: Tsujinaka, Choe and Ohtomo 2007. Reprinted with permission from the publisher.

⁶ With the brief exception of the Japan Socialist Party (the main opposition to the dominant Liberal Democratic Party [LDP] until 1993), which in the late 1980s encouraged women to join and fielded several successful women candidates, leading to a victory over the LDP in the Upper House in 1989; its leader at that time was Doi Takako, one of the most prominent women in Japanese politics (Rosenbluth and Thies 2010). The Socialist Party foundered and gave way to the more centrist opposition Democratic Party of Japan, in the mid-1990s (Gelb 2003).

Social organizations in Japan and South Korea rank relatively low in their evaluation of their own efficacy; this perception leads to less activism, reinforcing the inefficacy of civil society in these countries.

In contrast to Japan and South Korea, Taiwan has an active women's movement with widespread involvement, and women's groups have effected change in the form of legal reform and gender attitudes. This activism has undoubtedly played a major role in Taiwan's high gender equality, as "the activities of independent women's groups are the key to enacting policies that promote women's rights" (Clark and Clark 2008, 148).

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Summary

Although the status of women in the labor forces of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan is generally lower than that in most Western European nations, significant differences exist in gender inequality between these three nations. Despite a similar cultural background and the shared history of the pre-war Japanese Empire, the trajectory of gender-based development in Taiwan diverged significantly from that of Japan and South Korea. The latter based their economic development on large corporations with broad purviews, which inadvertently hindered the progression of gender equality: the long working hours and culture of strict loyalty to the company created a system inimical to balancing career and family, effectively shutting out women as regular employees. In Taiwan, a very different employment system came to dominate: smaller corporations were encouraged and supported by a militarist government fearful of the power of large enterprises, allowing for greater flexibility for employees and enhancing the ability of women workers to balance family and career. Furthermore, the KMT government established gender quotas extremely early, legitimizing women's political involvement and opening the doors for limited women's activism. This restricted activism led to a vigorous and autonomous women's movement after political liberalization that was able to achieve its goals of legal reform, and continues to flourish due to its broad support and political involvement. These unique circumstances were not present in Japan or South Korea; Japan continues to have a

political system that is difficult for women to enter successfully, and its women's movements are fragmented and ineffective; South Korea has a movement that has achieved limited success in gender reforms and opening the doors for women in politics, but does not enjoy broad support and has lost its affiliations with the government.

Because of these three unique factors, Taiwan's economy is more gender-equal in several ways: its gender wage gap is substantially lower; its female labor force participation rate is not affected by marriage and childbirth; it has less occupational segregation by sex and more women managers and business owners; and Taiwanese women on average are more highly educated than men, allowing them greater access to high-status jobs. Furthermore, whether as a result of these circumstances or other factors, the attitudes about gender held by Taiwanese are generally more egalitarian than those held by Japanese or South Koreans.

Policy Implications

Gender attitudes, "culture," and the political and economic status of women are inextricably linked, and are often slow to change; it is therefore difficult to identify a single area that is most critical to the furtherance of gender equality in a society. However, this analysis of some of the major contributing factors suggests that there are several ways that both governments and citizens can work to increase equality, both in the labor force and in society more generally. First, a legislative gender quota is a very effective means of increasing women's political participation, enacting gender-equal policy, and changing gender attitudes. Many countries, both developed and developing, have adopted gender quotas with positive results for equality (Jeon 2007). South Korea has begun this process, and has been fairly successful in increasing women's representation, but it still has far to go. Japan has not implemented any kind of quota system, and its female representation remains one of the lowest in the developed world. If the Japanese

government is truly committed to increasing gender equality, it would do well to consider adopting a gender quota system.

Furthermore, women themselves must become more involved in the process of achieving equality. Women's activism is vitally important for the successful implementation of policies and institutions that enhance women's empowerment. If women don't demand equal treatment, they are unlikely to receive it from governments and economic leaders who are predominantly male. Women's groups in South Korea should focus on appealing to a wide base of women to affect society-wide change. Japanese women's groups should organize nationally and take a more active role in raising awareness and petitioning for change.

Taiwan's achievements in gender equality in the workforce are impressive, but it has not yet reached the level of a gender-equal society. Currently, only the party lists used for the 34 seats filled by proportional representation must be composed of 50% women; a quota, whether legally enforced or voluntary (as is the case for many parties in European countries) of 50% female candidates for all positions would increase equality and set a better example to neighboring nations. Traditional gender attitudes that cause discrimination against women in the workforce must also be changed in order to achieve progress, especially in further reducing the gender wage gap.

Although industrialized East Asian countries lag behind other developed nations in gender equality, the case of Taiwan provides an example of the feasibility of sustained progress toward equality in this region. South Korea, too, seems to be actively pursuing measures to increase gender equality, while Japan is slowly moving toward more egalitarian attitudes. East Asia has seen substantial progress toward gender equality in the workforce in recent decades, and this trend will likely continue in the foreseeable future; the governments of each country

would enhance their international reputations and improve the lives of their citizens by taking steps to hasten this process:

[L]ong-term cultural shifts are important in bringing greater equality between women and men, but [...] structural policy reforms designed to reduce sex discrimination and expand opportunities for women can accelerate the pace of change in the lives of men and women. (Inglehart and Norris 2003, 163)

Legal, structural, and economic equality are basic rights for every human being, and most governments recognize this and work to ensure equality for their citizens. The industrialized nations of East Asia are no exception; despite cultural barriers, each has taken steps toward furthering gender equality. Among the three nations examined here, Taiwan has had the greatest success in this venture, but each has made progress in recent years and will undoubtedly progress further toward the goal of a gender-equal society.

Appendix A

Table A-1, corresponding to Figure 11.

“When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women”						
	Sweden (2006)	United States (2006)	Italy (2005)	Taiwan (2006)	South Korea (2005)	Japan (2005)
Agree	2.10%	6.80%	22.00%	43.60%	36.50%	27.10%
Disagree	94.10%	66.40%	59.20%	36.00%	26.40%	17.90%
Neither	3.80%	26.80%	18.80%	20.40%	37.10%	55.00%
Sample size	995	1238	987	1226	1197	1042

Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Fifth Wave)

Table A-2, corresponding to Figure 12.

“When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women.”			
	Japan (1995)	South Korea (1996)	Taiwan (1994)
Agree	28.7%	42.8%	56.9%
Disagree	21.8%	24.1%	5.4%
Neither	49.5%	33.1%	37.6%
Sample size	1016	1246	771

Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Third Wave)

Table A-3, corresponding to Figure 12.

“When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women.”			
	Japan (2005)	South Korea (2005)	Taiwan (2006)
Agree	27.1%	36.5%	43.6%
Disagree	17.9%	26.4%	36%
Neither	55%	37.1%	20.4%
Sample size	1042	1195	1226

Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Fifth Wave)

Table A-4, corresponding to Figure 13.

“Men make better business executives than women do.”			
	Japan (2005)	South Korea (2005)	Taiwan (2006)
Agree strongly	4.9%	11.5%	4%
Agree	30.9%	38.2%	26.5%
Disagree	52.5%	34.1%	59%
Strongly disagree	11.8%	16.2%	10.5%
Sample size	774	1200	1225

Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Fifth Wave)

Table A-5, corresponding to Figure 14.

“Men make better political leaders than women do.”			
	Japan (2005)	South Korea (2005)	Taiwan (2006)
Agree strongly	6.4%	11.4%	6.6%
Agree	37.5%	46.8%	36.4%
Disagree	49.5%	31.5%	52.7%
Strongly disagree	6.7%	10.3%	4.3%
Sample size	750	1200	1222

Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Fifth Wave)

Table A-6, corresponding to Figure 15.

“A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.”			
	Japan (2005)	South Korea (2005)	Taiwan (2006)
Agree strongly	4.6%	6.9%	2.6%
Agree	19.2%	22.4%	12.9%
Disagree	63%	45%	68.4%
Strongly disagree	13.2%	25.6%	16.1%
Sample size	843	1200	1226

Source: World Values Survey 2009 (Fifth Wave)

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