

Advocating Policy Interests in Local Politics: Women's Substantive Representation in Japan and South Korea*

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Abstract

This paper investigates how women's interests and rights are advocated in the legislatures in both the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly (Japan) and the Seoul Metropolitan Council (South Korea). A growing body of comparative research on women's substantive representation provides insights into the kinds of policy topics that are often categorized as women's issues, as well as the personal backgrounds of the legislators who represent women's interests. We raise and analyze three key questions: Can only female legislators represent women's interests? How does a legislator's sex/gender interact with other factors such as partisanship in shaping who represents women's interests and how? How do contextual factors such as party systems impact how women's substantive representation occurs? We explore these questions in the context of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly and the Seoul Metropolitan Council using an in-depth examination of statements made by local council members in plenary and committee sessions (Tokyo 2009-2015 and Seoul 2009-2014). We found that similar issues are discussed as being relevant to women in the two local councils. However, the issues emphasized and where those issues are discussed vary across our cases. Female members, regardless of their party affiliation, address women's issues more often than their male counterparts in both countries, although female members of progressive parties tend to advocate for women more actively, and parties representing distinct constituencies and ideologies highlight different aspects of women's concerns. Our findings contribute to

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existing knowledge of women's substantive representation, as well as to research on women and politics in the Asian region.

Key words

East Asia, women's representation, local politics, political party, Japan, South Korea

Introduction

Although women constitute half of the world's population, they currently hold only an average of 23.4% of the seats in national parliaments worldwide (IPU, 2017). The numbers of women holding office in parliaments around the world have increased in the past two decades; however, such increases vary widely by region, and academic researchers have sought to explain women's numerical representation (Krook, 2009). Some have examined whether representatives "act in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209). Others have asked whether women's presence in the political process makes a difference in advancing women's interests and concerns in politics (i.e., substantive representation) (Phillips, 1995). Though research on women's descriptive representation in Asia has grown over the years (e.g., Tan, 2015, 2016), empirical research on women's substantive representation in the Asian region is relatively uncommon, and especially so relative to the number of studies analyzing comparable cases in America and Europe. What women's interests are, who represents those interests, and what institutional factors shape the process of substantive representation in Asian politics still needs to be examined.

This paper analyzes council members' behaviors in relation to how they raise their policy concerns at the local councils of two Asian democracies—Japan and South Korea¹—in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly and the Seoul Metropolitan Council. We analyze 1) the policies characterized as *women's issues*, and how they are discussed, 2) whether female members in general address women's issues more often than male members, and if so, whether female members' behavior varies across political parties, and 3) whether political parties representing distinct constituencies and ideologies speak differently

¹ We refer to South Korea as Korea throughout this paper.

for women. We examine statements made by both female and male members in local councils during plenary and committee sessions, closely noting which members *speak for women*, to capture the discursive aspect of substantive representation. We pay attention to how both male and female members themselves speak on behalf of women, in their own words.

Our findings illustrate that similar issues are considered as being relevant to women's interests and concerns in the two local councils, although which issues are emphasized and where they are discussed varies across our two cases. Female council members were found to speak on behalf of women more frequently in local councils than male members in both countries. Although women represent only about 20% of the total assembly seats in both Tokyo and Seoul councils, we found that female members made half of the references to women's concerns and issues. At the same time, party affiliation also matters. That is, in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, female members of minor parties like the Tokyo Seikatsusha Network (the Net) and the Japan Communist Party (JCP) are notable for addressing women's interests. Similarly, party affiliation is correlated with references to women's issues in the Seoul Metropolitan Council. In general, members of the Democratic Party (DP), and particularly female members, address women's issues more often than do members of the Saenuri Party.² Finally, members affiliated with parties characterized by distinct ideological and constituency backgrounds speak differently for women. This behavior suggests that not only the sex/gender of the speakers but also their party influences how members represent women's interests.

These findings validate prior insights provided by studies of women's substantive representation. Our study broadens the geographic extent of the existing comparative literature on women's political representation, which has tended to focus on national legislatures in America and Europe. Additionally, we highlight how local politics presents a forum in which women's concerns are discussed, and why comparative scholars should consider local politics when analyzing women's political representation. Finally, our study contributes to research on gender and politics in the Asian region. Our in-depth analysis of the local councils in Japan and Korea shows, in detail, how women's interests are represented by council members of the two largest cities

² Formerly known as the Grand National Party (1997-2012). Currently known as the Liberty Korea Party (since February 2017).

in East Asia—Tokyo and Seoul.

Our review of published studies leads us to focus not only on members' sex/gender differences, but also on other factors that influence the patterns of substantive representation in the legislative arena. We then provide a brief overview of women and local politics in Japan and Korea, and a description of the methods used for data collection and analysis. Major research findings are presented next. We conclude the paper by summarizing our contribution to the literature, and positing avenues for future research.

Substantive Representation: A Critical Literature Review

Scholars of gender politics often begin from the premise that women's presence leads to better representation of women's interests in the legislature, largely because women and men have different backgrounds and experiences. Consequently, female legislators bring distinct sets of policy interests and priorities into government when they assume office (Phillips, 1995). The most direct impacts of women's numerical presence are observed in public policy-related changes, such as policy agendas, preferences, and outcomes more in line with women's concerns and interests (Bratton, 2002; Bratton & Haynie, 1999; Catalano, 2009; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Swers, 2002). Similarly, their presence influences changes in legislative processes such as leadership and governance (Rosenthal, 1998; Swers, 2001). Female candidates and officeholders also excite and motivate citizens to engage actively in politics (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Wolbrecht & Campbell, 2007). We focus our discussion on policy-related changes, and particularly on those relevant to setting the legislative agenda.

Empirical research that has explored the effects of members' sex/gender on legislative behavior (e.g., policy preferences) and activities (e.g., bill introduction) has found that women's parliamentary presence is important to shaping legislative priorities and activities (for a review, see Celis, 2006; Wängnerud, 2009). Specifically, research in Japan and Korea has found that male and female members behave differently, and that women are more active in advocating for women. A study based on a survey of representatives reveals that women focus on issues directly relevant to women (e.g., prioritizing childcare, education, disasters), and that male and female members have distinct preferences on major policy issues (e.g., nuclear power, constitutional reform) in Japan (Miura, 2016). More extensive evidence has

been gathered in Korea, where female members of parliament are more active in sponsoring bills related to the advancement of women's rights than male members. Furthermore, their presence has contributed to a broader change in the National Assembly, such as an increase in male members' references to women's affairs (Kim & Oh, 2010).

Other studies have considered how members speak on behalf of women's interests in parliamentary debates and questions.³ Research findings suggest that female legislators address women's issues more often than male legislators. Osborn and Mendez (2010) found that female senators in the United States devoted more attention to discussing women's health and family issues in their speeches than male senators. Congresswomen in both parties are significantly more likely than male members to discuss women in their speeches, and sex differences mattered more than partisan differences when it came to members' inclinations to invoke a gendered rhetoric (Pearson & Dancey, 2011). Overall, Pearson and Dancey (2011) concluded that "Congresswomen represent not only their own constituents but also women outside their districts, and women's life experiences and persistent underrepresentation in Congress give congresswomen extra incentives to address women's interests when debating and discussing the issues of the day" (p. 494). Similarly, Celis (2006) traces evidence of how members act for women—conceptualized as "to denounce a situation that is disadvantageous for women, to formulate a proposal to improve the situation of women, or to claim a right for women with the same goal" (p. 88)—during a budget debate in the Belgian Lower House. She found that the presence of a few women MPs made an important contribution to the number of interventions made in favor of women. Finally, gender is an important factor in explaining the content of remarks in the Indian parliament: female legislators ask more questions relevant to women's issues than their male counterparts (Jacob, 2014). In sum, research has confirmed that women's presence leads to a greater representation of women's interests in politics.

Other scholars have suggested that there may be factors other than the

³ This aspect of substantive representation—speaking for women—is of key interest to us. As we discuss later in detail, in the local politics of Tokyo and Seoul, executives usually propose policies, and the main legislative duty of local council members is to examine those proposals and express their own thoughts by asking questions to the executive. In other words, relying on council members' questions and speeches during legislative sessions is a good way to assess women's substantive representation in local politics.

legislators' gender that can explain the variations in male and female members' political behavior. In other words, explaining substantive representation on the basis of sex is problematic, since "sex as a simple, dichotomous variable will distort unless it is located in a gendered frame of reference" (Lovenduski, 1998, p. 339). Indeed, studies have found that political parties (both individual members' partisanship and institutional partisanship) affect the relationships between female members and their positions on, and support for, women's issues (Osborn, 2012; Sanbonmatsu, 2008). This argument suggests the importance of considering the sex of legislators and also their partisanship, as well as other contextual factors that can influence the process and dynamics of substantive representation in the legislature.

In this paper we explore who speaks for women and how in local politics. Do elected women really make a difference by speaking for women, and placing items regarding women's issues on the legislative agenda? We also consider political parties' possible influence on how male and female members represent women, and examine what issues are considered women's issues, and how these issues are discussed in the different deliberative settings of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly and the Seoul Metropolitan Council.

Though most studies to date have examined women's political representation in national-level politics, it is important to investigate their substantive representation in local politics for several reasons. First, local politics is believed to provide opportunities for women's political engagement. That is, women are active participants and decision-makers when it comes to addressing key concerns of the local community such as education and safety. Additionally, local governments are growing in terms of size and authority in many democracies around the world. Therefore, not only is local politics the appropriate level for analyzing women's substantive representation, but the degree to which women's interests are represented in local councils has significant implications for democratic governance.

Women and Local Politics in Japan and Korea

Although the percentage of elected women varies greatly across levels (provincial versus municipal) and areas (urban versus rural), their representation is generally higher in local councils than in national parliaments in both Japan and Korea. For instance, women's political representation is surprisingly low in Japan (9.3% in the lower house) and Korea (17%) (see IPU, 2017),

but female members represent 18.9% and 19.8% of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly (Fusae Ichikawa Center for Women and Governance, 2015, p. 12) and the Seoul Metropolitan Council (National Election Commission, n.d.), respectively. These countries share broadly similar cultural backgrounds and socio-economic development levels, thereby allowing us to control for cultural and economic factors. At the same time, key differences in institutional characteristics such as electoral systems, party systems, and deliberative settings (e.g., the types of standing committees) make the comparisons between the two countries interesting.⁴

Background

Japan and Korea are two of the world's largest economies (ranked 3rd and 11th, respectively) (World Bank, 2017), as well as advanced democracies (ranked 20th and 32nd, respectively) (Global Democracy Ranking, 2015). Nevertheless, these statistics run contrary to the status of women in the two countries. The Global Gender Gap Index ranks Japan and Korea 101st and 115th among a total of 145 countries (World Economic Forum, 2015). In the political arena, traditions of patriarchal and Confucian cultures have often worked as key barriers for women. That is, women must rely on personal connections or family networks to gain access to the political world dominated by men's social capital (LeBlanc, 2010). Given these social and cultural circumstances, low levels of women's parliamentary representation are not surprising.

Nevertheless, female activists in both countries have long recognized local councils as an important political sphere for women. In Korea, women's groups led a nationwide movement in support of women's political representation in local politics soon after the rebirth of local elections in 1991, particularly in the form of adopting quota policies (Yoon & Shin, 2015). The political representation of women became a priority for the women's movement, where groups with different ideological backgrounds united to promote a common goal (Cho & Kim, 2010; Kim & Oh, 2010). Since

⁴ We believe a host of factors contributes to women's political representation in the two Asian countries, such as political culture (e.g., patriarchies, Confucianism) and institutional characteristics (e.g., electoral systems, gender quotas, and party systems). In this paper we briefly discuss some of the features that we believe are central to explaining similarities and differences in the patterns of women's substantive representation in our cases. For more details on women's political representation in East Asia, see Shin (2016) and Tan (2015, 2016).

newly established political parties competing in democratic elections perceived women as a powerful voting bloc, the women's movement took advantage of this political opportunity to push for quota policies as part of a broader range of political reforms. Quotas recommending that parties nominate at least 30% and 50% of female candidates in the majoritarian and proportional representation (PR) tiers of the mixed electoral system were adopted and first applied in local elections in 2002.

In Japan, grassroots movements in support of women's access to politics have been successful in local politics. In particular, a local grassroots movement called the Seikatsu Kurabu Seikyo (Seikatsu Club Cooperative), which promotes the health, welfare, environment, and educational well-being of local residents—typical concerns and responsibilities of housewives (*shufu*)—organized a political movement/party called the Tokyo Seikatsusha Network (i.e., the Net) (Gelb & Estevez-Abe, 1998; LeBlanc, 1999). The founding members believed in the importance of sending their representatives to local councils as a way of attaining political influence. This party fundamentally represents women's political interests, though the party does not promote itself as a women-only party (Shin, 2016). The Net first appeared in Tokyo in 1977, and successfully won a seat in the Nerima municipal election in 1979. This party, which currently has branches in nine different prefectures and a total of 98 seats in prefectural and municipal assemblies nationwide, has proven particularly successful in the Tokyo region (Fusae Ichikawa Center for Women and Governance, 2015, p. 15).

Overview of Women's Representation in Local Politics

How have women fared in local politics in Japan and Korea, and particularly in Tokyo and Seoul? As Figures 1A and 1B show, the proportion of women is the highest at the level of general cities, with an average of 11.2% between 1998 and 2012, followed by prefectures (6.8%) and towns/villages (6.2%) in Japan. The Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, on the other hand, has the highest proportion. Similarly in Korea, the average proportion of female members is higher in municipal (13.2%) than provincial councils (11.2%). In particular, the proportion of women in the Korean local councils increased significantly in 2006, when a number of electoral and quota reforms were undertaken to promote women's political representation. Similar to the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, Seoul ranks highest in the percentage of women in

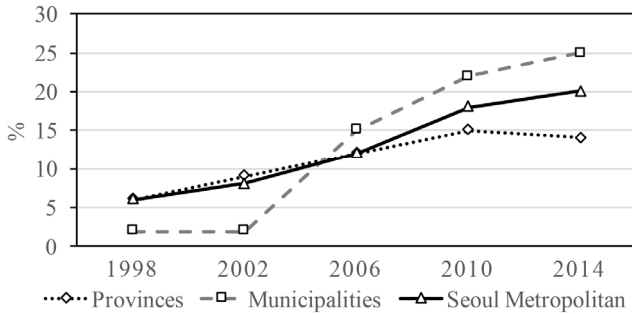


Figure 1A. *Women in the Korean Local Councils*

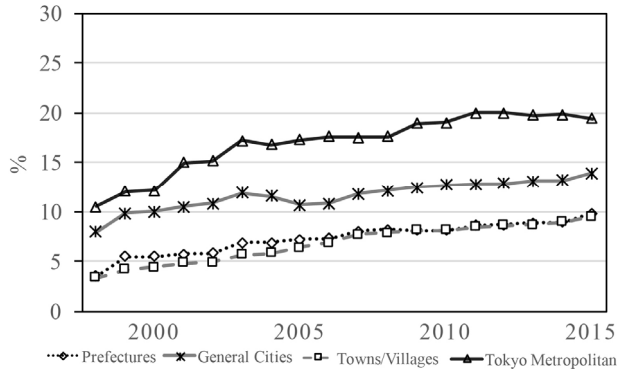


Figure 1B. *Women in the Japanese Local Councils*

Figures 1A and 1B. Percentage of Women in Local Councils. Sourced from the Gender Statistics Database in Japan (<http://winet.nwec.jp/toukei/>), and the Korea National Election Commission (<http://info.nec.go.kr/>).

its council, although the percentage of female members is still below 20%.⁵

⁵ The main reason Tokyo and Seoul have the highest percentages of female council members is that these are the most urban cities in Japan and Korea. That is, parties tend to include more women on their candidate lists in urban districts (than rural), and many of those female candidates successfully win the support of urban voters. For instance, in Japanese local politics, the Japan Communist Party (JCP) is well known for its high proportion of female members, and the party tends to be much more successful in metropolitan/urban areas like Tokyo than in rural areas (see Bochel & Bochel, 2005). The same is true for local councils in Korea, where parties generally nominate higher proportions of female candidates in urban areas (e.g., Seoul) than in rural areas. See past election statistics provided by the National Election Commission (<http://info.nec.go.kr/>).

Japanese and Korean women have been relatively successful in advancing into local politics; however, the two countries differ with regard to the formal electoral rules governing their local elections, which have led to the emergence of distinct party systems. Local council elections in Korea operate under the mixed parallel system that combines proportional representation (PR) lists with majoritarian constituencies. Accordingly, in the case of the Seoul Metropolitan Council, 10 out of 106 seats are assigned via PR, and the rest (96 seats) are assigned via elections in single-member districts (typically won by candidates from one of the two major parties). Gender quotas are applied to both majoritarian and PR tiers of the mixed electoral system, which mandate political parties to include women in their candidate lists (30% and 50% in majoritarian and PR tiers, respectively). In Japan, local council elections operate under multi-member majoritarian systems. For instance, the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly is comprised of 127 members, who are elected in districts represented by multiple members (between 1 to 8). Multi-member districts have allowed candidates from minor parties to win the election, thereby giving them representation on the local council. As we discuss later, these different party systems significantly influence how women's substantive representation occurs in Tokyo and Seoul.

Research Design and Data Collection

In this section, we outline our project's research design. We also discuss in detail the coding procedures applied to the data collected in each country.

Data and Case Descriptions

The main goal of this paper is to describe and examine how the substantive representation of women's interests occurs in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly and the Seoul Metropolitan Council. As a way of measuring the substantive representation of women's interests, we used statements/speeches made by legislators in plenary sessions and committee meetings in local councils by focusing on one aspect of substantive representation, namely *speaking for women*. This approach is particularly adequate for studying representation in local politics, because local council members primarily represent their constituents' interests through verbal statements, mainly by asking questions of, and keeping their eyes on, the activities of the prefectural/city government.

The data analyzed in this paper covers the periods in which different parties served as the ruling party in Tokyo and Seoul. We analyzed 1461 sessions for the Seoul Metropolitan Council, and 1388 sessions for the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly.

The data for the Seoul case covers the period between June 22, 2009 and June 30, 2014. It includes the entire 8th session of the Seoul Metropolitan Council, as well as one final year of the 7th council. The election of the 8th council took place on June 2, 2010. As a result, the DP became the majority party of the Seoul Metropolitan Council for the first time, holding a total of 66 seats. The conservative Saenuri ended with a total of 28 seats. This was considered a dramatic change from the 7th session, when the Saenuri (the Grand National Party at the time) dominated almost the entire council (see Figure 2A). Three different mayors assumed leadership in this time period, beginning with Oh Se-hoon (2006-2011), who was voted out of office in August 2011 by the Free Lunch referendum, which he himself initiated by betting on his position as the city mayor. Kwon Young-kyu filled the position for two months following his resignation (August to October 2011), until Park Won-soon was finally elected as the new mayor in October 2011.

The data for the Tokyo case covers the period from July 21, 2009 to the end of 2015. This period includes the entire 18th session and part of the 19th session. The 18th session began following the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election on July 21, 2009, in which the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won the majority of the seats. The 19th session started after another election on June 23, 2013, in which the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) regained the status of the largest party in the assembly (see Figure 2B).⁶ The governor of Tokyo was elected on February 9, 2014. Prior to the election, the governor had been Ishihara Shintaro, who is well known for his right wing and hawkish political orientation. Masuzoe Yoichi was elected as the new governor in the 2014 election.⁷ Although Masuzoe can be seen as less of an extremist than Ishihara in his political orientation, he was still supported mainly by the LDP and Komei, the ruling coalition in

⁶ During these sessions, some members switched to different political parties and factions. Refer to footnote 8.

⁷ Masuzoe resigned as governor on June 21, 2016 due to political scandals. Currently, Koike Yuriko is serving as the first female governor of Tokyo (since August 2, 2016).

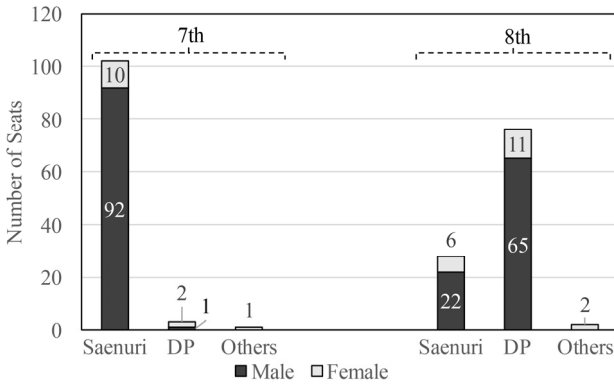


Figure 2A. *Seoul Metropolitan Council*

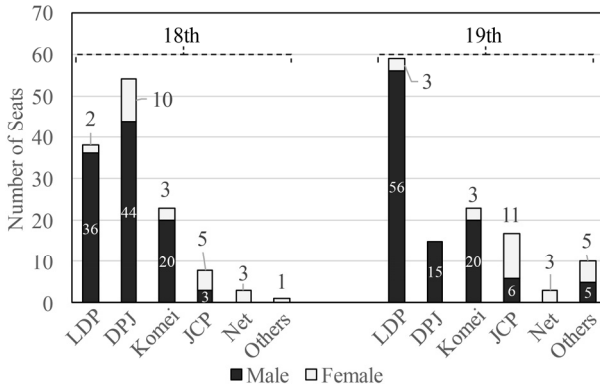


Figure 2B. *Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly*⁸

Figures 2A and 2B. Number of male and female members. These Figures depict the composition of the 7th (2006-2010) and 8th (2010-2014) Seoul Metropolitan Council, and the 18th (2009-2013) and 19th (2013-2017) of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly across sex and party affiliation. Numbers note seats held by male and female members of each party at the time of the election.

⁸ In 2009, JCP = Japan Communist Party, Net = Togikai Seikatsusha Network - Mirai, Others = Mushozoku (Jichishimin 93). In 2013 (18th council), Others = Mushozoku Heisei Ishin no Kai (1); Tokyo Ishin no Kai (3), Mushozoku Midori no Chikyū Kurabu (1); Mushozoku Tokyo Togikai Mushozoku (1); Mushozoku Togkiak Min'na no To (1). In 2013 (19th council), Others = Togikai Min'na no To (7); Nihon Ishin no Kai Tokyo Togidan (2); Mushozoku Shinkokyu no dekiru Tokyo (1). In 2015, Others = Togikai Ishin no To (5), Kagayake Tokyo (3), Mushozoku Tokyo Min'na no Kaikaku (1), Mushozoku Shinkokyu no dekiru Tokyo (1).

the assembly at the time of the election.

The structure of plenary sessions and committee meetings and the tasks of local council members are similar in the two countries. As mentioned above, executives typically propose bills, and local council members react to these bills. Council members make an effort to advocate the interests of their constituents and to reflect their own thoughts and ideas in the policy process by asking questions and expressing their opinions. In Korea, in the case of plenary sessions, the council chair begins by proposing agenda items. Policy proposals are voted on following a brief debate (or sometimes no debate), after a council member has asked to speak from the floor. For committee meetings, a typical meeting begins with the committee chair listing policy proposals (often initiated by the city mayor), followed by a brief introduction to the items by the city's senior bureaucrat, who heads a policy division/bureau (e.g., the head of the Women and Family Affairs Bureau). The chair then opens the floor for debate, when council members take turns asking questions. At other times, the bureaucrat will first outline the bureau's current activities, after which there is a question and answer session.

In Tokyo, the plenary session is the venue in which proposals regarding ordinances and budgets, contracts, personnel matters, and petitions are first submitted. Those who propose bills explain the relevant contents during the plenary session. The committees with jurisdiction over the bills conduct intensive discussions of these bills. For committee meetings the decision-making procedure is similar to that in Korea. Following bureaucrats' introductions and explanations of policy proposals, committee members ask questions, express their opinions, and ask the executive questions about the bills and the executive. Once the committees make decisions on the bills, they are sent to the plenary session, where assembly members discuss them further, and vote on them. The plenary session also serves as a forum in which assembly members ask questions of the governor and the executive branch with regard to the governor's annual policy speech made at the beginning of each calendar year (Sasaki, 2003; Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, 2017).

One major difference between the two cases that is relevant to our analysis is that in the Seoul Metropolitan Council, there is a specific committee—the Welfare Committee—designated to address a wide range of issues concerning women. Such a committee can be both a plus and a minus for the representa-

tion of women's interests. While the presence of a designated committee for women's affairs can encourage members of the committee to speak actively on behalf of women, it can also lead members to limit the discussion of women's issues exclusively to this committee, and thereby decrease the number of possible opportunities for representing women's interests outside the committee. We examine the effects of such differences on how women's interests are discursively represented in the two local councils.

Coding Procedures

We selected the statements made by legislators in plenary sessions and committee meetings when they “spoke for women.” We follow Celis, Childs, Kantola, and Krook's (2014) approach in “eliminating more generic references that do not involve representative claims about women per se” (p. 159). Thus, focusing on members' use of gendered rhetoric in their statements, we pay attention to the ways in which members themselves describe the issues that are of interest to women. Specifically, we count statements as *speaking for women* when 1) they claim women need and want certain things, 2) they claim women face difficulties and disadvantages that need to be improved, and/or 3) women have certain rights.⁹ In addition, the statements should explicitly (and in rare instances implicitly) mention women as the group being represented.¹⁰ After recording representatives' gendered rhetoric in their statements, we developed 20 nonexclusive policy categories, and assigned topic codes to each record. Our method ensures that we do not exclude instances in which members refer to issues of importance to women without using one of the predetermined policies' key words (e.g., childcare). At the same time, simple references to words like *women*, *mothers*, and *girls* are not enough to qualify for inclusion in our data set. Instead, for a statement

⁹ This is based on Celis' definition of the substantive representation of women— “Acting for women is to denounce a situation that is disadvantageous for women, to formulate proposals to improve the situation of women, or to claim a right for women with the same goal” (Celis, 2006, p. 88).

¹⁰ We follow Celis et al. (2014) in this regard. The authors analyze “materials containing public statements made by actors regarding their views on women's issues and interests” (p. 159). Interventions can be recognized as representative claims about women when the questions addressed are (1) directly constructed as being of importance to women, (2) presented as only affecting women, (3) discussed in terms of gender difference, (4) spoken of in terms of gendered effects, and/or (5) framed in terms of equality between women and men.

to be coded as a gendered rhetoric in our data set, members must express concerns and interests relevant to the well-being of women.

One author was responsible for coding the contents of plenary sessions and committee meetings in each of the two countries, and we made an effort to ensure that our codes corresponded well across the two countries. While making sure that we categorized similar issues under identical topic categories for comparative purposes, we also kept track of unique issues in each country context, with key information illustrating the differences in women's concerns in each country.

Research Questions and Expectations

After the data had been coded, we analyzed our results in reference to the three questions posed by this study. First, what issues are mentioned as being relevant to women's policy concerns, and where are they mentioned? Second, are there any differences between male and female council members and between female members of different parties in terms of the number of times they speak for women? Finally, are there substantive differences between the references to women's issues across political parties?

We expected that there would be both similarities and differences in how the legislators of the two councils define *women's issues*. We also expected that the presence of a Women's Bureau in the Seoul Metropolitan Government would encourage members of the Welfare Committee to discuss women's issues extensively and more intensively, while the lack of a similar committee in Tokyo makes the representation of women's interests less likely to occur intensively across a number of committees. As to whether legislators' gender and party affiliation impacted whether and how they speak for women, we expected that women, particularly women of progressive parties, would speak for women more often. Moreover, we expected both male and female members of different political parties would represent women's interests in distinct ways that reflect their parties' ideologies and orientations.

Who Speaks for Women and How Women's Interests Are Discussed

In this section, we discuss our major findings, and generally confirm our key research expectations.

What are Women's Issues and Where are They Discussed?

What issues are considered as being relevant to women's concerns by the council members? Similar issues emerged in both cases as women's issues, namely women's jobs, low fertility rates, women's health, and crime and violence against women. At the same time, the policy issues mentioned more frequently in each of the councils differ. Figure 3 shows the distribution of mentions across our 20 topic categories. In the Seoul Metropolitan Council, the most widely mentioned topics include childcare (15.8%), public work contracts (13.0%), promoting marriage and childbirth (11.9%), jobs (9.7%), and other topics (9.5%). In contrast, topics receiving most attention in Tokyo were jobs (23.9%), medical services (14.4%), disaster response and prevention (11.7%), women's rights (9.5%), and childcare (7.9%). These findings support the claim made in previous research that there is no fixed set of *women's issues* (Celis, 2008; Celis, Hilds, Kantola, & Krook, 2014). Instead, women's issues reflect the unique contexts in which they are discussed and debated.

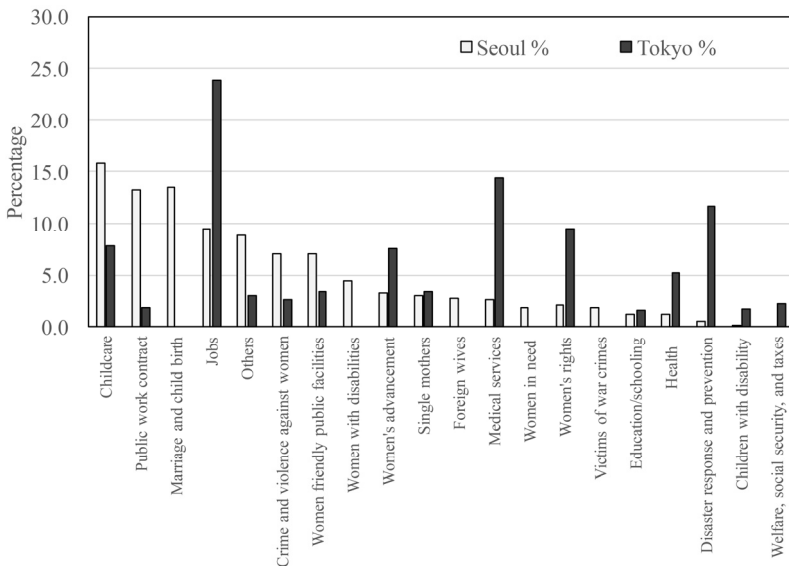


Figure 3. Council members' mentions of issues relevant to women by topic. This figure depicts the distribution of woman-related mentions across 20 topic areas. A total of 570 and 683 mentions were recorded in the Seoul Metropolitan Council and the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, respectively. The most-often mentioned topic in the Seoul Metropolitan Council appears on the far left of the figure.

Another difference we identify is the tendency of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly to concentrate on a few topics. The five topics discussed most often represented 40.7% of the total mentions in the Seoul Metropolitan Council, and 67.3% in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly.

As shown in Table 1, in the case of Tokyo, the largest number of remarks regarding women's issues are made in plenary sessions (28.1%), followed by those made in the Welfare Committee (15.4%), the Special Committee for Annual Settlement of Accounts (12.0%), the Education Committee (9.8%), and the Special Budget Committee (8.9%). In contrast, in Seoul, most discussions regarding women occur in the Welfare Committee (64.2%), followed by those made in plenary sessions (12.1%).

Table 1.
Institutional Locations Where Women's Concerns Are Addressed

	Seoul	Tokyo	
Plenary Session	11.9	28.1	Plenary Session
Welfare	64.0	15.4	Welfare
Construction	0.0	1.0	Environment and Construction
Environment	0.7	6.3	Economic and Port & Harbor
Culture and Tourism	0.9	1.5	Public Enterprise
Economy and Finance	2.5	2.3	Finance
Administration and Autonomy	4.2	7.3	General Affairs
Urban Management	0.7	0.6	Urban Development
Education	2.5	9.8	Education
Transportation	2.1	0.1	Police/Fire Fighting
Assembly Steering	0.7	0.3	Assembly Steering
Budget	3.2	8.9	Budget*
Women's Affairs*	4.2	12.0	Annual Settlement of Accounts (ASA)*
Parents Education Network*	1.2	4.8	Public Enterprise ASA*
Private School's Transparency/Tourism	0.0	1.3	Disaster Countermeasures*
Dokdo Island*	0.9	0.1	Olympic/Paralympic Games*
Disabled*	0.4	0.0	
Total %	100.0	100.0	Total %
Total N of Observations	570	683	Total N of Observations

Note. This table summarizes the distribution of women-related mentions across plenary sessions and committee meetings. Asterisks indicate special committees.

Why do the discussions of women's concerns occur mostly in the Welfare Committee in the Seoul Metropolitan Council? We believe this is because the Health and Welfare Committee in the National Assembly monitors the Ministry of Gender Equality (an executive agency in Korea). Consequently, when the Women and Family Affairs Bureau (the metropolitan government's version of the Ministry of Gender Equality) was established by the Seoul Metropolitan Council Welfare Committee, it was designated as the place for addressing women's issues. Thus, the presence of agencies such as the Ministry of Gender Equality responsible for dealing with women's affairs in the national government has implications for women's substantive representation in local councils as well. When, as in Japan, no agency has been given responsibility for handling women's affairs, politicians wishing to address women's issues have no alternative but to target different institutional venues simultaneously, in an attempt to find a suitable place for the discussion. Alternatively, members wishing to advocate for women's issues must raise them whenever and wherever there is an opportunity to do so.

The concentration of mentions in Korea's welfare committee is quite interesting, particularly given the wide range of women's issues as summarized in Figure 3. Designating a specific venue for discussing women's issues can be concerning, as doing so may confine the discussion to a narrow set of issues over which a specific agency or committee has jurisdiction. However, the Seoul case indicates that assigning a specific venue for discussion does not necessarily limit the scope of discussion.

Who Speaks for Women and How: Party Affiliation and Gender

Although women constitute a minority in both councils, we found that they are actively advocating for women in both Seoul and Tokyo. Given that the percentages of female legislators in both the Seoul Metropolitan Council and the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly are less than 20%, this finding suggests that female members do indeed speak more for women in both councils relative to male members. In the Seoul Metropolitan Council, 254 and 252 mentions were from male and female members, respectively. Examining the speakers' party affiliations, we found that mentions by members of the DP and the Saenuri Party accounted for 69.2% and 27.5% of the total mentions, respectively. This does not neces-

sarily imply that as a relatively more progressive party the DP cares more about women's concerns. Rather, the DP held more than 70% of seats in the 8th Seoul Metropolitan Council, which simply suggests that more DP members were given the opportunity to speak. At the same time, female DP members were responsible for the largest portion of mentions (38.7%), followed by male DP members (30.4%). On the other hand, male members of the Saenuri Party were responsible only for 17.2% of the mentions, and female members for 10.3% of the mentions. Thus, individuals who are both women and members of the DP are more likely to advocate actively for women.

In Tokyo as well, female legislators speak more often for women's issues than male legislators, with 369 and 295 mentions from female and male members, respectively. Across parties, members of the Komei Party (Komei) made the largest number of statements for women (25%), followed by the Net (19.2%), the Japan Communist Party (JCP, 17.1%), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP, 16.9%), the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ, 11.2%), and Others (10.5%). It is important to note that the time available for making statements and asking questions is allocated according to the number of seats each faction has (Otokita, 2013; Shiomura, 2015). Comparing the size of the factions and the number of times each faction speaks for women (Figures 2B and 4), we notice that the Komei, the Net, and the JCP tend to speak for women more often than other parties. At the same time, predominantly, female members speak for women in both the JCP (2.4% male and 14.7% female) and the Net (19.2% female). Not surprisingly, the Net has only female members (100% women), and the JCP has the second largest percentage of female members (63% in the DPJ era and 65% in the LDP era). Regarding the case of Komei, more male than female members made statements on women's issues (16.3% male and 8.7% female), but given that there are 20 male members and only 3 female members, respectively, the data suggests that female Komei members are on average more active in speaking for women than male Komei members.

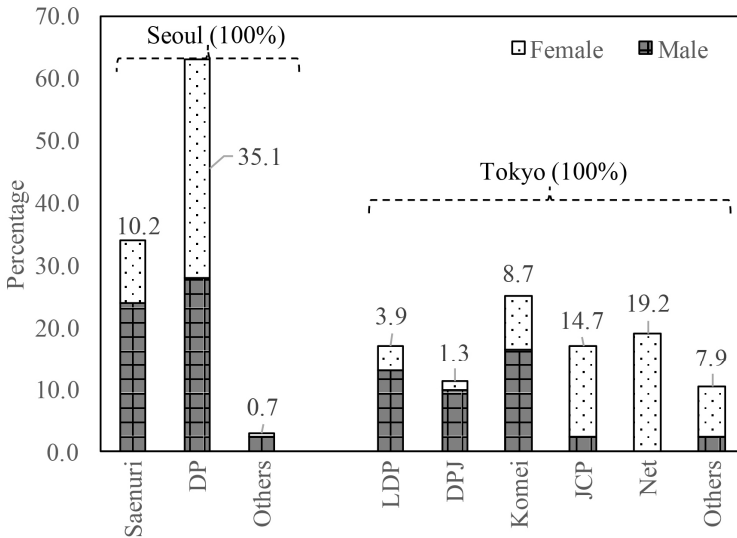


Figure 4. Speakers by gender and party. This Figure depicts the gender and party affiliation of speakers who made woman-related mentions. Three bars on the left indicate mentions that occurred in the Seoul Metropolitan Council by male and female members of various parties (total 100%). Six bars on the right indicate mentions that occurred in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly by male and female members of various parties (total 100%). Labels indicate the percentage of mentions specifically made by female members of each party in Seoul and Tokyo.

Delving into the Contents: Differences across Parties and Party Systems

We conducted a more thorough analysis to explore substantive differences in the contents of these statements across parties. Our findings indicate that party systems shape the ways in which women's interests are represented. In the case of Seoul, whereas the Saenuri Party members tended to focus on traditional issues concerning women such as promoting marriage and childbirth (20.5%) and childcare (14.9%) in their discussion of women's interests, the DP's understanding of women's concerns was clearly broader, particularly concerning underprivileged women (e.g., women-friendly public facilities, women's rights, foreign wives, victims of war crimes, and others including single mothers and women with disabilities). Looking specifically into the substantive contents under the categories of childcare and jobs (topics that were frequently discussed by both parties), we noticed that apart from the fact that only members of the DP mentioned contents specifically relevant to work-life balance (under the *jobs* cat-

egory), distinctions between the two parties were negligible.

In contrast, in Tokyo, depending on the topic, a clear difference is noticeable across parties. Focusing on the two most frequently mentioned topics—jobs and medical services—we notice that there is no major difference across parties' statements about medical services, although parties talk about jobs in very different ways. Two findings stand out. First, the LDP tends to tie women's employment and job opportunities to the national economy, while other parties like the JCP and the Net indicate their support for women's employment and well-being, rather than for the sake of other goals. Additionally, while all other parties argue that women (and men, for some parties) should be able to balance work and family, the LDP does not mention this aspect of the issue in their discussion of jobs and employment. Generally, whereas parties like Komei, the JCP, and most notably the Net understand women's employment and work as having various implications for women's lives, this is not the case for the LDP. These findings suggest that the multi-party system of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, compared with the two-party system of the Seoul Metropolitan Council, which allows smaller parties to gain legislative access, makes it possible for various aspects of women's interests and difficulties to be acknowledged and represented by the legislators.

Conclusions

What are women's concerns and who represents their interests in local politics? Does women's increasing numerical representation (i.e., presence) lead to women's greater substantive representation in elected bodies of government? Our paper provides a first glance at these fundamental questions within the Asian context. Specifically, we extend previous research on politics and gender by identifying the factors that shape the representation of women's interests in local politics, and test their validity in the Tokyo and Seoul councils, which are the local elected bodies of two East Asian democracies in which the process of women's substantive representation has rarely been examined.

We show that women's issues discussed in local councils include topics ranging from the provision of more jobs for women, better working environments, childcare services, to health-related issues affecting women. At the same time, the issues mentioned more frequently as being relevant to

women vary between our cases. Our findings also suggest that the factors identified as being important for women's substantive representation in previous comparative research are also relevant to local councils in Japan and Korea. For example, female members speak on behalf of women more frequently than male members with regard to women's concerns. Women, regardless of their party affiliation and the broader context (i.e., institutional partisanship), actively advocate women's concerns. At the same time, members affiliated with different parties speak for women in distinct ways, and more so in Tokyo's multi-party system than in Seoul's two-party system. This suggests that party systems can influence how women's interests are mentioned and represented.

We conclude by drawing two important implications from our findings. First, we argue that women do make a difference, but only those who aim to represent women really matter for substantive representation. Similarly, it would be inaccurate to state that women's interests will not be represented at all if female members are absent from the legislature. Although generally less active in speaking for women than their female counterparts, male legislators do make remarks that are relevant to women. Nonetheless, the presence of female members, particularly those keen to represent women (e.g., members of the Net in Tokyo), significantly increases the likelihood that women's concerns will be addressed in the assembly. In addition, we argue that addressing *what* difference women make is as important as addressing *how* women make a difference. That is, institutional rules and practices set the contexts under which members represent women's interests—who raises women's issues and where. In this regard, it is important to consider the overall policymaking process when analyzing women's substantive representation. Future research should delve further into the formal and informal rules that shape the process of representation.

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