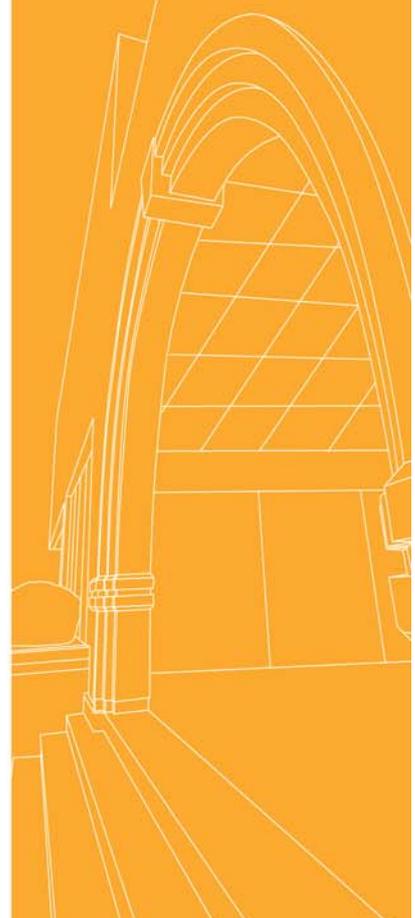




Knowledge Sharing on Korea's Development  
in Women's Policies

# Producing Gender Specialists through Women's Studies in Universities

Myoung-sun Lee



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## Producing Gender Specialists through Women's Studies in Universities

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**Producing Gender Specialists through Women's Studies in Universities**

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Korean Women's Development Institute(KWDI) is a government-affiliated think-tank under the Prime Minister's Office of South Korea. It has contributed to realizing gender equality, improving women's social participation and welfare and advancing family life and state through comprehensive researches on women's policies.

## Foreword

South Korea has transformed itself from being an aid receiving country to an aid giving one after achieving an unprecedented economic growth during the past half century. Such growth was not confined to economic spheres only, but happened in many social arenas. Women's advancement was one area that has seen another dramatic transformation.

While efforts has existed to share Korea's development experience, such as Knowledge Sharing Program(KSP) spearheaded by South Korea's Ministry of Strategy and Finance(MOSF) and Development Experience Exchange Partnership(DEEP) by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs(MOFA), there hardly existed initiatives to share women's advancement experiences in particular. The current study is the first of its kind and compiles the case analyses of women's development in various areas of South Korean society.

This study is an essential part of KWDI's multi-year ODA project titled "Strengthening Gender Equality Policy Infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific Region." This is a project aimed at establishing political and social infrastructure for gender-equal policy in the Asia-Pacific region. We believe South Korea's cases could serve as one model to consider for our partner countries in achieving this goal.

KWDI plans to share these case studies through various means such as policy consultation, workshops and international conferences. We will also come up with potential gender-related ODA projects that South Korean government can work with partner countries based on Korea's comparative advantage/experience. Our ultimate goal is to design a women's policy model tailored to local needs and work together to translate it into practice.

I hope the concerted efforts made by KWDI and partner countries will bring substantive changes in the lives of women in Asia.

**Choe, Keum-Sook, Ph.D.**

President

Korean Women's Development Institute



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# I

## Introduction



Women's Studies in Korean society was born with the establishment of the Korean Women's Institute (KWI) and installation of lectures on Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University in 1977. For more than thirty years, Women's Studies has made a remarkable achievement developing as an academic discipline. In particular, it is regarded that Women's Studies in Korean society have not only greatly influenced the academia and women-related fields, such as women's movement and women's policies, by producing feminist knowledge and experts, but it also has enhanced the awareness of women and gender equality in all areas of the society.

In this regard, this study aims to examine the institutional growth and development of Women's Studies since the time of its introduction up to the present with a focus on its institutionalization and to analyze its influence on changes in Korean society by producing feminist knowledge and women experts through institutionalization.

In order to analyze the institutionalization of Women's Studies in universities, the following three major factors must be considered: First, Women's Studies has been institutionalized as an academic discipline. By examining how Women's Studies have been institutionalized and disseminated as a branch of study within universities, the dissemination and promotion of Women's Studies can be analyzed. The second factor to consider is the current status and activities of university-affiliated research institutes for Women's Studies. The institutional base of Women's Studies is not strong given that it is a relatively new field. Thus, university-affiliated research institutes for Women's Studies played a critical role in the process of institutionalizing Women's Studies. Such research institutes have not only undertaken the roles of research institutes in general, namely conducting research, producing knowledge and engaging in scholarly exchange, but also more comprehensively, they developed the curriculum, published textbooks for Women's Studies, fostered researchers and provided support for them. Based on such different roles, the department of

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Women's Studies and university-affiliated research institutes for Women's Studies were mutually cooperative and complementary. The third factor is the institutionalization of association of Women's Studies. Academic societies are a community among scholars in related fields aiming to produce knowledge through research. The creation of such a society is based on the formation of a community of experts or scholars in Women's Studies that is of a certain size. While how Women's Studies was institutionalized in a university level can be analyzed by examining department of Women's Studies and university-affiliated research institutes for Women's Studies, another level of institutionalization of Women's Studies can be analyzed by examining the academic societies which represent the formation of an community for academic exchange among scholars in Women's Studies.

This study aims to analyze the process of institutionalization and development of Women's Studies in Korean society. The second chapter will reflect on the social background of the introduction of Women's Studies and the chapter III will examine the process and details of its institutionalization in chronological order. The chapter IV will analyze the production of feminist knowledge and experts as the fruits of the institutionalization. Lastly, the chapter V will provide an evaluation and implications of the institutionalization of Women's Studies.

## II

# Background

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This chapter examines the social changes and new trends in Korean society around the time when Women's Studies was first installed at the Ewha Womans University in the late 1970s. More specifically, it will discuss Korea's social background, women's movement and international trends which influence the development of Women's Studies, and it will also examine a social backlash against Women's Studies and the reflections of the university community.

## 1. Korean Society in the 1970s

Lectures on Women's Studies were first introduced in Korean universities during the 1970s. At the time, the Korean society was under the strong dictatorship rule by the Park Chung-hee military regime. Economically, it was experiencing the structural contradictions of an export-led economy and an acceleration of an economic crisis following its high economic growth of the 1960s. As a result, not only democratic movements that resisted dictatorship, but also labor movements that advocated the rights of workers were seen strictly anti-governmental and were suppressed. Furthermore, with the onset of an economic crisis and social contradictions, the workers who had to struggle in poor working conditions and low wages began to go on strike and be engaged in demonstrations and protests which spread fiercely across the country. As citizen's resistance against the Revitalizing Reforms system of the Park administration escalated, democratization movements led by students, professors, intellectuals and journalists spread to all levels of society.

The 1970s was still a time where traditional customs of Confucianism and a patriarchal culture was strongly upheld in Korean society. Discrimination against women in daily life was not recognized as a discrimination, but rather accepted as a natural social order. Men were the head of the household and the traditional discriminatory recognition that 'Men are the sky, women are the

earth' was deeply rooted in society. The tradition of preferring sons over daughters created a culture where being born a girl was not a blessing. Many young women worked in factories under the country's industrialization policies but they were not regarded as individual workers. They were seen simply as daughters or sisters earning money for their brothers' tuition. The hierarchical, authoritarian culture and order under the military regime dominated the Korean society, and the so called 'military culture' combined with the culture of Confucianism further strengthened the already conservative society and oppressed daily life. In fact, the hierarchical, patriarchal and authoritarian culture was accepted as a normal everyday culture even within those who were fighting for democracy.

This was similar in state or government policy decision-making. Gender equality or welfare were not regarded as important issues. After the establishment of the modern government, women were simply a major source or resource that implemented national policies, or a subject of policy under a national policy with the motto 'Economic Development' and 'Growth' to rise from poverty. In other words, women were recognized as cheap labor easily mobilized to achieve economic growth based on labor-intensive industries or industry reserves that form the lowest-level of manpower in a local organization which carries out government-led policies, such as the Saemaul Movement, or Family Planning Initiatives<sup>1</sup>).

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1) 'The Saemaul Movement', quoted as a successful national project which drove Korea's economic development and growth policies, should be evaluated from a gender perspective. One of the results of the Saemaul Movement is regarded as having contributed to the empowerment of women by granting them the chance to undertake village or local projects together with men in public sectors and voice their opinions. But it cannot be seen as having aimed for women empowerment or contributed to the improvement of gender inequality in the local society. This is a field which requires more in-depth follow-up study. Another prime example of how the state recognized women in the 1970s was the family planning initiatives. The government resolutely pushed forward with a population control policy to achieve economic development and growth, and strictly controlled and adjusted women's individual sexuality and

As such, the 1970s was an extremely complicated era of dynamic change for the Korean society where rapid industrialization led by government and urbanization, a political environment ruled by military dictatorship, and democratic movements resisting such governance and labor movements all coexisted at once. Despite how Confucianism-based traditional discrimination oppressed women's lives, issues of women or gender equality were never on the agenda in national policy, and women were treated as resources that could be mobilized to undertake economic development policies.

## 2. International Trends and Women's Movement in Korea

### A. Designation of 'International Women's Year' by UN and Its Social Implications

Domestically, a grim political and social environment persisted, but internationally, a new change and trend in women's issues began to surface. In particular, the United Nations designated 1975 as the International Women's Year and hosted the World Conference on the International Women in Mexico City in the same year. It was attended by 133 delegates from all corners of the world who adopted the World Plan of Action. In addition, they declared 1976-1985 the "United Nations Decade for Women," which aimed to facilitate national and international action for the empowerment of women. The World Plan of Action proposed detailed recommendations on the achievement of gender inequality in education and at the workplace, ensuring women's equal

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re-production to achieve its goals (Lee Mi-kyoung, 1989). As a result, the family planning initiatives of the 1970s has led to a real decline in birth-rates. It cannot, however, be free from the criticism that it was a serious infringement of women's human and reproduction rights.

participation in politics, and equal treatment and guarantee of promotion opportunities for women laborers.

Such international movements had a significant impact on not only the domestic women's community, but also in forming a social public opinion on women's issues. More importantly, the designation of the International Women's Year created a momentum for the so-called 'women's issues' to become a social agenda or discourse. Most notably, major daily newspapers began to actively post articles on women. The idea which looked down on women was criticized and active discussions were held on how to resolve the many issues that were in the law, politics, economy and society and at home. Efforts to highlight cases of discrimination against women in various spheres of the Korean society also increased, and discussions on the Family Act, the system where women must retire upon marriage ('Marriage Retirement System'<sup>2)</sup>), differences in wages according to gender and discrimination in promotions were proposed on newspapers (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 10-11). The government had no choice but to acknowledge the changes in the international community, and a shared understanding was formed on that it must more actively seek a solution for women's issues in Korean society. Consequently, in March 1975, the Korean government, together with women's organizations, hosted a ceremony proclaiming "Korean Women's Year."

The changes in public opinion or government attitude towards women's issues above clearly demonstrate how the movements in the international community provided a critical momentum that triggered change in the recognition of

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2) 'The Marriage Retirement System' was a custom of forcing married women to retire. In 1975, Lee Myeong-suk, who was working for the Cho Hung Bank, claimed, "I cannot submit my resignation with my own hands" against a management which was urging her to submit her resignation before her wedding. This case provided the momentum for women's organizations to organize a protest that demanded the abolishment of the Marriage Retirement System.

women's issues in Korea. Though such changes were temporary political measures to meet international standards, they were definitely major social changes. What calls for particular attention is not that such social changes were unilaterally influenced by the international society, but that the domestic women's community tried to create change by utilizing them. In other words, the Korean women's community dispatched a delegation to participate in international activities in person and reflected changes in international society into domestic public opinion, such as encouraging the government to proclaim the Korean Women's Year with the designation of the International Women's Year, and utilized them as a barometer. Such efforts of the women's community evolved into a full-fledged women movement in the modern sense in the late 1970s, and became more concrete through movements of the women's community that demanded a change in women's education henceforth.

## B. 'Women's Issues' on the Agenda and Women's Movement<sup>3)</sup>

Even up to the mid-1970s, women's issues were not included in the social agenda of the Korean society. Women participated in democratic movements as university students, intellectuals and believers in religion, but amidst the serious political situation and desperate economic conditions, 'democratization' rather than 'women's issues' was accepted as an urgent priority. Even in the industrialization process, women worked as industrial workers, and despite the

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3) If, in a broad sense, women's movement were to be regarded as a practice women undertook with an aim to create social change, women's movement in Korea goes back to the late 19th century when they participated in the Save the Nation Movement. In the Western world, it goes back to the so-called Suffrage Movement. But this paper sees women's movement in a much narrower concept from the point of feminism in the modern sense. More specifically, it regards it as an individual and/or collective practice which aims to change gender relations or pursues gender equality with a focus on women agenda from a feminist perspective.

fact that many women laborers undertook pivotal roles in labor movement camps, issues of low wages and inequality commonly faced by women laborers were simply referred to as 'labor issues' and not treated as separate 'women's issues' (Kang Nam-sik, 2004). After liberalization, women's organizations, which were few in number but had a nationwide coverage, were mostly pro-government and interested in promoting government policies and mobilizing women resources rather than concerned in women's issues.

The designation of the International Women's Year by UN, however, triggered a change, and gradually, women's issues emerged on the social agenda and women's movements with a focus on gender discrimination or women's issues gained visibility. Upon closer examination, movements to revise the Family Act and improve inequality in employment, primarily 'the Marriage Retirement System', and efforts by social organizations advocating women's education were carried out. Notably, the movement to revise the Family Act undertaken by the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations and more than sixty women's organizations nationwide, resulted in the first revision of the Family Act in 1977. Although the revision was limited to the partial amendment of only a few provisions, this achievement is highly symbolic in the history of Korean women's movement since the Family Act had contained provisions based on a patriarchal family structure and oppressed women (Yang Hyeon-a, 2011). In addition, women's organizations called for the abolishment of 'the Marriage Retirement System', criticizing the long-accepted custom that women laborers had to retire upon marriage. The movement against gisaeng (Korean geisha) tourism led by the Korea Church Women United also calls for attention. It is meaningful because it was a resistance against the government's policy that utilized sex trafficking as a tourism resource under the guise of bringing in foreign currency and it was an "approach on a women's movement level (The Kyunghyang Shinmun, 1983. 8. 3)" on the issue of sex trafficking. The activities of the Christian Academy at the time were also highly distinctive.

The Christian Academy proclaimed that women's movement was not simply an effort to improve the status of women, but a movement to liberalize humans, and it gathered women's organization workers, journalists and professors to initiate women's education and education programs for women in all levels of society, including housewives and laborers (Han Myeong-suk, 1993).

The inclusion of women's issues in the agenda and achievements of women's movements carried out upon its foundation in the late 1970s, however, failed to strengthen the women's movement on a nationwide level or build sustainable solidarity, and remained case-by-case solidarity movements or sporadic movements. Nevertheless, they are significant in the fact that women's movement became visible as an organizational activity based on so-called women agenda that attempted to change the gender discriminative society.

### 3. Social Criticism against Women's Education and Reflections of the University Community

Another issue worth-noting among major social agenda related to women in the Korean society during the 1970s was the initiation of the debate on the need for higher education for women. The designation of the UN International Women's Year had a particular impact in domestic public opinion, which placed various women-related issues on the table in newspapers and other media. Among the important debates circulated by the media, the debate on the 'A Theory that Educating Women is Useless'<sup>4)</sup> stands out. This debate

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4) This debate was triggered by a contribution titled 'A Theory that Educating Women is Useless' written by Professor Ahn In-hee of Ewha Womans University for the monthly journal *Generation* (1975. 3). Her article argued that many women receive tertiary education but their university graduation certificates are only used as a signboard to be sold at the highest price and they take it for granted that they must depend on their husbands financially, which is why tertiary education for women was unnecessary.

incorporates the skepticism and criticism against educating women based on claims that most women who graduate from university stay at home and fail to use their education for the good of the society, and therefore, questions “What is the use of tertiary education for women?” This discourse expanded to a debate on the very existence of women's universities, and the criticism was concentrated on Ewha Womans University, which was the most representative university for women in Korea. Some media outlets even went so far as criticizing that “Women who received tertiary education have degraded into leaders of extravagant fashion and frivolous values, and therefore the very existence of a women's university is a waste (The Kyunghyang Shinmun, 1976. 5. 27).”

The debate that women's education was useless is an exemplary episode which demonstrates the social recognition and limits of contemporary times. This, paradoxically, offers counter-evidence to the discriminative reality of women with tertiary education and overall women's education. Despite the gradual increase of women's entrance into universities<sup>5)</sup>, women's universities at the time were recognized as schools nurturing elite brides who would be a ‘good wife and wise mother’. As a matter of fact, many women university students believed that it was ideal to get married and have a family upon graduation rather than get a job or develop their career. It is also a fact that the Korean society at the time did not offer an environment where women with higher education could spread their wings and work. Yet, this argument simply ignored the social constraints and transferred all criticism and responsibilities to individual women. The criticism that the very existence of women's universities were a waste or criticism against Ewha Womans University are embedded with a negative social recognition against women that women with higher education do not contribute

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5) By the mid-1970s, the proportion of male university students to female university students reached 73.6% to 26.1%. Though the number of male students was triple that of female students, the latter was already more than a double increase compared to that of the 1950s (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 11).

to society but aim for a selfish life based on personal interests<sup>6)</sup>.

But almost at the same time, discussions were actively underway on the need for a new vision on education for women and the academic and theoretical systemization of women's issues among the university community led by Ewha Womans University, the very school that had been the main target of criticism. A point worth noting was that in case of Ewha, it was actively leading the introduction of 'Women's Studies' as an alternative to women's education in Korea. The academic conference "Yesterday and Tomorrow of Korean Women" hosted by the school in 1975 ignited an academic approach towards creating a new transition in the recognition of women's education and the effort of seeking alternatives. The conference aspired to reflect upon the education for women in Korea and search for a new vision on the occasion of the International Women's Year (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 15). This led to calls for the need to introduce Women's Studies. In 1976, Professor Chung Eui-suk and co-researchers at Ewha Womans University published a thesis titled "A Proposal to Install a Women's Studies Program for the Development of Women's Capabilities", which created an important momentum for the introduction of Women's Studies. The authors asserted in the thesis that women's education must liberalize women from traditional thinking and must enable their self-realization as a human and develop capabilities. In particular, it defined the concept of Women's Studies as "liberalizing women's consciousness and urging true humanization" and proposed the installation of Women's Studies in the university curriculum for improved consciousness of women and development of women leaders (Ewha school newspaper, 1976. 11. 5). Above all, the thesis holds great significance in the history of Women's Studies in Korea because it utilized the academic term

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6) Social criticism against so-called 'educated women' actually began with the emergence of the 'New women' in the 19th century. Even during that time when women began receiving institutionalized education, 'new women' were often criticized as "women giddy with extravagance and frivolous vanity" (Lee Myoung-sun, 2003).

“Women's Studies” for the first time in Korea<sup>7)</sup> and called for the installation of Women's Studies in the curriculum as a new paradigm for women's education. In fact, Ewha Womans University began preparing the installation of lectures on Women's Studies simultaneously with the publication of the thesis. Furthermore, it founded the Korean Women's Institute (KWI) as a research institute affiliated with the university for the installation of the lectures in 1977. In the same year, it became the first school in Korea to install lectures on Women's Studies.

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7) Chang Pilwha, the first full-time professor of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University, claims that the origin and genealogy of the science of Women's Studies actually go back to the history of women's education in the late 19th century. In other words, education of women in contemporary society was a resistance against the patriarchal society, and even before the term 'Women's Studies' was coined, Professor Kim Hwal-lan taught 'History of Women's Movement' at Ewha Womans University in the 1950s. She explains that these courses were based on the critical thought of Women's Studies (Chang, 2008).

### III

## Institutionalization Process and Projects

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This Chapter examines in detail the process of institutionalization of Women's Studies in chronological order. The 1970s was when Women's Studies was first introduced and the first lecture on Women's Studies was installed as part of the university curriculum. In the 1980s, the foundation of Women's Studies was built in an institutional level and was highlighted with the establishment of a department of Women's Studies in the graduate school level and the foundation of the Korean Association of Women's Studies (KAWS). With the beginning of the 1990s, the installation of departments of Women's Studies in graduate schools and undergraduate programs expanded nationwide, and the creation of a doctoral program in Women's Studies and increase of women's research institutes contributed to the quantitative and qualitative expansion of the institutionalization of Women's Studies. This was a period of qualitative and quantitative expansion and growth for the institutionalization of Women's Studies. In the 2000s, the institutionalization reached a period of stability, and projects to institutionalize women's studies in Korea went beyond the border to Asia. In particular, this is the expansion period where Women's Studies influenced every level of society through accumulated knowledge production and training of feminist experts.

## 1. Introductory Phase (1970s): Installation of Korea's First Women's Studies Lectures

The 1970s was the introductory phase when Women's Studies was first installed in universities in Korea. At the time, Ewha Womans University played a leading role and took the initiative of installing lectures on Women's Studies for the first time, while at the same time, founding the Korean Women's Institute (KWI) as an affiliated research institute. Through these efforts, it began to spread the science of Women's Studies in Korean society. This is why it is

impossible to explain the history of so-called "Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University" separately in the analysis of Women's Studies during the introductory phase. The process of introducing Women's Studies led by Ewha is not simply a case of an individual school, but a model and standard of great importance which demonstrates the process through which Women's Studies was born and developed at the university level in Korea.

## A. Installation of Women's Studies Lectures

### 1) Development of the Curriculum for Women's Studies

At the time, Ewha Womans University implemented its project of installing Women's Studies lectures with the recognition that it was not only the first of such an attempt in Korea, but it also could become a future model for other universities across Asia as well as other universities in Korea. The underlying reason for the success of the project lay, above all, in the powerful leadership of the then-president and university authorities, financial assistance, and the devotion and passion of the faculty that contributed to the project. The installation of Women's Studies was pursued as part of the "Women and Development Research Project" based on the school's powerful will and assistance. In particular, it was a project which was implemented relatively securely and systematically with the financial assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

For the effective operation of the "Women and Development Research Project", Ewha appointed Kim Young-jeong, a professor of history, as the chairperson of the Planning Committee; and Suh Gwang-sun(a professor of philosophy), Yun Soon-young(a visiting professor) and Lee Hyo-jae(a professor of sociology) as committee members. The primary goals of the project were to 1) develop a curriculum model for Women's Studies for the consciousness-raising of universities and general women, 2) install books and an information

center for Women's Studies, 3) develop textbooks, 4) install lectures on Women's Studies for the consciousness-raising of students, and 5) provide education to develop women leaders in rural areas, cities and low-income households. In order to add expertise to this core project, the Women and Development Research Project Planning Committee organized the "Committee on Women's Studies Research (the "Committee")" with professors at Ewha Wamans University who represented each department.<sup>8)</sup> At the time, the committee did not have a single professor who majored in Women's Studies. Given the multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary characteristics of the science, it was composed of a faculty that could represent every field of study. They were required to conduct research, give lectures and develop curriculum on Women's Studies. But for most of the members of the Committee, the title "Women's Studies" itself was much too unfamiliar and new. However, the professors who participated in the committee at the time were so passionate about their mission that they would gather a couple of times every month to hold seminars where they would make thematic presentations and be engaged in discussions (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 15-18).

The Committee aimed to 1) conduct basic researches for the development of a curriculum on Women's Studies, 2) educate themselves on Women's Studies, and 3) write textbooks on Women's Studies. To this end, the Committee undertook major projects such as basic investigation for the installation of Women's Studies, research and development of the curriculum, and development of textbooks, and conducted a basic research on the Women's Studies curricula in the U.S. In case of the U.S., lectures and departments on Women's Studies

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8) The Committee, comprised of ten professors, was established in 1976, and by 1977, it grew into an organization of a total of eighteen members. Professors who participated in the Committee were from various academic fields, including sociology, education psychology, political diplomacy, food and nutrition, Korean language and literature, law, philosophy, medicine, education, Christianity, English language and literature, history and social life.

in universities were rapidly spreading across the country during the 1960-70s based on the women's liberalization movement of the 1960s<sup>9)</sup>. Through its basic research, the committee could gather basic information on teaching methods and the curricula of Women's Studies. In particular, through such researches, the committee focused on the multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary characteristics, research methods of Women's Studies, and the composition of an equal community between the faculty and student members (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 16-33).

The committee, however, placed top priority on establishing the identity of 'Korean Women's Studies'. It took into consideration the unique women's issues in Korea and the academic characteristics of Women's Studies and tried to create education modules for Women's Studies as a new paradigm in women's education based on Korean context. In other words, it was considered that Korean Women's Studies was a science which would explore practices to change the lives of women by analyzing their experiences and gender discrimination in the context of the Korean society<sup>10)</sup>. The following two

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9) In the early 1960s, U.S. universities were active with student movements against the Vietnamese War, the black civil rights movement, and democratization of universities. In the process, female students began to think that they needed a women's movement separate from civil movements and calls for the democratization of universities if they were to solve women's issues. There were also strong voices urging for Women's Studies that would systematically analyze women's issues and provide the theoretical background to the women's liberalization movement. Lectures on Women's Studies were first installed in two universities in the U.S. in 1969. They proved to be so popular that by the mid-1970s, it was installed in some 150 universities. The National Women's Studies Association was founded in 1977. Furthermore, at the time of investigation, eight universities, including UCLA, were awarding bachelor's degrees in Women's Studies and three universities offered a graduate program in the field.

10) Professor Chung Sae-hwa, who participated in the Committee, reflects, "When we were preparing to install the lectures on Women's Studies during the early days, professors of different specialties at Ewha Womans University came up with women inequalities in their own fields of study, and this was what truly made it "Korean" Women's Studies. I can proudly say that this was a desirable step as the beginning of Korean Women's Studies" (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 20-21).

important principles on Korean Women's Studies were shared by the committee: first, Women's Studies must aim for change through a connection with not only the lives of Korean women, but also the local community. More specifically, Women's Studies should not be limited to an abstract and academic intellectual training program based on giving credits. It should develop women leadership and their activities in the local community, and contribute to the socio-economic development of women. Second, Women's Studies must unite with the women's movement in Korea in theoretical and practical terms. In other words, it must be relevant to the women's movement in Korea and assist the growth and development of women's movement (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 30-50).

The initial stages of the development of the curriculum of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University illustrate how Korean Women's Studies accommodated the multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary characteristics of Women's Studies and universal characteristics of Women's Studies teaching methods, while on the other hand, recognizing the Korean context and unique characteristics as important components of its field.

## 2) Publication of Women's Studies Textbooks

The establishment of the identity of Korean Women's Studies was critical during the initial introductory phase of Women's Studies. Efforts to this end were consistently evident in the process of setting the goals, installing the curriculum and developing textbooks for Women's Studies. This shows that although Women's Studies became an academic field upon the socio-cultural foundation of the U.S., Korean Women's Studies was based on the Korean society context and experiences of Korean women.

As part of its preparation to install Women's Studies lectures, the Committee published the New Theory of Women's Studies as the first textbook in Women's

Studies in Korea in 1977. The Korean Women's Institute (KWI) was responsible for compiling and publishing the book. It was a compilation of nine theses written by the professors of the committee and eleven theses written by foreign authors that were translated into Korean. It was comprised of four chapters on the philosophy of women's movement (Chapter I), women's physiology and psychology (Chapter II), women and cultural structure (Chapter III), and women, politics and economy (Chapter IV). In its introduction, Professor Kim Young-jeong emphasizes that in the background of the installation of Women's Studies lectures lay the call of the Korean society for women to develop and utilize their potential, rather than the following of a western trend in Women's Studies. As the first textbook on Women's Studies in Korea received great attention from the academia and society, and introduction of the authors along with contents of the textbook appeared in daily newspapers (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 34-37).

Later, the New Theory of Women's Studies was revised, and published in print under the title of *Women's Studies*. The theses that were included in the printed textbook show that early research in Women's Studies focused on women's issues based on an understanding of the Korean society and the women's issues that emerged from it, and that it was based on multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary research. Part I of Women's Studies was composed of theses explaining various academic understandings and theories, such as the philosophy of women's liberation movement and the social structure and religious, political, economic, psychological and anthropological approach to women's issues, to assist with a theoretical understanding of Women's Studies. Part II was based on the main themes of Korean social structure and Women's Studies. It was a compilation of various approaches to women's issues in Korean society, notably women's movement in contemporary Korea, Korean literature, Korean women and religion, legal inequalities, the status of Korean women laborers, rural women in Korea, and Korea's families and socialization.

The seventeen theses that were included in Women's Studies and their authors are as follows:

<b>Part I. A Theoretical Understanding of Women's Studies</b>	
1. Philosophy of Women's Liberation Movement	Chung Eui-suk (Law)
2. Essence and Direction of Women's Issues	Yun Hoo-jeong (Law)
3. Women and Social Structure	Lee Hyo-jae (Sociology)
4. Women in Christianity	Hyun Young-hak (Christianity)
5. Forms of Women's Participation in Politics	Kim Haeng-ja (Political Diplomacy)
6. Economic Development and the Status of Women	Cho Hyoung (Sociology)
7. An Anthropological Approach to Research in Women's Studies	Yun Soon-young (Anthropology)
8. Women's Physiology and Nutrition	Kim Suk-hee (Food and Nutrition)
9. Understanding Freud's Women Psychology	Lee Geun-hwo (Medicine)
<b>Part II. Korean Social Structure and Women's Issues</b>	
10. Women's Movement in Contemporary Korea	Kim Young-jeong (History)
11. Traditional Model of Women in Korean Literature	Lee Nam-deok (Korean Language and Literature)
12. Korean Women and Religion	Suh Gwang-seon (Philosophy)
13. Gender Inequality in the Legal System	Shin In-ryoung (Law)
14. Status of Women Laborers in Korea	Park Jae-bong (Law)
15. Rural Women in Korea	Kim Ju-sook (Sociology)
16. Socialization of Korean Women	Chung Sae-hwa (Education)
17. Domestic Life in Korea and the Role of Women	Lee Dong-won (Sociology)

### 3) Installation of Women's Studies Courses

Ewha Womans University first installed Women's Studies courses for the first time in Korea in its Fall Semester of 1977 after a preparatory period where a curriculum had been developed, basic research had been conducted and textbooks had been developed. The committee determined that the goal of the lectures would be to "facilitate the development and enhancement of self-awareness among women to enable them to realize their positions in Korean society, and

nurture leadership which will enable them to participate in creating a better future by changing the social structure which oppresses women". The development of a curriculum that would befit the Korean context was directly incorporated into the actual operational plans and textbooks for Women's Studies. Women's Studies was installed as an elective liberal arts course, and given the lack of professors in the field and the multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary characteristics of the science, it was taught based on a team-teaching method, three times a week. In light of the importance of encouraging the active participation of students and discussions that aimed to change the way of thinking, the course was basically composed with a two-hour lecture and a one-hour discussion session on a weekly basis. Discussions were based on various issues, such as Korean society cultures, daily women's issues, and gender discrimination in the media or family (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 16-21).

The first Women's Studies lecture was limited to 150 students, but it was so popular that at one time, about 500 students applied for the course. The installation of these lectures were not only at the limelight of attention within the university, but it also received great social interest that it was reported in major newspapers or news broadcasts. This derived from a situation of a time which was very new to the academic field of Women's Studies, which led to heightened curiosity and expectations. On the other hand, however, there were also many concerns and negative prejudices against Women's Studies. Some even went so far as to claim that the very existence of Women's Studies as an academic field was inappropriate, and concerns were raised that the hasty conscientization and westernization of women would create confusion and make them unhappy (Chang, 2006a, 2006b)<sup>11</sup>). But after a test period of two

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11) At the time of the introduction of Women's Studies as lectures, the Korean media showed great interest and expressed their expectations and concerns. There were positive expectations that it would open new horizons for women's education, but there were also considerable critical opinion that it was the reckless introduction of western science without considering the Korean context (Chang, 1996). But the search

semesters until 1978, Women's Studies stood its ground as a popular lecture within the university, and the students' evaluation of the course was highly positive. Students said that their traditional attitudes and values had changed through Women's Studies and that it was especially helpful in enabling them to acquire knowledge and enhance awareness on women's issues. In addition, it was found that the faculty and teaching assistants that operated the course had undergone a mutual experience of having gained greater consciousness and expertise on women's issues through team-teaching and group discussions. The operation of Women's Studies was the process of establishing a feminism community comprised of the faculty, teaching assistants and students, and it held significance as a course fostering experts and leaders in women's issues with leadership capabilities (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 40-44).

## B. University-affiliated Research Institutes for Women's Studies

### 1) Establishment of the Korean Women's Institute (KWI)

In step with the installation of Women's Studies lectures in the university, the Korea Women's Institute (KWI) was founded as an affiliated research institute of Ewha Womans University in the same year<sup>12)</sup>. KWI was established as the core project agent to undertake the installation of Women's Studies and development of a curriculum, publication of textbooks and continuously carry out research projects on Women's Studies. In fact, Ewha University managed to

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for the identity of "Korean Women's Studies" carried out by the faculty imply that the origin of Women's Studies was already deeply ingrained in the Korean context.

- 12) The distinctive fact about KWI at Ewha Womans University is that it was founded with the purpose of installing Women's Studies lectures and assuming the role of the central operating body. However, the first university affiliated institute for Women's Studies founded in Korea was the Research Institute of Asian Women at Sookmyung Women's University in 1960.

acquire the foothold to actively grow Women's Studies with the launching of KWI (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 24-26).

The purpose of establishment of KWI was to "contribute to the capacity development and status enhancement of Korean women by researching all sectors related to Korean women". Additionally, KWI assumed the role as the core project agent which drove the operation and development of Women's Studies. More specifically, KWI mainly served to (1) conduct research on women, including the compilation of data on the history of Korean women, (2) install Women's Studies lectures and provide operational support, (3) educate women in the local community and support women's movements, and (4) undertake international exchange. KWI was a university-affiliated research institute, but it was unique in its activities that were expanded "not only in terms of pure academic purposes, but due to a sense of responsibility towards society"<sup>13)</sup> (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 28).

## 2) An Education Model which Engages the Local Community

Similar to Women's Studies, KWI valued connecting with the local community or women's movement, and realized these values through tangible projects. Such activities were later proposed as an important standard and model in the establishment and operation of research institutes for Women's Studies in other universities in Korea. The education of women in the local community<sup>14)</sup> was a project that demonstrated the founding purpose of KWI. Titled the "Leadership Training Course (LTC)", the project aimed at providing education to develop leadership to women in all levels of society, including those in rural

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13) The first director of KWI Kim Young-jeong explains, "KWI sought to build consciousness in all women and further, to build a sense of fellowship with other women, and tried to undertake a mission for society by fostering it into a women's movement (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 28).

14) The project of educating women in the local community was implemented as a part of the "Women and Development Research" project.

areas and in low-income brackets in the city. Educating the local community was meaningful in that it (1) promoted mutual understanding and solidarity by bridging universities and the local community, (2) provided the university with a channel to communicate with the local community, (3) enabled professors and students alike to learn about relevant women's issues and the field by meeting with ordinary women, (4) reflected this into Women's Studies education and improved it to befit the situation of Korean women in real life, and (5) broke away from elitism of universities and carried out its duty towards the local community. To carry out this project, KWI developed textbooks and slide materials, and implemented the LTC for Rural Women, LTC for Urban Poor Women and LTC for Labor Academy. If previous education for rural women or women of the city poor in the Korean society were based on field visits, LTC education was a new method of inviting the women of the local community to the university. In other words, it was a novel way of education which enabled women from the academic society (the university) and local community to learn from one another and communicate (Thirty Year's History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 51-57)<sup>15)</sup>.

KWI's local community education model offered a new role for universities: they would no longer simply focus on academic activities, but exchange with local women outside of its gates and thus contribute to their growth and development. Additionally, KWI's mission of contributing to society through education for and exchange with rural women, showed the future direction of Women's Studies as a practical science.

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15) It can be said that funds from overseas institutions contributed significantly to the stable implementation of major projects, such as the installation of Women's Studies, local community education projects and international exchanges, since the founding of KWI up to the 1980s. Prime examples are the support from USAID for the development of Women's Studies, support for the LTC projects by the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (UB Foundation), and support to educate and assist city poor women by the German EZE (Evangelische Zentralstell Fur Entwicklungshilfe) (Thirty Years' History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 54).

### 3) Women's Space and Feminist Community

KWI shows symbolically and physically what the creation of a new 'women's space' meant for women. In other words, the KWI case demonstrates that a women's research institute was not only an academic institution affiliated with a university, but it also undertook a social role by spreading feminism as a women's space and feminist community. After the opening of KWI, women's research, which had been carried out on an individual basis, could transform into academic discussions and joint research projects. Additionally, KWI managed to systemize the production of knowledge in Women's Studies and institutionalized the provision of produced knowledge into education, while simultaneously opening a new space for a feminist knowledge community.

KWI served as a venue to prepare the installation of Women's Studies lectures, a women's space for teaching assistants, students and team-teaching professors, and a platform for the preparation of local education projects and exchange with education program participants. Later, with the installation of the Department of Women's Studies in the 1980s, it was used as the department office and a place of interaction among students and to hold seminars. Furthermore, it expanded as a space for visits and mutual exchange among professors and executives of the students' union who aspired to introduce Women's Studies beyond Ewha Womans University and across the country to acquire data and advice (Chang Pilwha, 2007).

## 2. Building of the Framework (1980s): Installation of the Department of Women's Studies and the Establishment of the Korean Association of Women's Studies (KAWS)

The 1980s was a period where the foundation of the institutionalization of Women's Studies as an academic department was built. In 1982, the Department of Women's Studies was established at Ewha Womans University and the installation of lectures and departments of Women's Studies spread in universities nationwide. The Korean Association of Women's Studies (KAWS) was founded in 1984, thus constructing the institutional cornerstone for greater growth in the field.

### A. Background and Installation of the Department of Women's Studies (1982)

In 1982, Ewha Womans University installed Women's Studies as an independent department. The installation of this department in the master's program was not only a first one in Korea, but also across Asia, and this signalled the full-fledged beginning of the institutionalization of Korean Women's Studies. The founding purposes of the Department of Women's Studies are the institutionalization of the theory of Women's Studies, the fostering of researchers and professors in Women's Studies, and the theoretical support of women's organization activities and cultivation of leaders (Thirty Year's History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 74). In other words, the goals of establishment were not only academic in terms of the production of feminist knowledge and nurturing of female researchers, but also practical in terms of supporting women's movements and fostering leaders.

An examination of the background of how Ewha Womans University installed

the Department of Women's Studies shows that such theoretical and practical demands and needs were closely intertwined. First of all, the demand for Women's Studies by students and their responses were significantly large. The determination to reflect this institutionally was the major cause behind the installation of the course in Women's Studies. In particular, the passionate responses by students and successful lectures were the major factors in enabling the school to accept the need and justification of the installation of a separate department of Women's Studies. Second, the rapid increase in the demand for education and research in Women's Studies nationwide led to the rise of the critical problem of acquiring professors and researchers who either majored in women's issues or could educate and research this field. Notably, after the late 1970s, other universities began to install Women's Studies or other related subjects, and this trend spread across the country. Every semester, more and more universities began to introduce Women's Studies, but in truth, there were only a handful of professors or lecturers who could teach the subject. At first, lecturers or professors with backgrounds related to sociology or other related fields taught the course, but it was often difficult to meet the explosive demand. Also, in terms of expertise in women's issues, there was an urgent need to produce graduates majoring in Women's Studies. This was amplified by the increasing social interest in women's problems or issues, and this was similar in academia. Such developments urged the building of an institutional and academic foundation to undertake research in women's studies with expertise.

The existence of the Department of Women's Studies as an institution is highly critical in terms of the production of feminist knowledge and continuous fostering of human resources. The installation of a department on Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University can be seen as the construction of the institutional foundation to produce experts who can research and teach on women's studies. Professor Chang Pilwha was appointed as the first full-time professor for the Department of Women's Studies in 1984, two years after it

had first been installed, and this is significant as Ewha was the first school in Korea and across Asia to appoint a full-time professor to the Department of Women's Studies. Since then, Ewha has continuously increased the appointments of full-time professors, and there are currently six professors in service as of 2013.

## B. Spread of Women's Studies and 'the Women's Studies Movement'

One of the characteristics worth noting in the 1980s was the explosive increase of Women's Studies lectures at universities nationwide. There was a rapid proliferation of Women's Studies. During the late 1970s, seven universities installed courses on Women's Studies, but in the 1980s, that number jumped to fifty-eight universities (Cho Hyung, 1990: 220). By the 1990s, more than one hundred universities were teaching Women's Studies as electives. The title of the courses at the time varied: An Introduction to Women's Studies, Gender and Society, Women and Society, Women and Family, and Understanding of Sexuality. Though the contents of the lectures differed slightly, most of them included an understanding of feminism, the theory of women's movement, patriarchal system, family, sexuality, women labor and women's policies.

The will of the university authorities or leadership proved to be a critical factor during the introductory phase of Women's Studies, but in contrast, the growth of Korean women's movements and institutional foundation of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University are analyzed as major underlying factors in the rapid spread of Women's Studies nationwide. First of all, the growth and spread of women's movement in the 1980s and the promotion of female student's movement within the university acted as the social factors that ignited the almost wave-like expansion of Women's Studies. As a matter of fact, a

closer examination of the spread of Women's Studies in Korean universities shows that each time phase has slightly different characteristics. From the 1970s to the mid-1980s, lectures were mainly installed under the leadership of university authorities, research institutes for Women's Studies, or individual professors who recognized the need for Women's Studies. In contrast, in the late 1980s, Women's Studies were installed in universities in response to the demand of women's student councils in each school. In other words, the growth of women's movement in Korean society and universities provided a social environment for Women's Studies to spread across the country, and the foundation to change the recognition of Women's Studies and create the need and actual demand for the field.

The early 1980s was a time of continued confusion and difficulty in terms of politics and society. The assassination of then-President Park Chung-hee in 1979 and the Gwangju Democratic Uprising of 1982 brought on the issuance of the emergency martial law. Universities were also caught up in the severe political whirlpool and almost lost their function as schools of learning. Many women laborers, female students who participated in students' movements and women activists joined in the democratic struggle. This helped to develop the capacity of women's movement at the same time. During the late 1980s, in particular, organizations of women's movements with nationwide coverage were formed, primarily the Korean Women's Association United (KWAU)(1987) and Korean Womenlink (1987), which championed "Gender equal democratic society and women's public movement". In step with the growth of women's movement, the organization and capacity of female student councils within universities also expanded. As more and more female students who actively joined the democratic or student movements became skeptic of the unequal gender hierarchy within the student movements and patriarchal culture within the democratic movements, and reflected upon their identity as women, they felt the need for the women's student councils to undertake independent activities. They

proposed the installation of Women's Studies as a pledge in elections for executive positions in the student's council and played a pivotal role in pushing forward with this initiative by investigating and gathering data on Women's Studies, signing petitions to support the installation of Women's Studies and hosting seminars (Cho Hyoung, 1990).

The second factor was the active intervention and role of the Department of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University and KWI. During the preparation of the installation of the lectures, many related university officials and women's student councils nationwide requested the curriculum or data on Ewha's experience and the recommendation of lecturers. In response, they provided full support to the installation of these lectures and departments in other countries by sharing their curriculum on Women's Studies and lecture plans<sup>16)</sup>. The efforts of Ewha's Department of Women's Studies and KWI demonstrate the core roles they undertook in promoting the rapid proliferation of Women's Studies in Korean society.

By 1986, Ewha began to produce graduates from its masters' program. They began to serve as lecturers of Women's Studies in universities across the country, thus creating a system to meet the explosive demand for such lectures at the university level. Although the number of lecturers were lacking in absolute terms compared to the rapid increase of demands for the lectures, the graduates willingly took on intensive lecture schedules and long-distance travel with a sense of mission and passion to spread Women's Studies across the

16) For example, KWI invited professors in charge of administration in universities nationwide to host the "Meeting on Women's Studies" (1979). According to KWI, the meeting was attended by related personnel from 32 universities, and KWI made a progress report on the installation of Women's Studies, introduced textbooks and gave audiovisual presentations (Thirty Years' History of KWI, 2008: 46). In addition, Chang Phil-wha who was appointed as professor of the Department of Women's Studies in 1982, reflects how having meetings with the executive of Women's Student councils from all over the country and giving orientations on the installation of Women's Studies were among her most important responsibilities (Chang Pilwha, 2009).

nation. Most of the university authorities failed to show particular support or interest in Women's Studies, which was only adopted as an elective course, and there were many difficulties in trying to operate a lecture on Women's Studies without the establishment of a department on the field. Universities in different regions paid lecture fees that fell short of the lecturer's travel expenses, and often, lectures had to accommodate huge numbers of students that reached hundreds. Nevertheless, graduates of Women's Studies travelled far and wide to give lectures in universities or give lectures to hundreds of students on their own based on the principle that they could not deprive students who wanted to study Women's Studies of the opportunity of education. Sometimes, the women's student council offered active support to the operation of the lectures or students volunteered to support the lecturers as their teaching assistants<sup>17)</sup>.

These processes were an experience of building confidence based on 'sisterhood' for the women's issues research institute, lecturers and women's student council at each university and sharing their passion towards Women's Studies. It was also a new experience in terms of women's movement to build a community of Women's Studies through the operation of lectures. The process in which Women's Studies spread in Korea has the values in the history of Korean women's movement and it also illustrates clearly the practical characteristics embedded in Women's Studies. Lee Hyo-jae (1994) called the process and experience of proliferating Women's Studies in the early stages 'Women's Studies Movement', and evaluated that Women's Studies was "exposing the deeply rooted gender discrimination and structural paradoxes that oppressed women, and the practical role of Women's Studies demanding

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17) The memories and experiences of graduates of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University during the early stages were compiled into the proceeding, *Twenty Years' of the Department of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University* (2002). This is a vivid memoir of how the dedication and passion of the lecturers in universities nationwide during the institutionalization phase of Women's Studies were pivotal in the proliferation of Women's Studies in Korea.

bottom-up reform has a powerful impact on the younger generation."

### C. The Establishment of the Korean Association of Women's Studies (1984)

Bolstered by the expansion of lectures in Women's Studies, KWI prepared to set up the Korean Association of Women's Studies (KAWS) with the aim of stabilizing and establishing the academic foundation of Women's Studies. In 1984, KWI hosted the Meeting of Professors of Women's Studies, which was attended by thirty one lecturers of Women's Studies from fourteen universities nationwide. The meeting was based on discussions on the current status and contents of lectures in Women's Studies and an exchange of information. The participants reached the consensus for the need to establish an association of Women's Studies to promote academic exchange among female researchers going forward. KWI was commissioned to prepare for the founding of the association, and finally in 1984, KAWS was established. At the Inaugural General Assembly held at Ewha Womans University, Yoon Hoo-jung, the then-Dean of the School of Law at Ewha was appointed as the first Chairwoman of KAWS (Thirty Year's History of the Korean Women's Institute, 2008: 86-88).

KAWS commenced under the purpose of publishing and disseminating research findings in Women's Studies and promoting cooperation among members. Its major areas of work included 1) conducting research on Women's Studies, 2) publishing journals and other publications, and 3) hosting meetings for reading of research papers and seminars. Together with its establishment, KAWS issued a journal, Korean Women's Studies, which has become an official medium in research and knowledge production in Women's Studies.

The launching of KAWS holds great significance in that it signalled the advancement of Women's Studies through not only institutionalization, but also

expansion of inter-disciplinary research fields and production of knowledge. More specifically, it was an academic and institutional platform for communication, discussion and knowledge/opinion exchange among not only majors of Women's Studies but also feminist scholars in various fields, including anthropology, sociology and literature, undertaking research on women from a feminist perspective in an academic community. As a matter of fact, not only majors of Women's Studies but also feminist scholars from different academic backgrounds have presented papers in the journal, *Korean Women's Studies* whose subjects cover various sectors, including culture, labor, gender, policy and theory (Cho Ju-hyeon, 2000).

Secondly, the establishment of KAWS and issuance of its journal created an academic space for feminist scholars to present their research papers. KAWS was a medium and channel for feminist scholars to develop their expertise and experience as scholars. It encouraged feminist scholars and female scholars to conduct research on women's issues acting as a critical institutional device which provided support academic career development of feminist scholars and female scholars.

Third, KAWS served as a physical, psychological, and academic space where new research topics or agenda on women or gender issues are developed and presented and produces and research results on them are accumulated. This space not only influenced members of women's student councils, but also other academic fields and the overall society. For example, the research topics at the very heart of research in Women's Studies include the concept and theorization of the patriarchal system and issues of women labor, violence against women including sexual violence, sexuality, family issues, the state and women policies, care labor and gender. As such research topics were discussed in public conferences, they often became major issues in different academic fields beyond Women's Studies or emerged as a social agenda.

Since its establishment, KAWS developed new issues and agenda related to

research in Women's Studies, and further deepened its research on them. Furthermore, the journal Korean Women's Studies became a pillar of the medium which expanded social and academic influence, wielding a significant impact on the changes in Korean society. KAWS first began with 124 members in 1985 to become a nationwide organization with more than 800 registered members as of 2012.

### **3. The Growth Period (1990s): Institutionalization and Growth of Women's Studies**

The 1990s was a period where Women's Studies was securely established as an institution, upon which it achieved both quantitative and qualitative growth. Such institutional growth is marked by the installation of the first doctoral program in Women's Studies in Korea, and the increased installation and institutionalization of departments of Women's Studies in universities and university-affiliated research institutes in Women's Studies nationwide. Together with the installation of doctoral programs, the institutionalization of Women's Studies that had progressed on a limited basis under the auspices of Ewha Womans University until the 1980s gradually expanded to other universities across the country, which is evidence of the quantitative and qualitative growth of this academic field.

#### **A. Institutional Growth of Women's Studies**

The most notable trait in the institutionalization of Women's Studies in the 1990s was that it achieved institutional growth with the increased installation of Women's Studies in masters and doctoral programs across the country. In case of Ewha Womans University, it installed its masters program in Women's Studies in 1982, followed by installing a doctoral program in the same field in

1992. These two achievements symbolize that the foundation for institutional growth was built to produce experts, such as researchers and professors in Women's Studies. Later in 1990, masters programs in Women's Studies were installed at the Catholic University of Korea (former Hyosung Women's University) and Keimyung University, followed by Dongduk Women's University (1996), Sookmyung Women's University (1996), Sungshin Women's University (1996), and Pusan Women's University (currently Shilla University, 1996). Additionally, the installation of a joint program in Women's Studies at the Seoul National University (1999) following Hanyang University (1996) was the initiation of an official certificate program for mixed gender universities (Cho Ju-Hyeon, 1996a; Lee Jae-gyeong, 1999; and Lee Na-young, 2011). Although there were only a dozen universities offering programs on Women's Studies, the installation of programs in Women's Studies in not only women's universities nationwide, but also mixed gender universities was a remarkable achievement over a ten year period since the first program was installed in Korea.

The institutionalization of Women's Studies, however, progressed with some limits. With the exception of Ewha Womans University, it was installed only as a masters program and half of these programs were not in the form of an independent department, but as a joint program (Lee Jae-gyeong, 1999)<sup>18</sup>). This implies that although the institutionalization of Women's Studies did achieve rapid growth on the outside, the support from the school authorities were either

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18) The joint program in Women's Studies reflect the interdisciplinary nature of Women's Studies, while simultaneously signalling a close connection to the changes in the educational environment at the time which emphasized convergence of different disciplines and encouraged various kinds of joint programs. Furthermore, in contrast to a department system, the joint program system enabled the installation of courses without additional financial pressure that came with the supplement of full-time faculty. Such administrative, financial convenience was the reason why school authorities could easily decide to adopt the joint program system (Lee Na-young, 2011).

highly on a formal level or that it was achieved on an institutionally vulnerable base. In fact, the abolishment or reduction of Women's Studies departments after the 2000s is connected with such institutional vulnerability. Despite such weakness, however, the installation of Women's Studies departments in a number of universities during the 1990s demonstrate the stable growth of Women's Studies as an institution. The installation of masters and doctoral programs in this field in various universities across the country during the 1990s reflects a reality with greater social demand on the production of knowledge and experts in Women's Studies.

In particular, the promotion and increased expertise in women's movement and development of women's policies that can be noted in Korean society during the 1990s increased the demand for experts in Women's Studies. As a democratic government ruled the country during the Kim Young-sam administration (1993-1998) and the Kim Dae-jung administration (1998-2002), women's policies based on gender perspectives emerged as an important social agenda of the government. The UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and the inauguration of the Kim Dae-jung administration provided an important momentum in the paradigm shift for women's policies. Political measures to achieve gender equality were introduced more actively than in any other administration, primarily the installation of the Special Committee on Gender Equality was installed directly under the President in 1998 and the adoption of the Office of Women's Policy system (1998). Together with progress in building a political democracy<sup>19)</sup> and the development of women policies, women's movement during this time was subject to extremely rapid growth and changes.

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19) Although not full-fledged, the Korean society in the 1990s experienced a gradual collapse of the political and cultural authoritarian framework, and the society was in the mid-way of advancing democracy. The civic movement of the 1980s that was represented by the 'democratic movement' or 'labor movement' diverged into various types in the 1990s, such as environmental movement or cultural movement.

In case of women's movements, it was only by the 1990s that women's issues, such as sexual violence or sexual harassment, became a new social issue based on nationwide solidarity. The women's movement during this time was distinctive in that it maintained a cooperative relationship with the government in the implementation of women's policies, while at the same time, it began to act an agent of governance. The leadership of the women's movement actively engaged in activities outside the system, such as holding campaigns, demonstrations or signing petitions for new women's policies or the expansion of existing ones. Meanwhile, it participated deeply in the proposal, implementation and evaluation of major women's policies and laws, thereby achieving tangible results, namely the Special Act on Sexual Violence (1994)<sup>20</sup>.

The production of feminist knowledge and expertise accumulated since the 1980s became major factors that vitalized and developed expertise-oriented women's policies and women's movement in the 1990s. The 1990s is a period when the experts who were graduates of Women's Studies began to enter all fields of society as government officials, activists in women's movements, and researchers involved in producing feminist knowledge. Having been trained within the academic foundation of 'Women's Studies Community', they had mutual confidence in each other and shared common feminist values which enabled them to cooperate and work together in their different positions. The development of women's policies and greater women's movement demanded more women/gender experts and such social demands were incorporated into

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20) These characteristics can easily be noted through the movement against sexual violence of the 1990s. The movement against sexual violence rolled out in full force, together with the opening of the Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center (KSVRC) in 1991, and with the sexual harassment case of the Seoul National University professor of his teaching assistant in 1993, a sense of recognition that this was a problem spread rapidly. In 1994, the punishment for sexual violence perpetrators were significantly reinforced, the Special Act against Sexual Violence was implemented through the legalization of victim protection measures, and with the revision of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1997, sexual harassment within the workplace also became law.

institutional expansion, in other words, the installation of departments in Women's Studies. From the viewpoint of the university authorities, Women's Studies was recognized as 'popular' and 'marketable', while offering a 'promising career and opportunities after graduation'. In fact, from the 1990s to 2000s, the expansion of masters and doctoral programs in Women's Studies led by the school authorities were very closely interlinked with these realistic factors.

## B. Expansion of University-affiliated Women's Research Institutes

Another important index which demonstrates the growth of the institutionalization of Women's Studies in the 1990s is the increase in the number of university-affiliated women's research institutes. In particular after the mid-1990s, their numbers increased with the establishment of the Korea Institute for Women at Dongduk Women's University (1996), the Institute of Gender Equality at the Catholic University (1996) and the Korean Women's Research Institute at Sungshin University (1996). Given that departments on Women's Studies were installed on the masters and doctoral levels, rather than the undergraduate level, and the interdisciplinary nature of Women's Studies, the role of university-affiliated institutes for women's research was very important in the operation of the departments and increased research in Women's Studies. In contrast to the superficial expansion, however, Women's Studies did not have a strong support base within the schools, and since related faculty were a minority, the activities of women's research institutes were either highly limited or became marginalized.

Additionally, compared to research institutes in natural sciences or sciences and mathematics, research institutes for Women's Studies suffered from an absolute lack of academic or financial support from outside. With the exception of a handful of research institutes for Women's Studies blessed with active support of the school authorities or continuous support from outside organi-

zations, most are simply barely managing to get by with the dedication of a couple of professors and researchers in Women's Studies, tight finances and few researchers.

Despite such poor conditions, the university-affiliated research institutes for Women's Studies have commonly expanded the overall size of Women's Studies by providing support to the institutionalization of Women's Studies through lectures and fostering of human resources, undertaking publications and academic activities, cooperating externally and networking internationally. More specifically, they 1) led the debate on women's issues and formed a feminist knowledge community within the university by hosting various academic events, including conferences, workshops and seminars; 2) conducted research, joint research or projects based on financial assistance from academic support organizations home and abroad or the government or foundations; 3) carried out publication activities, such as research reports, collections of dissertations, Women's Studies textbooks and related books; 4) contributed as a psychological and physical research space for women researchers, including professors of Women's Studies, research professors, visiting researchers and researchers, to meet and communicate; 5) expanded the university's duty to the local community, government, women NGOs and companies; and 6) exchanged with foreign women scholars, researchers, and activists through international academic conferences or networking.

Among projects undertaken by the university-affiliated research institutes, international exchange in Women's Studies renders attention. International exchange projects are mostly the publication of journals<sup>21)</sup>, joint research, knowledge sharing and exchange through conferences, and building partnerships and networking among feminist scholars. They were expanding in step with the

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21) English journals on Women's Studies published in Korea are *Asian Women* (1995) by the Research Institute of Asian Women at Sookmyung Women's University and the *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* (1995) by the Asian Center for Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University.

globalization of the Korean society in the 1990s. A notable feature of international exchange at this time was that the Korean Women's Studies field were breaking away from their preference for western-centered international exchange and leading and vitalizing exchange with feminist scholars in Asia. A prime example is the "First Conference on Women in Northeast Asia" jointly hosted by the Research Institute of Asian Women at Sookmyung Women's University and Korea Women's Institute at Ewha Womans University in 1993. Against such a backdrop of international exchange, Ewha founded the Asian Center for Women's Studies as an affiliate of KWI in 1995. This signalled that the Korean Women's Studies was going beyond the exchange in Women's Studies with Asian countries, and proposing and theorize 'Asian Women's Studies' as a new discourse in feminism.

### C. Growth of Women/Gender-related Academic Societies

The institutional growth of Women's Studies in this period became tangible through another achievement: increased research and knowledge production in feminism by other academic departments. In other words, increase in research in Women's Studies triggered the expansion of 'women's research' or 'gender research' by researchers of other academic fields. At the same time, societies with a focus on women/gender were established in various academic fields, ranging from literature, philosophy, and economy to psychology and nursing.

In the 1990s, there were seven newly established societies based on women/gender research, including the Korean Association for Feminist Studies in English Literature in 1992<sup>22)</sup>. They normally either explicitly used the word

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22) Academic societies established in the 1990s are Korean Association for Feminist Studies in English Literature (1992), Korean Society of Women Health Nursing (1995), Korean Society for Woman Psychology (1995), Korean Women Economists Association (1997), Korean Association of Feminist Philosophers (1997), Korean Academy of Women's Health (1998) and Society of Korean Classical Women Literature (1998).

'feminist' or 'feminism' like the Korean Association for Feminist Studies in English Literature, or simply chose titles that clearly showed they were focused on 'women' or 'gender' like Korean Society for Woman Psychology. Such associations that were based on the feminist perspective and aimed to undertake research in women/gender issues challenged existing male-oriented academics and made a critical contribution to the expansion of feminist knowledge production.

#### **4. Stabilization Period (2000s–Present): Stabilization and Diversification of Institutionalization**

In the 2000s, institutionalization of Women's Studies showed a highly complicated and diversified landscape. The establishment of departments and research institutes in Women's Studies at universities increased until the mid-2000s, continuously undergoing institutional expansion. But in the latter half, there was a rapid contraction with the abolishment of departments or women's research institutes in several universities. Yet, the two phenomena do not provide sufficient grounds to judge that the social influence of Women's Studies itself reduced. The quantitative contraction as shown by the abolishment of the Women's Studies department in the university community calls for new analysis on the superficial institutionalization of Women's Studies that expanded without fully establishing an internal foundation within universities.

##### **A. Institutional Stabilization and Diversification (Early and Mid-2000s)**

The early and mid-2000s was a period when the institutionalization of Women's Studies entered a stabilization period. In Korean universities, in particular, graduate and undergraduate programs offer a system designed with full-time professors and financial assistance. Given that this was what was

achieved in Women's Studies, it can be said that the institutional system was established overall (Lee Na-young, 2011). A notable feature of the 2000s was that the department system based on masters and doctoral degrees were relatively strengthened in other universities<sup>23)</sup>. For instance, Keimyung University, which only had a masters program, installed a doctoral program in 2007, and in case of Yonsei University and Joongang University, major courses related to gender were installed in sociology departments and other graduate programs<sup>24)</sup>. Another point is that the Women's Studies course was beginning to be taught in connection or as a multiple major for undergraduate programs. This period saw Ewha Womans University and seven other universities install a Women's Studies course in the undergraduate level, thereby securing Women's Studies on an institutional level. In other words, this was a period when Women's Studies became a securely institutionalized department in graduate and doctoral programs within universities, while simultaneously expanding to undergraduate programs<sup>25)</sup>.

The establishment of new affiliated research institutes increased steadily, and the number jumped from a mere six institutes in 1990 to twenty-two in 2005 nationwide. Similarly, the installation of academic societies related to women/gender issues also continued, and by mid-2000, four such societies were in operation (Lee Na-young, 2011)<sup>26)</sup>. These societies published academic

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- 23) Installation of a master's (2003) and doctoral (2004) program in Women's Studies at Pusan University, a master's program in Women's Studies at Sogang University (2005) and doctoral program in Women's Studies at Keimyung University (2007), among others.
- 24) Yonsei University (2001) and Joongang University (2003) installed Women's Studies as a concentration program at their Graduate School of Sociology.
- 25) As a result, a masters's or joint program in Women's Studies was installed in 13 universities, doctoral programs in Women's Studies in 4 universities, and an inter-disciplinary major or minor undergraduate program in Women's Studies in 8 universities as of 2005.
- 26) Academic societies that were established in the 2000s include the Korean Women's Association for Communication Studies (2003), Korean Association of Women's History (2004), Korean Association of Gender and Law (2005) and Korean Women in

journals, thereby playing a central role in expanding and deepening the base of feminist knowledge. Additionally, they were regarded as a feminist community which supported exchange and solidarity among feminist researchers in traditional academic fields that were dominated by a male-oriented history and research practices.

The institutionalization of women's studies continued to grow from the 1990s to the mid-2000s, and gradually, Women's Studies was securely established as an academic discipline in the university society. The installation of Women's Studies in the undergraduate level as well as the masters and doctoral levels, the increase of Women's Studies research institutes and the establishment of academic societies on women/gender issues in each academic discipline illustrated that the base of Women's Studies were expanded and diversified. This trend culminated into the recent establishment of the Korean Board of Women's Studies (the "Board" hereafter). The Board was newly founded in 2012 to promote mutual cooperation among sixteen societies that undertake research on women and gender issues, and to plan, organize and support related research<sup>27)</sup>. The Board appointed KAWS as the first organizing association and held its inaugural symposium based on the theme "Challenges and Future Tasks in Feminist Research in Each Academic Field". The commencement and activities of such an organization are evidence of the greater position of KAWS within the academic arena, while at the same time, reflects the uniqueness of

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Mathematical Sciences (2005).

27) The Korean Board of Women's Studies is composed of sixteen women's associations: Korean Academy of Women's Health, Korean Society of Women Health Nursing, Korean Association of Gender and Law, Korean Family Studies Association, Society of Korean Classical Women Literature, Korean Women Economists Association, Korean Association of Feminist Philosophers, Korean Physical Education Association for Girls and Women, Korean Women's Association for Communication Studies, Korean Association of Women's Studies, Korean Society for Women Physiology, Academic Society of Feminism and Korean Literature, Korean Association of Women Geographers, Korean Association of Women Theology, Korean Association for Feminist Studies in English Literature, and Korean Association of Women's History.

the multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary nature of Women's Studies and shows that its institutional base is still expanding.

The continuous growth of the institutionalization of Women's Studies that lead up to the 2000s is made in step with the growth and process of women's policies and movement after the 1990s. In particular, under the democratic government of Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008), policies that aimed to achieve 'gender equality' and enhance 'women's rights', primarily the installation of the Ministry of Gender Equality (2001) were adopted with great fervor. This naturally increased the adoption of a feminist perspective in the central government, local autonomies, government-led committees, and national research and development institutes, and widened the door for more feminist experts, namely professors and researchers with a background in Women's Studies, and women activists. Such experts/civil servants with a feminist-perspective developed measures to improve gender inequality in women's policies and actively led change in society. With the gradual expansion of women's policies, the expectations towards departments of Women's Studies that produced feminist experts also grew both in society and policy terms, and composed the background factor in the increase of Women's Studies departments after the mid-2000s<sup>28)</sup>.

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28) Lee Na-young (2011) points out the active recruitment of women professors by university authorities and their roles were the main factors that enabled the qualitative and quantitative growth and stabilization of women's studies after the 2000s. With the amendment of the Public Educational Officials Act (2003), which installed a new provision to increase the proportion of women in university professors, a considerable number of women professors were appointed as full-time professors. She claims that they were able to play a pivotal role in building the institution of Women's Studies and expanding its base. But the 'active measure' to expand the recruitment of women professors at universities should also be understood in the context of the growth of women policies.

## B. Institutional Contraction and 'Crisis Theory' (Late 2000s)

The institutionalization of Women's Studies, which had undergone stable continuous growth until the mid-2000s, began to show rapid institutional reduction or contraction after the mid-2000s. The fact that both the stabilization and contraction of institutionalization happened within some ten years is highly paradoxical. The contraction led to the claim in the women's sector that Women's Studies was in a crisis. The rapid growth of the field is probably what exacerbates its institutional contraction. However, the crisis discourse has actually been proposed in diverse levels, and a great controversy still remains as to whether this is a crisis, and if it is so, what is the true nature of the crisis and what is its cause.

The crisis discourse was based on physical evidence, such as the abolishment or reduction of Women's Studies departments or lectures nation-wide. In fact, institutional reduction could be found in most of the universities with Women's Studies departments where their masters and doctoral degrees in Women's Studies were either abolished or integrated with other departments after the mid-2000s. As of 2011, the only school with an independent department in Women's Studies is Ewha Womans University. The number of universities with Women's Studies as an inter-disciplinary major or minor at the undergraduate level has also fallen from eight in 2005 to three in 2011. In addition, the number of university affiliated research institutes for Women's Studies that acted as the driving engine in conducting research in women's or gender studies in universities and led the installation of related lectures also fell from twenty-two in 2005 to eighteen in 2011 (Lee Na-young, 2011). Furthermore, in most universities, the proportion of students majoring in Women's Studies or undergraduate students taking lectures in Women's Studies declined significantly, and lecturers in Women's Studies say that they do not feel that

students today are as passionate as those in the past. These are all factors giving weight to the crisis discourse.

The fact that the institutionalization of Women's Studies in Korean universities is undergoing rapid contraction is undeniable. But this is interconnected with the crisis in the structure of Korean universities rather than simply a crisis in Women's Studies. After the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s, the government adopted policies that advocated neo-liberalism, and combined with the acceleration of university policies towards restructuring based on competition market principles, the overall university domain was restructured based on competition and order. Women's Studies has a shorter history and relatively weaker institutional foundation compared to that of other academic disciplines, which places it in a vulnerable position. Factors, such as high unemployment due to economic crises, also add to the lack of this field's competitiveness in that it is not a mandatory course for employment. Furthermore, the young women born after the 1980s grew up in nuclear families without feeling any gender discrimination. Brought up by parents who have already been influenced by Women's Studies, they are a generation that does not feel enraged over gender discrimination. Rather, they believe that they live in a reality where social achievement, a good job and equal marriage are all possible. Therefore, the current phenomenon where women in the 20s and 30s are more interested in employment and personal success rather than Women's Studies is actually a very natural social change.

Studying another aspect of the crisis discourse under the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008-2012) advocating for neo-liberalism, government policies became more conservative and led to the contraction of women's policies and women's movements. As women's policies took a turn towards conservatism, it called for specialized bureaucrats more inclined to 'neutrality'. Public offices that had been occupied by feminist scholars or activist-turned-experts were substituted by experts of more 'neutral' majors, such as social welfare and home

economics, or experts with 'less progressive' backgrounds. This caused many graduates of Women's Studies who used to work for the government to lose their jobs or transfer to other fields, and this has led to the contraction of women's policy experts. Such social change reflected the uncertainty or crisis in the careers of graduates of Women's Studies. In particular, university authorities that had installed feminism courses without a conviction on the nature and objective of the academic science, such contraction of women's policies or social change acted as a powerful excuse to abolish the Women's Studies department altogether<sup>29</sup>).

Meanwhile, the feminist perspective claims of not the 'crisis of institutionalization' itself, but rather the 'crisis as a result of institutionalization'. In other words, with the stable institutionalization of Women's Studies within universities, Women's Studies gradually lost a sense of reality and activism and became comfortable being an academic discipline within the university. Some criticize that this has led to a loss of identity and essence of Women's Studies. For Women's Studies to survive and exist as an academic discipline, it is undeniable that it must build and deepen its theoretical and methodological expertise. But this crisis theory reflects that Women's Studies over-emphasized the pedantic and theoretical aspects within the world of science, and distanced itself from the field and women's movement. This is also regret over how, in the process of institutionalization, it had to value the number of research or achievements in order to survive as an academic field within the university system, and how it may have lost its significance as a feminist community in the process. "Women's Studies as a science of practice based on the connection

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29) The decision-making process by a women's university to abolish its Department of Women's Studies in 2007 showed that the school officially revealed the reasons behind its decision that "It goes against the trend and the lack of demand is causing management problems" (Kim Young-sun, 2010: 323). The schools that abolished the Women's Studies department around this time were in slightly different situations but basically shared an understanding along the same lines.

### Ⅲ. Institutionalization Process and Projects ●●● 53

between the field and theory" was the identity of Women's Studies that had been emphasized since the initial period and constituted the foundation of existence. In this regard, the discourse that the crisis is a result of institutionalization is a reflective criticism and critical thinking that the institutionalization of Women's Studies has progressed dispersedly from the field and women's movement.





# IV

## Achievement and Significance

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and Social Change 57
2. Cultivation of Experts in Women's  
Studies and Their Role 65



The institutionalization process of Women's Studies as examined above was a highly dynamic process of growth and development despite its short history of some thirty years. It is also considered to have had a considerably huge influence on bringing social change in Korea at varying levels, primarily the proliferation of the consciousness of gender equality and changes in the patriarchal culture and system. Nevertheless, it is realistically very difficult to objectively explain the achievements of Women's Studies as an academic discipline. In particular, given that Women's Studies is a science which aims to bring change to the values of humankind or overall social system through knowledge production and education, it is not easy to produce a quantitative evaluation or objective criteria on the detailed achievements or social influences that it had on Korean society. By taking these points into account, this paper attempts to examine the achievements and meaning of Women's Studies through a qualitative approach based on the two aspects of knowledge production and fostering of experts, the basic goals of Women's Studies.

## 1. Feminist Knowledge Production and Social Change

Feminist knowledge has been produced in various forms including master's theses, doctoral dissertations and research papers published in women's academic journals and research institute's journals. In other words, Women's Studies refers to the production of knowledge not only within the department of Women's Studies, but within a broader sense, and includes the research conducted by research groups with a feminist or gender-perspective. A chronological overview of the process of feminist knowledge production reveals that during the 1980s, the research in Women's Studies produced through masters dissertations by graduates of departments of Women's Studies and the

collection of theses published by KAWS and affiliated research institutes were the major channels of knowledge production. But after the 1990s, as a result of the spread of feminism and active women's/gender research, academic journals related to Women's Studies were also published by other majors, including sociology (Cho Sun-gyeong, 1992; Lee Jae-gyoung, 2006), thereby expanding the channels of knowledge production.

The production of feminist knowledge through Women's Studies first began from the criticism and challenge posed on the male-oriented mainstream academia of existing major academic sciences. Additionally, it revealed women's experiences and oppression faced by women, something which had not been dealt with in academic spheres previously, and cultivated a new field by conducting academic analysis and developing theories. In particular, feminist knowledge is embedded with activism which strives for social change, and contributes to the creation of many social, cultural and institutional changes in real life.

### **A. Women's Studies and Criticism against Male-orientation in Mainstream Academia**

Women's Studies is a science which "changes and re-highlights people's thoughts (Cho Ju-hyun 2000: 168)" and it strives to achieve "a change of paradigm, in other words, a change in the view of human beings and the world in terms of the kind of future society they pursue, and an overall system transition in economy, politics, society and culture (Cho Hyung, 1999: 129)". More specifically, Women's Studies aimed to reveal the discrimination and oppression against women in a patriarchal society based on a consciousness or perspective of feminism and produce practice-oriented knowledge that could change the unequal gender relationship. In this respect, Women's Studies is a critical challenge against mainstream male-oriented academia, and furthermore, it

values activism which aims to transform the overall society.

Criticizing a patriarchal system and building related theories is one of the topics at the heart of Women's Studies. In particular, early feminist research made best efforts to analyze the patriarchal system and reveal its oppression of women in Korean society based on theoretical criticism. A prime example is the journal *Korean Women's Studies* by KAWS. Since its first issue in 1985 up to its ninth issue, it presented research papers on the theme, "Universality and Uniqueness of Korean Women's Studies". Feminist scholars theorized the concept and nature of the patriarchal system and produced various research results on the patriarchal characteristics in the Korean society (Cho Ju-hyeon, 2000). More specifically, they analyzed the views on women of Korea's major religions, Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity, and the theoretical, legal, economic and family characteristics of the Korean patriarchal system. Additionally, they explained the universality and characteristics of the patriarchal system and how it was institutionalized in Korean society by adopting thematic approaches to it (such as education, work, sexuality, law, skills, body and state, among others). They explained the concept of the patriarchal system and by critically analyzing the history and structure of patriarchy in Korean society, they showed that the oppression of women is not natural and set in stone, but a historical and societal component. Such studies explain how the patriarchal system was established in the Korean social context, and the women's experience of oppression within it (Chang Pilwha, 2009).

With the gradual expansion of the scope of feminist research and researchers, the research that was initially focused on criticizing the patriarchal system and women's oppression expanded to include gender issues that made women's oppression into a social structure. In other words, they began analyzing and theorizing gender issues as a social system which structuralized unequal gender relations. In addition, research on women or gender are now adopted as an academic theme not only in Women's Studies but also other disciplines. Though

in most of mainstream academia, research on women/gender is still relatively marginalized, 'gender' is gradually being accepted as a research perspective and research theme. This is one of the achievements of feminist knowledge production influencing previous male-oriented science and creating change.

## B. Feminist Politics and Socio-cultural Changes

Another major trend in the production of feminist knowledge was the identification of women's experiences that had been hidden in a patriarchal society, visualizing unseen experiences and re-composing and theorizing such experience from a women's perspective. Themes, such as pregnancy, childbirth, contraception, family planning, maternity, domestic labor, care labor and violence against women, that are important in feminist research were rarely addressed in existing mainstream academia. These issues were often regarded as natural, biological or private experiences of women. But Women's Studies adopted the important task of analyzing and theorizing women's experiences and daily oppressions against women, which had been overlooked or marginalized, based on the feminist consciousness that "The personal is political". Through research on experiences and lives of women previously regarded as 'personal' or 'private', they focus on the point that these problems are creations of the social structure system and practices, and related to social power. Furthermore, these research brings forth social and cultural change through knowledge production, thereby demonstrating the transitional and practice-based nature of the politicization of feminist knowledge production.

A prime example is the feminist research on sexuality. In 1989, KAWS hosted a seminar on 'Sexuality' where sexuality from a women's liberation perspective, philosophical approach to sexuality, sexual violence issues, sexual trafficking and sexual control of women laborers were dealt with as important themes<sup>30</sup>). At the time, sexuality was not only a very unfamiliar theme to the Korean society, but it was not really recognized as an 'academic' theme worth

discussing at a conference. In other words, sexuality was a field of human instinct and a theme that could be discussed at after-work drinks, not at an official academic venue nor as a research theme. Moreover, in a Korean society with long Confucianist traditions, women's sexuality was even more a concept that was not talked about but it was even seen as taboo. But sexuality became a theme on which conferences could be held by academic associations, and this stimulated various types of research on sexuality. Feminist researchers began to analyze how women's sexuality was oppressed and controlled in a patriarchal society through themes such as women's sexuality, sexual violence and sex trafficking. This created the momentum for sexuality to be regarded as an important research theme in various sectors of sociology, law, literature and psychology, in addition to Women's Studies.

Research on sexuality is seen as having had a central impact not only in academic terms, but in changing the recognition and the culture on the sexuality of the Korean society. As the sexuality debate among feminists became a social issue, it not only became the core agenda, but also a new cultural mark that comprised the Korean society in the 1990s. Feminists, in particular, proposed the problems of sexual violence and sex trafficking as major social issues in the process of theorizing sexuality, and combined them with the practical agenda of women's movement, it managed to attract explosive social interest. The very radical enactment of laws or system changes related to sexual violence and sex trafficking after the 1990s can be explained within this social context.

The leaders of women's movement accepted sexuality as the core element in feminist politics of protesting against women oppression and a male-oriented

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30) The presentations of this academic conference were published in the Korean Women's Studies Vol. 5, and the following theses were included: "Sexuality in the Modern Western Philosophy (Hwang Phil-ho)", "A Review of Feminist Analyses of Sexuality (Chang Philwha)", "Sexual Deviance and Women (Lee Young-ja)", "Sexual Violence and It's Legal Control (Shim Young-hee)", and "Sexual Control at Work (Cho Soon-gyoung et al)."

society. Only back in the 1980s, the main leaders of women's movement were women laborers. But with the beginning of the 1990s, anti-sexual violence, anti-sex trafficking, self-decision making regarding sexuality, women's rights to their bodies and sexuality, and criticism against male-oriented sexuality culture were adopted as new agenda, in relation to which women's movement began. Additionally, sexuality emerged as a core element composing 'politics of identity' where sexually marginalized or discriminated people, such as gay/lesbians and youths, found a voice. Sexuality became to appear broadly in the cultural fields of novels, TV dramas, movies and art works, and women, gay/lesbians, and youth that had always been represented as a subject of sex or passive attitudes began to gain new spotlight. In particular, the 2000s was a period where oppressed subjects of sexuality gradually gained voice, and the sexuality debate now not only comprises the expression of social diversity, but is expanding to a dimension of human rights.

### C. Women's Movement and Expansion of Women's Policies

An important feature of practice-oriented feminist knowledge is that it is connected to theory, practice and women's movement. Feminist knowledge, in other words, is embedded with revolutionary qualities, and its connection to the field, further enables the concrete materialization of such qualities. The process of anti-sexual violence movement is a good example. The anti-sexual violence movement that was carried out in the 1990s was led by a women's solidarity organization, the Korean Women's Association United (KWAU), and within a short period, it managed to achieve successful results, such as amendment of the law and building of a victim support system. In particular, several sexual violence cases that became huge social issues drew more attention and support of the public to this movement. But the anti-sexual violence of the 1990s is

based on the feminist knowledge production of the late 1980s. More specifically, the hosting of academic conferences on sexuality by KAWS and the masters' dissertations by graduates of the Department of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University were the first attempts to deal with the concept of sexual violence. With the attention of mass media, it managed to draw social attention to the issue. In 1989, three theses on sexual violence were published by the Department of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University, which were the first papers studying sexual violence from a feminist perspectives for the first time in Korea<sup>31)</sup>. Then, in 1990s, Korea's first counsel for victims of sexual violence, the Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center (KSVRC) was installed led by professors, students and graduates of the Department of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University. The fact that feminists led the installation of a counseling office for sexual violence victims became a particularly big issue at the time. Since then, sexual violence has been 'named' as infringing the rights of sexual self-determination in the anti-sexual violence movement. Various women's movement were carried out, calling for the enactment of the Special Act on Support for Victims of Sexual Violence and Anti-Sexual Violence and institutionalized support for the victims. Many feminist scholars actively participated in the process, not only as researchers, but also activists and committee members, contributing to the expansion of the expertise and size of anti-sexual violence movement (KSVRC, 2012).

Although there are slight differences, issues such as sex trafficking and

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31) For the first time in Korea, three theses related to sexual violence were published as the masters' dissertations of Ewha Womans University in 1989. They included, "Criticism against Social Norms on Rape (Kim Seon-young)", "A Study on the Experiences of Rape Victims (Lee Myoung-sun)", and "Gender Discrimination Issues in Rape Cases (Park Seon-mi)". Before the channels of feminist knowledge production were expanded after the 1990s, masters' dissertations by graduates of the Department of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University identified new women's issues from a feminist perspective, thus played an important role in the production of feminist knowledge (Chang Pilwha, 2000).

Japanese sex slaves also show how the production of feminist knowledge changed social recognition or approach to the issues. Above all, feminist researchers claim that these issues were not problems of personal sexual deviation or ethics, but rather the results of the oppression of women by a male-oriented society (Kim, 2005). They criticized the discriminative meaning combined in previous concepts of prostitution and introduced a new concept of sex trafficking. They saw prostitution, not as personal 'sexual deviation' but a gender issue caused by an unequal gender structure and male-oriented sexual culture (Won Mi-hae, 1997). These studies offered a new perspective towards prostitution, and thus superficially expanded the anti-prostitution movement and actively intervened to establish policies against prostitution from a women's perspective. In addition, by focusing on the oppression of women's sexuality by a state authority (Japanese Colonial government) or sexual violence problem during wartime, the feminist researchers turned the spotlight to the Comfort Women issue, which had until then been recognized as a 'historical ordeal of the Korean people under Japanese Colonial Rule' or 'shameful personal experience of women' (Kang Seon-mi, Yamashida Young-ae, 1993).

In other words, feminist research on sexual violence, sex trafficking or sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial army show effectively how feminist knowledge defined and identified women issues, how they could change social recognition and agenda, and how they were connected to women's movement and policies.

In addition, research related to women policies is another field of practice-oriented knowledge production and calls for thorough examination. Feminist scholars also provided support in establishing, implementing and evaluating women's policies by participating in the government's policy committees or project review processes. Similarly, many feminist researchers or researchers with gender perspectives actively took part in government-funded research institutes or projects commissioned by the government, thereby expanding feminist knowledge production in policies. Their research, in

particular, produced policy concepts and frameworks, such as 'gender-sensitive' and 'gender mainstreaming', and applied them to policy research, thereby contributing to the specialization and theorization of women's policies. In fact, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act and new legislations<sup>32)</sup> and policy achievements are indexes evidencing the expansion of a gender equality system, and they are results attained by the participation and knowledge production of experts.

## 2. Cultivation of Experts in Women's Studies and Their Role

While one of the two achievements of the institutionalization of Women's Studies was the production of feminist knowledge, the other was the fostering and production of experts, the agents that carry out such production. It is not easy to simply define the scope of women/gender experts that were fostered and produced through the institutionalization of Women's Studies. Primarily, as an academic unit, Women's Studies nurtured and produced majors in Women's Studies through masters and doctoral programs. But from a broader sense, the concept of experts of Women's Studies include the entire feminist research group or expert group. In other words, while majors in Women's Studies are a group of degree course-based feminist experts and in a narrower sense, the feminist experts expanded through institutionalization, includes professors of Women's Studies, members of women's associations, and researchers with gender-perspectives in a broader sense. In particular, most of the feminist

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32) Among major amendments and enactments of legislations include the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (1987), Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes (1994), Equal Employment Opportunity Act (1999), Framework Act on Women's Development (2002), and Act on the Prevention of Sexual Trafficking and Protection of Victims Thereof (2004).

scholars studying and teaching 'women/gender' issues at universities or social system are graduates of different majors in different academic disciplines, and yet they carry out research and teach students in Women's Studies from a feminist or gender perspective. In order to examine the characteristics and role of experts produced through the institutionalization of Women's Studies as a unit of the school system, this paper seeks to discuss 'majors of Women's Studies' in a narrow definition. Nevertheless, it is difficult to separate their roles and activities from those of the group of feminist experts of a broader sense. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the roles and achievements were mostly undertaken by the both.

### A. Roles of Academia and Education Sector in Producing Knowledge and Raising Awareness on Gender Equality

Over a period of some thirty years since the first department of Women's Studies was established in Korea in 1982, several domestic universities followed suit. Yet, the institutionalization of Women's Studies based on graduate schools that can produce only a few number of specialized people through master's and doctoral programs was a constraint in producing large quantities of human resources with expertise. Additionally, in most cases, Women's Studies was installed not as an independent department, but in the form of a joint or inter-disciplinary program, if not abolished mid-way. Such uncertainties compounded the difficulty of producing graduates consistently. In case of Ewha Womans University, where Women's Studies was installed as an independent department with both master's and doctoral programs and operated with relative stability, it produced two master's degree graduates for the first time in 1986. As of 2011, it reports to have produced a total of 314 master's and doctoral degree graduates: 283 with master's degree and 31 doctoral degree.

#### IV. Achievement and Significance ●●● 67

Despite the limits in number and the fact that they are a minority group, the graduates of Women's Studies departments are very active in each field of society and assume leading roles. According to a study report on majors of Women's Studies (Byun Hae-jeong et al, 2011), 30 respondents out of a total 79 surveyed worked in academia or research institutes, recording the highest proportion. The others were working in women's organizations as feminist activists(9 persons); in the areas of politics or policy (7 persons); as freelancers including gender trainers and lecturers (22 persons); and others (7 persons). This survey was based on a random sampling, and therefore, it may not be reasonable to generalize the results. Yet, it offers an idea on the sphere of activities of majors in women's studies.

In fact, majors of Women's Studies are cultivating new specialties in various areas of society and actively working to spread feminism and feminist ideas and create change. Above all, they are assuming various roles in producing feminist knowledge in the academia and research institutes as 'feminist scholars'. In particular, the graduation dissertations of this department in the 1980s and 1990s are evaluated to have significantly contributed to attracting social and academic attention to women's issues by identifying problems that had not been dealt with before sharing women's experiences and proposing new perspectives.

Since Women's Studies was installed at universities in the late 1970s, many majors of Women's Studies have been teaching this subject at universities, which is extremely important in terms of the awareness-raising on feminism and women's empowerment. Particularly for the generation who graduated from university after the 1980s, education of Women's Studies was considerably influential in raising awareness of women's issues and women's empowerment. Most of the courses were not lectures given by the lecturer. They were based on discussions and participation of the students, and were taught with the aim of changing the way of thinking. Such contents and teaching methods enabled male students to break away from their patriarchal mindset, and Women's

Studies became a course on empowerment for female students where they could learn about their identity and boost their feminist consciousness<sup>33</sup>). As a matter of fact, the youths who studied at universities after the 1990s are also called the generation 'blessed with Women's Studies', which means that they are a gender-sensitive generation who have 'learned about or are familiar to Women's Studies'. Though the number of students in Women's Studies is said to be on a downward trend, the courses are still regarded as an important subject for the raising of awareness and empowerment of female students (Huh Min-suk, 2012).

Together with Women's Studies education in universities, the majors of Women's Studies are also actively participating in social education outside school. In addition to nurturing experts and raising awareness within the university, Women's Studies has contributed to spreading consciousness of gender equality by conducting education in this field for experts and the general public in a form of social education. Since the early days of the introduction of Women's Studies, education for the women in the local community or Women's Studies education was set as an important goal for university-affiliated research institutes for Women's Studies, in relation to which, it has conducted related programs for government officials, businesses and feminist activists. In particular, with the vitalization of women's movements after the 1990s, majors of Women's Studies have directly and indirectly participated in the education for citizens or education projects to foster activists/counselors as lecturers,

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33) These discussions are based on personal experiences and that of other colleagues who worked as lecturers of Women's Studies at universities for many years since the late-1980s to the mid-1990s. Most of the graduates of the Department of Women's Studies since the introduction of Women's Studies to when it was securely installed in universities in the 1990s worked as lecturers of this field at universities. They discussed teaching methods and lecture plans through workshops and shared data and materials. This was also where they discussed about the influence of Women's Studies to students, and they say that the lectures brought forth passionate participation and higher consciousness as if they were a 'religious revival'.

educators or gender experts<sup>34</sup>). As gender equality education or education to prevent prostitution and sexual violence led by the government or related agencies has spread more widely recently, more and more people are participating in education to foster specialized lecturers or feminist education for citizens.

## B. The Roles of Women's Movement and Policy Sectors: Establishment and Development of Gender Governance<sup>35</sup>)

Majors of Women's Studies see Women's Studies and women's movement closely related and intertwined not only theoretically but also in practice. Many of them have participated in students' movement at university students or as women activists, and they have a traditional foundation which values the connection between theory and practice from the initial adoption of Women's Studies. In fact, they are not only working as activists in women's movement, project planners and researchers, but they are also taking part in women's movement as advisors and other forms of human resources. Although the number of majors of Women's Studies is highly limited considering the whole scale of women's movement, their contribution to the movement has been

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34) Many women's movement organizations carry out various education programs as part of their activities. In particular, they host education programs or seminars to raise awareness on gender equality for the general public and also regularly undertake education programs that aim to foster counselors/activists.

35) Won Sook-yeon and Park Jin-gyeong (2006: 9) defines the concept of gender governance as "an interaction and relationship structure among related actors through a policy network aimed to ease and improve the discriminative relationship between men and women that is manifested and socially reinforced in various forms". The essence of interaction in gender governance is network and partnership, and it is the state, market and civil society that comprises the network. This paper discusses the agent of interaction which composes gender governance based on women policies, women's movement and Women's Studies.

unparalleled. In particular, as demonstrated by the anti-sexual violence movement after the 1990s, they played a pivotal role in expanding a 'sexuality' issue as a major agenda in women's movement. In other words, it is regarded that they have intensified and diversified the expertise of women's movement by supporting it with new perspectives and theories as part of the leadership of the movement.

Meanwhile, majors of Women's Studies began entering the area of women's policies in the central government and local autonomies, government-funded research institutes, legislative body and politics since the mid-1990s. They have been undertaking diverse roles from low-level civil servants at local governments to high-level officials in the central government, members of parliament and prime minister, but they all share the same goal orientation of the feminist identity and gender equality. A highly distinctive and interesting point is that individual majors of Women's Studies cross over the boundaries between the academia, women's movement and women's policy areas with flexibility. For example, majors of Women's Studies are working in the academia, women's organization and women's policy areas, but a closer look into their individual career experiences or personal lives shows that many have various career experiences crossing over two or three career areas. This may reflect the constraints of reality where their positions are insecure and employment limited on one hand, but on the other hand, it also means that women's studies seeks to bring social change and practice. Such flexible movement over the boundaries is actually proved to be an advantage in expanding expertise and undertaking projects in women's movement or policy fields. In particular, the academia, government and feminist activists could engage in closer bonding and communication, and cooperation through gender governance, which enabled them to develop women's policies and mutually expand expertise.

Since the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s when women's movements grew

increasingly active and women's policies began to expand, so-called 'gender governance' was developed in Korean society for about ten years. This was also a time which left various institutional and legal achievements. Amidst the implementation of gender governance, the women's movement leadership actively participated in raising women's issues as social issues and demanding new legislations and policies, proposing new agenda throughout the process of implementation, collecting foreign policy cases, and adopting, evaluating and monitoring policies. The government recognized women's organizations as its policy partner by actively adopting such proposed agenda and providing financial support to women's movement activities. This enabled the efficient implementation of women's policies. In 1983, the government-funded women's issues organization, the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) was established. In 2007, it changed its Korean name to the 'Korean Women's Policy Research Institute' but retained its English name, KWDI, and focused on research related to women's policies. Basically, it proclaims that it aims to "contribute to the advancement of women and the country, women's social participation and enhancement of welfare by undertaking comprehensive research on women's issues, women's policies and women's capacity development, and providing women's information". The background of the establishment of KWDI as a women's research institute by the government in early 1980s was the announcement to establish such a government-led organization in a keynote address delivered by the Korean delegate at the World Conference on Women in 1980 according to the recommendations of the UN proclaimed in 1975 on the occasion of the International Women's Year. The establishment of the Department of Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University in 1982 and the demands of the academia and women's movements for the need for a national-level approach to women's issues were also seen to be reflected in such a decision.

As a matter of fact, Professor Kim Young-jeong, the first President of KWI

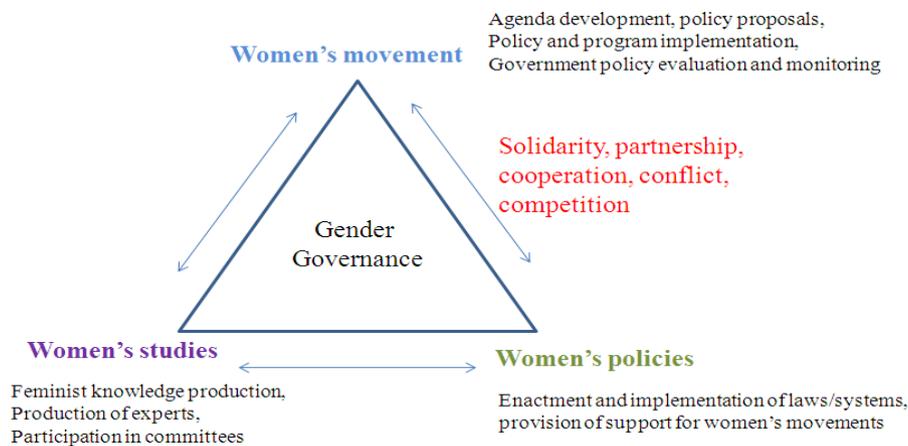
and one of the main actors in installing the Department of Women's Studies at Ewha took office as the first President of KWDI. In addition, the government installed the Korean Institute of Gender Equality Promotion and Education (KIGEPE) in 2003 to promote gender equality awareness and acquire effectiveness in gender equality policies. KIGEPE currently hosts gender-sensitive training programs mainly for civil servants and programs to foster experts in gender equality education.

In this process, the Women's Studies community acted as another important role by participating in the formation and implementation of gender governance by producing human resources that were active in leading both women's movements and women's policies, participating in knowledge production and education as feminist researchers, and by researching and evaluating policies. More specifically, the Women's Studies community not only produced feminist scholars but also women activists and experts in women's policies, while majors of Women's Studies working in the three areas of Women's Studies, women's movement and women's policies became main actors of gender governance. Under a shared objective of "achieving gender equality through gender mainstreaming policies", they actively contributed to creating tangible policy results, namely the enactment of the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes and Act on the Prevention of Sexual Trafficking and Protection of Victims Thereof<sup>36</sup>).

The interactions between the three fields can be illustrated below in a diagram:

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36) In the process of forming and developing gender governance, these three actors built solidarity and a cooperative relationship based on partnership, but at the same time, they show a conflict of interests and competition. Furthermore, the institutionalization of 'women's movement' due to gender governance was criticized for contracting and controlling the critical activities of women's movement organizations to keep the government in check (Shin Sang-sook, 2011).



### C. The Roles of Media, Cultural Arts and Others: Spread of Public Feminism

Besides the academia, women's movement, and women's policy areas, majors in Women's Studies took part in cultivating and expanding new areas of 'feminist media' or 'feminist culture' in various cultural arts fields, including films, novels and media. Majors in Women's Studies, feminist scholars and women activists have played a central role from the initial funding to the editing and publication of the Women's News, established in 1988. Even today, it plays an important role in delivering the feminist view to the mass media and the public. Those who became writers, journalists, cultural arts planners and film producers in popular culture or arts are contributing to the spread of feminism by incorporating the feminist or gender perspective in each specialized field. The field of women's movement or the so-called 'feminist cultural movement' gained force after establishing an women's organization named "Another Culture" in 1984. This organization led by feminist scholars, feminist writers, and Women's Studies majors developed an alternative feminist popular culture through writing, performances and composition by women artists. Later in the 1990s, the "Feminist Artist Network" was established under the banner of

feminist cultural movement, and various events, such as the "Feminist Movie Festival", were hosted. The feminist cultural movement continued to become more diversified and popular, and is continuously gaining greater visibility. Given the influence and impact of popular culture and arts, their roles and symbolism are quite substantial.

# V

## Conclusion : Evaluation and Implications

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3. Joint Growth of Women's Studies, Women's Movement and Women's Policies and the Achievement of Gender Equality 84



Women's Studies in the Korean society has a short history of approximately thirty years. Yet, it has managed to achieve remarkable institutional growth, and has wielded considerable social influence in the academia and different fields of society. This Chapter seeks to evaluate Korea's institutionalization of Women's Studies based on the institutionalization process and influence and discuss its implications.

## 1. Features of University-centered Institutionalization and the Need to Provide Support

Women's Studies in Korea is regarded as an unprecedented success story. Throughout its short history, it managed to achieve remarkable growth and institutionalization as evidenced by the expansion of the installation of master's and doctoral programs in universities, the establishment and increase of women's research institutes, the establishment of KAWS and publication of various academic journals. In particular, the fact that it managed to maintain stable growth by fostering and producing graduates and experts through the department of Women's Studies at universities, its institutional foundation, is also noted as a positive achievement.

The institutionalization of Women's Studies in Korean society is distinctive in that it was led by universities throughout the process of introduction and growth. Individual universities played a pivotal role as core agents of the project in the entire process, from the first introduction of Women's Studies in the 70s and its base building period of the 1980s to the growth period of the 90s and the stabilization period of the 2000s. In this respect, the case of Ewha Womans University offers extremely important implications for the growth and advancement of Women's Studies going forward. Ewha Womans University

carried out a fundamental role in the institutionalization of Women's Studies as it was the first school to install Women's Studies lectures in the 1970s, the first to establish a research institute for Women's Studies in Korea, the first to install a master's course in Women's Studies in the 1980s and a doctoral program in the 1990s. As such, it is noted to have opened new horizons in the institutionalization of Women's Studies in Korea. It is well worth noting that from the very first moment of introduction up to the present, former presidents and executives of Ewha have staunchly supported Women's Studies and held feminism as the core value of women's education.

The recent rapid decline in demand for lectures on Women's Studies, the continued reduction and abolition of the lectures, and the closing and contraction of activities of university-affiliated research institutes for Women's Studies over the past few years give way for concern that the institutionalization of Women's Studies is at a crisis. Considering that the institutionalization itself is based on departments and research institutes of Women's Studies in universities, the contraction of institutionalization seems to be a realistic problem. The case of Ewha Womans University stands out amidst universities that piggy-backed on rising market demand or trend and installed Women's Studies departments without a concrete direction for value in Women's Studies and abolished or reduced the courses due to restructuring or a decline in market demand after the mid-2000s. This demonstrates that for the stable institutionalization and continuous growth of Women's Studies, the strong will and support of the school authorities on the necessity for Women's Studies are essential factors. The stabilization of the department of Women's Studies as an institution is the most fundamental and physical foundation which enables the production of feminist knowledge and experts. As shown by the history of institutionalization of Women's Studies in Korea and that of Ewha Womans University, research in Women's Studies and production of experts in this field can only be guaranteed with the continued existence and

secure maintenance of the Women's Studies department.

Another distinctive feature is that university-affiliated institutes of Women's Studies supported the institutionalization of Women's Studies in universities and played important roles as hubs that expanded inter-disciplinary research. As illustrated in Ewha's case, the role undertaken by the Korean Women's Institute (KWI) was highly pivotal and dominant in the building of the institution of Women's Studies, from the preparation of lectures on Women's Studies to the development of the curriculum, publication of textbooks, operation of lectures and installation of a Department of Women's Studies, and the establishment of the KAWS. In addition, the university-affiliated institutes were entrusted with exchange with universities, local communities and the international society, and thus was a core actor in the proliferation of Women's Studies. A glimpse into the activities of KWI in the 1970-80s shows that the financial assistance of the Western community, mainly the United States and Germany, made an important contribution to the activities and projects of these institutes.

But the change in Korea's status in the international society has transformed the university-affiliated institutes for Women's Studies to become new agents of education that lead the international exchange in Women's Studies. As international exchange continued to expand in step with the opening of the Korean society after the 1990s and the flow of globalization, international exchange projects led by the research institutes for Women's Studies were also expanded in diverse ways. An important feature is that in parallel to the recent heightening of Korea's political and economical position in the international society, the affiliated research institutes are leading the expansion of projects that support women's education in developing countries, including Asia<sup>37</sup>). The

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37) The 'Asian and African Women's Conference' hosted by Sookmyung University in 2011 and the 'World Congress of Global Partnership' hosted by Deokseong Women's University in 2012 were international academic conferences to enhance education and leadership skills in women in Asia and African regions. As for Ewha Womans University, it installed the Ewha Global Empowerment Program (EGEP) for women

expansion of such international projects signify that the research institutes are now driving the globalization of the institutionalization of Women's Studies based on the achievements that it has accumulated so far. These efforts hold great significance as it goes beyond the meaning of internationalization of Korean Women's Studies in a globalized era. It enables the overcoming of an academic inclination towards the west, and presents an alternative paradigm to Women's Studies based on a regional identity of Korea and Asia (Lee Sang-wha, 2008)<sup>38</sup>).

Nevertheless, with the exception of a few university-affiliated research institutes for Women's Studies, the support they receive from universities is seriously lacking and insufficient, which is compounding the contraction of the role of the institutes and adding to institutional uncertainty. The vitalization of the university-affiliated research institutes will primarily require the securing of human resources, such as the active participation of not only professors in Women's Studies, but also professors in other areas and gender researchers. Financial or policy support is also desperately called for in order to continuously undertake and expand projects with more stability. In particular, greater government support or cooperative projects with the government will be critical at a point in time where the position of Korean Women's Studies is changing on the international stage.

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activists in Asia and Africa in 2011. EGEP is a two-week residential program for the women activists who are working for the non governmental sector. These projects are a prime example of how Korea's Women's Studies is expanding its field as an actor of international exchange.

- 38) The Asian Center for Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University pursued the institutionalization of Asian Women's Studies after its establishment in 1995. This project aimed to critically overcome the inclination towards the western community, and by engaging in an Asian Women's Studies debate, aim to advance research in Women's Studies based on the experiences of Asian women in the Asian context. Furthermore, it aims to form Asian feminism as an alternative discourse. The Asian Association of Women's Studies (AAWS) founded in 2007 is regarded to be a result of these efforts.

## 2. Academic, Social, Policy Support to Cultivate Experts

The achievements of Women's Studies which is considered to be 'successful' includes not only its proliferation through institutionalization, but also its cultivation of human resources that produced experts who created change in each field of society. The training and production of majors in Women's Studies in the Korean society provided the physical foundation that formed a new type of experts, 'feminist scholars'. Though they were a group limited in number, those who majored in Women's Studies have proceeded to various fields and have been working as feminist scholars, women activists, women's policy experts and feminist cultural artists. They are considered to have brought considerable social, cultural and policy changes in Korean society by raising women's issues from a feminist or gender-perspective in each field, criticizing male-orientation in existing mainstream academia and developing new academic agenda, providing the contents and future direction of women's movement, and acting as gender experts in women's policies. They are the very agents of action that produced knowledge and created social change. They brought forward discrimination and oppression against women in an era where the term 'feminism' itself was unfamiliar to many during the early days of Women's Studies, and after the 1990s, they led the institutional and cultural change to achieve gender equality through women's movements and policies.

However, the reality of Korean society that they face is not easy to deal with. The identity of a 'feminist' in an organization or field is still a minority group in terms of quantity or value, and marginalized. Additionally, in terms of academic expertise, majors of Women's Studies are always doubted for their expertise compared to other academic backgrounds and are recognized as experts that can be substituted. What is worse, Women's Studies lectures in universities are considered to be presentable by any professor as long as they are 'women',

and gender-perspectives are disparaged as not an academic training but 'common sense' that is inherent if the researcher is a 'woman'. Thus, majors in Women's Studies or feminists are not only doubted for their academic expertise, but they have to face the negative social perspectives and prejudices every day<sup>39</sup>). Feminists in male-oriented mainstream fields in particular, experience a 'daily struggle' where they must always face challenges and resistance.

Behind the growth in institutionalization of Women's Studies lies the support of dedication and passion of experts produced by Women's Studies programs. As can be derived by how the activities of feminist scholars or majors of Women's Studies are labeled 'Women's Studies Movement', they literally show dedicated efforts and passion in proliferating feminist knowledge and practice in not only research, lectures and education in Women's Studies but in all areas of women's movement. But for them to be able to fully spread their wings and securely maximize their capabilities and expand their social capacities, institutional support is required. Above all, for feminist scholars to have their own voice, they need a certain level of empowerment. But the number of majors in Women's Studies, especially those with doctoral degrees, reach only a few dozens, and are seriously marginalized within the academia. Furthermore, the possibilities and potential careers granted to them in Korean university society are highly limiting. Though the institutionalization of Women's Studies developed based on master's and doctoral degrees, the installation of Women's Studies departments themselves were limited and more recently, these are also under contraction. Therefore, opportunities for majors in Women's Studies to act as knowledge producers, researchers and faculty members within the university

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39) Feminist scholars or feminists are most often portrayed negatively or comically in mass media. In dramas or comedy programs, they often appear with black horn-rimmed spectacles and are described as typically high-handed 'dreadful' women. Even recently, in a popular comedy program, they appeared as characters who are 'tough women activists who always wear suits and loudly claim for gender equality' or 'ugly with sideburns'.

system are extremely limited. This reality is considered to be the most fundamental factor that impairs the proliferation of feminist knowledge production and academic expertise. Therefore, the cultivation of experts in Women's Studies must be pursued with greater enthusiasm and the efforts of the academia to support it, and for this, social and policy support are desperately called for. Primarily, university authorities must devote greater efforts to securely establish the institutionalization of this field to be able to train and produce majors in Women's Studies, which should be compounded by financial and policy support. Furthermore, the institutional base must be built so that they can securely position themselves in the academia or research institutes.

Meanwhile, Women's Studies in universities is criticized for gradually losing touch with women's movement as its institutionalization progressed. In particular, the feminist activists criticize that Women's Studies is excessively pedantic or biased towards theory, and locked within the boundaries of academic science distanced from the voices on the field (Cho Ju-hyeon, 2000; Lee Jae-gyeong, 1999). The evaluation on the connection between Women's Studies and women's movement is based on various considerations: first, whether Women's Studies is producing practice-oriented knowledge can be examined. In other words, it is a question of whether research and knowledge production in Women's Studies guarantee activism that will transform society? Secondly, whether researches or theories in Women's Studies are driving or supporting the contents or direction of women's movement can be examined. And thirdly, whether Women's Studies is adequately undertaking the goal of cultivating women activists also can be evaluated.

In the early stages of introduction, Women's Studies set 'connection between theory and practice' and 'connection with women's movements' as important values (Jung Dae-hyun, 1984), but it cannot be denied that Women's Studies is distinctive as an academic discipline and that it grew based on university-focused institutionalization. Against intensifying competition in the university communities

and an environment where researchers and professors alike are evaluated based on the number of theses written or academic achievements, Women's Studies had to consider the criteria or evaluation of the university system with importance for its very survival. Additionally, the knowledge, research and theoretical works produced by Women's Studies as an academic effort cannot incorporate the pending issues required on site or day-to-day in women's movements. In order to improve the situation, there are internal discussions for the need to install a course which enables students of Women's Studies departments to participate in women's movements or on-site or an internship at a movement organization which gives credits to students. In other words, it is a suggestion to address the constraints of institutionalization in universities by incorporating the connection with women's movement within the academic system.

### **3. Joint Growth of Women's Studies, Women's Movement and Women's Policies and the Achievement of Gender Equality**

As seen in Chapters II and III, the institutionalization of Women's Studies in Korean society has developed through a mutually intimate connection with the growth and development of women's movement and women's policies.

In the early introduction phase, Women's Studies proclaimed the training of women leaders and advancement of women's movement as one of its major goals. In fact, it has contributed to expanding the base of Women's Studies by putting forward new women/gender agenda, primarily sexual violence and sex trafficking, and by undertaking theoretical and practical interventions. At the same time, increasingly vibrant women's movement or movement by female university students during the period of base building or growth acted as important social factors that facilitated the proliferation and institutional growth

of Women's Studies. The growth of the movement of female students directly acted as the driving engine that increased the installation of Women's Studies lectures, and raising women's issues and spreading an awareness of gender equality through women's movement were the social background that supported the installation of a department of Women's Studies in universities.

After the 1990s, the development of women's policies also became a major growth engine that led the development of women's movement and Women's Studies. Experts in Women's Studies produced research on women's policies in the academia or research institutes, and could actively participate in the entire process of establishing and implementing policies as government officials, policy officials and committee members. At the same time, the growth in women's movement and women's policy acted as an external engine facilitating the institutionalization of Women's Studies by university authorities by expanding employment opportunities for feminist experts to work in governments and local autonomies as public servants and increasing the demand for such experts. Such characteristics are evident in the process where the growth and contraction of the institutionalization of Women's Studies, the developments of women's policies and women's movement happened almost simultaneously. For instance, the installation of the department of Women's Studies began spreading after the mid-1990s, and this is almost the same as when women's movement and policy became more vibrant. The increased conservatism in women's policies and contraction of women's movement after the late 2000s are also nearly synchronous with the abolishment or reduction of the department of Women's Studies. The corresponding time frames show that the three areas are mutually interactive rather than one area influencing the other areas one-way.

For the past three decades or so, Women's Studies managed to build its institutional base and successfully achieved continuous institutional growth. Women's Studies has pursued the purposes of feminist knowledge production and experts training through them, and contributed to significant social changes

and institutional achievements in an environment ridden with various constraints and limits. The birth, growth and development of Women's Studies imply that the institutionalization of Women's Studies cannot be achieved solely by the strong determination of university authorities, and that it can only be a continuous success when it progresses in relation to changes in the overall society and institutionalization of gender equality through women's movement and women's policies.

More recently, the feminist community initiated reflective discussions over the limits of achieving gender equality through institutional change of laws or policies alone. It particularly shares the need for a new paradigm of feminism, women's movement and women's policy that goes beyond institutional change and is accompanied by changes in more daily and cultural values. Such recognition demands the fundamental reflection on the direction and way forward of Women's Studies. Until now, Women's Studies focused on constructing the physical foundation for its existence as an academic discipline through institutionalization of Women's Studies in universities. Such institutionalization has provided the minimum physical foundation for the production of experts and knowledge, and continuously require social and policy support to this end. Additionally, greater institutional support is needed to enable majors of Women's Studies to enter various fields in society, including the academia, and securely engage in activities. Finally, self-retrospective and dedicated efforts are called for internally, and greater efforts in strengthening the social connection between women's movement and women's policy externally shall be required in order for the two to undergo new growth and development hand-in-hand<sup>40</sup>).

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40) Cho Hyoung, Chairperson of the Korea Foundation for Women, who played a leading role in the introduction and institutionalization of Korean Women's Studies recently diagnosed the problems facing departments and majors of Women's Studies today in an interview with the Women News: "First, a time for reflection is needed within the Women's Studies community. Women's Studies was first introduced when the land

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was barren, but because of its theory and methodology, and because it is a critical, practice-based science, it is a field which offers a great sense of achievement to its researchers. It is regretful that this fascinating academic field failed to build a stronger bridge when it came to society. In other words, when majors in Women's Studies first entered society, they simply left things to society instead of actively building a new field for them to work in. Its application to women's movement also fell short of expectations. The Korean society needs to create a social mood to more broadly integrate feminist knowledge, information and perspectives. (Women News, 2012.11.2)”



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