Chapter 7
Factors Promoting Women's Participation in Taiwan's Politics

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Most spectacularly, Taiwan elected its first woman President when the DPP's Tsai Ing-wen won with a decisive 56% of the vote. As the postwar era commenced in the late 1940s, the status of women in Taiwan could probably best be described as dismal. The country had a poor agricultural economy that had been devastated by World War II; it was ruled by an authoritarian regime that had just lost the Civil War in China, and its culture was widely described as a highly patriarchal one that relegated women to subservient roles. Consequently, most women faced highly constrained circumstances; and the prospects for either political or economic changes that could improve their situation and status appeared remote. Half a century later, both Taiwan itself and most women on the island have "come a long way." The country experienced an "economic miracle" and now is an industrialized, if not post-industrial, nation with a GDP per capita in 2013 of $38,200 at ppp (purchasing power parity), which was only $200 less than Germany's.[1] While real political liberalization was delayed until the 1980s, there is now a thriving democracy. The status of women has improved markedly as well. For example, women have a fairly high level of participation in the labor force; and the ratio of women's salaries to men's has now reached the level that exists in the United States. In the political realm, women now occupy about a fifth of the seats in most of the country's legislatures and assemblies and have reached a third of the national parliament.

Taiwan obviously has gone through dramatic socioeconomic and political changes that has produced a much more prosperous and democratic society. That women would benefit from such change is somewhat more problematic, however, since both industrialization and democratization have had countervailing implications for the status of women in developing societies. On the one hand, industrialization should set off a series of socioeconomic changes favorable to women:

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(1) women's greater participation in the formal labor market, (2) growing prosperity and opportunities for education, and (3) a more urbanized society in which the repressive power of extended kinship systems is diminished. On the other hand, many women face marginalization, rather than empowerment, from such disparate facets of industrialization as the mechanization of agriculture, the breakdown of strong kinship ties and the extended family, and the evolving division-of-labor in industrial urban centers. For example, new agricultural techniques (e.g., the Green Revolution in South Asia) were dominated by men, thereby marginalizing women in agricultural production; and women's contribution to the industrial work force was largely limited to the least skilled and most tenuous positions in many developing societies.[2] Consequently, while women in some social groups and classes have clearly benefitted from industrialization, the accompanying economic and social transformations have reproduced and reinforced patriarchy in many societies. Similarly, since democracy provides broader avenues for influencing public policy, previously excluded and marginalized groups, such as women, might gain some impact on governmental activities in more democratic societies. However, the strength of the existing patriarchal culture will almost inevitably influence both the extent of women's autonomous participation in the public sector and the efficacy of government policy. Indeed, women seemingly made few gains from the democratic transformations in Latin America and the former Soviet bloc during the 1980s and 1990s.[3]

These countervailing effects that economic and political development had upon the status of women during the twentieth century suggest two divergent perspectives upon women's progress in Taiwan. First, Taiwanese women must have been able to take advantage of important opportunities that political and economic change opened up. Second, we need to be careful not to overlook groups or types of women who have not benefited from the rapid change on the island over the past half century. This chapter begins by presenting a brief overview of Taiwan's development during the postwar era. Two sections then discuss women's changing status in the socioeconomic and political spheres. Finally, the conclusion argues that many women in Taiwan were able to utilize resources made available during the country's development but that significant groups of women were excluded from this process as well. These findings are then used to illustrate a theoretical model of how socioeconomic change affects the status of women in developing societies.

7.1 Taiwan's Postwar Transformations[4]

Taiwan's economy and politics went through a series of transformations during the postwar era that resulted in the creation of a prosperous democracy and created opportunities for many (but far from all) women to better their lives. In particular, four periods of major structural transformation can be discerned—(1) the 1950s when both an authoritarian regime and the transformation away from an agricultural

economy were consolidated; (2) the early 1960s to the early 1970s when the "export boom" revolutionized the economy and set off significant social changes as well; (3) the mid 1970s to the late 1980s when substantial industrial upgrading occurred that was accompanied by the emergence of a middle-class society and a significant political liberalization; and (4) the late 1980s to the present when full democracy was finally achieved but the country was also challenged by an ongoing transformation from an industrial to an "information age" economy.

The first stage of Taiwan's postwar development was strongly shaped by the imposition of authoritarian rule over the island by Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang (KMT or the Nationalist Party) party who had evacuated to the island following its loss of the Chinese Civil War in the late 1940s. Under the KMT, the government was dominated by Mainlanders (i.e., the 15% of the population who came to Taiwan with Chiang). The Mainlanders were seen by many Islanders, those who resided in Taiwan at the end of World War II, as treating the Taiwanese (who are also almost entirely Han Chinese) as "second class citizens" in their own land. In addition, there was a legacy of political oppression called the "white terror," most especially the tragedy of the February 28, 1947, or 2-2-8 Incident, in which a limited popular uprising brought a massive retaliation that resulted in an estimated over 20,000 deaths, mostly by execution.[5] While the KMT rule was strongly authoritarian, it did include several aspects that helped to promote democratization several decades later. It incorporated existing social and political groups and factions into the lower levels of the regime. It also allowed local elections which the central party-state adroitly manipulated to play local Taiwanese factions off against each other.[6]

In the economic realm, in contrast, this period saw a series of much more positive reforms or transformations. First and probably most dramatically, there was a radical land reform that created a productive small agriculture sector, greatly reduced the country's economic and social inequality, and provided resources for small business entrepreneurship. Second, a program of universal primary education proved to be extremely successful in developing the country's human capital. Third, the government substantially increased its economic leadership capability by bringing skilled technocrats into the top levels of the regime. Finally, import-substitution policies of protecting the domestic market allowed light industry to develop quite rapidly.[7]

Despite the initial success of this transformation, import-substitution soon reached its inevitable high point with the saturation of the local market for light industrial goods, setting off a new challenge for Taiwan. The resources accumulated during this first stage then formed the foundation for a new transformation to exporting light industrial products in the 1960s. The technocrats conceived and implemented the major policy changes which made this transformation possible, while its success rested on the human capital that had been developed in the work force and business community. The results were certainly spectacular as Taiwan recorded double-digit real economic growth through most of the 1960s and early

1970s based on an even more rapid expansion of primarily light industrial exports. In the political realm, the liberalization of the economy to promote exports had the perhaps ironic consequence of undercutting state power by forcing Taiwan's small businesses to become highly entrepreneurial in the face of stiff international competition. This also had a very salutary social effect by increasing the power of the primarily Taiwanese business community, thereby bringing a little more balance to the relations between Mainlanders and Islanders.[8]

Just as with import-substitution, the success of Taiwan's export-led strategy contained the "seeds of its own destruction" in the sense that the island's rising prosperity and wages began to price it out of the niche of low-cost manufactured products in the world economy. Economically, Taiwan responded to this new challenge with two somewhat disparate transformations during the late 1970s and 1980s. First, there was a state-led push into the heavy industry (e.g., steel and petrochemicals); second, the small-scale business sector began to upgrade its production techniques, especially in the electronics field.[9] The important social change occurred as well with the emergence of a strong middle class.[10] The authoritarian regime began to liberalize significantly as well with the emergence of a coherent opposition and the growing role for "electoral politicians" within the Kuomintang.[11]

The final structural transformation commenced in the late 1980s. Economically, Taiwan emerged as a major player in the global high tech industry (e.g., ranking third in the world in semiconductor production as the new millennium opened) and, correspondingly, saw a massive movement to offshore production in its traditional labor-intensive industries, primarily to the PRC.[12] Unlike earlier eras, though, the economic change was probably dwarfed by the transformation of the polity, as Taiwan went through a very successful democratic transition. By the early-to-mid 1990s, Taiwan's citizens were electing all their political leaders in free and competitive elections; and the formerly opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the presidency in 2000.[13] Perhaps because this final structural transformation is not yet complete, it appears more problematic than the first three. Economically, the massive loss of old industries periodically raises fears of impending crisis, while the polarization and gridlock in Taiwan's recent politics have taken a little of the luster off its successful democratization.[14]

Cumulatively, therefore, these four transformations have radically reshaped Taiwan from a poor agricultural dictatorship to a prosperous industrial (or post-industrial) democracy. Such far-reaching and fundamental change certainly presents many opportunities and resources that women might potentially use for greater empowerment. Yet, as noted in the introductory section, development in many Third World nations has not really benefitted women very much because of various barriers that prevent them from availing themselves of such theoretically potential resources and opportunities. The next two sections, therefore, examine what socioeconomic and political development has meant for women on Taiwan.

7.2 Women's Socioeconomic Status in Taiwan

Most indicators of women's socioeconomic status in Taiwan imply that they have made very substantial progress and now experience conditions that are, for the most part, equivalent to those in the developed world. For example, the data in Table 7.1 show that women in Taiwan now have a life expectancy of 82, a fertility rate of 1.1, an infant mortality rate of 4.5, and a maternal mortality rate of 6.5, all typical of figures in the developed nations. Educationally, women now have a literacy rate of 96%; and there is little difference between the school attendance of girls and boys through four-year colleges and universities, although a clear male bias in graduate education remains.[15] In terms of economic status, women have a fairly high rate of participation in the formal labor force at 50%, which is widely seen as an important prerequisite for their social empowerment. Most impressively, their average wages and salaries are 80% those of men. While this is still far from equality, it is approximately equal to the ratio in the United State.

The attainment of increased and increasingly equal education for women in Taiwan is crucial because a good education is almost required to broaden one's possibilities and achieve independence and empowerment. Traditionally before industrialization, most families in Taiwan had been reluctant to invest in education for their girls who were regarded as "spilled water" because they left the family upon marriage. Consequently, educational opportunities are vital if women are to develop their skills and resources. At the beginning of Taiwan's industrialization drive, educational opportunities were quite limited; and very substantial gender inequality existed in the education system. For example, in 1951 the average man had attended school for four years, while the average woman had only a year and a half of education.[16]

The government instituted compulsory primary school (grades 1–6) at the beginning of the country's development drive; and compulsory schooling was expanded to nine years or junior high in 1968.[17] Universal education paid for by the government is obviously very advantageous for girls because it overcomes cultural

Table 7.1 Indicators of women's socioeconomic status in Taiwan, 2008–09

Life expectancy	82
Fertility rate	1.1
Infant mortality	4.5[a]
Maternal mortality	6.5[b]
Literacy rate	96%
Labor force participation	50%
Average salary compared to men's	80%

[a]per 1,000 live births
[b]per 100,000 live births
Source
Phyllis Mei-lien Lu. *The Changing Status of Women in Taiwan: 1948–2010*. Auburn, AL: PhD Dissertation, Auburn University, 2012. pp. 158, 160, 162, 171, 173, 185

prejudices against girls' going to school. The data on the percentages of girls and boys in various age cohorts who attended school in 1969 and 1988 in Table 7.2 demonstrate the importance of Taiwan's educational policy. In 1969, just after the increase in compulsory schooling, there was nearly universal schooling for both girls and boys through the age of 11. For older children, however, the proportion of those in school dropped considerably; and serious gender inequality existed for those who continued their schooling. For example, only a little more than half (50%) of the girls aged 12–14 were in school compared to nearly three-quarters (70%) of the boys. Clearly, the patriarchal traditional culture was acting in a biased manner to limit the resource endowments of many girls and women in Taiwan.

Two decades later as Taiwan emerged as an industrialized society the picture was much more positive. School attendance for both girls and boys had increased substantially. Furthermore, the decided gender inequality that existed in the educational system had been overcome as well. Indeed, by 1988 women had become a little more likely than men to have continued their education beyond 15 years of age. Despite this aggregate equality in educational opportunities for girls and boys, more subtle but serious gender biases continue in the educational system, however. For example, lower levels of schools seem to be more oriented to educating and encouraging boys than girls; and substantial gender segregation by subject matter exists at the level of colleges and vocational schools.[18] Even with these limitations, though, the tremendous expansion of educational opportunities for women during

Table 7.2 Percentage of age group attending school

	1969	1988
Age 6–11		
Male	98%	99%
Female	97%	99%
Age 12–14		
Male	70%	91%
Female	54%	90%
Age 15–17		
Male	43%	73%
Female	31%	80%
Age 18–21		
Male	20%	29%
Female	15%	33%
Age 22–24		
Male	7%	8%
Female	3%	8%

Source
Cal Clark, Janet Clark, and Bih-er Chou. "Women and Development in Taiwan: The Importance of the Institutional Context." In Kartik C. Roy, Clement A. Tisdell, and Hans C. Blomqvist, Eds., *Economic Development and Women in the World Community*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996. p. 47

the postwar era is widely seen as making a major contribution to women's empowerment in Taiwan.[19]

Taiwan's pattern of economic development also proved to be helpful for improving women's status, although there were a few more contradictory results than for the expansion of educational opportunities. The implications of land reform were very significant. During the 1950s and 1960s, these effects were clearly positive. Because of the small agricultural plots that were institutionalized by the "Land to the Tiller" program, large-scale mechanization was limited, thereby curbing the pressures for a gender-based division of labor in which men would monopolize the new, much more productive technologies. Consequently, women shared the benefits of vastly increased ownership and somewhat increased productivity with men without facing the negative spin-offs that the Green Revolution can produce for the status of women. Furthermore, Taiwan's early development that was based on the growth of geographically dispersed small factories[20] reduced the problems that early industrialization often creates for rural women. For example, the existence of nearby factories minimized the disruption of traditional ties and support systems that industrialization inevitably generates. More importantly, aggregate data on women's employment showed that, perhaps surprisingly, they were not grossly under- or overrepresented in most job categories except the very highest one of managers and administrators.[21]

Taiwan's rapid passage through industrial development into an "information age" economy by the 1990s also was quite beneficial to women because this tertiary economy created innumerable professional positions for which educated women were quite well qualified. This economic transition brought significant pressures undercutting traditional family relations. Several traditional norms continued to hold sway even as what has been termed the "new nuclear family" has increasingly replaced the extended rural kinship system in urbanized Taiwan. For example, daughters are still viewed as "marrying out" of their natal families. However, women, especially those who are educated and employed, have become much more independent. For example:

> Highly educated urban women after marriage use their greater economic independence to help their natal families financially. Thus, various tensions within the family are evident as women assume new roles in the larger society. Many men resent challenges to their traditional prerogatives of domination in the public domain and also recent challenges to a sexual double standard. This contributes to domestic discord and a slowly rising divorce rate.[22]

Despite Taiwan's relatively good record in terms of aggregate statistics, more detailed and qualitative studies point to continuing and substantial biases that women faced in labor markets during Taiwan's industrialization. Most importantly, women's role in the industrial labor force has always been subject to very considerable discrimination. For example, women have formed a highly disproportionate number of the "part-time proletariat" who work in factories before marriage, rank at the bottom of pay and status among manufacturing employees, have almost no opportunity for advancement, and continue to be subordinated within traditional

family structures. In agriculture and small-scale commerce, moreover, women are far more likely than men to occupy the marginalized status of "unpaid family help."[23] This marginalization of a substantial number of women in Taiwan's postwar economy spotlights class differences among women, as well as the growing role of education and professional employment in promoting the independence and empowerment of many (but far from all) women in Taiwanese society.

7.3 Women's Political Status in Taiwan

Women can use government and the political processes in two distinct ways in order to improve their status. First, women officials are usually assumed to be especially responsive to women's concerns and issues. Thus, having more women officials should result in more governmental policies supportive of women.[24] Second, women's groups and individual women can canvass public officials to gain favorable policies. Indeed, the activities of grassroots women's organizations have been quite effective in upgrading the status of women in a wide range of contexts in both the developed and developing worlds.[25] This section, hence, examines women's political status on Taiwan.

7.3.1 Women in Political Office

In terms of holding official political offices, women have gained very significant representation in many areas of government. The question of how well women are represented in Taiwan's politics is one of whether one sees a glass "half full or half empty." On the one hand, women are grossly underrepresented in almost all categories of political offices and jobs; on the other, they now have very significant representation that is fairly high for a developing country. In terms of holding official political offices, women have gained very significant representation in many areas of government. For example, in the early 21st century, women generally held over 20% of the seats in Taiwan's assemblies and legislatures and 15% of the cabinet posts. Furthermore, while women in Taiwan have not fared as well in gaining executive positions as they have in winning legislative races, they have done quite well in contests for the top executive positions. Annette Hsiu-lien Lü of the Democratic Progressive Party served as Taiwan's Vice President for eight years (2000–2008) during the presidential administration of Chen Shui-bian; and Tsai Ing-wen won the DPP's presidential nomination for president in 2012, although she lost in a highly competitive race.[26]

Gaining political office, of course, does not necessarily mean that women will be able to exercise effective power or to pursue their own policy objectives. This is especially true for Taiwan where the patriarchal Confucian culture might well result in women office-holders acting and being treated as second class "tokens." Moreover, especially during the authoritarian era, many governmental positions did not really confer much power upon the office-holder. Still, there are several important indications that women officials have participated meaningfully in government. For example, two studies of Taiwan legislators based on in-depth interviews with matched samples of Assemblywomen and Assemblymen found a surprising similarity in the activities and role orientations of female and male legislators in both the authoritarian era[27] and the more recent democratic period.[28]

During the mid-1980s, of course, Taiwan's politics still retained considerable authoritarian controls; and, in particular, legislative activities were clearly constrained. Thus, it might be argued that the relative similarity between Assemblywomen and Assemblymen at that time lacked much substantive import. The same cannot be said for Taiwan's politics after the democratic transition was completed in the early 1990s. Consequently, the argument that women legislators in Taiwan are far from inactive tokens receives strong support from similar findings about the activism of women legislators in Yang Wan-ying's study of the Legislative Yuan (Taiwan's national parliament) that was based on interviews conducted in late 1997 with a matching sample of about 20 women and 20 men.[29]

Furthermore, Yang was explicitly interested in the question of whether women and men legislators differed in their representative activities. Table 7.3, for instance, explores the hypothesis that women and men would specialize in sponsoring different types of bills (these data are not based on Yang's interviews but on the records of the Legislative Yuan for all parliamentarians). In particular, Yang hypothesized that a much higher proportion of the bills introduced by women, as compared to men, would address either (1) "feminist issues" (legal equality and improving women's status in society) or (2) "caring issues" in such areas of women's traditional concerns about children, education, health care, and social welfare. Table 7.3 provides strong support for this hypothesis as over half (57%) of the bills sponsored by women were in these two fields, while less than a fifth (18%) of men's bills were, with (as might be expected) the difference being especially pronounced concerning feminist issues (13–1%). In addition, women accorded a slightly higher priority than men to bills concerning judicial affairs (20–13%), perhaps reflecting a greater interest in human and legal rights (which can benefit women even if not specifically targeted toward them). Overall, therefore, women legislators in Taiwan do appear to be specializing in the representation of women.[30]

The historical operation of Taiwan's electoral system provides the primary explanation for women's comparatively good representation today. Article 136 of the 1946 Constitution mandates that women be guaranteed a minimum representation in legislative assemblies at all levels of government. In practice, this has meant that one or more seats are "reserved" for a woman in Taiwan's multi-member electoral districts, with the number of "reserved seats" being determined by the size of the district. When a sufficient number of women candidates got enough votes to

Table 7.3 Emphasis in bill sponsorship by gender, 1996–1997

	Women[a] (%)	Men[a] (%)
Feminist issues	13	1
Caring issues	42	17
Judicial issues	20	13
Economic development issues	17	36
Politics and government issues	1	19
Defense and foreign affairs	1	5
Group advocacy	4	10

[a]Columns do not sum to precisely 100% because of rounding errors

Source Wan-ying Yang. *Politics of Gender Differences in Taiwan's Legislative Yuan: Descriptive, Symbolic or Substantive Representation?* East Lansing: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1999. p. 106

be elected, they were considered to meet this quota. However, when no or not enough female candidates got enough votes to be elected, those with the most votes were awarded the seat or seats reserved for them. Overall, about ten percent of legislative seats were reserved for women by this system. The fact that there were competitive local elections even during the authoritarian era in which the central government played off Taiwanese factions against each other meant that local factions had a strong incentive to recruit women candidates in order to prevent these "reserved seats" from falling to their rivals by default. Over time, therefore, women candidates had to develop their own political skills; and by the 1970s or 1980s, depending upon the office, women were exceeding their reserved quotas by significant margins in all of Taiwan's legislative elections.[31]

That women had become quite competitive in their own right was demonstrated in the 2008 Legislative Yuan elections when the voting system was changed so that single-member districts predominated, in which women were guaranteed half of the few party-list seats or about 15% of the total (Hsieh, 2009). Instead of increasing the male domination of the legislature, this election actually resulted in a jump in women's representation as they captured 30% of the seats, including 21.5% of the single-member districts (Legislative Yuan, 2008). Table 7.4 charts women's progress in the Legislative Yuan. From 1969 when elections were first held for this body (before then it was composed of legislators who had been elected in the late 1940s from all of China) through 1992 women won slightly over 10% of the seats which was 30–40% above their reserved quotas. This jumped by almost half to about 20% of the seats in the late 1990s and early 2000s and then jumped again by ten percentage points to 30% in 2008 and 34% in 2012.

In contrast to the reserved seat system, the specific political dynamics of Taiwan's political democratization were not particularly helpful to women because they worked to marginalize women's issues. Questions of "ethnic justice" have always been central to politics in Taiwan due to the dominance of the government and the ruling KMT party by the 15% Mainlander minority during the authoritarian

Table 7.4 Women's percentage of seats in legislative yean elections

Year	Women's share of seats (%)
1969	9.1
1972	11.1
1975	10.8
1980	11.4
1983	11.3
1986	9.6
1989	12.9
1992	10.6
1995	14.0
1998	19.1
2001	22.2
2004	20.9
2008	30.1
2012	33.6

Sources

Phyllis Mei-lien Lu. *The Changing Status of Women In Taiwan: 1948–2010*. Auburn, AL: PhD Dissertation, Auburn University, 2012) p. 192

Timothy Rich. "Women in Politics: The Pattern in Asia," *Thinking Taiwan*, June 22, 2015, www.thinking-taiwan.com

era. For example, the Democratic Progressive Party, which emerged as the leading challenger to the Kuomintang in the late 1980s, has always emphasized Taiwanese nationalism in its platform.[32] Consequently, other issues, such as women's and social welfare ones, have been shunted to the margins of political debate. More recently, beginning in the late 1990s, the balance in Taiwan's politics became so even and highly polarized that very little opportunity for policy initiatives existed.[33] In combination, therefore, these factors have kept women's issues fairly low on Taiwan's political agenda.

7.3.2 Women's Groups and Political Activism

In the realm of civil society, feminist and women's groups have pushed for an aggressive agenda of democratization, social reform, and the granting of equal rights to women. During the authoritarian era, a variety of women's groups existed. However, they either were officially organized by the regime, such as the Kuomintang's Office of Women's Activities, or were fairly conservative social and professional organizations that were closely tied to the Office of Women's Activities. Consequently, these organizations were highly supportive of the political status quo and refrained from challenging Taiwan's patriarchal culture.[34]

Taiwan's feminist movement in the 1970s was something of a "one woman whirlwind," in large part because of the open hostility from the regime. Annette Hsiu-lien Lü, who had been exposed to American feminism during her studies in the United States, launched Taiwan's Feminist Movement with a talk on International Women's Day in 1972 and with the publication in 1974 of a book, *New Feminism*, which described western feminism, gave a historical overview of the position of women in Chinese society, and argued that considerable gender inequalities still existed in Taiwan. While Lü quite consciously limited her analysis and arguments to seemingly moderate issues, the regime quickly concluded that her brand of feminism constituted a threat to the island's social order, thus contradicting its women's policy aimed at preserving the patriarchal tradition in Taiwan. For example, when Lü was arrested after the Kaohsiung Incident, her interrogators specifically berated her for her activities on behalf of the Feminist Movement, even though they had nothing to do with the alleged reason for her arrest:

> Your motivation to launch such a movement is to destabilize the society, especially to arouse dispute between the husbands and wives of our high ranking officials so that their marriages may be broken.[35]

In the face of repression from the KMT, support for Lü and the Feminist Movement remained limited. The Women's New Awakenings Foundation, which was founded in 1982, continued Lü's work in the 1980s (while she was in jail) but was the only women's group that openly promoted feminism and women's rights before the end of martial law in the late 1980s, even though women continued to suffer from substantial handicaps. For example, despite the fact that the Constitution assured equality of the sexes, many laws discriminated against women, especially the marital property law which prevented married women from developing economic independence. Even so, the Foundation's journal, *New Awakenings*, had to struggle in its work to raise female consciousness, encourage self-development, and voice feminist opinion. The magazine was considered radical by many and failed to win a wide readership. In addition, most of the feminist leaders were Mainlanders, which unfortunately limited their appeal to Islander women.[36]

The beginning of Taiwan's democratic transition in the mid-1980s, however, opened up much more space for both feminist activities and the formation of new, independent women's groups. For example, Lü's *New Feminism* was reissued in 1986; and, following the lifting of martial law in 1987, a coalition of women's, human rights, and religious groups organized a large public demonstration against child prostitution. More generally, many new women's organizations were formed and sought to improve women's lives. For example, the Feminist Studies Association became quite active in academic life; the Warm Life association was formed by divorced women; the Taipei Women's Development Center focused on the reemployment of minority women and the elderly; the Warm Life Association for Women assisted divorced women and women on the verge of divorce; the Women's Research Program in the Population Center of National Taiwan University worked on gender and women's studies; the Rainbow Project, which was supported by the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, helped aboriginal teen girls;

the Taipei Association for the Promotion of Women's Rights and Pink Collar Solidarity supported women against the still prevalent patriarchal norms in Taiwan; and the Homemakers' Union was concerned with the protection of the environment and a wide range of social issues. Subsequently, an intricate network was created among such organizations. Within this network, if any group seized a particularly compelling issue, the others immediately stepped up to help win the attention and support of the public.[37]

Somewhat later in the 1990s the Feminist Movement in Taiwan began to expand as well. In particular, the diversity (as well as the number) of feminist groups increased to meet the needs of particular groups of women. These new women's associations began to focus on gender concerns from different perspectives. While some of them provided women practical services and professional assistance, others actively took part in political and social movements to urge the modification or enactment of laws and to supervise the government's execution of public policies to improve women's status in Taiwan's society. Women also participated in protests related to nuclear development, pollution, police-protected prostitution, and aborigines' land struggles. Most significantly, in contrast to feminists' prior need to compromise with conservatives, these activists threw off their self-censorship after the revocation of martial law, as women's groups based on social feminism and radical feminism began to emerge in the mid-1990s.[38] Moreover, in 2001, the National Alliance of Taiwan Women's Associations (NATWA), an umbrella organization, was established to coordinate the country's more than 70 gender-related NGOs.[39]

Directly challenging traditional beliefs and patriarchal culture, these autonomous women's groups in Taiwan have been working hard to improve women's situation in various fields, including women's right to reproductive choice, the prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault, environmental protection, gender equality in employment opportunities, the civil rights of same-sex couples, and the advancement of women into leadership roles in the political arena. In particular, the Women's Movement had a significant impact on women's daily lives through its success in obtaining legal reforms for gender equality. These achievements in legislative reforms between 1984 and 2011 include legalizing abortion, revising the Civil Code to protect women's rights, preventing children and teenagers from becoming prostitutes, prohibiting different forms of violence against women, eliminating gender biases in the education system, and securing women's equal access to employment opportunities.[40]

Not all women's groups were particularly feminist, though. In fact, several seemingly derived their success from appealing to traditional values. For example, the Homemakers' Union's Environmental Protection Foundation primarily appealed to middle-class housewives who "root their environmentalism in issues of household and motherhood."[41] Moreover, probably the most successful women's group through the 1990s, the Compassionate Relief Merit Society, appeared

distinctly unfeminist. Compassionate Relief had been founded by a Buddhist nun in the 1960s and grown to a membership of 4 million (80% women) 25 years later, making it the largest civic organization in Taiwan, with a charitable budget of over $20 million annually. This organization, in addition to its traditional religious orientation, ignores normal feminist concerns in its support for the traditional family structure and in its appeal to wealthy housewives:

> Many of the followers' stories speak of alcoholic husbands, shrewish mothers-in-law, and disappointing children. Compassionate Relief teaches them to accept their problems, gives them a supportive group of friends, and offers new interests that give them a feeling of worthy accomplishment…. Compassionate Relief's unique appeal to women in Taiwan thus stems from its universalization of women's family concerns. It confirms women in their family roles yet also extends them beyond the family itself for the first time.[42]

This importance of women's groups also suggests that conventional stereotypes of women's subordination and submissiveness in Confucian societies are somewhat oversimplified. For example, Emma Teng[43] points to a research tradition based on Margery Wolf's *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan*.[44] Wolf's anthropological field work found a variety of social phenomena that were at variance with the prevailing stereotype of women's universal oppression and victimization under Confucian patriarchal culture. Women's status differed considerably over their life cycle; women actively participated in informal social networks that exercised considerable power; and some of these social networks even constituted "a women's community." Overall, Wolf's work:

> offered a radical challenge to the idea that women were wholly subordinated in the Confucian patriarchal family. Wolf's notion of the "uterine family," centered on the mother, opened the way for an investigation into an alternate women's view of Chinese society that contrasted with the official Confucian view.[45]

Robert Weller's work on civil society and democracy in China and Taiwan represents a somewhat broader application of this approach.[46] His analysis of civil society in Taiwan and China, in particular, is distinctive because of the strong emphasis that he places on the role of women in developing informal social organizations in Chinese societies. Weller argues that historically women have played a leading role in a wide array of "horizontal" social organizations (e.g., religious groups, poetry societies, clothes washing groups, and revolving credit associations) at every level or class in society. While these organizations, unlike those dominated by men, were almost exclusively communal and local in nature, the ties were often more intense and more trustworthy than in male organizations. In contemporary society, Weller sees women as taking a leading role in small business and revolving credit associations, charitable groups (e.g., Compassionate Relief), and even more conventional political interest groups (e.g., the Homemakers' Union).

7.4 Women in Taiwan

Women in Taiwan have certainly made considerable, if not remarkable, progress over the postwar period. They have done so by using new resources to enhance their independence, empowerment, and status. While not generally recognized, women's networks were important even in traditional Taiwanese society, creating a basis for women's activism and empowerment. Tremendously increased opportunities for education, professional employment, and political influence allowed numerous women to transform and improve their lives and life opportunities. Still, despite these expanding opportunities, Taiwan's development pattern also created very significant barriers to the empowerment of many women as well. For example, those who did not have access to better education and professional employment have been generally marginalized in Taiwan's increasingly post-industrial society. Furthermore, while democratization has allowed a very wide array of women's groups to emerge and become politically influential over the last two decades, the dominant issue dynamics in the polity have also made it hard to get many women's issues onto the political agenda. In short, much has been accomplished, but much also remains to be done.

The Taiwan experience also is suggestive for broader theories of what factors promote or retard the improvement of women's status in developing societies. As diagrammed in Fig. 7.1, two background sociocultural factors are the degree of patriarchy in the traditional culture and the amount of socioeconomic development and cultural change that has occurred. Higher levels of economic development, in turn, are associated with democratization which can both help stimulate autonomous women's interest groups and, though the enhanced representation of women,

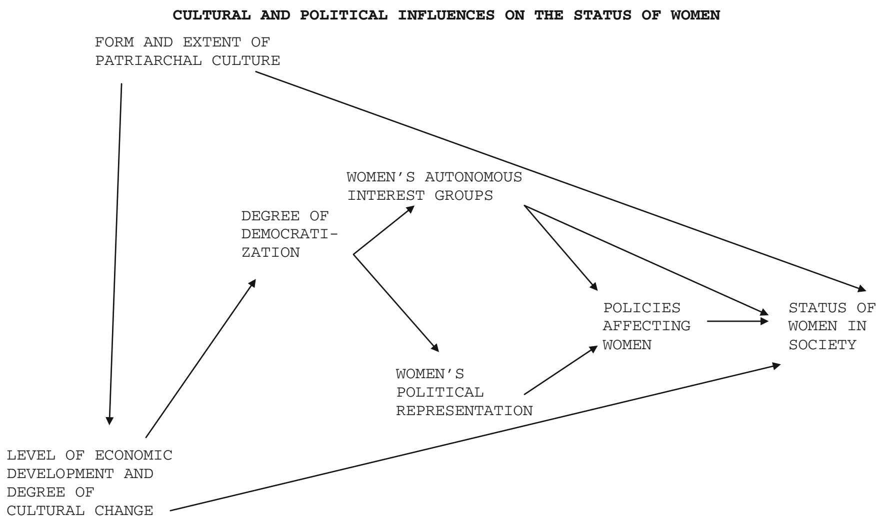

Fig. 7.1 Cultural and political influences on the status of women

lead to more supportive laws and government policies. The status of women in a society, finally, is determined by a combination of the initial patriarchal culture, the amount of sociocultural change, the ability of women to develop autonomous groups, and public policies affecting women.

The theoretical controversies over how these factors shape the status of women that were noted in the Introduction certainly imply that each of these linkages is at least somewhat problematic. What happened in Taiwan is consistent with this. First, the strongly patriarchal Confucian culture turned out to be not as pervasive as generally assumed. Rather, the work of Emma Teng, Robert Weller, and Margery Wolfe found very important women's spheres and skills. These expanded the opportunity for women, however, only because of specific components of Taiwan's developmental trajectory: (1) the emphasis on small-scale agricultural that land reform promoted; (2) universal education; and (3) the rapid transformation to first an industrial and then a post-industrial economy. In addition, political change and development had contradictory implications for women. The development of women's groups was retarded during the authoritarian era but then stimulated by the democratic transition. Similarly, the reserved seat system helped increase the representation of women, but the nature of party competition pushed women's issues to the side.

Notes

1. *Index Mundi* 2015.
2. Boserup (1970), Scott (1995).
3. Jaquette (1994), Waylen (1994).
4. For a much more detailed presentation of this model of Taiwan's political economy, see Clark and Tan (2012).
5. Gold (1986).
6. Rigger (1999).
7. Galenson (1979), Ho (1979).
8. Galenson (1979).
9. Fields (1995), Wade (1990).
10. Hsiao (1991).
11. Copper (1988), Tien (1989).
12. Chang and Yu (2001), Chow (1997), Ling (1996).
13. Chao and Myers (1998), Rigger (2001).
14. Clark (2006).
15. Lu (2012).
16. Chiang and Ku (1985).
17. Hsieh (1996).
18. Hsieh (1996).
19. Chiang and Ku (1985); Chou et al. (1990), Farris (2000).
20. Ho (1979).
21. Clark et al. (1996).

22. Farris (1994) p. 158.
23. Greenhalgh (1981).
24. Chou, Clark, and Clark (1990).
25. Bystydzienski and Sekhon (1999), Lee and Clark (2000).
26. Chen and Chung (2016), Lu (2012), Rich (2015).
27. Chou, Clark, and Clark (1990).
28. Yang (1999).
29. Yang (1999).
30. President Tsai's election was something of a mixed blessing, however, since only 4 of her initial cabinet appointees were women, the lowest level in almost 20 years.
31. Chou, Clark, and Clark (1990).
32. Rigger (2001).
33. Clark (2006).
34. Chiang and Ku (1985); Lu (1994).
35. Farris (1994).
36. Chiang and Ku (1985); Farris (1994); Lu (1994) Liberation; Teng (1991).
37. Chiang and Ku (1985); Farris (1994); Ku (1998); Wang (1999); Weller (1999).
38. Chen (2004); Ku (1998); Wang (1999).
39. Gao (2011).
40. Chen (2004); Fan (1994); Gao (2011); Yu (1994).
41. Weller (1999), p. 114.
42. Weller (1999), p. 98.
43. Teng (1996).
44. Margery Wolf (1972).
45. Teng (1996) p. 125.
46. Weller (1999).

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