

## **Gender Conflict Perception and Social Identities: In the Context of Backlash Phenomenon**

Sabinne Lee

*Yonsei University, South Korea*

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### **Abstract**

Although gender conflict in Korean society is becoming more serious, as seen in the Gangnam Station murder case of 2016 when a 34-year-old man murdered a woman for no reason, it is hard to pinpoint its characteristics and origins. This study explores gender conflict perception (GCP) in various types of social groups and identifies the determinants of GCP based on social identity theory (SIT). Specifically, the study focuses on the interaction between gender and political ideology to analyze how the two types of social identities interact. In particular, the study analyzes how socially constructed identities affect GCP. Additionally, by adding interaction terms to the regression model, the effects of various social identities are considered simultaneously in order to generate a full understanding of gender conflict. It is found that female respondents are more likely to think of gender conflict as a serious social issue if their political ideology is closer to liberalism. On the other hand, male respondents show the exact opposite results. Specifically, conservative male respondents tend to think of gender conflict in Korean society as serious.

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### **Key words**

gender conflict perception, social identity theory, gender, political ideology

## **Introduction**

In 2016, a cold-blooded murder occurred at midnight in Seocho-gu, Seoul. A 34-year-old man with no job and no family murdered a woman. He had no obvious motive. The two were complete strangers. Later, the man explained to the police that he hated women for belittling him (Economist, 2016). This tragedy triggered an opportunity for people to think about the seriousness of gender conflict in Korean society. In particular, once it was revealed that the killer was

mentally ill, a debate grew as to whether it should be viewed as a personal crime or as a misogynistic hate crime. This begs the question of whether men or women feel more gender-conflicted.

One of the important reasons why this question cannot be answered is rooted in the limitations of previous studies. As Gupta and Shuzhuo (1999) noted, gender relationships are not only the most basic social relationship but also the most sensitive conflict relationship. To this day in Korea, however, gender conflict has been unable to attract serious attention from scholars, despite being, as pointed out by Suh (2004), one of the most serious social conflicts Korea faces today. This lack of attention is mainly because, in a traditional Confucian culture, most women in Korea throughout history have failed to recognize the irrationality and inequality of Korean society. Furthermore, studies addressing gender conflict were not conducted until recently because of the lack of accessibility to data and difficulties measuring gender conflict (Buvinic, Gupta, Casabonne, & Verwimp, 2013).

In this context, this study attempts to identify the determinants of gender conflict perception (GCP) and show how the two primary political ideologies (liberalism and conservatism) and fixed gender variables interact. In particular, on the basis of social identity theory (SIT), this paper endeavors to analyze whether the level of GCP can be determined fragmentarily or it should be understood in the context of the interaction of various factors. We expect to expand the outline of the theory through this study. In SIT, political ideology is one's symbolic identity that contains not only a political point of view but also represents how conservative or liberal one's life values are. Furthermore, as Lee (2014) and Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon (2004) have stated, gender conflict is the most symbolic conflict, especially in developing countries, and surpasses the intensity of other types of conflict. In this sense, scrutinizing the tendency for gender conflict would be helpful in understanding social conflict as a whole.

Ultimately, on the understanding of the parties involved in the policy, it is possible to establish a basis for resolving the gender conflict that is causing social integration to deteriorate. If opposition to gender equality and the resulting conflict intensify, policies aiming to eliminate discrimination against women and expand social participation will be difficult to enforce, and these goals will remain unachieved. Therefore, it is necessary to find out how individuals with different social identities perceive the social conflicts of men and women and to pursue policy efforts to move toward a more gender-equal society.

## Literature Review

### Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Conflict Perception

Previous studies describing social conflict from a social structural point of view began with Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel. According to Weber (1978), social conflict occurs inevitably when carrying out one's will against an opposed group or party. Simmel (1955) and Coser (1956) focused on the practical function of social conflict that can solidify social bonds within a group, while Dahrendorf (1959) dealt mainly with the consequences of social conflict. As described above, there are various perspectives on social conflict, but many scholars agree that conflicts arise in the process of social change and can contribute to a change in group relations and the maintenance of the internal relations of the group.

In SIT, classifying a group based on factors such as race, gender, age, or nationality can cause social conflict. According to Tajfel (1979), social identity is a knowledge that rooted from recognizing himself/herself as a member of a specific social group. People maintain self-evaluation through their social identities or are motivated to change their self-evaluation in a more positive way. Specifically, people differentiate other people into two groups: an inner group where he/she himself/herself belongs, and the outer group. Social Identity Theory can provide a plausible explanation for conflicts in our society. As Sherif (1966) stated, SIT provides a valuable explanation for Realistic Group Conflict theory. According to SIT and its conflict theory, the relative social status of the inner group is the main standard of self-evaluation (Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999). The inner group differentiate themselves from the outer group in order to maintain a positive perspective of themselves. Furthermore, if the inner group begins to have feelings of deprivation, these can quickly become the seeds of social conflict. Gurin and Townsend (1986) argued over thirty years ago that the collective discontent of women and motivation to engage in political action for legislative change has consistently been predicted by gender identification and feelings of deprivation; the same phenomenon can be observed now. As scholars like Lee (2014) argued, gender conflict, especially in South Korea, is generated from collective male anxiety that deepened with the development of neo-liberalism in the twenty-first century. In a neo-liberal society, gender-based privilege, which was considered as a naturally born privilege, can no longer be depended upon. In this situation, some men start to think of the improved human rights of women as a

serious attack on their status. Naturally, since attacked men want to preserve a positive perspective on their social identity, it is possible that they now begin to criticize their outer social group: women. Chodorow (1979) stressed that this phenomenon can be readily observed in marginalized males. According to the definition of social conflict, gender conflict can be defined as a process in which men and women feel that they are relatively unequal to each other and struggle with scarce resources to solve that inequality. If in the past, however, the idea that women and men could not be equal caused gender conflict, now the idea that women and men are already equal leads to men claiming reverse discrimination as the main reason for gender conflict. Faludi (1991) named this phenomenon 'backlash,' a strong opposition between groups that respond to political, social changes or events. Faludi (1991), on the other hand, defined backlash as a reaction to feminism and gender equality that started from the late 1970s to the 1980s. In the 1960s and 1970s, the reaction to the progress of the civil rights movement in American society resulted in violent crimes against women and the tolerance of these crimes by social institutions. In particular, the stigmatization of the stereotype of black women as "welfare queens" provoked the anger of white workers (Wormer, 2008). Even major mass media outlets, such as the *National Review*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *New York Times*, described the current female generation as a blessed generation and reported on men who believed themselves to be victimized by the feminist movement (Faludi, 1991). Backlash was observed globally, including in the U.K. (Dominelli, 2002), Canada (Busby, 2006), and Japan (Kano, 2011). A similar phenomenon began to be observed in South Korea. In 2016, a 24-year-old woman was murdered in the Gangnam station toilets just because she was a woman. Although the criminal defined his crime as female dislike, conservative media and the police tried to reduce the incident to that of a murder by a mentally ill person, a typical type of backlash.

Many scholars criticize the limitations of SIT, arguing that it cannot explain all cases and that sometimes personality can be more powerful than one's socially generated identity. Huddy (2001) argues that political researchers in particular are often embarrassed by the absence of group conflict despite the existence of distinct groups. Brewer and Weber (1994) concluded that individuals constantly shift back and forth between their individual and social identities. In addition, as Hogg, Terry, and White (1995) pointed out, social identity is a highly dynamic concept that changes over time.

## Gender and Conflict Perception

Gender is one of the most important variables in explaining social phenomena (Wilcox, 1996). For this reason, scholars like Huddy (2001) and Stryker and Burke (2000) use gender in explaining social conflict in the context of SIT. Males and females often have different perspectives on various issues, especially on conflict situations, such as war (Gidengil, 1995; Miller, 1988). Usually it is said that females are more sensitive to sensing social conflict and problems of social inequality. Caprioli (2000) and Melander (2005) reported that females tend to have negative points of view to social equality when compared to males. Campbell (2004) argued that females are more interested in family, social security, and welfare policies while males focus on the economy, defense, and military policies. White (1988) also pointed out that males are more likely to be involved in power games than are females.

Where, then, do these differences come from? According to Melander (2005), they are rooted not in biological difference but in socially constructed gender roles, such as femininity and masculinity. In other words, since men and women are educated to pursue socially constructed gender roles from childhood, they cannot help but act according to the social rules. As a result, men and women develop different takes on social issues, such as conflict and inequality. Another explanation for why women have a more serious point of view on conflict would be found in the work of Campbell (2004) and Gidengil (1995). Since women in our society experience inequality more often, because they usually constitute a social minority and are poorer than men in most countries (Smeal, 1984), they have more interest in inequality or social conflict issues.

Scholars like Alvarez (1990), however, have pointed out that gender is not the only variable that can explain the variation of perceptions about social conflict. In fact, not only gender, but also race, rank, religion, generation, and political ideology can be very effective tools for explaining conflict perception. Blumberg (1991) argued that economic status is the most important variable in social conflict perception, so much so that it can almost overwhelm the effect of other variables. Similarly, according to the social dominance theory, the class vested with power prefers an unchanged, conservative, stable society because they do not want to lose their position (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). In that sense, males, the vested class in our society, respond more quickly than do females.

Brewer and Weber (1994) and Piccinelli and Simon (1997) also warn that gender is not an absolute identity that can explain one's social identity. Rather, social iden-

tity is a very dynamic concept (Hogg et al., 1995); an individual constantly shifts back and forth between an individual and a social identity. That is, individual characteristics like self-efficacy and self-motivation would be more relevant variables in explaining one's identity. In this sense, Huddy (2001) recommends interpreting the effect of gender in the context of the relationship among other identities. For example, she argues that females who work in male-dominated occupations or work settings tend to have a stronger gender identity. Huddy (1998) also reports that feminists' identities change as they gain more information about the social and political characteristics of feminists.

### **Political Ideology and Conflict Perception**

Although political ideology has potential as a social identity, it does not attract much attention from scholars (Huddy, 2001). Nevertheless, various scholars stress the importance of political ideology in understanding social conflict (Coser, 1956). McLellan (1986) defined ideology as the most elusive concept in the whole of social science, and Erikson and Tedin (1988) defined ideology as a set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved. Although a consistent definition is a difficulty faced by many scholars (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009), most scholars agree that ideology is a complex mixture of the perspectives and beliefs of individuals on social issues and conflicts (Yang, 2012). In other words, ideology is the belief and starting point for indicating specific situations (Rokeach, 1973).

Individual political ideology can be separated into two categories: conservative and liberal. Conservatives, who embody the values of maintenance and preservation, usually pursue keeping society as it is. Bobbio, Canova, and Manganelli (2010) stressed that conservatives accept and endure an unequal reality, while liberals struggle ceaselessly to minimize inequality. Lavine and Gschwend (2004) pointed out that voting behavior and attitudes toward political candidates can differ according to political ideology. Conservatives are more likely to vote for candidates on the right (Conover & Feldman, 1981; Federico & Schneider, 2007). In sum, as Jost (2006) stressed, political ideology is the strongest and most consistent predictor of political preferences.

Political ideology is effective not only in explaining an individual's political preferences but also in understanding perceptions of social conflict. On the basis of SIT and the self-categorization theory (Huddy, 2001), ideology can predict social conflict perception and intergroup attitude (Jost et al., 2009). More specifi-

cally, people with a conservative point of view are generally associated with stereotyping, prejudice, intolerance, and hostility toward an outer group, especially a low-status or stigmatized outer group (Duckitt, Wagner, Du Plessis, & Birum, 2002). In other words, conservatives are more focused on in-group favoritism (Major et al., 2002).

Political ideology is considered a determinant factor in the feminism-friendly perspective of men with personal, direct experience of women's unequal lives experiencing discrimination (Reingold & Foust, 1998). According to Reingold and Foust (1998) and Wilcox (1996), political ideology actually affects an individual's perception of gender conflict. Gender equality and feminism tend to be supported by liberals. Then, does political ideology affect the perceptions of gender conflict? The perception of conflict depends on the social categories of men and women, as well as on one's thoughts on equality. The more people think that the existing social structure is stable, the more likely they are to think that gender inequality in our society is serious. In other words, when a person's political ideology is close to conservative, they are likely to think that gender inequality is a more serious phenomenon (Davis & Proctor, 1989) because they think that gender conflict rooted in social change threatens the existing norms of our society (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Although its potential as a social identity is widely known, Huddy (2001) pointed out that acquired social identity, such as political ideology, is weaker than a fixed identity like race, ethnicity, or gender. In this sense, we should consider other variables, such as fixed identity (Huddy, 2001), group identity (Abrams & Hogg, 1990), and individual differences (Duckitt, 1989), when using political ideology as social identity.

### **Previous Research on Gender Conflict in Korea**

For a very long time, gender was not a main subject of conflict perception studies in Korea. As Lee, Kim, and Chun (2008) stated, since conflict between regions, political parties, and social classes has worsened with rapid urbanization and democratization, those subjects took up much more of the spotlight than did gender conflict. This fact is mainly rooted in Korea's strong paternalistic tradition. Before Christian missionaries came to Korea, most Korean women had no identity as a human being. When Christian missionaries did come to Korea for missionary work, they not only delivered Christianity but also the concept of gender equality to Korean women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Lee, 2007).

In this sense, Kim (2003) noted that Christianity contributed significantly to the modernization of Korean women.

Over the subsequent 100 years, although women's social status had changed, the issue of gender conflict outside the family was still not addressed, where women were believed to have strayed from the traditional perspective. In other words, most of the gender conflict studies conducted in the 1990s were based on conflicts between married couples. Choi (1994) analyzed the relationship between types of families and marital conflicts while Kwon and Lee (1999) examined how marital conflict affects children's behavior. Lee and Oh (2000) also noted that marital conflict can have an impact on the psychological status of children. In sum, gender conflict studies in the 1990s did not focus on how people from various backgrounds and various characteristics think about gender conflict.

When the twenty-first century began, scholars tried to focus in a more specific way on how people think about gender conflict. For instance, Lee et al. (2008) analyzed the level of GCP using various standards, such as gender and political ideology. However, Lee et al. (2008) simply reported the level of GCP of people from various backgrounds and did not explain how these circumstances had come about, especially in terms of the concept of backlash. Also, few studies dealing with GCP have analyzed the impacts of various factors simultaneously. Rather, most of the studies only focused on how the level of GCP was affected by only one or two factors.

In sum, previous studies on gender conflict in Korea have understood the role and identity of women in the context of family. Later studies have more and more focused on the social identities of women as independent social actors but still from a limited perspective. Furthermore, those studies could not fully explain why GCP differs by social identity based on the theoretical concept of backlash. In this context, the current paper focuses on the various social identities of men and women and how these social identities affect gender perception, alone and in combination, especially in terms of the backlash phenomenon.

## **Research Design**

### **Data Collection**

We used the Korea Social Integration survey data collected in 2016 for this study. The Bureau of Statistics of Korea and the Korea Institute of Public Administration (KIPA) designed a survey analysis to identify the degree of public



perceptions and attitudes toward integration levels in society and drew policy implications by comparing Korea's results with those from the international social values survey. To identify the level of social integration of our society, KIPA has surveyed nationally sampled respondents every year from 2013. The sample size is between 7,500 and 8,000, with subjects older than 19 and younger than 69. The questionnaire comprises seven sections on the perceptions about social rights, social participation, political participation, social communication, social trust, social tolerance, and social security. Of this survey data, we used data from 2016 because we believed that the latest version of the data could suggest the most relevant policy implications for society. In the 2016 data, the total number of observations is 8,000; this includes the questionnaire through which we can measure the degree of gender conflict, gender inequality, and the public's perception of political ideology.

### Research Design and Variable Measurement

Figure 1 and Table 1 below represent the theoretical frame of this study and the method of measuring variables. As we can see from Figure 1, the dependent variable of this study is the gender conflict perception of respondents. A 4-point scale was used to measure the degree of gender conflict perception. If the respondent believes that gender conflict in our society is not at all serious, it is coded as 1; the more serious the perception of gender conflict, the higher the number.

Since we tried to analyze how political ideology and gender interact to each other, we add a dummy variable whose reference group is female, with the interaction term of gender variable and the political ideology variable. If the interaction term of ideology and gender variable turns out to be statistically significant, it can be

Category	Research Design
	$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Political Ideology}_i + \beta_2 \text{Gender}_i + \beta_3 \text{Political Ideology} \\ * \text{Gender} + \beta_4 \partial i + \varepsilon$
Regression Model	<p><math>\alpha</math>: constant</p> <p><math>\beta_1</math>: effect of Political Ideology</p> <p><math>\beta_2</math>: effect of Gender</p> <p><math>\beta_3</math>: interaction effect (interaction term for Political Ideology and Gender)</p> <p><math>\varepsilon</math>: error term</p>

Figure 1. Regression model.

concluded that political ideology and gender affect each other and the level of gender conflict perception should be understood in the context of those interactions.

To control for the effect of other factors, we added variables related to the socio-economic status of respondents: level of income, education, age, and marital status. Of the four control variables, income and age are the continuous variables, so we coded the exact number that respondents reported. The education variable is measured from 0 to 5. If the highest level of education of the respondent is that of an elementary school graduate, it is coded as 0. The respondents with the highest academic achievement are marked as 5. Lastly, the marriage variable, which represents the marital status of the respondent, is a dummy variable. Since the reference group is a single, unmarried respondent, married respondents are coded as 1.

**Table 1**  
**Variable Measurement**

Type	Variable name	Questionnaire	Description
Dependent variable	Gender conflict	How serious do you think gender conflict in our society is?	1 = not at all serious 2 = not serious 3 = serious 4 = very serious
Independent variable	Gender	What is your gender?	Male = 1, Female = 0
	Ideology	What is your political ideology?	Continuous variable
	Ideology*Gender	Interaction term of ideology and gender	
Control variable	Income	What is your monthly average income?	From 0 to 10 (closer to 0 = more economically unstable)
	Edu	What is your level of education?	0 = elementary school 1 = middle school 2 = high school 3 = undergraduate degree 4 = master's degree 5 = Ph.D
	Age	How old are you?	Continuous variable
	Marriage	Are you married?	Yes = 1, No = 0

## Empirical Analysis

### Descriptive Statistics

**Dependent variable.** The dependent variable is the degree of gender conflict in our society as perceived by each respondent. In the survey we analyzed, the questionnaire that measured gender conflict perception used a 4-score scale. Among the numbers from 1 to 4, the respondents selected the number that best represented their gender conflict perception; the higher the number is, the more serious the perception of gender conflict perception is. Table 2 below describes the summary statistics of the dependent variable. As we can see, of 8,000 respondents, 3,741 people chose number 2, that gender conflict in our society is not serious.

We also subdivide the dependent variable by important independent and control variables. First, we scrutinize how gender conflict perception changes as political ideology changes. Figure 2 below shows the relationship between political ideology and gender conflict perception. The X-axis of Figure 2 represents the degree of political ideology;<sup>1</sup> the Y-axis is the mean of gender conflict perception. As we can see in Figure 2, the mean of gender conflict perception rises as political ideology increases. The results show, however, that the most liberal people think that gender conflict in our society is not serious.

How about, then, the difference between male and female? Figure 3 represents the result of the subdivision of gender conflict perception by gender. As we can see, the mean of gender conflict perception is larger in the female group. Specifically, in Figure 3, the dark-gray bar graphs represent the means of the gender conflict perception of male respondents, while the light-gray graphs represent those of female respondents. As we can see, the light- and dark-gray graphs show the exact opposite tendencies. When it comes to male respondents, the more conservative the political ideology of the respondent is, the more likely they are to indicate that gender conflict in our society is serious. In addition, male respondents with a relatively liberal political perspective responded that gender conflict is not very serious. Contrary to the result of these descriptive statistics, in terms of female respondents, the more politically liberal they are, the more conflicts they perceive in our society. In addition, the female respondents with a conservative per-

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<sup>1</sup> The questionnaire for measuring political ideology used a five-point scale, with higher scores indicating a more liberal political ideology.

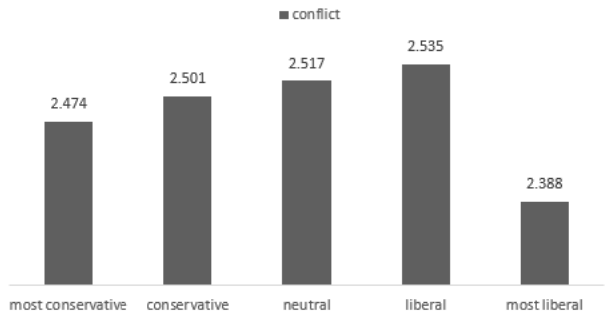


Figure 2. Gender conflict perception by level of political ideology.

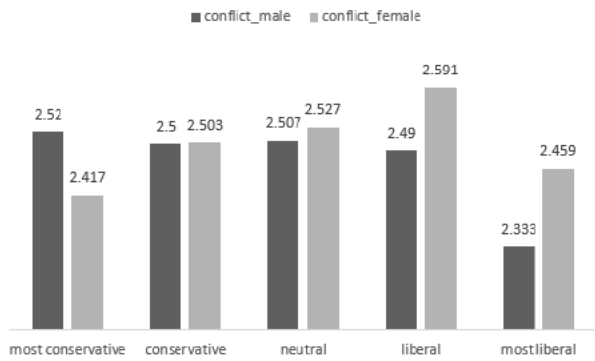


Figure 3. Gender conflict perception by level of political ideology and by gender.

Table 2  
Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variable

Conflict	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1 (not at all serious)	371	4.64	4.64
2 (not serious)	3,741	46.76	51.4
3 (serious)	3,304	41.3	92.7
4 (very serious)	584	7.3	100
Total mean		2.513	

spective are revealed to have a perception of relatively lower gender conflict than liberal women. These results indicate that the relationship between political ideology and gender conflict perception shows exactly opposite results according to gender.

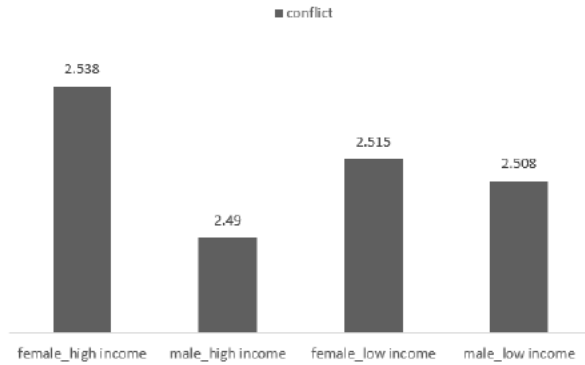


Figure 4. Gender conflict perception by gender and income.

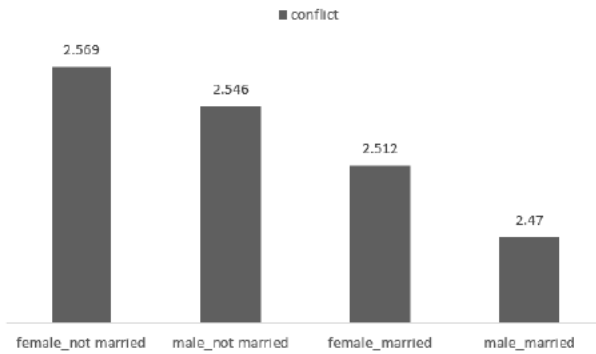


Figure 5. Gender conflict perception by gender and marital status.

In addition, we analyze the descriptive statistics of Gender Conflict Perception by level of income and marital status. Figure 4 and Figure 5 show the result of the descriptive statistics of the four respondent groups: non-married females, married females, non-married males, and married males. As we can see, when we divide the respondent groups by gender and income, high-income females show the highest perception level of gender conflict of the four groups, whereas high-income males tend to be more satisfied with gender issues than the other three groups. Gender conflict perception level is highest among non-married females, followed by non-married males, married females, and finally married males. Overall, we can conclude that non-married, liberal, high-income females think most seriously of gender conflict as an issue in our society, whereas married, high-income, conservative males perceive gender conflict least seriously.

These results concur with the backlash phenomenon we mentioned in the literature review. As Faludi (1991) pointed out, backlash occurs when formerly minority groups pursue equality. To this point, it is natural that females with high incomes and liberal political ideologies, who have enough resources to be educated and speak up for equality and have a more liberal and critical perspective on social issues, think of gender conflict as being more serious than do the dominant group in society: high-income, married males.

**Independent and control variables.** Table 3 below shows the descriptive statistics of string variables inserted into the regression models as independent or control variables. All the string variables have 8,000 as the number of observations. The ideology variable, which is an independent variable in our study, shows 2.989 as a mean value, and its standard deviation is 0.825. The maximum value of political ideology is 5, which represents the most liberal a respondent can be, and the minimum value is 1, showing that the respondent is as conservative as can be. Since the political ideology mean is closer to 5 than to 1, it can be said that the respondents are relatively liberal. Next, the income variable, ranging from 1 to 12, shows 5.436 as a mean and 2.062 as the standard deviation. In terms of education, since the mean education level is 3.643, it can be said that the average education level of respondents is between an undergraduate student and Master's degree. Lastly, the age variable mean is 2.925 and its standard deviation is 1.337.

Besides string variables, there are two other categorical variables in the regression model. The first categorical model is gender, composed of female and male. Of 8,000 respondents, 3921 respondents were female (49% of total respondents). Also, 33% of all respondents were unmarried, which means the majority of respondents (67%) were married.

**Table 3**  
*Descriptive Statistics of String Variables*

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
ideology	8000	2.989	0.825	1	5
income	8000	5.436	2.062	1	12
edu	8000	3.643	1.188	0	7
age	8000	2.925	1.337	1	5

**Table 4**  
***Descriptive Statistics of Categorical Variables***

Variable	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
female	3,921	49.01	49.01
male	4,079	50.99	100
not married	2,615	32.69	32.69
married	5,385	67.31	100

### **Regression Analysis**

Table 5 below presents the empirical results drawn from the hierarchical regression analysis. Of the various regression analysis methods, hierarchical regression analysis has an advantage in drawing the determinant factor. Since we were trying to analyze how the effects of gender and political ideology change as variables are added, we decided that the hierarchical regression analysis would best fulfill our purpose. In the first model, Model 1, we added only independent variables and moderating variables in the empirical model: political ideology, gender, and the interaction term between those two variables. As we can see from Table 5, all three variables in Model 1 turned out to be significant. First, the political ideology variable is strongly significant, and the sign is positive, which means the closer the respondent's political ideology is to liberal, the more seriously they perceive the level of gender conflict. Second, the moderating variable, the gender dummy, is also significant. According to this result, male respondents tend to have a relatively higher level of gender conflict perception. The interaction term between gender and ideology is also strongly significant, and its sign is negative. Since the interaction term is significant enough, we can see that gender has a moderating effect on the relationship between ideology and gender conflict perception.

We add socio-demographic variables, such as income, education, marriage, and age in Model 2. The empirical result drawn in Model 2 does not change. Gender, political ideology, and their interaction term are all statistically significant. Both age and education variables are strongly significant, as shown in Table 5. Specifically, a young and well-educated person is likely to believe gender conflict is more serious than an older, lower-educated person, according to the empirical result shown in Model 2. The effect of age and education level has already been broadly analyzed by previous studies. As Lee (2014) argued, younger people are more interested in

**Table 5**  
**Regression Analysis Results**

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
gender	0.124***	0.059	0.098*	0.059
ideology	0.033***	0.014	0.007	0.014
gender*ideology	-0.053***	0.019	-0.047***	0.019
income			-0.001	0.004
edu			0.021***	0.008
marriage			-0.018	0.020
age			-0.031***	0.008
_cons	2.432	0.043	2.548	0.063
N of obs	8000		8000	
R_squared	0.0161		0.0189	
Adj R-squared	0.0122		0.0180	

Note. \* =  $p < 0.10$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* =  $p < 0.01$ .

social conflict because they tend to be more interested in social values or public values like public good, equality, equity, and freedom. Education level is also important in determining the level of gender conflict perception. Generally, it is believed that people with higher education tend to have more interest in social values and equality (Lee, 2014).

In addition, to compare the effect of gender and ideology on GCP, we standardized the regression coefficient, as shown in Table 6. We inserted only two independent variables in Model 3. As shown in Model 3, the absolute value of the regression coefficient of the gender variable is higher than that of the ideology variable. In addition, political ideology is not statistically significant, while the gender variable is strongly significant. After adding the interaction terms of gender and ideology in Model 4, the standardized coefficient of ideology is even smaller than the interaction term, a tendency also presents in Model 5. As can also be seen in Model 5, the standardized coefficient for ideology is smaller than that for gender or the interaction term. In conclusion, as noted in the literature review section, we can see that the acquired social identity of political ideology is relatively weaker than the fixed ideology, the gender variable.



Table 6  
Standardized Regression Analysis

	Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
gender	-0.034***	0.016	0.124***	0.059	0.098*	0.059
ideology	0.005	0.009	0.033***	0.014	0.007	0.014
gender*ideology			-0.053***	0.019	-0.047***	0.019
income					-0.001	0.004
edu					0.021***	0.008
marriage					-0.018	0.020
age					-0.031***	0.008
_cons					2.548	0.063
N of obs	8000		8000		8000	
R_squared	0.0068		0.0161		0.0189	
Adj R-squared	0.0042		0.0123		0.0180	

Note. \* =  $p < 0.10$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* =  $p < 0.01$ .

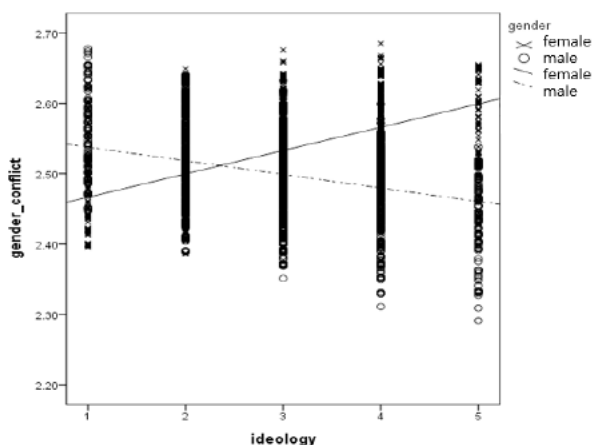


Figure 6. Moderating effect graph of gender.

To understand the specific moderating effect of gender, we drew a moderating effect graph as seen in Figure 6. The X-axis represents the level of political ideology and the Y-axis represents the respondents' gender conflict perception. Having inserted the interaction term for gender conflict perception and the gender to observe the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between ideology and

gender conflict perception, we drew regression graphs for females and males. As seen in Figure 6, the black dotted graph represents the relationship between ideology and the gender conflict perception of male respondents and the black solid line shows how the gender conflict perception of female respondents varies as ideology changes. First, in the case of the male group, the relationship between ideology and gender conflict perception shows negative signs. Specifically, the male respondents with a higher level of conservative ideology have a higher level of gender conflict perception. The most conservative male respondents are more likely to think that gender conflict in our society is more serious than the respondents with a more liberal political ideology. On the other hand, the female respondents show the exact opposite result. Unlike the male respondents, female respondents think gender conflict is more serious when they have a liberal political ideology. Also, as seen in the positive slope of the female group graph, if the female respondents are close to conservative, they show a lower level of gender conflict perception.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study analyzed how GCP varies by political ideology. Using gender as a moderating variable, it has also shown how gender and political ideology interact and affect GCP. It is found that the relationship between political ideology and GCP is the total opposite for males and females. Specifically, in the case of female respondents, perception of the level of gender conflict increases the closer the respondent's political ideology is to liberalism, whereas the GCP of male respondents is higher the closer their political ideology is to conservatism.

In summary, the level of GCP is high in conservative males and liberal females. These results precisely match the predictions from previous studies. According to the definition of conflict and social conflict, gender conflict can be defined as a process in which men and women feel that they are relatively unequal to each other and struggle with scarce resources to solve these inequalities. While other conflicts are mainly caused by interests, gender conflicts are caused by differences in values and are symbolic. In particular, the characteristic point of gender conflict is that there is a clear difference in social power between the groups, and conflicts arise because of the negative reaction toward efforts to correct past discrimination against women. In the past, the idea that women and men could not be equal caused conflict, but now women and men are considered to be of equal value, and the main reason for conflict is that men feel that they are the victims of reverse

discrimination. In other words, in moving toward equality, there arises a conflict between the group that wants to maintain the current inequality and the group that wants to overcome it. Faludi (1991) calls this phenomenon backlash. Faludi defined backlash as a reaction to feminism and gender equality in American society from the late 1970s to the 1980s, which began with an increased likelihood of achieving gender equality rather than starting from the full achievement of complete gender equality. Similarly, Sidanius and Pratto (2001) noted that, according to social dominance theory, groups with power tend to maintain the current social circumstances.

The case is exactly so in Korea, where whenever policies such as the abolition of the military conscription system have been introduced, conflicts have arisen and attacks on the Ministry of Gender Equality have continued. This rebound eventually led to an attack on women (Wormer, 2008). Dating violence and sexual violence in Korean society reveal that opposition to gender equality is serious, with the murder at Gangnam Station the most obvious example of the phenomenon. Even though the perpetrator defined his actions as “female aversion” after the incident, the actions of the conservative media and the police to reduce the incident to “murder by a mentally ill person” are typical of the backlash phenomenon.

The results of this study imply that gender conflict should no longer be understood fragmentarily but instead in a combined context. As argued in the literature review section, previous studies dealing with gender conflict have analyzed how GCP differs in terms of separate factors. However, gender conflict cannot be analyzed by adopting only one social identity. Rather, various factors, such as political ideology and gender, affect GCP simultaneously. As Kwon (2016) pointed out, since Korean society is continuously changing in a more complex way, the tendency toward conflict is also becoming more and more complicated. In this sense, to understand the perception of conflict, studies should focus on the interaction among various factors simultaneously, unlike previous research. This approach can also be adopted to understand other types of social conflict because, as Bouta et al. (2004) have stated, especially in developing countries, gender conflict is the most symbolic conflict that surpasses other types of conflict.

For this reason, fragmented training or education programs might have a difficult time easing the tension surrounding gender conflict; a more comprehensive solution is needed. As can be seen from the empirical analysis, the specific relationship between political ideology and GCP varies by gender, which suggests that a more relevant policy solution is necessary to solve backlash problems.

The Korean government should therefore choose policies related to gender

equality more carefully as sometimes they can lead to unexpected results that are exactly the opposite of those intended. For instance, the “veterans extra point system,” a shining example of a failed policy, was first adopted in 1998 to achieve equality in the job market between women and men who are obligated to join the army at least once in their lifetime. However, soon after, it faced major criticism from women and was abolished by the Constitutional Court in 2001. Although the losses in terms of career path suffered by men as a result of compulsory military service duty should be compensated for by the state, the Korean government tried to solve this problem by penalizing women, who should be able to compete fairly in the job market. In other words, the Korean government shifted their own responsibilities to women; it can be said that from this time gender conflict has worsened. In this sense, we expect future research to evaluate the impact of current government policies on GCP. By doing so, future studies can provide relevant direction for future government policy.

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**Biographical Note:** Sabinne Lee received Ph.D. in Public Administration in 2017 with the doctoral thesis about RFID household waste charging system in Korea. Specifically, she wrote articles about e-government, technology policy and innovation policy during the Ph.D. course. Her recent research topics include the gender discrimination, technology policy, e-government, environmental policy and incentive theory. E-mail: sabinnelee@yonsei.ac.kr