

A STUDY OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO CAPABILITY AS REPORTED BY
COMMITTEE STAFFERS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF
KOREA

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Abstract

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This study seeks to identify the factors that contribute to capability as reported by congressional staffers in the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea. The most significant finding is that work experience in congress is more closely associated with self reported capability than is educational background or rank. The study also informs us that rank, a consequence of successful examinations and evaluations, is not meaningfully associated with self-reported capability. This study also did indicate that academic major is an important factor well associated with capability of committee staffers even though the general argument that education and training matter to capability was only weakly supported.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Development of Congressional Power

Since the late eighteenth century, the democratic system of representation has been firmly established as a universal political system in many countries, mainly due to the rapid expansion of democracy through people's revolution. The parliament has existed as a main component of "separation of powers," supervising and checking the administration and participating in governance through legislative power, authority to inspect government offices and financial control. However, after the dawn of the twentieth century, affirmative governmental intervention was required to overcome new crises such as major economic depression, war, and other monumental issues of the day. Administrative bureaucracy was expanded, strengthened and professionalized to deal with the complexity and departmentalization of the society. The role of an elected legislature in controlling an increasingly powerful administration has become more significant.(Jung, 2003) In the 21st century, I believe that we cannot establish a democratic system in our country without a "separation of powers" including a strong parliament.

Importance of congressional staffers

In contemporary times, it has become more difficult for members of congress themselves to control and check the administration because of the complexity of congressional activities such as making bills and analyzing the national budget. This is why congressional staffers appeared to support the congresspersons (Jung, 2003).

Malbin(1980) thinks that congressional staffers actually have more expertise than congresspersons in many countries, because congressional staffers have more permanent jobs than congresspersons who work for limited periods and are so busy spending a lot of time on the election campaign. It means that congressional staffers are more influential than congresspersons themselves in creating public policy.

Patterson (1970a) classifies the activities of the professional staffs of congressional committees as intelligence, integration, innovation, and influence. Regarding Intelligence he describes that “The most visible capability of committee staffs involves the intelligence function of the Congress. The professional members process information and forward it to committee members”(p 26). Regarding Integration he describes that “Committee staffs contribute to the integration of committees and subcommittees, House and Senate, and legislative and executive branches”(p 26). Patterson indicates that “most committee staffs, especially the most professionalized ones, are tightly knit groups: they work closely together, interchange tasks, and frequently are socially close.” He also describes that “One of the reasons why committee staff personnel like their work is that they have the opportunity to innovate, to initiate public policy, or to see policy initiated”(p 27). Finally, he concludes that “committee staff personnel have a great deal of influence on public policy, since (1) they gather and analyze much of the information upon which policy is based; (2) they plan and largely execute public hearings and investigations; and (3) they draft legislation and committee reports which not only justify committee recommendations of bills but also make policy” (p28). He shows below the examples of influence of committee staffs through several comments written by staff members (Staff members of the House Armed Services Committee, House Appropriations Committee, and House Veterans’ Affairs Committee)

I feel that the staff has an enormous impact on the policy output of the committee. It works under the general guidance of the chairman, but has a pretty wide berth. Further, the advice of the staff is very often sought by agency staff people, and given regularly without consulting the members of the committee; and, it usually is taken. [Patterson, p28]

The policy influence of the staff depends upon the capabilities of members. When a subcommittee chairman doesn't do his homework, the handiwork of the staff man may be regularly seen. If that same staff man is transferred to work for a member who works hard, his handiwork is not seen. [Patterson, p28]

I feel the influence of the staff can't be overemphasized. Our members are not too well informed about veterans' affairs. The junior members are just learning, and the senior members are busy. They must rely on competent and trusted staff. In executive session, the staff always develops its own policy position. [Patterson, p28]

As in the US Congress, committee staffers in the National Assembly of the ROK are influential actors. According to the National Assembly Law of the Republic of Korea (ROK), policy evaluation, information gathering, analysis and preservation, and the report of the committee staff director are important jobs for committee staffers. Among those jobs, the provision of the report of the committee staff director is a very critical and powerful function which can actually influence policy outputs of the government such as legislative bills, the budget and other outputs. The report of the committee staff director is a result of information gathering, analysis and policy evaluation of the committee staffers working at the same committee.

Personal Experiences Foundational to this Study

As a public officer working at Korean National Assembly Secretariat which supports various activity of congressperson of the Republic of Korea, I worked about three years as a deputy director of the International Bureau. I was then transferred to be a committee staffer of the Committee on Environment and Labor of the Korean National Assembly where I worked for another three years. I was transferred into the Committee on Environment and Labor without any consultation with the Human Resources Office about my preference. I had hoped to go to the Agricultural Affairs committee because my bachelor's degree was "Agricultural Economics." But this was not taken into consideration by the Human Resources Office of the National Assembly Secretariat.

My initial period on the Environment and Labor committee was very busy because the beginning of Regular National Assembly (10th of Sep.-10th of December) was approaching. I needed to do everything such as reviewing legislation issued by the government and reviewing the budget and accounting of the Labor Department. At that time there were only two staffers on the committee who actually worked for the Regular National Assembly. The first year was very difficult.

After two years service I was getting better at my job and after three years I was starting to feel somewhat capable. But after three years of service on the committee, based on the informal "three year rule," I was transferred into the Human Resources Office without any consultation with the office director. I had to start learning about human resource management skills from the beginning.

The "principle of job rotation" and its informal practice the "three year rule" have been applied to the all the staff of the Korean National Assembly including committee staffers. These

two policies are intended to develop a wide range of experiences for all staff, and allow them to gain insights into the process of the National Assembly. This is also intended to reduce boredom and increase job satisfaction, and finally to create more capable bureaucrats.

My experience at this time caused me to think about the negative impact frequent rotation might have on committee staffers whose work is quite different from that of general staff. I myself thought that there were some chronic problems associated with committee staffer capability. I wanted to find some solutions to help increase the capability of committee staffers of Korean National Assembly.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study focuses on the capability of congressional committee staffers of the Republic of Korea. I approach capability from the specialist perspective common in the US, meaning that capability is to specialize and acquire deep expertise in a limited number of policy areas relevant to the committees on which the staffer serves. This definition of capability is different from that traditionally held in the ROK which sees capability in terms of generalist perspective, focusing on general knowledge needed to be a bureaucrat. Based on this specialist perspective, this study asks the following questions. What are the important factors that contribute to capability as reported by congressional staffers in the National Assembly? What individual and institutional characteristics contribute to staffer capability in the National Assembly? How can the capability of committee staffers be improved?"

Building on these foundational questions, my research focuses on staffer's "capability" asking: *Do individual characteristics of work experience such as tenure in current committee or tenure in congress have an effect on the self-reported capacity by congressional staffer? Do education and training differences such as major, degree level and on-the-job training play a critical role in staffer capability? Do the institutional characteristics such as testing and assessment explain differences in committee staffer capability?"*

The goal of the study is to use a survey of ROK congressional staffers to make recommendations for improving staffer capability. In addition, a smaller survey of US congressional staffers is used to make qualitative comparisons because many people in the ROK believe that the United States has an advanced congressional staff system. By contrast, congressional staffers in the ROK National Assembly are frequently criticized by people and congressperson for lack of capability or influence. So, identifying the factors that contribute to capability of the congressional staffers in the National Assembly of the ROK can be an important step toward more capable congressional committee staffers.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an extensive literature regarding congressional staff with regard to classification, function and role, recruitment, experience, tenure and turnover patterns, increases in the size of congressional staff, women staffer's contributions and challenges, use of congressional staff in election campaigns, accountability of congressional staff and more. The substantial US based literature and the less developed Korean literature are both considered here.

Malbin (1980) as reported in Patterson (1981) shows that there exists a powerful level of staff generated policy initiatives among US congressional staffs. He argues that “the large congressional staffs (sic), and particularly the so-called ‘chairman’s staffs’ of committees, attenuate the flow of reliable information from staff to committee leaders. Especially the ‘entrepreneurial’ ones, exacerbate, rather than assuage, the problem of congressional workload”. He also argues that “thus instead of freeing the members to concentrate, the staffs contribute to the frenetic pace of congressional life that pulls members in different directions, reduces the time available for joint deliberation, and makes concentration all but impossible.”(p.243).

Sidlow and Henschen (1985) explore the function of professional committee staff systematically. These functions include information gathering (intelligence function), cohesion, facilitating integration (among committees, between chambers or with the executive branch), and innovation. They conclude that “There is no doubt that the professional staff member of congressional committees are a significant part of the legislative process. In performing their intelligence, integration, and innovation functions, staffs have the opportunity to influence the statutory product.”(p493)

Price (1971) classifies the role of US congressional committee staffers into “Professionals and Entrepreneurs”(p316).

For the “Professional,” expertise was the summum bonum, neutrality a basic norm, and the analysis of proposals coming from elsewhere is his primary legislative task. He saw himself as contributing to the legislative acumen of all committee members. The “professional” regards himself as contributing to the legislative insight of all committee members, though he considered it his particular responsibility to give the chairman expert guidance. The “policy entrepreneur,” however, viewed his job quite differently. He was committed to a continual “search” for policy gaps and opportunities. The policy entrepreneur was more willing to use his position to implement his own policy preferences and to let political considerations influence the role he assumed. He recognized the need to inform himself in the committee’s policy areas and to hold his own preferences in abeyance in order to assist certain members, but in the end he

valued creativity more than expertness and did not hesitate to establish a particular identification with the interests and ambitions of the chairman or (sometimes) of other members.(p335)

Price (1981) argues that professional staffers' orientation to their work affects the size and kinds of projects their committees accept as responsibility, and also argues that even though their influence is dependent on the legislators' receptivity to their efforts, in many instances, professional staffers wield great influence and exercise discretionary powers.

Patterson (1970a) describes the development of professional staffing of congressional committees mainly dealing with increased number in size and expertise, the utilization of these professional staff by congressmen, executive agencies, and lobbyists, the capabilities of professional staff of committees involved in lots of legislative activities, and "the constraints on committee staffs" which the organizational setting of congress imposes" (pp 29-32). He stresses the importance of "legislative norms" such as "limited advocacy," "loyalty to chairman," "deference to congressmen," "anonymity," "specialization" and "limited partisanship." (pp 29-32) after introducing the activities of professional staffs such as intelligence, integration, innovation and influence (pp 26-29). He, then, suggests several conditions for contributing to the capabilities of the professional staff: level of payment, work flow, morale, nonpartisan, job tenure, and hands-on experience. He argues that "the payment for professional staff is good, and the irregular flow of work provides both for periods of very intense activity and periods of quiet and vacation. Most staff members like their work, so that morale is high. Staff members regard themselves as professionals and are so regarded by congressmen" (p28). He also argues that "On the whole, congressional committee work is relatively nonpartisan." He argues that the committee which is more nonpartisan gets the greater support for staff performance capability. And he suggests that "job tenure for the professional personnel of most committees has been

very stable; political dismissals have been exceptional, and many staff members have survived changes in the political majorities of Congress”(p29). Finally, he argues that “a considerable proportion of the professional staff have had wide experience in their areas of specialization, so that their expertise is well established; and this specialization contributes to their capability”(p29).

Romzek and Utter (1997) portray congressional staff as a unique and highly specialized group.

Congressional legislative staff are something more than a mere occupational grouping and something less than a fully established profession. Congressional staff have a commitment to a calling; a specialized knowledge base; a strong service ethic; engage their work as a disciplined, serious endeavor; have a performance ethic to do one’s best; and promotion based on achievement (as well as ascription). Staff have high status, expertise, delegated autonomy, and commitment and identification as political professionals. Congressional staff possesses a range of acceptable behavior as professionals in pursuit of political outcomes. Staffs’ professional norms emphasize deference and loyalty vis-a-vis members of Congress and as such appear to define professionalism, at least in part, as responsiveness to members (p1275).

Salisbury and Shepsle (1981) examine the autonomy of individual staffers, the stability of these member-centered enterprises, and generally, the responsiveness of staffers to member through an investigation of the causes and consequences of staff turnover.

Staffer Characteristics

Fox and Hammond (1977) as reported in Sidlow and Henschen (1985) provides data on staff recruitment and tenure patterns and comparisons of Senate and House personal and committee staff activities, and also provides committee staffer’s working pattern with other agencies. They report that House committee aides are communicating with other House committees an average of more than once a week and, on average, House committee aides consulted with executive department personnel more than once a week, the Congressional

Research Service about once a week, and various interest groups between once a month and once a year.(p197)

Romzek and Utter (1996) give us sharp understanding about the career dynamics of congressional legislative staffer. This study identifies that “Congressional staff have relatively short career ladders and can achieve positions of responsibility fairly quickly. Although congressional staffers exhibit career orientations typical of the general workforce, they also exhibit several that are specially suited to legislative staff, including personal loyalty, partisan politics, substantive policy areas, and geographical focus.”(p439) They finally suggest that “we should know more about the professional norms, commitment, policy roles, and accountability relationships of individuals who have such potential to influence our public policies” (p 440).

Sidlow and Henschen (1986) examine the data focused on the staff recruitment, tenure and career goals (aspirations). He suggests that “many staff members come to their work on committees with experience in the executive branch or in the personal offices of Senator or representatives.”(p702) Their findings show that “27 percent of respondents came to the committee staff from an executive agency, and another 25 percent held positions in member offices prior to joining the committee. In addition, a sizable number came from the ranks of academe, from private sector careers, or other governmental positions.”(p702) They also argue that staffers have been characterized as viewing their jobs in Congress as stepping stones to something else (as reported in Malbin 1981, p149). Their findings indicate that “most staffers have not served their committees for very long. In fact, about half have held their positions for only four years or less, while 87 percent have been on their respective staffs nine years or less” (pp 705-706).

Their study “shows a slight tendency for the constituency committee staffers to be more willing than their policy committee counterparts to commit themselves to a career on Capitol Hill. The policy committee staffers were nearly twice as likely to express a desire to move to other governmental positions and were also more interested in transferring their skills to the private sector” (p 706). Their data suggest “a profile of policy/prestige committee staffers who, relative to the staff serving constituency committees, are younger, slightly more educated, less likely to have been recruited by committee leadership, and more interested in parlaying their congressional experience into a new careers off the Hill” (p707).

Institutional Environment

Regarding the growth (size) of the staff, as reported in Sidlow and Henschen (1986), Davidson and Oleszek (1981) assert that the number of committee, personal, and support staff has grown steadily since the passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, and that in the decade between 1970 and 1980 the number of congressional staff almost doubled. Specifically, the House, in 1980, employed 8,667 personal staff members, while the Senate had 4,281. Additionally, house committee staffers numbered 1,818, while their Senate counterparts totaled 1,108.(p238)

Rosenthal and Bell (2003) focuses on two cases that illustrate how institutional factors affect and constrain women staffer’s contributions as substantive representatives for issues concerning women. They posit that “passive representation translates into the active representation only when: 1) interest groups hold expectations for passive representation on an issue and then in turn *demand* some level of active representation; 2) a staff member possesses the necessary *resources* of interest, expertise, and status, and 3) the *opportunity* structure of

member-staff relations, staff autonomy, and political salience coincide. When these conditions are less than optimal, active representation will not occur” (p65).

Romzek (2000) focuses on the issue of accountability of congressional staff. She argues that “Congressional staff have substantial autonomy and opportunity to influence public policy, albeit in ways that are not very visible to the general public” (p413). She also argues that “congressional staff works within a web of multiple accountability relationships under a variety of performance standards and that congressional staff is attentive to a diverse range of stakeholders, with members of congress being the primary but not the only group, and that expectations are subtle and uneven.”(p413)

Kline (1982) argues that “ congressmen who use their aides for campaign work rather than official work gain an unfair advantage in election.” He argues also that “thus the practice, which appears fairly common, needs to be discouraged” (1031).

Staffers in South Korea

It is unfortunate that there is so little literature about congressional staffers, especially committee staffers, in South Korea. I think that the studies dealing with congressional staffers has not been done because scholars outside of the National Assembly had a hard time getting unlimited access to the appropriate information about congressional staffers. This originates from a government superiority complex which is very common in authoritarian regimes.

Kim (1992), as reported in Jung (2003) asserts that after the 1990’s many scholars focus on the expansion of the congressional staffs and suggest a reasonable solution for an active and productive congress such as strengthening of the function and role of staffers and improvement of professionalism of committee staffers.

Jung (2003) deals with the comparative study on congressional staff systems and describes the characteristics and problems of U.S and South Korean congress. Jung deals with all kinds of congressional staffers in the U.S and South Korea including personal staffers, committee staffers and staffers from a party with the methodology based on secondary data analysis. He argues that the first step toward the solution of low professionalism of congressional staffers in South Korea is to increase the number of the staffers because the main problem of the congressional staff system is the lack of the numbers of staffers (p101). He also argues that role of staff should be classified apparently by the rank or current position as in the U.S congressional staff system.(p 104) He argues that the Korean National Assembly needs to change the recruiting system and role of committee staffers. He asserts that the Korean National Assembly currently emphasizes too heavily the political neutrality of the committee staffers. Therefore the recruiting system is very narrow and it is difficult to use outsourcing (p 106).

Park (1998) as reported in Jung (2003) argues that lack of number of committee staffers, lack of professionalism or capability of committee staffers and imbalance between legislative support and administrative support are the main problems of committee staff system in Korean National Assembly.

Park and Yoon (2001) studied the reality of legislative support of committee staffers of the National Assembly empirically through a survey of 123 committee staffers and 100 personal staffers serving legislative members. They found that staff have some influence, skill, autonomy and commitment in managing their legislative duties. In addition to the main survey, the authors conducted qualitative interviews with an unspecified subset of the twenty directors of committee staff serving at that time. The directors interviewed reported that they have a high level of professionalism due to their long tenure in congress.

In South Korea, some scholars have studied about congressional staffers. In particular, Jung (2003) conducted a comparative study on congressional staff systems and described the characteristics and problems of congressional staffers in U.S and South Korea Congress. Jung (2003) found that salary level of committee staffers of US Congress began to increase to a maximum of \$115,092 a year in the House and a maximum of \$ 99,215 a year in the Senate after the Legislative Reorganization Act passed on 1970. Jung also found that committee staffers of in the US mostly have degree levels of more than master's degree, live near Washington D.C, and that committee staffers, on average, worked for five years and one month in the same committee. Some committee staffer worked more than twenty years.

Individual characteristics of the committee staffers of the National Assembly

The legal status of committee staffers of the ROK National Assembly is that of a government official who is under the control of the Secretary General of National Assembly. Most committee staffers are government officials who are recruited through open invitation of applications for employment, and are posted in certain committees by "rotation of position." (The one exception is Senior Staff Directors who are recruited in the form of special appointment.) So, the salary level of committee staffers is the same as other government officials and is determined by the one's class of position and a salary class according to laws and regulations. According to a sample survey on the committee staffers working at the Fifteenth National Assembly (1996.5-2000.5), almost 97 percent of committee staffers had bachelor's degree and 38 percent had master's degree, doctoral degree or higher. Almost 75 percent of committee staffers had a social science major such as law, administration, and politics. (Park Hyun Joo 1998). National Assembly Secretariat shows that as of now (Oct. 18, 2009) almost 99

percentage of committee staffers whose class position is above the clerk job have bachelor's degree and 54 percent have a master's degree or higher. 92 percent of committee staffers have a social science major such as law, administration or politics.(National Assembly Secretariat, 2009)

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

This study seeks to identify the factors that contribute to capability as reported by congressional staffers in the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea. The conceptual assumption for my study is that capability as self-reported by congressional staffers in National Assembly of the Republic of Korea is a function of individual characteristics of committee staffers and institutional characteristics of the staffer system in the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea. As a conceptual framework, I investigate three possible causal mechanisms:

1. **Experience matters:** “The committee staffers who have more experience will report higher levels of capability in their job than committee staffers who do not.”
2. **Examination and Evaluation matters:** “The committee staffers who pass higher examination and evaluation will report higher levels of capability in their job than committee staffers who do not pass examination and evaluation.”
3. **Education and Training matters:** “The committee staffers who have higher level of education and training will report higher levels of capability in their job than committee staffers who do not.”

To examine these relationships, I collected data from committee staffers of the ROK National Assembly. The data collection instrument was a survey of committee staffers on the ROK National Assembly's Judiciary Committee and Committee on Budget and Accounting. To gain further insights, I also conducted a small survey of US staffers on similar committees, though this survey was too small for direct, statistically significant comparisons to the National Assembly data.

The Korean National Assembly has eighteen standing committees and two special committees. There are significant differences in the number of committees in the US and ROK, and it would take tremendous time and energy to try to get information on all committees. I decided to choose the Committee on Budget and Accounting (29 staff) and Committee on Judiciary (26 staff) from the ROK National Assembly and the Committee on Appropriation (42 staff) and the Judiciary Committee (39 staff) from the U.S Congress as sample committees. The budget function of the U.S Congress is distributed among three committees; The Committee on Appropriation, Committee on Ways and Means, and Committee on Budget. The Korean National Assembly, however, has a Committee on Budget and Account which deals with the national budget process. So, I think it is reasonable to compare the US Committee on Appropriation with ROK Committee on Budget and Account considering that the two committees have similar responsibilities. I also chose the judiciary committees from both the U.S and ROK because they share similar responsibilities and their staffers are required to have similar professional characteristics. Furthermore, these two committees of ROK are comparable with those of US in terms of the number of committee staffers. Finally I chose the sample committees from the US House of Representatives, not from the Senate, because the ROK has a unicameral legislature with a similar electoral system as that of House of Representatives.

To contact ROK committee staffers, I used the Directory of Personnel Management database (Insagirokbu) (Korean National Assembly Secretariat 2008). It contains committee staffers with title, name, education (major, university, degree, etc.), career highlights (tenure in office) and contact information (e-mail or telephone). For US staffers I used “The Congressional Staff Directory” published by Congressional Quarterly Press (2008 and 2009). It contains committee staff with titles, address, telephone and fax number and staff biographies. Staff biographies include education (major-sometimes not available, university, degree-master’s degree, doctor’s degree, etc) and career highlights including tenure of office.

The ROK survey was administered on July 17th. The survey was administered directly to the Judiciary Committee staffers and staffers of the Committee on Budget and Accounting with the help of a committee staffer. The staffer distributed the survey to the staffers and collected it the same day. I received the survey response from South Korea in a package on July 23rd. The U.S survey was administered by regular mail (July 3rd and 16th), and followed by e-mail (July 18th and 28th) and phone contact (Sep. 4th and 8th). In total I received 49 responses out of the 55 committee staffers surveyed from Korean National Assembly. For the US Congress, I received 10 responses out of 59 staffers surveyed. (While 81 US committee staffers were listed in the directory as working at the Committee on Appropriation and the Judiciary committee. I was able to get the addresses of only 59 of them.)

The survey instrument was designed to look for a potential relationship between three attributes: experience; education and training; examination and assessment; and the self reported capability of staffers. Survey questions for educational and training attributes were: What is your highest educational degree level? (**HighEducation**) What was your major in your highest educational degree? (**Major**) Did you receive any training when you became a congressional

staffer? (**Training**) How important is your major in college or graduate school in how well you do your job? (**Impmajor1**) How important is your level of education (e.g. BA, MA or Ph.D.) in how well you do your job? (**Impeducat1**);

Survey questions for experience attributes were: How long have you worked in the Korean National Assembly (or Congress)? (**workyear1**) How long have you worked in your current position? (**currentyear1**) Have you become more capable in your job over time? (**overtime1**) How many years do you think are needed to become fully capable as a legislative staffer? (**YearFullCapa**)

I used rank as a proxy for examination and evaluation. The most significant institutional difference in the committee staff system in the ROK and US is that staffers in the ROK National Assembly are assigned civil service rank through a series of examinations and evaluations. Therefore the survey administered to the National Assembly staffers included the question “What is your current rank?” (**classposition2**). This is why the Korean language version of the survey (appendix one) is one question longer than the English version.

Finally I measure the target variable, staffer’s self-reported capability, by using responses to the following question: “How capable do you feel in doing your job?” (**capability1**) The full texts of the survey in English and Korean are presented in Appendix One.

Among the fifty five staffers on the Judiciary Committee and the Budget and Accounting Committee of the ROK General Assembly, forty nine staffers responded. The survey was successfully sent to 59 committee staffers of the US House of Representatives Judiciary and Appropriations committees. Only ten responded to the survey despite follow-up contact by email and phone. Thus, the response rate for the main survey was reasonably good and allows some

degree of quantitative analysis. But the survey administered to US staffers may only be used for qualitative insights.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Staffers from two committees Judiciary Committee, and the Budget and Accounting committee were chosen to respond to the survey from the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea. Among fifty five staffers, forty nine staffers responded to the survey. Their responses were analyzed using Pearson Correlation Analysis between nine variables, focusing on the correlations with the variable **capability1**. All correlations and levels of significance are shown in a single table in Appendix Two. In this section I will analyze correlations with the variables intended to test support for the three relationships hypothesized in the conceptual framework above.

Experience Matters

Table 1 shows correlation analysis for the attributes associated with experience.

<Table 1 :Pearson Coefficient for Experience>

	Capability1
currentyear1	Pearson .303
	sig. (2-tailed) .034
workyear1	Pearson .034
	sig. (2-tailed) .815
overtime1	Pearson .347
	sig. (2-tailed) .015

The responses to all three experience questions - “How long have you worked in your current position?”(**currentyear1**), “How long have you worked in Congress?”(**workyear1**), and “Have

you become more capable in your job over time?”(**overtime1**) - have positive correlations with the question “How capable do you feel in doing your job?”(**capability1**). Tenure in congress **workyear1** has a weak positive correlation (Pearson Correlation Coefficient: 0.034). But two variables, **currentyear1** and **overtime1** have positive correlations with the variable **capability1**, which are statistically significant. The analysis indicates that tenure in current job and working over time in the same job are very correlated with the self-reported capability of the committee staffers of National Assembly. With this result, **hypothesis1** “The committee staffers who have more experience will report higher levels of capability in their job than committee staffers who do not” is tentatively supported and merits further study (see below).

It is interesting finding that total year in congress is not meaningfully associated with capability with a Pearson Coefficient of only 0.034. My general expectation was that total years in congress would strongly influence the capability of the committee staffers because I expected that capability gets better with a lot of year’s experience in congress. What explains this result? I already know that the variable **currentyear1** has a positive correlation with the variable **capability1** (Pearson correlation coefficient 0.303). To see some reason why **workyear1** has a very low positive correlation with capability, I did a crosstab analysis between the two variables: **workyear1** and **currentyear1**.

< Table 2: currentyear1 * workyear1 Crosstab >

workyear1 \ currentyear1	1 to 5 years		6 to 10 years		11 to 15 years		16 to 20 years		over 20 years		Total	
	count	%	Count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%	count	%
Less than 1 year	3	23	0	0	1	20	1	13	1	7	6	12
1 year	3	23	1	13	2	40	1	13	5	33	12	24
2 years	3	23	5	63	1	20	1	13	1	7	11	22
3-5 years	4	31	0	0	1	20	3	38	5	33	13	27
6 or more years	0	0	2	25	0	0	2	25	3	20	7	14
Total	13	100	8	100	5	100	8	100	15	100	49	100

Table 2 above shows that tenure in current position for committee staffers who have worked more than 20 years in the National Assembly is not that different from that of committee staffers who have worked under five years in congress. This means that there is a possibility of low self-reported capability among committee staffers who have been working in congress over twenty years if tenure *on a specific committee* is the more significant factor impacting capability. In other words, the practice of moving staffers from one committee to another may negate the experience gained through many years in congress.

Examination and Evaluation Matters

Table 3 below shows the result of Pearson correlation analysis between answers to the questions “How capable do you feel in doing your job?”(**capability1**) and “what is your current rank?”(**classpositon2**)

<Table 3 :Pearson Coefficient Associated with Testing and Assessment>

	Capability1
Classposition2	Pearson .159
	sig. (2-tailed) .274

From the Table 3 it is clear that my second hypothesis “The committee staffers who pass the higher examination and evaluation will report higher levels of capability in their job than committee staffers who do not.” **cannot be supported**. The variable **classposition2** has no significant correlation with the variable **capability1**.

This result indicates that class position and capability of committee staffers are not meaningfully associated with each other. What is the reason for this result? The answer may lie in the inverse relationship between rank and years in current position. The correlation between these two attributes is negative and statistically significant. (Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.361 and significance is 0.011).

As table 4 shows, for example, respondents with higher class rank (Higher than career rank 5) tended to have less years in their current positions.

< Table 4: currentyear1 * classposition2 Crosstab >

	Rank 5 and lower than rank5		Higher than Career Rank 5		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Less than one year(0.5)	3	10	3	15	6	12
One year to two years(1-2)	7	24	5	25	12	24
Three years to four years(3-4)	4	14	7	35	11	22
Five years to six years(5-6)	10	34	3	15	13	27
More than six years(more than 6)	5	17	2	10	7	14
Total	29	100	20	100	49	100

Once again, the importance of tenure in current position appears to be greater than that of rank.

Education and Training Matters

Tables 5 shows the correlations between the responses to the education and training questions - “How important is your major in college or graduate school in how well you do your job?” (**Impmajor1**), “How important is your level of education in how well you do your job?” (**Impeducat1**), “What is your highest Educational degree level?”(**HighEducation**) and “Did you receive any training when you became a congressional staffer?” (**Training**) - and capability.

<Table 5 :Pearson Coefficient Associated with Education and Training >

	Capability1
Impmajor1	Pearson .379 sig. (2-tailed) .007
Impeducat1	Pearson .048 sig. (2-tailed) .742
HighEducation	Pearson .102 sig. (2-tailed) .487
Training	Pearson .177 sig. (2-tailed) .225

Responses to the question “How important is your major in college or graduate school in how well you do your job?” (**Impmajor1**) showed some positive correlation with the variable **capability1** which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (Pearson coefficient 0.379). The other questions yielded positive but weak and insignificant correlations. These results provide only very weak support for hypothesis 3 “The committee staffers who have higher levels of education and training will report higher levels of capability in their job than committee staffers who do not.” According to the National Assembly Secretariat (2009), committee staffers’ major fields of study are narrowly distributed. Almost 92 percent of staffers majored in social science fields, while natural science was the major of just 8 percent of the committee staffers. (National Assembly Secretariat, 2009)

Further Investigation of the Experience Matters Hypothesis

The initial results of this study indicate that experience (particularly tenure in current position) is the attribute with the greatest capacity to impact self-reported capability. In this section, I use the survey responses to look further into this topic.

< Table 6 : YearFullCapa and Currentyear1 of committee staffers of ROK (N=49)>

	Years needed for full capability (YearFullCapa)			Years in current position (currentyear1)		
	Count	%	Cum%	Count	%	Cum%
Less than one year(0.5)	3	6.1	6.1	6	12.2	12.2
One year to two years(1-2)	13	26.5	32.6	23	47	59.2
Three years to four years(3-4)	24	49	81.6	10	20.4	79.6
Five years to six years(5-6)	8	16.3	97.9	5	10.2	89.8
More than six years(more than 6)	1	2.1	100	5	10.2	100
Total	49	100		49	100	

The Table 6 above uses the survey data to compare how many years staffers think are needed to become capable with how many years they actually spend in their positions. A large majority of committee staffers (more than 67%) believe that staffers need three years or more to become fully capable in their jobs. But most staffers (more than 59%) have been in their current position for less than three years. In short, by their own estimate, many committee staffers in the ROK National Assembly do not feel that they have been in their current positions long enough to be capable.

The importance staffers place on time in office for achieving capability is illustrated by their responses to the question “Have you become more capable in your job over time?” <Overtime1>. As Table 7 shows, nearly all respondents (90%) said they agree or strongly agree and none disagreed. It is also interesting to note that this confidence that tenure increases capability holds true even for those who are new in their positions. While overtime1 and year in current position <Currentyear1> are both significantly correlated with the target variable capability1 (Pearson coefficient is 0.303 and 0.347 respectively), they do not correlate with each other. The correlation between them is low and even negative (-0.098). This may indicate that the first weeks on a new committee are the hardest and that any time in office increases feelings of capability.

< Table 7 : currentyear1 and overtime1 Crosstab >

currentyear1 \ overtime	Less than 1 year		1 year		2 years		3-5 years		6 or more years		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neutral	0	0	2	17	0	0	3	23	0	0	5	10
Agree	3	50	8	67	8	73	8	62	5	71	32	65
Strongly Agree	3	50	2	17	3	27	2	15	2	29	12	24
Total	6	100	12	100	11	100	13	100	7	100	49	100

CHAPTER SIX

INSIGHTES FROM U.S. CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS

A parallel survey was sent to US Congressional staffers on similar committees. While the response rate was low, the responses give a glimpse of a very different reality for congressional staffers. The most striking attribute of those who responded is that most of them have been in their current position for more than six years. Only 10% of Korean staffers had served for this long (see Table 8).

<Table 8 :Comparison of working years in Current Position between R.O.K and U.S>

Nation	Republic of Korea			U.S		
	Count	%	Cum%	Count	%	Cum%
Current Year						
Less than one year(0.5)	6	12.2	12.2	2	20	20
One year to two years(1-2)	23	47	59.2	1	10	30
Three years to four years(3-4)	10	20.4	79.6	0	0	30
Five years to six years(5-6)	5	10.2	89.8	0	0	30
More than six years(more than 6)	5	10.2	100	7	70	100
Total	49	100		10	100	

Of course, there may be a self-selection bias if new staffers were less likely to take the time to complete the survey. But this dramatic difference in tenure is certainly worthy of further examination. To confirm this difference in tenure, I went back to “The Congressional Staff Directory” published by Congressional Quarterly Press (2008 and 2009). Time in current position was available for 51 of the 59 committee staffers listed in the directory. The average time in current position for the fifty one U.S congressional staffers was about 6.5 years, whereas the average time in current position for the forty nine South Korean congressional staffers responding to the survey was about 3.5 years.

Table 9 below shows the frequency and percent of U.S responses on the years needed to become capable and the years in current position. While the response rate was too low to allow statistically significant interpretations of these responses, the contrast with the same table for Korean staffers (Table 6) is stark and enlightening. While many staffers in both countries responded that three to four years were needed to reach full capability, some US staffers responded that more than 6 years were needed. Also, there is no indication of the gap between time needed to become capable and actual time in office that was observed in the Korean case.

Table 9 : YearFullCapa and Currentyear1 of committee staffers of U.S(N=10)

	Years needed for full capability (YearFullCapa)		Years in current position (currentyear1)	
	Count	%	Count	%
Less than one year(0.5)	0	0	2	20
One year to two years(1-2)	0	0	1	10
Three years to four years(3-4)	5	50	0	0
Five years to six years(5-6)	1	10	0	0
More than six years(more than 6)	4	40	7	70
Total	10	100	10	100

A second insight from the US survey came in an email message from one of the US respondents. The respondent stressed that experience and/or professional level prior to joining staff is very critical element which is required to be a committee staffer. The respondent went on to note that, for example, the Appropriation Committee has historically required at least 5 years previous experience as a budget or policy analyst. Almost all the committees require significant experience to even be considered even though this varies enormously by committee. Professional experience prior to working for the National Assembly was not included in the scope of the

survey. The value of experience *outside* of the national assembly could be an important topic for further study in South Korea.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is that work experience in congress is more closely associated with self reported capability than is educational background or rank. This is particularly true for tenure in the current position. In fact a short tenure on a specific committee correlates with low capability even for staffers with relatively long tenure in congress on other committees. This highlights the potential detrimental effects of the informal “three year rule” and the principle of “rotation of position” currently followed by the Human Resources Office. *It is strongly recommended that the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea reexamine these policies and pursue efforts to increase the average number of years spent on the same committee to maximize staffer capability.*

The findings of this study, that tenure in congress is not meaningfully correlated with self-reported capability, contradicts Park and Yoon’s (2001) finding that directors of committee staff report high levels of professionalism due to their long tenure in congress. However Park and Yoon got this finding in interviews only with committee directors. These interviews were qualitative using only a small sample. Therefore, direct comparison with the current study is problematic.

The possible contradiction with Park and Yoon, however, does point to questions of the meaning of capability. Park and Yoon’s emphasis on *professionalism* is consistent with the assumption in Korean public administration that a capable bureaucrat must be a generalist. The Human Resources Department emphasizes this generalist perspective by using tests of general

administrative knowledge in recruitment and assessment and by relying on the “three year rule” in rotation of position. The fact that staffers with long tenure in the National Assembly under this generalist system did not report high levels of capability implies that the committee staffers themselves may not share this generalist definition of capability.

In the US congressional system, by contrast, there is an assumption that capability is a function of specialized expertise. The importance of specialization applies not only to congressional staffers, but even to the US legislators themselves. Herbert B. Asher (1974) asserted that “the need for congressmen to specialize and acquire expertise in a limited number of policy areas is so universally conceded as to be labeled a norm of legislative behavior.” (p64) The longer tenure on specific committees and the higher level of capability reported by US staffers is consistent with this norm of specialization. The primary recommendation of the present study can be seen as an argument that the US norm of specialization should be extended to committee staff in the ROK.

The study also informs us that rank, a consequence of successful examinations and evaluations, is not meaningfully associated with self-reported capability. It seems that this is because that higher level career staffers (high class position) are also rotated quickly to new committees. I think that the value of examination and evaluation could show itself if the higher ranking staffers had longer tenure in their current positions.

While the general argument that education and training matter to capability was only weakly supported, this study did indicate that major is an important factor well associated with capability of the committee staffers. Degree level of education and staffer training both had low, positive correlations with self-reported capability. This indicates that there should be some change in training program in the Korean National Assembly for the purpose of more profitable

training. It also indicates that field of major should be considered in job assignments for committee staffers by the Human Resource Management Office of the National Assembly.

The topic addressed in this study could benefit from much more research. A more successful comparative project between the National Assembly of the ROK and the US Congress could develop more specific recommendations. Specifically, the Human Resource Office of the National Assembly should explore the possibility of requiring professional level experience prior to joining committee staff.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A:

Cover letter and survey questions sent to the committee staffers of U.S and South Korea

1. U.S Survey

Dear _____

The attached survey is part of a study of the factors influencing capacity among congressional staff in the United States Congress and the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea. The intent of this research is to understand the role of individual factors such as education, and of institutional factors, in preparing legislative staffers for their jobs. While there is no anticipated benefit to you from your participation, this study may benefit society by leading to recommendations for improving staffer capacity.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, every effort will be made to keep your individual response confidential. Your name and contact information will not be kept with your response to this survey.

This survey is being administered by Mr. Myeongho Oh, a graduate student in the Program in Public Affairs at Washington State University under the directorship of Dr. Paul Thiers, Mr. Oh's thesis advisor and the director of that program. If you have any questions about this research, please contact Dr. Thiers at thiers@vancouver.wsu.edu or 360-546-9466.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Myeongho Oh
Graduate Student
Program in Public Affairs
Washington State University
myeonghooh@yahoo.com

< Survey Questions >

1. What is your highest educational degree level?
(1) High school or Associate's degree (2) Bachelor's degree
(3) Master's degree (4) Doctoral degree or More
2. What was your major in your highest educational degree? (ex; economics)
3. How long have you worked in Congress? _____ years.
4. How long have you worked in your current position? _____ years.
5. What is your gender? (1) Male (2) Female
6. Did you receive any training when you became a congressional staffer? (1) Yes (2) No
7. Did you find this training helpful and adequate to prepare you for your job? (Please answer if you answered "yes" to the question # 6)
(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly disagree
8. How capable do you feel in doing your job?
(1) Very capable (2) Capable (3) Somewhat capable (4) incapable (5) very incapable
9. Have you become more capable in your job over time?
(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly disagree
10. How important is your major in college or graduate school in how well you do your job?
(1) Very important (2) Important (3) Neutral (4) Not important (5) Never important
11. How important is your level of education (e.g. BA, MA or Ph.D.) in how well you do your job?
(1) Very important (2) Important (3) Neutral (4) Not important (5) Never important
12. How many years do you think are needed to become fully capable as a legislative staffer?

(1) Less than one year (2) One year to two years (3) Three years to four years (4) five years to six years (5) More than sixty

2. R.O.K Survey

-----남께,

첨부된 질문지는 대한민국 국회와 미국의회 입법보좌진의 능력에 영향을 주는 요소가 무엇인지를 연구하기 위한 조사의 일부분입니다. 이 조사의 내용은 입법보좌진의 역할을 수행하는 자들에게 있어 교육수준등과 같은 개인적 요소와 제도적인 요소들이 능력(capability)에 미치는 영향을 이해하는 데 주안점을 두고 있습니다.

여러분이 이번 조사에 참여하여 얻는 개인적 혜택은 없지만 입법보좌진의 능력을 개선하기 위한 권장사항을 이끌어냄으로써 우리가 사는 사회에 혜택을 줄 것으로 봅니다. 여러분의 참여는 순전히 자발적입니다. 참여하실 경우에 개인적 답변은 절대 누설되지 않도록 철저히 관리하도록 최선을 다하겠습니다.

이번 조사는 미국의 워싱턴 주립대에서 행정학 석사학위과정(Program in Public Affairs)에 있는 오명호 학생이 실시하는 것으로서 논문지도교수인 Dr. Thiers 교수의 지도하에 진행되고 있습니다. 이 조사에 의문이 있으면 Dr. Thiers 교수에게 전화번호 1-360-546-9466 이나 이메일 theirs@vancouver.wsu.edu 로 연락을 주시기 바랍니다.

감사합니다.

오명호
미국 워싱턴 주립대(Washington State University)
행정학 석사과정 대학원생
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질문지

해당 란에 답하여 주십시오.

1. 귀하의 성별은?

(1) 남자 (2) 여자

2. 귀하의 최종 학력은?

(1) 고졸 및 전문대졸 (2) 학사학위 (3) 석사학위 (4) 박사학위 이상

3. 귀하의 최종학력의 전공분야는 무엇입니까? 예) 법학, 경제학

4. 귀하는 국회에서 얼마 동안 근무하셨습니다?_____년

5. 귀하께서는 현재의 직책에서 얼마 동안 근무하고 계십니까?_____년

6. 귀하의 현재 직급은? 예) 일반직 5 급, 6 급, 사무원 6 급등

7. 귀하께서는 위원회업무를 담당하기 전에 내부 교육(예: 연수원 교육)훈련을 받으신 적이 있습니까?

(1) 예 (2) 아니오

8. 이 교육훈련이 귀하의 위원회 업무를 대비함에 있어 충분하게 도움이 되었다고 생각하십니까?(7 번 문항에 “예”라고 답하신 분은 반드시 답해 주십시오)

(1) 매우 도움이 되었다 (2) 도움이 되었다 (3) 그저 그렇다 (4) 도움이 되지 않았다.

(5) 전혀 도움이 되지 않았다.

9. 귀하는 현재 위원회 업무를 수행함에 있어 본인의 업무처리능력에 대해서 어떻게 생각하십니까?

(1) 매우 유능하다 (2) 유능한 편이다 (3) 보통이다 (4) 유능하지 않은 편이다.(5)

전혀 유능하지 않다.

10. 귀하는 위원회에서 장기간 근무가 귀하의 업무처리 능력을 보다 강화시킨다고
보십니까?

(1) 매우 그렇다 (2) 그렇다 (3) 그저 그렇다 (4) 그렇지 않다 (5) 전혀 그렇지 않다.

11. 귀하는 대학이나 대학원에서의 전공과목이 본인의 업무를 처리하는데 얼마나
중요하다고 생각하십니까?

(1) 매우 중요하다 (2) 중요한 편이다 (3) 보통이다 (4) 중요하지 않다 (5) 전혀
중요하지 않다

12 귀하께서는 학위 수준(학사, 석사, 혹은 박사 학위)이 업무를 잘 처리하는데
있어서 얼마나 중요하다고 생각하십니까?

1) 매우 중요하다 (2) 중요한 편이다 (3) 보통이다 (4) 중요하지 않다 (5) 전혀
중요하지 않다

13. 귀하께서는 위원회에서 성공적으로 업무를 처리 하기 위해 몇 년 정도의 기간이
필요하다고 생각하십니까?

1) 1년 미만 (2) 1년-2년 (3) 3년-4년 (4) 5년-6년 (5) 6년 이상

Appendix B:

Pearson Correlation Coefficient between the two attributes

	Capability1	
currentyear1	Pearson	.303
	sig. (2-tailed)	.034
workyear1	Pearson	.034
	sig. (2-tailed)	.815
overtime1	Pearson	.347
	sig. (2-tailed)	.015
Classposition2	Pearson	.159
	sig. (2-tailed)	.274
Impmajor1	Pearson	.379
	sig. (2-tailed)	.007
Impeducat1	Pearson	.048
	sig. (2-tailed)	.742
HighEducation	Pearson	.102
	sig. (2-tailed)	.487
Training	Pearson	.177
	sig. (2-tailed)	.225