
Gender-Based Job Segregation and the Gender Gap in Career Formation: Focusing on Bank Clerical Staff since the Postwar Years

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Gender-based job segregation in companies is the main cause of the gender gap in pay and careers. This paper sets out to examine the processes of formation and transformation of gender-based job segregation between the 1960s and present. The focus is on bank clerical staff, a field of employment with a large gender career gap in a representative industry that embodies Japanese-style business management. The examination by this paper clarifies the following facts. Male university graduates are assigned with priority to “lending” and “corporate and individual financing,” roles in which they build capacity and form careers through regular internal transfers. But this depends on the presence of male high school graduates who accept internal work and tend to have limited scope for promotions and elevation, and females who take care of clerical work. The aspect of females gradually raising the ceilings on their careers is important, based on measures for “utilizing women” in the workforce. However, this “utilization of women” by banks is no more than a measure designed to overcome occasional management problems, and has merely created new “women’s jobs.” Meritocratic management and the “utilization of women” have transformed gender-based job segregation into a gender gap in promotions.

I. Introduction

Gender-based job segregation is an extremely important structural element that creates gender disparity on the labor market. This is why there have been numerous empirical research studies focusing on gender-based job segregation in specific industries and occupations, ever since Cockburn (1983) analyzed gender disparity in jobs and authority in the printing trade and Beechey (1987) highlighted the need for historical research and analysis of the present situation of female labor and gender-based job segregation. For example, Crompton and Sanderson (1990) looked to job segregation to explain why the average wage for women was so far below that of men even after the 1970 Equal Pay Act, and researched and analyzed gender job segregation in several industries. Strober and Arnold (1987), meanwhile, examined the processes of hiring and workplace establishment of women in bank teller work, which used to be a predominantly male domain, and analyzed the process whereby gender-based job segregation is formed.

In Japan, gender-based job segregation inside companies is even more important as the main cause of gender disparity in wages and careers. Large Japanese corporations adopt the practice of hiring new graduates en masse (except for certain specialist and other occu-

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pations). They then combine OJT with grade-based training and other forms of Off-JT via regular job rotation, in a long-term commitment to developing human resources equipped with the skills to master uncertainty (to use Koike's term) (Koike and Inoki 2003). However, this development of human resources follows divergent routes for men and women. Men gather knowledge and experience while being moved from department to department on the premise of long-term continuous employment, and are promoted in line with their years of service. Women, on the other hand, are regarded as short-term continuous employees and tend to be assigned to "women's jobs" with limited scope for internal transfers. They are rarely promoted to managerial posts, even after long years of service. Kumazawa (1996) points out that the seniority system, one of the three main characteristics of Japanese business management, depends on there being few workers at the top and many at the bottom, and that in order to achieve this situation, Japanese companies are absolutely dependent on gender-based job segregation. Gender-specific employment management, in which men and women are given different work duties and employment terms, is structurally embedded in Japanese-style management (Komagawa 2015).

Now that the government has placed promoting active participation by women at the core of Japan's growth strategy and set challenges such as elevating women to executive and management positions,¹ we need to decipher aspects of gender in employment management by Japanese companies, clarify the causes of gender disparity in human resource development and career formation, and find measures for improvement. Therefore, the task taken up in this paper is to attempt a historical retrospective on the processes whereby gender-based job segregation has been formed, focusing on bank clerical staff—an occupation featuring significant career disparity between men and women in a representative industry that embodies Japanese-style management—and to consider how gender-based job segregation and career disparity have been affected by financial restructuring in recent years. From there, an attempt will be made to find clues for improvement.

II. Method and Targets of Analysis

The focus will be on the following points in this analysis. Firstly, the analysis targets both men and women, and the relationship between the two is depicted three-dimensionally. Male workers are the basic building blocks of employment management by companies. As such, the process of career formation by male workers based on different educational backgrounds will first be examined. Career formation by female workers will then be ascertained, and the complementary relationship with male jobs and careers will be identified. Secondly, the focus will be turned on companies' management strategies and employment management in various eras, and an attempt will be made to identify the effect this has had on

¹ The Abe Cabinet is committed to promoting active participation by women under the "Japan Revitalization Strategy—JAPAN is BACK" (June 14, 2013), and various ministries and agencies have announced measures to this end (Komagawa 2014).

Table 1. Attributes of Survey Subjects (Former Bank X Employees)

Male university graduates		Male high school graduates		Female high school graduates	
Name	Entry year	Name	Entry year	Name	Entry year
UA	1951	HA	1952	WA	1946
UB	1951	HB	1954	WB	1948
UC	1952	HC	1955	WC	1951
UD	1952	HD	1957	WD	1954
UE	1952	HE	1962	WE	1957
UF	1957			WF	1959
UG	1958			WG	1959
UH	1961			WH	1966
UI	1964				
UJ	1968				

Source: Compiled from results of interview survey.

gender-based job segregation. And thirdly, trends among labor subjects will be extracted from an interview survey.

The targets of examination are major banks called “city banks” or “megabanks.” Banks are representative workplaces for white-collar workers, and rigorously apply meritocratic management to male workers; they make limited “utilization” of women on the premise of “women’s attributes,” and have historically created a gender structure revolving around gender-specific employment management (Komagawa 2007). But these banks were pressed into devising new management strategies as a result of financial restructuring in the second half of the 1990s, when promoting measures to harness women’s abilities became an important issue. Banks are suitable subjects for examination by this paper, in that they are in the process of changing their gender-based job segregation and career disparity.

This paper will attempt a historical analysis focusing on the situation at City Bank X between the 1960s and the first half of the 90s, when meritocratic management was introduced or reinforced, but will also examine the impact of financial restructuring from the second half of the 1990s onwards. For this paper, a survey was conducted mainly with the Personnel Planning Department in City Bank XA, the successor to City Bank X, but also with personnel departments and departments responsible for harnessing women’s abilities in several other banks. Besides this, a career history survey was conducted with 23 former employees of City Bank X (Table 1), and interviews were held with current employees, former employees, dispatched workers and other non-regular employees of several other banks.² For purposes of this paper, “careers” will refer to chronological changes in work duties, grades and job titles within an organization, “workplace culture” will refer to

² The survey with former employees of major Bank X forming the core of this paper was based on semi-structured interviews. Besides this, the administrative centers and branches of several other major banks were visited and observed in action.

awareness and values fostered and shared within a workplace due to the allocation of duties, authority, etc., and “women’s jobs” will mean jobs with gender connotations and a notably high female ratio within a given vocational field.

III. Transitions in Banks’ Management, Business, and Employment Management

Before discussing the contents of jobs and the process of career formation, let us look at historical transitions in banks’ management, operational structure, and employment management, upon which that discussion is premised.

In banks, the foundations of the postwar operational structure were laid in around 1960. With the start of high-level economic growth and cash shortages in banks in the second half of the 1950s, banks started assigning women to deposit counter (teller) positions in order to promote an image of approachability. They also created or increased corporate and individual financing clerks and put them in charge of acquiring deposits and loan clients. They then installed deposit accounting machines, introduced one-stop unit systems for everything from reception to payments, and took steps to make their operations more efficient. This meant merging or scrapping clerk positions, and reorganizing the clerk composition in branches into “deposits” (deposit-related operations), “exchange” (exchange-related operations), “lending” (loan screening), and “corporate and individual financing” (client relations for bank operations in general) (Figure 1). Male employees were assigned with priority to loan screening and client relations, and females to deposit operations, as well as internal clerical work for each type of clerk. In this way, they developed an integrated system whereby the work brought in by corporate and individual financing clerks would be executed by other clerks, and established an operational structure facilitating large-volume deposits and loans based on gender-based job segregation (Komagawa 2007).

Meritocratic management was introduced in the first half of the 1960s, following the reorganization of operational structures. Banks had started introducing performance-related pay in their payroll systems in the second half of the 1950s, but then introduced ability-based grade systems in the first half of the 1960s, and created systems of evaluating job performance through personnel assessment. In the case of Bank A, the topics for evaluation in personnel assessment were (i) performance appraisal (appraisal of the outcome from the employee’s performance of work assignments during the assessment period), (ii) work approach appraisal (appraisal of the employee’s approach in applying ability to duties, i.e. work attitude), (iii) ability appraisal (appraisal of expectations of future usefulness, i.e. latent ability), (iv) personality appraisal (judgment of character and aptitude), and (v) overall appraisal (to complement the first four appraisals) (Research Institution for Bank Employees 1969, 127). While the evaluation items were wide-ranging, including latent ability and personality evaluation in addition to work performance, particular details were not indicated.

1957: All bank employees 59 (37 males, 22 females)

Branch manager: 1 (male) Assistant branch manager: 1 (male)

Deposit clerks: 17 6 males 11 females	Lending clerks: 9 7 males 2 females	Corporate and individual financing clerks: 7 7 males	Foreign exchange clerks: 4 3 males 1 female	Domestic exchange clerks: 4 2 males 2 females
Tellers: 6 2 males 4 females				
Cashiers: 3 2 males 1 female	Accountants: 4 2 males 2 females	General clerks: 4 2 males 2 females	General affairs clerks: 5 4 males 1 female	

1969: All bank employees 85 (43 males, 42 females)

Branch manager: 1 (male) Assistant branch manager: 2 (male)

Deposit clerks: 25 6 males 19 females	Lending clerks: 16 10 males 6 females	Corporate and individual financing clerks: 14 12 males 2 females	Foreign exchange clerks: 7 3 males 4 females	Domestic exchange clerks: 8 2 males 6 females
Tellers: 5 1 male 4 females				
General clerks: 12 7 males 5 females				

Source: Compiled from results of interview survey.

Figure 1. Personnel Composition of Bank X's Branch a by Type of Clerk (1957/1969)

In 1964, Bank X introduced an ability-based grade system consisting of grades 4 to 1 for the clerical staff level, and the positions of investigator, assistant advisor and advisor for the management staff level (Table 2). Promotions were judged from a combination of years spent in a position and the personnel assessment in 5 stages from A to E. If an employee was given an assessment of A or B in the 2nd year of a given grade, promotion to investigator was possible by age 31 at the earliest. If the assessment was only C, promotion to investigator would be delayed until age 48. This system created gaps in position and grade between employees who entered the bank at the same time, depending on their ability evaluation in personnel assessment. Grade requirements were said to be “completely unrelated to gender or educational background,”³ but as the internal clerical work assigned to female

³ *Corporate History of Bank X.*

Table 2. Bank X's Ability-Based Grade System

Grade (Position) Advisor (Branch manager class)	Grade requirements	Grade promotion requirements Last 3 times B+, last 2 times A
Assistant advisor (Assistant branch manager class)	(1) At least 5 years' experience as an investigator (2) A specialist deemed of equal value as (1)	Last 3 times B+, last time A
Investigator (Section manager class)	(1) At least 3 years' experience of Grade 1 (2) A specialist deemed of equal value as (1)	(1) 1st time C+, 2nd time B+, last time A (3 years+) (2) Last 3 times B+ (5 years+) (3) Total 10 times C+ (10 years+)
Grade 1 clerk	At least 3 years' experience of Grade 2 plus the following 2 (1) Ability to perform nearly all normal proposal drafting work, planning, research and negotiation work independently (2) Ability to teach and guide up to Grade 2	(1) 1st time C+, last 2 times B+ (3 years+) (2) Total 8 times C+ (8 years+)
Grade 2 clerk	At least 3 years' experience of Grade 3 plus the following 2 (1) Ability to perform normal document and other drafting, negotiation work, relatively simple planning and research with a degree of independence (2) Ability to teach and guide up to Grade 3	(1) 1st time C+, last 2 times B+ (3 years+) (2) Total 8 times C+ (8 years+)
Grade 3 clerk	(1) University graduate in process of general clerical apprenticeship (2) At least 4 years experience of Grade 4 (2 years for junior college graduates) with ability to perform bookkeeping, calculation and negotiation work, relatively simple document and application form drafting, and research work with a degree of independent judgment under guidance Skilled ability for staff in charge of routine repetitive work	(1) Last 2 times B+ (4 years+) (2) Total 6 times C+ (6 years+)
Grade 4 clerk	(1) High school and junior college graduates with general apprenticeship process (2) Take care of relatively simple bookkeeping and calculation, negotiation work, routine repetitive work, auxiliary administrative work with a degree of independence under guidance	

Source: Compiled from Bank X union material and results of interview survey.

Table 3. Outline of Bank XA's Track-Based System of Employment Management

Track name	Assigned duties	Expected role	Place of employment
Managerial career track	Branch management, planning judgment, management, promoting business, and other duties with a high level of difficulty	Well-versed in operational areas with a high level of difficulty, contributes to the bank's growth by exhibiting advanced management ability	No restriction
Specialist track	Duties that exhibit advanced specialism in specific fields	Has advanced specialist knowledge and ability, contributes to the bank's growth	No restriction
Specific managerial career track	Person with proficiency in lending, client relations, deposit operations and other basic bank operations, engaged in branch operations and related Head Office operations	Has mastered lendings, client relations, deposit operations, and other basic bank operations within a certain range, supports the sales infrastructure and contributes to the bank's growth by specializing and being proficient in one of these fields	In principle, works within an area selected by the employee
Clerical career track	Engaged in general clerical and limited client relations work under instruction from a superior	Fast and smooth work processing in line with administrative procedures, and assisting superiors	In principle, no distant transfers

Source: Compiled from Bank XA Personnel Planning Department materials.

staff was regarded as “routine,” many women were assessed at level C and stagnated in low grades.

Meritocratic management was intensified between the 1970s and 80s. The ratio of ability-based pay in salaries rose from a city bank average of 4.8% in 1965 to 20.6% in 1970, 29.9% in 1975 and 35.0% in 1980 (Research Institution for Bank Employees 1983, 15). This kind of meritocratic management produced a mentality among men of long working hours and priority on jobs, causing a strong integration with companies by what became known as the “company man.” For women, conversely, gender-specific employment management was intensified, and some bank employees were made non-regular. Banks set up administrative centers in the first half of the 1970s, introduced secondary online systems in around the mid-1970s, and established worker dispatch agencies. They started rationalizing and centralizing administrative work and dispatching part-timers to branches in the first half of the 1980s (Komagawa 1997). Then, to coincide with the enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (1986), they introduced systems of career management based on predetermined career tracks (career track systems). Table 3 shows an outline of Bank XA's

career track system.⁴ Employees selected for the “managerial career track (*sogoshoku*)” (mainly male employees) were trained as candidates for executive and management posts, while the “clerical career track (*ippanshoku*)” involved routine clerical work performed by women and offered limited promotion prospects. The “specific managerial career track” was one of the banks’ fundamental operations including client relations, and was designed to harness expert ability. As such, it consisted of fewer employees than the two tracks mentioned above. Judging from the managerial career track (*sogoshoku*) and clerical career track (*ippanshoku*), we can say that the career track system institutionalized gender disparity in employment terms based on the name of the track.

Thus, from around 1960 when the operational structure was established until the first half of the 1990s, via the introduction of the career track system, banks introduced and reinforced meritocratic management, assigned male employees to lending and client relations and developed their abilities, assigned women to internal clerical work, made some of them non-regular and established low-level employment terms.

IV. Gender-Based Job Segregation and Male-Female Careers: 1960s to First Half of 1990s

1. Meritocratic Management and Career Formation of Male Employees

Next, let us turn to job contents and careers. Human resource development by banks can be divided into measures aimed at “management candidates,” “managers and supervisors,” and “clerical workers.” Management candidates were trained as generalists with broad operational knowledge, aspiring to positions from branch manager or head of department upwards. The targets in this case were male university graduates. On the other hand, managers and supervisors were trained as specialists with expertise in specific operations, eventually becoming assistant branch managers and section heads. The targets here used to be male high school graduates, but switched to male university graduates when the hiring of male high school graduates was stopped after the mid-1980s. Clerical workers, finally, were expected to process work quickly and accurately, but were outside the scope of long-term ability development. With the exception of the managerial career track (*sogoshoku*), the majority of these were women.

In this way, bank employees were subject to different “expectation levels” based on gender and educational background, and this was reflected in ability development. The main method used for ability development involved OJT based on regular internal transfers; male university graduates who were management candidates would experience various important operations and acquire broad-ranging abilities on the premise of long-term continuous employment. By contrast, the operations assigned to male high school graduates were limited in nature, while women experienced few internal transfers in the first place. So, first of all,

⁴ The specialist career course was specialized in work limited to system development and the like.

Table 4. Career Formation Process of Male University Graduate UJ

Month-Year	Assigned branch	Operation	Age when appointed	Duration
Apr-1968	Joined City Bank X Kansai district, branch <i>a</i> (commercial)	Cashier, deposits	23	1 yr 9 mons
Jan-1970	Head Office	Overseas Dept.	24	9 mons
Oct-1970	Kanto district, branch <i>b</i> (residential)	Lending, corporate and individual financing	25	3 yrs 2 mons
Dec-1973	Kanto district, branch <i>c</i> (major)	Lending	28	4 mons
Apr-1974	Federation of City Bank Employees' Unions	Executive committee member (full-time)	29	2 yrs 1 mon
May-1976	Kanto district, branch <i>d</i> (major)	Corporate and individual financing	31	4 yrs
May-1980	Kansai district, branch <i>e</i> (major)	Lending section chief, corporate and individual financing section chief	35	2 yrs 2 mons
Jul-1982	Kansai district, branch <i>f</i> (commercial)	Corporate and individual financing section manager, assistant manager	37	4 yrs 5 mons
Dec-1986	Kanto district, branch <i>g</i> (commercial)	Assistant branch manager	41	2 yrs 2 mons
Feb-1989	Secondment (securities company)		43	3 yrs 1 mon
Mar-1992	Head Office	Personnel Dept.	46	5 mons
Aug-1992	Kanto district, branch <i>h</i> (commercial)	Branch manager	47	2 yrs 4 mons
Dec-1994	Kanto district, branch <i>i</i> (residential)	Branch manager	49	2 yrs 7 mons
Jul-1997	Secondment followed by employment transfer	Appointed director	52	

Source: Compiled from interview survey.

Note: "Major" = city branch handling major corporate loans, "Commercial" = branch in commercial area handling small corporate loans and operations for individual clients, "Residential" = branch in residential area mainly handling operations for individual clients.

the process of career formation for male university graduates will be confirmed.

Table 4 shows the career formation process of male university graduate UJ. He joined the bank in 1968. This was some years after the introduction of meritocratic management, and Table 4 shows a typical pattern of ability development not limited to UJ's individual characteristics.⁵ The career formation process of male university graduates had the follow-

⁵ An individual characteristic of UJ's career is that he was assigned to the overseas department in the initial stage of his career. This is a development route designed for overseas postings, suggesting

ing five characteristics. Firstly, they would be assigned to two different types of branch (branch *a* and *b*) for about 5 years, where they would gain general experience in the bank's basic operations of "deposits," "lending," and "corporate and individual financing." Secondly, after learning the basic operations, they would be assigned chiefly to "lending" and "corporate and individual financing." Thirdly, they would be transferred at approximately 3-year intervals, including distant transfers, and promoted each time. Fourthly, they would expand the scope of their work through secondment, and would be promoted to branch manager. And fifthly, they would be seconded and their employment transferred to an affiliate as they approached the standard executive retirement age of 53 (as it was then).

Male university graduates intensified their knowledge and experience through internal transfers, and developed the ability as generalists needed for managerial posts. By taking charge of the bank's core operation of loan screening, in particular, they acquired the ability demanded of branch managers. Therefore, let us now look at the career formation of male university graduates under meritocratic management while confirming the labor process involved in loan operations.

"Loan operations" refer to the work of analyzing the conditions of loan applications and setting loan interest, etc. When screening loans, the employee goes to the client company and confirms its management status and policies from a broad perspective, and also analyzes collateral, financial statements as well as other aspects. Skill in screening loans is acquired by handling many different cases, and two to three years are considered necessary to be able to screen at the minimum level. Male university graduate UG points out the importance of experience, saying "You have to cultivate the ability to interpret figures. The branch manager and assistant manager yell at us till we understand. You keep thinking, *Ah, now I see!* You wish they'd told you everything from the beginning, but then what they're doing is giving you that experience from the inside. (part omitted) The ones who are good at absorbing that kind of thing then go on to absorb it more and more" (Male university graduate UG).

They set the loan conditions, summarize them in an approval circular, then seek the approval of the loan from the branch manager, etc. If the superior thinks the loan is too risky, the client company could suffer cash-flow problems and go bankrupt. Employees responsible for loans must carefully prepare documentation to ensure that the loan can be safely made to the client company. Male university graduate UJ recalls the constant pressure to make persuasive arguments proving the client's ability to repay, and to create data to support those arguments: "Your boss might say, 'If sales go down by this much, the company could run out of cash three months down the line and go bust', so then you have to provide all the data to show that the company will be all right because this, this and this will happen

that UJ was seen as a promising future prospect. However, UJ was soon transferred to branch *a* at his own request, thereupon returning to the normal development route. His executive committee experience in the Federation of City Bank Employees' Unions was based on a nomination by the bank, and was useful in forming human networks with talented employees of other banks.

before it ever gets into difficulty.” He alone handled tens of these client companies, the work volume was massive, and in his private life he couldn’t even remember the face of his newborn baby. “I would take the last train home, or a taxi if I missed it, then work another two hours or so there. Then I’d sleep for two or three hours, get up at five, wake myself up by taking a hot bath, then work some more. Then I’d go to the bank, go to the client, gather data. And when I’d done that, the next customer would come” (Male university graduate UJ). Given this daily routine, it was sometimes a fine line between physical collapse and survival, but while doing so he drove himself on because “it was too late to back out,” while looking ahead to his next post.

Many bank employees have health issues as they suffer from sleeplessness and other problems on top of stress at work. Long-term solo assignments away from home and the attitude of prioritizing work over private life sometimes cause discord within the family. Male university graduate UG recalls that, when sent on a solo assignment while his child was taking exams for senior high school, “At the most important time in my child’s life, I left it all to my wife.” And on his own well-being, he says, “I depended on my family for the minimum necessities of life to somehow maintain my physical condition. . . . I carried on without worrying too much about that—I was selfish,” and even admits, “I sacrificed my family.”

But even then, all of the men surveyed say that they never once thought of quitting the bank, except at the initial stage of their careers. They had a responsibility to feed their families, while the size of their annual salary and social status were also factors. But what provided a driving force over and beyond these was their sense of responsibility toward their job and their desire for self-fulfillment through their job. Male university graduate UJ says “The job comes with its own responsibility, its own status. We are relied upon by the customers.” Male university graduate UG says, “You have to work to give your child a good life, to feed your family,” but adds that “More than those, I think what motivates a man is wanting to do a good job, wanting to become what he really wants to be.”

To this is added the desire for promotion. In the case of male university graduates, the aim is to be promoted to branch manager. And there was a certain sense of security that the evaluation to this end would come naturally as long as the firm’s requirements were met, however unreasonable they were. Even if disparity in promotions arose in an ability-based grade system, the evaluation of male university graduates was more like a weeding out of employees who made “mistakes” or had “problems,” rather than a positive process of selection. As such, there was a feeling that promotions were “less about being selected, more about being removed from the running” (male university graduate UF), and “There was no pecking order; everyone went up collectively” (male university graduate UH). Many male university graduates took the attitude that “if we just carry on, we will rise in status” (male university graduate UJ). This sense of security toward evaluation made male university graduates reluctant to make themselves too conspicuous in the workplace. Instead, they would approach their work with the attitude that the demanding aspects of it were a

Table 5. Career Formation Process of Male High School Graduate HE

Month-Year	Assigned branch	Operation	Age when appointed	Duration
Apr-1962	Joined City Bank X, Kanto District, branch <i>o</i>	Deposits, teller, calculations, cashier	18	4 yrs 9 mos
Jan-1967	Head Office	Administrative planning, administrative management	22	3 yrs 9 mos
Oct-1970	Kanto District, branch <i>p</i>	Deposits chief, corporate and individual financing	26	5 yrs 7 mos
May-1976	Kanto District, branch <i>q</i>	Corporate and individual financing	32	3 yrs 9 mos
Jan-1980	Kanto District, branch <i>r</i>	Corporate and individual financing	35	3 yrs 4 mos
May-1983	Kanto District, branch <i>s</i>	Corporate and individual financing	39	3 yrs 11 mos
Apr-1987	Kanto District, branch <i>t</i>	Corporate and individual financing	43	4 yrs 11 mos
Mar-1992	Computing Center	Issuing slips	48	8 mos
Nov-1992	Administrative Center	Planning Dept, exchange concentration work	48	8 mos
Rest omitted				

Source: Compiled from interview survey.

“touchstone for the next post.” Male high school graduates were not on the same playing field as male university graduates. Their rivals for promotion were always contemporary male university graduates; they gathered information on personnel transfers by their contemporaries, and confirmed their own position in the bank in that way.⁶

Turning our attention to the careers of male high school graduates, five out of approximately 100 male high school graduates who joined banks in 1955 have been promoted to branch managers, but the majority have gone no further than assistant branch manager or chief clerk. This is due to a lack of experience in loan operations. Table 5 shows part of the career formation process of male high school graduate HE. After working in two branches and Head Office, he was assigned as a corporate and individual financing clerk in a branch, and worked in an administrative center for central processing of bank slips from his latter 40s onwards. During this time, he has had no experience of loan operations. As a result,

⁶ Not all male university graduates are promoted to branch manager. Male university graduate UI is an “elite” bank employee with experience of overseas posting, but his personnel assessment in his 10th year was poor, and in his 25th year he was seconded and his employment was transferred. According to UI, his superior at the time said that he had made a mistake in the assessment. However, the truth of this statement is under some doubt, and in any case, an assessment once made is impossible to reverse and continues to have an impact on UI’s career.

despite being a 4-time winner of the branch manager's prize awarded to staff with excellent sales performance, he says he was always aware of being at a disadvantage when talking to clients about loans. Again, he was promoted to investigator in 1977, but did not rise to chief clerk. This is because the work handled by male high school graduates mainly revolved around "corporate and individual financing," "deposits" or "exchange," and they were expected either to produce sales results as staff in charge of client relations, or to become deposit clerks or other staff responsible for internal operations. This was quite in contrast to male university graduates, who alternately took care of "lending" and "corporate and individual financing" before being promoted to branch manager. So there was job segregation based on educational background among male employees, and this was reflected in their careers. For this reason, an awareness and attitude somewhat distanced from meritocratic management is observed among some male high school graduates who understood the limits to their promotion prospects. They could be seen to live their vocational and private lives in proactive ways, such as by cooperating with their co-earner wives, avoiding overtime work, and taking their children to and from the nursery.

2. The "Utilization of Women" and Women's Careers

Next, let's look at women's careers. Banks practice gender-specific employment management, and expect women to apply their abilities as clerical workers. At the same time, banks have also "utilized women" in line with the management issues of each epoch. Here, we will look back over initiatives aimed at "utilizing women" from the 1960s to the first half of the 1990s, to see how this has affected gender-based job segregation. A point to note is that "the utilization of women" by banks in this period was limited to harnessing their ability in the workplace; it did not include various measures to support women's continued employment, etc.

The "utilization of women" by banks after the war started with the "popularization of banks" in the second half of the 1950s. Banks started to create cheerful, approachable images in their attempt to secure deposits from individual customers. One means to this end was the mass recruitment of female high school graduates, who were assigned to bank counter work as tellers. Bank X increased its recruitment of female high school graduates from 362 in 1961 to 1,074 in 1965,⁷ and assigned "veteran" women with at least 6 years of service to counter work. As Figure 1 shows, female employees of Bank X's branch *a* doubled between 1957 and 1969. Tellers were mainly women, with men supporting or providing cover at particularly busy times or during lunch breaks. This increase in female tellers created a perception that counter work "suited women" as it drew on "female attributes," eventually evolving into an assessment that "this occupation has been switched to women as

⁷ *Bank X Securities Report* and *Nihon Kin'yu Meikan* (The Japan Financial Directory) published by The Japan Financial News Co., Ltd. As for the number of men hired during this period, male university graduates increased from 53 to 69 and male high school graduates from 103 to 118, revealing a relatively conspicuous rise in hiring of female high school graduates.

it only involves simple and light work” (Women’s and Young Workers’ Bureau, Ministry of Labour 1964, 29).

Concerns over the declining job evaluation of counter work are voiced by a “veteran” female high school graduate who was selected as a teller: “Both men and women can do this work. But because women do it, the job is regarded as being one rank down” (female high school graduate WB). Nevertheless, the theory that counter work “suited women” was accepted by the majority of women. In a workplace where there was already a heavy tone of gender disparity (for example, in that the payroll system made distinctions based on gender and duties⁸), there was expectation even from the women themselves that “utilizing women” by making the most of “women’s characteristics” would raise the profile of female workers in the workforce. As a result, women positively accepted theories that “women are attentive to detail” and “women are courteous in their dealings,” and attempted to secure a distinct role for themselves in the form of women’s jobs. As female high school graduate WD says, “I thought the work should not be left to wimpish men. I felt a kind of pride that we could do it more accurately, faster, and without mistakes.”

Thus, gender-specific job placements combined with theories of gender-specific characteristics in clerical role divisions to produce a workplace culture in which “men work outside (lending, corporate and individual financing) while women protect the inside (internal work).” This resembled the gender-based role division of the modern family, in which “the husband worked outside and the wife was a full-time housewife,” and was widely accepted by male and female workers. Gender-based job segregation was created by “utilizing women” for counter work at the beginning of the 1960s, as a measure to address the challenge of securing deposits (which had been a management issue since the 1950s).

In the 1970s, given the search for new business and compositional changes in the female workforce, the occupational field of female university graduates expanded and long-serving female workers were introduced into loan screening operations.⁹ When Bank X started hiring female university graduates in 1971, it assigned some of them to international operations, as well as secretarial and other Head Office work. There, they were given work that required some specialization, such as using their foreign language ability to prepare work documents, managing executives’ schedules, and negotiating. Female university graduates hired by branches were to be fast-tracked to the front line by assigning them to counter work at an early stage. Despite being regarded as “routine,” counter work involved contact with customers, and “it would be unthinkable to be made a teller in the first year

⁸ In the 1957 revision of its payroll system, Bank X maintained the four-pillar structure of its seniority-based salaries based on gender and duties. *Bank X Employees’ Union Journal* June 25, 1957 issue.

⁹ According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology *Report on Basic School Statistics*, in 1970 the female ratio of advancement to university was 6.5% and to junior college was 11.2%, causing a rise of around 20% in women from higher educational backgrounds among all female employees. The employment terms of female junior college graduates differ from bank to bank (Komagawa 2007).

after graduating from senior high school” (male university graduate UF). Nevertheless, after 10 days to 2 weeks of counter training, female university graduates were assigned to counter work from their first year. Long-serving women were selected for individual loan work. In 1970, Bank X separated loan work from “lending,” and created a system in which loan specialists would cover all processes as full-time staff, from advising customers to processing applications, screening, execution, management and recovery. Loan specialists took care of screening work for calculating collateral value and clients’ ability to repay, and managing the processes of loan execution.

The “effects” of these two measures to “utilize women” in the 1970s were as follows. For female university graduates, women’s occupational fields in Head Office operations were broadened, while in the branches they took charge of counter work from the first year, thus introducing disparity among women based on educational background. Long-serving female employees became involved in individual loan screening work, and cultivated the ability needed for promotion to managerial posts. However, the “utilization” of female university graduates did not go beyond the scope of work that “suited women,” while the loan work handled by long-serving female employees was “routine work” distinct from corporate financing. As stated above, the 1970s was a period in which meritocratic management was intensified with a focus on men, and the two attempts to “utilize women” did not usher in a revision of gender-specific employment management or an improvement in women’s employment terms.

Now let’s look at the careers of female high school graduates. Table 6 shows the career formation process of female high school graduate WG. In 36 years between joining the bank and reaching mandatory retirement age, she only worked in two branches. Her assignments were also few in number. For the first 10 years, she was engaged in “female work” in internal administration, namely as a “cashier,” “deposit clerk” and “teller.” After serving for a year on the union’s executive committee, she was assigned to “loan administration” in the same branch, and worked as clerical assistant to a male employee in charge of loan screening for 12 years. It was in her 24th year, at age 41, that she was made a “loan specialist” as a measure for “utilizing” long-serving female staff. She stayed in that capacity for another 13 years until retirement, and was never promoted to a managerial post.

Because loan operations depend on the ability to evaluate collateral, WG broadened the scope of her work while learning from a male colleague. Even when her child broke a bone and had to stay in hospital for surgery, she “couldn’t take time off, because work had been scheduled” (female high school graduate WG), and worked on equal terms with a male high school graduate who was also a loan specialist. WG took pride in the joy of being able to do “work that is useful to people” and the sense of fulfilment that she was “personally responsible for the work from beginning to end.” However, her evaluation in personnel assessment did not improve, and she received no promotions at all after rising to Grade 1 Clerk at age 35. In WG’s case, the evaluation may have been reduced due to her experience as a member of the employees’ union executive committee. But even without that, WG’s

Table 6. Career Formation Process of Female High School Graduate WG

Month-Year	Assigned branch	Operation	Age when appointed	Duration
Apr-1959	Joined City Bank X, Kanto District, branch y	Cashier, deposits	18	1 yr 5 mos
Sep-1960	Kanto District, branch z	Preparation for opening, deposits, teller	19	8 yrs 8 mos
May-1969	Bank X Employees' Union	Executive committee member (full-time)	28	1yr
May-1970	Kanto District, branch z	Lending administration	29	12 yrs 5 mos
1971		Maternity leave	30	6 wks
1976		Maternity leave	35	6 wks
Around Oct-1982	Kanto District, branch z	Lending / loan section (loan specialist)	41	13 yrs 5 mos
Mar-1996	Retired		54	

Source: Compiled from interview survey.

perception is that married women with children “will not be promoted to higher grades or positions, whatever the case.” As WG says with a hint of resentment, “Promotions are not judged on the content of your work at all. It’s a complete joke.” Women were tied to “women’s jobs” and had no opportunities for ability development through internal transfers. And even if they applied their abilities by taking advantage of measures to “utilize women,” they could not achieve high evaluation in a system of gender-specific employment management that positioned women as clerical workers. Women were rarely promoted to managerial posts, even if they continued to work until mandatory retirement age.

In terms of the job content, employment terms and gender ratio of the managerial career track (*sogoshoku*) and clerical career track (*ippanshoku*), the track-based system of career management introduced in the second half of the 1980s could be seen as an institutionalized version of the previous gender-specific employment management. Moreover, the choice of career track was conditional upon educational background, with only university graduates or higher eligible for the managerial career track. Even applicants with a university degree or higher were expected to choose career tracks based on professional awareness. As such, the career track system could be said to have used educational background and professional awareness to selectively appoint female workers, who were increasingly from higher educational backgrounds. The career formation of women on the managerial career track will be examined in section V.

3. Gender-Based Job Segregation and Career Structures

Now, let us summarize job segregation and career structures in banks. In the case of men, male university graduates were assigned primarily to “lending” and “corporate and individual financing,” where they developed the skills needed by branch managers. Conversely, male high school graduates were mainly concentrated in “corporate and individual financing” or internal work such as “deposits” and “exchange,” and their promotion prospects tended to be limited. Women, moreover, were tied to “women’s jobs,” lacked opportunities for ability development through internal transfers, and were rarely promoted to managerial posts.

Let us now check how this job segregation based on gender and educational background is reflected in ability-based grades. Table 7 shows the result of past surveys by the Bank X employees’ union. The response rate was just over 50%, and tended to decrease with increasing age and grade, so will be used as a reference material. The first finding is that male university graduates were the quickest to receive grade promotion, while male high school graduates were delayed by one rank and women by two to three ranks. The second is that the range of grades occupied by each type expanded in 1985, causing a widening disparity between employees who joined at the same time. This is seen as a consequence of intensified meritocratic management. The third is that, while some female employees were employed in the grade of “Manager” and above in 1985, others were still “Grade 1 Clerks” even at age 45 or above. In 1985, the monthly salary for the minimum basic grade was 281,900 yen for an Investigator but 247,900 yen for a Grade 1 Clerk, showing a large wage disparity between the two. There were no male employees who remained at the clerical level throughout their careers. The gender gap could be said to be larger than the disparity due to educational background among male employees.

Focusing only on the careers of male university graduates, knowledge and experience were certainly accumulated through regular internal transfers, resulting in promotions to higher positions and grades. But these processes of ability development and career formation depended on the presence of male high school graduates who took care of internal operations and tended to have limited prospects for promotion, as well as female employees who took care of the clerical work. The advance of meritocratic management and the “utilization of women” had the effect of transforming gender-based job segregation into gender disparity in promotions. The dividing line between careers within organizations, consisting of job duties, grades and positions, shifted from educational backgrounds to gender, thus forming and reinforcing gender-specific employment management. In around the mid-1960s, this led to a gender relationship between male employees, who took care of “judgmental work” and went through promotions while intensifying their commitment to the organization, and female employees, who took on “routine” work that “suited women” on the premise of short-term service and stagnated in lowly positions and grades. This gender relationship mutually reinforced a workplace culture incorporating gender-based role division, and remained strong until the first half of the 1990s.

Table 7. Distribution of Ability-Based Grades in Bank X (1974 and 1985)

							(%)
1974	Grade 2 clerk	Grade 1 clerk	Investigator (lower)	Investigator (higher)	Assistant advisor	Advisor	
<u>Age 33</u>							
Male university graduates	0	5.2	94.7				
Male high school graduates	0	10.4	89.5				
Females	63.6	36.4	0				
<u>Age 40</u>							
Male university graduates		0	0	33.3	33.3	33.3	
Male high school graduates		0	37.0	46.3	16.7	0	
Females		33.3	66.6	0	0	0	
<u>Age 45</u>							
Males		0	40.0	60.0			
Females		60.0	40.0	0			
<u>Age 50+</u>							
Males		15.8	10.5	73.7			
Females		60.0	40.0	0			
							(%)
1985	Grade 2 clerk	Grade 1 clerk	Assistant manager	Manager	Assistant advisor	Advisor	
<u>Age 33</u>							
Male university graduates	0	4.2	5.6	43.7	46.5		
Male high school graduates	0	13.0	32.1	54.8	0		
Females	51.3	48.7	0	0	0		
<u>Age 40</u>							
Male university graduates		0	0	18.2	45.5	36.4	
Male high school graduates		3.7	3.7	29.6	63.0	0	
Females		61.5	23.0	15.4	0	0	
<u>Age 45</u>							
Males		0	0	21.7	73.9	4.3	
Females		50.0	0	50.0	0	0	
<u>Age 50+</u>							
Males		0	0	15.7	83.2	1.1	
Females		18.8	0	75.0	6.3	0	

Source: Compiled from the Bank X employees' union, *Situation of Promotions*, 1974 and 1985 versions.

- Notes: 1. Response rate was 52.1% in 1974 and 60.6% in 1985. Response rate decreased with increasing age and grade.
2. As very few responses were received from male university graduates aged 45 and 50+, the figure shows the total of all educational backgrounds.
3. In 1974, "Investigator (lower)" is the total of the two lower classes of this grade and "Investigator (higher)" the total of the two higher classes, corresponding to the 1985 "Assistant manager" and "Manager," respectively.

V. Women's Career Formation after Financial Restructuring: Second Half of 1990s to Present

The so-called “financial big bang” in the second half of the 1990s prompted a large-scale financial restructuring that transcended business categories, the nine city banks being integrated into four financial groups.¹⁰ As banks diversified their operations, they prioritized investment trust services for individuals, an area promising market expansion and stable commission revenues. The central providers of these services were women. So now let's see how women's work duties and careers were affected by this emphasis on services aimed at individuals (retail banking) after the financial restructuring.

As professionals handling products with no assurance of principal, staff engaged in investment trust services require a strong sense of ethics. They also need to acquire the status of FP (financial planners). Because it takes time to train them into the finished article, “it's a waste to rotate them after five years, as they do on the clerical career track” (Bank P). For this reason, the banks set up specialist departments aimed at harnessing women's abilities, with a view to developing women's abilities and easy working environments. They also set out measures to support women's career formation and a balance between work and home life.¹¹ Many employees of departments designed to harness women's abilities were women on the managerial career track. One female employee of Bank Q had survived the rigorous selection of just 8 women included among 470 recruits on the 1992 managerial career track, as well as being in the minority. These women are now proposing and implementing measures based on their own experience of life events such as marriage and childbirth, setting targets for the ratio of women in managerial posts, and offering consultation on concerns about taking childcare leave. They are also promoting workplace awareness reform by holding seminars for superiors who are unsure about letting their subordinates take childbirth leave. These efforts have been successful, and the ratio of women in managerial posts increased from 4.7% in 2006 to 14.7% in 2013. Some 25 years after the introduction of the career track system, women on the managerial career track who had worked their way into the core of their employers' organizations had become a force for reforming those organizations.

¹⁰ “Mizuho Holdings” (Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank, Fuji Bank and Industrial Bank of Japan) was established in 2000, “Mitsubishi Tokyo Financial Group” (Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi, Mitsubishi Trust and Banking Corporation, Nippon Trust Bank and Tokyo Trust Bank, renamed “Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group” with the addition of Sanwa Bank, Tokai Bank, and Toyo Trust and Banking in 2005) in 2001, “Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group” (Sakura Bank and Sumitomo Bank) in 2002, and “Resona Holdings” (Daiwa Bank, Kinki Osaka Bank, Nara Bank and Asahi Bank) in 2003. A reorganization of local financial institutions was also in progress at the same time, but it was based on a different rationale from that of the major banks (Komagawa 2009).

¹¹ Mega-banks establishing departments designed to harness women's ability were Resona Group in 2003, the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ in 2006, and Mizuho Bank and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation in 2008.

However, the situation is more complex if we look at the branches. Many branches with female managers are retail-type branches aimed at individual customers; there are few female managers in full-banking branches that offer corporate loans as their main business. Currently, with retail branches occupying a low status within each bank's organization, women struggle to win high evaluation even if they amass a strong business record as branch managers. As a result, it would be difficult for them to be promoted to executive status if they have no experience as full-banking branch managers. So while women are increasingly being promoted to branch manager, the "utilization of women" is generating a new type of career disparity by inducing women to enter retail business.

VI. Conclusion

Banks have been finding various ways to "utilize women" in line with their management issues at various points in time. Women who have embraced the "utilization of women" and have acquired skills and confidence are gradually raising the ceilings on their careers. And now, following their lead as role models, a series of successors are emerging. On the other hand, the "utilization of women" has given rise to new work that "suits women," and has failed to eliminate gender-based job segregation. This is because the "utilization of women" by banks is sometimes no more than a way of surviving occasional management issues, and has not been positioned as a long-term management strategy. This reflects the predominance of banks in the new graduate recruitment market, where they can secure large numbers of superior male university graduates, and suggests that male-centered meritocratic management is still considered effective. For this reason, banks feel little need to revise gender-specific employment management.

The following points may represent windows of change and clues to improvement in this respect. Firstly, it remains to be seen whether government measures to promote women's participation can have an impact on companies' employment management. Secondly, we need to focus on harnessing the ability of women, who are increasingly being promoted to upper managerial posts, as well as the evaluation and treatment of women employed by banks. But the most important thing of all is to ascertain fluctuations in male-centered meritocratic management. Specifically, we need to verify two aspects of employment management and male workers. The first, in terms of employment management, is the negative impact of transfers every three years or so (including distant locations) on the ability development of male university graduates. This is because bank operations are growing more diverse and global, requiring ever greater levels of expertise from bank employees. The second is the possibility that male workers could develop an attitude of prioritizing their own health and private lives rather than placing value in their workplace, now that a university degree is becoming the minimum requirement for new graduate hiring and there is a weaker sense of security in the evaluation of male university graduates.

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