

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Gwyn D. Madden-Bethune for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology presented on June 12, 1997. Title: The Women's Movement in Japan and its Effect on the Workplace.

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of women in the Japanese workplace. Data obtained from in-depth interviews and questionnaires, shows that the Japanese workplace is in a state of change moving toward a higher level of opportunity for female workers. While similar to the circumstances experienced by Western women, the changes which Japanese women are experiencing have their own history and thus are analyzed from a non-Western perspective. Some key aspects of the analysis include: training, separate positions for men and women, tasks, and perceptions of gender discrimination.

For men and women who held the same jobs it was found that the majority of training experiences were gender neutral. This is consistent with the fact that Japanese companies must make training equal as mandated by the 1985 Equal Employment Opportunity Law.

In the workplace, however, discrimination has taken the form of separate positions for men and women. While there were informants

who were both supportive and un-supportive of job separation, it was clear that this practice resulted in lower salaries and fewer high level positions for women.

When males and females held the same positions, 17% of women were given different duties. These duties included serving tea, cleaning, and hostessing, all of which are tasks generally done by a wife for her husband. Thus in some instances domestic roles determine tasks assigned in the workplace.

From the informants' responses a Japanese definition of gender discrimination was formulated. Culturally, gender discrimination was noted in terms of treating women differently than men, but also included improper sexual advances. A full 80% of the study's informants acknowledged the existence of gender discrimination in the Japanese workplace.

Finally, from this sample it was determined that cultural relativism, internal labor market theory, and human capital theory are all compatible tools for analysis of the Japanese labor market.

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**The Women's Movement in Japan and its Effect on the Workplace**

**by**

**Gwyn D. Madden-Bethune**

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Gwyn D. Madden-Bethune, Author

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# **The Women's Movement in Japan and its Effect on the Workplace**

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Japan is a country steeped in traditional beliefs, but also an industrial nation which has been experiencing a period of considerable economic growth. This period of economic growth has resulted in many changes in the Japanese workplace. Throughout these changing times harmony has remained an extremely important theme in Japanese society. Frequently, the phrase, "the nail that stands up is hammered down" is spoken to remind people how much the traditional ideal of harmony is still valued [Condon 1985: 16]. Coming from the United States where individualism is the ideal, it is easy to understand and support women fighting for their chance to gain control of their lives. However, in a country like Japan with such a strong ideal of harmony, I began to wonder how different it might be for a woman to speak out and fight to bring herself the freedom to live and work in a world dominated by men.

Although women's involvement in the labor market has been increasing, few have been able to achieve positions of power outside of

the home. The Japanese economic growth rate is currently experiencing a decline, and the labor market is once again changing.

The main purpose of this study was to discover what the Japanese workplace of today is like for women. Work experiences were collected from selected Japanese informants; and then the data was examined to find out how they perceive gender discrimination in the workplace and to reach an understanding of how much and what kind of gender discrimination is actually occurring.

In chapter two, I will give a historical view of how the Japanese women's movement has evolved over time. Following the overview of the women's movement, I will give a historical view of women's presence in the Japanese workplace. Next, I will discuss issues affecting present day women in the Japanese workplace. Finally, I will discuss theory that is relevant to the area of this study.

For the purpose of this study I decided that information on the Japanese women's movement and women's work would be divided into separate sections. Although the women's movement and women's work have affected one another, each developed in distinct ways and were driven by different forces. In light of the fact that the two were not united as they developed, though at times the histories overlap, they will be discussed separately.

A historical background will be presented on the Japanese women's movement to show under what circumstances women have been living. Cultural tradition legally placed women in the position of second class citizens under their male counterparts. This background will show in what ways and to what extent women were allowed to act in their own interest.

The purpose for presenting historical background on the trends in work for Japanese women will draw a picture of women's presence in the workplace over time. By establishing this historical presence, it will allow for a comparison with current data on women in the workplace. With this comparison I will be able to show how today's working woman is making it in the workforce in comparison with her sisters of the past.

The third section of chapter two will cover current trends effecting women in the present day Japanese workplace. One of the topics that will be discussed is education and how it effects women's workplace opportunities. Other topics that will be covered include: finding employment, training practices, company structure, specific changes companies are making to increase women's opportunities, child care, the tax system, and societal views on combining work with marriage and child rearing.

The final section of chapter two will cover relevant theory related to the main topic of this study. Theories which will be covered include cultural relativism, human capital theory, and dual economy theory.

In chapter three the methodology used to carry out the study will be described. Data for the study was collected in the form of both in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The majority of the sample population used in the study were Japanese students, with prior work experience, visiting the United States to further their studies. The interview and questionnaire data were combined and a comparative style of analysis was used to search for patterns in the data.

In chapter four, I will begin by telling the stories of one male's and one female's workplace experiences. Then, I will present the data from the in-depth interview and questionnaire results. In the interview results section, male and female experiences will be grouped separately to aid in the comparison which will be made in the following chapter. In light of the fact that there was only one male questionnaire respondent, no separate male-female groupings were made in the questionnaire results section.

Chapter five will be an analysis of the data collected and described in chapter four. The data analysis will be done in the form of



comparison. Categories that will be compared are: male responses, female responses, and present day responses with historical data.

In Chapter six, I will start off with a brief summary of the data. I will follow by summarizing the progress of Japanese women in the workplace. In addition, I will address issues raised in the introduction and questions related to the four theories. Finally, I will describe areas in which future research are necessary to further understand the factors effecting the entry of women into the Japanese workplace.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

In this chapter several topics will be examined: 1) the historical background of the Japanese women's movement (both pre-WWII and post-WWII), 2) the historical background of Japanese women and work (both pre-WWII and post-WWII), 3) the present day Japanese workplace (including finding employment, training, new opportunities, child care, and other outside influences contributing to participation in the workforce), and, 4) theory relevant to the focus area of this study.

#### II.1 Historical Background on the Japanese Women's Movement: Pre-WWII

The status of Japanese women has changed greatly over the last several hundred years. Prior to and throughout the Heian period (784 AD -1184 AD), Japan was a matriarchal society. A matriarchal society is one governed by women in which descent is traced through the mother. Following the Heian period, Japan was no longer "matriarchal" but common women, "who made up 80 percent of the [female] population throughout premodern times," were able to enjoy much "freedom

(including freedom in such areas as love and marriage), equality, and power as they worked under much the same conditions as men" [Iwao 1993: 5]. However, beginning as early as the 1400 to 1500's, elite women, primarily of the Samurai class, were defined by the Confucian ethic. According to this ethic, women were bound by three obediences: obedience to fathers when young, to husbands when married, and to their children in old age [Iwao 1993: 5].

During the Meiji period, from 1868-1912, Japan began to modernize and the culture of the elite class spread throughout the entire society [Iwao 1993: 5]. In the patrilineal society that emerged, women were second class citizens filling the lowest level of the power hierarchy. As the Confucian ethic extended to all levels of society, women lost the power and freedoms they previously enjoyed [Iwao 1993: 5]. There were a few Meiji women who made an effort to better the position of women through political movements of the day. Nonetheless, in 1890 women suffered a setback from the freedoms that they had previously gained. They were legally denied entrance into the political realm because of the governmental opinion that women should stay at home in an effort to be *ryosai kenbo*, "good wives and wise mothers" [Condon 1985: 60]. However, the women who began working to better women's position in society, laid the foundation for future Japanese feminists [Condon 1985: 60].

In the early 1870's, Japanese society was going through a period of purposeful change in order to show Western countries that the country was progressing. One of the items chosen to undergo change were men's hairstyles. Men's traditionally long hairstyles were changed to a short contemporary Western cut. Some of the Meiji women wanted to show they were progressing as well and so adopted short hairstyles for themselves, too. The government did not approve of the short hairstyles for women and thus initiated a law making the practice illegal. On the other hand, the government advocated that women cease shaving their eyebrows and blackening their teeth. These examples demonstrate the high level of government involvement in women's lives [Sievers 1983: 14-15]. Any changes regarding women were under strict supervision of the government.

Again in 1900, "Under Article 5 of the Police Security Regulations women..." were "...prohibited from joining political organizations and from initiating, holding, or attending political meetings" [Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda 1995: 408]. After the introduction of Article 5 the growing "political potential" of women and the Reform Society were once again extinguished [Sievers 1983: 99]. Since women were not allowed to participate in politics, they began to work for social reform outside of the political system. In 1886, the Christian group the "Tokyo Women's Reform Society" was established. One issue important to the Reform

Society was to bring an end to the practices of concubinage and prostitution. From their fight to eliminate these discriminatory uses of women, members of the Reform Society were transformed into feminists [Sievers 1983: 88-92]. Although these women were working hard for their cause they had one major difficulty. This difficulty, though not unique to Japan, was that those women who were involved in reform did not reach working women [Sievers 1983: 85].

In addition, as a consequence of the war with China from 1894-1895 women were “under growing pressure to praise the country, not criticize it” [Sievers 1983: 103]. Sievers (1983) states:

The 1894-95 conflict with China had a telling impact on the nation—and on women. It accelerated a number of conservative tendencies that were by definition anti-feminist, and created a greater appreciation among government leaders of the roles women could play as child bearers and supporters of national policy. Above all, the war and its aftermath sharpened the already sharp conflict between conservatives who wanted to reinstate the past and modernizers who wanted to use the most politically conservative ideas from the West to consolidate authoritarian control over social institutions. What emerged from this dialectic by the end of the century was, in fact, an amalgam of Tokugawa style and rhetoric couched in Prussian institutions. For women, it was a deadly combination...[103-104].

Following the Meiji period, the Taisho period (1911-1926) still gave no opportunity for Japanese women to become involved in politics. In spite of the fact that they had no entrance into the political arena,

inspired by the Henrik Ibsen play *A Doll's House*, several women began a conversation on the role of women in Japanese society [Rodd 1991: 175].

A small group of women, including Hiratsuka Raicho, Yosano Akiko, Yamakawa Kikue, Yamada Waka, and others through the medium of women's literary magazines discussed what women's roles should be. Criticism ran high among the writings that these women produced. The main focus of their discussions was "the protection and support of motherhood" [Rodd 1991: 189]. Some of the other topics under discussion included "securing women's political rights, combining work and home life....equal access to work and equal earnings" [Rodd 1991: 189].

Later in the Taisho period, during the 1920's and 1930's, many women's groups were formed. Smaller women's organizations were often started under government guidance. By the late 1920's several large groups, made up of the smaller women's organizations, were formed. For example, Garon (1993) states that:

The antiprostitution group, the Japanese Women's Christian Temperance Union (Nihon Kirisutokyo Fujin Kyofukai, WCTU), reported 8,086 members in 155 chapters throughout Japan and its dominions in 1926...the Federation of Women's Associations of Western Japan (Zen Kansai Fujin Rengokai)...claimed some 3 million members in 1927 [8].

The Japanese government frequently gave direct support and/or use of facilities to women's groups in an effort to mold women's roles. "Women everywhere seemed coopted by a government that was using them to create an even more powerful and authoritarian state" [Sievers 1984: 116].

In 1925, under "The Universal Manhood Suffrage Law" all of Japan's male citizens were given the right to vote. At this point, women were still denied the right of enfranchisement. To show their anger at being denied the right to vote, in 1928, 13 women's organizations with a total of 32,000 women involved, submitted a petition "calling for women's suffrage" [Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda 1995: 409].

The 1930's meant entry into WWII for the Japanese people. Throughout the war the government emphasized the acts of giving birth and motherhood. Some women chose to continue to publicly strive for the movement but were jailed for their efforts. "Others remained silent, while still others calculated the war effort to be an opportunity to gain certain improvements in the status of women and chose to collaborate" [Buckley 1994: 51]. After the war, those who chose to collaborate with the government were treated compassionately by others because the war was a complicated time for women [Buckley 1994: 151].

## II.2 Historical Background on the Japanese Women's Movement: Post-WWII

Shortly after WWII ended, many new women's organizations appeared, several with ties to pre-war groups. "The Occupation period was seen to represent a once-only opportunity to push for the passage of the rights denied women in the prewar decades of modernization..." [Buckley 1994: 151]. Women were seen by the Allied Forces to be probable partners in the effort to transform "the political and social fabric of Japanese society" [Buckley 1994: 151].

The women's groups that formed after WWII were nationwide. Their purpose at the time was to lobby the Allied Forces to provide aid to the Japanese people. In addition, the women's groups strove to build ties with women in other countries. This led to many visits abroad and visitors coming to Japan. However, when the Allied Forces left Japan in 1952, the women's groups changed significantly [Buckley 1994: 152]. Women's groups shifted their focus from lobbying the Allied Forces to lobbying against problems associated with women's labor.

During the late 1940's, in the effort to rebuild Japan many women were moving into the paid labor force. Women in rural areas had previously worked hard in the fields in the effort to help support their families (Wiswell and Smith 1982: 94). As far back as the Edo period,



women worked as household managers and merchant wives managed manufacturing shops, stores, and sometimes employees. In an effort to provide some protection for the increasing number of women workers in the paid labor force, the Labor Standards Law was put into force on April 5, 1947 [Shinotsuka 1994: 105]. Under this law there were special provisions for women workers. Shinotsuka (1994) states:

The following items were included as the chief "protection provisions" for women. First, limits were placed on the amount of overtime work that could be done by women over eighteen years who worked 8 hours per day: They couldn't be made to work more than 2 hours of overtime per day, 6 hours per week, and 150 hours per year. Second, women could not be made to work on holidays. Third, women could not be made to do late-night work (between the hours of 10 PM and 5 AM). Fourth, women could not be made to work for six weeks before or six weeks after childbirth. And fifth, employers could not force a woman to work during menstruation if it presented a hardship for her to do so and if she requested menstrual leave [105].

In addition, working women were taking this opportunity to unite. "Both the National Congress of Working Women and the National Congress of Trade Union women were inaugurated in 1956...leading to the establishment of the Japan Women's Union in 1959" [Buckley 1994: 152].

In 1960 women involved with the "anti-AMPO (opposition to the reratification of the U.S. - Japan Peace Treaty)" and anti-Vietnam War movements came together to begin a new wave of Japanese feminism

[Buckley 1994: 157]. This new wave of feminism included the continued operation of large national organizations begun during the Occupation and many new small local organizations. From this structure of small local organizations arose a communications network called the "minikomi system" [Buckley 1994: 158]. The *minikomi* system consisted of informative papers being distributed between the small women's groups. In addition, the *minikomi* system was used to rally these groups together to lobby for an important issue. This communication system is still in existence today.

During the 1970's a new focus emerged on the scene of the Japanese women's movement, female sexuality [Buckley 1994: 173]. Women began to learn about their own sexual identity. For the first time there were "signs of an organized and public lesbian movement in Japan" [Buckley 1994: 173]. Although small groups of women had previously fought to obtain the right to use the pill for contraception, this was the first time that large numbers of women became interested in the issue. Around the same time, abortion also became an important issue for Japanese women. These women struggled against several government attempts to reduce the accessibility of abortion. Sexual violence (rape) and sexual harassment were brought into the public eye. Although there have been court cases and numerous books/discussions involving sexual

violence and harassment, through 1992, the government had not developed a policy regarding either of the two issues [Buckley 1994: 177].

Japanese feminists have involved themselves in a wide range of issues, not limiting their movement to issues dealing expressly with women. One area in which Japanese feminists have taken a strong stand is the anti-war and anti-armament platform. Another issue women have rallied against is the "environmentally destructive" behavior of Japanese companies in other Asian countries [Buckley 1994: 170]. In addition, the women have fought to extinguish the market of "sex tours" to other Asian countries and to eradicate prostitution in Japan itself.

During the early to mid 1970's, one radical group lead by Misako Enoki called the Chupiren, better known as the pink helmet brigade, was thought to be characteristic of the women's movement for a short time. The women of Chupiren chose to involve themselves in rather unorthodox events that drew high media coverage. The rather aggressive tactics used by this group gave a negative image to women's "lib" in the public eye. Condon (1985) describes one event saying, "She [Misako] and the pink helmeted members of her group....decided to attack the double standard too, by raiding the offices of unfaithful men" [62]. Misako promised that if she did not win election to the Diet in 1977 she would quit the group and go home. After losing the election she kept her word and left her leadership position with the pink helmets which disbanded

shortly thereafter. By returning home Misako was said to have set the women's movement back a great deal [Lebra 1992: 376]. Buckley (1993) explains the second wave of Japan's feminist movement well, saying:

What is most significant about the 1960s and 1970s is the multiplicity of feminisms that emerged over these two decades. The forms of resistance to those policies of the body politic that sought to organ-ize women's individuated bodies, both in their reproductive and productive functions, were diverse and not infrequently conflictual. Japanese feminism remained highly fragmented into the 1980s and this fragmentation continues to be both a strength and weakness of the movement. Women's groups have come together at different junctures of policy reform to reject the state's power to define the condition of "being-woman" and to fight for women's right to self-determination [351].

1975 was International Women's Year and the beginning of the International Decade of Women. Japanese women attended a great deal of the conferences and "repeatedly expressed their concern at the extent to which Japanese women's working conditions fell behind those of other industrialized nations" [Buckley 1994: 163]. In light of the fact that so many Japanese women had attended the numerous meetings celebrating the Decade of Women, the government decided to "sign the 1980 Copenhagen Treaty to End All Forms of Sexual Discrimination" [Buckley 1994: 163].

The wave of feminism Japanese women are experiencing today is referred to as "academic feminism" [Buckley 1994: 178]. Academic

feminists are focusing their attention on “the role of the media in the construction of gender and sexual identity” [Buckley 1994: 178]. They have targeted pornography, TV, advertising, and even children’s school books. Furthermore, they are trying to increase the awareness of the female experience by bringing women’s issues into school courses [Buckley 1994: 180]. Despite the fact that Japanese feminists are successfully making changes in some areas, there is a feeling among many that the framework of the Japanese family and the ideal of motherhood need to be re-negotiated for real change to occur [Buckley 1994: 181].

### II.3 Historical Background on Japanese Women and Work: Pre-WWII

Women made up around 83 percent of the workers in Japan’s textile industry by the late 1800s [Saso 1990: 24]. Some of these women were as young as twelve to thirteen years of age. During the late 1800s, the women working in the mills ranged from “daughters of former samurai” to “girls from a range of social origins” [Hunter 1993: 50]. As time passed, positions in the mills were filled by “the young daughters of impoverished rural families” [Hunter 1993: 50].

Women’s working hours in some of the textile factories were as long as eighteen hours a day [Hunter 1993: 51]. Working conditions for

most of these women were unspeakable. The women stayed in dormitories that were said to resemble pigsties. "One mill reported a single room for over 700 girls as late as 1926" [Hunter 1993: 52]. In addition, in times of high production to keep workers readily available the factories would not let the women leave the compounds and also held back some of their wages [Hunter 1993: 52]. In the face of these deplorable conditions, many women worked only a short period of time and then returned home [Hunter 1993: 54]. This started a cycle of employers expecting women to stay on for only a few years. The employers were then given a reason for paying women low wages and not giving them a great deal of training. At the time the only other types of employment for women were in agriculture or family businesses.

"By the end of the Meiji period (1912), Japanese women had made their country the world's leading exporter of silk" [Sievers 1983: 56]. Although at first the cotton industry was weak, Japan was one of the dominate cotton manufacturers in the world by 1914 [Sievers 1983: 56]. It is not generally recognized that Japanese women/girls were "the backbone of the country's economy" [Sievers 1983: 55]. However, it was through the labor of these Japanese women and girls that the country was able to support growth of both "heavy industry" and "military strength" without becoming heavily indebted [Sievers 1983: 56].

There are several reasons why Japanese girls went to work in the spinning mills. First, the girls were often sent by their families to the mills because it made one less mouth to feed. The second reason girls worked in the mills was for money. However, the money the girls earned was usually not their own. Families carefully managed their daughters like “commodities” and in some cases found it “necessary” to sell the girls into such jobs as prostitution when the family was suffering financial hardship [Sievers 1983: 55].

Work for Japanese women in the past and continuing through to today is defined by the family. Women have been used by the family to supplement income and build up a savings for marriage. It has been said that Japanese women are protected by the family but in reality it is easy to see that the statement is a myth [Sievers 1983: 58]. Family, both natal and marital, for Japanese women, has been an institution that uses their potential for its own gain. When Meiji women were working in the silk and cotton mills, natal families worried if the mills were safe because girls would be far away and under male management. These circumstances concerned the families in that it might ruin the daughter's chances at marriage. Therefore, the owners and managers of the mills acted as stand-ins for the family, further continuing the suppression of women's freedom [Sievers 1983: 59-63].

Into the early 1920s, the conditions in many mills continued to be poor. The women worked “a twelve-hour day, alternating everyweek between the day and the night shifts” which was extremely tiring [Molony 1991: 233]. In addition, a “lack of chairs prevented workers from resting even during their fifteen-minute morning and afternoon breaks.” There were also continuing problems in many larger mills with the baths being dirty, low pay, crowded housing, forced savings, and only having four days off in every month [Molony 1991: 232-233].

Although it seems that women working in the mills must have endured a high level of suffering there were some positive things, as well. Molony (1991) says that, “workers tried to make the best of their grim situation, either through enjoyable friendships or through labor activism to improve their conditions” [233].

Work in the mills began to improve progressively during the 1920s “particularly with the upgrading of dormitory, food, and recreational services following major strikes...” [Molony 1991: 237]. For example, “After 1929, late-night (11:00 P.M. to 5:00 A.M.) work was prohibited for women, thereby shortening the hours...and radically altering the pattern of shared bedding in dormitories” [Molony 1991: 234]. In addition, Molony (1991) states:

By the 1920s most school-age children were completing at least elementary education....As girls stayed in school longer,



and as legislation limiting child employment began to be enforced during the 1920s, the average age of beginning factory workers rose. With fewer vulnerable children under thirteen working in the mills, the incidence of disease decreased, producing a generally healthier, more vigorous work force [226-227].

Some companies even went so far as to open "corridor schools" to try to attract workers. Although many girls did find the possibility of continuing their education attractive, after their long shifts they were too worn out to attend [Molony 1991:227].

Regarding those middle class women who began to branch off into areas other than mill work, Nagy (1991) states,

The data tell us first of all that middle-class working women were a clear minority of the total female population and even of the total labor force in Taisho-early Showa Japan. Of an estimated total female population of 27 million in mid-Taisho, women in the labor force numbered only 3.5 million. Nearly three-quarters of these employed women (2.6 million) were classified as manual workers, while the remaining one-fourth engaged in intellectual or mental work....Still, Taisho-early Showa records document a "marked increase"...in middle-class working women [202-230].

Many of these middle class women entered the professions of teaching and nursing. Nursing had always been a "female occupation" but teaching was "originally a male profession" [Nagy 1991: 203]. Teaching began to open up to women during the mid to late 1910s around the time of World War I. Japan was experiencing a time of economic growth and

many men who had previously been teachers left the profession for “better-paying jobs in private industry” [Nagy 1991: 203]. Another area into which these middle class women pursued positions was journalism. According to Nagy (1991), “during the Taisho years public preoccupation with the ‘woman’ question...the debate over the nature, status, and proper sphere for women—created new positions that from the outset women themselves filled” [208].

In the mid 1940s, WWII brought about another change for women workers in Japan. Although the government held out as long as possible, in “August 1944 when a scarcity of raw materials and a series of air raids had already interrupted production...the wartime cabinet decided to implement compulsory conscription of women for the munitions industry” [Miyake 1991: 267]. Each eligible woman was to serve one year in “industry service” [Miyake 1991: 289]. Women who were not eligible consisted of “those women ‘pivotal [konjiku] to a family’ —that is, women in their procreative years whose roles as housewives and mothers were indispensable for family cohesion” [Miyake 1991: 267].

Miyake (1991) states, following WWII:

The postwar government fired about three million women in 1945 in order to open their jobs for returning soldiers....Yet for several reasons, women’s wartime experiences merit attention if we are to understand long-term changes in gender relations in the workplace. First, the entrance of women into a wide range of jobs previously monopolized by

men served to undermine the sex-segregated labor market...In addition, the removal of sexual barriers in order to raise productivity, and women's demonstration that their capabilities compared favorably with men's, gave impetus to the postwar working women's movement for equal employment opportunities [292].

#### II.4 Historical Background on Japanese Women and Work: Post-WWII

Until about 1955 Japanese women working outside of the home were concentrated in the area of textile manufacturing. After 1955 Japan entered a period of high economic growth. Shioda (1994) says, "Automation of the production of light appliances and precision instruments, the introduction of light electrical appliances and the expansion of the sales sector all combined to broaden the opportunities of women workers..." (mostly these opportunities were for lower level positions) [161].

A decade later, in 1965, a variety of labor saving devices were becoming popular in the majority of Japanese homes. These devices were efficient enough to lift a good portion of the household burden off of women's shoulders and open up some free time for them. On the other hand, to be able to possess these devices and their desire to continue their rising level of affluence encouraged women to get work outside of the home to "supplement" the family coffer [Shioda 1994: 162].

Beginning in the 1960s and through the 1970s women were leaving the primary industries (such as agriculture) and moving into the secondary and tertiary industries [Shioda 1994: 162]. Shioda (1994) states that during this time period, "female labour fell sharply from 43.1 to 26.2 per cent" in the primary industries [162]. Near the end of this period, 1970, "the percentage of salaried female workers exceeded 50 per cent of all female labour" [Shioda 1994: 163]. This means that more women were being paid for their labor than before because they were no longer working on farms or in family businesses. Until the oil shock in 1973, the end of Japan's rapid economic growth period, the trend of women entering salaried employment continued [Shioda 1994: 163].

Prior to the period of rapid economic growth, young women were mainly working in the textile industry, however, this trend began to shift by the early 1960s. Women workers began to move from textiles into the metal and electrical appliance industries. By the early 1970s the concentration of women in the work force began to change again this time into the services industry [Shioda 1994: 168-170]. In the 1980s there was even an increase in the number of female workers in professional and managerial positions. However, the increase was not as significant as it had been in the other industries. Shioda (1994) says, "as of 1980, the percentage of all female workers in professional and technical occupations was only 13 per cent, and in management only 0.8

per cent" [170]. In addition, the majority of these professional and managerial positions were in fields understood to be women's domain. It is important to note here that the women working during this period were generally lower class urban women. During the 1970s the country had hit a peak for middle class women staying at home.

Another important change regarding women that took place was an increase in the number of older married women entering into salaried labor and a decrease in the number of young women in the work force [Shioda 1994: 164]. Previously, there was a single bracket on the "female labour participation curve" which represented young unmarried women workers. With the large number of older married women entering the labor force the curve changed from the single bracket to an M-shaped curve [Shioda 1994: 164]. The M-shaped curve represents the cycle of young women working prior to marriage, quitting upon marriage or childbirth, and then returning to the workplace after a period of intense child rearing. The current decrease in the number of young unmarried women in the work force is due to an increase in the number of those opting for higher education [Shioda 1994: 164].

Most of the older women workers were employed in "unskilled simple tasks on a part-time basis" [Shioda 1994: 164]. In 1980, the number of part-time married female employees had risen to 73.4 per cent

which far exceeded the 34.7 percent of married full-time female employees [Shioda 1994: 165].

In 1972, in an effort to aid the large number of female workers the Japanese government established "The Working Women's Welfare Law" [Lam 1992: 93]. This law was meant to "further the welfare and improve the status of working women by taking appropriate actions to help them reconcile their dual responsibilities of work and home or to enable them to develop and make use of their abilities" [Lam 1992: 94]. The Women's Welfare Law did not prohibit or make any company behaviors illegal but recommended actions the government deemed would make the workplace more amiable to female employees. Since equality between men and women is sought by many, this law was criticized because it promoted retention of women's traditional role in the family. The retention of the traditional familial role thus suggested only part-time employment for women [Lam 1992: 94].

The Equal Opportunity Employment (EEO) Law which was established on April 1, 1985 declares: "...it is illegal to advertise jobs by sex and age, to have different hiring standards for men and women, and to limit on-the-job training to men. The law also states that discrimination against women in company retirement and dismissal policies is not allowed" [Tanaka 1995: 111]. Many see the EEO law as a good start, however, this law only recommends that employers strive for

equality among its workers; there is no punishment stipulated for non-adherence [Tanaka 1995: 111].

The EEO law, which at first seems to be little more than a list of possible suggestions for employers, needs to be viewed in light of Japan's cultural tradition. Lam (1992) states, "The use of informal moral sanctions for obliging employers to observe the spirit of the law and the emphasis on mediation are methods frequently employed by the Japanese for reaching social consensus" [113].

In 1986, with the new EEO law in place there was a call to revise the old Labor Standards Law. The ban on "...overtime work, work on holidays, and late-night work were declared not to apply to women in managerial positions and women who belonged to any of fourteen occupational categories determined to require specialized knowledge or technical skills" [Shinotsuka 1994: 106]. Although this was a significant change, considering that of the 18.34 million women employed in Japan in 1990 only "one percent of these women, or 180,000, were in managerial positions" it did not effect a very large group of women [Shinotsuka 1994: 106].

Other changes that were made to the Labor Standards Law included: removing the wording "menstrual leave" from the law (while still leaving provisions for a woman if she was enduring hardship due to her menstruation), extending maternity leave from six weeks after

childbirth to eight weeks (but still not specifying if the leave should be paid), and changing the overtime section so there is no limit on daily or weekly overtime (however, the limit of 150 hours of overtime per year was left in tact) [Shinotsuka 1994: 106-107].

One of the more recent accomplishments for the Japanese is the government's adoption of the Child Care Leave Law in 1991. The Child Care Leave Law allows for up to one year of leave, for the mother or father, after a child is born. Although the leave is unpaid it is still thought to be a step in the right direction [Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda 1995: 413].

## II.5 Present Day: Education's Effect on the Workplace

Today, it can be shown that Japanese companies are not as inclined to hire women graduates of four year institutions as they are to hire high school or junior college graduates. Many companies are still under the impression that women are only available for "*koshikake shushoku*" or temporary employment [Tanaka 1995: 101]. These employers believe that there is a pattern in women's behavior where they leave the workplace upon marriage or childbirth. With this in mind companies prefer to hire high school or junior college graduates because they feel that those women will be available for a longer period of time.



This way a company can maximize a female employees longevity while still paying a low wage.

Occasionally female employees stay on longer than the company expects. In the past if such cases arose “*katatataki* or ‘shoulder-tapping’” would occur [Tanaka 1995: 102]. Shoulder tapping refers to a time when an employer would approach a woman and discuss retirement with her insinuating that she should get married before she becomes too old [Tanaka 1995: 102]. Officially this practice has been made illegal; however, it does still occur in more subtle ways.

A woman’s education is another determining factor of her participation in the workforce. Many Japanese parents still feel that it is more important to give their sons a university education while limiting their daughters to attending two year colleges. These parents feel that it is not a wise investment to give their daughter a four year university education since she will marry and become part of another family. This bias of parents later sets up the opportunity for the better educated male children to capture the best jobs [Ueno 1994: 30]. With this kind of bias remaining in the family, it is no wonder that bias still exists in the workplace. For example, when women go to apply for a job, Ueno (1994) says, “equal opportunity applies only to individuals with identical academic credentials, so discrimination on the basis of education

background is practiced boldly against women graduates of junior colleges" [34].

The majors which women pursue in junior colleges or in universities also hinders their entrance into the workforce. It is true that within the past few years women have begun to major in fields traditionally dominated by males, such as, engineering or the social sciences. "Nevertheless, 55 percent of all women enrolled in universities in 1991 were concentrated in the traditionally female fields of humanities, education, and home economics" [Fujimura-Fanselow & Kameda 1994: 46].

## II.6 Present Day: Finding Employment

Japan has a unique process of hiring new recruits at a certain time each year. On the surface Japanese companies have agreed to begin the recruitment process at exactly the same time, on or after the first of July. However, the agreed upon start date is not always completely honored. One way that companies begin to recruit new employees before the July 1<sup>st</sup> start date is to hold informational meetings about a company's progress. It is understood by those who attend the meetings that the recruitment process has unofficially begun. Public advertising of job openings which is put out at the beginning of July is followed by more

informative company meetings, employee candidate screening in August, and actual offers on the first of October. However, because some companies unofficially begin to recruit before the agreed upon time in July many of their positions are filled before the official date even comes around. Since the majority of students understand this process it was for the most part fair until Japanese companies had to tighten their belts because of the slowing economy.

Now the rank or prestige of a student's school is more important than ever in finding a position in the marketplace. "Sakata Takaaki, head of Waseda University's job placement center...admits, 'The recession has really pushed to the surface all those discriminations that were not so obvious before: your gender, your school, your major, and how well you are connected'" [Fukuzawa 1995: 158].

Those graduates who have felt the greatest reduction in ability to find employment are women from universities with less prestigious names [Fukuzawa 1995]. The numbers show that while companies claim to support an atmosphere of equal employment, in reality they are not standing behind their words.

## II.7 Present Day: Training

Differences between the training that men and women receive in Japanese companies is considered discriminatory by some. Women are infrequently allowed to participate in “in-company rotation and company training programs which are necessary prerequisites for advancement” [Lansing and Ready 1993: 264]. Women receive in-company rotation less frequently because they are usually admitted to companies as clerical workers. “The training women receive is minimal, with emphasis placed on receptionist activities, including how to greet customers and how to bow. Special attention is placed on the correct procedure in answering phone calls and on the use of polite language” [Lansing and Ready 1993: 265]. Since employers assume that women will only stay in the workplace for a few years, they do not choose to invest in the training of women workers.

## II.8 Present Day: Company Structure

The Japanese company of today is based on the “traditional *ie* model” (family model) [Lam 1992: 66]. The traditional family model has its roots in the Meiji period. “The Meiji Civil Code of 1898 raised to the level of national law a subordinate status for women and it legitimated a male-centered household” [Lam 1992: 66]. Later, Japanese companies

used the traditional *ie* structure as a model on which to build their firms. With this traditional model in place men held the primary status within the firm and women held secondary or peripheral status. On the other hand, it is argued by some that the company model is more of a network that shares information than an *ie* hierarchical model (Kumon 1987: 124-125).

In Japan, there are specific names for large or core companies and small or periphery companies. Some of the core companies are called “*keiretsu*” while the periphery companies are called “*kogaisha* or child companies” [Whitehill 1991: 95]. These companies form large groups with the *keiretsu* as the head company and the *kogaisha* being subsidiary or affiliate companies, this type of formation is called a dual economy. Cook and Hayashi (1980) explain a “dual economy” as follows:

The large firms represent the upper level with their modern equipment, their lifetime employment, at least of male workers, their high level of supplementary benefits, and their wage rates, which approach those of Western Europe and the United States. The medium and small firms are the underlayer. Here a majority of the workers have lower wages, less secure conditions, and few, low fringe benefits. In the upper level, hiring is of graduates with no—or very little—room for job-seeking adults; the lower level of the economy is more like a Western labor market with many adults changing jobs and looking for work in a market that offers, however, only limited opportunities [6].

The structure of many Japanese firms is one of the primary areas on which much research has been focused. The lifetime employment model, which is usually used in core companies, was widely publicized during the 1970s and 1980s. However, this type of employment system is in place for a limited number of workers. It has even been said that in the 1980s lifetime employment is fading away as employers “are being forced to let people go—or are actively seeking to hire experienced midlevel managers from outside” (Beck and Beck 1994: 232-234). Lam (1992) explains how the lifetime employment system works:

Lifetime commitment refers to a practice whereby an employee enters a company after school graduation, receives in-company training, and remains an employee of the same enterprise or enterprise group until the retirement age of 55 or 60. This practice is supported and reinforced by the *nenko* wage and promotion system, whereby wage increase is not so much based on job performance as on personal characteristics such as age, length of service, education and sex. The *nenko* system reinforces high commitment because leaving the company means giving up all the accumulated seniority and promotion chances [57].

In order to insure lifetime employment for this select group companies will hire temporary, part-time, and day laborers. Susan Houseman and Katharine Abraham (1993) conducted a study on the use of women workers in Japan as buffers for lifetime employees in times of economic stress. These buffer-type workers are mostly employees in periphery companies. Houseman and Abraham’s (1993) findings show

that females are overrepresented in temporary, part-time, and day labor positions, all of which are not included within the lifetime employment system [49]. In times of economic downturn the three types of employment in which women are overrepresented are the ones laid off or that have their contracts terminated. In effect, female employees serve as a buffer for Japanese companies during times of economic hardship.

Japanese unions can also be somewhat problematic for women. Unlike other countries with national unions for workers, Japanese unions are organized on a shop-by-shop basis, except for government offices. In these Japanese unions all members must be regular employees. This means that those employed as temporary, part-time or contract workers are not protected by the union. With 73.4 percent of full-time female employees falling into the non-regular employee category few women have union membership available to them, although, there has been an increase in union membership for part-time female workers.

As mentioned previously women's wages in Japan are for the most part held low by employers. "The average wage of women in 1990 was 57.1 cents for every dollar earned by men. (The discrepancy was smallest in 1975, when women earned 58.9 cents for each dollar he made, a considerable improvement from 45 cents in 1965)" [Tanaka 1995: 104]. In addition, twice yearly workers receive a bonus, "about two month's wages in summer and about three month's wages in December" [Lansing

and Ready 1993: 264]. “There is a big difference in the amount of an employee’s bonus according to whether that employee is a member of the family, that is, a regular employee” [Shinotsuka 1994: 110]. With the large number of women who work as non-regular employees such as part-timers, temporaries, or on contract it could be said that this is another area in which women are being discriminated against.

## II.9 Present Day: Other Influences Which Effect the Workplace

The Japanese tax system is one factor outside of the workplace that influences the role of women workers. Under this tax system Shinotsuka (1994) states:

If the head of household has a dependent family or spouse, they are exempt from tax as long as their annual income is less than 1 million yen (a salary income exemption of 650,000 yen and a basic exemption of 350,000 yen). If their income exceeds the limit, they must pay income tax and social insurance fees. In addition, the head of household’s (husband’s) tax liability increases because he no longer receives the spouse exemption that had hitherto been subtracted from his income. Moreover, many companies independently pay a special spouse allowance (10,000 yen on average), so the husband’s income is reduced by that amount as well [115].



With this tax system in place it appears to be more beneficial for the family if the wife/mother only works on a part-time, contract, or temporary basis to keep her earnings low.

There are several other areas of a woman's life which influence her workplace participation. For example, many Japanese people both past and present have seen work as an activity for women to be involved in prior to marriage or childbirth [Lo 1990: 99]. In the past, Japanese companies were able to force women into an early retirement. Today, forced early retirement practices have been banned. However, companies still retain this practice as an unspoken custom. In addition, social networks have taken over to pressure women into quitting work at the time of marriage or childbirth. Thus, companies are guaranteed a great deal of turnover. With this turnover the companies primarily employ young recruits that only have to be paid low starting salaries [Lo 1990: 99].

Finding child-care is still a problem for Japanese mothers who want or need to continue working. There are government sponsored child care facilities, although, these facilities are not always available as early or as late into the day as is necessary for the working mother. In addition, legislation limits these facilities from keeping a child over eight hours each day. This situation is made even more difficult in that there are very few facilities that will take babies. These limitations are being

made ostensibly in an effort to lookout for the children's welfare. Although circumstances are changing slowly, "The popular notion is still that mothers should work part time and only after their years of intensive child rearing are over" [Tanaka 1995: 115].

In a study of female department store workers, Creighton (1996) found that because of gender differentiated tasks, more women have been able to become managers in department stores. Department stores whose largest clientele are female, have available more high level, traditionally female tasks. Women have risen to management status because there is a feeling that women should lead women, in essence giving them role models which they can strive toward [197]. However, Creighton (1996) stated:

Despite claims by some social analysts that women no longer see wife and mother and career roles as incompatible, young women employees in my department store study still saw high-ranking female superiors—their potential role models—as women who have succeeded in their chosen careers only at the cost of marriage and motherhood. For most of the younger women, giving up marriage and parenting was too high a price for career fulfillment. The presence of large numbers of unmarried managerial women served not to inspire these young women to further their career goals, but to confirm their belief that success in the job market conflicts with success in the marriage market [215].

To put the feelings of these young women into perspective, Creighton (1996) refers to the Christmas cake analogy. Every year in

Japan during the holiday season Christmas cakes are sold. However, most people buy their cake either the day before or on Christmas day itself. The cakes are only in demand for a certain specified time period. Young women are analogous to the cakes; they have a specific time period during which they are considered to be of the prime marriageable state [205-206]. The prime age to marry today is between 24 and 29. Instead of marrying at 21-25, which was the custom within the last few decades, women are choosing to marry later in life. From a western perspective this may seem like an odd analogy; however, Japanese society has an age-related cycle which largely predetermines the life course for its people.

#### II.10 Present Day: Changes Occurring in the Workplace

Some companies are trying to change their employment systems. A new system has been devised that offers two separate tracks for female employees. The first track is called "*ippan-shoku*" meaning "clerical positions." The second track is called "*sogo-shoku*" meaning "management-track positions." To get on the *sogo-shoku* track a woman would apply to be transferred to the managerial track. However, she would be required to pass a company exam to confirm her eligibility to make the conversion from the clerical to the managerial track. The

managerial track on which men are placed upon entrance into the company, and an occasional woman, is slightly different than the *sogo-shoku* track.

These two tracks at first appear to be free of any gender qualifiers, however, almost all clerical positions are filled by females with only a few "token" women entering the management-track positions [Fukuzawa 1995: 156]. Males do not make this choice but are automatically hired into the management-track positions [Tanaka 1995: 112]. Since women are often unable to meet the geographic mobility requirement for the management track, some companies have begun to use a third track. This third track consists of management work with no transfers [Maki 1993; Kawashima 1995]. As of 1989, "three per cent of companies were using the two track system" [Maki 1993: 93]. Women stood a much better chance of being offered the choice of the two track system in companies with 5,000 or more employees. These large companies show a 49 percent introduction rate of the two track system into their policies [Kawashima 1995: 289].

Although it appears that in some areas more career opportunities are being opened up to women, companies are decreasing opportunity in other areas. As a strategy to protect regular workers, in light of the tightening of the Japanese labor market, companies are decreasing the

number of clerical worker positions, which are almost totally dominated by women [Fukuzawa 1995: 157].

## II.11 Theory

A few theories regarding women in the workplace must be briefly outlined, each of these theories attempts to explain why women are discriminated against in the workplace and possible solutions to bring the discrimination to an end. The theories to be discussed are cultural relativism, human capital theory, and internal labor market theory.

### II.11.1 Cultural Relativism

It might be easy from a Western perspective to point out problem areas in the Japanese workplace, however, Japanese women may not be working toward the same goals as Western women. Nakane (1972) explains the idea that people in different parts of the world choose to live life differently: this concept is called "cultural relativism." She states,

The fact that two countries are at similar levels of industrialization does not necessarily substantiate a conclusion that the state of their societies are similar. Of course it is true that industrialization leads to specific social phenomena that are similar in a worldwide sense. Noteworthy phenomena of this type would include, for

example, concentration of population in cities, standardized organization in public administration, increase of salary earners and the middle class...Nevertheless, in spite of these substantial changes common to industrialization, an examination of the real personal relations that prevail upon individuals in a social context reveals a surprisingly marked degree of variation from society to society, which shows that the traditional aspects of each society have been retained [2-3].

In the past, when Japanese women have been compared to Western women, it has been said that Japanese women are lagging behind in the effort to obtain equality in the workplace with men. This kind of an analysis might be correct if the same things were expected of people in Japan and the West, but expectations are not the same because the Japanese hold different cultural traditions. Japanese women do not expect to follow in the footsteps of Western women, and so Western women should not hold that expectation, either. On the other hand, this type of thinking could be criticized from the perspective that these cultural traditions are part of the structure which is causing women to be discriminated against.

### II.11.2 Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital approach, introduced by Gary Becker in 1957, bases discrimination on employers' "tastes" [Schmid 1984: 272]. These tastes or preferences could include such employee attributes as gender,

educational attainment, skills, etc. Chafetz (1984) states, "As long as decision-making on the basis of such 'tastes' does not interfere with profit maximization, employers will act in accordance with their tastes" [74]. Therefore, in order to obtain a job and receive promotions, an employee must "accumulate sufficient skills, educational credentials, personal and intellectual attributes" for which companies are searching [Chafetz 1984: 74]. The human capital approach has been criticized as 'blaming the victim' by emphasizing faults or shortcomings among members of disadvantaged groups as the explanations for their disadvantage" [Chafetz 1984: 74].

I will now apply the human capital approach to entering into the Japanese labor market. The attainment of a high level of education is an employer preference, but a woman may obtain this education and still not be able to find a position commensurate with her qualifications. Even though a woman endeavors to meet employer preferences, she would find that in Japan there are many hiring preferences. Some of these preferences include hiring male employees, persons with high level education's from top ranked schools, and younger people. Male employees are preferred because they will not leave work for marriage or childbirth. Younger people are preferred because they can be given firm specific training. In addition, some employers believe younger women will stay with the company for a longer time and will have better work

dispositions. Therefore, an employer can hold several preferences for the types of employees they will hire. While a man or woman may work to meet some of these preferences, the individual may not be able to meet all of them and therefore may not be hired. In Japan, hiring based on employee attributes is discriminatory because many employers prefer male workers over better qualified female workers with other desirable attributes. When applied to Japan's labor market the human capital approach is a useful tool of analysis for understanding workplace discrimination.

### II.11.3 Internal Labor Market Theory

Internal labor market theory is based on the understanding that there are primary and secondary segments within the labor market.

According to Lam (1992),

Doeringer and Piore attribute the origin of internal labour markets to the development of modern technologies, by which skills have become more firm specific, so that a worker's productivity increasingly becomes a function of on-the-job training and experience, and consequently of length of service. In such



circumstances, it becomes particularly important for the employer to encourage stability and reduce turnover. This is done by providing wages, benefits, and prospects better than those available in the external labour market [31].

Schmid (1984) explains the differences between internal and external labor markets and how they are structured, saying,

Employers very often face the problem of uncertainties due to market fluctuations and technological "shocks." This problem can be solved by dividing jobs and work organization into two segments: jobs with permanent tasks, and incidental jobs. To this basic "job division" there corresponds a division of employees: an internal work force with secure and permanent jobs, connected with current training and retraining, good wages and internal promotion ladders; an external work force with insecure or time-limited work contracts, no current investment in human capital, low wages, and restricted promotional opportunities [276].

Gordon et al, from a study done on the U.S. labor force, found "that women are more likely than men to be secondary workers, much more likely to be subordinate primary workers...and much less likely to be independent primary workers" [Hartmann 1987: 60]. According to Schmid (1984), women are placed in these lower level positions by companies because companies believe that women view their jobs as "temporary" and that women have "traditional activities upon which to fall back" [277]. Internal Labor Market theory, when used to analyze women in the workplace, is criticized because the theory was formed to explain minority workplace discrimination. Those criticizing the use of

Internal Labor Market theory to explain women's workplace discrimination "have noted the division of labor by sex cuts down the middle of all segments of the labor market: sex divides internal labor markets in the primary sector, and even in the secondary sector men and women hold different jobs" [Hartmann 1987: 60].

Now I will apply the internal labor market theory to the Japanese labor market. The Japanese internal labor market began during the early years of manufacturing when employers were trying to hold onto their skilled labor force because a great deal of job changing was occurring. Over time, the skills held by workers became firm specific as employers recruited recent graduates and then shaped the workers through on-the-job training. This type of firm specific skill, the high wages and good benefits worked together to keep skilled workers in one company for their entire career. However, companies could not sustain an entire workplace of these lifetime employees, especially in time of economic trouble. Thus, employers hired a limited number of regular or lifetime employees, and then filled the remaining with unskilled workers or workers whose skills were common to a large number of people. These non-regular or temporary workers were not included in on-the-job training and received lower wages and benefits than the regular workers. The core and periphery workers described by internal labor market theorists fit with the regular or lifetime workers and the non-regular or

temporary workers in Japan. It should be noted that overall the use of lifetime employment for workers is beginning to decline. While internal labor market theory seems to fit well with the Japanese labor market, if such trends continue, the Japanese labor market may soon undergo big changes. These changes may include more job changing and promotions based on employee merit, which would make the use of internal labor market theory as a tool of analysis for the Japanese labor market obsolete.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

The first method employed in this study was a review of the literature written in English on both the Japanese women's movement, women in the Japanese workplace, and relevant theory. From the information gathered in the literature review, I identified factors effecting women's opportunity in the workplace. Once a set of factors was established, I designed interview questions for semi-structured interviews and later questionnaires that would allow for data to be collected for a comparison, between the past and present, of those factors and trends existing in the workplace.

#### III.1 Sample

For the semi-structured interviews my sample included 8 male informants and 12 female informants, for a total of 20 informants. One member of the sample population for the semi-structured interviews was a woman living and working in Japan. The remaining members of the sample population employed in the study were Japanese students attending Oregon State University, University of Oregon, and Western Oregon State College. Included in this sample were graduate students,

undergraduate students, and English Language Institute (English as a second language) students. All of the students involved in the study were, at the time, residing in an area between Monmouth, Oregon and Eugene, Oregon. Hereafter, I will refer to this woman and these students as my informants.

The questionnaire sample included one male and five female informants for a total of six informants. Two additional questionnaires were collected but the informants are also interviewees and so their responses were discussed in the interview section of this paper.

It should be noted that the women in the sample may be non-representative of the majority of Japanese women. Since all but one of the women in the sample were in the United States it might make their perspective on women in the workplace different from Japanese women who had not visited the United States. In addition, many of the women were pursuing higher education and were past or would soon be passing the prime marriageable age.

### III.2 Methods Used In Previous Studies

The researcher, Jeannie Lo, previously undertook a study on Japanese women in the workplace. Lo's methodology included, "three different approaches—a questionnaire, interviews, and fieldwork" [Lo

1990: 95]. From the questionnaires and interviews Lo was able to obtain an “outsider” understanding of women’s participation in the Japanese workplace. The fieldwork referred to by Lo, called participant observation, allowed her to become an “inside observer” in the workplace. In Lo’s opinion, research based on questionnaires alone give “little consideration to the individuals involved or to possible inconsistencies” [Lo 1990: 106].

Glenda Roberts used similar methods for her research on the Japanese “attitudes toward women’s role as worker and wife” [Roberts 1994: 4]. Long term participant observation at a manufacturing company was “supplemented by interviews” [Roberts 1994: 4].

Alice Lam’s recent study of the new EEO law and its affects on women in the workplace in Japan included survey data as well as the “qualitative research methods” of “interviews and discussions with the personnel managers of major companies” [Lam 1992: 119]. According to Lam (1992), the “large-scale surveys” previously done in Japan, by the Ministry of Labor, were not completed by a “disinterested party” [139]. While the large-scale surveys do serve a purpose, Lam believes that it is important to collect more in-depth information “for a more complete evaluation of the situation” [Lam 1992: 139].

While I think that participant observation would have been an excellent way to collect data for this study it would have also narrowed

the focus to a specific type of company. Since I was trying to get a broad view of different workplaces this would not have fit with my study. In addition, going to Japan would have been extremely expensive which removed it as an option for this study.

### III.2.1 In-depth Interviews

I conducted semi-structured, face-to-face interviews in English with the bilingual Japanese informants. Since the interview focused on the workplace there was only one condition, that the informants had previous work experience in Japan. I was put in contact with my informants through a social network system and messages posted to computer newsgroups. Before each interview took place, I presented a letter of confidentiality and discussed with the potential informant that they would remain anonymous in any publication resulting from the data collected (see Appendix C). The interviews were held in coffee shops, libraries, a bakery, and a pizza shop. I chose these meeting places since they were easy for the interviewees to locate and because they were public. Public places were chosen because several of the interviewees were males and I wanted to afford maximum comfort for myself and the interviewees. The data was taken down in the form of notes during the course of the interview. After each interview, I returned to the notes to

check for accuracy and to make sure the statements would be understandable at a later time.

The interviews were designed to determine what the Japanese workplace is like for women. To answer this question, I asked how men and women were operating within the workplace and what kind of gender discrimination the informants believed existed. The main interview questions were as follows:

Where did you work?

What product or service was being dealt with?

How was the office divided up spatially?

Who were the other employees that you worked with?

What were the other employees roles?

What types of rank did the other employees have?

What was the gender of the other employees?

How did male and female employees talk with one another? What kinds of things did they talk about?

What kind of training did you receive?

What kind of training did members of the opposite gender receive?

Describe a typical day for yourself; in what kind of tasks did you participate?

Describe a typical day for a member of the opposite gender; in what kind of tasks did they participate?



Describe how you found your place of employment? Was it a typical way to find employment?

Did you feel there was any gender discrimination in your workplace?

### III.2.2 Questionnaires

I developed the questionnaire from the information that was recorded during the first few interviews. The questionnaire consisted of a small number of demographic questions and several descriptive short answer questions (see Appendix A). The purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain a more complete range of workplace experiences.

For distribution of the survey I first went to the English Language Institute (ELI). The ELI directors took 31 questionnaires and delivered them to the ELI teachers. Then questionnaires were handed out to the Japanese students in the higher level classes. Since the questionnaire was written in English the directors suggested translation into Japanese if I wanted to survey the lower level ELI classes. Next, I approached the Oregon State University Japanese Student Association (JSA). At a regular JSA meeting I gave a short introduction to my project and requested any person with experience in the Japanese workplace to participate in the study. At the suggestion of a JSA member I left several questionnaires to be picked up later by those who were interested in

participating. Finally, I met with the Hall Director of the Oregon State University Graduate Dorm. After I explained my project I was given a list of names of the Japanese residents. Questionnaires were then mailed to all the names provided by the Hall Director. In all, 67 questionnaires were distributed to members of these three groups.

The survey was designed to evaluate the following variables: 1) age, 2) sex, 3) full-time or part-time experience, 4) length of experience with employer, 5) geographic location of the company, 6) number of employees in the company, 7) the type of product or service the company produced, 8) typical tasks, 9) status hierarchy within the company, 10) how the job was obtained, and, 11) training. In addition, the questionnaire examined what they understood gender discrimination to mean, what kind of act they considered to be discriminatory to a particular gender, and how they viewed women's opportunities in the workplace.

### III.3 Procedure

During the fifth week of winter term 1996, I submitted the appropriate form to Oregon State University's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and received approval to do the interview portion of this

research. The first seven semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted over the following 12 weeks. I began by interviewing an ELI conversant partner and a fellow graduate student. Each of these informants then introduced me to members of their social network and that is how I came in contact with the next five interviewees. The remaining 13 interviews were conducted during Summer term 1996 and the first two weeks of Fall term 1996. I was connected to several of these interviewees by placing an e-mail request on Japanese newsgroups. From a few of these interviewees I was given introductions to members of their social networks. Then from those introductions I met with the rest of the interviewees.

In the seventh week of spring term 1996, I submitted the questionnaire to the Human Subjects committee for review and received approval for this portion of the research. During the course of the following week I distributed the questionnaires to the ELI, JSA, and graduate dorm students. Since no names were provided by the ELI and JSA and no phone numbers by any of the organizations I was unable to contact students who did not return the questionnaires. By not having a personal relationship with the people that received questionnaires no personal obligation existed which is one explanation for the low response rate.

### III.4 Analysis of Data

Comparative analysis was carried out with the interview and questionnaire data. All responses were examined for differences and similarities. I looked for patterns within the data related to factors involved in obtaining and holding positions in the workplace. In addition, I compared the responses given by the male and female informants. The comparison of male and female responses examines the effect of gender differences on perceptions of women in the workplace. Furthermore, I used the data collected in this study to do a comparison between today's workplace and the workplace of the past.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

#### IV.1 Interview Data

I will begin the discussion of the interview data by telling the stories of two of my interviewees. The two interviewees that I have chosen, Miss A and Mr. K, are representative of important themes in this study. Following the two stories, I will break down and discuss all the interviews question by question. In light of the fact that my study was fairly small, I will be able to concentrate more on the individual responses of my interviewees.

##### IV.1.1 The Story of Miss A's Work Experience

Miss A, a student, was introduced to me through the ELI program. We met in a crowded coffee shop where we made our introductions and awkward small talk as we began to get to know one another. She was studying English because she wanted to stay in the United States and obtain a graduate degree before returning home. At the time we met, Miss A was preparing to take the TOEFL exam and was nearing the end of her ELI studies.

After we spent some time getting to know each other I asked Miss A if she would mind talking to me about her work experience in Japan. I went on to explain the scope of my study, and Miss A agreed to answer the questions the best that she could. First, I asked Miss A to describe what type of a company she worked for and what her position had been. She explained that her Tokyo based company produced fiber optics which were mostly used for telecommunication.

Miss A's position at the fiber optics company was that of a bookkeeper. Among the tasks that she performed were negotiating orders with customers over the phone and then giving the orders to the factory. According to Miss A, the men in her department acted as salesmen. The duties of the men consisted of going out of the office to meet customers. Customers had to be continually encouraged by the salesmen to purchase the company's goods. Miss A said that the arrangement in her department was similar to the relationship of a husband and wife: the females in the office stayed at the company like housewives stay at home, while the males go outside of the company like husbands go outside of the home to work.

When Miss A began looking for a job she picked up an employment magazine and browsed through its pages. There she saw an ad for the fiber optics company, which later became her employer. She called the company and made an appointment. At the appointment she watched a

film and talked with women working there to find out about the company. Miss A was given no test but filled out an application and left her resume. During the next two weeks Miss A went to two interviews after which she was called and asked to join the company. According to Miss A it was somewhat different for a male applying to the fiber optics company. Male applicants took basic tests in English and Math, attended three interviews instead of two, and were required to obtain recommendations from their university.

Next, I asked Miss A what the training process was for new employees in the company. She said all of the new women workers gathered together and stayed in the same quarters for two nights to complete their training. During this training period Miss A was taught how to serve tea to customers and how to talk with men using polite words. In addition, she was taught how to properly answer a phone, how to act in the office, and how to wear her uniform and look clean. Miss A said that this training session gave the women an opportunity to get to know each other which was in some ways fun, but she also thought the experience was "stupid." For men in Miss A's department training was quite different. The men's training lasted for four to five months during which time they stayed in a building like a dormitory (four men to one room) at a company factory. While in training the men learned the steps in making the fiber optics, and the company's concept of teamwork.

After learning about her company's training procedure, I asked Miss A to tell me how people in her department talked with one another. Miss A told me that when the opportunity to socialize arose in the office, women talked to each other about "funny stuff" and family, not in-depth family issues but more surface things. Sometimes all the men and women would get together and laugh. At the company Christmas or Year End Party in the department, men would ask the women how it was going with their boyfriends or if they were getting married.

When I asked Miss A if she knew of any discrimination in her office she told me of several things that she saw as different between the male and female employees. Although all of the members of Miss A's department had four-year degrees, men and women were paid different salaries. At the time of Miss A's employment, among those in the same age group, men earned 220,000 Yen per month while women earned 180,000 Yen a month. In addition, unmarried men could live anywhere they liked while unmarried women were required to live with their parents. Finally, Miss A said that during the first year on the job each employee received eight days of vacation and time off on national holidays. Each year the number of vacation days for the employee would increase. The difference regarding vacation was that men usually used fewer days of vacation time than their female co-workers. Miss A went on to say that she thought women continuing to work after marriage was



more common than it had been in earlier times, and she was aware of no encouragement for female employees to retire young.

Overall, Miss A said that she did not feel any discrimination in the company. However, she had heard a story about a woman in her company who was suffering from discrimination. This woman was 45 years old and had worked for the company for 22 years. Yet, her salary was the same as a 25 year old man just starting to work. The woman was very angry and thought she had been mistreated.

In Miss A's opinion, the women in her division worked harder compared to women in the other divisions of the company. For example, they worked from 9:00 AM until 8:00 PM, well past the usual 5:45 PM quitting time. However, Miss A's experience in her department was good. For example, she said the men in her department took care of the women. If the women wanted to take a vacation, the men would help them get the time off. In addition, the men helped the women with their work.

At the end of our meeting Miss A and I decided to meet again and share our cultural and linguistic differences with each other. During subsequent meetings Miss A asked how my project was progressing and offered to help if there was anything else she could do. Later, she used her social network to put me in touch with several other people that were interested in talking about their work experience in Japan.

#### IV.1.2 The Story of Mr. K's Work Experience

The second story is that of Mr. K., whom I met on a sunny afternoon at a local Corvallis coffee shop. After a short greeting Mr. K and I began the interview. We had previously become acquainted so there was no need for a long introduction. Mr. K told me that he had worked in a pharmaceutical company whose main products were disinfectants, anesthetics, and herbal medicines. This Osaka based company was one of the top five pharmaceutical companies in Japan and also one of its oldest companies. In light of the fact that the company was very old it was quite traditional, according to Mr. K, and thus the company employed few women.

Mr. K's position in the company was that of a medical representative. His tasks included visiting and distributing product information to hospitals, managing wholesalers, and organizing conferences. In addition, Mr. K did product comparison, collected clinical data, and worked on developing new anesthetics. This position gave Mr. K a great deal of freedom regarding his work. His office was in his home and the company supplied him with a car and fuel for his traveling. Once each month Mr. K would make a visit to the company's headquarters.

After a period of time, Mr. K was promoted from his medical representative position to work in research and new product development. In his new position Mr. K designed methods of research, interpreted government guidelines based on new drug approval, and accumulated information from other pharmaceutical companies.

Mr. K originally applied for a job at the pharmaceutical company with the help of a professor from his university. His professor was able to provide Mr. K with information on the pharmaceutical company because he had worked in cooperation with the company. After searching out and studying information on several other companies, Mr. K found that he was interested in the company suggested by his professor. Mr. K applied for the position and then was given a test. Once the test was completed Mr. K was served sushi.

Training for Mr. K lasted for three months and consisted of product information, a general overview of the company, and visits to different parts of the company. If there was a woman of the same professional status as Mr. K, he said that she would have received identical training. However, in Mr. K's company his position was almost 100 percent male-dominated. He told me that he had heard of another pharmaceutical company that hired one woman; a big fuss was made and the story was put in the newspaper. According to Mr. K, secretaries in his company received much less training than employees in positions similar to his.

Mr. K believed that gender discrimination in the workplace definitely existed, not only in his workplace, but in other Japanese companies as well. When Mr. K first entered the company his boss told him that both genders were treated equally, but he came to realize that was not really the case. One example given by Mr. K of an area of gender discrimination was the seniority system. In the framework of the seniority system all employees start on the same level, but as time goes by Mr. K said the males are promoted and the females are not.

Tea was served in the office four to five times a day. Mr. K told me that he would serve tea for himself, because he believed that it was a discriminatory task. The women in the office thought that it was strange that Mr. K wanted to serve himself. Unlike the work of men which lends itself to interaction and discussion, women's usual tasks such as typing offer little to no interaction. Therefore, tea serving is the only time for communication among the women, Mr. K said that during tea time the women were "constantly" talking. In addition, Mr. K's impression is that serving tea is not 100 percent negative but it is more symbolic and helps to create identity.

Mr. K is also of the opinion that there is a major perception that women are more talented than their male counterparts. However, there is still an underlying fear that women cannot be given jobs with much responsibility because they may quit to marry or have children.

According to Mr. K this fear is well founded because most women do quit five to six years into the job to have families.

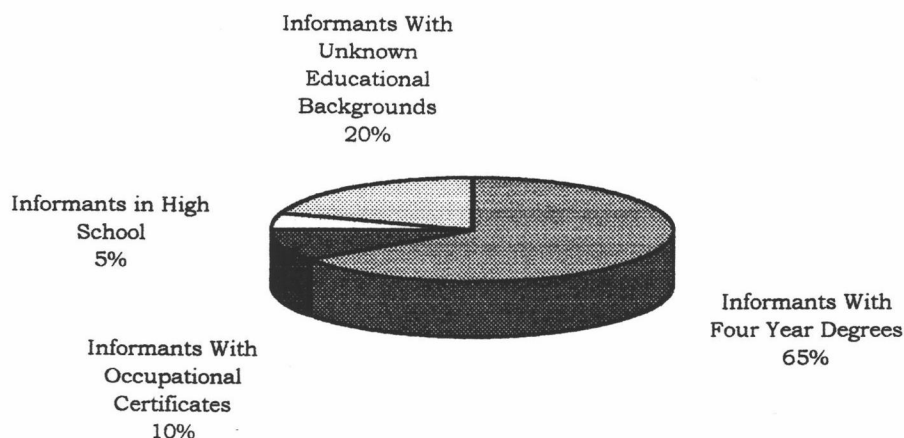
Another area of gender discrimination that hurts women is the after work drinking culture and company parties. During these social functions Mr. K said that women are sexually harassed. However, because people are considered different when drinking, it is as if the drunken men are not responsible for their actions. In addition, women in the workplace have to deal with the perception that middle aged women are too aggressive to be dealt with. During times of economic boom, women's opportunity to obtain jobs increases and so does their status. When the economy is in a down turn, women are the first to lose their jobs and status at the same time.

#### IV.1.3 Educational Background in Relation to Positions Held

In all, thirteen (65%) of the interview informants had four-year university degrees. Two (10%) of the interviewees had occupational certificates, one (5%) was in high school, and four (20%) had unknown educational backgrounds (see Figure IV.1).

Of the eight male interviewees, five had received four-year university degrees. One man had an occupational certificate; another was in high school during the time he was employed; and one man's

Figure IV.1 Educational Backgrounds of Interview Informants



background was unknown. Mr. K said that while he was at the university earning his degree, he sold seafood to help out with his expenses. Even though he was offered less money, after graduation Mr. K joined the pharmaceutical company because that position carried higher status. Mr. E explained that after college he wanted to be a junior high school PE teacher, but there were no positions available. After awhile his parents urged him to get a job and he went to work for the advertising company. Mr. D, Mr. F, and Mr. G all went straight from college to their jobs as teacher, automobile researcher, and confections researcher. All of the male informants with four year-degrees were able to obtain positions that readily reflected their level of education in the areas of research, advertising, and teaching.

Out of the twelve female interviewees, eight had four-year university degrees. One woman had a certificate from an occupational college and the educational backgrounds of three women are unknown. All of the female university degree graduates received their positions immediately after graduation. Four of the female graduates were in teaching positions, two were researchers, and two were office workers. Six of the female informants with four-year degrees obtained positions which reflected their education in areas similar to the men, teaching and research. However, two of the female university graduates were hired into clerical positions which are often filled by high school and junior college graduates. Those without university degrees worked in offices, in sales, and customer service positions.

#### IV.1.4 How Interviewee's Found Employment

The most widely used means of job hunting described by the interviewees was reading employment books or magazines. Nine of the twenty interviewees stated that they had purchased this type of employment literature. However, at least three of these interviewees used employment literature in combination with information given by friends. Altogether six interviewees said that they had obtained their jobs through information given by friends. Three of the interviewees reported that a

professor from their university had helped connect them with a company. Only two of the interviewees had found employment through their university's career center. One interviewee wrote directly to the board of education, one took the government exam, and one went to an employment office that was not affiliated with any school.

#### IV.1.5 Positions Held by the Interviewees

Five of the interviewees held positions as researchers. Three of the researchers were male and two were female. Another five held positions as teachers. Four of the teachers were female and one was male. Three of the women held jobs as office workers/secretaries. Two women had sales positions and two more had customer service jobs. The remaining position held by a female was that of a government office worker. Each of the following positions were held by one male interviewee: pharmacy representative, athletic trainer, entertainment worker, mover, and company director. Of the fourteen positions held by female interviewees, five of the positions specifically involved assisting males in the company who held higher rank. No male informants described their jobs as assistant positions.



#### IV.1.6 Women's Training Experiences

Miss A and Miss K said that for their training in the fiber optics company they and other women in their division gathered together and stayed for two nights at a company facility. During that time they were taught how to serve tea, how to wear their uniform (to look clean), and how to act in the office (how to talk with men using polite words). They also told me that men in the same division were in training for four to five months. All the men in training stayed together in a company dormitory where four men would share one room. The men went to the factory and learned how to make the fiber optics and how to work as a team.

Miss B said that for her medical research position she received about one month of training. During that month she learned about her company's products. However, for the most part in her job she used the research and development skills that she had learned in college. In Miss B's company, men were given exactly the same training.

Miss C stated that for junior high school teaching she received two weeks of training. This training consisted of other teachers observing Miss C and then giving her their comments. The training that Miss C underwent was the same for male and female teachers.

Miss D received no training at all for her job teaching at a girls high school. Likewise, men at the school received no training because they were previously trained while earning their degrees.

For a pharmacological research job Miss E was given three weeks of training. She stated that she was taught how to speak correctly, how to greet people, how to serve tea, and was given information about the company's products. Depending on what section they were in, men received a different kind of training. Men in the same research section were taught the same types of skills as the women, even how to serve tea.

I first discussed the issue of separate jobs for men and women with Miss E. She believed that separate jobs are not considered by Japanese people to be a form of discrimination. Later I found that a few of the other informants shared Miss E's position on this issue.

For her kindergarten position, Miss F learned directly from on-the-job instruction by the president and older co-workers. Men at the kindergarten were trained in the same fashion. At her other job in the patent office, Miss F was in training for three months. During that time she learned from older female co-workers how to take care of letters, use the computer, send faxes, and use the copy machine. In addition, she learned translating and letter writing on-the-job from her male boss. The men working in the office were either lawyers or aspiring lawyers, and their training was entirely different.

Miss H's training, at the children's clothing store, lasted for five days. Miss H was taught how to communicate with others, how to think, how to negotiate, how to cooperate in a group, and how to plan. Then in a group setting there was a discussion on how to make the company successful. The men at the company were included in the same training sessions with the women but also met at a place outside of the company to "learn how to lead the females."

For her training at the travel agency, Miss I spent three months learning how to treat customers and how to make reservations. She did not know what kind of training men received because they were in sales positions, not the more clerical type of position held by Miss I.

Miss J received one day of training at her *Juku* teaching position. A *Juku* is a school where children go after regular school for extra help in a variety of subjects. At her bakery job, she spent two hours learning how to operate the register and wrap the product. Her day of training at the bridal ceremony company was spent learning how to organize wedding ceremonies.

At her electronics distributing firm, Miss L at first received no training because she filled the position quickly when an older employee resigned. Months later, the company held a training session for women. At this session Miss L was taught how to improve her skills; how to open the door, how to bring in tea, how to serve tea, how to answer the phone,

and how to speak more politely. Miss L said the men in her department spent several days of training together in a place away from the office. A portion of the men's training included how to make sales, how to meet customers, and how to negotiate. She was not sure what other training the men underwent.

For her government position, Miss G was given one introductory training session and a couple of overnight camp outs so that employees could get acquainted. In addition, during the first year sometimes there were study sessions at the office in the afternoon. Training was the same for the men in the office.

#### IV.1.7 Men's Training Experiences

Mr. A's position as an athletic trainer did not call for much training. He was well prepared for the job with his physical education certificate. Mr. A was given a small amount of training on how the system worked at his company. Women were given the same type of training.

Mr. B stated that at his entertainment company he was given a few hours of introduction to the workplace. However, he learned mostly through experience. Training for the female employees was the same.

Because his job at a moving company was part-time, Mr. C did not receive any training. The regular male workers at the company received three months of training. Since all the women in the company were office workers, Mr. C stated he did not know what kind of training they received.

Mr. D told me that training for his position at an elementary school consisted of attending teacher conferences where teachers could exchange their experiences. In addition, Mr. D said they were told to read books on how to teach and how to discipline students. The training was the same for male and female teachers.

In his advertising company, Mr. E was in training for four to six months with a mentor. He would observe the mentor and learn how to do various types of work. Women in this company were given the same type of training. The women would observe a female mentor. However, women were only in training for two months. A friend of Mr. E was given the job of training a female as a director. He said that it was a difficult time because the styles used by males and females were different.

A chemical engineer, Mr. F, was given one month of training in which he was taught how to combine elements, how to color, how to emboss, some office policy, and some information about the company. Women in Mr. F's section were trained in the same manner.

Mr. G, who worked for the confectionery company was in training for one week. The training was fairly basic: how to answer the phone, how to write up papers, and he read a brochure on how the company was started. All of the employees in his section were given the same training.

Mr. K, employed by a pharmaceutical company, was provided with a general overview of the company. In addition, he was given product information and was taken to observe different parts of the company. The training was spread over three months. He said, "if" women were of the same professional status they would receive the same kind of training. However, Mr. K asserted that his position in the company was almost one hundred percent male-dominated. According to Mr. K the company was very traditional and employed few women, most of whom were in secretarial positions. Women in these positions received little training.

#### IV.1.8 Summary of Training Data

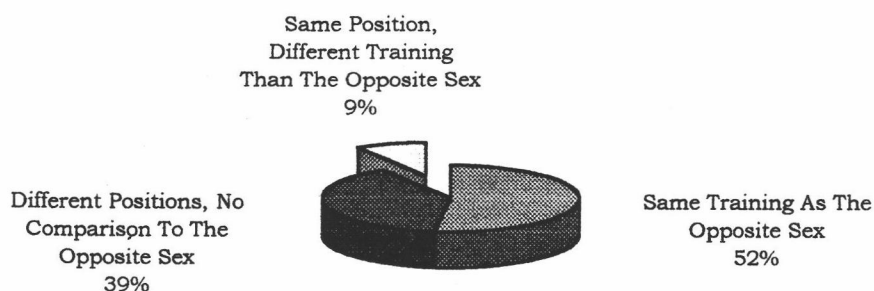
A few interviewees discussed more than one position which they had previously held. When totaled the 20 interviewees held 23 positions. Of the 23 positions held by the interviewees, 12 (52%) involved the same training for males and females. Nine (39%) of the 23 positions were

different from those held by the opposite sex, therefore their training was different and no training comparison could be made. Only two (9%) of the 23 positions held resulted in different training for males and females (see Figure IV.2).

For almost half of the positions held by female interviewees, six, training was the same as that of men. Of the six positions two were in the field of research and four were in teaching. This points to the possibility that research and teaching are more gender neutral professions. However, both types of workers come to the workplace with prior skills, so little training would be necessary for filling their positions. Another eight of the female interviewees stated that their positions were different from the males in their companies so they could make no comparison regarding training. Only two of these women even knew what type of training the men in different positions received. There was only one case in which a male and female in the same position received different training. The employee in this case was Miss H who said men received extra training on how to "lead" women.

The majority of the male interviewees, six, said that the training they received was the same for women in their position. Three of these

Figure IV.2 Summary Of Interview Informants Training Experience



were in the field of research and one was a teacher. This finding adds further evidence to the possibility that research and teaching are gender neutral. One man said that regular male employees received three months of training but females in the company were in different positions, so there was no basis for comparison. Finally, only one male, Mr. E, found training to be different for men and women in the same positions. He stated that at his company women received less training compared to men in the same position.

#### IV.1.9 Tasks Conducted During a Typical Day for Female Informants

Miss A and Miss K performed similar tasks at the fiber optics company. The two women said that they negotiated orders with customers and gave the orders to the factory. Miss K stated that it was mostly the female's job to watch the delivery schedule and also to assist



the males in the office. The men in the office went out to meet with the customers, to get new orders, and follow-up on requests. Miss K told me that the difference between the male and female jobs was that the males went to the customer directly and that the males watched over all of the sales and marketing of the products.

Miss B stated that her job at the medical research company was in research and development. Her normal tasks would be to perform lab experiments. Miss B said that in her division men's tasks were the same.

Miss C said that a normal day for her as an English teacher for junior high students began at 7AM. She had to be at school early to prepare for her day and then make tea for the other teachers. Making tea was her job because she was the youngest and newest employee. On Wednesdays she had to clean the school, the only day the students did not do the cleaning, and other young male teachers helped her. During lunch she and the other female teachers distributed lunches to the teachers and collected the dishes when they were finished eating. Of course, Miss C also taught English to the students. In addition to their other duties all male teachers were put in charge of at least one club or after-school activity. Female teachers with children were exempt from sponsoring clubs or activities.

Miss D, also a teacher, said that she taught five days a week but did not discuss her daily tasks. For the question regarding the tasks of male teachers she gave no response.

At the pharmacological company, Miss E's tasks were researching new medications, checking the effects and stability of medications, observing how the medications worked on the human body, and establishing new testing methods. Miss E was in an all-female group working on a specific project. Men's tasks were about the same depending on the group to which they belonged.

At the kindergarten Miss F's tasks were to assist the teacher in the morning, take care of the children (including having lunch with them), teach English in the afternoon, and do some light clerical work after school. There were four men working at the kindergarten. Three of the men were bus drivers but they were also supposed to play with the children sometimes. The fourth man was the president who made all of the decisions.

When Miss F was working at the patent office her tasks were to serve tea to the president, vice-president, and her boss (the women took turns), pick-up and open the mail/faxes, distribute letters to other workers, and do letter translation. The men's tasks in her section were to review paperwork for patents (all the men were lawyers).

Miss G's tasks at the government health office included coming early to prepare tea (she was the lowest level employee), doing paperwork from small community offices, giving permission to treat illnesses, and making copies for the boss. The first thing men in the office did was to read the newspaper; then they reviewed documents and went to meetings, but they did not serve tea.

Miss H, at the children's clothing company, held several different positions. Some of her tasks were loading/shipping, computer work, assisting a salesman in negotiating with companies from the office, taking calls, organizing displays, sales, and helping mothers with their shopping. Women working at the main office were required to live in a dorm close by. Miss H said that the men did the heavy work, computer programming, and most sales which involved going outside of the company to meet with clients.

For the travel agency, Miss I made reservations, worked on itineraries, checked tickets before distribution to customers, took calls, and met with customers. The male employees at the travel agency went outside of the office to sell their services to other companies.

Miss J stated that at the bakery her task was to help the customers. All of the employees at the bakery were female.

At the bridal ceremony company Miss J served dinner or drinks and worked on sales. Men in the company did different jobs such as transportation of food or production of sound effects.

While working at the *Juku*, Miss J taught science to junior high and high school students. Those who taught Japanese and English language to elementary students were mostly females while those who taught science to junior high and high school students were mostly male. Those who taught high school students received a higher salary than those who taught the younger students.

Miss L's tasks at the electronics distribution company were typing letters, doing reports, filing, making up packing lists, answering the phones ("men don't answer the phone"), doing Christmas cards for customers, cleaning the desks, and making hot water to serve tea. Men in her section went outside of the office to negotiate with other companies, took care of problems, went to meetings, checked other branches, and returned calls.

#### IV.1.10 Tasks Conducted During a Typical Day for Male Informants

Mr. A's tasks as an athletic trainer were to teach swimming and gymnastics to children and to teach adults how to use exercise machines. Mr. A said there were not many women at the company; a few

were trainers who performed tasks similar to his and some worked in the office.

At the entertainment company, Mr. B's tasks were to load/unload trucks, do carpentry, shop for food, coordinate with companies to schedule events, and set up tables. The females at Mr. B's company handled most of the catering work and did carpentry along with the men.

Mr. C told me that at the moving company his only task was to carry furniture. Other men in the company discussed costs with clients, contacted customers, carried furniture, and drove the trucks. There were some women who worked in the office. Mr. C said he saw them doing work such as copying and filing.

Mr. D said that the tasks at his teaching job consisted of attending teachers meetings, cleaning up the classrooms, keeping records of student assignments, being a sponsor for club activities, and teaching English. He gave no response about tasks carried out by women, except to say there were only a few female teachers.

At the advertising company, Mr. E's tasks included supervising other workers and developing new concepts. There was one female director at the company, but Mr. E said that she was old and had no children. Other women in the company did creative design; they came in during the afternoon and worked until evening, and worked as copywriters from their homes by faxing their work to the office.

Mr. F, the chemical engineer, did research and development for automobile instrument panels and door liners. He worked on composition, elements and compounds of the materials, and did structural design. Women in his section did the same kind of work. Mr. F remarked it was an unusual setting because the women did not do office work.

At the confectionery company, Mr. G's tasks were researching new types of chocolate, quality control, selecting proper temperatures, and choosing types of beans. Women in the office did the same kind of work as Mr. G, except the females took turns serving the morning tea. Also, Mr. G said that the women in the office cleaned all of the desks while the male workers swept the floor.

At the pharmacological company, Mr. K's tasks were to act as a representative and provide product information to hospitals, manage wholesalers, sell products, organize conferences, and develop new products. Mr. K stated that his company was very traditional and employed few women. The women employees did tasks such as typing and tea service.

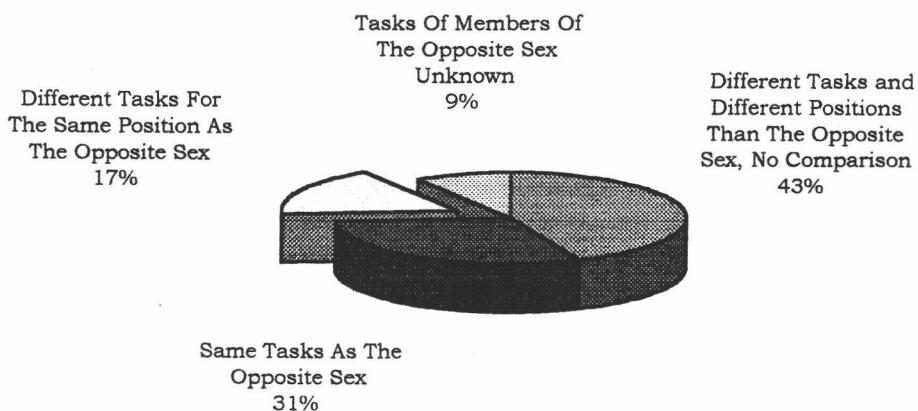
#### IV.1.11 Summary of Tasks Conducted During a Typical Day

Of the 23 positions held by the interviewees the largest portion, ten (43.5%), had different positions than those held by the opposite sex and so could not compare tasks. Seven (30.5%) of the 23 held the same positions and participated in the same tasks as the opposite sex. Only four (17%) of the interviewees indicated that there were different tasks for the same position. Two (9%) of the interviewees did not respond to the question about the tasks in which members of the opposite sex were engaged. (see Figure IV.3)

Of the 15 positions held by the female interviewees three women had the same tasks as males in the same position. It should be noted that one of these women was in an all-female research group. However, she thought that men in the same position in different groups did the same or similar tasks.

Three other women did different tasks than their male counterparts in the same positions. One of the women said that in her office the only difference in tasks was that men did heavy lifting. Another woman, who was a teacher, served tea, did cleaning, and served lunches while the male teachers did not, except for the young male teachers who helped out in cleaning. Instead, the male teachers were in charge of clubs after classes. The last woman in this group said that she made tea and did copies for her boss, which men did not do.

Figure IV.3 Summary Of Informants' Tasks In Relation To Employees Of The Opposite Sex



Eight of the positions women held were different than those of men, and for these no comparison could be made. One of the female interviewees did not respond to the comparison of tasks question. Tasks specific to women that men who held the same position did not perform were serving tea, assisting males, staying in the company while the men went out, and being required to live in a company dormitory.

Half of the male interviewees, four, said that women in the same position at their company participated in the same type of tasks. Two other interviewees stated that there were no women in the same positions in their company and for these no comparison could be made. One interviewee responded that his tasks were the same as women in the



same position, except that the women had to serve tea in the morning. Only one other male interviewee said that women at his company served tea. Altogether there were two companies in which women served tea. The last interviewee gave no response to the question regarding different tasks for male and female employees.

#### IV.1.12 Spatial Organization of Offices

Questions asked about relationships with other employees and how the office was divided up spatially will be discussed together. During the process of conducting interviews I realized that these two questions were best asked together. The answers to these two questions basically show the setup of the office, sex of the employees, hierarchy in seating arrangement, and style of organization. Reproductions of the interviewees drawings of spatial layout can be found in Appendices D through N.

The major seating pattern was hierarchical face-to-face seating with the boss sitting alone facing all of the other employees at the high status end of the grouping (see Figure IV.4). This seating pattern shared variations, such as workers separated into groups but still in the face-to-face style. Another variation of this pattern has all of the employees sitting face-to-face except for the boss who has his own desk set apart

from the rest but still at the high status end of the grouping (see Figure IV.5). In addition, one variation included the boss at the high end of the grouping sitting directly across from a lower level employee (see Figure IV.6). One of the offices was slightly reversed; the secretary sat alone at the low status end of the grouping (see Figure IV.7).

Figure IV.4 Illustration Of Major Seating Pattern

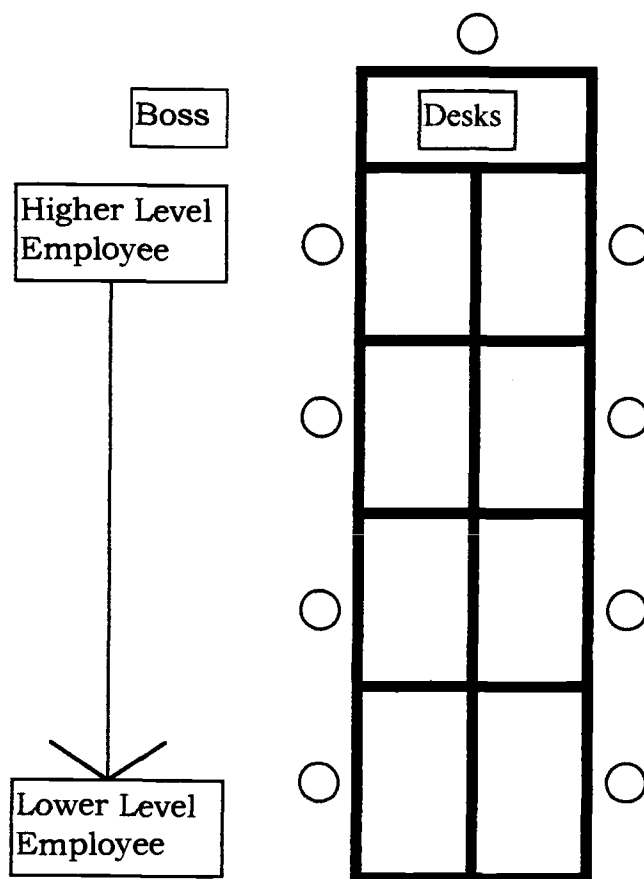


Figure IV.5 Illustration Of Variation Of Major Seating Pattern: Boss Seated Separately From Group

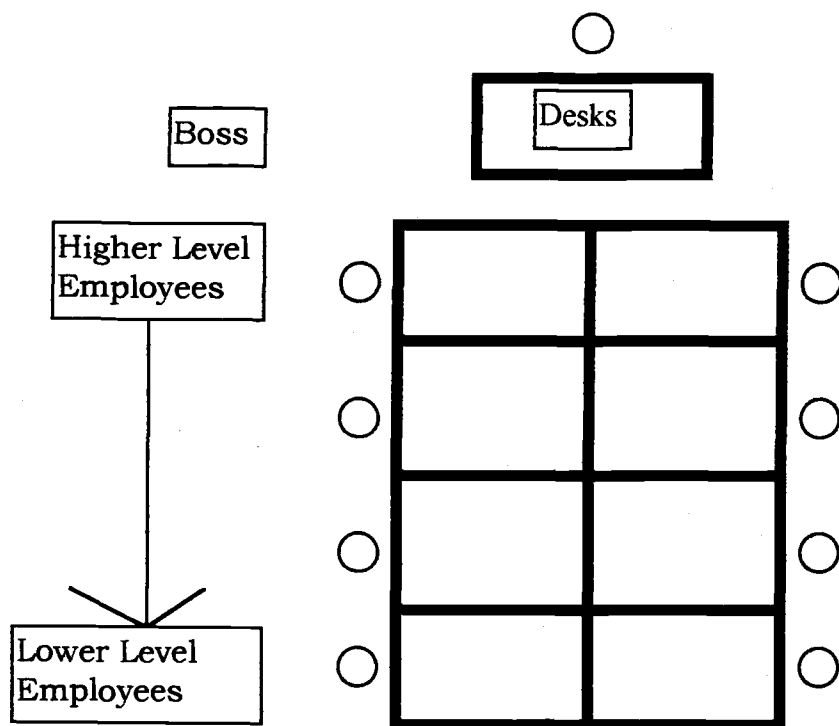


Figure IV.6 Illustration Of Variation Of Major Seating Pattern: Boss Seated Across From High Level Employee

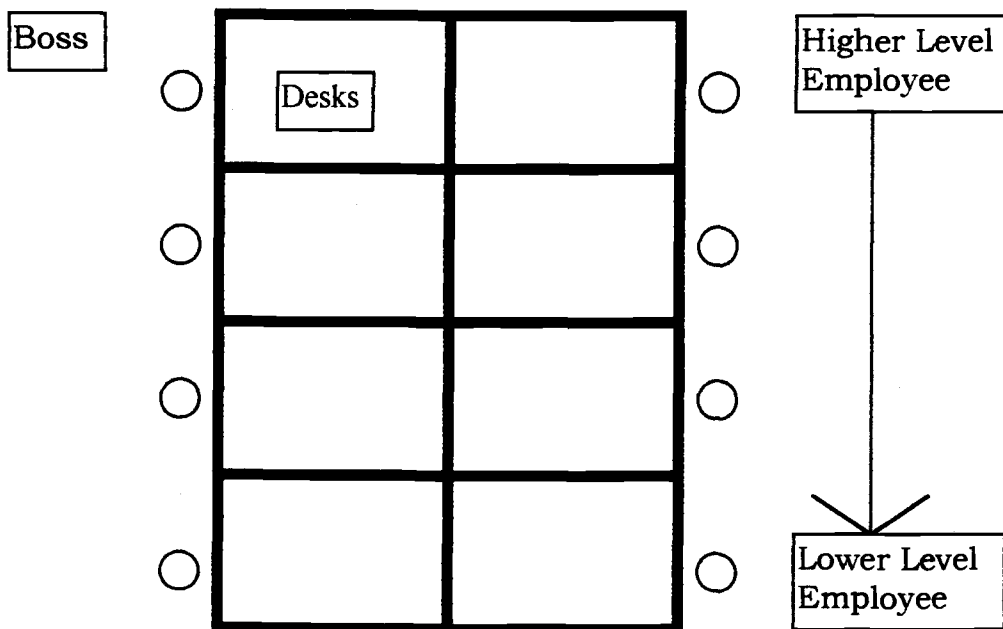
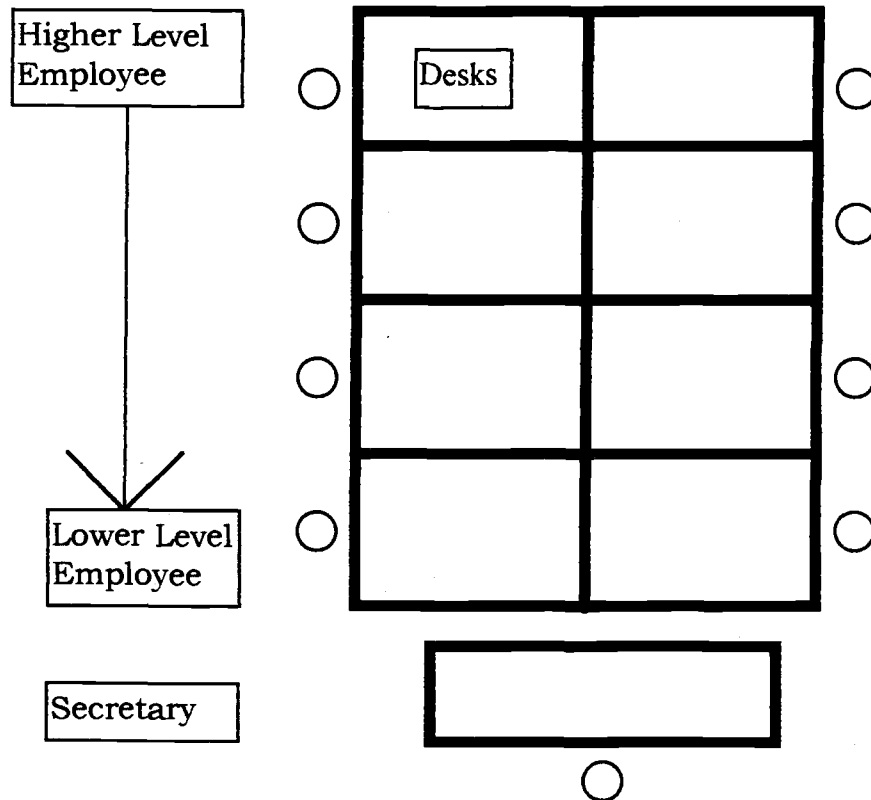


Figure IV.7 Illustration Of Variation Of Major Seating Pattern:  
Secretary Seated Alone



Only one of the offices was not a variation of the face-to-face pattern. In this office the president and vice-president had separate rooms of their own. The rest of the employees had their own desks with partitioned space for lawyers and aspiring lawyers.

Seven of the interviewees drew no maps because they were not applicable to their line of work. One other interviewee responded over the Internet and could draw no map, another interviewee chose not to respond to the question.

#### IV.1.13 How People Talk with Each Other in the Workplace

During the in-depth interviews three times I asked the question: What do people talk about with each other in the workplace? Miss A responded that they talked about family, Mr. F said that men and women talked about family, friends, hobbies and jobs, and Mr. K gave no direct response to the question. At the time I thought the question was not eliciting the information that I was looking for and so stopped using it.

Later, I realized that although I was not getting the information I was looking for, other analysis could have been done. For example, it may be that discussion between employees was surface talk only which would have corresponded to the Japanese concept of *tatemaie*. *Tatemaie* can be explained as “conventional rules of discourse” or a “facade of manners” [Tobin 1992: 21-39]. The behaviors which are considered *tatemaie* are those to be used in public places. A person’s private thoughts or feelings are to be restrained and used only in private situations. Expressing behavior in private situations is called *honne* behavior. It would have been interesting if I had continued to use this question to see if these behaviors were patterned in the workplace.

#### IV.1.14 Women's Perceptions of Discrimination

Miss A, when asked if she knew of any discrimination in the workplace, said that she had not experienced any herself. However, she repeated a story about a 45 year old woman who had worked in the company for 22 years and a newer 25 year old male employee who was making the same salary. The older woman was really angry.

Miss B said that in her medical research company there was an unofficial double standard. As an example she said there were two kinds of meetings: One meeting was for everyone and the other meeting was for men only. The male-only meeting was considered more important, but she was never told why they had a separate meeting. Another example of the discrimination Miss B experienced occurred when a product presentation was given at a conference held for the doctors at a nearby university hospital. Only men were taken to the presentation, but what made it even worse was that some of the men who went were from a different section and had no knowledge of the product being presented. On another occasion, Miss B's boss was having a party for his boss and took some of the women from the department to act as hostesses, which meant they had to talk with the men and serve them drinks. Also, the female researchers worked hard and late like the male employees but there was less opportunity for promotion.

Miss C, one of the school teachers, said that she thought teaching was the best job for females because there was less discrimination. Miss D, also a school teacher, said there was discrimination in her profession. For example, Miss D said male teachers think that female teachers should wear plain square style clothes, teacher style, with no accessories, and very little cosmetics. She also said that the male teachers did not like female teachers to complain about gender discrimination, which a few of the aggressive female teachers did.

Miss E, the pharmacological researcher, said that men were given more chances in her company. For example, three men were sent to America to learn English. In her opinion women in research who worked as hard as men may obtain higher positions. However, usually in the process of obtaining a higher position women give up getting married and having a family.

Miss F, the kindergarten and patent office worker, said there was discrimination at both companies. At the kindergarten the women worked much harder than the men, and the men would not help out even if they had nothing else to do. In her position at the patent office Miss F did not experience any discrimination herself, but a co-worker had suffered discrimination. This female co-worker thought she was being treated unfairly because a man who entered the company at the same time now held a technical position while she was still a secretary.

Miss G did not think there was very much discrimination in her government position because her boss was a woman. She actually thought that women had special privileges. For example, during menstruation every month women were allowed to take two days off, and she always took one of the two days. However, her friend who worked in a small company had trouble because she was 28 years old and still working. Most women quit at age 25 when they are either married or pregnant, but Miss G's friend had not. The company considered her an unmarried widow, and a social disgrace. Eventually, she was able to find a husband and then quit the job.

Miss H, who worked for the clothing company, saw a few areas of discrimination in her company. She said that the most important positions were reserved for males; there was a difference in male and female wages, and the roles for men and women were different. On the other hand, men had to stay longer hours and work harder than females. Furthermore, Miss H believed that to be a female in the company was comfortable and that the men cared about the women.

Miss I, the travel agency employee, said her employer told her that men and women were equal in the company, but she thought it was not true. According to Miss I, women had to come to work earlier to clean the desks and prepare to serve the coffee. Then the men would stay late and "send" the women home. She stated that there were limitations for



women and that it would be impossible to get a high position in a large company. Miss I later mentioned an incident of discrimination. A male customer came into the travel agency and became angry; he wanted a man to help him because he said a woman could not understand his problem.

Miss J said that she did not experience any discrimination in the workplace because she applied for "girls" jobs. However, she stated that looking for a job now is really hard because they do not want to hire girls, "they think we will quit when we get married."

Miss K, also a worker at a fiber optics company, noticed some discrimination in her company. She thought it was not right that women had to wear uniforms to the office. In addition, she stated that almost all of the female workers in the company were assistants to the male employees.

Miss L, of the electronic distribution company, believed there was much discrimination in her company. Some of the examples she gave were separate jobs for men and women, different salaries for men and women, and hiring women under the age of 25 because they were easy to deal with. Miss L said there were a few women in her company who had worked as long as the men but did not get promoted and were rarely allowed to go to meetings or on trips.

#### IV.1.15 Men's Perceptions of Discrimination

Mr. A, the athletic trainer, admitted that there might be discrimination in his company. He stated that wages and promotional opportunities for men and women were different. Mr. A mentioned that he thought men and women should be equal and the fact that they were not was one of the "stupid" things in Japanese society.

Mr. B, from the entertainment company, did not say there was discrimination in his company. However, he did point out that there were some women foremen in the construction division of the company, and that most of the men felt strange with a woman foreman in that kind of a job.

Mr. C, the part-time worker at the moving company, said the only noticeable discrimination was that women did not work in physical jobs. He mentioned that years ago when his mother, who worked for a bank, became pregnant she was pressured from the higher ranks to quit. She was told that if she did not raise her children well they would not be good people.

Mr. D, the English teacher, claimed there was no gender discrimination at his school.

Mr. E, the advertising director, stated that there was no discrimination in his workplace. He went on to say, however, that there

were separate jobs for men and women. Women did the majority of the paperwork and men went out to visit clients. Mr. E also said that women have the idea that they will quit when they find a husband; males expect this and do not give women higher positions that require someone who will work for a long time. Mr. E added that women have a chance for such jobs but usually quit, because they do not want to do the "crazy work" of men.

Mr. F, the chemical engineer, said that in his opinion men were discriminated against. Women did not have to do any heavy lifting; they could leave work early; they were not allowed to overwork; and they were also encouraged to take all of their vacation.

Mr. G, from the confectionery company, said women were discriminated against because they were expected to quit their jobs upon marriage, and because their salary was not as high as that of men.

Mr. K, from the pharmacological company, said that his company held a big party twice-a-year where he felt women were sexually harassed. Men justified the harassment by saying that because they had been drinking they were not themselves and so not responsible for their actions. Mr. K was aware of discrimination in his workplace in activities such as the women serving tea. He believed this was not right and told the women that he would get his own tea. Mr. K added that socially middle aged women were viewed as too aggressive to deal with; he

thought this might be the reason behind choosing young women employees.

#### IV.1.16 Summary of Perceptions of Discrimination

Overall, of the twenty interviewees, seventeen acknowledged gender discrimination existed in the Japanese workplace. The three interviewees who thought no gender discrimination existed in the workplace were male. Twelve of the interviewees stated they had experienced no direct discrimination, but four had heard stories of women who had such experiences. Of those who experienced gender discrimination in the workplace, seven were women and one was a man. Some of the more negative forms of discrimination experienced by the interviewees were: forced hostessing, serving tea, cleaning the office, lower salaries, and less important jobs and meetings for men only.

All of the female interviewees acknowledged that discrimination existed in the workplace to some extent. Five of the women experienced no direct discrimination themselves in the workplace, but three of these five had heard stories of other women who had suffered from gender discrimination. Seven of the women stated that they had experienced direct discrimination in the workplace. Four of these seven had

experienced little to some discrimination while three had experienced fairly strong discrimination.

Of the eight male interviewees, five acknowledged gender discrimination in the workplace and three said there was none. Seven of the men stated that they had experienced no discrimination themselves. One man had heard a story of a female who had suffered from gender discrimination. There was one man in the group who stated he had experienced gender discrimination in the form of separate duties assigned to men and women.

#### IV.2 Questionnaire Data

The age range of the informants was from 21 to 28 years old. Three of the youngest informants had experience in part-time employment only. Two of the informants had experience with both full and part-time work and one informant had experience with only full-time work. Length of employment for informants who had worked part-time ranged from three months to three years. Length of employment for those who had worked full-time ranged from four months to three years.

Two in the part-time category, one male and one female, worked as cashiers in convenience stores with few than fifty employees. Tasks for the woman, at her Tokyo based company, were cleaning, loading

products onto shelves, and tending the cash register. She said that men at her store did the same things except they mainly worked night shifts. Tasks for the man, at his Saitama based company, included tending the cash register and "handling the shop." He said that women were given the same tasks as men.

Another of the part-time employees worked for a Saitama sweets and snack manufacturing company that employed over 500 workers. Tasks carried out by the sweets company employee were making and checking products. Members of the opposite sex at the company were in charge of the proper functioning of the machines and were in charge of "moving stuff."

One part-time employee at a Kyoto private teachers school eventually worked into a full-time position. Between 50 and 100 people were employed at her school. She said that her task was to "help teach the private teachers." The men's task was the same.

One of the informants had held two positions with different employers. The first position was as a part-time translator for a Tokyo company of fewer than 50 employees. Her main task was to do translation work for the company. She did not give a descriptive list of tasks for men but said that they worked in management positions. The second position was a full-time receptionist at a foreign embassy in Tokyo. The embassy also employed fewer than 50 people. At the

embassy she was a receptionist. She indicated that male employees of the embassy were given personnel and accounting type tasks.

Another female full-time employee worked for an Osaka based company that imported plywood from Indonesia. This import company was an employer for more than 500 people. Her tasks included computer input, filing, preparation of documents for tax clearance, serving tea to customers, and cleaning the office. She remarked that she had to serve tea to men in the office who started working there after she did. She drew contrast to other big companies that have coffee or tea machines that people use to serve themselves. She did not mention tasks for men at the import company; however, she said that men had to stay in the office until late while women went home on time, and that men had to work on Saturday.

Four of the informants found their positions through newspaper ads and one through a magazine. The other informant was helped by her uncle to find her job at a sweets manufacturing company.

#### IV.2.1 Training

Of the six informants, three said that their training was the same as members of the opposite sex. These three included two convenience

store workers and a teacher at a private school. The full-time female employee at the import company said that training at her company was the same for both sexes, "but in daily life men get better training from our boss or other experienced people. Women are out of the main stream; we aren't allowed to participate in many kinds of meetings!" The two remaining informants, the translator/embassy worker and the worker at the sweets manufacturing company, gave no response to the question regarding the type of training the opposite sex received.

#### IV.2.2 Company Organization

The organizational chart made by the female import company worker showed male managers, assistant managers, and group heads. Women were only employed in the lowest level group. The organizational chart of the female convenience store employee showed a male store manager and male and female part-time workers. The translator/embassy worker drew a chart that showed a male chief secretary, female secretaries, and below them female receptionists. At the sweets manufacturing company men and women were mostly separated into two groups, those in the machinery division which were male and those in product production which were female. In the private teachers school, the boss and all of the other employees were women.



The male informant did not make an organizational chart for his company. In only one company a woman was the boss. Women in the rest of the companies all held lower level positions.

#### IV.2.3 Perceptions of Discrimination

The woman who worked at the private teachers school said that almost all of the other employees were female, including her boss. Therefore, she felt no discrimination at the school. However, she did think that gender discrimination was occurring in Japan. As an example, she stated that the salaries are different for males and females at many companies. In the opinion of this teacher, the workplace is getting better for women. Although, Japanese women cannot expect a big change.

The female employee at the sweets manufacturing company, viewed gender discrimination in terms of different jobs for males and females. She said that typically companies think men are good at using machinery and women are good at doing jobs which they can do "sitting down." According to this informant, positions should not be given to people based on their gender. In addition, she thought that it was discriminatory that women were rarely bosses or presidents. In her

opinion, however, women in Japan are being encouraged to make an effort to obtain "equal opportunity."

The female convenience store worker stated that women are discriminated against because they are "neglected regardless of how well they can do their job or whatever university they graduated from." She said that women get lower salaries and are excluded from the higher positions because all of those jobs are given to men. In addition, she thought it was discriminatory that women are often required to attend parties to please the male executives. In her opinion, women's opportunity increased when computer skills became important in workplaces. However, "two years ago there was an economic recession and companies decreased the number of openings. They still take men in general but don't have openings for women at many places."

The female translator/embassy worker thought a good example of gender discrimination was that males were always in higher positions and that it was rare for females to obtain high positions. In addition, she thought it was not right for companies to refuse to give responsible work to women. The companies assume that women will not stay on the job for a long period of time, and that there is no need to invest in the female employees. Once she was asked to go to a hotel after a job interview. The male interviewer hinted that she could get the job if she went to the hotel with him. She stated that he did not care whether she was

qualified for the job. This experience suggested to her that women are not accepted by Japanese males in the workplace as equals. In her opinion, women's opportunities are not changing.

The female worker at the plywood importing company said she thinks Japan is a male chauvinistic country. "Both men and women have been trained to think that women should obey men." Examples she gave of gender discrimination included men putting calendars of naked women on their desks, women not being able to attend meetings while younger inexperienced men do attend, being required to make tea for men, and having less opportunity for promotion. In addition, she thought it was not right that only women were asked to clean the office and throw away the garbage. Many companies use cleaning services but her company did not because the managers believed the female employees could do the cleaning. In her opinion, opportunities for women will stay the same for awhile. "One reason is that it is difficult for women to get support to continue their career. Generally, the husband and husband's family, especially his mother, require the wife to stay home to take care of the husband and children. Actually, it is hard for the husband to support his wife because he has no time. Men have to stay at the company until late at night. Another reason is that most women want to quit their job after they get married because they have no hope of promotion or getting a higher salary." Instead of having to deal

with problems at a company, women choose to stay at home and do housekeeping. "That is why women try to marry wealthy men. They can enjoy their extra time by attending English school, tennis school, traveling with friends, etc. If women get more opportunity, it might change. But, we have to change the whole system for that!" However, changing the system will take a long time, in her opinion, because Japanese hate to change.

The male informant did not give answers to the two questions regarding gender discrimination in the workplace. In his opinion, women are increasingly gaining acceptance and opportunity in the workplace.

## **Chapter V**

### **Analysis**

As previously stated, the analysis of the data will be done in the form of comparison. Data from this study will be compared to historical information described in the literature review section. In addition, for some of the questions, male and female responses will be compared for similarities and differences.

More than half of the female interviewees in this study had a university education. However, some of these women are still being placed in lower level positions with fewer responsibilities than their male counterparts. This is despite the fact that the level of education for Japanese women has been increasing compared to their sisters of the past. It furthermore shows that companies are not acknowledging their higher qualifications and not using these women to the full extent of their ability.

This study found no evidence from the interviewees' responses that there was any significant difference in the way men and women applied for employment. The only category that showed a slight difference between men and women was that of friends referring potential workers to employers. Twice as many women as men in the sample were referred to employers by friends.

In one case, women who chose occupations as teachers or researchers entered fields with relatively high levels of workplace equality. Conversely, women in other workplaces often received positions relegating them to jobs as clerical workers or assistants. While a few women did not regard different jobs for men and women as discriminatory, this factor does contribute to inequality in the workplace. For example, women with a bachelor degree were receiving lower salaries than equally qualified men. This is due to the fact that they are being placed in clerical jobs, which are also given to high school and junior college graduates, instead of being placed in the higher paying management track jobs with men. From the start these women are given jobs with no room for advancement.

There may be a tendency in Japan to believe that separate positions for men and woman are acceptable. This brings up a possible question for further study: Are employers using this belief to continue the practice of hiring men and women for separate positions? From a Western perspective this practice of separate positions are a major stumbling block in the movement for equality in employment. However, perceptions held by some of the Japanese interviewees' reveal they view disparate treatment of men and women in the same job as discriminatory, but they do not see the structural discrimination that is occurring by having separate positions for men and women. This

Japanese view is likely different from the Western view because discrimination against women is defined differently due to the dominant cultural values held by members of each society.

In terms of the spatial organization, women tend to be in the positions which are the farthest away from the boss. In these hierarchical seating patterns, seats were not assigned according to gender but rather the status of the employee. The closer a person was to the boss in the spatial layout of the office, the higher their position; and the farther away from the boss, the lower their position. For the most part, women in the sample were of lower status than the men and thus occupied the lower end of the seating formation. In this study, informants reported that only two women in their companies or workplaces were top bosses and that only two other women were second in command. This finding is consistent with the statements of several interviewees that few women are able to obtain high level positions.

The fact that only two of the interviewees experienced differential training for the same positions can be viewed positively. From a Western feminist point of view, differential training would be seen as discriminatory, they would applaud the fact that the number of people experiencing this treatment is very low. This result could point to the possibility that employers are dropping discriminatory practices and

adopting more gender neutral policies to align themselves with mandates in the EEO law.

When asked to describe discriminatory acts, several of the female interviewees said they believed that being required to serve tea and act as hostesses at parties was extremely discriminatory. These women were required by their companies to carry out the duties assigned to women in the home. The women felt they should be treated as professional colleagues, not domestic partners.

Many duties assigned to the women were evidence of the fact that the Japanese companies discussed in the sample use a family style structure. Miss A likened her company to a household where men go out to work and women stay home to keep house. Women in these companies do tasks similar to a wife, which include assisting her husband and making him comfortable. For example, women in some companies are required to serve tea and do cleaning around the office. In the case where women are required to live in a dormitory, the company assumes the family responsibility of protecting female members. This finding corresponds to information discussed in the literature review regarding Japanese companies using the structure of the traditional "ie" family.

Some factors included in the questionnaire related to women's treatment in the workplace were age, location of company, size of



company, and full-time or part-time employment status. However, due to the small number of questionnaire responses, it was not possible to determine the affect of these characteristics on how women were treated in the workplace.

When the responses of the questionnaires and interviews were combined, eighty percent of the respondents, according to their own definition, reported gender discrimination in their workplaces. However, a full fifteen percent reported no gender discrimination. Of the combined total of 26 informants, thirty-eight percent, or 10, had experienced acts of discrimination themselves. The answers given to the question, "Describe discrimination or give examples of what you believe to be discriminatory acts?", was used to construct a list of acts the Japanese respondents saw as discriminatory. Discriminatory acts encountered by informants are ranked in order of frequency as follows: 1) few women in high ranking positions, 2) low salaries, 3) different jobs for men and women, 4) hostessing, 5) serving tea, 6) different tasks for the same jobs, 7) cleaning, and 8) sexual harassment.

From these responses a Japanese definition of gender discrimination can be drawn. For this sample, gender discrimination in the workplace was primarily comprised of women being treated differently than men, but also included improper sexual advances. This Japanese definition of discrimination does not differ significantly from the one held

by Western cultures. According to the New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary (1990) to discriminate means "treating differently, to single out for unfavorable treatment" [270].

Although female members in the sample described workplace discrimination as being treated differently than men, there were also women who enjoyed protections, such as menstrual leave. A discussion between Japanese women, concerning equality in the workplace with men and special protections for women, has been ongoing since the early 1910s. For some women, protections may help to outweigh the discrimination which occurs in the workplace. These women may believe they are being treated more fairly than male workers since special protections have been developed to meet their needs in the workplace. However, these very protections perpetuate the continued unequal separation of men and women into different types of jobs.

Finally, another finding that emerged from the interview data is the expectation held by both companies and workers that women would quit upon marriage or childbirth. For this reason, companies did not like to hire females for fear the women would leave and the investment in their training would be lost. This finding corresponds to historical information regarding women being forced to retire prior to childbearing. Although forced retirement, which was prevalent historically, has been banned, the

expectation that women will quit has remained. This expectation continues to pressure women into taking early retirement.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Conclusion**

In summary, this study began by asking the question, What is the workplace like for women in Japan? This was followed by a literature review which was conducted on the Japanese women's movement, women in the labor force, and related theories on women and the workplace. After the literature review, both in-depth interviews and questionnaires were conducted with Japanese men and women who had previous work experience. From the data gathered in the interviews and questionnaires I discovered several significant patterns. For example, women's workplace training seems to be moving toward a higher level of equality with men, but traditional forms of discrimination are still present. The conclusion deals with some possibilities of furthering women's workplace opportunity in Japan.

Establishment of equal opportunity for men and women in education will be a necessity for women to obtain equal opportunity in the workplace. For educational opportunity to be equalized, familial roles given to sons and daughters will undergo an essential period of reappraisal. Then, Japanese parents may begin to see education as beneficial to the career advancement of both sexes. Inequality in education may be resolved through the

very acts of women themselves in seeking an education: Japanese parents may begin to view education as increasingly beneficial for their daughters as more young women strive to obtain and hold good jobs. In effect, it will take the vision of a few women who abandon the idea of having their own families and break free of women's traditional roles for careers in the workplace. Many of the women interviewed in this study have been able to pursue higher levels of education, at least one informant said she holds the hope of obtaining a career.

Now a large number of Japanese young women are choosing to pursue higher education. It is my opinion these women will be far more likely than their predecessors to remain in the workplace after marriage or childbirth. This is likely to be the case because once these women obtain an education, they will not want to lose the status and income that the education has brought them. The stories of the women in this sample support this observation because at least four were past the prime marriageable age and thus will be less likely to marry. Unless like one of the female informants they chose to marry a foreign man while in the United States, in which case they will likely not return to Japan to live. Therefore, after these women complete their education, they are likely to remain in the workplace as career women.

Another way that family affects women's workplace opportunities is in the area of child care and household duties. Kawashima (1995) states:

As long as changes in the male-centered workplace culture and the share of responsibility at home by males stay minimal, Japanese women's ambivalent attitude toward work is likely to prevail. Firms, in turn, continue to view women as secondary workers and, thus, the cycle of inequality is not easily broken [289].

The Japanese government has been making an effort to help relieve the burden of this familial duty for women. Daycare centers are being established to provide child care during the day for working mothers. However, the number of centers currently open for business are not adequately meeting the majority of women's needs. In the area of household duties, husbands would need to be socialized to believe that housework is not just women's work. For the women in this sample, the fact that current child care facilities are inadequate and women are still responsible for all of the household duties means that they will more than likely have to forgo marriage or family if they intend to stay in the workplace.

Pressure to quit a job is also tied to women's roles within the family. They experience social pressure to conform to the roles which society holds for them. This expectation many begin to decline as more

pioneering women either reject getting married and having children altogether for careers, or as child care facilities become more abundant.

The companies which employed the women in this study still viewed the idea of separate jobs for men and women positively. If women are continually viewed as separate or different from men, they will not be given the same positions as men. Certain jobs will be kept as male and female jobs, thus predetermining the types of jobs available to men and women. Some Japanese companies have already begun to change this practice of separate jobs for men and women. This turn-around comes in the form of offering women the choice of a managerial track position or a clerical track position upon entrance into the company, or later offering a conversion from a clerical to a management track position. However, there are few women in management positions because of the high time demand. Even male managers are beginning to question their total dedication to the company, and it is highly unlikely that women will want to agree to the total commitment required by the company, either. Therefore, this extra barrier to higher level positions for women may decrease if men act on their desire to stop devoting all of their time to the company.

Now, I will return to a discussion of the theories explained in the literature review chapter. To begin, I will discuss how cultural relativism affects Japanese working women and the Japanese feminist movement.

The findings of this study support the use of cultural relativism as a tool of analysis for Japanese women's workplace opportunities. For example, it was found that the Japanese companies in this sample had family style structures paralleling a traditional family model. For Japanese women, this compounds the difficulty of their struggle for equal opportunity. Western women struggle against family structure at home but not a family structured workplace. However, many changes have occurred in Japanese business since the beginning of industrialization which have resulted in adjustments to the traditional way of life, and further change will occur.

Cultural relativism should have an effect on the Western feminist view regarding the advancement of Japanese feminism. Western feminists should come to understand that Japanese feminism has grown within a very different cultural tradition. An example of the differences in cultural traditions would be the family style structure used by Japanese companies which is infrequently used in Western countries. Thus, the changes which Japanese women choose to make and the speed with which these changes are made are likely to be vastly different from the West.

Next, I will discuss how human capital theory works within the framework of the Japanese workplace. From the information gathered from the informants, it is apparent that Japanese employers have a



preference for male employees. This preference stems from the fact that the employers believe that women will quit working once they marry or have children. In addition, educational attainment is an employer preference. In Japan, this has meant that women were discriminated against because their education level was generally lower than that of men. Therefore, the findings in this study support the human capital approach, since the women's education in the sample was high and they still received lower level positions.

Internal labor market theory seems to fit well as a tool of analysis for the Japanese employment structure, which has core and periphery companies as well as core and periphery workers within those companies. The information collected in this study shows that several women had jobs in core companies, but those jobs did not come with the guarantee of lifetime employment. Thus, although women are being admitted to core companies, they are being placed in periphery positions for no other reason than they are not men. The option to begin on the management track or to do a conversion from a clerical to a management position may eventually bring women into core worker positions. However, until the idea of separate jobs for men and women is abandoned women will continue to be placed in peripheral positions based on their sex.

This shows that there is a need for more than just suggestions like those set forth in the EEO law. Establishing consequences for companies that do not adhere to equal opportunity legislation is one way to increase the number of companies practicing equal employment. In the past, mere suggestion in the law has been effective in promoting change; however, now it appears that few companies are following suggestions to make substantial changes. The time has come to put some power behind those suggestions. The information collected in this study, together with data from other recent studies, could be used to correct what is adversely affecting women's opportunity in the workplace. Examples of factors affecting women's opportunity are education, availability of child care, and separate jobs for men and women. With this information as a guide, policies could be drafted in line with the changes needed to increase women's opportunities in the workplace. Specifically, a policy could be drafted that would regulate drop-off and pick-up times at daycare centers to give working women a few hours leeway instead of the current strict policy on holding youngsters no longer than eight hours per day. This policy change might not completely solve the problem of inadequate child care, but it could ease some of the burden experienced by mothers working outside of the home.

How has the workplace changed for Japanese women? While it would be correct to state that Japanese women's workplace conditions

and opportunity have improved a great deal in relation to the past, there are still many more changes that will have to take place before women are treated the same as their male counterparts. How does the ideal of harmony discussed in the introduction make Japanese women's struggle for equality in the workplace different? The level of social pressure to conform to the traditional gender roles assigned by Japanese society appears to be much stronger than in the West. Therefore, the struggle to obtain equality in the workplace will likely be more difficult for Japanese women because their struggle with pressure to insure societal harmony is more intense. I agree with the statement made by Brinton (1993): "Change in Japan will mainly be produced by the economic necessity for employers to hire and keep good workers. In the decades to come more and more of these workers will be women" [238]. Additional issues that are important to future change for women in the Japanese workplace are pressure from overseas and a predicted labor shortage [Kawashima 1995].

### VI.1 Statement of Contribution

In writing this thesis, I hope to make a contribution to the small amount of literature in English on women in the workplace in Japan. In addition, this thesis offers a slightly different perspective. Instead of

offering the one sided perspective of women, men were included so that a broader view of the workplace situation could be obtained. Furthermore, I was able to construct a Japanese definition of gender discrimination which could be useful in future research. Also, this thesis adds to the information on the Japanese workplace by documenting recent changes in women's opportunities.

## VI.2 Further Research Possibilities

Further research on women in the Japanese workplace would help to further clarify the data collected in this study. This additional research should be conducted in Japan with men and women still working so the data would be fresh and not based on recollection. In addition, engaging in participant observation in one or two companies would give the researcher first hand knowledge of how the workplace is for Japanese women. It would also be advisable to use a larger sample of men and women in more varied employment positions. Selecting workers from varied Japanese cities would serve to show regional differences in employment conditions. Tokyo, Kyoto, and Kobe are three cities with well-known, distinctive characteristics that may well suit a future study. Tokyo is the nation's capital and the country's largest city. Kyoto is

known as a more traditional city, and Kobe is characterized as an Americanized city.

I am unfamiliar with the employment magazines and books that the interviewees frequently mentioned. Further research into ways of finding employment may show why these magazines are so popular. These magazines may represent a labor market change from personalized labor market, where individuals are introduced to employers, to a generalized labor market in which individuals find employment on their own. In addition, further research into job hunting on a larger scale may turn up more substantial and important differences in the ways that men and women go about looking for work. Since, this topic has been discussed by only a few researchers, more research would be extremely useful in completing the picture of how women seek and obtain employment in the workplace.

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## **Appendices**

**Appendix A: Research Questionnaire****Survey: The Japanese Workplace, Men, Women, and Gender  
Discrimination**

Student Researcher, Gwyn Madden 737-8854

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: Male Female (circle one)

Was your work experience: Part-time Full-time (circle one)

How long did you work for this company?

What product or service did your company produce?

In what city was your company located?

Approximately how many employees worked in your company?

1-50 50-100 100-250 250-500 500+ (circle one)

What tasks or activities would you do for the company in a typical day?

What tasks or activities would members of the opposite sex do in your section of the company?

Give the gender and describe the position/status of the people who worked in your section. (Make an organizational chart for your section)

How did you find your job?

What kind of training did the company give you?

Was the training that you received similar to members of the opposite sex in the same position?

Describe what you think gender discrimination means and give an example of an act in the workplace that show gender discrimination?

Describe gender discrimination in the Japanese workplace? (Give an example)

In your opinion, is women's acceptance and opportunities in the workplace changing? How? (Increasing, staying the same, or decreasing)

**Appendix B: Research Questionnaire Informed Consent Letter**

The workplace in Japan has long been studied for its successful business endeavors, however, a new area of interest has arisen regarding how Japanese women are operating in the workplace. With feminism so strong in many Western industrialized countries people in these countries are looking worldwide to see how feminism is helping women to improve their lives. Japan's form of a women's movement seems to be different than most and so is a fascinating area for research. The purpose of this study is to survey individuals and obtain a "peoples" perspective on how the women's movement has and is effecting Japan focusing on the workplace. The information, when collected, will provide people with a better picture on what type of a women's movement Japan has and how the Japanese people feel about the movement.

As a student, working on a thesis project, I am asking your help in uncovering your perspective on the Japanese women's movement and how it is effecting the workplace. We would appreciate it if you would take approximately 20 minutes to complete the attached survey. Your responses, together with others, will be combined for qualitative summaries. Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question. Only a handful of people will be asked to take part in the survey so your participation is vital to the project.

The answers you provide are strictly confidential and special precautions have been established to protect the confidentiality of your responses. For the survey only the researchers will have access to the participants names and any documentation will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (541) 737-8854. If I am not available when you call, please leave a message and I will call you back.

Thank you for your help. We appreciate you cooperation.

Sincerely,

Gwyn Madden, Student Researcher

gdm

### **Appendix C: Research Interview Informed Consent Letter**

The workplace in Japan has long been studied for its successful business endeavors, however, a new area of interest has arisen regarding how Japanese women are operating in the workplace. With feminism so strong in many Western industrialized countries people in these countries are looking worldwide to see how feminism is helping women to improve their lives. Japan's form of a women's movement seems to be different than most and so is a fascinating area for research. The purpose of this study is to survey individuals and obtain a "peoples" perspective on how the women's movement has and is affecting Japan focusing on the workplace. The information, when collected, will provide people with a better picture on what type of a women's movement Japan has and how the Japanese people feel about the movement.

As a student, working on a thesis project, I am asking your help in uncovering your perspective on the Japanese women's movement and how it is affecting the workplace. We would appreciate it if you would take approximately one hour to meet with me and to do an in-depth interview. Your responses, together with others, will be combined for qualitative summaries. Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question and you may terminate the interview at any time. Only a handful of people will be asked to participate in the in-depth interview so your participation is vital to the project.

The answers you provide are strictly confidential and special precautions have been established to protect the confidentiality of your responses. For the in-depth interview only the researchers will have access to the participants names and any documentation from the interviews will be destroyed at the conclusion of this project.

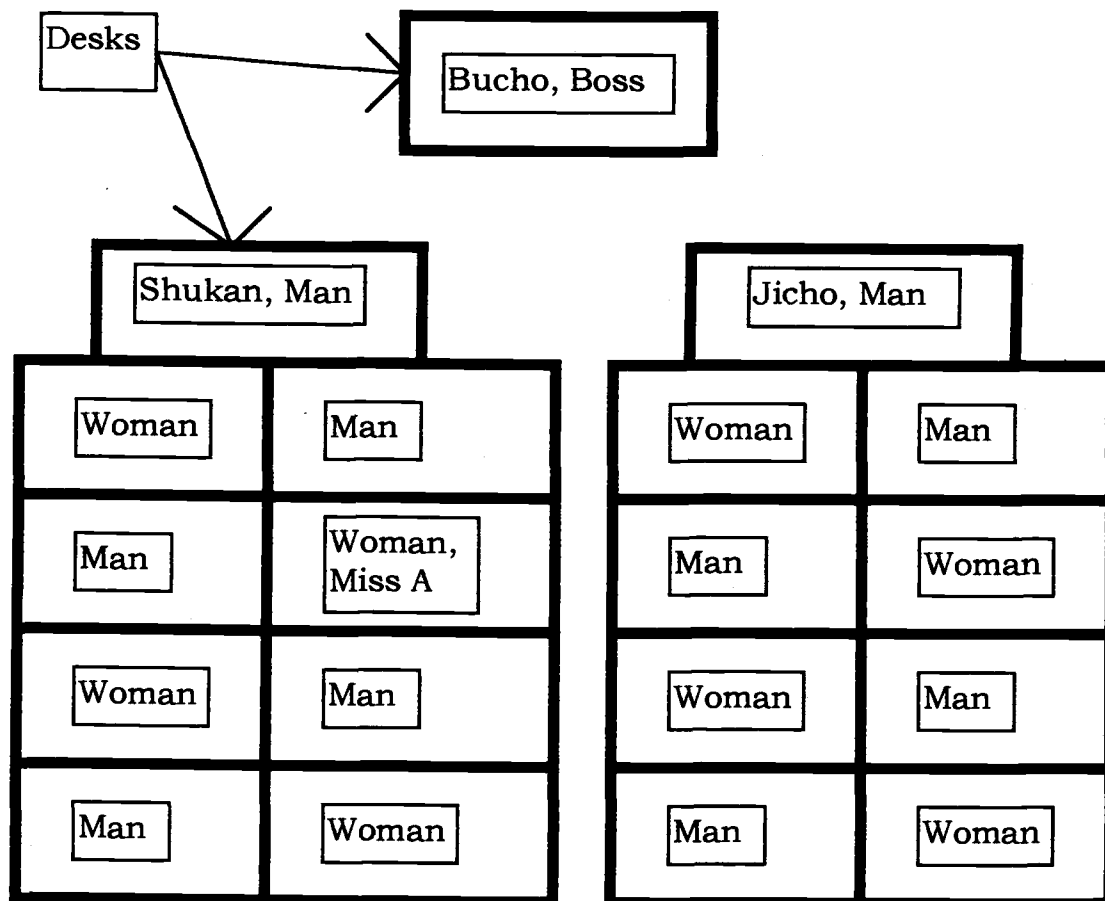
If you have any questions, please contact me at (541) 737-8854. If I am not there when you call, please leave a message and I will call back.

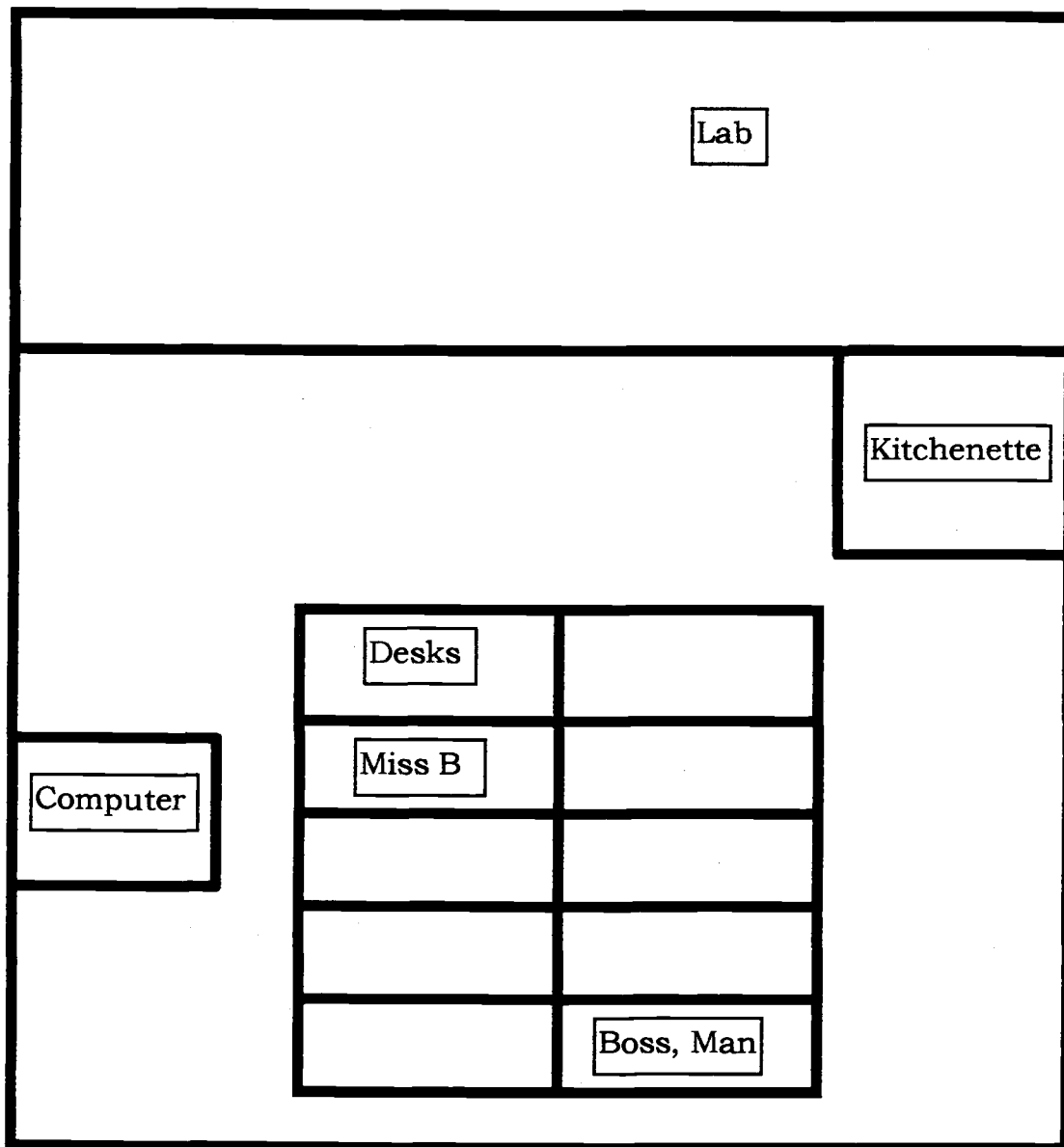
Thank you for your help. We appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Gwyn Madden, Student Researcher

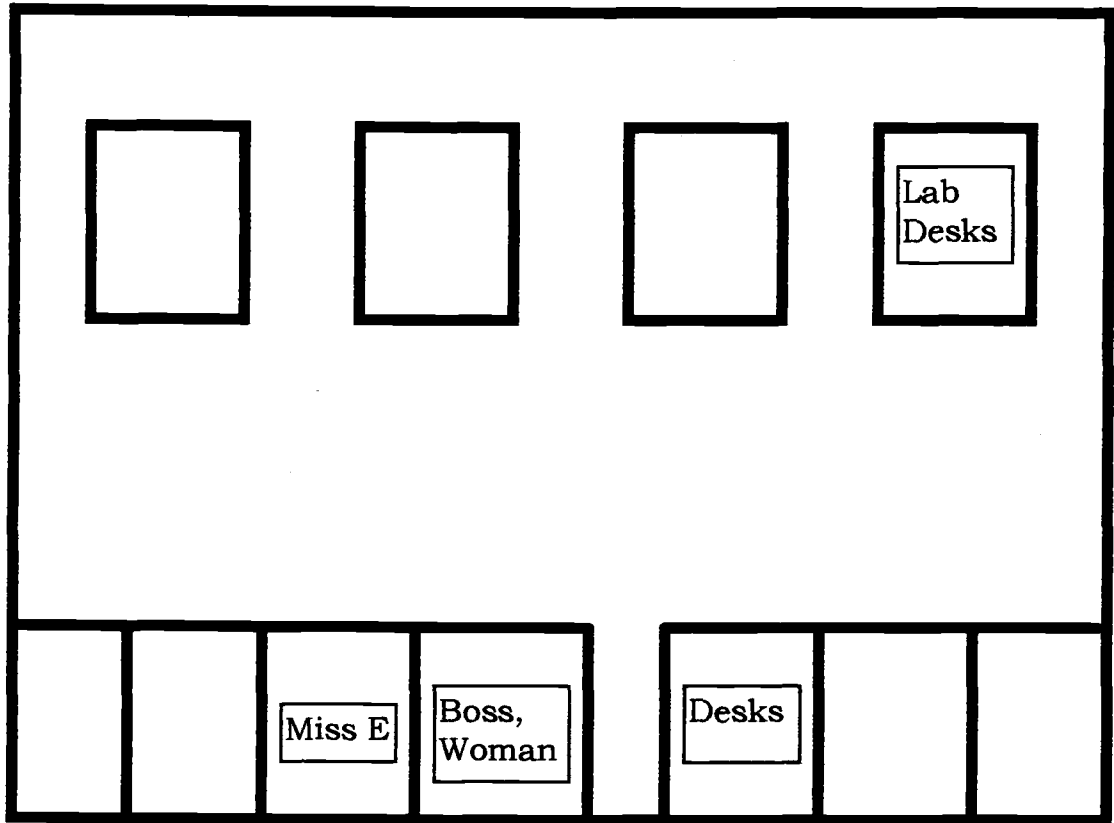
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**Appendix D: Miss A's Office Drawing**

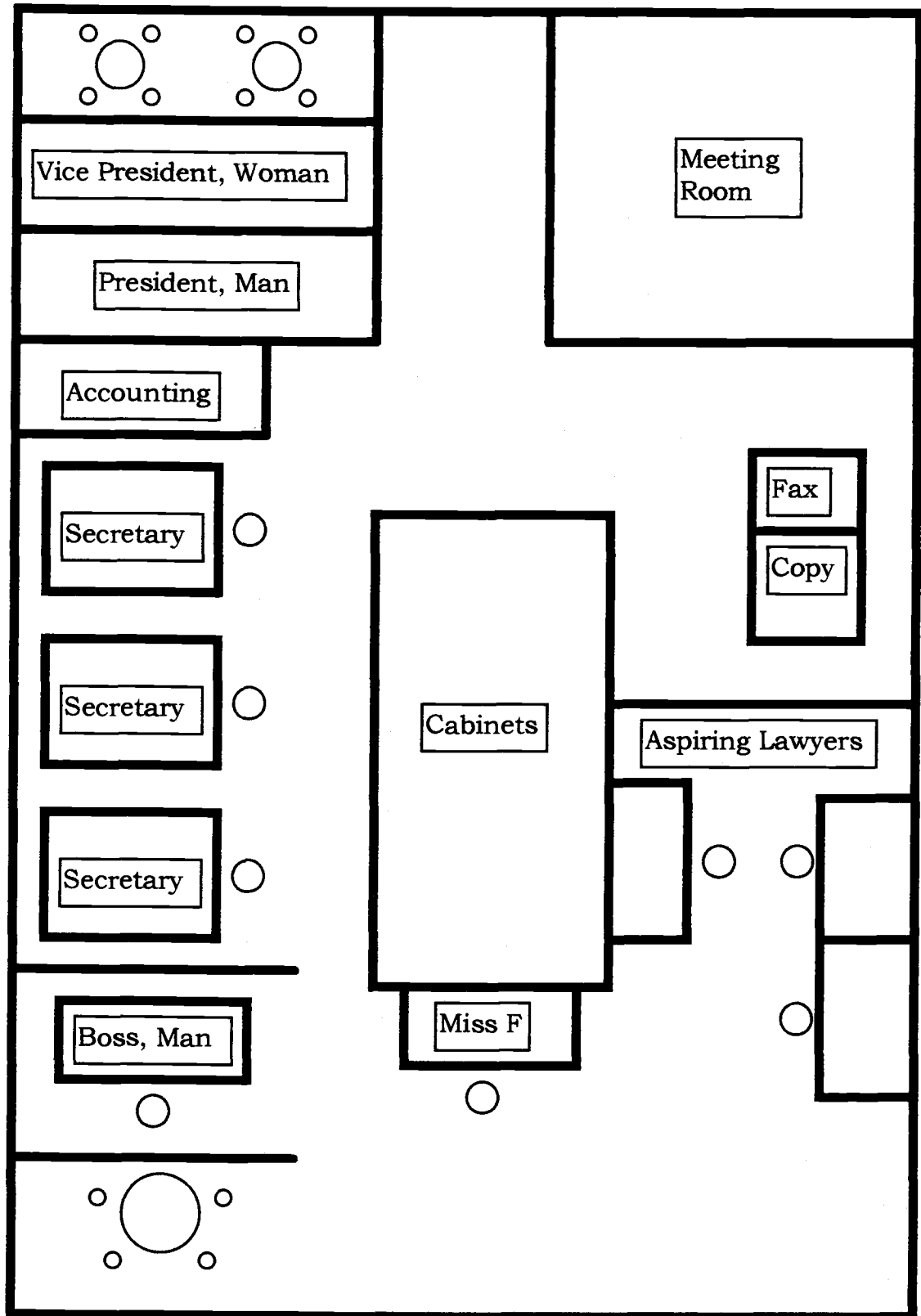
**Appendix E: Miss B's Office Drawing**



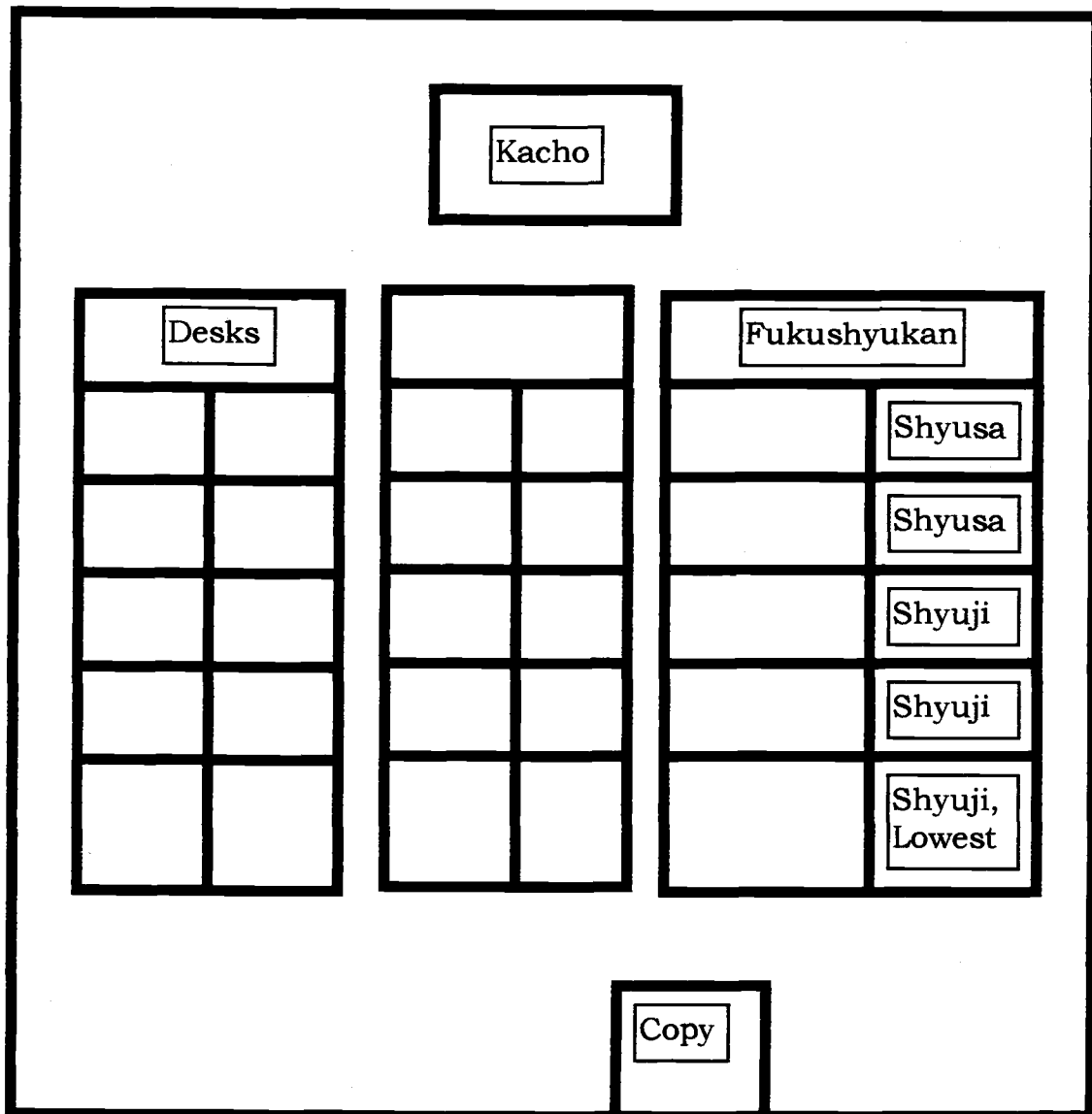
**Appendix F:** Miss E's Office Drawing



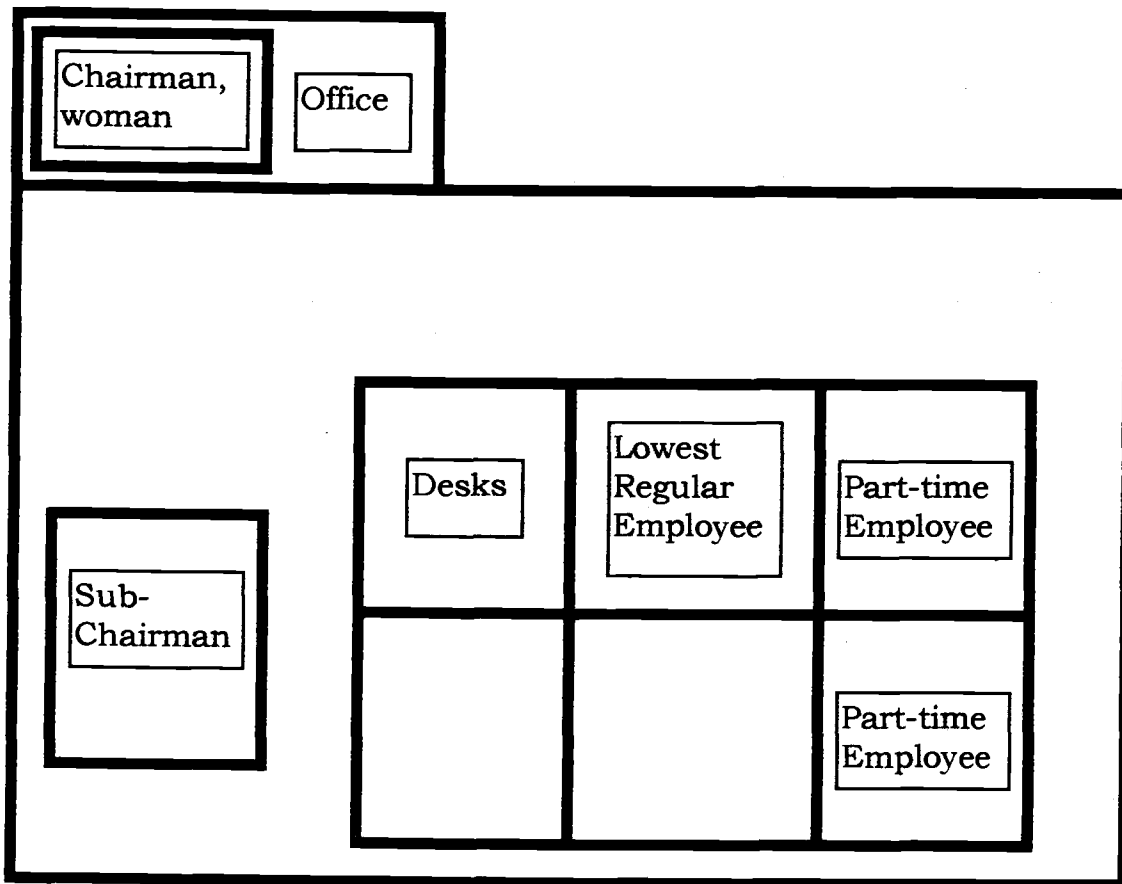
**Appendix G:** Miss F's Office Drawing



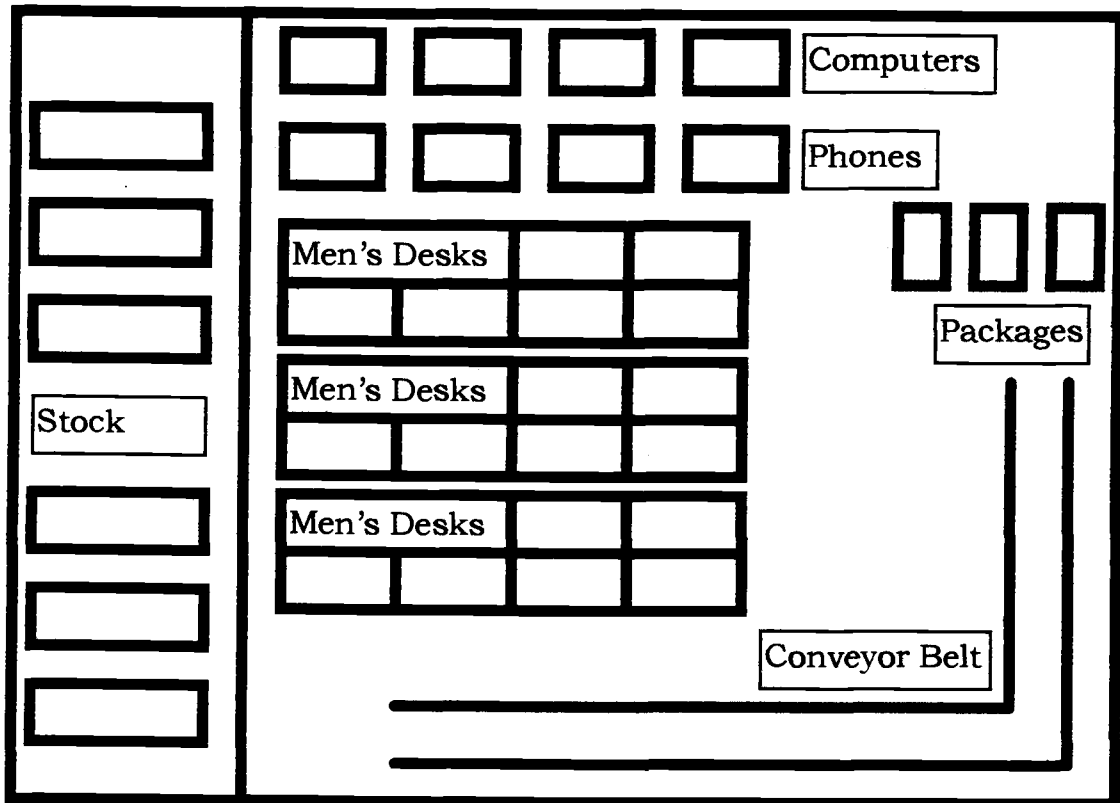
**Appendix H:** Miss G's Office Drawing, Position One

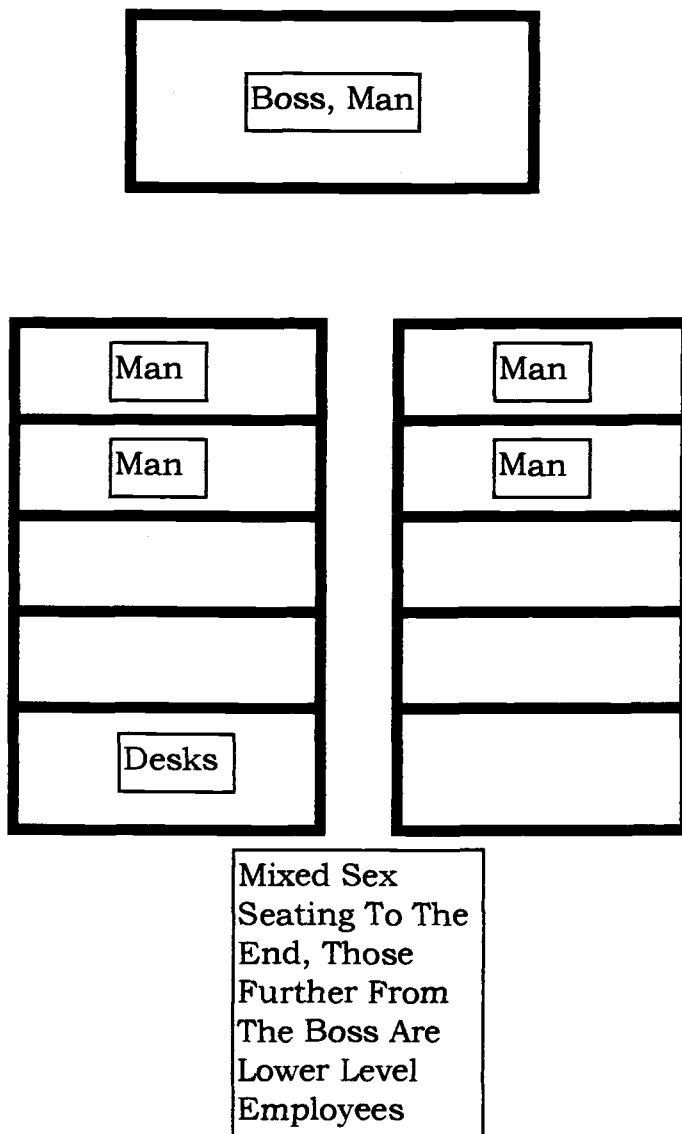


**Appendix I:** Miss G's Office Drawing, Position Two

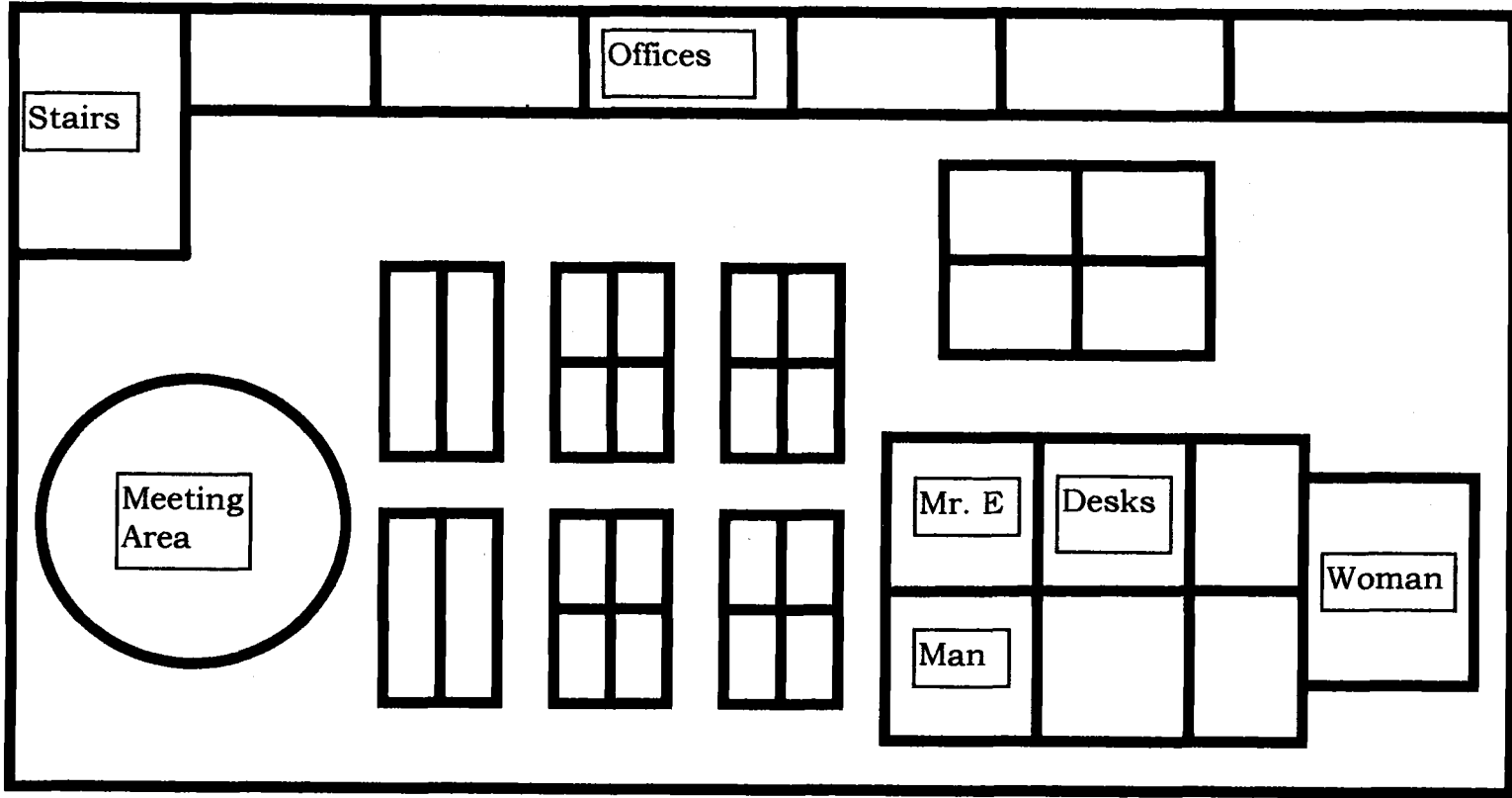


**Appendix J:** Miss H's Office Drawing

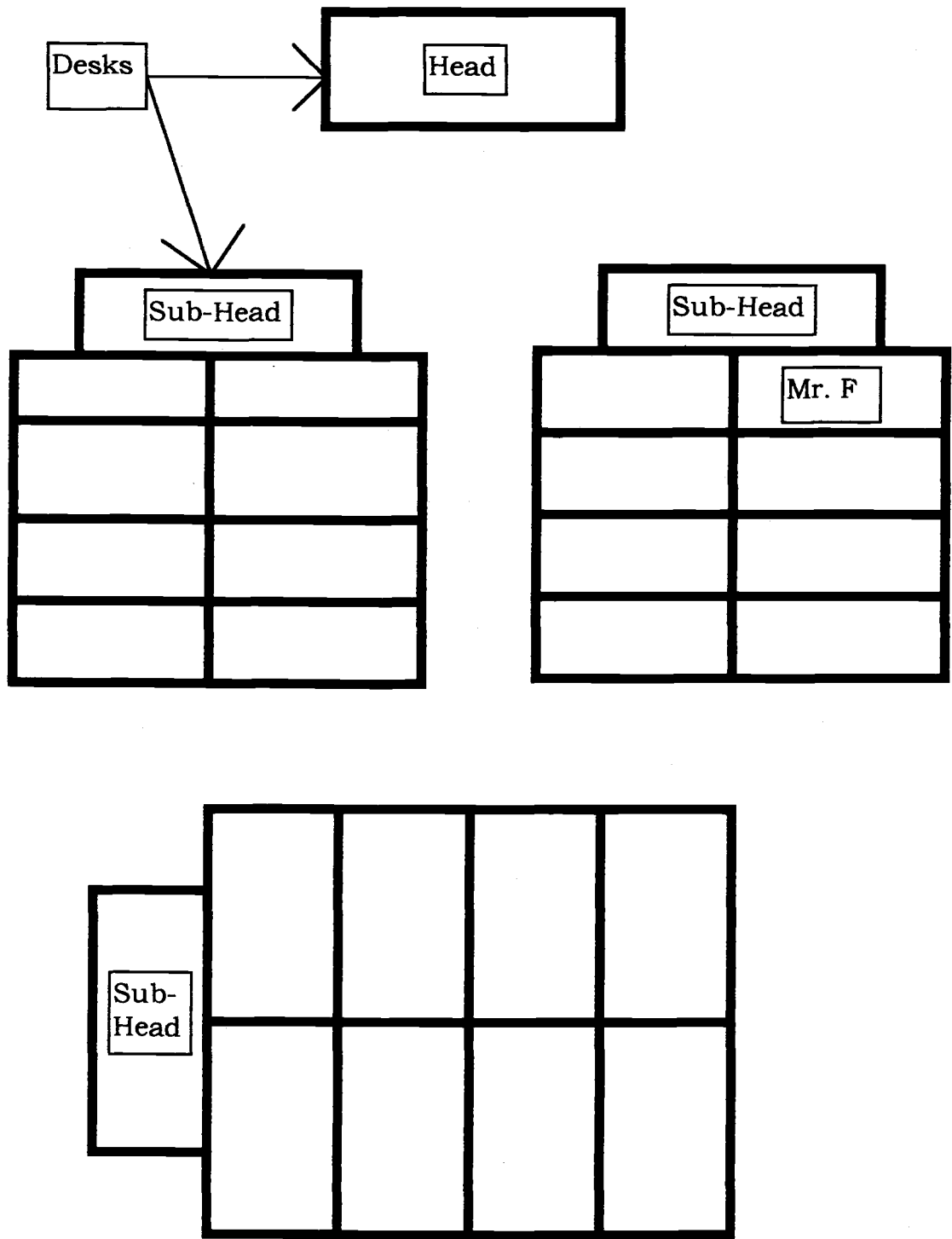


**Appendix K: Miss I's Office Drawing**

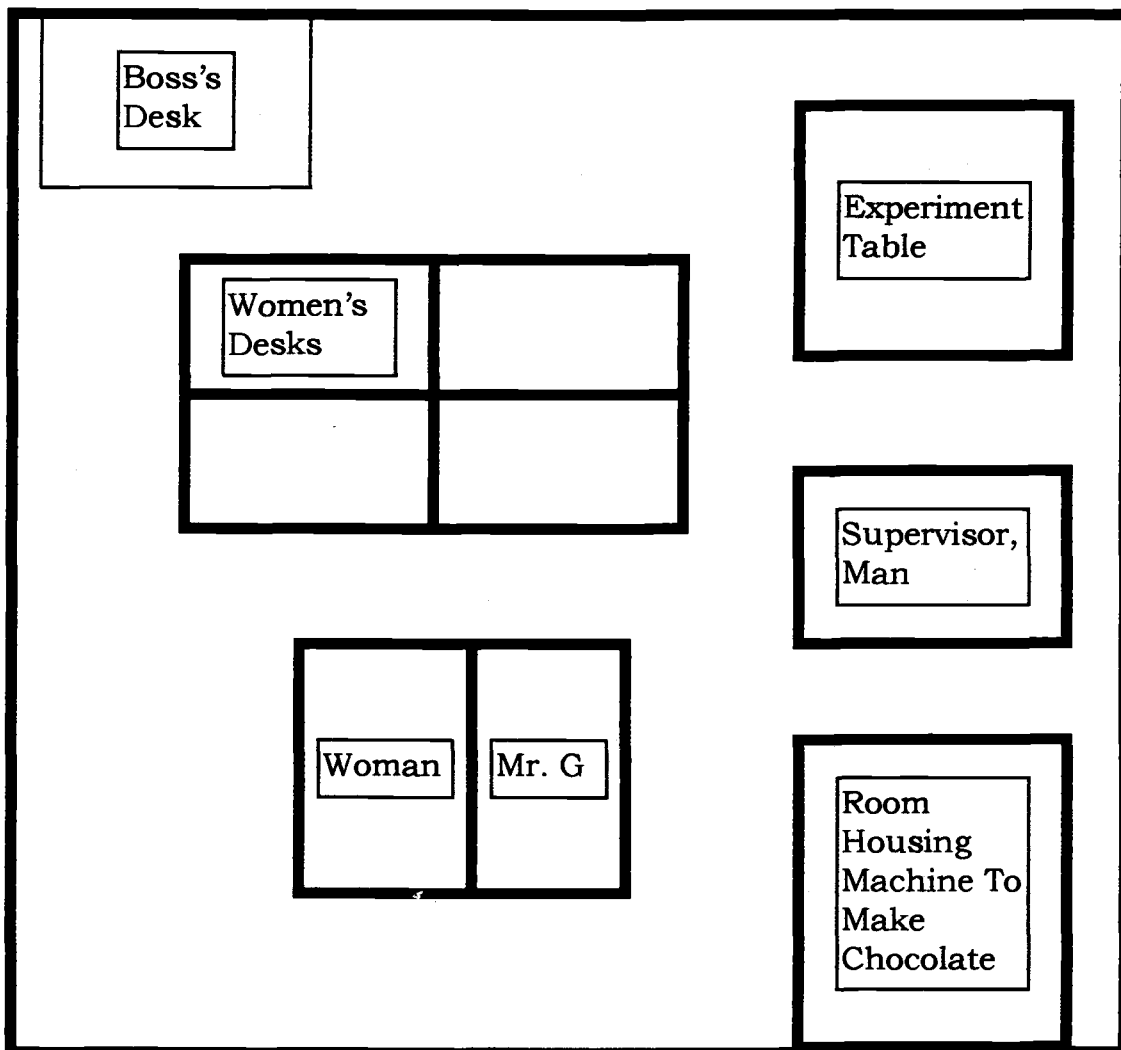
**Appendix L: Mr. E's Office Drawing**



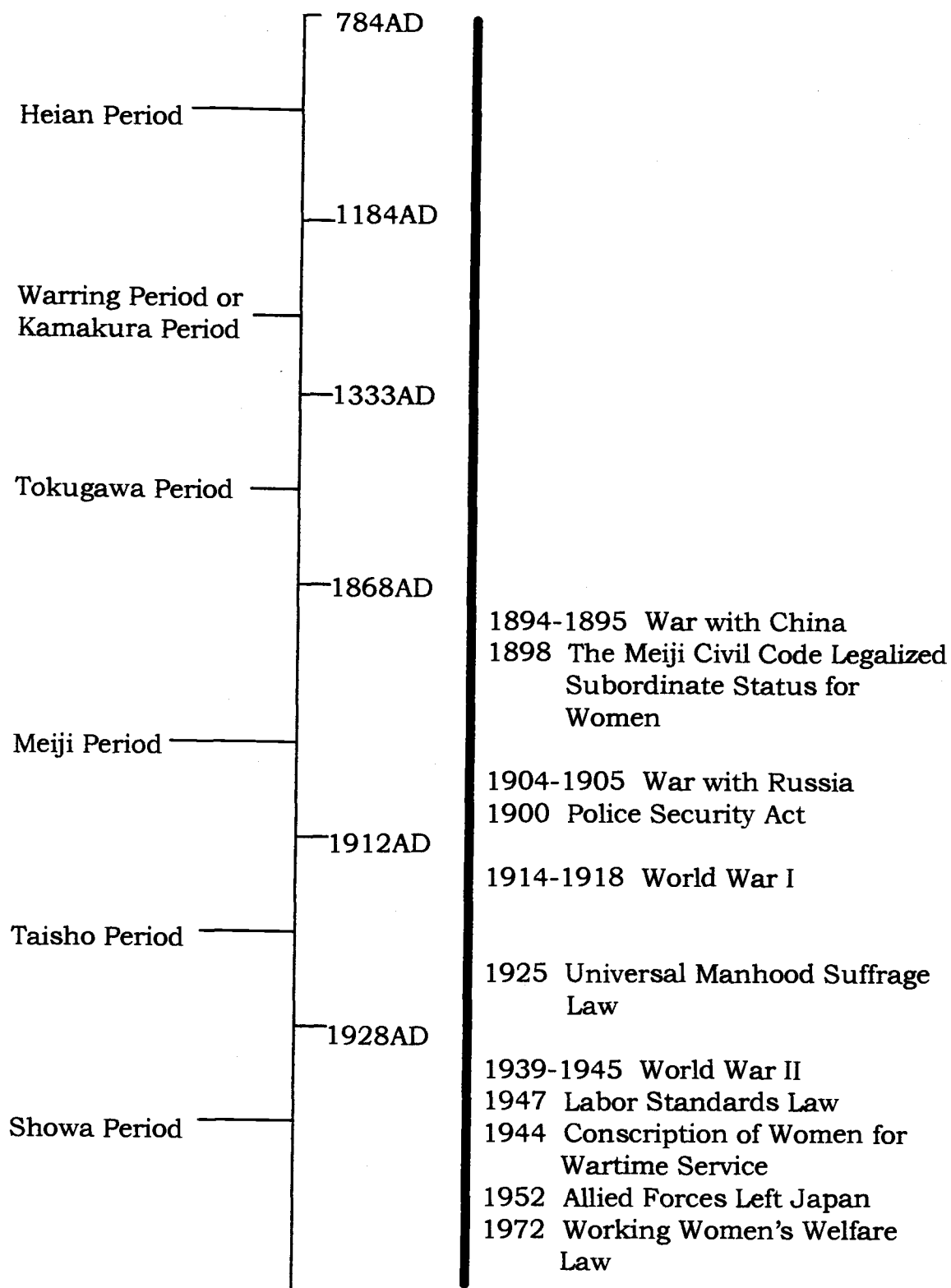
**Appendix M:** Mr. F's Office Drawing





**Appendix N: Mr. G's Office Drawing**

## Appendix O: Japanese History Timeline



## Appendix O: Japanese History Timeline (Continued)

