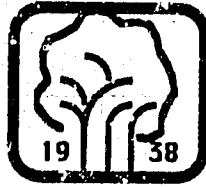


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**California State Polytechnic University, Pomona**  
**International Center**

# **Women Managers in the Banking Industry in India**

**By**

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## Preface

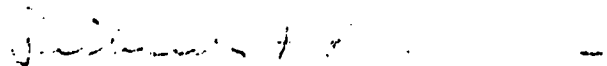
With the dual objectives of providing information on successful experiments in economic growth that might be replicated elsewhere and of providing information to faculty of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona that could help them in working in developing countries, the International Center of Cal Poly Pomona has produced a series of short monographs for distribution to appropriate faculty, AID officials, developing country institutions, and assistance agencies.

Seven such monographs are being issued, principally based on case studies. Their preparation and publication have been made possible by a Matching Support Grant from the Office of Research and University Relations, Bureau for Science and Technology, of the United States Agency for International Development.

This monograph contains a case study by Cal Poly Professor Dr. Shanthi Srinivas on "Women Managers in the Banking Industry in India". The study is based on interviews in India with women managers and executives in banking. The monograph could be used as a sample study on opportunities for women professionals in development elsewhere.

Additional monographs in the series cover EXCEL for Managers (in French), Interactive Electronic Distance Education in Zimbabwe, Women Who are Making a Difference in Swaziland, Student Career-Related Services in Egypt at Cairo and Suez Canal Universities, Foreign Exchange Liberalization in Egypt, and Strategies to Achieve World Class Manufacture in Mexico (in Spanish).

The International Center of Cal Poly, Pomona would welcome observations on these monographs from recipients.



Richard F. Pedersen  
Director, International Programs

**WOMEN MANAGERS IN THE BANKING INDUSTRY IN INDIA**

**NOVEMBER, 1992**

**Shanthi Srinivas  
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## Abstract

The focus of this manuscript is on the role played by women managers in the banking industry in India. It provides a brief overview of the status of Indian women and the progress they have made in Indian society. A short summary of the banking industry in India is also included. The primary objective of the monograph is to describe the characteristics and strengths of women managers in the banking industry from the perspective of these individuals. Issues related to mentoring programs, discrimination and barriers faced by women managers in their careers are explored.

Seventeen women managers and executives working in a commercial bank in India completed a questionnaire. The results of the study indicated that women considered factors such as determination, hardwork, patience and tolerance to be unique characteristics that women possess. They indicated that women were better at interpersonal skills, motivating their subordinates and using participative management techniques.

The single women in the study indicated that they faced several forms of discrimination, especially related to promotion and training opportunities. One of the significant barriers to career progress mentioned by married women related to their dual responsibilities of fulfilling their domestic as well as professional responsibilities. The majority of the women felt that the transfer and promotion policies of the banking industry created serious barriers to their advancement to managerial jobs.

In general, it was felt that the banking industry was more conducive to women employees than other types of industries. This was due to the favorable work hours, compensation packages and the prestige of bank jobs. Secondary research showed however, that women make up only a little over 11% of the workforce in commercial banks, and further, that only 4% of the managerial and executive level jobs are held by women. These are surprisingly low numbers, considering the perceived favorability of this industry.

There are several recommendations that are made to improve the participation of women in the banking industry. It is suggested that the central issues to improving the status of women in this industry are those of control and choice. Women should be provided with alternatives regarding different aspects of their careers and the choice of focussing on a certain career path should be theirs alone. These choices should cover training programs, transfers, as well as promotions. By allowing women to be in control of their careers, those who wish to devote their attention primarily to their work life can excel and be promoted, while those who wish to give priority to their domestic responsibilities can choose an alternative career path which may not be as demanding and may lead to slower career progress.

Several additional recommendations related to mentorship and training programs that will result in greater participation of competent women in the banking industry are also presented.

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## **I. Introduction**

The progress of any country is intimately linked to its ability to develop and use its human resources effectively. This is particularly true in a developing nation such as India. Women, as a significant part of this human resource pool will play a vital role in the economic, social and political development of India as it heads towards the twenty first century. While the participation of women in the workforce in India is on the rise, their inclusion into the exclusive male dominated professions such as engineering, criminal law and corporate leadership is still limited. Another such area is bank management. Women constitute a little over 11% of the workforce in the banking industry (Khandelwal, 1988). However, among the managerial ranks, women occupy less than 4% of the available positions. This represents a significant disparity in the participation of men and women in the upper echelons of bank employment.

The present study will focus on women managers in the banking industry in India. The purpose of the study is to understand the role played by women managers in this industry, by identifying the unique strengths of women managers as they see themselves and by uncovering the barriers they face as they progress in their careers.

In order to understand the role played by women managers in the banking industry we will begin with a brief description of the role of women in India and the progress they have made in the Indian society. We will then present a short summary of the banking industry before we analyze the results of the data we gathered for this study.

### **The Indian Woman**

Any meaningful insight regarding the Indian woman cannot be gained without describing the unique cultural heritage of the group to which she belongs. This heritage is derived from two historical sources: the matrilineal family organization and matrilineal religious traditions. The matrilineal family organization consists of a system in which property is owned in common by men and women and both sexes are in control of their own sexuality to a certain extent (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). The matrilineal religious traditions, which thousands of years ago emphasized the idea of female power or *Shakti*, provided a unique base for this power. Prior to the arrival of the Aryans who migrated to India around the year 1500 before the Christian era, the many indigenous communities in India used female symbols of worship and prayed to the mother goddess. Since many of these communities were primarily agricultural in nature, God was female and the Earth Mother was considered supreme. With the establishment and influence of the Aryan traditions with their patriarchal systems, the importance of the female sex was diminished and several power struggles ensued.

These aspects of the cultural heritage of women in India lead to certain essential differences in terms of the mechanisms that have been used to control women's power in India and in

the Western world. While in the West, the concept of the women as the weaker sex is common, in India, especially among the male-dominated communities, it is believed that women's power needs to be contained. Both cultures therefore, impose various controls to deal with women's power or lack thereof. The nature of these control mechanisms and the manner in which they are executed have profound implications for female progress in these two very different cultures. We can extend this argument and state that in the Indian context, women may be denied positions of power and authority due to a belief that women may be dangerous in such positions whereas, in the Western context they may be denied such positions due to society's perception that women lack the necessary ability or are inadequate in some manner.

Women played a significant part in India's independence movement to gain freedom from British rule. Gandhi wanted women to be an integral part of the national movement and involved them in his nonviolence disobedience struggles. He played a significant role in inspiring women and emphasized their equality with men as seen in the following quote found in Devendra (1985).

Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he . . . . By sheer force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have.

At the time of independence, India established a democratic system of government, instituting equal voting rights to men and women. Several progressive legal reforms were instituted emphasizing equal rights for women in the areas of matrimony and divorce, inheritance and the right to education and employment (Chatterji, 1988).

At the present time, one of the most important trends related to the India woman which was revealed in the recent census figures is that women constitute a numerical minority of the population (Narayanan, 1992). The national average of females to males in the population is 929 to 1,000. This is in contrast to other countries where there are more females compared to males due to greater longevity associated with women and their ability to survive the crucial early years of life. Different explanations have been offered for this trend, the most significant of which has been the neglect of female children, thus making them more susceptible to disease and malnutrition. Other alarming trends indicate greater incidents of female infanticide (Narayanan, 1992) in rural areas and the practice among wealthy parents of sex selection that favors male offsprings.

On a more positive note, several changes in the socioeconomic and educational levels of women have had a favorable impact on their progress. In the next section we will explore these issues.

## Progress in the Status of Women

Describing the status of women in India is a daunting task and any statement regarding this group is likely to be a sweeping generalization due to the tremendous variation in factors such as socioeconomic status, education, geographic location, religion, and caste. Nevertheless, it is important to come up with a reasonable backdrop in which to discuss the roles played by women and to understand their unique position in the context of the Indian setting.

Generally, middle class, educated women residing in large metropolitan areas enjoy considerable freedom of movement and expression giving the impression that Indian women enjoy a status comparable to their male counterparts. As Desai and Krishnaraj, (1987) point out, there are many visible women in political positions that reinforce this image of equality. However, in some remote rural areas, women tend to suffer several forms of economic and social oppression and are definitely considered inferior to men. In these areas, they actually seem to be confined to the home while fulfilling their principle responsibility of taking care of their immediate family and relatives (Mandelbaum, 1988).

The perceptions of the status of women change dramatically as we move from an urban setting to a remote rural region, especially one that consists of subsistence farming. In such places, women typically work three shifts a day tending to their families first, weeding the crops for a meagre wage and foraging for fuel and vegetables to cook their meals before returning home to prepare dinner and complete the evening chores (Jacobson, 1992). Such women spend twice as many hours working and supporting their families as their husbands and yet do not own the land they work on and despite their efforts, find themselves poorer each year. Additionally, their work is undervalued and their status is dismal when compared to their husbands and other male relatives.

Education is perceived as a gateway to higher status the world over for decades. In Western society, women believe that one way to achieve equality is to acquire formal education to compete successfully in the job market. In India, historically, males receive a greater share of educational resources in spite of efforts by the government to improve the status of female education. Traditionally, within the family, when money is short, preference is given to the male members of the family for educational expenses (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). The family plays a key role in the educational qualification of females. A study conducted by Blumberg and Dwaraki (1980) showed that the family, most importantly, the father had a significant influence on the extent to which the women were educated. Only 7% of the participants in this study indicated that continuing their education was their own choice.

Interestingly, as observed by many sociologists including Srinivas (1978), education was seen as an asset in finding an eligible groom rather than as a way of attaining economic independence, especially among the wealthier classes. Srinivas (1978) noted that colleges and universities are often regarded not as institutions for acquiring knowledge but instead as "respectable waiting places for girls who wish to get married." This attitude has changed somewhat with the increasing participation of women in the work environment and with

the prevalence of two income households. However, there still remains a significant number of women who find themselves in this situation. To them, an education provides an edge in the highly competitive marriage market.

The religious traditions of India combined with the variations in geographic location, play a significant role in the status of women. Hindu and Muslim women in the "purdah belt" of northern India have different experiences from those women in the south. The term *purdah* refers to a set of prescribed behavior patterns for women related to veiling the face and covering the body and restricting the movement outside the house. The women in the north, especially Muslim women, are much more likely to be subjected to these restrictions than their counterparts in the southern regions of India (Mandelbaum, 1988). One explanation for this difference between the northern and southern regions of India, is that women have traditionally worked in the rice paddy fields of the south and this automatically granted them freedom of movement outside their homes and allowed them to enjoy a higher status than the women in the northern wheat growing regions.

Again, the practice of *purdah* along with its restrictions is much more prevalent in the rural areas than in urban centers. With an increase in education and socioeconomic status, many of these restrictions tend to fade away as more practical concerns of working and earning a living take precedence. In metropolitan cities, many women have considerable freedom and find themselves enjoying the same favorable status as their male counterparts.

The caste system in India is more than 2,000 years old and has survived several challenges to its structure and has since been somewhat modified. Historically, the caste system divided society into four groups, the *brahmin* or the priestly class at the top of the rung, followed by the *kshatriya* or the warrior class, then the *vaishya* or the merchant class and *sudra* or the laborers at the bottom of the rung. Within this classification system there are several subcastes with their own hierarchies that vary regionally.

The caste to which you belong has traditionally determined your status in society and the privileges you are entitled to enjoy. The caste system is closely tied to the status of women with the higher castes imposing greater constraints on women and their freedom. However, due to a desire to move to a higher class, many families have encouraged the entrance of women into professional employment. This has been true even for those women belonging to the higher castes. Thus, in the struggle between caste structure and class structure, the latter seems to have been responsible for the emergence of women into the professional environment. Later on we will see that entrance into the work environment is but one of the few steps towards fuller participation of women. There are several other barriers that women face in their road to equal participation with men at the workplace.

In the next section we will present a brief overview of the banking industry in India and the participation of women in this industry.

## II. The Banking Industry in India

The banking system of a country plays a significant role in its economic development. The major function of a financial institution is to provide the maximum financial convenience to the public. There are three major responsibilities that such institutions have. First, they are responsible for promoting overall savings by making banks more accessible to the public. Second, they distribute savings in a more efficient manner to those who need it more, from an economic and social perspective. Third, banks are responsible for creating credit and facilitating the transaction of business and trade which ultimately affect the growth of the economy (Desai, 1987).

In a developing country like India, the importance of the banking industry is even more critical because the availability of capital is limited and the task of mobilizing resources to certain sectors of the economy is a challenging one. In a general sense, financial institutions have been charged with the task of accelerating economic growth and revitalizing the industrial and agrarian sectors of the country (Chawla, 1987).

### Regulation

The banking industry in India is heavily regulated to ensure its smooth operation as a partner of the government. In 1949, the Government of India passed a comprehensive Banking Regulation Act to clarify among other things what constituted a banking company (Desai, 1987). This piece of regulation also mandated that banks play a crucial role in growth and development.

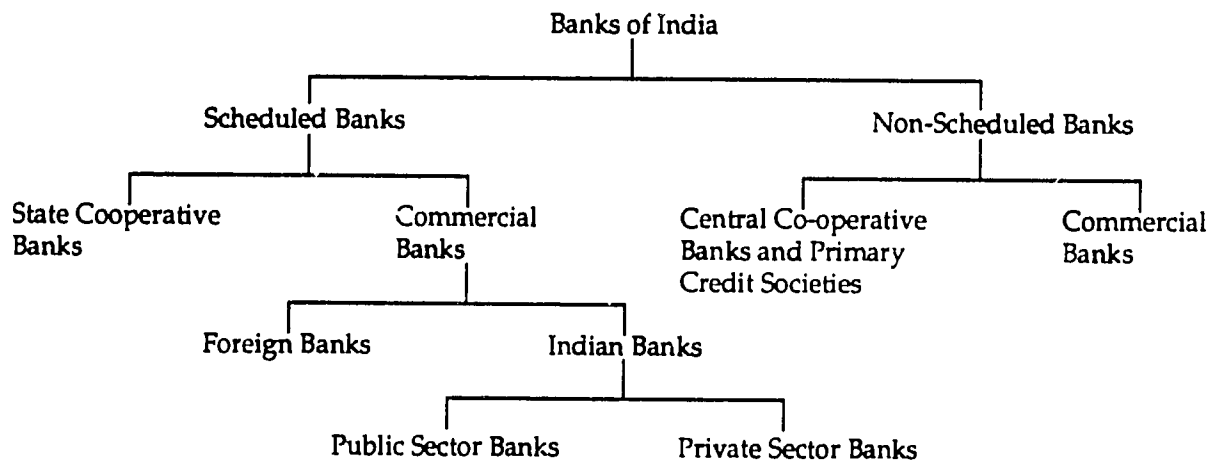
On July 19, 1969 the banking industry again faced a significant government intervention that transformed its very nature of operation. Fourteen major commercial banks were nationalized. The basic objective of this initiative was to accelerate development and control the rising unemployment and poverty in the country. Nationalization has been referred to as a form of socializing credit (Chawla, 1987). Prior to the nationalization, a form of social control existed. Banks were expected to expand banking facilities, improve deposit mobilization, and allocate proper credit where needed. However, with the growing agricultural sector and its improved performance due to breakthroughs in technology, the banks were focussed on meeting the changing expectations of the public. The intent of the nationalization step was to decrease the disparities between the wealthy and poorer sections of the economy and to reach both the advanced as well as remote regions of the country. In 1980, six additional banks were nationalized bringing more than 85% of the banks under public control.

The changes in the banking structure have resulted in three major benefits. First, they have increased the geographic coverage of the banks and increased accessibility to rural areas. Second, they have increased the mobilization of deposits and thirdly they have redistributed bank credit to people with limited means and to previously neglected sectors (Morris, 1985). However, the downside of these changes includes a significant decrease in autonomy of the bank management and a decrease perhaps in the competitiveness of this industry.

## Institutional Structure

The central bank of the financial system in India is the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) established in 1935. The role of the RBI is to formulate and implement monetary and credit policy and function as the "banker's bank" (Morris, 1985). The RBI also plays a role in maintaining the exchange value of the rupee, the Indian monetary unit.

The next most important part of the financial structure is the commercial banks. These banks represent the typical branch banking type of institution. These banks have been further divided into scheduled and non scheduled banks to distinguish the extent to which the institution satisfies the Reserve Bank requirements. Scheduled commercial banks are more prevalent and constitute 99.9 % of the total business. Figure 1 shows a diagram of the structure of the banking industry in India.



**Figure 1 Structure of the Banking Industry in India**

Source: Chawla, A.S. (1987), Nationalization and Growth of Indian Banking, Deep and Deep Publications New Delhi.

## **Participation of Women in the Banking Industry**

Working women in a 1977 study conducted by Blumberg and Dwaraki (1980) were asked what type of jobs they would prefer to the ones they currently held. The most frequent alternative chosen by 20% of the respondents was working in a bank. Bank jobs were considered "fashionable, glamorous and well paying". They were also acceptable from the point of view of many middle class families who were "approving" of their daughters working in such jobs.

The banking industry is unique in that it has been attracting women employees for over two decades. Several studies indicate that there is an increase in the participation of women in the banking industry and even in the executive classes (Bhatnagar, 1985). However, as recently as December 1985, women constituted only a little over 11% of the total number of employees in banks. Further, the differences in the employment patterns of men and women in banking are dramatic. In the officer or management category, less than 4% of the positions were held by women. At the clerical level, women occupy approximately 17% of the positions.

Appendix A shows the composition of employees at various levels in the nationalized banks in India based on gender. It shows that of all the positions held by women, 83% of them are in the clerical ranks and only 9% of the positions held by women are managerial in nature. These numbers differ dramatically in the case of men. For them, 50% of the positions they hold are in the clerical levels and 28% of the positions are managerial in nature. Thus, the inequity in job distribution is clearly evident. The various reasons for these differences will be explored later in the manuscript.

The numbers in Appendix A show that the largest bank, State Bank of India employs only 16,036 women which constitutes less than 8% of its workforce. Only 1.71% of the managerial jobs are held by women. This is a surprisingly low number considering the visibility that this bank enjoys and its accessibility to urban areas and highly educated women. The best track record on employment of women is seen in Vijaya Bank with 16.31% of the workforce consisting of female workers. This bank also has the largest percentage (11.83%) of women managers in its workforce.

Thus, while the participation of women in the banking industry is on the rise, their involvement at the management levels is still very limited. There are some notable examples of women who have achieved success in breaking the glass ceiling and have enjoyed careers in the executive ranks but, for the majority of the women there remain many barriers to the coveted position of bank officer.

In the next section, we will describe the results of the study conducted on women managers and executives in a large commercial bank in India.

### III. The Descriptive Study

A descriptive study was conducted with the purpose of understanding the perceptions that women who work as managers and bank officers have of their roles in the banking industry. We were interested in documenting what these women had to say regarding their strengths, career progress, the type of mentoring they had received and the barriers they face as they try to advance in their careers.

#### Participants

The participants in the study were 17 women who occupied positions of manager or officer in a commercial scheduled bank in Bangalore, India. This bank has approximately 12,300 employees, 16% of whom are women. Close to 19% of the jobs held by women in this organization are in the officer or manager category. Of all the managerial positions available at this bank, 11.8% are occupied by women. This compares very favorably to the national average which is close to 4% for such banks. This bank is perceived to be a progressive bank compared to others of its kind and it was felt that it would be a good model to study and base our recommendations on, so that this and other banks could benefit from them.

A convenience sample of women bank officers and managers was identified and participants were asked to complete a questionnaire and return it directly to the researcher. Complete confidentiality was assured and the raw data was not available to anyone other than the researcher. The questionnaire contained several items that asked for information about the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards women managers as well as barriers that they faced in their progress. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix B.

#### Demographic Data on Participants

We will now analyze the results of the study to provide background information on our sample. The participants in this study were between 32 and 47 years of age. Table 1 shows a frequency distribution of the age of the participants. The median age of the participants was between 38 to 43 years. The age distribution reflected the fact that these women held managerial positions and that they had several years experience in their previous positions before being promoted to their present jobs.

**Table 1**  
**Frequency Distribution of Participants' Age**

Age	Frequency
20-25	0
26-31	0
32-37	2
38-43	10
44-49	5
over 49	0

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution for the participants' marital status. Of the seventeen participants, who completed the questionnaire, 11 (65%) of them were married and 6 (35%) of them indicated that they were single.

**Table 2**  
**Frequency Distribution of Participants' Marital Status**

Marital Status	Frequency
Married	11
Single	6
Widowed	0
Divorced	0
Separated	0

The women in the study had earned at least an undergraduate degree. One of them indicated that she had two masters degrees. Two of the participants had earned doctorate degrees. These two individuals indicated that their present position titles were branch manager and chief economist.

All the participants appeared to hold managerial positions, although their various titles did not always reflect the managerial nature of their jobs. Seven of the individuals who filled out the questionnaire indicated that their job title was manager. Three others indicated that they were senior managers and two others stated that they were branch managers. One individual indicated that she was a divisional manager. Two individuals indicated they were officers and then explained that this was a junior executive level position. One individual indicated that she worked as a chief economist and another said she was a personal assistant. Thus almost all the women held management positions.

The participants were asked how many years experience they had in their present jobs. Table 3 shows that the average number of years of experience that the participants had in their present position was 7 years. There was one individual who worked as a manager and had been in her present job for 18 years. The majority of the participants had a minimum of 5 years of management experience. These individuals would therefore be in a good position to comment on the role played by women in this industry as well as to identify some of the barriers to progress that they had encountered.

**Table 3**  
**Frequency Distribution of Number of Years of Experience in *Present* Position**

Number of Years	Frequency
less than 1	1
1-2	1
3-4	1
5-6	4
7-8	5
9-10	1
11-12	3
more than 12	1

The participants were also asked about the number of years they spent in their previous positions before being promoted to their present jobs. The purpose of this question was to identify the average number of years it took these women to get promoted. Since we do not have comparable data for their male counterparts, we are not in a position to gauge whether the time period was either average or too long. However, we will be able to get an idea of how much time it takes women in this bank to progress to the next level. Table 4 shows the breakdown in terms of experience in the participants' previous positions. The number of years of experience that these women brought to their present positions varied between no experience and 11 years.

**Table 4**  
**Frequency Distribution of Number of Years of Experience in *Previous Position***

Number of Years	Frequency
less than 1	2
1-2	0
3-4	0
5-6	7
7-8	4
9-10	2
11-12	2

The average number of years that these participants spent in their previous position was six and a half years. Of the two individuals who indicated that they had spent no time at all in previous positions, one of them has worked 18 years in her current position of manager, while the other, was hired 6 months ago to the position of chief economist. This individual had earned a doctorate and was probably hired after she had completed her degree requirement.

All the participants in the study worked full time and their hours ranged from 32 to 52 hours per week. The average number of hours that these women worked per week was 40, which is probably the norm for the industry.

There were several open ended questions that were asked of the participants. Their responses were content analyzed by placing each discrete comment into categories representing general themes of information that emerged out of an initial review of the gathered data (Randal and Smith, 1979). In the following section, we present the results of this study.

### **Women Managers' Unique Strengths**

The first question related to the participants' perceptions of the type of strengths that women managers possess. There were numerous characteristics that were identified. These were categorized into clusters and one such cluster that was chosen frequently related to perseverance. Characteristics such as grit, determination, motivation, and perseverance were mentioned twelve times by the participants. In a male dominated society, where women are expected to carry primarily home related responsibilities,

working women are likely to face several obstacles. It is not surprising then that women expressed these points of view. In addition, management has been a male dominated field, especially in India, and it probably takes characteristics like grit and determination to succeed in this field.

The next most common set of words that was mentioned included patience and tolerance. These words were mentioned ten times. To some extent this might reflect the cultural context in which they were mentioned. Indian society, like many other eastern societies, views patience as a virtue. This is in sharp contrast to western society that reveres action and quick resolution of problems. The women in this study felt that patience and tolerance were unique strengths that women possess that will contribute to their success as managers.

Five of the participants felt that hard work was one of the significant strengths that women possess. Throughout the questionnaire, there were several references to the notion that working hard to succeed was a special characteristic of women. In addition to hard work, several participants indicated that women seemed to be committed, honest, sincere and conscientious. As one person stated "most women are sincere and hardworking. Besides they have the quest to climb up the ladder".

Several women mentioned that women also possessed unique interpersonal skills such as being sensitive, exhibiting tact, being understanding and cooperative, better at human relations and having a positive attitude in general. One woman went on to elaborate that women possess "patience and tact which go a long way in getting the best out of subordinates and which may also induce the usually lethargic ones to contribute to the work output". Another woman said "Women are able to obtain better cooperation from their subordinates. They are able to appreciate even the personal problems of their staff as well as their clients in (sic) a better perspective". It was also pointed out that women seek the involvement of their staff and take their suggestions into consideration.

Only two individuals mentioned that analytical skills were unique characteristics of women. Other characteristics that were mentioned include creativity, intuition, administrative ability, eye for detail and being methodical. One participant mentioned that women tend to be alert minded and that it "comes out of minding various disparate household chores simultaneously under time pressure".

There were several other characteristics that were mentioned that give us a sense of the way these women see their roles in society as well as in their work environment. The following is a set of comments made by these women in response to the first question.

Capacity to work hard for work alone rather than to corner some personal gain/credit.

Their femininity itself is a strength, though it should not be used for manipulation. Their sensitivity coupled with determination. While mentioning femininity and sensitivity, it should be noted that it is not to be mixed up with being emotional.

Women can manage the stress of office and home quite efficiently.

Majority of the women in management possess pleasing manners and carry themselves gracefully.

Strong will to challenge male counterparts.

One person indicated that women did not possess any unique strengths. Several times in the questionnaire, some women mentioned that they were not different from men in their management and leadership styles and that it was inappropriate to generalize regarding differences based on gender.

### **Factors Affecting Women's Career Progress**

The participants were asked what factors helped them progress to their present positions. A review of the responses indicated that the majority of the participants felt that hard work, perseverance, courage and determination were the factors that made a difference in their lives. Two of the women felt that it was sheer luck that helped them gain their current jobs.

Eight of the women felt that they achieved their present jobs due to their job knowledge and their ability to excel at whatever assignment they were given. Three of the women mentioned their education as being a significant factor. About six of the participants indicated that self confidence, enthusiasm and being self motivated made a difference in their careers.

Other factors that were mentioned included sound and healthy relations with coworkers, dedication and sincerity, experience and being efficient.

There were some remarks that the participants made that reflect their perceptions of what made the difference in their lives. In order to capture the essence of what they were trying to communicate, we present these ideas in their own words below.

Whatever branch I was posted at, I can confidently say that my bosses appreciated my diligence and noticed it. Whatever work was entrusted, I have managed to complete within banking hours.

The attitude that I can do any work - if anything can be done I can do it better than any other person can.

A sense of dedication and devotion to duty and the feeling of always having to give my best.

Confidence to continue despite setback due to negative discrimination.

An iron fist in a velvet glove kind of handling.

Doing a job better than others (men mainly).

Cooperation of family members.

My initial experience in working all types of work related to banking which was possible since the branch was not too big.

A review of the responses to the previous question dealing with the unique strengths that women possess revealed that factors such as determination and hard work were mentioned most frequently. In response to the question regarding what factors helped women progress to their present position, again the words determination and hardwork were mentioned. Thus there is congruence between these unique characteristics of women and the factors that helped their career progress.

### **Advice to Women Entering Banking Industry**

The participants were asked what advice they would give to women who enter the banking industry and who seek to be promoted in the future. There were a variety of responses to this question. Unlike the earlier responses there was not much consensus in the statements that were made by the participants to this question.

One piece of advice offered by the participants related to keeping abreast of advancements in the industry. Six of the participants indicated that increasing one's knowledge of the industry as well as acquiring technical skills relevant to the job would be critical areas to focus on. Two of them indicated that new entrants should develop an awareness of the corporate goals and direct all efforts to achieving them. Hardwork and being prepared to meet any challenge was again mentioned as critical factors to success.

Two women indicated that being prepared to work in remote areas of the country would help them progress in their careers. This advice reflects the perceptions concerning the promotion policy in banks. Taking one's job seriously and developing professionalism were two other areas that were mentioned. "Take your job seriously. Do not treat it as a mere pastime as you have a responsibility towards the institution which has chosen you to work for them and with them", said one participant.

One individual indicated that she could not give any advice since "promotions are not based only on merit, seniority or additional qualification and hence any advice to improve one's bio-data is meaningless." Incidentally, this participant also mentioned that it was sheer luck that helped her progress to her present situation. She also indicated that she has faced no discrimination in her job because of her gender. It is clear that this participant's experiences have shaped her responses to the present question.

Some of the participants indicated that women should not expect any special treatment. One manager said "since we have been fighting for equal rights, we cannot afford to say no to any job that is entrusted to us". She went on to elaborate that "women should take up bank jobs as a challenge. If men can do it, we can do it better".

While indicating that it was important to get along with colleagues, the participants also indicated that one should not "let people (in power or your colleagues) brow beat you or talk down to you or patronize you". New entrants were also advised to "trust your own intuition over the opinion of others and aim to meet your own standards of work achievement".

The participants indicated that bank jobs can be monotonous, but that people should make an effort to not simply do things in a routine manner. One woman indicated that it is the extra effort that is made beyond what is expected that takes you a lot farther.

### **Gender Discrimination**

The participants were asked whether they had faced any discrimination in their jobs because they were female. Of the seventeen participants who responded to the questionnaire, 71% (12) said that they had not experienced any type of discrimination, while 29% (5) indicated that they had indeed experienced various forms of discrimination in their attempts to progress in their work environments.

We further analyzed these findings and found an intriguing pattern. We attempted to see whether there were any differences in the experiences of single and married women in terms of the extent to which they felt discriminated. The cross tabulations are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**

#### **Cross Tabulations for Experienced Discrimination by Marital Status**

		Discrimination		
		Yes	No	Total
Marital Status	Single	5	1	6
	Married	0	11	11
	Total	5	12	17

Table 5 shows that all the women who were married indicated that they had not experienced any form of discrimination due to their gender status. However, all the single women except one, indicated that they had indeed experienced discrimination. We can speculate on what the reasons might be for these differing experiences of single and married women.

In a society like India, married women are generally treated with more respect than single women. Perhaps the single women in the study received differential treatment compared to their married counterparts. It could be that men perceive single women as a greater threat than married women since single women might be perceived to be more career oriented and therefore in direct competition with the men for various jobs. One can also argue that the married women might be more tolerant and accepting of traditional roles played by men and women in society and therefore, may not perceive various treatments they have received as discriminatory. Another explanation could be that single women have perhaps tried to get promoted more often or have actively sought training opportunities and have found their efforts blocked. Based on the evidence from this study, we cannot make any conclusive remark on the reason for these differences, however, these patterns of experiences certainly deserve further investigation.

Those women who indicated that they have not faced any form of negative discrimination pointed out that in fact their perception was that women were preferred for certain types of jobs and that quite often it was based on capability rather than gender.

The individuals who felt they were discriminated against were asked to elaborate on their experiences. They explained that there were certain jobs that the men felt women were not capable of handling. One example of a job that would fall under this category is the cashier's job. However, it was pointed out by one individual that many women have volunteered to take over as cashiers and have been more successful at it than men. Another participant indicated that women officers are given routine, high volume jobs, while men in the same grade level are given the "offbeat or high profile jobs".

Another area where it was felt that there was discrimination was related to transfers. Promotions in the banking industry are often tied to transfers. A perceived unwillingness to transfer translates to fewer promotion opportunities. One woman indicated that "despite willingness (to transfer, women are denied the opportunity) on the basis/ presumption that as a woman you won't be able to handle that kind of responsibility. No chance is given to prove otherwise." It was pointed out that this type of discrimination was implicit and often difficult to prove.

In the area of training, it was felt that there was a reluctance to send women for hi-tech training programs. One woman indicated that "sometimes the reasons given were downright ridiculous, such as "the training institute, (in this case a national training institute) has no separate facility for women".

Some additional comments made by women on this topic include:

The general attitude is that a woman cannot do certain tasks as well as a man. However, I can proudly state that I was the first woman to join the inspection department and go out of station on inspection work.

There has been no discrimination as such but men even today somehow look at women who have come up the ladder with some sort of ridicule.

No (to the question of having experienced discrimination). On the contrary I have received cooperation to the fullest extent from all quarters irrespective of higher ups or subordinate staff, which made me what I am today.

### **Supportive Bosses and Mentors**

The participants were asked about the extent to which their bosses were supportive of their careers. They were asked to respond to a five point scale with 5 being "very supportive" and 1 being "very unsupportive". The mean rating on this item was 3.58 with the average participant indicating that her boss was somewhat supportive to supportive of her career. More than half of the women indicated that their bosses were only somewhat supportive. Only two people indicated that their bosses were very supportive. Six of the individuals indicated that they had supportive bosses. There were no individuals who selected "unsupportive" or "very unsupportive" for this question.

The next question focussed on the mentors that these women had who helped them in their careers. Mentoring is defined as a lasting relationship between a junior person (the protege, if male and protegee, if female) and a senior person who is the mentor (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1992). The research evidence on mentoring indicates that the individual benefits from being part of a mentoring relationship (Dreher and Ash, 1990). It has been found to increase job promotions, mobility and pay increases.

The participants were almost evenly distributed in terms of those who indicated they had mentors versus those who indicated that they did not have any mentors. Ten people responded "yes" to this question while 7 indicated that they did not have any mentors.

The participants were asked whether their mentors were male or female. With the exception of one individual, all the other participants indicated that their mentors were male. This is not surprising since the majority of the senior positions are held by men. Studies have shown that women who network with men and who have male colleagues tend to be more successful (Goverman, 1992). The fact that the women in this sample had male mentors is likely to have a positive impact on their careers. The one individual who indicated that her mentor was female, identified her mother as her mentor. The participants were asked to indicate who their mentors were from a list that we provided them with. Table 6 shows the number of people who identified the different types of mentors. They were asked to choose as many as were applicable.

**Table 6**  
**Frequency Distribution of Type of Mentor**

Type of Mentor	Frequency
Male	9
Female	1
Boss	4
Friend	3
Husband	5
Senior Bank Official	5
Colleague	1
Mother	1

The results in Table 6 shows that senior bank officials and husbands were chosen quite frequently as mentors, followed by immediate bosses and then friends.

### **Status of Women in Banking and other Industries**

We mentioned earlier that bank jobs are considered respectable and therefore many women seem to be attracted to this industry. We asked the participants to compare the status of women in the banking industry to other industries. Results indicate that the majority of the women (88%) felt that bank jobs were considered more favorable than other types of occupations. One individual however felt that it was less favorable for women compared to other types of industries. This individual explained her point of view by stating that "bank employees are governed by the transfer policy which is unique in the banking industry. Since women face severe problems when transferred from place to place, I feel this is an unenviable position. Mobility is also a factor to decide promotions." There was another participant who indicated that there was no difference between the banking industry and other industries as far as the status of women was concerned. This individual pointed out that "the problems if any, faced by women are common to those in banking as well as the ones in other industries."

Those women who rated the banking industry positively were asked to tell us why bank jobs were favorable for women. We categorized the responses and came up with a few clusters. The women indicated that bank jobs were prestigious, had high status and were considered respectable for women in India. One women mentioned that she felt that "women (in the banking industry) are not inerely considered ornamental here. They are given the same jobs that men do and hence command the same respect." Another women mentioned that "by and large, women are considered to be more honest and hard working than men in this industry".

Several women mentioned factors related to the working conditions that were favorable for women. Many indicated that the salary was good and that "they (women in banks) are better paid than their counterparts in other sectors." They felt that the working hours were suitable for women and that there was less stress or physical strain in banking jobs.

While two women indicated that the transfer policy was unfavorable for women since it was directly linked to promotions, one of the participants indicated that "women are still treated a bit more "kindly" at work than their male counterparts, especially in the matter of transfers." These contrary responses were interesting because while some women may benefit from this differential treatment they receive, there are others who are willing to be transferred for whom this very policy might create barriers to their career progress.

### **Perceived Gender Differences in Leadership Styles**

The participants were asked to indicate any differences they saw between men and women in terms of their leadership styles. Six of the participants indicated that there were either no differences between the two sexes or that they did not think it was appropriate to generalize on this topic. One woman stated that "the management and leadership styles in each individual differs. There are some ladies who possess all the required leadership qualities - much more so than men." She went further to give the example of India's late Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi and stated that she was beyond comparison.

Those who felt that there were differences between men and women in this area, indicated that women tend to exhibit more personal consideration and are more patient with failures. They tend to believe in participative management more than their male counterparts. They tend to lead more by example and can take on multifaceted roles. There were two individuals who felt that women were more committed and ambitious compared to men.

Three of the participants felt that women were not as dynamic as men, were less assertive and more submissive. There was one person who felt that women were more assertive but that they possessed a "soft side". Thus we can see that the results were inconclusive in this area. The perceptions were very varied and no pattern could be detected in these results.

### **Important Skills in Participants' Present Jobs**

Up to date information on rules and regulations and job knowledge were considered to be the most important for success in the participants' present jobs. The various responses that the participants gave to this question clustered around five main areas. These were communication skills, interpersonal skills, analytical skills, up to date knowledge and personal characteristics. As far as communication skills were concerned, the women in the study felt that writing skills, a working knowledge of the English language and oral communication skills were very important for their present jobs.

In the area of interpersonal skills, the participants made many observations. Several participants indicated that the ability to get along with people was critical for successful job performance. This was true in terms of getting along with peers as well as supervisors. It was felt that being able to cooperate in various situations was important as well as being aware of the social and political climate in the organization. The participants also pointed

out that a person's ability to maintain a peaceful atmosphere in the office was critical to effective performance. Listening and counselling skills were also deemed important in this category.

The importance of keeping up to date in one's field was emphasized by the participants. They indicated that being conversant with the rules and regulations related to banking was important. They pointed out that it was crucial to remain aware of advancements in technology that related to their careers in banking. Further, keeping up with current affairs and national events were considered critical for job success.

The participants also identified certain general job skills that they considered important in their present jobs. These were analytical skills, ability to think methodically, having forethought, using intuition, quick computing skills and a sharp memory. Specific skills in the area of credit appraisal were also considered important by one of the participants.

There were several personal characteristics that the managers thought were important for their jobs. Many of them indicated that self-confidence and the ability to meet any responsibility were important. Hardwork, trustworthiness, honesty, ambition and ability to maintain confidentiality were all considered critical. One individual indicated that "man management" was a critical skill.

### **Bank Branches with Exclusively Women Employees**

The banking industry has experimented with several bank branches that employ only women at all levels, from the clerical workers to the management staff. These branches provided many Indian women, who felt uncomfortable working closely with men, an opportunity to work in an office setting free from the pressure of dealing with men. One could argue that these types of branches also gave a wider opportunity for women to work at all levels of the bank without competing with them.

The participants in this study were asked to indicate their attitude towards these "women only" branches. They were given a scale ranging from 1 to 5 with 1 representing very unfavorable and 5 representing very favorable. Seventy one percent (12) of the women indicated that their opinion of branches run exclusively by women was favorable. Three of them indicated that they felt somewhat favorable towards these types of banks while one individual indicated that her attitude was unfavorable. One other individual indicated that she did not know much about the operation of these branches and therefore had no opinion towards them. The mean rating for this item was 3.7.

The participants were asked to explain the reasons for their ratings of these bank branches. Their responses can be categorized into three main groups.

Several women felt that a mixed group provided for a more interesting work environment. Here are some of the responses:

I feel that a judicious mix of female and male employees is best to promote a congenial and challenging work environment.

There are some spheres (that) men excel at and some (that) women excel at hence a fusion of these skills lends more harmony.

I personally prefer to work with 75% men and 25% women.

Uninteresting to work only with women or only men.

Those individuals who felt favorable towards the banks run by women indicated that women were courteous and provided timely and good service to the customers. They also felt that there was less scope for fraud and cheating by employees in such branches. One woman indicated that women in general tend to keep up with their work and not shirk their responsibilities. As one woman put it "they (women) do not while away time by taking coffee breaks - talking to customers/friends for an unduly long period". It was also pointed out that women in India faced several problems related to financial independence and female employees may be able to empathize and offer better services to such women.

There were several women who indicated that there were some negative aspects to these branches run by women. They indicated that instructions and suggestions might be better received by the opposite sex. There were other opinions that were expressed that indicate the nature of the attitudes that these women have towards these branches.

Though women are normally sincere and work hard, men have more grasping power and use common sense and innovative approach generally.

Speed of decision may suffer. Business development wise (especially in getting new business/deposits) women managers may be a little behind.

One person who expressed a somewhat unfavorable attitude towards such branches indicated that "branches managed by women have been effective but I feel a woman manager should be able to control the men staff also working under her and should not seek to have only female subordinates if she is to prove herself a good manager".

### **Barriers Faced by Women In Career Progress**

Several barriers to the progress of women in banks were identified by the participants. These responses can be classified into four main areas. These are, the conflict between home and office responsibilities, the existing promotion policies in banks, discrimination, and women's inadequacies.

In the area of role conflict, 71% of the participants indicated that one of the significant barriers that women face is the difficulty of balancing the responsibilities on the job as well as in the home. The responses of many women presents the nature of the burden they face.

Dependability on husbands and their jobs (especially applicable to Indian women).

A woman has basically to manage her career as well as a home. She cannot single mindedly pursue her career as a man would do.

Very few Indian men assist their wives in household chores.

In addition, women felt that working late hours was a problem since they had to be at home to take over the child care duties. Frequent long distance travelling also interfered with their family responsibilities.

Six of the women indicated that the transfer policy that was tied to promotions was a significant barrier to career progress for women. One woman stated that "the major barrier is the promotion policy which makes rural and semi-urban service a compulsory prerequisite for promotion. Most women are unable to meet this requirement". Another individual stated that there was a "general feeling that women cannot be sent to certain places for transfer/duty though some of us are prepared for it and confident that we can excel". One woman indicated that there was a tendency to take women for granted and assume that women do not need promotions. Also, it was pointed out that "promotion is rarely given on merit and as there are very few vacancies, men do all in their power to get promoted".

The participants also indicated that women faced discrimination in several areas. They felt that there was a "lack of confidence in women executives by the top brass". Some others felt that there were several prejudices and firmly entrenched preconceived ideas about women's abilities that posed significant barriers to their progress.

Several women pointed out that there might be factors related to women's inadequacies that could themselves pose barriers to their progress. They felt that due to the inherent problem of managing a career and a family, women might consider their jobs as temporary ones and therefore be less committed. Some participants felt that there were some women who had no aspirations and lacked professionalism. They felt that part of this could be corrected through training.

A few other points were made by the participants regarding the barriers that women faced in their career progress. One person pointed out that it was difficult for women to access the grapevine information as compared to their male colleagues. Part of this might be due to the tendency for women not to socialize after hours or attend company parties. One woman pointed out that "one requires godfathers within the organization or political influence outside" in order to progress.

The participants were presented with six different reasons why there were so few female executives and bank managers. They were then asked to rank order these statements by placing a number ranging from 1 through 6 next to each statement. The results are shown in Table 7. The first column of numbers shows the mean ranking for the six items for the entire sample. The next two columns represent the mean ranking for married and single women separately. The numbers in parentheses represent the rank order for the various items for the three groups.

**Table 7**  
**Mean Ranking for Items Related to Barriers Faced by Women Managers**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Mean ranking (entire sample)</b>	<b>Mean ranking (married only)</b>	<b>Mean ranking (single only)</b>
Women do not want the extra work and hassle	3.88 (5)*	2.59 (5)	1.29 (5)
Women find it difficult to balance work and household demands	2.00 (1)	0.94 (1)	1.06 (3)
Women are not given the opportunity to get promoted	2.88 (2)	2.06 (2)	3.82 (1)
Women are discouraged from seeking management jobs	3.41 (4)	2.35 (4)	1.06 (3)
Women are not as qualified as men	5.71 (6)	3.59 (6)	2.12 (6)
Women don't like to deal with the politics associated with management jobs	3.18 (3)	2.12 (3)	1.06 (3)

\*indicates the rank for each item for each group

The results indicate that the participants as a whole felt that the difficulty in balancing the responsibilities at home and at work was one of the most important reasons why the number of women in the executive ranks is not large. However, when the data for the single women is considered separately, it can be seen that they gave this factor a ranking of three. Single women felt that the reason why there were few women managers was because women in general are not given the opportunity to get promoted. This relates to the point made earlier regarding experiences with discrimination. The married women indicated that they had not experienced discrimination while the single women felt just the opposite. One can argue that single women are less likely to face the pressure of balancing home and work related responsibilities and therefore they do not consider this as serious an issue as that of being denied promotion opportunities.

Both married and single women, assigned a rank of 6, gave the statement that said women are not as qualified as men. They also agreed on a rank of 5 for the statement that read women do not want the extra hassle. The participants indicated that the politics associated with management jobs was a significant reason why women have not progressed more rapidly into the management spheres.

The participants were also asked to indicate reasons other than those provided in the questionnaire for the low participation of women in the executive ranks. The responses indicated that some women do not seem to take their careers seriously and perhaps only consider their employment as a way to supplement the family income. One person indicated that "if one does not attempt some kind of self-promotion, develop the right contacts, etc., career chances are bleak." The transfer policy related to promotion was mentioned by several women. This is related to the role conflict of dealing with home and work responsibilities. Another woman indicated that women may not be occupying managerial jobs in large numbers "because of the Indian culture where a woman has always been considered subordinate to a man."

One participant indicated that there are few women in managerial positions because of deficiencies among women. However, the results in Table 7 show that the statement women are not as qualified as men received the lowest ranking. Thus, in general the women appear to have a positive self image of their capabilities but realize that their views may not be shared by their male counterparts.

In the next section, we will summarize the results of the study and present our conclusions.

#### IV. Conclusions

The results of the study provide some important insights into the status of women in the banking industry. The women managers appear to have positive self concepts regarding their abilities and strengths. Many feel that in order to progress in their careers they need to constantly prove themselves to be equal to or better than their male counterparts. This is not surprising since management has traditionally been a male dominated field, especially in India. The same factors that women indicated were unique to them as female managers were the ones that helped them in their career progress. Of note are the characteristics of patience and tolerance that were identified as unique and important to the success of female managers. These characteristics reflect the cultural context in which the managers operate. The philosophy and cultural heritage of the Indian people include an emphasis on patience and tolerance as significant virtues among humans, especially among the female members of society.

The women in the study also felt that they had strong interpersonal skills and were extremely hardworking especially compared to their male colleagues. It was interesting to note that very few women mentioned that analytical skills and decision making skills were the areas in which women might be particularly competent.

In terms of gender differences related to leadership styles, the participants observed that women tended to use a more participative approach to leading and they were more supportive of their subordinates. It was pointed out several times that women were able to get along with their subordinates better and were able to motivate them to achieve higher levels of performance. At the same time, a few of them pointed out that women tended to be less dynamic and aggressive compared to their male counterparts.

The status of women in this industry was perceived to be positive especially when compared to women in other industries. Bank jobs were considered prestigious, with favorable working conditions and compensation packages. As pointed out earlier, bank jobs have been attracting women for over two decades and there has been a slow but steady increase in their participation in the managerial ranks. It should be pointed out however, that women still make up only a little over 11% of the total workforce in this industry. It is surprising that an industry which is considered highly favorable by women employs such a small percentage of them in its workforce. The picture certainly looks bleak and further steps have to be taken to increase the participation of women in clerical as well as managerial ranks in the banking industry.

The experiences of the participants in terms of job discrimination have been varied. The majority of the participants felt that they had not been discriminated against. Some of them indicated that their experiences, on the contrary, have been very favorable. They indicated that they have been given special consideration when it came to transfer issues. Ironically, this differential treatment was perceived by some women as a significant barrier to their progress. This was particularly true among the single women in the sample, the majority of whom felt they had experienced discrimination. The single women in the sample may

have perhaps tried to seek opportunities for transfer and promotion and were perhaps rebuffed in their efforts. The others in the sample may have found the policies convenient to their marital status and therefore felt that the differential treatment was favorable and allowed them to devote adequate attention to both their domestic and professional responsibilities.

The participants indicated that the majority of them had a mentor who helped them in their career progress. Most of them mentioned that their mentors tended to be senior bank officials and/or their husbands. It seems that most of these mentorships evolved on their own rather than by organizational design. There did not appear to be any significant differences between single and married women in terms of the presence or absence of mentors in their lives and in terms of the type of mentors they had.

There were several pieces of advice that the women had to offer based on their experiences to prospective female bank managers. The general consensus was that it was important to keep current with bank technology and to be willing to transfer to remote parts of the country. This was especially true if one wanted to advance steadily to managerial and executive level positions. The other point that was made by the participants related to commitment and professionalism among women managers. Many of the participants felt that it was important for women to take their careers seriously and not to treat their jobs as temporary part time forms of employment.

Finally, the participants commented on the nature of bank branches that employed women only. Most of them had favorable attitudes towards such banks. They felt that since women were just as capable as men, there was no reason to believe that the quality of such banks would be inferior. Some women felt that it was more interesting to work in a mixed environment and had definite preferences in terms of the percentages of men and women in an office setting that would constitute an ideal work environment. There were some who felt that such banks might do more harm than good for the status of women. If women are considered just as capable as men, then they should be in a better position to exhibit their ability if they worked in a mixed group. Many of these women seemed to be targeting their responses at the protectionist attitude towards women that they perceived. As one woman pointed out, if women want to be treated equal to men they should be willing to work in the same type of environment as their male counterparts.

The conclusions from this study lead to several recommendations that can be made for avenues to improve the status of women managers to make them full partners in the banking industry.

## V. Recommendations

Banks have been employing women in increasing numbers however, their participation in the executive and managerial ranks has been less than satisfactory. Several reasons can be identified, some which relate to the choices women make and others that relate to bank policies that might pose barriers to women's progress.

As Bhatnagar (1988) has so aptly pointed out, banks like many other institutions, react to the unequal participation of women in their organizations by either ignoring differences based on gender and having uniform policies for both groups or alternately, recognizing the differences in the situations that men and women find themselves and offering selective policies for each group. Both approaches have inherent dangers in them. In the one case, women might find that because of their unique role expectations, they may need a differential policy to fulfill their assignments. A classic example is the case of a young working mother who needs to take a temporary hiatus from the work environment to devote attention to child rearing duties. A differential policy that recognizes the need for temporary absences from work for women might allow such a person to successfully complete her work and personal responsibilities. On the other hand, such an approach implies that women are different and cannot be expected to fulfill the same set of responsibilities as their male counterparts. This could lead to several stereotypes related to women and their commitment to the work organization. Women in this set-up could be passed up for promotion opportunities and training programs because their continuity with the organization might be suspect. Several women, especially single women in our study ran into this very same problem. They indicated that they were not given certain work assignments and had not been recommended for training programs because of their female status.

On the surface it appears that any company policy related to women and addressing their needs is a no win situation. However, if one gets to the root of the problem, it is clear that the issue is one of choice and control. Several women in the study pointed out that they were eager to participate in training programs but were not selected due to their female status. These are the kinds of situation that banks must avoid. While there will be some women who do not wish to seek promotion opportunities, there are others whose efforts are thwarted by oppressive organizational policies and attitudes. Ideally, the opportunities should be made available to all competent employees regardless of their gender or marital status and ultimately, it is the employee who should make the choice.

Banks need to provide different career paths to all employees. At the present time, it might be the women who take advantage of these alternate career paths to successfully complete their dual obligations. However, it is not unlikely that in the foreseeable future, as more couples find themselves in dual career situations, men may also be in need of such alternate career paths. These career tracks might involve providing flexible time schedules, part time work and in some cases, a slower career path in those years where child rearing and other duties are a priority.

A major area of concern that is unique to the banking industry is its transfer and promotion policy. It has been pointed out time and again both by the participants in this study as well as articles on this topic, that the banking industry's transfer policy might be a significant barrier to the career progress of women. The policy, as it exists today, is that promotions often involve transfers to other areas and in many cases remote regions of the country. While these postings are temporary they can still cause serious disruptions in family life which many women find unacceptable due to the expectations of their immediate family and society in general. The Government of India in 1986 (Bhatnagar, 1988) instituted a policy that affects public sector banks and recommended that a husband and wife be posted in the same geographic area, subject of course, to availability of job positions. While this is a positive step in the right direction, it does not address the problem of individuals whose spouses may not be working for the banking industry as well as those single women who might face other constraints regarding transfers to remote regions.

It is clearly time for banks to reassess their policy concerning transfers and promotions. The present situation results in several women forfeiting promotion opportunities because of an inability to accept transferring to a different city. Such women then continue working at the clerical level, even though they might have significant management potential. It might appear unfair and unreasonable to expect banks to have separate policies for men and women regarding promotion and transfer. However, if weighed against the negative consequences of the present policy it appears to be an alternative that has to be seriously considered.

There have been some banks that have tried to set up bank branches that were managed and staffed exclusively with women employees. These banks were intended to provide women with a work environment that many of them might feel comfortable with. In the Indian context, where socializing with men is not a common practice, there may be some women who prefer this type of work environment. However, some of the participants in the study indicated that they preferred not to work in such environments. They felt that women were as capable as men and should be able to compete along with men on the job. While the intention of such banks might be positive, they may tend to highlight the differences between the genders and thus perpetuate stereotypes. At the time such branches were instituted they served a useful purpose in encouraging greater participation of women in the industry and providing managerial opportunities for women. However, it appears that their role in promoting the participation of women in this industry needs to be replaced by other measures that address the problem.

Training is frequently seen as an effective way to develop human resources and to correct deficiencies in an organization. The banking industry has invested some amount of resources into training programs. The National Institute of Bank Management (NIMB) which was formed in 1968 to formulate and execute a broad strategy of education, training and research program for bank policies plays a significant role in the area of bank management training. NIMB offers several training programs ranging from general management seminars to workshops on specific functional areas like credit management and technical training programs. In addition, the Reserve Bank as well as the commercial

banks have their own training institutions or staff colleges that offer training courses for their employees (Deekshit, 1988). The bank from which the participants of this study were drawn had a few training courses specifically designed for its women employees. A description of these training courses is presented in Appendix C.

A review of these training courses indicates that their content focuses on goal setting, interpersonal skills and stress management. Many of the participants in the study indicated that women were strong in the areas of interpersonal skills. Thus it appears that there is less of a need for training in these areas. However, the participants indicated that women were constrained because of their dual responsibilities at home and in the work place. It appears that the focus on stress management in these courses would be appropriate given the concerns expressed by the participants. The women in the study also indicated that it was important for employees to keep abreast of technological developments in the banking field. Some women were dismayed that they were not given opportunities to participate in various training programs. It would be effective if the training programs designed for women focus on the technological tools necessary for career advancement. If indeed women are denied access to general training programs, then perhaps training workshops that are designed specifically for women should focus on training in the technical areas as well as address those topics that are of unique concern to women. In this manner, women might have better access to training that will help them compete on an equal footing with their male counterparts.

Another area where training programs would help is in addressing gender stereotypes and interactions between men and women. These courses specifically need to address the problems that arise when male employees have to be supervised by female managers. Training programs to help male employees accept female employees as peers and supervisors is just as important as training women managers on leadership and motivation skills (Mankidy, 1991). These types of training programs would be particularly helpful for men who are not comfortable working with female colleagues and more importantly with a female boss. Caplan (1985) found that one participant in her study who happened to be a bank manager related an incident where she had to deal with a junior male employee who questioned her authority because she was a woman. Such situations are likely to be common in the Indian setting where males are considered superior to females especially in the workplace. Training programs that include both men and women and involve role playing and other experiential exercises to explore gender issues are likely to be highly effective.

An area that is closely related to training, is that of mentorship programs. It has been pointed out that the lack of mentors who can take new recruits under their wings to groom them for future managerial positions is a significant barrier that women face (Bhatnagar, 1988). Women frequently suffer subtle forms of discrimination that tend to get worse as they progress up the career ladder. Their lack of visibility is a disadvantage that manifests itself when job assignments and selections for training programs are made and they tend to be excluded (Goverman, 1992). Banks should be encouraged to have a formal mentorship program in which new employees are assigned mentors who are responsible for helping the new recruit to fit into the central core of the organization. One of the concerns expressed

by the participants in the study was their inability to participate in activities that took place outside working hours. They mentioned that they did not network or socialize as much as their male counterparts and this might have an impact on their career progress. Bhatnagar (1988) points out that Indian women managers in her study also repeatedly expressed an interest to be included in informal networks on the job. These mentorship programs could address this concern among the women managers by allowing women to have access to such informal interactions. The training programs presented in Appendix C have a session on meeting professional women. This is a step in the positive direction because these women can serve as role models and possible mentors to the junior employees. They might also provide opportunities for women to socialize and network with women in senior positions.

There are several steps that can be taken to encourage greater participation of women in the managerial ranks in banks. The study shows that female managers in banks seem to enjoy a higher status and more favorable working conditions than their counterparts in other industries. While there has been progress in the participation of women in banks, there are still several obstacles that women face in their career progress. At this stage, the banking industry must find more creative ways of accommodating the changing needs of women and men who find themselves fulfilling multiple responsibilities in their personal and professional lives. It must create an environment in which men and women are provided a challenging and supportive work environment in which they can excel.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A

### Distribution of Women Employees in Various Nationalized Banks

Name of Bank	Male Employees				Female Employees			
	Officer	Clerk	Sub-staff	Sub-total	Officer	Clerk	Sub-staff	Sub-total
Allahabad Bank	4705	7715	4409	16829	171	830	124	1125
Andhra Bank	3734	5407	2334	11475	373	1292	21	1686
Bank of Baroda	10254	17116	9055	36425	552	3726	251	4529
Bank of India	9720	22004	9568	41292	531	5758	260	6549
Bank of Maharashtra	3524	6448	3571	13543	236	2755	18	3009
Canara Bank	10749	20418	7386	38553	413	6976	891	8280
Central Bank	13594	17405	9556	40555	556	3738	245	4539
Corporation Bank	2347	3110	959	6416	155	1481	83	1719
Dena Bank	4207	6375	3565	14147	79	1399	167	1645
Indian Bank	5900	8503	3288	17691	353	2703	22	3078
Indian Overseas Bank	6179	11968	3515	21662	387	2607	26	3020
New Bank of India	2861	4878	2393	10132	135	1059	239	1433
Oriental Bank	2102	3553	1727	8291	195	751	91	927
Punjab National Bank	11590	20272	11223	43095	490	3865	750	5105
Syndicate Bank	8204	16008	4112	28324	738	5809	511	7058
Union Bank	7753	11497	6064	25314	486	2894	430	3810
United Bank	4742	10607	5348	20697	32	674	48	754
UCO Bank	7652	15704	7834	31190	225	2059	113	2397
Vijaya Bank	2758	5567	1893	10213	370	1420	202	1992
State Bank of India	51396	943519	39984	185899	895	13853	1288	16036
State Bank of Bikaner & Jaipur	2633	6628	2973	12234	50	564	53	667
State of Hyderabad	2494	5204	2490	10188	80	832	179	1091
State Bank of Indore	1161	2956	1566	5683	13	356	11	380
State Bank of Mysore	1788	4482	1448	7718	73	1317	92	1482
State Bank of Patiala	1827	4837	2534	9198	40	976	16	1032
State Bank of Sourashtra	1551	3501	1352	6404	13	330	139	482
State Bank of Travancore	2077	3877	2256	8210	169	2125	455	2749
Punjab and Sind Bank	3597	3407	2139	11143	103	480	15	598
Total	191099	345966	154451	691516	7903	72529	6740	87172

Source: Bhatnagar, D. (1988). HRD for women employees in banks. In A. K. Khandelwal, (ed.) **Human Resources Development in Banks**. Oxford and IBH Publishing Company, New Delhi.

## Appendix B

### Women In Management Questionnaire

This research study focuses on the role played by women in the banking industry in India. The following questionnaire asks about your experiences as a female bank officer, manager or executive. All information provided in the questionnaire will be held confidential and every measure will be taken to guard the identity of the respondents. The completed questionnaires will be returned directly to the researcher in the United States and bank management will not have access to them.

In your opinion, what unique strengths do women possess that will help them to be successful in their management careers? Please explain.

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What factors helped you progress to your present position? \_\_\_\_\_

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What advice would you give to women who are entering bank jobs and who seek to be promoted in the future?

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Have you faced any discrimination in your job because you are a woman? Please explain.

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Please indicate how supportive your boss is of your career by circling one of the choices below.

Very supportive   Supportive   Somewhat supportive   Unsupportive   Very unsupportive

Have you had any mentors who have helped you in your progress?   Yes   No

If yes, was your mentor:    Male    Female    (Please circle one)

Please also indicate who your mentor(s) were/are?    Boss    Friend    Husband  
Senior Bank Official    Other    (Please circle as many as applicable)

In your opinion, how does the status of women in the banking industry compare with other industries? Please explain.

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What differences do you see in the management and leadership styles between men and women managers?

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What skills are crucial for success in your present job? Please list them. \_\_\_\_\_

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What is your opinion of bank branches that employ mostly female employees and are managed by women?    Very favorable    Favorable    Somewhat Favorable  
Unfavorable    Very Unfavorable

Please explain your point of view \_\_\_\_\_

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What kinds of barriers do women face in their attempts to progress up the career ladder? Please list the barriers.

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What are some reasons why there so *few* women bank managers and executives? Please rank order the following reasons from 1 to 6 by placing a number next to each.

- \_\_\_\_\_ women do not want the extra work and hassle
- \_\_\_\_\_ women find it hard to balance work and household demands
- \_\_\_\_\_ women are not given the opportunity to get promoted
- \_\_\_\_\_ women are discouraged from seeking management jobs
- \_\_\_\_\_ women are not as qualified as men
- \_\_\_\_\_ women don't like to deal with the politics associated with management jobs

Please list any other reasons you consider important. \_\_\_\_\_

What is your present job title or position? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you worked in your *present* position? \_\_\_\_\_ years

How many years did you work in your *previous* position before you were promoted to your present position? \_\_\_\_\_ years

What is your age? (Please circle one) 20-25 26-31 32-37 38-43 44-49 over 49

How many hours a week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

Education: (Please circle highest degree) High School Undergraduate Graduate  
Doctorate

How many months of technical training did you go through? \_\_\_\_\_ months

Marital status (Please circle one) Married Single Widowed Divorced Separated

*Thank you so much for your interest and time in filling out this questionnaire..*

## **Appendix C**

### **Description of Agenda for Training Program for Women**

#### **Sample A**

##### **Programme on Developing Professionalism in Lady Officers**

- OBJECTIVES:** To enable the participants to identify the constraints in their functioning and in performing their tasks and examine the ways and means of overcoming them.  
To develop certain personality traits for better functioning.
- DURATION:** Five days
- TARGET GROUP:** Women officers in Scale I/II and III
- COVERAGE:** Functioning of Women in Banks  
- Basic Issues  
- Group Work to Identify Factors that Facilitate, Factors that Hinder  
Problem of Working Women in Career Development  
Personality Development  
Socio-psychological factors in Work Life - Coping with Business  
Organization Objectives, Contribution and Expectations  
Developing Professionalism  
Women as Leaders - Inter-personnel Relationship- Communication  
Experience Sharing  
Towards Better Functioning - Strategies to Overcome Blockages

#### **Sample B**

##### **Training Programme on Developing Professionalism in Women**

**Day 1:** Registration and Inauguration, Introduction, Sharing of Course Expectations Objectives and Content, Film on Functions of Manager, Introduction to Current Principles of Management, Place of Women in Management (Indian Case)

**Day 2:** Review of Monday Case Study, Case Discussion and Analysis, Self and Value Clarification Exercises, Summing up on Professionalism, Role Analysis and Enhancing Role Effectiveness.

**Day 3:** Review of Tuesday. Identifying Stress and Stressors, Management of Stress, Life Planning  
Group Discussion and Presentation, Goal Setting.

**Day 4: Review Assertiveness Concepts, Skills and Techniques, Time Management, Career Planning and Growth, Meet the Professional Women**

**Day 5: Review Film on Communication, Effective Communication, Women and Communication, How to be Interviewed, Deriving any Action Plan and Overview of Programme, Conclusion**