CHAPTER 6

An Inter Regional Comparison of Occupational Gender Segregation in Japan

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1 Introduction

In many Western capitalist countries, the gender gap in labor force participation rate and average years in employment significantly narrowed following World War II. This was due mainly to increased participation in the labor force by women, particularly married women. Nevertheless, the wage gap remained, and it remains, relatively large, as does the gap in workplace power and authority.

Table 6.1 presents gender disparity in terms of labor force participation rate, average years in employment, and wages in three Western countries that represent the three kinds of welfare regimes identified by Esping-Andersen (1990)—Swedish social democracy, German conservatism, and American liberalism—and Japan. The number means the ratio of female workers to male workers in Table 6.1 (male as 100). The smaller number indicates the larger gender disparity. Although gender disparity in labor force participation rate and years in employment is small in the three Western countries, in wages the gender disparity is relatively large. To understand the persistence of gaps in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.1 Gender disparity in labor force participation rate, years in employment, and wages (male as 100)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor force participation rate&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Years in employment&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wage&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<sup>a</sup> 2003.
<sup>b</sup> The average length of years per same employer. In 1996 for the United States, in 2004 for Japan, and in 1995 for others.
<sup>c</sup> Monthly average. In 1999 for the United States, in 2004 for Japan, and in 2001 for others.

wages and perhaps in workplace power, much research on gender and employ-
ment in Europe and the United States has focused on occupational gender
segregation, where men and women are concentrated in different occupations
(doctors tend to be men while nurses tend to be women, for example) as well
as the social processes behind such segregation.

Table 6.1 shows that the gender gaps in labor force participation rate and
years of continuous employment in Japan are larger than in Europe and the
United States. Many researchers consider that these gaps lead to gender gaps in
wage, power, and authority since women with shorter tenure are likely allocated
to lower level positions. Research has therefore focused either on women's exit
at marriage or childbirth as a factor that reduces labor force participation rate
and length in employment, or on their re-entry into the labor market after chil-
drearing as a factor that counters the reduction of labor participation or years in
employment (Nakai 2009; Osawa Machiko 1993; Otobe 2010; Takeishi 2006a;
Wakisaka and Tomita 2001; Yamato 2009). However, little research has been con-
ducted on workplace gender segregation. It may be that workplace gender seg-
regation has a negative impact on female labor participation rate and years in
employment, for the reason that if women cannot find employment with suffi-
cient appeal they more easily quit their jobs at marriage or childbirth.

This chapter focuses on occupational gender segregation in Japan to
understand Japanese women's employment from a different perspective from
previous studies. We use the framework presented by Charles and Grusky
(2004) to analyze how global social changes such as the spread of gender
egalitarianism and the advancement of post industrialization have affected
occupational gender segregation in Japan. We then compare the results of the
analysis with those in Europe and the United States as analyzed by Charles
and Grusky (2004), and examine how the impacts of such global social
changes differ accordance with country-specific socioeconomic structure.