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Women, uniforms and brand identity in Barclays Bank

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ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the British banking sector in the late twentieth century. It explores the approach of the managers of Barclays Bank, who in contrast to their competitors, decided to use female staff at the forefront of their strategy to increase business and to improve customer perceptions of the bank within its branches. In particular, we explore the decision to place women on the 'shop floor', to sell financial services and to dress them in a corporate uniform. Special clothing is often seen as a symbolic representation of an organization's identity and culture. The article examines the way in which managers used female employees and their femininity as a device to attempt to build stronger customer relationships that eventually became part of a wider branding exercise.

KEYWORDS

Gender; women; branding; marketing; corporate identity; banks; banking

Introduction

There are several studies which place women at the centre of a narrative of professional development.[1] The works in business and economic history are no exception here and there is now growing interest in gender in these areas.[2] Within this literature, there is a focus on the experience of a woman or women, which is argued to be different to that of their male counterparts.[3] The career trajectory of women is noted to be limited due to the imposition of formal exclusion and discrimination practices and, later, glass ceilings and informal barriers.[4] While the discussion of women in sectors and professional contexts is important in uncovering their story and their voice, which is often forgotten (Auchmuty, 2015),[5] it is equally important to consider women as a group in the context of an organization as well as its culture and its branding or identity.[6] This study adds to the discussion of gender in business history and financial history (Maltby & Rutterford, 2006; Newton & Cottrell, 2006; Rutterford et al., 2011) by examining women in a particular banking organization who were recruited to a specific role.

The article focuses on the British banking sector in the late twentieth century. It notes the approach of the managers of Barclays Bank, who, in contrast, to their competitors, decided to use female staff at the forefront of their strategy to increase business and to

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improve customer perceptions of the bank within its branches. In particular, we explore the decision to place women on the 'shop floor', to sell financial services and to dress them in a corporate uniform. Special clothing is often seen as a symbolic representation of an organization's identity and culture.[7] The article examines the way in which managers used female employees and their femininity as a device to attempt to build stronger customer relationships that eventually became part of a wider branding exercise. It asks how and why did the bank's management use women rather than men in this way? Was the uniform meant to de-feminise female employees and to dress women in a way that made them appear more professional? Was it to highlight stereotypical feminine qualities (caring, approachable, personable, amenable, etc.) that were deemed important for the role? How did women negotiate and renegotiate their role with male managers? Did employing women and utilising uniforms improve bank/customer relations and improve corporate identity for Barclays?

To do so, this article uses archival resources located in British banks. It uses private correspondence among the senior management team at Barclays, including the Chairman, General Manager, and Head of the marketing department to provide an understanding of their views. A number of communications were circulated among the group in the head office and branch managers and local directors were in direct contact with this group. To reconstruct the voice of female staff members and understand their bargaining power, it analyses notes and letters written by the Women's Representative to the senior management, as well as correspondence from the senior management which reflect on their meetings with female staff members. Barclays, in contrast to some of the other banks, had a better relationship with the political left and so used a union or collective bargaining.[8] Women workers adopted this structure of representation whereby one spoke on behalf of the group or class of workers. Pamela Emney was the Women's Representative. We have no evidence of her verbal conversations but she wrote an array of letters to the senior management, which we examine here. She was involved in managerial debates and was in close contact with those at the top of the managerial hierarchy. Her private or personal thoughts are not recorded in the archive. Neither are her horizontal discussions with her fellow female employees. Yet, she had a voice. Her interruptions and lobbying efforts were effective in changing the direction of the policy of Barclays senior management team and in influencing bank strategy.[9]

The article places women at the centre of a professional development narrative but it does much to emphasise that a contest, a debate and a dialogue took place. There was not a clear or obvious single path which was to be taken. In other words, women had to negotiate their working conditions and their rights with other women but also with those who were higher in the hierarchy of the bank, most notably the senior management, who were all men. We focus both on recreating the views of employer or bank's management as well as that of the ordinary female employee. The article shows that the women in Barclays bank in the late 1970s were conscious of gender issues and protested where they believed managerial behaviour fell below what they considered to be acceptable. The mood of the time was influenced by the second wave of feminism and radical left-wing politics. These views were building in the years prior.

The structure is as follows. The first section provides a context to the study by examining retail banking in British society from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. The second part considers the history of women employees in retail banking in the United Kingdom and the conscious recruitment of women to work in branches by Barclays in the 1970s. This is followed by a section which considers the recruitment of female staff by Barclays in the

context of the strategic development of the bank's identity and brand. The fourth section considers women's bodies and the direct input of women into their professional appearance, in particular the voice of women in the negotiations surrounding their representation in the workplace at Barclays. The final section provides organizational context by considering how men dressed within Barclays, in comparison with women, and the changes in staff appearance in the 1980s and 1990s.

British banks and society

In the 1970s, British retail banks carried an 'elitist' persona that stemmed from their origins in the nineteenth century. Previous studies have shown bank shareholders in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were fairly affluent and bank executives were usually of an aristocratic or gentlemanly character. As Turner indicates, in the nineteenth century the wealth of bank shareholders was an important signalling device in an era of unlimited liability; private banking was no different (Turner, 2009; Cassis, 1994). Bank executives and staff members knew their communities; they offered their services through extensive social networks that were bound by familial and class ties (Newton, 1996; 2010; Barnes & Newton, 2017). Proximity to groups of wealthy depositors motivated early expansion as banks raced to gain additional sources of capital (Barnes & Newton, 2018b). Banks had traditionally engaged with a certain segment of British society: those with surplus money and enough to deposit. Banks continued to service this group well into the twentieth century.

The twentieth century witnessed an increase in the number of personal bank accounts held by the population of the United Kingdom. Yet even by the early 1970s, only approximately forty per cent of the adult population in the United Kingdom were in possession of a current bank account (Ackrill & Hannah, 2007, p. 197). At Barclays, changes began in attitudes to those without bank accounts, known as the 'unbanked'. Those at Barclays believed that it could reach out to new depositors and this would provide a profitable opportunity to expand the bank's business (Weyer, 2000). Beforehand, the prevailing view within senior management was that 'any business they had to 'tout' for was not worth having' (Ackrill & Hannah, 2007, p. 197). Change came in the form of Deryk Vander Weyer. He was appointed head of Barclays marketing department in 1968. He transformed the bank's anti-advertising attitude and moved towards selling its services. From this point onwards, new customers were pursued with vigour, in particular those who did not have an existing bank account.

Depositors had traditionally been the main source of personal customers for retail banks in the United Kingdom but the 1970s also saw a shift in importance from the depositor to the individual borrower.[10] After the government lifted restrictions on loans in the early 1970s, banks aimed to increase their lending activity and extend credit to new customers.[11] In this environment, National Westminster, Lloyds, Midland and Barclays (hereafter the Big Four) began actively soliciting new business from those individuals who were too modest in means to be thought of as useful depositors but might now be a benefit to the bank as borrowers. Customer-friendly building societies and savings banks attracted new business with offers of mortgages. These organizations were traditionally the financial institutions used by the lower or working class. They were the organizations with which high street banks now began to compete with for customers in a more direct fashion.

British retail banks had undertaken mass expansion in the late nineteenth century through branching in the belief that a bank was used primarily due to location and customer

convenience. In the twentieth century, the Big Four rushed to close up gaps and spaces between potential customers to secure a firm footing in a local high street. Location and being within close proximity to large residential areas was key to strategic growth. Yet their customers, or the general public, did not view these organizations positively. British banks were often indistinguishable from one another; they sold intangible services that were largely identical; and they colluded on the price charged. Following the commission of market research and investment in PR departments in the 1950s and 1960s,[12] British retail banks better understood their elitist and unpopular image and saw it as a hindrance. In 1962, the Committee of London Clearing Bankers concluded that British consumers viewed banks with 'indifference and unfamiliarity'.[13] Gough (1982) argued that the working class in particular did not like stepping into a clearing bank branch and building societies exploited this by projecting a friendly image. Customers also had specific complaints about bank services. Dissatisfaction arose from queuing times to being treated impersonally in branches by staff, inconvenient banking hours, bank charges and credit transfers.[14] This view persisted into the 1970s. How could the retail banks firstly improve customer service and secondly dispel this negative and elitist image that had existed since the nineteenth century?

Recruiting women employees and corporate dress

As part of the bank's strategy to change consumer perceptions and the identity of Barclays within British society, Barclays introduced a new position called the 'Personal Banker' in 1977. This move was an attempt to improve relationships with their existing customers, as well as to attract new clientele and new business, and to improve their identity and reputation as a bank. The Personal Banker was an entry-level position. It was the task of the Personal Banker to be approachable but also to sell personal mortgages, insurance services, loans and other such financial products (Ackrill & Hannah, 2007, p. 348 and 248–249). Personal Bankers at Barclays were at the forefront of facilitating a shift in retail banking/customer relations from passive inertia to active solicitation. Located within branches, but not behind counters, Personal Bankers were accessible in a way that bank managers and tellers had not been. The wearing of uniforms meant that they could be clearly identified on the shop floor by members of the public. They were encouraged to engage with customers. As Joseph and Alex (1972, p. 722) state in their work on uniforms, '[t]he uniform makes the wearer's status much more visible than other types of dress'.

The decision to institute uniforms for Personal Bankers was discussed centrally by those at the top of the company, most notably by Gittoes, head of Advertising Services, and the General Manager, Sale.[15] Sale instructed local boards to implement the strategy of introducing uniforms for personal bankers to wear.[16] Sale's involvement in the scheme came as a surprise to some of the other senior members of staff. When Sale signed off on the final uniform and disseminated this news to the branches, a local director wrote to Deryk Vander Weyer to complain about Sale's letter. He found 'it astonishing that a General Manager's time is spent directly or indirectly in making decisions about uniforms for receptionists, particularly at a time when there must be many much more important issues'.[17] This statement demonstrates that not all managers within the bank had shifted their views to see the importance of enhancing relationships between customers and the bank.

By the summer of 1979, there were approximately 100 Personal Bankers employed by Barclays and the majority of these were women.[18] Retail banks in the United Kingdom had

employed women since the beginning of the twentieth century as translators and clerks (Adams & Harte, 1998, p. 788), but it was not until the First World War that women entered retail banks in any great number (Seltzer, 2011). Women were again called upon to replace male labour during World War II. After 1945, women stayed in employment but banks required women to give up their jobs upon marriage through enacting the 'marriage bar'. Of the retail banks, Barclays was the last to abolish the marriage bar, which it retained until 1961 (Ackrill & Hannah, 2007, p. 346; McKinlay, 2013; Walsh, 2017). Recruitment of women in the 1940s and 1950s remained gendered, with allocation of jobs deemed suitable for women, such as clerical or mechanised tasks, being differentiated from jobs for men, who were expected to engage, by contrast, in 'careers' (Adams & Harte, 1998, p. 791; Wardley, 2011).

Female managers within banks or their branches remained rare in the 1950s and 1960s, despite the abolition of the marriage bar. In the 1950s, Barclays looked to diversify recruitment into its managerial ranks but '[w]omen formed no part of the blueprint or its implementation' (Ackrill & Hannah, 2007, p. 129). However, the total numbers of women employed by retail banks was rising. At Barclays, women went from under one fifth of the staff prior to 1939 to almost equalling the number of men employed in the 1950s, and 'formed three-fifths of Barclays staff by the 1960s' (Ackrill & Hannah, 2007, p. 344). In 1962, half the workforce of Lloyds Bank were female, and almost half of them were under 19 years of age (Adams & Harte, 1998, p. 794). The number of women employed by the clearing banks in total increased between 1945 and 1970 to the extent that they outnumbered men by the end of the 1960s.[19] Yet despite growth in the numbers of female staff, women were not found in senior positions as there were limited opportunities for promotion (Adams & Harte, 1998). The Equal Pay Act of 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 had a significant impact upon women's legal rights to equality, but within retail banks opportunities for career progression for women remained restricted. The 1970s witnessed women reaching middle management positions within retail banks, but they remained absent from senior positions (Savage, 1993). By the late 1970s, there remained a preponderance of women in lower grade jobs within banks and a limited number in higher grades. In 1978 women in lower grade posts within banking stood at: Grade 1 – 70%, Grade 2- 72%, Grade 3 – 48%, Grade 4 – 15%. In 1978 those women at Grade 4 or above stood at: Midland – 2%, Lloyds – 1.3%, Williams and Glyns – 3.8%, TSB – 2.4%, Clydesdale – 0.8%.[20]

The move to employ greater numbers of women within British banking was also reflected in the concerns of the National Union of Bank Employees [NUBE].[21] Therefore, women's voices were heard not just within individual banks but also at a national level. The union campaigned for equal rights and opportunities for women working in British banking.[22] The Union joined in wider labour movements to campaign for women's rights in the workplace, for example attending the 48th TUC Women's Congress in 1978 where issues of equal opportunities for women, training, and child care were discussed.[23] In 1978, *N.U.B.E. News* declared that '[w]e do not have equality in our industry nor do we have it in our Union'.[24] On the NUBE national committee for Barclays in 1978 there were 14 representatives, 4 of whom were women.[25] The NUBE Executive Committee for 1978/9 was compromised of 22 members, only 3 of whom were women.[26] In contrast, a meeting of the London Area Committee in 1978 was comprised mainly of women. It met to discuss the need for trade union meetings to take place where women worked (not in the evenings when they were working at home), the provision of crèches in the workplace, the loss of pension entitlement when women took maternity leave and the need for the union to campaign on behalf of women.[27] The

issue of career breaks and child rearing continued to be prominent for women. Crompton and Le Feuvre argue that the division of labour within banks was gendered. 'Bureaucratic careers' they argue 'rest upon full-time, continuous employment – that is, the male norm'. This resulted in hierarchies where 'overwhelmingly men, are at the apex of such hierarchies, and women … are at the base' (Crompton & Le Feuvre, 1991, p. 98). Their study provides an examination of gendered workplaces, whereby gender differences are used as a means for dominant groups to assert their position and power over subordinate groups. The research finds that in both the British and French financial sectors 'a formal equality of access is … not adequate to achieve a real equality of practice' (Crompton & Le Feuvre, 1991, p. 115). They emphasise the 'difference' between men and women that has led to the reinforcement of inequality in corporations, and how women have traditionally been 'lesser' in this context.[28]

Why did those at Barclays seek women rather than men to fulfil this entry role of Personal Banker? Indeed, those at Barclays were clear that it was this group which was being sought for this role. A report from Barclays claimed that this job would open up new career opportunities for women, as well as providing the bank with the opportunity to improve relationships with customers and increase its business.[29] This aim was evident on a wider scale. In looking at the shift from industrial to service sector employment in the United Kingdom during the twentieth century, McDowell (2009, p. 8) examined those service jobs in which both the service provider and the customer were both physically present (an interactive occupation) and asserted that the 'physical attributes of the body providing a service are part of the exchange that occurs at the point of sale'. McDowell (2009, p. 25) continued to argue that the role of women in the service sector, and the types of work they undertake, 'are associated with natural attributes of femininity'. Those working in interactive service sector jobs are 'usually trying to persuade the purchaser to buy something' (McDowell, 2009, p. 56).

Barclays made considerable efforts to make the bank more appealing to young women who were looking for careers as it placed advertisements in several magazines aimed at a female readership.[30] It is notable that women were recruited at a young age and at the entry level. While the bank lacked women at its highest levels, the recruitment of women to the position of Personal Banker was not a move towards equality in the workplace. The introduction of the role happened at branch level and did not interfere with the hierarchy of the bank. The bank manager's role was by no means undercut or superseded. He remained an authoritative figure and ultimately in charge of the branch. Personal Bankers did not hold any discretionary powers. Women who were in post were also paid significantly less than men and were less likely to demand promotion (Ackrill & Hannah, 2007, pp. 344–46). Changes could be made with existing employees to improve gender relations.

Importantly, political pressure was by no means the principal motivation for hiring more women at Barclays. Those at the bank employed women as Personal Bankers as part of the effort to address the stereotype that British banks were elitist and distant. The Personal Banker had customer-facing responsibilities. Bank managers believed that employing women as Personal Bankers made the service appear more personable, approachable and friendly to consumers. They leant upon the stereotype of women as being more caring and relationship orientated. Thus, they hoped, the activity of Personal Bankers on the shop floor might build stronger ties to their consumers (Royne Stafford, 1996). Or, at least, present the appearance of a caring and approachable organization. This approach was not unique to

Barclays. Female employment was considered by Mills (1956, p. xvii) in the 1950s as 'selling smiles'. Likewise, Hochschild (2012) considered the 'managed friendliness' and the emotional labour of mainly female flight attendants, who offered a service in a positive fashion in order to make the customer feel valued, to have an enhanced consumer experience and possibly repeat their business with the airline.[31]

When Barclays began using female staff in this way, several publications provided the bank with media coverage which promoted the new Personal Banker and spread the word to potential customers. The *Bankers' Magazine* announced that Personal Bankers had been created 'on the common sense premise that customers like to feel that someone in the branch is personally interested in and responsible for his financial affairs'.[32] These workers were particularly important in the larger branches where expansion and computerization meant that customers might feel that the personal touch had been lost. John Beard, Manager of the branch in Hayes (Middlesex) spoke of the growing chasm between bank staff and the consumer, adding that before this change, 'the only place to work was in a medium-sized branch where you had the opportunity to know your customers'.[33]

Women were also in a position to sell the banks products and communicate with the ideal consumer, who was male. Those without accounts were thought to be manual workers who were paid cash in hand and therefore had no need for a deposit account or a relationship with one of the high street banks (Meidan, 1984, pp. 80–81). Manual workers were, for most part, male. Marketing science suggested that male account holders were more desirable to obtain than female, as men were more loyal customers. When a female married, reports suggested that she would switch to her husband's account (Meidan, 1984, pp. 26–27). The account of a single man was thought to be more useful than that of a single woman. Therefore, Personal Bankers were intended to be successful in engaging those who thought that the bank was too big, too corporate and unapproachable; in having a positive impact on increasing business; and in providing careers for women within the bank. We now turn to consider the way that Personal Bankers were dressed.

Dress, colour and brand

Introducing Personal Bankers and placing the majority in a uniform constituted what would be later understood as part of Barclays' strategy to build its own brand through special or unique identity.[34] Clothing reflects the identity of the wearer and communicates key information about that individual, and this applies to the workplace in addition to everyday life (Popp & French, 2010; Gurney et al., 2017). Joseph (1986, p. 1), writing from a sociological perspective, considers that 'Clothing is very much a social artefact – a form of communication'. In the workplace, dress can be used to manage the impressions made upon others. This activity is often referred to as 'impression management' (Rucker et al., 1999). Dressing formally in business attire has been found to enhance respect and status and results in the wearer being perceived as competent and professional (Cardon & Okoro, 2009; Kang et al., 2011; Rucker et al., 1999).

In an organizational context, the work of Rafaeli and Pratt (1993, p. 41) has demonstrated that corporate dress 'acts as a symbol of core organizational values'. Service, packaging, colour, brand and corporate dress separated retail banks from one another. This first uniform, which was formally introduced to a wide range of workers in Barclays Bank, appears as Figure 1 (Winter 1977). With this outfit, Barclays was the first of the Big Four British banks to produce

and implement a corporate uniform. It came after a short pilot project in 1977 and as the new rank of employees - Personal Bankers - were created in the branches listed. Personal Bankers, together with some receptionists, were given the specially designed clothing to wear on a voluntary basis. Those creating change at the time were far from certain that this was the best course of action.

Barclays forged its own unique identity based on a colour (cyan blue), found in the bank logo.[35] This was evident in its uniform (see Figure 1). Only a short while after the introduction of the Barclays blue outfit in Figure 1, another set of corporate clothing was introduced as represented by Figure 2 (Summer 1979). The design team dropped the buoyant and bright colour from the uniform in 1979, and it explained its reasoning as: 'Barclays blue is neither a practical nor a fashionable colour for clothes'. They believed that 'Adherence to the house-style need not be involved [as] "if it moves colour it blurs"'.[36] The internal correspondence addressed to the General Manager, Sale, revealed that the colour 'navy was preferred to 'Barclayblue' by the girls' and an order had been made for this colour. Sale, doubting that many receptionists and Personal Bankers had been asked about the colour, 'believed that it is a retrograde step to depart from Barclayblue'.[37] He pushed this idea again several months later, arguing that the Receptionists he talked with, 'thought that it was a great shame that the cloth in future would be in navy blue as opposed to Barclays blue'.[38] Emney, Women Staff Manager, sided with Sale, asserting that she felt that it was 'essential to maintain the colour identity' with the Barclay brand.[39] The uniform also maintained a strong link in identity between the employee and Barclays as an organization. Indeed, as Joseph and Alex (1972, p. 719) argue, uniforms perform the function of social placement for the wearer, stating that '[t]he uniform identifies group members, helps insure that organizational goal will be attained, and orders priorities of group and status demands for the individual'. By using a uniform, an organization verifies an individual as a representative of the organization and one that accepts responsibility for his/her activities and legitimises their position within the organization (Joseph & Alex, 1972, p. 723). Those at Barclays seemed to accept this thinking.

While Barclays blue may not have been a desirable colour for suits, it was a distinctive shade which was ever present in the bank's corporate uniforms. Later, with other banks like NatWest taking up deep purple, Lloyds in navy and green and Midland in navy blue, cyan blue was unique to Barclays and thus closely associated with that particular bank. The connotations remain firm and continue to be an integral, but not dominant, part of the staff uniform as shown by Figure 3, which shows the redesign of 2009. Barclays blue was not the basis of the colour of a two-piece suit as it had been earlier. These items of clothing moved away from the brand colours of the bank towards traditional black trousers and skirts. Yet, the cyan blue had not disappeared completely. An introduction to a new range said that '[m]ore than ever before this new range features the Barclays cyan blue, a colour that defines the brand and is easily identified by our customers'.[40] Cyan blue was the shade of statement items, such as the ties, neck scarves, and women's belts. Another symbol of the bank's corporate identity was the Barclays eagle. The motif appeared consistently on Figures 1–3. In Figures 1 and 3, it sat on the lapel and shirt or blouse. In Figure 2 the logo was inside the blue box adjacent to the word 'Barclays'. The eagle was repeated and it was a clear motif for the bank. The name of the bank also became a prominent marker.

Since the 1960s, the bank had drawn on the 'Barclay' name with the introduction of Barclaycards, Barclayloans etc. in a way that the other banks in the United Kingdom had not.

Figure 1. The first Personal Banker outfit (Winter 1977).

As a tool for communication, the more refined uniform design shown in Figure 2 (Summer 1979) - with the Barclays logo repeated over the outfit - was far from subtle. This was one of the reasons why the summer outfit of 1979 was dropped. Recalling some of his conversations with the Personal Bankers, Sale wrote '[t]he girls also said they did not like the print being used on the new dress material that they are to wear in the summer. Whilst they would not mind having an 'eagle logo, they did object to having "Barclays written all over them"'.[41] The marketing team at Barclays believed that the uniforms were manifest of a positive wider change in the nature of the firm's approach to its customers. One internal report said that:

> We believe that uniforms create an attitude of mind on behalf of those that wear them (the analogy of the Brigade of Guards is not too far fetched!) and an improved perception of the bank on behalf of our customers. They strongly reinforce the idea that we are doing something different to what we have done in the past.[42]

Employee dress thus constituted a visual way of communicating ideas and messages to wider society. When it was introduced in 1977, it indicated that a widespread cultural change

Figure 2. The Personal Banker outfit (Summer 1979).

had occurred within the bank.[43] The introduction of uniforms also sparked 'spontaneous comment' and 'notice' from customers.[44] In the eyes of ordinary consumers, the uniform appeared to help bridge a gap between the distant, elitist corporation and society.

Overall, the uniforms were a means of reinforcing other marketing efforts and building an image of the bank and its employees, which could be distinguished from that of their competitors. Responses from staff members in the early trials had encouraged the use of colour in building corporate identity. From an internal view, it demonstrated a commitment from staff 'to shared values and goals' that Ackrill and Hannah (2007, p. 343) point out was so important to Barclays. The following section considers the appearance of the new Personal Bankers in more detail, and how staff responded to their introduction.

Figure 3. The Jeff Banks 1690 collection (2009).

Women's bodies, their voices and their dress

The decisions made about corporate dress in the 1970s and 1980s took place in the context of second wave of feminism. This was a discourse that focussed on women's identity and their bodies as well as their place within society. It was preceded by the first wave of feminism in the early twentieth century which had classically liberal aims due to the pursuit of equal legal rights. It resulted in the removal of legal barriers which restricted women from voting and from entering into certain professions. There was a resurgence of feminist writing which began in the English-speaking world in 1953 with the translation of Simone de Beauvior's text *The Second Sex*. Beauvior's interest in the human condition of women was not new but her work introduced the concept of women as 'other'. She wrote that 'He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other' (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 16). Her work inspired a new group of feminist writers to think again about the difference between men and women in society. One of the most prolific authors of this generation was Betty Friedan, who published the *Feminist Mystique* in 1963. Friedan wrote as one of those from the first generation of women who had access to higher education and were permitted to attend college. Dissatisfied with their status in the home, as mothers and wives, Friedan (2010, p. 58) challenged the notion that those women who chose marriage and motherhood over a career were happy with that decision.

A more radical feminist agenda emerged in the 1970s. Firestone (1971, pp. 10–11) and other radical feminists called for an uprising or revolt to take control of their own physical autonomy and ability to reproduce, which they saw as one of the ways in which women were treated as 'other' or 'second' class to use the words of Beauvior. The act of sex itself was later seen by Dworkin (1988, p. 19) as a lens through which the 'othering' could be identified. Germaine Greer published her seminal book, *The Female Eunuch*, in 1970. She saw her book as being 'part of the second feminist wave' where in comparison to the first wave, the 'new emphasis', Greer (1972, p. 11) claimed, was 'different'. She considered that once the 'genteel middle-class ladies clamoured for reform, now the ungenteel middle-class women are calling for revolution'.

How did those employed by Barclays react and fit into this debate? Did they see differences between men and women in the way that is described above? To what extent were these differences identified or negotiated through the means of dress? In the 1970s, both prior to and after the introduction of the Personal Banker by Barclays, men at the bank were subject to the same dress code as women. That is, neither gender was forced to adopt a uniform. There remained a striking visual difference between male and female Personal Bankers, which was helped by the complete lack of male corporate attire.[45] Those in the General Manager's office preferred 'to confine this [the wearing of uniforms] to the ladies'.[46] Managers rather than workers raised the implications of the Sex Discrimination legislation and noted the impact that it had upon business policy. Sale stated that 'I think it is important that we make a decision as to the extent to which uniforms are to be granted in our branches. Under the Sex Discrimination Act it is unlikely that we can restrict the provisions of uniforms to females'.[47] The uniform was, therefore, voluntary. Yet, it was women who took up the uniform and decided to wear it. This decision is somewhat counterintuitive if it is juxtaposed against the feminist discourse about changing the patriarchal structure of socio-economic relations.

Those in the bank's management sought young women to trade on the stereotype of women possessing a more caring side and better social skills when compared to men.

Rapoport et al. noted that 'relational skills' were more associated with women, yet within organization these skills are often not valued as highly as more aggressive and assertive traits more commonly associated with men (Rapoport, 2002, p. 5). It was hoped that female Personal Bankers would utilise their social skills to give the bank a better relationship with the public. Crompton and Sanderson also emphasised 'cultural assumptions about femininity' (1990, p. 122) and argued that women's paid work has tended to be viewed as 'nurturing and supportive' (1990, p. 28). The design of the early outfits emphasised the wearer's femininity with a dress or skirt, flowing blouse, and buttons on the left rather than right side. The feminised nature of the role and the uniform was well noted among the managerial group in Barclays. Sale, the General Manager, referred to female Personal Bankers as 'girls' repeatedly.[48] One Local Director quipped after the introduction of the uniform: 'when are we going to get Barclaybras. Would you like me to try a few experiments for you?'[49] This comment fits with the thesis of Gervais et al. (2012, p. 743) who argued that 'women's bodies were reduced to their sexual body parts in perceiver's minds'. Much has been written about female employees and a frequent focus on the attractiveness of women (Heilman & Stopeck, 1985; Smith et al., 2018; Watkins & Johnston, 2000).

The issue of sex and sexuality more generally was a central feature of the bank's advertising campaign, which resulted in the publication of Figure 4 (advert for the Personal Banker') in several local newspapers. Through this advertisement, the marketing department had intended to alert potential male customers of the new service. The bank had run several 'tongue-in-cheek' and humorous campaigns before,[50] and Figure 4 was intended to be of this style. The women who worked at the bank did not share this view. The female workers contested the presentation of Personal Bankers in this way.

On learning of the advert, Pamela Emney, the Women Staff Manager and representative of female employees at Barclays, complained. She wrote to Gittoes, the Head of Advertising Services, to tell him that 'our women staff did not like the message contained in this advert' or being associated with the notion that workers could be 'touched'. She acknowledged that while the advert may have been thought of as a amusing by some, she worried that it 'could be taken the wrong way by a crank'.[51] The vast majority of British society, she implied, would understand this was humorous and meant figuratively. Emney, in this correspondence, took a purposeful but non-confrontational approach. Emney did not promulgate a revolt as Firestone had called for. She did not go on strike nor quit her job in protest and convince others to do so. Nor did she as an individual sue for sex discrimination and pursue a claim in court. She did not launch a discussion about women and the new legal protections offered to special groups or classes of individuals in this correspondence. Her disagreement was not publicised (although the advert was) to draw attention to the cultural problems or injustices that women as a group had suffered inside the bank. More to the point, she did not criticise Gittoe's work nor his approach towards women explicitly but said that only a minority of individuals might take this message literally. She did not move antagonistically and label the actions 'discriminatory' but sought to persuade Gittoe that his approach was problematic.

Emney's life experiences and background are important in unpicking her political position. She joined the bank in 1960 as a wife and mother of three children. She did not seem to be unhappy with balancing her role in the home with work and commented in an interview that she managed to fit in both. Emney said 'I like work, I like organising, and I have had wonderful help from my family'.[52] She took an open position on the question of whether a woman should

Figure 4. Advertisement for Personal Banker Service, 1978.

seek a marriage and children or career and education or both. She said '[t]he dual role can work better for some women than others. There's no set pattern; some women will want to work outside of the home and some won't. It depends on so many different factors, and for each family there's a different situation'.[53] Although Emney held this dual role of wife/mother and career woman, she did not believe that there was one way of structuring a woman's life

or that different paths were lesser. Indeed, she gave other women guidance and instruction on how to climb the ladder at Barclays. One of the pieces of advice which she gave was 'to enjoy it'.[54] She perhaps took this literally in her own communications and attempted to strengthen and bridge relations. It is unlikely that she had, like Freidan, gone into higher education.

Whatever Emney's background or political position, she was not a passive actor. In Emney's letters to Sale, the General Manager about Figure 4, the advert which implied bankers could be touched, her reproach was unwavering and direct. She labelled the message 'distasteful' and 'unnecessary'.[55] The language here was notably of disgust rather than that of radical feminism and socialism. It is important to note that this letter did not have the same conciliatory tone as Emney's letter to Gitteos. It was clear here that Emney could manage a complex set of relations with those in the managerial team without difficulty and she could also complain, challenge and push where she felt it appropriate. She outlined that it was her belief in her capacity as representative of female staff that Gitteo's marketing message was inappropriate. She was effective in this regard. The bank's management listened. They responded quickly to Emney's complaint and the advert was pulled.

The women did not see their uniforms as presenting them in an overtly sexual or feminine light. In some quarters, this dress would have been received as such – it would have been a marker of women as objects to be sexualised for male gratification or simply 'other'. But this view does not appear in either General Manager Sale's notes of his discussions with the female workers or Emney's letters. The women, it appeared, saw the outfit as a marker of professionalism. It mirrored that of other industries and sectors, where special dress denoted the individual's professional group. For the female staff, the uniform presented them with the opportunity to dress in a clearly defined and professional manner, or, as Mrs Emney articulated: 'will create a neat and business-like image'.[56] For Emney, at least, uniforms were a way of getting away from the stereotype of women as wives, mothers, carers. In this business dress, they were visibly a businessperson and employee. The corporate uniform clarified that those women wearing the costume worked for the bank and it legitimised their role in a traditionally male environment. Wider studies, such as Peluchette et al. (2006, p. 59), have found similar results. They found that when they questioned women, in particular, they tended to 'place significant value on workplace attire and believe that it positively impacts several workplace outcomes', including making 'them feel more competent at work'.

Moreover, it seemed that the women at Barclays who wore the early uniform enjoyed wearing it. One report remarked that '[t]he staff directly involved enjoy their new role and there is some competition to be selected as a Personal Banker. There has been a very high level of commitment evidencing good job satisfaction [underlining in original]'. From this evidence, women working at Barclays did not view the wearing of a uniform as marking them out as 'lesser' in any way whilst at work. The report was not reluctant to mention some of the disagreements as it noted that: '[a]fter some initial misconceptions other staff have welcomed the scheme seeing reductions in interruptions as a particular benefit'.[57] An obvious advantage for the recipient of the uniform was that it was free and the bank bore the cost.[58] The evidence demonstrates that the women at Barclays did not think of a uniform highlighting femininity as a tool for capitalist patriarchal oppression, which radical feminists such as Firestone could conceivably have interpreted it as being. Rather, evidence suggests that female employees of Barclays viewed it as a visible marker for making in-roads into the corporate world.

The uniforms normally observed in stores along the main or high streets are the antithesis to clothing found and sought after in the cutting edge world of fashion. Fashion in its most ideal form is the production and marketing of high-end goods; it is an industry which sets trends and innovates in design resulting in a quick turnover in styles.[59] The influential, transgressive and seasonal outfits found in haute couture do not appear to have much of a natural synergy with corporate uniforms. Corporate uniforms tend to be, after all, practical, 'everyday' and safe outfits. Barclays chose clothes for their employees to wear with the explicit expectation that these garments would be seen by consumers and worn during working hours, repetitively, day after day – sometimes even year after year. Uniforms, such as the ones discussed here, are intended to middling in their very nature — long-lasting and designed to enable the wearer to conform to an ideal and standardised mode of dress. This is a gulf away from those bright statement designs which are launched on the catwalk, sold at a premium to fashionistas and later chosen by the consumer to be worn with pride. Yet, the Barclays uniform did not appear to have these negative connotations.

Despite the impression that corporate uniforms might be somewhat unfashionable and unlikeable, as Table 1 shows, the majority of staff members liked various aspects of the uniform. These figures reflected an optimistic disposition among the workers. There were 52 votes in favour of a positive statement about the uniform's design and style, while just two disliked it. 73 liked the colour, while only seven did not. Of the winter uniform, 46 liked the material while only five did not. Those who were polled preferred the winter outfit (Figure 1) to the summer version (Figure 2). Notably, here the questionnaire was not answered systematically by every Personal Banker. At this point, there was around 100 Personal Bankers and there were a maximum of 83 responses.[60] This deficit was well noted by the managers

Table 1. Results of Personal Banker experiment, 1979.

Receptionist/Personal Banker Uniform*		
Style/Design	Liked	Disliked
Positively stated	52	2
Logo		24
Winter Uniform	29	
Summer Uniform	2	19
Printed Skirts	2	17
Printed Blouses	1	26
Neck tie	3	30
Material	Liked	Disliked
Positively stated	19	7
Winter Uniform	46	5
Summer Uniform	4	41
Printed Blouses		25
Neck tie		7
Colour	Liked	Disliked
Positively stated	73	7
Workmanship	57	26
Fit	37	43
Other comments	Votes	
Logo disliked	13	
Summer uniform too warm	10	
Wished to choose own style/clothes from local shops	7	
Summer uniform not liked	12	
More summer skirts needed	11	
Winter uniform too cold	1	

*Some columns appear blank in original.

who read the questionnaire. In Sale's reply in pencil, he commented on the missing figures. He said that it 'would have been interesting to know' but where the noticeable gap on Table1 was, he noted that he believed that 'the winter uniform' was 'not troublesome'.[61]

The general enthusiastic reaction among staff transferred onto customers; they shared the employee's sense of positivity.[62] Customers responded optimistically to the introduction of both Personal Bankers and the corporate uniform. One marketing manager wrote in his evaluation of the uniform that he 'must report not one adverse comment has been heard from customers who have been full of praise for the idea. I have received many verbal compliments regarding the Service which has often been a topic of conversation at many local social occasions'.[63] In the quantitative assessments, Personal Bankers with an active and friendlier style of interaction appeared to have succeeded in encouraging new consumers to engage with the bank, as Table 2 shows. In qualitative surveys, older respondents reacted more favourably as they believed that the bank was 'reintroducing the principle of personal service'. Those customers in smaller branches proved more 'hesitant' as they felt that the atmosphere had become 'more formal and less friendly'.[64] A report on Personal Bankers in the summer of 1979 summarised that these new staff had improved customer service; improved work flow within branches; increased job satisfaction for staff; and made better use of management time. However, they also cautiously recognised that 'evidence of improved market share and cross selling is rather more tentative'.[65] In sum, it appeared those who encountered the uniform and the Personal Banker generally saw it as a success.

Echoing more glamorous designs worn by airline hostesses, the new uniform from the 1980s aimed to provide employees with a sense of class, prestige and power.[66] On the other hand, several staff members remarked upon it less positively, noting that it resembled Maplins Holiday as much as British Airways.[67] One of the reasons it appeared to be well liked was that it gave women a sense of equality with male workers. Popular texts from the second half of the twentieth century were Edith Head's 1965 book *How to Dress for Success* and John T. Molloy's 1976 book *Dress For Success*. As Peluchette et al. (2006, p. 46) stated, the 'common theme in these books is that clothing decisions can make a difference in how one is perceived by others and that clothing wearers can use their attire decisions to influence the impressions formed by others in the workplace'. The effort of making decisions around what to wear to work has been defined as 'appearance labor' and has been noted to be particularly applicable to women (Peluchette et al., 2006; Rafaeli et al., 1997). Women's entry into the corporate workplace was later than men's, more contested and has required more consideration of appearance than men, given that there was no direct equivalent to the men's business suit as a 'uniform' for women to wear. Forsythe (1990, p. 376) noted that 'appropriate business dress for female executives is not well defined, and there is little empirical basis for establishing clothing criteria that would enhance the employment opportunities of female candidates for management positions'. This could impact on decisions surrounding the hiring and promotion of women within organizations. Gummer (1998, p. 82) also argued that '[d]ress and appearance are more important to women than to men, in part because women in male dominated organizations have a greater need for legitimacy, credibility, acceptance, and self-confidence that dress can convey'.

Another reason which explains why women liked the uniform was due to their agency. Despite the involvement of high profile executives in the discussion concerning the introduction of uniforms for Personal Bankers, workers themselves also had a considerable amount of bargaining power and influence over the decisions made about their clothing. The bank

Table 2. Receptionist/Personal Banker uniform results of completed questionnaires, 1979.

Local Head Office	Branch	Local Head Office View	Branch View	Specific Results
Birmingham	Rugby	Success	Excellent scheme: reduces pressure on management	
Brighton	North Street	Success	Success: increased goodwill and service: less queries at securities	Increase in introductions to Bisco and Trust Company
Bristol	Bath			40% increase in Barclayloans
Cambridge	Saffrod Walden	Success	Delighted: relief of queries	Sample of customer congratulatory letters sent. More accounts opened and fewer closed
Cardiff	Greyfriars		Objectives achieved: management freed from routine queries	
Chelmsford	Wickford	Not gone well		M/A now transferred
Darlington	Hartlepool		Extremely successful: minor queries kept from management	Insurance commission 500 pounds
Ipswich	Colchester		Highly successful: counter and securities have less queries	Net gain of personal accounts
Leeds	Harrogate		Success	
Liverpool	Liscard		Success: reduced interruption time but cost/benefit difficult to assess	Increase in new deposit accounts
London Eastern	Stratford	Success	Evaluation difficult but interruptions reduced for management	Barclayloans up 83%: most other figures up
London Northern	Kingsway		Success: evaluation difficult but most figures up	
London North Western	Greenford		Good for business: keeps queries away from management	Some accounts from other banks
London Southern	Croydon	Well received	Made banking easy for personal customers	
Pall Mall	St. James'	Valuable	Success	
Luton	St. Albans			Barclayloans up 43%
Maidstone	Gravesend		Worked very well	Several large loans done following leads up personal bankers
Manchester	Bramhall	Very pleased	Success: saving of management time	Barclayloans up 45%
Newcastle	Whitley Bay	Customer care benefits	Well received: management time saved	Barclayloans increased
Nottingham	Mansfield		Very pleased: success hard to measure	
Oxford	Whitney	Success	Success: management time saved	
Peterborough	Lincoln	Delighted	Success	
Reading	Newbury		Success	
Swansea	Neath		Excellent: customers full of praise	
Windsor	Hayes		Improved work flows	

executives did not force their own agenda regarding uniforms and there was a close dialogue and push and pull between the two groups. In March 1979, the correspondence between the senior managers reveals that they had decided to cease the experimentation with the uniforms altogether. One general manager scribbled in blue ballpoint pen on a memo to say that he agreed to stop producing uniforms but this proposal left 'the difficulty of asking girls not to wear uniforms [that] they have got'. He supposed that 'the answer is not to issue any

more and it will slowly die'.[68] It appeared that the female bankers enjoyed wearing the uniforms to the extent that this particular manager did not feel that it was in the bank's best interests to instruct them not to wear it. It was evident that some managers did not wish to discourage or demotivate the Personal Bankers and their enthusiasm for the business clothing.

However, the managers reconsidered and eventually retained uniforms for the ranks of receptionists and Personal Bankers. What – or rather who – changed their minds? Emney, the manager of the Women Staff, was well-liked, it seems, by those sat at the top of the hierarchy. The lone voice speaking in favour of the uniforms was Emney, acting in her capacity as representative of the bank's female workers. Emney, as Women's Staff Representative, echoed the voices of the women who worked at Barclays. These women liked wearing the Personal Bankers uniform. Sale wrote to the General Managers in March 1979 to state his change of opinion - that he was 'still totally against the introduction of Personal Banker Uniforms' and that there was a 'unanimous opinion' among the Staff Managers that uniforms 'should not proceed'. In contrast, Emney had, according to Sale's letter, 'given the uniforms her blessing' but as she was on holiday so he could not press her further.[69] He was to see Emney when she returned.[70] Two weeks later, it was conceded that the 'decision was taken too hastily and should be reversed'.[71] Emney, we assume, spoke up on behalf of the female staff and reaffirmed their enthusiasm and liking for the uniform. Only the summer dress, which was generally disliked as Table 1 indicates, was dropped.

In summary, women were the early adopters and beneficiaries of the corporate uniform. Personal Bankers wore uniforms in order to differentiate them from customers within branches; to provide a professional appearance; and to reinforce the brand identity of Barclays. Women also had a say in the design and retention of the uniform. The bank later turned its attention to the dress of its male members of staff and the following section discusses this in more detail.

Dressing men and women

These uniforms introduced in the 1970s were not the first to be worn by Barclays staff members. The business suit, in itself, was a uniform. Male bank staff wore it to identify their professional or clerical occupational status. Men were not required to wear business suits in any formal sense. There were, however, informal rules in lieu of such directives. For males in the bank, a suit was the norm. Women did not have an equivalent outfit that signalled their belonging to the organizational or professional status within it. If the suit was the male banker's uniform, what should the woman in banking wear? Uniforms designed specifically for female Personal Bankers filled this gap. They operated in the same way that a business suit did for males. For women, it signified that they worked for the organization and had achieved professional or business parity to the male counterparts. When the bank proposed to roll out the uniform to all staff, female staff who did not have a uniform felt strongly that they were perceived to be more junior.[72] The uniform had the reverse effect for males. Those males not wearing a uniform felt that they were thought to be more senior than they really were. As uniforms demarked the management from other members of staff, male staff wearing a uniform could no longer be perceived by customers as the Manager.[73] Men had their own business dress in the form of a suit and felt that they had no need for a uniform. This explains why men operated without a formal uniform until the 1990s.

Between 1980 and 1995, executives mooted the idea of extending the uniform to all customer-facing employees – male and female - on several occasions but without success. Nothing much changed in this period, although change was proposed and attempts were made to expand the uniform. With 'Project Mufti',[74] which was attempted in 1986, the difficulty was not in persuading staff to wear the uniform but, rather, the drawback was in the design and production of clothing. A reliable supplier could not be found.[75] When uniforms were proposed again in 1995, members of staff once more responded positively. A private communication from the Operations Director revealed that when he held meetings in the Northern Regional Office, there were 'no dissenters in terms of people being quite happy to wear a uniform'.[76] By 1996, a suitable and confident designer was found in Jeff Banks who was employed to design Barclays uniforms. Jeff Banks was a well-known fashion designer holding awards such as British Designer of the Year from 1979 and 1981. He established franchises in department stores, such as Harrods and Harvey Nichols, and appeared as one of the hosts on the BBC programme, *The Clothes Show*.[77] In addition to his own fashion business, he created a corporatewear company which designed clothes for a number of other large companies. By this time, attitudes to women in the workplace had also changed. Although men still dominated senior positions, women were no longer the 'newcomers' to the corporate workplace as they had been in the 1960s and 1970s. Feminist debates had also moved on from focusing upon women and encompassed gender and masculinity as well as femininity.

For Barclays, Jeff Banks created the 'elite' collection and a range called '1690'. The date chosen was the year when Barclays bank started trading under the names of two Goldsmith bankers, John Freame and Thomas Gould. Jeff Banks tailored his designs to Barclays Bank's needs and demands. Figure 3 shows part of the collection from 2009. He wrote a foreword that was attached to the catalogue in 2011 stating that: 'I have applied my uncompromising demands for quality in terms of styling and manufacturing as I do for my branded retail collections'.[78] The influence of Jeff Banks as a named designer gave the bank's uniforms some legitimacy and credibility as items of fashion. Indeed, the switch in name from 'uniform' to 'corporatewear' was significant in the attempt to make the uniforms more attractive. Calling an outfit a 'uniform' dredged up memories of school and durable garments.

'Corporatewear' was different; it was intended to be flexible and to allow the wearer to demonstrate their individuality. Jeff Bank's range of corporatewear also extended into accessories such as ties and belts, as well as staple items of men and women's wardrobe. All were closely related to core themes and key colours. While the ability to show distinctiveness through dress (within the confines of the catalogue) was a fundamental distinction between corporatewear and a uniform, achieving this was difficult. There was evidence in the magazines which indicated that the supplier would only provide a minimal range of these more specialised items and the stock would run out quickly.[79]

Men, it seemed, no longer found the notion of a uniform, when it was branded 'corporatewear', problematic. When workers reviewed Jeff Banks' designs in the *In Fashion* magazine, a Corporatewear Staff Purchase and style magazine, they reacted positively – just as women had done in the 1970s. One male employee remarked that: he 'felt proud to wear the corporatewear. I think the new designs are fashionable and the range is the best yet'.[80] Outside the bank, the clothes gained attention and recognition. With annual fashion shows, makeovers and style guides, Barclays staff felt that their outfit had a firm purchase in the fashion world. The image was complete with one article remarking that 'If they [Jeff Banks and his

design team] continue to update the fabrics and increase the quality, with a wider range of cuts for their staff, we may be seeing Barclays clothing on our high streets soon'.[81]

With a designer such as Jeff Banks on board, corporatewear was desirable. It was, after all, a version of the male business suit. The influence of Jeff Banks as a named designer gave the bank's uniforms some legitimacy and credibility as items of fashion. Jeff Banks' designs for Barclays would remain as designs which were only worn in work - no matter how well-liked by those inside or outside the bank. The internality of the uniform was key to its function: it gave rise to a collective set of values and an identity within those who worked for the bank.[82] Yet, if not in substance or even in style, uniforms and items of fashion do share some fundamental similarities: they are tools for revealing values, ideas and identities and enable the wearer to share (or not) their sense of belonging to a particular group.[83] In the 1990s, Barclays thus moved from uniforms to corporatewear. Correspondingly, there was movement from only women at Barclays dressed in uniforms to both men and women wearing corporatewear. This new attire also took into consideration maternity wear, which had not been considered in the original Personal Bankers uniforms in the 1970s.

Conclusion

This article has shown the way women and their dress was used as part of an attempt to generate positive customer engagement and further profits within Barclays bank. The decision to create a rank of employees called Personal Bankers should be understood within the context of the time period. In the 1970s, Barclays, like the other high street banks, was unpopular within British society and especially among the lower or working classes. Market research had shown that the public found them to be intimidating, unfriendly, inconvenient and old-fashioned. In order to overcome their unpopular public image, the 1970s saw Barclays introduce the Personal Banker. The majority in this role were women and they were presented by Barclays as the new friendly caring face of the bank. In order to clearly identify these Personal Bankers within branches, Barclays introduced a corporate uniform. Dress was – as is often the case - used to indicate a set of shared values and beliefs among the wearers. The introduction of a uniform indicated a shift in those attitudes. Building upon the reputation of women as mothers, wives, daughters, and carers, marketing executives hoped that customers would see a service that supported them; one that followed and responded to the needs of the customer rather than one that was driven by the internal will of the bank.[84] The uniform was visibly feminine. This may be viewed as the bank's attempt to re-personalize in a context in which banking was viewed as becoming an increasingly depersonalized service.

Female staff engaged with this new role within Barclays Bank as they saw it as a step on the career ladder and they responded positively towards the uniform. It was, for them, at least akin to a formal recognition of professional status – it perhaps even showed to some that they had a clear position within the workplace. While men in banking had the business suit, women did not have an equivalent dress that fulfilled this role. The uniform indicated that the female staff who wore it were not well-dressed customers but members of the business organization. In the eyes of the wearers and of the consumers who saw it, the women appeared more professional in the uniform than without it. The introduction of the uniform or the rank of Personal Bankers did not reposition the balance of power in the branch and the male bank manager remained authoritative. The women at Barclays bank did not

engage in a revolt about the gendered nature of socio-economic relations but they did protest and demand change when it came to the presentation of Personal Bankers. At points, the marketing team presented Personal Bankers in advertising campaigns and to members of the public in a manner that was overtly sexual. The marketing team adopted the sex sells mantra. The women at the bank objected when this occurred and the bank's senior management listened and backed down.

Women thus engaged, through collective bargaining strategies, in the decision-making process around the introduction, design and retention of uniforms. They challenged and called attention to attitudes that they felt were unacceptable internally and within the confines of the hierarchical structure of the organization. As Woman's Staff Representative, Pamela Emney headed this group and class of workers. Communicative styles of deliberation made the uniform far more effective. It meant that the aim to make the bank appear less elitist, more personable and approachable was a realistic one. Unhappy, disgruntled or rebelling workers would not carry this message. Managerial elites, often separated from the workforce and unsure about the best course of action, relied upon Emney, as the voice of female workers, to guide them. Through Emney, female workers could push for change and negotiate their position. Emney appeared to have a good relationship with the senior management. When presenting corporate dress, Barclays invested heavily in attempting to ensure that the clothing which was given to female employees to wear was liked and somewhat desirable. Positive engagement with the outfit ensured that those women who wore it bought into the organization's ideals, values and beliefs and its culture which came with wearing the uniform.

It was not until the 1990s that men also wore an equivalent garment and a special dress, which identified them as a member of the organization. In the 1970s and 1980s, the uniform did not have the same appeal to men. Men did not need a new outfit for the world of banking because, after all, they had the business suit. Surveys in the 1970s showed that men believed that wearing the uniform had made them appear less senior, in contrast to its impact on women. In the 1990s, a shift occurred owing to the presence of a corporate designer, who was brought on board to make the uniform more attractive. The signature of Jeff Banks and switching the name of the outfit from a uniform to corporatewear ensured that it had a wider professional appeal which might appease the male contingent in the workforce. Both genders were after this point subject to formal guidelines, which governed their appearance, and both male and female looks were the focus of managerial scrutiny.

Notes

1. There are studies of the medical profession (Witz, 2013; Celia, 1995), the legal profession (McGlynn, 1998; Sommerlad & Sanderson, 1998; Skordaki, 1999), pharmacy and accounting (Crompton & Sanderson, 1990).
2. This approach tends to be stronger in American business history (Yeager, 2015; Gamber, 1997; Peiss, 1998), but there is some literature in British business and economic history (Simonton, 1998; Barker, 2006; Honeyman, 2007; Aston, 2016; Durepos et al., 2017). McKinlay (2002) covers more on the traditional career of men in banking.
3. Much literature from the 1980s and 1990s, in particular from a sociological perspective, has examined women's unequal status in the workplace from the traditional 'male breadwinner' model of employment, the consequent tensions between women's domestic responsibilities and their employment, and the low pay of many female occupations, especially clerical and

caring jobs in the service sector (Crompton & Jones, 1984; Crompton & Sanderson, 1990; Crompton, 1997). Female employment has traditionally been viewed 'lesser', in that men have dominated high status positions in the corporation. Kanter stresses that such positions have been enabled through the support of women in lower status roles in the home and at work (Kanter, 2010).

4. More recently, women have been described as working on 'glass cliffs'. See (Ryan & Haslam, 2007; 2005).
5. Crompton and her co-authors observe that 'the impact of gendered organisational assumptions on women's labour market experiences has received less attention' than inequality between men and women in the workplace (Crompton et al., 2007, p. 241).
6. See, for example, the works mainly from a sociological perspective that consider women in workplace organizations (Crompton 1989; 1997; Crompton & Jones, 1984; Crompton & Le Feuvre, 1991; Crompton et al., 2007; Crompton & Sanderson, 1990; Kanter, 2010; McDowell 2009, 2014; Rapoport, 2002).
7. There were of course many influences on organization culture (Trice & Beyer, 1993; Hatch, 1993; Schneider, 1988; Hofstede, 2003).
8. Barclays Group Staff Union was founded in 1918. London Joint City and Midland Bank Staff Association was formed in 1919. Lloyds, for example, did not have an similar union nor did its executives have a close relationship with its employees (Barnes & Newton, 2018a).
9. All of the archival references cited here are to Barclays Group Archive, unless otherwise stated.
10. Household indebtedness in the United Kingdom as a percentage of personal disposable income increased from 49 per cent in 1975 to 107 per cent in 1990 (Ackrill & Hannah, 2007, p. 49). According to Median (1984, p. 24), there was a distinction between people of lower and upper/middle class as the former borrowed for consumption rather than investments.
11. The abolition of government of credit control regulations and bank rate took place in 1971 together with the ending of cartel agreements on lending (Arch, 2018).
12. Midland appointed the first full time public relations (PR) officer in 1958 (Holmes & Green, 1986, pp. 224–225). Lloyds Bank formed a PR Department and appointed their first PR Officer in 1961 (Winton, 1982, p. 181). See also HSBC Group Archives (hereafter, HSBCGA): 200/247, 'Public Relations Policy', 11th Nov. 1965. For market research reports see: HSBCGA, 200/247 'Banks and their Image', undated from 1960s; 200/250 and 'Report from the Working Party to Examine Bank Image to the Committee of London Clearing Bankers', Sept. 1965; History of Advertising Trust [HATA]/J. Walter Thompson [JWT]/604, 'Current Accounts – plan for research through access' prepared for the District Bank by The British Market Research Bureau Limited in 1968.
13. HSBCGA: 200/250, Letter from the Committee of London Clearing Bankers, following a meeting about bank publicity, 7th May 1962.
14. HSBCGA: 200/247, 'Banks and Their Image' (undated from the 1960s): 7 and 200/250, Minutes of the Committee of London Clearing Bankers, 22nd April 1965.
15. Surveys of other bank archives have not revealed discussion or implementation of the introduction of uniforms at such a high level of the organization.
16. Here, they were given a considerable amount of leeway. In one such letter, the local director wrote to Sale to advise him that while they had tried to carry on 'in the spirit' of the policy, his branch was not to implement the uniform fully as one staff member had an allergy to the fabric.
17. 424/74, Letter from local director to Mr Weyer, 11th February 1981.
18. 424/61. Note for Mr Sale, 30th August 1979 and Memo to Mr Sale from the General Managers Office, 5th March 1979.
19. National Union of Bank Employees (N.U.B.E.) figures show approximately '47.5% of total bank staff at the end of 1969 were males, with 52.5% female.' *NUBE News*, May 1970, No. 5, 8. British Library, P515/109.
20. *NUBE News*, October 1978, No. 106, 8. British Library, P515/109.
21. Bank workers were represented by the National Union of Bank Employees but also by staff associations, which divided representation of the workforce. National negotiations were intro-

duced in 1968 through the Joint Negotiating Council for Banking, comprising staff associations as well as NUBE and bank representatives.

22. *NUBE News*, June 1975, No. 66, 7; October 1975, No 70. 8; April 1978, No. 100, 9. British Library, P515/109.
23. *NUBE News*, April 1978, No. 100, 15. British Library, P515/109.
24. *NUBE News*, May 1978, No. 101, 5. British Library, P515/109.
25. *NUBE News*, June 1978, No. 102, *Barclays Supplement*, iii. British Library, P515/109.
26. *NUBE News*, May 1978, No. 101, 12. British Library, P515/109.
27. *NUBE News*, September 1978, No. 105, 10. British Library, P515/109.
28. Crompton's (1989) earlier study also focuses on the different experiences of men and women employed by banks.
29. These aims were explicitly stated in 424/74, Personal Banker Report 14.6.1979.
30. One such advertisement appears in Ackrill and Hannah (2007, p. 196). It is entitled: 'And she has a good head for figures'.
31. The emotional labour of women, particularly in the service sector, has also been noted by McDowell (2014).
32. *The Bankers' Magazine* 1978, p. 111. See also 424/74, Personal Banker Report 14.6.1979.
33. 424/74, Personal Banker Report 14.6.1979. For more, see Pål Vik, "'The Computer Says No': The Demise of the Traditional Bank Manager and the Depersonalisation of British Banking, 1960–2010," *Business History* 59, no. 2 (February 17, 2017): pp. 231–49, https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2016.1177024.
34. The few male Personal Bankers that were employed wore their own clothes. 414/61. Letter from Mrs Emney to Mr Ward Linley, 20th February, 1979.
35. https://www.home.barclays/about-barclays/history/barclays-eagle.html
36. 424/74, Personal Banker Report 14.6.1979.
37. 424/61, Letters between Mr. Sale and Mr Pearse, from Sale to Pearse, 10th December 1979.
38. 424/61, Letter from Mr Sale to Mrs Emney (with a copy to Pearse), 7th December 1979.
39. 424/61, Letter from Mrs Emney to Pearse (with a copy to Sale and Dawes), 30th May 1980.
40. B544, B574, B575, B577, *In Fashion* Autumn/Winter 2009.
41. 424/61, Letter from Mr Sale to Mrs Emney (with a copy to Pearse), 7th December 1979. This reveals the tension between individual and corporate identity that could arise in wearing uniforms (Rafaeli & Pratt 1993, pp. 43–45).
42. 424/74, Personal Banker Report 14.6.1979
43. Visual communication is an important method in advertising (Ames, 1980; Black, 2009).
44. 416/50, Appendix B, Qualitative consultancy, Project Mufti, April 1986, 10.
45. It appears that male uniforms were designed and made but not worn. See 424/61 Letter from KBWL to Sale (with a copy to Stevenson, Rishcardson, Quayle, Walshe, Emney), 26th February 1979.
46. 424/61, Letter Quayle to Fortescue, 3rd September 1979.
47. See 424/61 Letter from KBWL to Sale (with a copy to Stevenson, Rishcardson, Quayle, Walshe, Emney), 26th February 1979.
48. 424/61, Letters between Mr. Sale and Mr Pearse, from Sale to Pearse, 10th December 1979. 424/61, Letter from Mr Sale to Mrs Emney (with a copy to Pearse), 7th December 1979.
49. 424/61, Letter to Mr Sale, 11th February 1981.
50. The archive has placed a number of these advertisements online. See: https://www.archive.barclays.com/items/browse?category=advertisement&sort_field=Item+Type+Metadata%2C-Sort+Order
51. 424/61, From Emney to Gittoes (copy to Sale), Note for Mr Sale, 21st October 1980.
52. https://www.archive.barclays.com/files/original/fe16b65d9217823d90972c8007e538e7.jpg
53. https://www.archive.barclays.com/files/original/fe16b65d9217823d90972c8007e538e7.jpg
54. https://www.archive.barclays.com/files/original/fe16b65d9217823d90972c8007e538e7.jpg
55. 424/61, From Emney to Sale, Note for Mr Sale, 24th October 1980.
56. 414/61. Letter from Mrs Emney to Mr Ward Linley, 20th February, 1979.
57. 424/74, Personal Banker Report 14.6.1979, 5.

58. Initially, the costs to the bank were thought to be high as there were only a 100 Personal Bankers and the uniforms were not capable of being manufactured cheaply for such low numbers. When the number of wearers rose, this price decreased. The number of uniforms given out depended on the number of hours worked. The catalogues indicated that new suits could be ordered after the old one had been used for eight months.
59. In its strictest sense, the word 'fashion' describes the manufacture and marketing of clothing and cosmetics which is in the highest demand at that particular moment in time. The latter part of this definition is derived from the adjective 'fashionable' which is used to described goods that are popular in the current style or the trend pervaded at the time. Trend setters are generally designer, high end or luxury clothing manufacturers (Merlo & Polese, 2006). These designs can of course be imitated by companies and sold on the high street to the masses (Breward, 1999; Merlo & Polese, 2006; Worth, 2007; Blaszczyk, 2011).
60. 424/61. Note for Mr Sale, 30th August 1979 and Memo to Mr Sale from the General Managers Office, 5th March 1979.
61. 424/61, Letter from Pearse to Sale, 31st March 1980. 424/61. See also, Letter from Sale to Pearse, 28th March 1980, where Sale mentions the missing statistic for some of the questions and the dislike for the Winter uniform.
62. See the study of Workman and Johnson (1989) who discovered that the impression made by employees, depending on what they wore, extended to the impression that was given about the organization that they worked for. Karl, Hall and Peluchette (2013) also found that the appearance of public sector employees affected the perception of customers with regard to their abilities and credibility in the workplace
63. 424/74, Personal Banker Report 14.6.1979
64. 416/50, Appendix B, Qualitative consultancy, Project Mufti, April 1986, 10-11.
65. 424/74, Personal Banker Report 14.6.1979.
66. For a case study of the airline industry, see (Jo Hatch & Schultz, 2003; A. Mills, 2006).
67. 416/50, Appendix B, Qualitative consultancy, Project Mufti, April 1986, 1-3. In making changes to the uniform of the 1990s, clothes designer Jeff Banks said that 'One thing they didn't want was the old brilliant turquoise jacket - they said it made them feel they were working for a holiday business' ("Jeff Banks Gives Barclays Staff a Pounds 4m Makeover" 1997).
68. 424/61, Letter from Sale to United Kingdom General Managers, 6th March 1979.
69. 424/61, Letter from Sale to United Kingdom General Managers, 6th March 1979.
70. 424/61, Minutes of General Managers' Meeting, 9th March 1979.
71. 424/61, Letter from JGQ to Mr Sale, 26th March 1979.
72. This feeling had basis in fact as customer responses indicated that they did view those women without the uniforms as less senior than those women with the uniform.
73. 416/50, Appendix B, Qualitative consultancy, Project Mufti, April 1986, 1-3.
74. Mufti is a term used often by the military to denote the wearing of plain clothes by someone who usually wears a uniform.
75. The first reason given for rejection was that extending the pilot scheme was 'too expensive and logistically horrendous'. Note for Mr Rout, 10.7.86. The Careerwear supplier had not delivered all the uniforms for the pilot project in the time frame required and some branches were awaiting replacement uniforms for those that did not fit. See also 416/50, Extract from minutes of General Managers' meeting 14.7.86, Customer service programme – uniform proposals, 3.7. 1986.
76. 1834/12, Email from Wood to Beck, 15 December 1995.
77. See http://jeffbanks.co.uk/biography/
78. B544, B574, B575, B577, Corporatewear guide 2011, 1
79. One ran a Q and A piece which explained these points.
80. B544, B574, B575, B577, *In Fashion*, Corporatewear Staff Purchase Magazine, 2009, Autumn/Winter. 35
81. B544, B574, B575, B577, *In Fashion*, Corporatewear Staff Purchase Magazine, 2009, Spring/Summer, 57.
82. This conforms with the findings of Rafaeli and Pratt (1993, p. 45).

83. This point fits Polese and Blaszczyk (2012, p. 6) definition of fashion. They consider that at its basic level fashion might be the fabric or pattern but that dressing is for some a 'cultural phenomenon that encompasses not only the way people dress but also how they act and think'.
84. A good example of this is Midland's marketing campaign as the 'listening bank'.

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