



Too Few Women at the Top: The Persistence of Inequality in Japan (Cornell Studies in Political Economy)

Kumiko Nemoto

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The number of women in positions of power and authority in Japanese companies has remained small despite the increase in the number of educated women and the passage of legislation on gender equality. In *Too Few Women at the Top*, Kumiko Nemoto draws on theoretical insights regarding Japan's coordinated capitalism and institutional stasis to challenge claims that the surge in women's education and employment will logically lead to the decline of gender inequality and eventually improve women's status in the Japanese workplace.

Nemoto's interviews with diverse groups of workers at three Japanese financial companies and two cosmetics companies in Tokyo reveal the persistence of vertical sex segregation as a cost-saving measure by Japanese companies. Women's advancement is impeded by customs including seniority pay and promotion, track-based hiring of women, long working hours, and the absence of women leaders. Nemoto contends that an improvement in gender equality in the corporate system will require that Japan fundamentally depart from its postwar methods of business management. Only when the static labor market is revitalized through adoption of new systems of cost savings, employee hiring, and rewards will Japanese women advance in their chosen professions. Comparison with the situation in the United States makes the author's analysis of the Japanese case relevant for understanding the dynamics of the glass ceiling in U.S. workplaces as well.

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