

Education and Marriage Decisions of Japanese Women and the Role of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law

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Over the past 25 years, Japan has experienced dramatic demographic change: declining birth rates; declining marriage rates; an increasing mean age at first marriage among those who do marry; and an increasing proportion of women who attend university. Over this same period, the 1986 Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) went into effect, with the goal of expanding the career opportunities available to women. Within Japan, almost all births take place within marriage, so declining birth rates are closely linked to the changing propensity to marry. It is also the case that women who get a university education, which is the principal path to career employment, are more likely to delay (or decline) marriage. This paper analyzes the joint marital and educational decisions of Japanese women and the role that the passage of the EEOL played in these decisions. We develop a model of joint education and marriage decisions and estimate it with data from the Japanese Panel Survey on Consumers (JPSC), a micro panel data set with detailed information about a representative sample of Japanese women aged 24-34 who are followed over a ten-year period. Preliminary findings suggest that marriage and education decisions are indeed linked, even after a host of family background and labor market

variables are held constant, with university-educated women more likely than other women to delay or decline marriage. In addition, our findings suggest that the EEOL played a role in the demographic changes cited above: the passage of the EEOL is associated with an increase in women's propensity to go to university and decrease in their likelihood of marriage by age 30.