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Kumiko Nemoto

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The Persistence of Inequality in Japan

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Kumiko Nemoto : Too Few Women at the Top: The Persistence of Inequality in Japan (Cornell Studies in Political Economy) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Too Few Women at the Top: The Persistence of Inequality in Japan (Cornell Studies in Political Economy):

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.

"Kumiko Nemoto tackles one of the most critical social and economic issues for Japan today: the role of women in the workplace. She demonstrates how legal institutions, business practices, and social norms combine to produce a distinctively Japanese version of the glass ceiling in Japanese companies. Nemoto gives the analysis a personal touch by reporting the experiences of individual working women in their own words."—Steven K. Vogel, University of California, Berkeley, author of *Japan Remodeled*

"Despite their high educational attainment, Japanese women remain woefully underrepresented in positions of authority and leadership. In her beautifully written book, Kumiko Nemoto provides a comprehensive analysis of the legal, political, and economic forces that reinforce sex segregation in corporate Japan. Nemoto skillfully intertwines her analysis with findings from her compelling in-depth interviews with men and women in five companies, showing how structural constraints reinforce and exacerbate essentialist cultural narratives about men's and women's capabilities. This book is a must-read for scholars interested in a deeply authoritative account of the barriers that women face in contemporary capitalist countries and a clear-eyed analysis of the institutional changes needed to support an integrated and equitable society."—Susan D. Holloway, University of California, Berkeley, author of *Women and Family in Contemporary Japan*

"In *Too Few Women at the Top*, Kumiko Nemoto explores an enduring empirical and theoretical puzzle regarding the persistence of the lack of full integration of women at all levels of Japanese organizational hierarchies, despite the legal prohibition against sex segregation at the workplace and women's educational achievements."—Heidi Gottfried, Wayne State University, author of *The Reproductive Bargain*

"Kumiko Nemoto has written an important book. *Too Few Women at the Top* is a fascinating analysis that reveals one of the greatest weaknesses in the once famous 'Japanese Model.' This well-written and thoroughly researched volume not only identifies the unfairness of a society and economy that systematically discriminates against 50 percent of the population but also shows why this is a problem for the future of the economy as it struggles to adapt to an increasingly competitive and interconnected world. This book should not be read as a 'feminist critique' of Japan today; it is instead a carefully written analysis of the Japanese political economy and should be mandatory reading for Japanese policymakers and business leaders alike."—Sven Steinmo, European University Institute, author of *The Evolution of Modern States*

About the Author: Kumiko Nemoto is Professor in the Department of Global Affairs at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. She is the author of *Racing Romance: Love, Power, and Desire among Asian American/White Couples*.