High-Powered Jobs: Can Contraception Technology Explain Trends in Women’s Occupational Choice? *

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Abstract

The rate at which young women enter managerial /professional occupations began to rise steadily in the early1960s, when oral contraceptives first became available in the US. The fact that young mothers are comparatively rare in these occupations suggests that the advent of more effective contraception may have played an important role in the occupational trend. This paper uses a lifecycle model of contraception, abortion and occupational choice to ask how much of the occupational trend could be explained by the changes in contraceptive technology since 1960.

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