“Hedged bets: preferences for future marriage partners’ earning power in contemporary Japan
An Empirical Analysis using Process Data from a Marriage Agency”

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This paper studies how income affects individuals’ attractiveness to the opposite sex in contemporary Japan using a dataset from a large Japanese marriage agency. The dataset contains 3626 female and 6738 male agency customers. I find patterns of preferences that are highly gendered and vary dramatically across income groups. Both specialisation and collaboration models of marriage are supported in the choices of individuals belonging to different subsets of Japanese population. Broadly speaking, Japanese men would prefer to form partnerships based on collaboration at least when it comes to providing for their families. If they are unable to find a partner who can contribute substantially to their future families’ financial well-being, high income men choose extreme specialisation, preferring women with no income to women with low earning power. Women prefer dating men with the highest possible incomes and their choices are more consistent with the specialisation model of marriage.

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