



|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Title        | Precarious Academic Employment in 21st Century Japan : Exploring the Career and Life of Japanese PhD Graduates from the Humanities and Social Sciences |
| Author(s)    | Macyowsky, Kai Uwe   |
| Citation     | 大阪大学, 2017, 博士論文   |
| Version Type | VoR  |
| URL          | <a href="https://doi.org/10.18910/61437">https://doi.org/10.18910/61437</a>  |
| rights       |  |
| Note         |  |

*The University of Osaka Institutional Knowledge Archive : OUKA*

<https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/>

The University of Osaka

## 論文内容の要旨

氏 名 ( MACYOWSKY Kai Uwe )

論文  
題名

Precarious Academic Employment in 21st Century Japan: Exploring the Career and Life of Japanese PhD Graduates from the Humanities and Social Sciences  
(21 世紀日本のアカデミアにおける非正規雇用：人文・社会学系の日本人博士課程修了者のキャリアと生活を探って)

## 論文内容の要旨

The number of PhD graduates in Japan has been rising for decades, but at the same time, a trend towards more non-regular employment in academia can be observed. More PhDs are therefore competing for a smaller number of regular positions resulting in many PhDs being unable to gain a regular position throughout their careers. Especially graduates of the fields of the humanities and social sciences are influenced by this development because, unlike PhD graduates from the natural science or engineering fields, they do not have many options aside from an academic career. More than half of the humanities and social science PhDs, therefore, start their careers in non-regular academic employment. How this affects their career progression, and their life chances after graduation remains largely unexplored. Existing statistics give a fragmented and incomplete picture of this highly skilled, but underemployed group, making it difficult for policymakers or universities to improve their situation or aid them in their endeavors. By conducting a qualitative interview survey and analyzing the data using grounded theory, this dissertation fills the gap in our understanding of the post-graduation lives of humanities and social sciences PhDs and assesses their chances for career advancement. It covers both their employment situation and how the PhD graduates used their free time. This kind of comprehensive look at aspects of work and life allows for an understanding of the mechanisms that keep PhDs of these fields in non-regular employment.

I argue that working as a part-time teacher (*hijōkin kōshi*) is the main reason that those highly skilled graduates get trapped in a non-regular career in academia. Unlike other non-regular forms of employment, *hijōkin kōshi* positions are not only precarious because of their low pay and employment insecurity, but also because the participants' free time is consumed by class preparations and grading. This leaves them little opportunity to build a record of research and publications, which is necessary to secure regular academic employment.

After providing an overview of the discourse on precarious employment in general and non-regular employment in Japan, I show that the categories utilized in existing surveys do not allow to draw conclusions about the PhD graduates' employment situation. Subsequently, I introduce my own qualitative survey that allowed me to identify both, employment status and the management of their free time, as influential factors for their career progression and their livelihood. I locate the most common employment form of *hijōkin kōshi* as a particular precarious case of non-regular employment that aside from bad pay and employment insecurity also consumes the PhDs' free time. Aside from working as *hijōkin kōshi*, other places of employment, research, housework, their families, and their hobbies were also

demanding the PhD graduates' time. I show that the inability to manage these demands leads to an impasse in their careers and binds most of the PhDs to non-regular employment in academia with all its consequences.

The results of this study suggest that especially young PhD graduates from the humanities and social sciences lead precarious lives as non-regular employees in academia. As a consequence, many of them are unable to find a partner and due to their low social standing avoid social contacts. Low income and employment insecurity makes them vulnerable to social decline and leads to more precarity in case they get sick or retire.

## 論文審査の結果の要旨及び担当者

| 氏 名 ( Kai Uwe Macykowsky ) |         |    |                     |
|----------------------------|---------|----|---------------------|
| 論文審査担当者                    | (職) 氏 名 |    |                     |
|                            | 主 査     | 教授 | Scott North         |
|                            | 副 査     | 教授 | Wolfgang Schwentker |
|                            | 副 査     | 教授 | 山中浩司                |

## 論文審査の結果の要旨

Precarious Academic Employment in 21st Century Japan: Exploring the Career and Life of PhD Graduates from the Humanities and Social Sciences

This interview study of contingently employed humanities and social science PhD holders highlights the causes and consequences of the trend toward growing precarity in employment in Japanese higher education. Although the study is not explicitly comparative between professions, the data and analysis can be suggestively applied to other posts requiring a higher degree, which are also experiencing the erosion of employment certainties. In closing part of the gap in our understanding of how irregular academic employment makes "regular" life difficult or impossible, the paper raises profound questions about the value of higher degrees, the impact of adjuncts and part-time professors on quality of higher education, and the quality of life of the irregular academic workers. The strength of the study is in showing how young, irregularly employed PhDs cope with the gap between their expectations and realities of their situation.

To find answers to his questions the author first explores large-scale surveys carried out by the Government of Japan. Exactly how many irregularly employed PhDs there are turns out to be a difficult question to answer. Surveys suggest that these PhDs are both underreported and over estimated. What is certain, is that a growing number, perhaps one-third, of academic posts are now irregular, *hijōkin kōshi* posts. These pay only one-sixth of what full-time regular instructors make. Moreover, they seldom lead to regular employment, although the PhDs often hold onto hopes of such advancement. Universities, on the other hand, responding to contemporary fiscal imperatives caused by Japan's falling number of college-bound 18-year-olds, continue to expand their reliance on these yearly contract instructors. This protects the posts of established faculty and reduces costs. Unlike most other part-time work, university teaching is still highly competitive and job seekers are dependent on insider introductions for posts. This, and the highly specialized nature of their skills, makes them more susceptible to social hierarchy and interpersonal status games than other irregular workers. The irregular PhD job market tends to be narrow because opportunities are limited in any particular geographic area. Faced with this scarcity, the PhDs must sacrifice their personal lives, working many hours for free, in order to maintain precarious employment. This work style also takes a toll on their own research, which they must advance in order to win a full-time post. Thus, PhDs are restricted by their specialized training, which once seemed a ticket to the promise of stable, respected employment.

Analyzing the interview data in the light of other studies, this paper found that the PhDs coped with the socio-economic structural change in their labor market by adjusting their life plans. *Gakubatsu* networks played an important role. Most jobs were the product of introductions from older graduate school friends. The PhDs took these jobs even if the teaching hindered obtaining a full-time post. They respondents did this because they expected that their careers would include a period of non-regular employment as they seldom achieved the requisite teaching experience for regular posts while in graduate school. The surprise comes later, when they gradually realize that they are fated to remain in irregular employment. Faced with this prospect, and having few options because their age, training, and inclinations made them unattractive to other sorts of employers, they embraced their part-time jobs in order to survive. Depending on their personal circumstances, they felt trapped or were able to reconcile their original goals with their precarious situations.

The author's analysis reveals three types, which he labels "the Overwhelmed," "the Settled," and "the Researchers."

Drawing on interview data, the middle chapters develop the characteristics that define these three heuristic conceptions, which help us see how varying degrees of attachment to irregular academic employment contribute to delay or abandonment of marriage and family formation, leads to spousal stress or separation, and diminished overall quality of life. Irregular employment was found to have more profound effects on men than women, because the low status of *hijōkin kōshi* posts is less commensurate with male career norms. Women found irregular academic employment attractive because it provided more status, income, flexibility, and stimulation than other irregular job options. Still, these jobs do not pay a living wage, and some of the PhDs were forced to take on additional, academic work, or even to work gratis in order to secure an affiliation that will give them access to university facilities essential to pursuing their research. Some respondents could not endure the uncertainty and opted to leave academia or to reduce their involvement to teaching alone.

Irregular academic employment resulted in diminished social and personal life, but people with normal lives outside academia failed to appreciate the struggles of the PhDs, leaving them "overwhelmed" and isolated. Still, the majority of those who agreed to participate in this study endured the stigma of having failed to find a regular post, and they reconciled with their predicament, becoming "settled" in their *hijōkin* roles. About a fifth of the sample could be classified as "researchers," individuals who retained the goal of full-time academic employment and lived scholarly lives devoted primarily to their academic interests. The presence of sympathetic parents or other sources of support was crucial to maintaining a research-first stance.

Overall, the consequences of precarious academic employment in this study are negative. The author contributes a vigorous and clearly argued exploration of how idealistic young scholars are victimized by cost-cutting university reforms and established personnel hierarchies. This dissertation achieves its basic goal of shedding light on the dilemmas and challenges of irregular academic employment, adding intimate case studies to our understanding of the sociology of irregular work and the value of the PhD in Japan. It is fitting that the author be awarded a doctorate in Human Sciences for this work.