

Long-term career paths of women part-time workers: Can they find regular full-time jobs?

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1. Introduction

This paper discusses the working conditions of Japanese non-regular part-timers in terms of how possible it is for them to make a transition into regular forms of employment, based on the belief that non-regular part-time work can be included in regular employment as a means to promote equal treatment of part-timers.

The rate of non-regular staff to all members of “Employee, excluding executive of company or corporation” has grown rapidly since the 1990s, rising to 33 percent of employees in 2006, according to yearly average data from the Labor Force Survey published by the Japanese Bureau of Statistics. Seen by gender, however, men continue to be mostly employed as regular workers (over 80 percent of male employees are regular workers), whereas the proportion of non-regular workers among women reached just over 50 percent in 2003, and the proportion of non-regular workers has continued to increase since then. In short, within the Japanese labor market there exists an ever-widening gender gap in type of employment, between regular and non-regular employment. At the same time, there has been a quantitative expansion in non-regular workers and a qualitative change in the nature of their job, as they increasingly take on tasks formerly relegated to regular employees, and they have become the core workforce in many workplaces. Yet, for all the quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement, the treatment of non-regular workers in terms of wage rate, job stability, and social security remain low, resulting in growing inequities

between non-regular workers and regular employees. Given the growing trend toward the gendering of males into regular employment and females into non-regular employment, this gap in the treatment of regular and non-regular workers translates, in effect, into a gender gap.

The question of how to improve treatment for non-regular part-time workers, including how to correct the inequality between regular and non-regular workers, requires consideration from two perspectives: (1) improving non-regular part-time employment environment and (2) finding ways to channel non-regular part-timers into regular employment. With regard to (2), there are two possible ways of job switch, the first from a non-regular part- to a regular full-time position within the same company and the second across companies via the external labor market. In relation to the former, the revised Act on Improvement etc of Employment management For Part-time Workers passed in May 2007 obliges business owners to adopt measures for promoting non-regular part-time workers into regular full-time positions within the company; thus policymakers have taken a certain stand toward ensuring career mobility within the same workplace as a vital part of improving non-regular part-time employment conditions. Yet, at present, nothing has been attempted on the policy level to provide for movement from non-regular part- to regular full-time employment through the external labor market, nor has data on such career shifts been fully investigated.¹ According to statistics on job changing by type of employment cited by Mori (2005: 18–19) from the February 2000 Special Survey of the Labor Force Survey, only 18.5 percent of non-regular part-timers who switched jobs were able to attain regular full-time employment compared to the 70 percent who found other non-regular part-time work, while similarly 81.5 percent of other non-regular workers who shifted jobs did so within the non-regular labor

market.² Based on these figures, Mori argues that once non-regular workers are situated into the external labor market, which is governed by competition, it becomes extremely difficult for them to break into internal labor markets made up of regular employees who are managed by internal rules and customs based on long-term career development and accompanying pay system. Since the proportion of non-regular workers is high among women, it would follow that the majority of female workers are consigned to a closed external labor market.³

Given the above, this study focused on these female non-regular part-timers who make up the bulk of the part-time workforce in Japan, employing a micro dataset to analyze cases of successful transition from non-regular part- into regular full-time positions in order to evaluate the ease with which this may be done via the labor market, and, at the same time, investigate what factors help determine whether a non-regular part-time woman who changes jobs or starts working again will next go into regular full- or non-regular part-time work. Further, the employment conditions for new regular full-time positions obtained by non-regular part-time women were studied by business sector, occupational category, and other possible distinguishing characteristics. Finally, this study statistically tested how much going into regular full-time employment after having worked non-regular part time affected a woman's wages at her new job, factoring out as much as possible the influences of such considerations as age, education, and occupational category. Thus, through narrowing down the employment conditions and wages of women after they changed from non-regular part- to regular full-time positions, this study addressed the hypothesis that women who move into regular employment (the internal labor market) from non-regular employment (the external labor market)

will continue to be marginalized.

2. Data for Analysis

This study was conducted using micro data from “Working Persons Survey 2004” carried out by Works Institute, Recruit Co., Ltd. Taking place from August 23 through October 15, 2004, this survey collected questionnaires from males and females 18 to 59 years of age working in the Tokyo metropolitan area as regular staffs, contract or entrusted staffs, dispatched, non-regular part-time staffs, *Arbait*.⁴ A employee as defined by the survey was someone employed by another for at least one day during the last week of July 2004; a total of 5,846 respondents (3,856 males and 1,990 females) were selected by area sampling.

Of this sample, an overwhelming 87.7 percent of male respondents were regular full-time employees at the time of the survey, while 47.8 and 39.5 percent of the females worked regular full and non-regular part time, respectively, confirming the high rate of part-timers among female employees. A total of 475 women had held non-regular part-time positions prior to acquiring their present jobs and thus qualified to be in the data pool for the present study; of these women, 317 (66.7 percent) had either changed jobs or been reemployed as a non-regular part time workers, and 139 (29.3 percent), or roughly three-tenths, worked as a regular full time worker.⁵

3. Transition from Non-regular Part to Regular Full Time versus from Non-regular Part to Non-regular Part Time Employment

3.1 Non-regular Part-timers who moved into regular full- versus other non-regular part-time jobs: Comparison of personal, household, and career attributes

The analysis first looked at female survey respondents who previously held non-regular part-time jobs in terms of whether they now worked as a regular full or non-regular part time, not taking into account whether they experienced a hiatus between jobs. What characteristics did the female workers who transitioned from non-regular part-time to regular full-time employment possess compared to those who found work in non-regular part-time employment. Table 1 shows personal, household, and career attributes for women who went from non-regular part to regular full time, those who went from non-regular part to non-regular part time, and female employees overall. The analysis focused particularly on details of the women's employment at the non-regular part-time positions immediately preceding their present jobs, in the interest of determining whether the differences in their current paths might owe to differences in their previous careers. Statistics for female employees overall were also taken up to provide a clearer frame of reference; these statistics concerned present jobs only.

In Table 1, both current age and age of entry into the present job were higher for "part to part time" than for "part to regular" women, suggesting that it becomes more difficult for non-regular part-time women to find regular full-time positions as they become older. This observation correlates with a report done by Shinotsuka (1995: 179–209) showing that very few positions for regular full-time employment give eligibility to those 35 and older. Yet, a closer look at age of job entry for "part to regular" women by age class shows that approximately 55 percent attained their present regular full-time positions when they were 35 or older, indicating that one does not necessarily have to be under 35 to gain regular full-time employment.⁶ For education, women with four-year university degrees comprised the majority of "female employees overall", those in "part to regular" primarily held

two-year college degrees, and “part to part time” women were made up of high school graduates. Marriage rates were highest among “female employees overall,” then decreasing among “part to regular” and “part to part time” women, in that order. Regarding the type of employment of their spouses, “part to regular” women had the highest proportion out of all the groups of spouses who worked as a regular full-time worker, in contrast to as much as 10 percent of “part to part time” women who had spouses in non-regular employment. As with marriage, the rates for those with children rose in the order from “all female employees” to “part to regular” to “part to part time;” and relevant figures for all female employees versus “part to regular” and “part to part time” women diverged by more than 20 percent, indicating how closely having children is tied to a woman’s choice of non-regular part-time employment early on in her career.

In terms of career attributes, the proportion of those with previous regular full-time experience was 77.8 percent for “part to part time” women, higher than the 69.6 percent for “part to regular” women. Whereas average hours at their preceding part-time jobs varied little between “part to regular” and “part to part time” women at 32.0 hours/week (standard deviation 11.0, maximum value 73, minimum value 3) and 29.7 hours/week (standard deviation 11.6, maximum value 72, minimum value 5), respectively, a considerable difference was seen between their current working hours of 41.0 hours/week (standard deviation 7.5, maximum value 78, minimum value 29) versus 25.1 hours/week (standard deviation 10.5, maximum value 60, minimum value 4). While this difference is to be expected given that one group of women now works full time and the other still part time, it should also be noted that “part to part time” women experienced an average loss of roughly five hours/week between their old and new jobs. Incomes at

preceding jobs averaged 1.543 million yen/year (standard deviation 0.934 million, maximum value 5 million, minimum value 0.35 million, median 1.253 million) for “part to regular” women, compared to 1.230 million yen/year (standard deviation 0.863 million, maximum value 6 million, minimum value 0.12 million, median 0.962 million) for “part to part time” women; thus the former took in more than the latter to begin with in terms of average and median income, indeed exceeding the so-called “1.03 million-yen barrier” that is commonly said to be the maximum amount a married woman may earn a year before the advantages of a greater income are outweighed by the disadvantages of added taxes, higher social-security costs, and losses in eligibility to receive corporate spousal and other benefits from her husband’s place of work⁷ The difference in incomes grows even greater once incomes after job changing—an average of 2.743 million yen/year (standard deviation 1.102 million, maximum value 7.5 million, minimum value 1 million, median 2.5 million) for “part to regular” women and 1.053 million yen/year (standard deviation 0.528 million, maximum value 4.2 million, minimum value 0.07 million, median 1 million) for “part to part time” women—are compared, with earnings for “part to part time” women going down nearly 200,000 yen between jobs due in part to the abovementioned decrease in working hours.

Turning next to the business sector, the percentages of both “part to regular” and “part to part time” women whose preceding part-time jobs were in wholesale/retail were nearly 10 points higher than for “all female employees,” reflecting the high ratio of part-time workers in the labor makeup of these sectors. Preceding occupations in the medical/welfare sector were especially prevalent among “part to regular” women, and those in the restaurant/hotel and service sectors among “part to part time” women. As for

occupation, the greatest number of both “part to regular” and “part to part time” women previously held clerical jobs, with rates reaching 45 percent for the former and 38.3 percent for the latter. These are extremely high figures, considering that the General Survey on Part-time Workers 2001 put out by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare shows clerical workers as making up only 11.6 percent of the total part-time workforce. This discrepancy may be due to the Recruit survey having been limited to the Tokyo metropolitan area, which is known to have a disproportionate number of clerical workers compared to the rest of the country.⁸ Aside from clerical work, it was common for preceding occupations to include specialized/technical jobs for “part to regular” women and service jobs for “part to part time” women. Finally, while “part to regular” and “part to part time” women shared a similar length of hiatus between previous and present jobs, with approximately 55 percent of both experiencing a hiatus of shorter than three months, differences were found in the activities taken up by each group during this interval. Among “part to regular” women, 66.7 percent answered they had engaged in some sort of job hunting, 10 points more than the 56.1 percent of “part to part time” women who said they did so. Further breaking down the activities of those who did not look for jobs, 5 percent more “part to regular” women, compared to “part to part time” women, spent their time in education or studying to enter school or to receive certification, whereas conversely roughly 15 percent more “part to part time” women, compared to “part to regular” women, had been involved in such activities as housework, childrearing, and caring for elderly family members.

3.2 Factors that determine whether a non-regular part-time woman will next work as a regular or non-regular part time workers

From here the study proceeded by analyzing the factors that determine whether a non-regular part-time woman who changes jobs will go into a regular or another non-regular part-time position. We adopt logistic regression model. The dependent variable was a dummy with a value of 1 for a previously non-regular part-time woman presently employed as a regular full time worker and 0 for one presently employed in a different non-regular part-time job. Possible factors that might influence a non-regular part-time woman's next job include personal attributes (e.g., career history, education), household situation, and the woman's own preferences as to working style. Thus, explanatory variables were set up to capture (1) career history: experience of regular full-time employment or lack thereof, occupation of preceding part-time job, working hours at that job, previous annual income, length of hiatus between the old and new job, and activities during hiatus, (2) personal attributes: age of present job entry, education, and generation, and (3) household situation: spouse's type of employment (including if one is married) and presence of children.⁹ With regards to working-style preferences, since the Recruit survey contained no item directly asking respondents what type of employment they had actually desired during their previous time as part-timers, an annual income of below 1.03 million yen while at the old job was substituted as an indication that the individual had wished to remain a dependent of her spouse rather than work as a regular.

A more detailed description of each explanatory variable follows. It is generally accepted that career history will have a bearing on efforts by regular full-time workers to switch jobs. Thus we focused on career details as a possible influencing factor also for non-regular part-timers. Taking advantage of the data of each respondent's complete job history as provided by the survey, regular full-time experience was set up as a dummy variable

with a value of 1 for a woman who worked as a regular full time worker at least once in her career and 0 for one who did not. As for the preceding occupation, dummies were set up with service sector as the reference category, manufacturing/manual, clerical, and specialized/technical jobs, with other infrequently occurring occupation treated as missing values. Previous non-regular part-time income was a dummy variable with a value of 1 for earnings of 1.03 million yen/year or more and 0 for those below; missing values were substituted with the median incomes of either “part to regular” or “part to part time” women as the case required. Length of hiatus, defined as the interval between when a woman left her preceding non-regular part-time job to when she started at her current position, was set up as a dummy variable with a value of 1 for three months or longer and 0 for shorter than three months, reflecting the two options provided on the survey questionnaire. For activities during hiatus, “job hunting” was used as a reference, with dummies adopted for “not looking for jobs due to study” (i.e., because one was in education, studying to enter school, or to receive certification) and “not looking for jobs due to housework or childrearing” (i.e., because one was taking care of the house and children, nursing elderly family members, rehabilitating from an illness, or otherwise occupied).

For personal attributes, age of present job entry was included to account for the common belief that age poses a significant restriction on a woman’s ability to reenter employment in a regular full-time position. To control for economic trends and other generational effects, dummies for age group were also set up in ten-year age spans. The effects of education were examined using junior/senior high school as the reference, with dummies for technical school/college, two-year college, and university/graduate school.

Given how closely women’s work styles are perceivable tied to marital

status and household financial conditions, a third group of variables dealing with household situation was also entered into the analysis. As per limitations imposed by the original questionnaire design, a spouse's type of employment was set up with "unmarried" as the reference and dummies constructed for "spouse working full time" and "spouse unemployed or working part time" (i.e., someone who answered on the survey that her spouse was either "unemployed" or "employed, although not full time"). For children, a dummy variable was adopted with a value of 1 if a woman had one or more. While age of children would also seem to be a potentially important explanatory variable, lack of survey items querying for this information barred it from inclusion. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2.

Regarding personal attributes, even controlling for age cohort, the probability that a non-regular part-time woman would next be reemployed regular full time rose statistically significantly as age of entry into her new job went down. In terms of education, only two-year college graduates showed a statistically significantly higher probability of obtaining regular full-time positions compared to high school graduates. The lack of a statistically significant correlation for completing university/graduate school probably owes to the present study being limited to those who were formerly part-timers. From past literature on married women's job-seeking activities, we know that the higher a woman's education, the more likely it is that she will work as a regular full time (Nagase 1994: 37); studies of female university graduates likewise indicate that these women more often tend to seek regular full-time reemployment than do those with other educational histories (Takeishi 2001: 128–29). In discussing the job preferences of unemployed female college graduates, Takeishi (2001: 135–36) moreover

points out that those of them who seek work after once quitting due to marriage or childbirth tend to be relatively less concerned about household economy than they are about finding satisfying and challenging work in regular full-time positions, suggesting that they will simply choose to stay out of the workforce if they cannot find a job to their liking.

Turning next to the employment status of a woman's spouse (from variables dealing with household situation), the analysis found that compared to an unmarried woman, a woman with a spouse who was unemployed or employed part-time was statistically significantly more likely to work as a non-regular part timer. Contrary to intuition, having a spouse who worked full time did not significantly affect a woman's chances toward becoming a non-regular part-timer. Judging from the cross tabulation, most of the women with unemployed spouses were 45 or older, suggesting that these spouses were not working because they were retired. Women with spouses not working full time, meanwhile, were spread out across young and old, making it difficult to reach any conclusions based on age. Taking into account the finding that over 90 percent of them have children, we can perhaps surmise that those in the younger age ranges belong to couples both employed non-regularly, with the husband working for example as a "freeter" who works as an *Arbait* after school, while those in the middle to higher age ranges are perhaps married to spouses who switched to non-regular work after retiring from full-time employment; the questionnaire data, however, are inconclusive on this matter. Given the small size of the sample of workers whose spouses were unemployed or part-time workers, it may also very well be that selection bias is at play. No significant correlation was found for the effect of having children.

Finally, as for the variables dealing with career history, no statistically

significant correlation existed for the occupation and hours a woman experienced at her preceding part-time job. Nor did having a previous annual income of under or equal to 1.03 million yen or more make any statistically significant correlation. The analysis likewise found no statistical significance for previous regular full-time experience, not even after substituting this variable with that of experience working in a regular full-time position immediately after school. Thus, for a non-regular part-time woman, neither previous non-regular part- or regular full-time experience nor indeed any other aspect of her career history seems to have a bearing on whether she next obtains a regular full- or non-regular part-time job. Whether a woman experienced a hiatus between her old and new jobs was also not found to be statistically significant, although given that the survey only classifies hiatuses into those under or equal to three months or longer, it is possible that an effect might have been discovered had longer intervals been examined. For example, Nagase (1994: 37) argues that as a general rule, the longer one stays out of work, the harder it becomes for one to find a new job, especially a regular full-time job that gives long working hours.¹⁰ It should be noted here, however, that Nagase defines “hiatus” to be total time spent unemployed after completing schooling, whereas the present study counts only the period of unemployment between a woman’s current job and the part-time job immediately preceding. As for their activities during hiatus, women who did not look for jobs because they were busy with housework or childrearing had a much more statistically significant probability of becoming non-regular part-timers than those who engaged in some sort of job hunting. As for the other category of women who did not look for jobs because they were attending school or studying, the probability that they would become non-regular part-timers compared to those who did look,

although not statistically significant, was similarly positive.

From the above, we can conclude that no details of a woman's career, whether at her preceding non-regular part-time job or at any regular full-time positions before then, have any particular correlation toward raising the probability that she will next work regularly. Instead, it is conditions such as age of job entry or level of education that exert strong influence, revealing that for a woman working part time non-regularly, the factors that most determine whether she is able to move into a regular full-time position are those that she has no control over at that point. At the same time, the analysis also found that women who look for work while unemployed tend to obtain more regular full-time jobs, at least compared to those who do not look because they are busy with housework or childrearing. Thus, taking action and actually putting oneself out on the labor market may be one way that a woman might mitigate the disadvantages of her background and heighten her probability of attaining regular full-time employment.

4. Employment Conditions of "Part to Regular" Women

Section 3 above analyzed the factors that determine whether a woman who previously worked part time non-regularly will next go into regular full- or non-regular part-time employment. But once a part-time woman attains a full-time position, does that mean that she is integrated into an internal labor market where she can expect greater job stability, having pay scales and career prospects? To answer this question, the study looked at the present employment conditions of women who transferred into regular full- from non-regular part-time employment, then focused on the single measure of pay in order to estimate their wage function as compared to other women

working full time regularly at a single company throughout.

4.1 Employment conditions

To capture the present employment conditions of women who find regular full-time employment after having worked part time, female survey respondents currently employed regularly were categorized according to whether they had worked at the same company throughout (“regular at one company”), had switched into their present positions from a regular full-time job at another company (“regular to regular”), or had come in from other forms of employment (“part to regular,” “contract to regular,” “freeter’ to regular,” “dispatched to regular,” “other to regular”). Starting with average age and age of present job entry, “regular at one company” women were found to be the youngest for both, with “part to regular” women being the oldest. The former was 15 years younger than the latter in age of job entry and 10 years younger in current age. In connection to this, great numbers of “regular at one company” and “dispatched to regular” women were unmarried at roughly 65 and 79 percent, respectively, in contrast to which “part to regular” women made up the highest marriage rate (66.9) out of all the groups. Likewise, the proportion of those with children was highest among “part to regular” women at 83.3 percent and lowest among “regular at one company” women at 27 percent. Here, too, we see evidence of the extremely close relationship between having a spouse and children and having previously worked part time. For education, the greatest proportions (over 30 percent) of “regular at one company” and “dispatched to regular” women had completed university/graduate schooling, compared to over half of “part to regular” and “freeter’ to regular” women whose highest education was in junior/senior high school. The latter two, however, differed in that

whereas “part to regular” women ranked lowest out of all the groups in terms of percentage of those who finished university/graduate school (roughly 7 percent), corresponding statistics for “freeter’ to regular” women stood quite high at 20 percent. Taken altogether, it is quite clear that regular full-time working women with varying career histories exhibit considerable qualitative differences with regards to their personal and household attributes. In particular, it may be said that even among all those previously in non-regular employment, “part to regular” women stand most markedly apart from women who stay regularly at a single company.

Turning next to business sector and occupational category, for the former we see present occupations in the two sectors of medicine/welfare and finance/insurance to be especially prevalent among “part to regular” women compared to the other groups. A look at the index of diversity D^{11} for the business sectors by “regular at one company” versus “part to regular” women reveals a higher value of D for the former, indicating greater diversity among this group made up mostly of individuals employed immediately out of school. In short, women who obtain regular full-time jobs immediately upon graduation enter into a wider range of sectors than do those who move into regular full-time employment after having worked part time non-regularly. Meanwhile, comparing data for “part to regular” women before and after job changing, medicine/welfare were again high for both, with finance/insurance increasing by 6 points between old and new jobs and wholesale/retailing going down significantly. Next, for present occupational category, clerical work accounted for the highest proportion of jobs held by female regular full-time workers regardless of the group. Among “part to regular” women, however, the percentage of clerical workers, although still first among all occupations, was roughly 10 points lower than for the other categories, while

conversely rates for marketing/sales employees were significantly higher. The index of diversity D for occupation was higher for “part to regular” women than for “regular at one company” women, indicating the former to be more widely distributed than the latter. Parallel to these findings, a comparison of the occupation of “part to regular” women before and after job changing reveals a decrease of 6 to 8 points each in service, manufacturing/manual, and clerical work, a drop counterbalanced by a considerable increase of 13 points in marketing/sales work. Takeishi (2001: 118–119) argues that even when the great numbers of women in Japan who held clerical jobs during their young unmarried years seek to reenter the workforce after once quitting due to marriage or childbirth, there exists very few opportunities for them to find positions where they can make use of their prior experience. This assertion agrees with the present study’s finding of a lower percentage of clerical workers among “part to regular” women, who tend to be older than those with other career histories.¹² As a final note, the one job subcategory that most contributed to pushing up the proportion of marketing/sales occupations among “part to regular” women was “insurance sales” (11.6%).

4.2 Effect of moving into regular- from part-time work on wage function

Can a woman who shifts into regular- from part-time employment expect to receive wages equitable to those earned by women working regular at one company throughout, factoring out differences in the distributions of such characteristics as age, education, occupation, and length of tenure? To test whether the “part to regular” dummy negatively affects wages independent of these other factors, cross-section log-wage functions were estimated for female survey respondents at their current jobs for one year or longer. First,

dummy variables were set up each with a value of 0 for a woman working regularly at the same company continuously and a value of 1 for a woman who moved into her present regular position from regular work at another company, from a non-regular part-time job, or from some other form of non-regular or non dependent employment (e.g., contract/temporary, “freeter,” dispatched, or commissioned work; self or family employment), respectively. To excise as much as possible the effects of other differences in personal attributes, a variable commonly adopted for substituting age, education, and tenure in human capital was entered as an explanatory variable, occupation, business sector, and company size were also taken into account, and wage functions estimated using the least-squares method (Table 4).

The resulting coefficients on the dummy variables provide a measure of how much—in cases where wage rates may be explained by such factors as age, tenure, education, occupation, and company size—moving into a regular full-time job from another regular full-time, non-regular part-time, or other non-regular position affects the wage level compared to staying in regular full-time employment at the same company. Although “part to regular” women, as already discussed, actually diverge significantly from “regular at one company” women in terms of age, education, and sector and category of jobs held, the analysis here supposes such characteristics to be equal across both groups. The results show the effect of the “part to regular” dummy, representing a woman who moves into regular- from non-regular part-time employment, to be significantly negative statistically. The coefficient, -0.012, indicates that a “part to regular” woman will earn roughly 10 percent less than a woman working regularly continuously at the same company even when other possible influencing factors are leveled out.

Given that Japanese wage systems generally tend to favor employees who remain with one company (Nitta 2003: 68),¹³ it perhaps hardly goes against popular intuition that a woman who continues regular at one company since completing her education should be paid more than someone who comes in after having worked part time non-regularly. But what should be ascertained when wage function shows that the wage level remains unequal even after controlling for age, tenure, education, occupation, business sector, and company size? At the very least, we may claim that failure to stay at one job acts as a penalty on a woman's wage rate as a regular employee. Indeed, we cannot help but go one step further and conclude that companies attach no value to previous part-time experience at least as far as formation of human capital is concerned.

5. Conclusion

To summarize the main findings of the study:

1. Of women who obtain new jobs after having worked part time non-regularly, 66.7 percent go into other part-time jobs while 29.3 percent, or roughly three-tenths, find regular full-time positions.
2. Occupation and hours at a woman's preceding non-regular part-time job have no bearing on whether she next obtains a regular- or another non-regular part-time position. Nor does prior regular full-time experience, whether immediately out of school or otherwise, affect matters, indicating a woman's career history either as a non-regular part- or regular full-time employee to be largely disregarded during hiring.
3. Rather, the factors that most increase a woman's chances of gaining regular full-time employment are those that she has no control over at

that point, for example youth at time of job entry, completion of two-year college, and being unmarried. In terms of age of job entry, approximately 55 percent of “part to regular” women obtained their current full-time positions when they were 35 or older. Even given the aforementioned finding that the probability of attaining regular full-time employment rises as long as one is younger, this result does not seem significant enough to contradict Shinotsuka (1995: 179–209)’s assertion that very few offerings for regular full-time positions give eligibility to those 35 years of age and older; instead, it should be interpreted as meaning that the few companies that offer opportunities for regular full-time employment to individuals 35 years and older impose looser restrictions on age both when soliciting and actually hiring applicants.

4. Engaging in some sort of job-hunting activity while unemployed increases a woman’s probability of finding regular full-time employment, at least compared to others who do not look for work and instead devote themselves to housework or childrearing.
5. Comparing regular full-time working women who stay at one company since graduation to those who come in from other regular or non-regular employment shows that even among those who previously worked non-regularly, “part to regular” women vary most markedly in quantitative terms from “regular at one company” women in terms of both personal attributes (e.g., age, age of job entry, education) and household situation (e.g., presence of spouse and children). Thus, a close relationship exists between a woman’s choice of non-regular part-time work and the need to fulfill the family responsibilities that come with being married and having children. With regard to business sector,

women who stay regular at one company after presumably being employed out of school or shortly afterwards tend to go into more diverse sectors than those who obtain regular full-time positions after having worked part time non-regularly. In terms of occupational category, by contrast, “regular at one company” women tend to be distributed more narrowly than “part to regular” women, with especially high numbers of the former being concentrated in clerical jobs.

6. Finally, wage levels for women who move into regular - from non-regular part-time employment are significantly lower statistically than those for women who stay within one company, even assuming no difference in age, tenure, education, occupation, business sector, or company size.

As revealed by this study, a woman’s ability to shift into regular- from non-regular part-time work is most determined by factors that she has no control over at that point. Failure to work regularly continuously at a single company, moreover, acts as a penalty on her wages as a regular employee; indeed, at least from simply looking at pay rates, we seem to have no choice but to conclude that companies consider previous non-regular part-time experience to have no value in the formation of human capital. Such findings suggest that career prospects remain quite dim for a woman even should she have the opportunity to develop her vocational skills to a certain extent through non-regular part-time work.

Japan is known to have an exceedingly large gender wage gap compared to international standards. That sexual discrimination is partially responsible for the wage gap in Japan is broadly accepted as truth, even if

the extent of the gap by sex discrimination remains debatable (see, e.g., Nakata 1997: 173–205 or Mori 2005: 44–64). The present study analyzed whether wage levels for female regular full-time workers will differ between those who come in from non-regular part-time work versus those who have been at the same job throughout. Combining the results with previous literature on the gender wage gap, we can conclude that in addition to being discriminated for their gender, “part to regular” women are penalized in relation to their female peers for failing to continue regular full time at a single company, consequently earning even less compared to men. Thus, in order to promote gender equality in employment, it will be crucial not only to ensure that non-regular part-time workers are able to shift smoothly into regular full-time employment, but also to develop employment systems that do not penalize individuals for making diverse choices throughout the course of their lives.

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For this secondary analysis, the author employed individual response data from the 2004 Working Persons Survey conducted by Works Institute, Recruit Co., Ltd. and provided through the SSJ (Social Science Japan) Data Archive of the Institute of Social Science, The University of Tokyo.

*I will show all tables at the presentation.

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¹ As an exception, the problem of finding regular employment for "freeters" who work as an *Arbait* after school through the labor market is currently attracting attention as a future policy goal. The "Comprehensive 'Challenge Again' Support Plan" announced by the Japanese government at the end of 2006 lists regular employment for "freeters" among its important objectives. Specifically, the plan calls for the Employment Measures Law to be revised so as to expand job opportunities for younger generations previously shut out of employment by the bubble crisis, for example through obliging business owners to work toward fairly assessing the talents and experience of, and increasing hiring for, young people and through offering comprehensive counseling and

vocational training at “hello work” (job placement offices) and “job cafes” (one-stop service centers for job-seeking youth).

² Labor Force Survey 2006 likewise shows that only 20 percent of job-switching non-regular part-timers went into regular work versus the 65 percent who went from one part-time position to another and the 80 percent of job shifts by temporary, dispatched, and other non-regular workers that involved movement into other non-regular jobs, thus revealing little change in trends between 2000 and the present.

³ Internal labor market theory is not necessarily limited to accounting for the differences between regular and non-regular employees, but may also be applied to males versus females, large versus small/medium-sized businesses, or any other pairs that can be hypothesized to be divided into dual-structured, qualitatively distinct labor markets each cut off from the other by contrasting governing principles.

⁴ Classification based on self-report.

⁵ The sample total, 5,846, is a real value; lesser values were scaled by weighting back the sample to the parent population.

⁶ To give a more detailed breakdown of time of job entry for age groups 35 or older, 18.6 percent of “part to regular” women came into their present jobs between ages 35 to 39, 17.3 percent between ages 40 to 44, 10.6 percent between ages 45 to 49, 6.8 percent between ages 50 to 54, and 1.4 percent between ages 55 to 59.

⁷ As also discussed in *“Raifusutairu no sentaku to zeisei/shakaihosho seido/koyo shisutemu” ni kansuru hokokusho* (Report on Lifestyle Selection, Taxation, Social Security, and the Local Labor Market) published in 2002 by the Cabinet Office Gender Equality Bureau, strictly speaking the 1.03 million-yen barrier involves a host of complicated factors. According to the 2001 *Part-time rodosha sogo jittai chosa* (General Survey on Part-time workers) conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, income distribution of part-time women who purposely limited their earnings to fall within a certain range clustered at 0.9 to 1.1 million yen/year. This result is likely partly attributable to Japan’s tax scheme, in which 1.03 million yen/year is the line at which one’s income becomes subject to taxation. From responses to questions asking women why they chose to adjust their earnings, other reasons may be seen to include a desire to remain eligible for spousal deductions on their husbands’ tax returns (45.1 percent of those surveyed) or to qualify for dependent status on retirement pensions, medical insurance, and other social-security plans (38.2 percent). Yet in truth there would seem to be no logical need to limit wives’ incomes as far as deductions are concerned, given that the present tax scheme already provides measures to counter the paradox by which women earning more actually leads to less money as a result of deductions. At the same time, 80 percent of Japanese companies do use the 1.03 million-yen line established by the tax scheme as the eligibility cutoff for their own family benefit plans, making it possible to see this as one alternate motivating factor. Incidentally, there is no cluster of incomes around 1.3 million yen/year, the limit at which one loses dependent status for pension and medical-insurance programs. While the above set of findings may seem somewhat contradictory, the Gender Equality Bureau report cites the effects of misunderstanding, lack of knowledge, and false assumptions on the part of the public about tax and social-security schemes as well as of a general aversion to paying taxes, given these are the reasons why women persist in adjusting down wages, incomes, and working hours in concern over such considerations as taxes, social security, and family benefits.

⁸ According to the 2000 Census, which provides statistics for occupational category by gender and prefecture, clerical workers made up 36 percent of the female workforce in Tokyo, 7 points higher than the nationwide average of 29 percent.

⁹ Although an analysis of job-changing male “freeters” who moved to regular

employment versus those who went into another “freeter” job was also attempted using the same model, the variables were found to have no explanatory power, indicating that study of male “freeters” will require a model with an entirely different set of variables altogether.

¹⁰ This study by Nagase analyzes married women’s career choices in terms of whether they work “non-regular part time for short hours,” “non-regular part time for long hours,” “regular full time for short hours,” “regular full time for long hours,” or “other.” The cutoff between short and long hours is 42 hours/week.

¹¹ One measure of the diversity in the values of a discrete variable

¹² Brinton (1993: 67–68), also cited by Takeishi on the same pages, points out based on 1980 Census data that the proportion of clerical employees within the Japanese female workforce drops with age from 50 percent among those in their early twenties to between 10 to 20 percent among those in or beyond their late thirties. The 2005 Census, meanwhile, gives clerical workers as making up 29 percent of the female workforce for ages 20 through 24, 38 percent for ages 25 through 29, 41 percent for ages 30 through 34, 37 percent for ages 35 to 39, 34 percent for ages 40 to 44, 30 percent for ages 45 to 49, 26 percent for ages 50 to 54, and 23 percent for ages 55 to 59; thus, although differences between age groups have flattened out compared to Brinton’s analysis for 1980, numbers do still go down after women reach a certain peak age group, now holding a little older than before at 30 to 34.

¹³ In discussing the seniority wage system as it actually operates today, Nitta (2003: 23–36) argues, first, that it is a merit system based fundamentally on job performance where pay rises along with age and tenure owing to the use of seniority as a measure of capability, and second, that historically since the 1960s, the trend has been for age to be emphasized over tenure in setting wages as determined by seniority.