

【Grant-in-Aid for Specially Promoted Research】

Humanities and Social Sciences



Title of Project : A Comprehensive Study of Life Course and Inequality Using the Framework of Cumulative Advantages and Disadvantages

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Research Project Number : 18H05204 Researcher Number : 40272504

Keyword : Inequality, life course, panel survey, quantitative analysis

【Purpose and Background of the Research】

Low wages, non-standard employment, and long working hours among young people are just a few examples identified as urgent social issues to be addressed in Japan. Unfavorable labor market conditions were suspected to be one reason for delayed marriages and declining birth rates. Inequality and economic gaps occupied the central location in social discourse in Japan.

The primary research question for this project is: how and why does social inequality persist and accumulate across individuals' life courses? Through compiling long-term panel surveys, the project aims (1) to identify diverse life course trajectories from youth to old age by taking into account multiple dimensions of the life course including education, employment, family, health, and attitudes as shown in Figure 1; and (2) to examine the process through which social inequality is generated and accumulated over those life course trajectories.

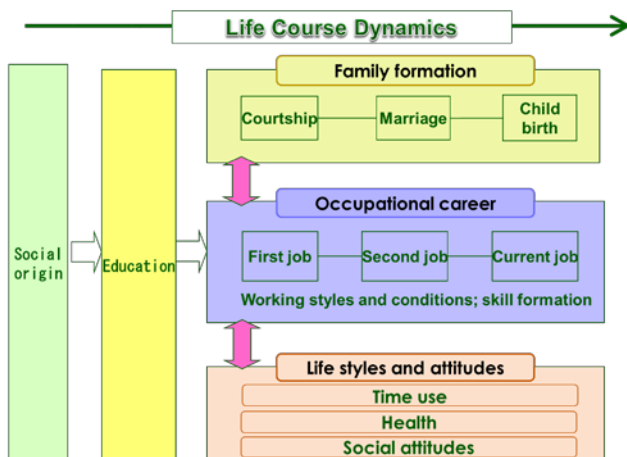


Figure 1 Life Course Dynamics

【Research Methods】

Our project has been successfully conducting the following surveys: a panel study targeted at the youth (20-34 years old) and the middle-aged (35-40 years old) since 2007; and a panel survey of the elderly (50-84 years old) since 2010. Our team will continue the data collection of the youth, the middle-age, and the old-age panel surveys. Our panel surveys allow us to identify diverse life course

trajectories of individuals: those who were consistently disadvantaged from the initial life stage and those who were able to overcome their early disadvantages. Our project aims to identify the mechanisms enabling mobility out of and into the most disadvantaged positions and insights for breaking the cycle of cumulative disadvantages.

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

This study will identify the factors which explain differential life course trajectories and discover the mechanisms behind cumulative advantages and disadvantages. It takes into account various dimensions of life course trajectories: socio-economic career progression, family formation (marriage and childbirth), and health and subjective well-being. The study will also examine the reproduction of inequality across three generations.

The accumulated panel surveys are publically available for academic use and education. We have also been collaborating with other East Asian projects on the transition to adulthood. We will continue to work together and conduct cross-national studies on social inequality.

【Publications Relevant to the Project】

- H. Ishida (ed.) *Cumulative Advantage and Disadvantage and Youth 1: Education and Career*. Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 2017 (in Japanese).
- H. Ishida & K. Sato (eds.) *Cumulative Advantage and Disadvantage and Youth 3: Life Design and Hope*. Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 2017 (in Japanese).

【Term of Project】 FY2018-2024

【Budget Allocation】 470,800 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】

<http://csrda.iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/panel/purpose/>