

'Broken Bodies: Precarious Labour, Gender and Well-being'

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Emma E. Cook is a social anthropologist with interests ranging from gender, employment, family, and intimacy to food, health, risk, emotion and well-being. She has published articles in Japanese Studies, Asian Anthropology, Social Science Japan Journal and Asian Journal of Social Science, and in 2016 published a monograph titled: *Reconstructing Adult Masculinities: Part-time Work in Contemporary Japan*, London: Routledge. Her current research, funded by a JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) is titled 'When Food is Risky: Food Allergies in Japan and the UK' and it cross-culturally explores the social, embodied and affective experiences of food allergies in Japan and the UK.

“In that job, I broke my body (karada wo kowashita)” explained Yoshio-san. To ‘break the body’ was a term that was typically used to indicate a physical breakdown or physical manifestations of illness and exhaustion as the result of long-standing stress, difficult working relationships, long hours of work, and lack of sleep. Such experiences were generally narrated as a consequence of overwork but also as a result of character and cultural imperatives to do their best (ganbaru) and endure (gaman) their situation. For some, working part-time – for a limited time – provided respite from the labour pressures experienced in full-time jobs. Yet, part-time work was not a safe space in which bodies are not broken. Indeed, the precariousness and low wages of irregular labour, exploitative company practices, and a culture of gaman and ganbaru, can push workers to the point of breakage. This paper explores what it means to have and experience a ‘broken’ body, how precarious labour can precipitate breakages, the affects on physical and emotional well-being, and the role that gendered understandings of labour plays in experiences and narratives of broken bodies.

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