**PhD outcomes in the UK: exploring entry into academic employment**

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Internationally, governments are seeking to increase the number of PhD graduates (Smith 2010; Nature 2011). These intentions reflect a commitment to the knowledge for growth agenda – to say, the belief that future economic prosperity rests upon the creation, application and dissemination of knowledge. Expertly knowledgeable, creative and highly skilled, PhD graduates are repositioned as vital to industrial strategy. The UK is no exception to this policy consensus, with a state loan system recently introduced to increase the number of PhD graduates (Department for Education 2017).

Despite this policy consensus, UK PhD students express ambivalent attitudes to the broader knowledge economy agenda, and the majority initially embark on a PhD with the intention of becoming an academic (Hancock 2018; Hancock et al., 2017). While it is well established that most PhD graduates will not secure an academic career, relatively little is known about the characteristics of those that do. This paper seeks to explore this question, with a particular focus on the role that academic and demographic variables may have in explaining academic employment outcomes. Extending our understanding of this is particularly pertinent in light of recent evidence suggesting institutional differences in pathways to the doctorate, and a lack of diversity in the UK research workforce (Pasztor & Wakeling 2018; Bridge Group 2017).

This analysis uses a bespoke dataset of UK domiciled PhD holders in the Destination of Leavers of Higher Education Longitudinal Survey, which records the employment circumstances of UK PhD graduates some 3.5 years after they have graduated (n=4,731; 39.5% response rate). The results suggest significant institutional and disciplinary differences in entry to academic careers. With the exception of gender however, the effect of demographic variables on the attainment of academic careers is limited. The implications of these findings will be discussed.

293 words

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