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**Research Institution: Kyoto University**  
**Research Department: Disaster Prevention Research Institute**  
**Host's Name: Professor Haruo Hayashi**  
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My research looked at how to increase the effectiveness of response agencies when responding to natural and man-made disasters. I used my time in Japan to collect data from disaster victims, local government and police, fire and ambulance response agencies to gain insight into the problems and current structuring of disaster response. This data was then analysed through viable systems modelling (VSM) – a technique traditionally used in the management sciences – to identify potential improvements in disaster response. In doing so, the research moved the VSM away from its traditional organisational roots to provide a new way of structuring information processing analysis for rapid response in disaster situations.

Aside from the research, I also got involved with many other activities during my time at Kyoto University. I provided a workshop at the university to introduce delegates to management science and explored its transferability from the more traditional business context to the area of disaster management. As a result, attendees learnt a new methodology that is predominantly applied in western business organisations. Another activity I was involved in was supporting the teaching of a disaster management course to Japanese undergraduate students at the university. I also attended a day of research seminars at the university and a number of social evening events with Japanese academics. These events provided opportunities to talk with Japanese academics and students to learn more about the Japanese perspective on my research topic and also to help me more generally understand Japanese culture.

Throughout my time in Japan I also travelled extensively. I visited the bustling cities of Tokyo and Osaka, saw the beautiful Mount Fuji and spent an exhausting day climbing up the hills on the amazing Miyajima Island. I drank gold leaf tea in Kanazawa, played with robots in Fukushima, watched geishas playing instruments and dancing in Kyoto and looked down the mouth of a volcano at Mount Aso. I was also really lucky to be in Japan for the spring blossom which was truly spectacular.

I also took Japanese lessons whilst I was there – I found the language very hard but it was worth it when I was armed with some simple phrases to help me buy things in shops, etc. I also got a positive reaction in meetings when I said hello and introduced myself in Japanese.

My advice to anyone thinking about applying for a JSPS scheme is go for it! I have so many fantastic memories that will last a lifetime. I recommend that, as well as your research, you make the time to do some travelling and engage in local/cultural activities – Japan really does have something for everyone!



**Me giving a workshop at Kyoto University**



**Me at an evening dinner with Japanese academics**