

I had the pleasure of serving as a JSPS postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Sociology at the Graduate School of Letters (Bungaku-bu) of Kyoto University in 2009-2010 with the widely respected sociologist Professor Emiko Ochiai acting as my host researcher. To say the least, this proved a highly fruitful period in my early research career. In retrospect, the main benefits of the fellowship boiled down to three points: (1) the chance to prepare my first monograph & high-impact articles for international social science journals; (2) the opportunity to learn about Japanese university life from the perspective of young faculty & to network intensively within Japanese academia; (3) the time to begin designing a new post-PhD research project. Since Kyoto University lacked a social space for international early-career scholars to meet each other and discuss their research, I also co-launched an informal group called the "Kyoto Salon" with other JSPS postdocs, Kyoto University students and a wide variety of interested acquaintances from across the city. More recently, the friendly network we built has morphed into something called Kansai RISE (a cross-sectoral social innovation community) with well over 300 active members across central Japan: www.kansairise.org .

The research I conducted at Kyoto University closely corresponded to my initial JSPS research plan which centred on youth policy and new counselling measures in Japan, though I must admit my emphasis was inevitably on producing (or preparing) publications rather than on further empirical fieldwork on surveys. With publication processes growing ever longer and more complicated especially in the realm of social science, I'd say this is probably typical of most postdoctoral scholars.

If I may share a bit of advice with prospective JSPS postdocs, please strive to receive explicit confirmation, well ahead of arriving in Japan, on whether you will be given access to **suitable work space** or not. I am saying this because, upon reaching Kyoto University, I found myself being placed in a shared office with only a mini-desk (50 cm in width) to work at. It was clearly difficult for me to prepare an entire monograph for publication in this cramped environment (which by the way wasn't very clean--- national universities in Japan typically do not hire professional cleaners to tidy up research spaces; students and researchers are expected to do this themselves, the result being that shared rooms are often cleaned only once or twice a year!). I therefore proceeded to consult my host researcher about finding alternative work space and was somewhat grudgingly given access to an unused office in the attic of a large office building, which was spacious but possibly had some mold issues. One unexpected side-effect of my request was a (temporary) reputation, within the department, as a somewhat 'difficult' or demanding person, which fortunately evaporated later once I got to know all the staff members better. In any case, I'd recommend all new JSPS fellows-- especially those in Japan for a year or longer and those who do not expect to work in science labs as team members-- to sort out such basic issues beforehand and receive an explicit confirmation regarding work space before landing in Japan. (It's good to bear in mind that providing 'suitable' work space is, in terms of JSPS rules, the duty of the host researcher).

These minor difficulties aside, I remain extremely grateful to JSPS, Kyoto University as well as my host researcher Professor Ochiai for a productive postdoc tenure in 2009-2010. I am proud to be able to announce that it is largely as an outcome of this period that my first monograph, *Japan's Emerging Youth Policy: Getting Young Adults Back to Work* (Routledge) will finally be published in the autumn of 2012."