

My First Visit to Japan

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I was very fortunate to be an Invitational Fellow sponsored by JSPS. While they allowed me to stay in Japan for up to three months, I could only squeeze out half a month from my teaching and administrative schedules (17 March to 1 April 2019). I do wish I could have stayed much longer! My host was Dr Tami Saito, the Head of Social Science section at Japan's National Centre for Geriatrics and Gerontology (NCGG). NCGG was located in Obu to the south of Nagoya. Despite being small, it is a city of health and about health with several hospitals and medical centres, which is very fitting to my research interests. Except for the days that I visited other places, I went to NCGG every day to meet my host and her colleagues. Dr. Saito and I discussed a large number of issues related to our shared research interest, i.e., loneliness. At the end of my trip, I gave a copy of my newly published book *Loneliness: A Social Problem* to Dr. Saito as a gift.

On the 27th of March 2019, I gave a presentation titled 'Loneliness in the UK: Evaluating current situation and coping strategies' at the NCGG.



The next major research event on my trip to Japan was the seminar organized by Dr Saito at the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology (TMIG). Prof. Ken Harada, Dr. Erika Kobayashi, Dr Saito and myself all made a presentation on different aspects of loneliness in Japan and Europe. Unfortunately, we forgot to take any photo of this seminar. As there were more people in the

audience with a social science background, my presentation focused on the question why loneliness should be studied as a social problem as well, besides as a psychological and individual problem. I presented a lot of results showing that the relationship between age and loneliness varies greatly from nation to nation but not much from time to time; therefore, the relationship remains very much stable over time for a particular nation.

Besides the above major research activities, I also visited some researchers at two universities in Japan in order to establish further academic networks and explore potential collaborations. As National Center of Geriatrics and Gerontology is very close to Nagoya, I visited Dr. Tasuku Igarashi, Associate Professor at Graduate School of Education and Human Development, and Dr. Soko Aoki, Associate Professor of Sociology, both at Nagoya University.

I also visited some researchers at Center for Genomic Medicine, Kyoto University Graduate School of Medicine, who have conducted research on loneliness among young mothers in Japan. The research group published a paper on this emerging important issue in *British Medical Journal*, with Dr. Marie Mandai as the lead author. We had a very lively discussion on the reasons for loneliness among young mothers in Japan, and it is my hope that we could continue this line of research in the future.