

日本カナダ学会関西地区便り

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カナダ研究のさらなる発展に向けて

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このたび、佐藤信行会長による新体制のもと、水戸考道会員に代わり、関西地区担当理事を仰せつかりました。これまで活発な活動を続けてきた関西地区のたすきを受け継ぐにあたり、改めて身の引き締まる思いです。私が日本カナダ学会に入会した 1990 年代後半以降をふりかえっても、草野毅徳、杉本公彦、下村雄紀の各会員を会長として輩出したことからわかるように、関西地区のカナダ研究者は日本のカナダ研究の一翼を担ってきました。これまでの伝統を継承しつつ、さらなる発展に向けて、力不足を顧みず、少しでも貢献できるように努める所存です。

さて、カナダ研究に限らず、日本の学術研究がおかれている状況は芳しいものではありません。少子・高齢化の進行はもとより、日本の大学の将来が見通せない現状において、大学院に進学する若者はあまり多いとはいえ、研究者の高齢化が進んでいます。また、大学に所属する研究者はさまざまな業務で多忙となり、定例の研究会に出席する余裕を失いつつあります。しかし、カナダ研究のさらなる発展を目指すなら、やはり日本カナダ学会の活動を活発化していくほかになく、日常的に集まりやすい地区活動は重要な役割を担っているといえます。カナダ研究の研究者を養成する講座が国内には実質的に存在しないことに加え、研究者を輩出してきた大学院をもつ研究センター型の大学に勤務する会員ばかりではないなかで、会員の増加は容易ではありません。ただ、幸いにもカナダは語学留学先として人気があり、その経験によりカナダに興味を抱く若者は少なくないと思われます。また、在外研究先としてカナダの大学・研究機関を選ぶ非会員の研究者も少なからずいることでしょう。これらの人々にとって、地区活動はカナダ研究を本格化させる入り口になりえます。そこで、

My research focuses on the implications of communication technologies — such as mobile phones and social media — for personal networks, and the exchange of support and information within personal networks. I have studied this topic in Canada, Japan, the United States. Much of my research has taken place in Japan and the United States, because I completed a two-year Postdoctoral position at the University of Tokyo and then worked for nearly four years as an Assistant Professor at Rutgers University. However, since returning to Canada in 2012, I have focused my efforts on collecting data in Canada. I am pleased to spend some of my time in Japan this spring analyzing this data for the first time.

The data that I have recently collected in Canada is rather unique. In addition to having respondents complete survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews, many of the respondents also agreed to install a smartphone application that I designed to collect specific information from their phones' calling and texting logs. I designed this application to protect respondent privacy, and for this reason the application does not collect phone numbers, names, message content, or other information that could be directly linked to the respondents or their contacts. Moreover, respondents were informed in detail about how the application worked before agreeing to install it on their smartphones.

The data that this application provides is vital to understanding communication patterns in Canada. It is difficult for respondents to remember and articulate their communication behaviours, especially over long periods of time and with multiple types of relationships. With this logged data I am able to understand the patterns of calling and texting within personal networks over long periods of time. This application is among the first of its kind to provide access to this useful information while respecting the privacy of consenting participants.

This application was further designed such that participants could select particular individuals from their address books and calling logs in response to on-screen survey questions. Using this method, we asked Canadians to identify several types of relationships that provide important support and information. I am eager to analyze this data and learn how mobile phones have been used to maintain contact with these various types of relationships in Canada. I have also collected similar data in Japan and the United States with my collaborator Professor Tetsuro Kobayashi. My long-term goal is to discover how Canadians are unique (and similar) to those living in Japan and the United States, in regards to the composition of their personal networks, the exchange of information and support within these networks, and their use of communication technology.

