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## International Fellowship - Yuichiro Shimizu : Opinions refine research. "Relying on others" is the key to broaden your world

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Published on Aug 04, 2021

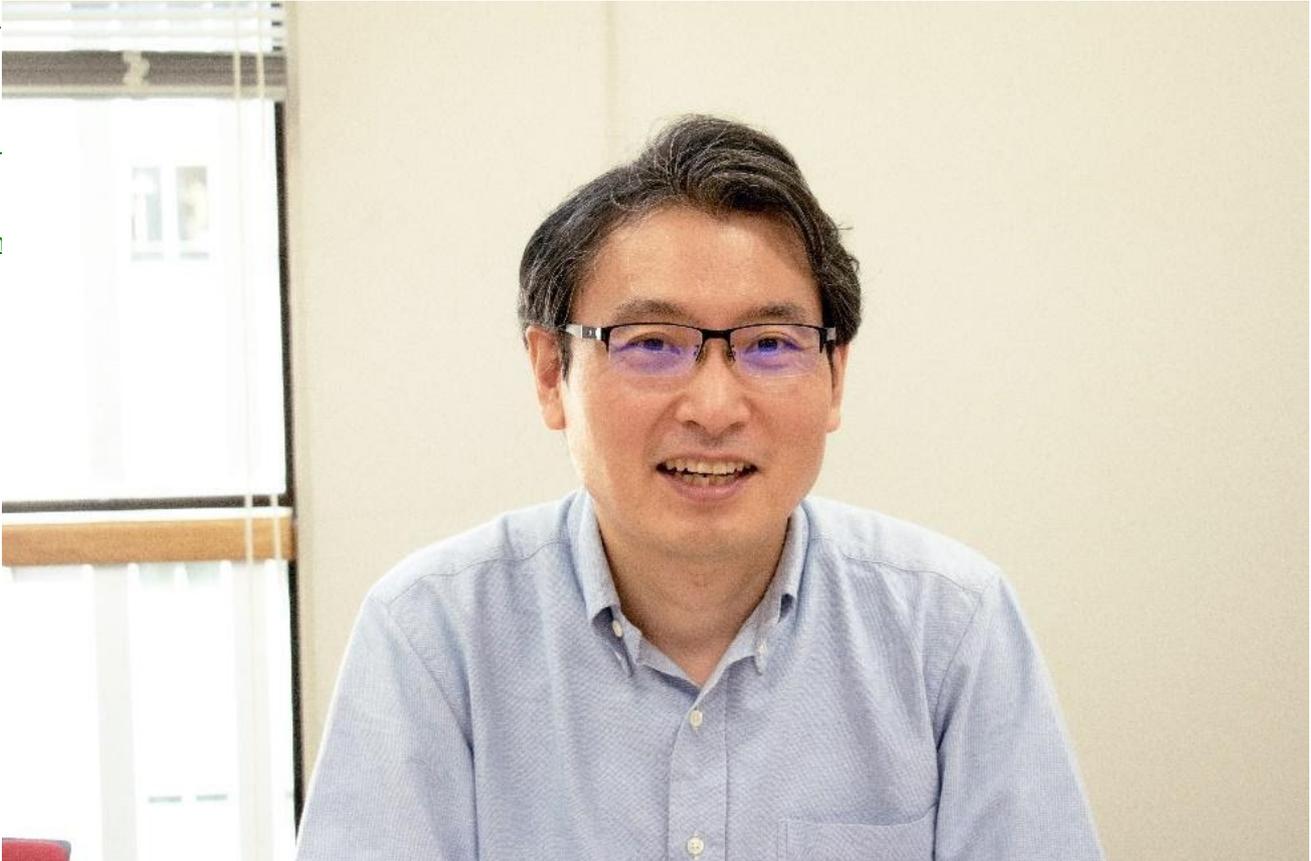
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Dr. Yuichiro Shimizu, a professor in the Faculty of Policy Management and a member of Graduate School of Media and Governance at Keio University.

Yuichiro Shimizu, a fellow of the third cohort of The Nippon Foundation International Fellowship \*, one of a scholarship program developed by Nippon Foundation, is a researcher of the history of Japanese politics and diplomacy, and is also known as a leading expert on Oral History in Japan. Oral History is a research method to record and analyze the dialogue with the people involved.

\* This program had produced 45 fellows over the course of six cohorts which later ended in 2019

Currently Mr. Shimizu is teaching at his Alma mater, Keio University, where he has many opportunities to interact with young people around the world, which led him to start a research on the relationship between youth and politics.

In this interview, Mr. Shimizu talks about his research and what he has gained from studying abroad.

### ■ Fascination of working on Japanese Studies across the world



Mr. Shimizu talks about how he got involved in political science

Mr. Shimizu is currently appointed as a professor in the Faculty of Policy Management and is also a member of Graduate School of Media and Governance at Keio University.

History and politics have always been his passion so he spent a lot of time with teachers of social studies in high school.

He graduated from Keio University with Bachelor's Degree of Law, Major in Politics in 1999, and finished his Master's degree at the Graduate school of Law and Politics, Keio University in 2001. After that, he started a part-time job as Research Assistant at National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) in 2002 where he had an encounter with Oral History which became a part of his study thereafter.

GRIPS is a graduate school specializing in policy research, and is an international center for policy research and education that attracts future policy leaders and researchers from all over the world.

"In policy research, we need to interview a variety of people involved in the policy and analyze their testimonies. Oral History is a necessary methodology in order to progress this work."

He worked as a Research Assistant (RA) for Project for Oral History and Policy Enrichment at GRIPS for one year, in parallel studying in the doctoral course at the Graduate School of Law and Politics, Keio University. In 2003, he became a Research Associate at Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology (RCAST), the University of Tokyo, and received his Ph.D in law from Keio University in 2005.

Mr. Shimizu indicates that his research on the history of Japanese politics and diplomacy is similar to Japanese area studies, except that he also does international comparisons. Therefore, he does his research in Japanese and writes his papers in Japanese. A typical career path for a professor is to publish a doctoral thesis as soon as possible and find a job. Mr. Shimizu

also published his doctoral dissertation as his first book in 2007 and became an assistant professor in the Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University.

"Although I was immersing myself into research in Japan, I was also wondering 'Would I end my career as a researcher without leaving Japan?'"

One day, one of his friends from Germany invited him to the European Association for Japanese Studies Conference held in Tallinn, Estonia in 2011. This was the beginning of his journey abroad.

"'Tallinn is a historical walled city! How does that sound to you?' said my friend. I didn't have confidence in my English, and had never presented my research in any other languages except Japanese. But my friend offered me help with my English, and moreover, his invitation was too attractive to ignore as a history lover.(laughs)"

Mr. Shimizu was relieved to finish his first presentation on modern Japanese party politics in English at the conference. And what he saw in the next moment surprised him. There was a long queue of audience waiting to talk to him.

"When I asked the people in the queue why they were interested in me, they said 'Your English was not very good, but you do have some unique content with you.' That was the first time I discovered the value of disseminating Japanese research to the world as a Japanese. From that point on, I began to look for research institutions overseas."

#### ■Expanding his network around the world through his experience at Harvard University



Mr. Shimizu shares memories of the time at Harvard University

Mr. Shimizu became an associate professor in the Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University in 2010, was awarded tenure (permanent employment) in the next year.

"When Japanese researchers involved in Japanese studies go abroad, they usually start their research based on materials available over there. For example, in the U.S., they look at the relationship between Japan and the U.S., or what kind of studies were done by Japanese students who studied abroad in the past. That does not sound interesting to me. If I am going to do research overseas, I would rather meet the researchers and people involved there, talk about my research, and obtain their feedback."

Mr. Shimizu had his sights on Harvard University where there are excellent Japanese Research Institutes. However, he noticed that the money provided by the university as travel expenses for research was just about to cover the rent, and was not enough to meet various people as he wished.

After comparing several scholarship programs and Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research promoted by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, he chose the Nippon Foundation International Fellowship program.

With the advice around him, he planned to go abroad not only by himself but with his wife, children, and his mother. One of the key points why he got attracted by The Nippon Foundation International Fellowship program is that it encourages people to travel along with their family, and also covers their living expenses.

"If you go abroad alone, you can only meet with the people in your circle. However, if your family accompanies you, you can connect with the people around your family. Especially when I studied at Harvard University, the children's community was unique. For example, I became friends with the father of my children's classmates from Germany who was a physicist and was very interesting to talk to. We stay in touch to this day."

Mr. Shimizu studied at Harvard on the study abroad program\* provided by Keio University. Although it was only one year, he has participated in 12 International conferences during the period.

\* This program is a leave of absence for training activities, and salary is paid during the applicable period.

"I used to study 'the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats' as a main topic of my research, and now it has changed to 'the relationship between politics and the people' after I studied at Harvard. "

For example, during the Edo period (1603-1868), there were almost no wars in 260 years. This is rare even from a global perspective." says Mr. Shimizu.

"The arrival of Perry in 1853 triggered the formation of a new government, the Meiji government. The new government needed policies that could surpass the 260-year peace of the Tokugawa shogunate. In order to make the country a place where every citizen could have a dream, the new government abolished the hierarchy of samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants. Anyone could become a bureaucrat to run the country if they worked hard. They opened up politics to the people."

He presented this research in English and got it translated by a friend whom he had met at Harvard University and published his book in English.

Through the network he formed at Harvard University, his community has expanded in various ways such as the Boston Japanese Researchers Forum. He has also made connections with other people at the Nippon Foundation International Fellowship program.

"The Nippon Foundation International Fellowship program also provides fellows with an opportunity to interact with each other once a year even after they return to their home countries. And I'm glad that the launch of this social media platform has given us more opportunities to connect with more people involved in this program."

### ■ Disseminating a research in English will help you expand your field of study

Mr. Shimizu continues his research on the history of Japanese politics and diplomacy while engaging in discussions with students and supporting them. He also extended his research to the relationship between youth and politics, with the hope that today's students can learn about the thoughts of the young people who had created Modern Japan.

Furthermore, he teaches students how to refine their expertise by gaining experience in interviews and by interacting with others through his seminars on Oral History which is his other specialization .

"A research is to be refined by presenting it at conferences and getting opinions from various people. It is not easy to expand one's knowledge only through the studies at universities. For example, when I broadened my field of activity to include the Public Policy Studies Association and the Consortium of Japanese Studies, I received completely different responses from the people in all different fields of Japanese studies. This is one of the things I learned from studying abroad at Harvard in 2014."

Because Mr. Shimizu puts great value on connections and dialogue with people, he suggests that " sometimes it is important to rely on others" .

"Don't be shy to ask for help. For example, when you go abroad, many people tend to think that they must work hard by themselves. However, since you are in a different country, you should ask for help from people around you. If they give you advice or help you, that's when you start building a relationship with them. If you rely on them, they will rely on you too."

And Mr. Shimizu says the following,

"Japanese researchers in Japan studies rarely disseminate their work in English. There is a huge field of potential out there."

This may be true not only for the Japanese, but also for all the researchers who publish their studies about their own country only in their own language.

"If you are not good at English, you can rely on someone who is good at it. You can always open the door to the world by yourself."

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## Profile Mr. Yuichiro Shimizu

He was born in Nagano Prefecture, Japan in 1974 and currently is a professor in the Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University(2017-present), and a member of the Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University(2010-present).

He graduated from Keio University with a Bachelor's Degree of Law and Politics and received the Outstanding Paper Award of the 100th Memorial for the Faculty of Law and Politics, Keio University in 1999. Then he obtained M.A. at the Graduate School of Law and Politics, Keio University in 2001, and served as a Research Assistant for the Oral Policy Information Project, the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies(2002-2003). He was also assigned to a Research Associate at Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology, The University of Tokyo(2003-2007), while completing a doctoral course at the Graduate School of Law and Politics, Keio University in 2003, and received his Ph.D. in 2005.

After that, he worked as an assistant professor in the Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University (2007-2010) and became an associate professor in the Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University (2010-2017). From 2014 to 2015, he studied abroad at Harvard University as a visiting researcher at Reischauer Institute for Japanese Studies, and received the Public Policy Studies Association Japan Award in 2014. In addition, he taught overseas as a visiting associate professor of Program in Japanese Studies at National Chengchi University, Taiwan(2015-2016) and as a visiting professor in the Department of Japanese Studies at Ruhr University Bochum, Germany in 2018. He also received Japanese Association of Electoral Studies Award in 2016. His publications include Shimizu,Y.(2019).The Origins of the Modern Japanese Bureaucracy (A. Ghadmi, Trans.). London: Bloomsbury Publishing. (Original work published 2013) and many others.

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