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Deepening Learning and Inspiring Rigor

Bridging Academic and Experiential Learning Using a Host Country Approach to a Study Tour

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American students are increasingly incorporating study in a foreign country into their college educations, but many participate in short-term programs that limit their engagement with any more than the superficial aspects of the host culture. This article describes a short-term study abroad course for American students to Japan in which the authors drew on an “emic” host country model of group travel in an effort to combine high academic standards, personal growth, and deepened engagement with Japanese culture. The authors first consider the history of study tours in U.S. study abroad and then look at an alternative model provided by Japanese school trips. The authors explain the process by which their American students read, research, and work in groups to plan the itinerary for their study tour. The final section reports on their preliminary evaluations of the program and their plans for future excursions sponsored by the East Asian Studies program.

Some of the value of the experience abroad comes from having to learn new ways of learning that are different from those at home.

—William W. Hoffa (2007)

Introduction: The Origins of a Pop Culture Study Tour to Japan

In 2001, the director of our university's Center for Global Education approached the East Asian Studies faculty about developing a short study tour to Japan. She believed that a focus on popular culture would be appealing to students and help to internationalize our campus. We responded that we would give it some thought, but we were strongly biased in favor of year-long study programs that maintained high academic standards and greater immersion. "I didn't get a PhD to become a travel agent," one of us commented. But after further reflection and discussion, we realized that a study tour was indeed a good way to reach students who for reasons of curriculum, cost, or self-confidence, would be unlikely to ever take advantage of our longer study abroad programs (cf. Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). We agreed to create a course that included a study tour, and immediately began to tackle what we saw as our main problem: How to keep a short trip academic while making sure the students were engaged and benefiting from experiential learning.

As we struggled with this issue, an answer came in part in the form of a conference paper we heard about Japanese school trips for middle school students.¹ In addition to the usual academic assignments, adapting some of these practices to our study tour seemed to be a way of deepening the students' experience with Japanese culture despite the short time of the trip, and to involve them in ways that contributed to developing their life skills. We wanted an approach to learning that would outlast their memories of the names of Tokyo subway stops. Our university's mission states that we will prepare students to "engage the world." A short-term trip that could take them from interest and curiosity about Japanese popular culture to serious academic study would be one way to achieve all of these goals.

This article describes what we have learned from our experience. We first consider the history of study tours in U.S. study abroad and then look at an alternative model provided by Japanese school trips. We explain the process by which our American students read, research, and work in groups to plan the itinerary for their study tour. The final section reports on our preliminary evaluations of the program and our plans for future excursions sponsored by our East Asian Studies program.

Authors' Note: The authors would like to thank Pamela Mason and Dawn Wooten for their assistance conceptualizing and organizing the Popular Culture in Japan Study Tour. Dawn Grimes-MacLellan, Pamela Mason, and Frank Congin provided helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of this article. We also received early feedback from the audience at our presentation of this program at the ASIANetwork Conference, Lisle, Illinois, April 2007.

Short-Term Tours as Study Abroad

In a recent volume on the history of U.S. study abroad, William W. Hoffa (2007) points to the long history of travel abroad by elite young men as preparation to take their places in society as worldly rulers. In particular, the tradition of the European Grand Tour also was an opportunity to “sow their oats” in exotic locales. By the 19th century, such royal sons were joined in this liminal journey by sons, and now some- times daughters, of the nouveau riche class who sought symbols of their status before assuming adult roles in society. Hoffa notes that “To the degree that the Grand Tour continues today, it might be seen in the demographics of contemporary inter- national education, which generally still favor students from wealthy and educated families and affluent nations” (p. 18).

Nonetheless, the dramatic increases in the proportion of young Americans attending college from the end of World War II, due in part of the GI Bill, led to the democratization of higher education in the United States and a subsequent challenging of the goals of liberal education. College was to prepare them, as in the past, for their future adult social roles, but now a greater variety of jobs, not only elite ones, required college degrees. In recent years, as the American economy has become increasingly globalized, knowledge of other countries has become to contemporary students what seeing the museums of Europe was to the elite youth of the past: a marker of cosmopolitan status and a preparation for their jobs, only now the jobs are in an international economy. Students and parents believe an experience overseas will make young people more worldly and more competitive (Grünzweig & Rinehart, 2002). And as in the past, study abroad is an opportunity for adventure in an exotic locale before taking on the responsibilities of adulthood. It is thus not surprising that the number of U.S. students participating in study abroad has increased by more than 5% a year in recent decades, and 8.5% just between 2004 and 2005. In 1985 to 1986, the first year that national statistics were collected, a total of 48,283 U.S. students participated in study abroad programs. By 2005 to 2006, that number had more than quadrupled to 223,534 (Institute of International Education, 2007b; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

The varieties of programs in which U.S. students participate have also increased. One option is short-term travel, in which faculty take students and others such as additional faculty members, alumni, or community members for an educational tour. Hoffa (2007, pp. 43, 97) notes that such trips “with at least the pretense of education” date from as far back as the 1880s. With the development in the 1920s of the course credit system we use today, these tours came to be offered for academic credit. Faculty-led study tours for particular courses or majors developed further in 1940s and 1950s, but were available mainly to more affluent students. Such

programs were referred to as “vacation study programs” (Institute of International Education, 2007a), and as Hoffa writes, “Drawing the line between serious educational travel and mere academic tourism was probably not easy at the time, and in retrospect, is even more difficult” (p. 158).

Today, the Institute of International Education refers to these as “short-term programs,” and publishes an annual guide to the enormous number and variety of such opportunities. The 2007/2008 edition states, “shorter programs, if well-planned, can offer a more intensive and focused experience—and may be the only realistic alternative in terms of the demands of your degree studies and economic resources (p. xxxiii).”

The organization defines short term as anything from 2 weeks to 3 months, combining travel and academics sequentially or simultaneously (Institute of International Education, 2007a). Today about half of American study abroad students participate in these short-term programs of up to 3 months. In 1993 to 1994, only 1.7% (1,297 students) of study abroad students participated in programs that were shorter than 8 weeks duration, but the proportion quadrupled to 8% (16,478 students) by 2004 to 2005 (Institute for International Education, 2006).²

The increasing popularity of these programs demands again that instructors reflect on the goals of our study tours and take steps to assure that for-credit travel maintains the academic standards of our other courses as well as the personal growth and cultural learning that can come through structured out-of-classroom experiences.

An Emic Model From Japan: The School Excursion

Inspired by Dawn Grimes-MacLellan’s analysis (2005) of Japanese middle school class trips, we have found that we could use this combination of structure and active student engagement to bridge between traditional classroom assignments and the cultural learning and personal development of study abroad. We refer to this as using an “emic” model, referring to the priority given to the local or native concepts, categories, and worldview. In an emic methodology, the categories used and the process of analysis of people of another culture are elicited by relativizing one’s own cultural assumptions and through careful observation and questioning of local people. Thus, to understand Japanese school excursions, we must put aside our cultural assumptions of such things as how the trip is arranged and by whom, the meaning of the travel to participants, the preferred content and means of tourism, and so forth.

School excursions, or *shūgaku ryokō*, are mandatory class tours that are part of the curriculum at each level of education, elementary, middle, and high school. They have typically included visits to historic sites and places of scenic

beauty in Japan, although in recent years, overseas destinations such as Korea, China, Australia, and the United States have become increasingly popular choices. Within Japan, students generally stay in inexpensive Japanese-style accommodations in which groups of students share tatami-floored rooms, sleep on futon mattresses, eat together in a large dining hall, and use sex-segregated communal baths. The atmosphere in the evenings is not unlike American youngsters' pajama parties, with games, snacks, and excited conversation after retiring to their own rooms. Discourse about shūgaku ryokō emphasizes that these trips "create the memory of a lifetime" (Grimes-MacLellan, 2005, p. 639).

The school excursions are part of a broader context of Japanese culture and of education in the middle years of schooling more specifically. Just as today's American university study tours have grounding in European and American history such as the Grand Tour, styles of contemporary Japanese travel, including the shūgaku ryokō, also have precedents in the past. Scholars have looked in particular to religious pilgrimages to shrines and temples as the premodern forerunner to a popular contemporary style of Japanese group travel. By the Edo period (1600 to 1868), participating in a pilgrimage was a common male experience, often financed by rotating credit associations, allowing each year for one or several young men from a village to join regional pilgrim groups in what came to be seen as a training exercise that prepared participants for future family headship. The pilgrimage functioned as a type of coming-of-age ceremony; those who had already made such a pilgrimage were seen as full-fledged adults of the community (Kato, 1994, p. 57). Pilgrimage tours were characterized by their high degree of institutionalization and commercialization, rigid scheduling, and the development of a tourist industry (Formanek, 1998).³

Other goals have always been intertwined with the religious purposes of the trip. Pilgrimages have also been social, educational, and playful; in a society that emphasized hard work, they legitimated "impractical and frivolous activities as [being] for the sake of the gods" (Kato, 1994, p. 53). Souvenir shopping, for example, served (and continues to do so today) commercial, social status, and interpersonal functions (Park, 2000). As Nelson Graburn (1993) put it in an article on Japanese tourism, the cultural structure of these trips is "pray, pay, and play." Although Americans may label activities as religious, educational, or leisure/fun, such distinctions may be irrelevant in some Japanese contexts, as suggested by Creighton's (1994) term "edutainment" in her study of a Japanese department store and as discussed by Hendry (2000) in analyzing Japanese museums and theme parks. Certainly, Japanese teachers recognize that school excursions are not merely about learning history or geography by seeing famous sites.

Shūgaku ryokō themselves have a long history, dating at least to the 1880s, when it was believed that such excursions contributed to the physical and spiritual discipline of young people (Grimes-MacLellan, 2005, p. 638; March, 2000, p. 191). They were made a compulsory part of the Japanese middle

school curriculum in 1956. Along with other “special activities,” they are intended to promote

the harmonious development of mind and body through desirable group activities to develop individuality, to enhance the self-awareness of being a member of a group, and to cultivate self-reliant independent and practical attitudes to enrich school life in cooperation with others. (Ministry of Education’s middle school course of study, 2003, as cited in Grimes-MacLellan, 2005, p. 638) Those organizing shūgaku ryokō aim to broaden students’ knowledge and experience, to deepen their Japanese identity, and to allow them to practice “the rules of group life and public morality, and cultivat[e] a sense of belongingness . . . that may motivate them towards increased involvement in school life” (Grimes-MacLellan, 2005, p. 638).

March (2000) places shūgaku ryokō in the context of a Japanese “travel life cycle” between family travel as a child and the more independent college graduation trips and honeymoon travel of young adults. Because the goals of the trip incorporate life skill and travel skill development along with practice in interpersonal relationships and self-discipline, the narrower curricular content is seen by teachers and students alike as secondary. As with premodern pilgrimages, the school trip is a rite of passage of the group’s members (Grimes-MacLellan, 2005, p. 640).

These other goals are widely recognized throughout Japanese education. Scholars of Japanese education identify as recurring themes the teaching of group living, mutuality, energy, positive atmosphere and attitude, the authority of the teacher, effort, and perfectibility. Personal growth, defined as confidence, commitment, and character, stems from difficulty and challenge which students meet through mastery of forms learned by rote, imitation, and applied practice (Rohlen & LeTendre, 1996, pp. 369-375). According to Grimes-MacLellan (2005), school trips, as rites of passage, serve as a sort of culmination of students’ education in that broad sense, incorporating social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development.

To achieve this complex set of goals, shūgaku ryokō need both structure provided by teachers and the “ownership” of the experience by students. In an ethnographic study of Japanese and U.S. middle schools, LeTendre (2000) describes the approach of Japanese educators:

teachers carefully plan and organize the basic structure of the event and then allow students to make decisions within that structure. Students perform in the context of the group event, even when engaged in ostensibly individual events like painting a picture, singing a song, or running a race. Individual creativity is constantly negotiated through a group decision-making process. (p. 152)

He found that in planning the school excursion, the teachers involved spent hours of meeting time discussing details such as bathroom stops, how much

money the students could bring, and the types of snacks that would be allowed (p. 43). Once this frame is established, students work within it to express their interests, ideas, and creativity. Teachers do not openly contradict students' desires, but they are continually present and steer students toward activities that will be generally acceptable. On the day of the event, teachers tend to move into the background, allowing students to engage in creative or spontaneous acts within the framework of the event (pp. 150-151).

Grimes-MacLellan (2005) agrees that this detailed planning, along with careful examination of the process afterward, are characteristic of Japanese teachers' general approach to learning. Even more important than learning the history or science lessons of the trip, she argues, the main objective is to provide opportunities for independent and group decision making. Teachers and travel agents do the initial planning, but they encourage substantial student input, thereby drawing students into the activity, giving them a sense of ownership, and building expectations. In this approach, personal and interpersonal growth are not "accidental by-products" of the excursion, but are the results of spaces teachers create within the plans for students to try-out and practice the skills needed for maturity.

Our goal was to bring this emic perspective to our students to enhance their learning of Japanese culture despite the short duration of the study tour. As Mestenhauser (2002) explains, "the emic perspective focuses on one culture whose units of analysis are not known in advance and have to be discovered. Once discovered, they enlighten the understanding of the whole cultural system" (p.188).

International education itself is based on its innovative potential. One of its explicit purposes is to introduce alternative ways of thinking to individuals, organizations, and societies (Grünzweig & Rinehart, 2002, p. 6). As we considered the possibilities of employing elements of this model in our study tour, the benefits were immediately apparent. It would allow students deeper engagement with Japanese culture by participating in a Japanese-style learning process. Because of our greater familiarity with Japan and the constraints of time and cost, like Japanese teachers, we had to provide a tight frame. But why not give students a voice in filling in the frame? It would develop their travel planning and their life skills more generally by giving them practice. It would orient them to the places they selected to see. By having specific responsibilities within small groups and within our travel group, they would, we thought, be better prepared, more engaged, and behave more responsibly.

Of course, we were simultaneously aware of problems in adopting this model to our U.S. college students. For one thing, they are older. They are already used to making decisions that have real-world consequences

(Grimes-MacLellan, 2005, p. 640). They might personally experience growth and gain “the memory of a life- time,” but it could not be a rite of passage in the same way as the Japanese trips because it would not be recognized as such by the wider society. Most importantly, the American students do not have the years of preparation for group living and collective problem solving emphasized in Japanese socialization. They are unaccustomed to group travel, and do not expect intimate relationships with classmates and teachers in the way that Japanese middle school students do. And at least some of our students are reluctant to accept that “the nature of the [group] activities also places responsibility for public morality on the members of the group as they come to realize their actions also draw attention to themselves and the institution to which they belong” (Grimes-MacLellan, 2004, p. 18). Finally, the structure of the university and students’ lives makes the sort of posttrip processing recognized as important in the Japanese model difficult to do as a group when we return from the trip.

The John Carroll University Popular Culture in Japan Study Tour: Keeping Academic

The purpose of our study tour is to expose students through study and first-hand experience to Japanese popular culture, broadly defined as the everyday beliefs, practices, and consumption of the masses. Students learn that popular culture depends both on a sufficient concentration of people and on a level of affluence that supports discretionary and commercialized consumption of cultural artifacts and activities. They are expected to understand the development of at least some cultural forms historically, that is, popular culture does not equal contemporary youth culture, and to recognize that what is elite culture in one era may be transformed into popular culture in another and vice versa. We also expect through this study tour that students will gain a deeper understanding of Japanese society and of transnational cultural flows. Although we anticipated personal growth and skill development, it was not initially our main concern. We discovered, like Grünzweig and Rinehart (2002, p. 16), that the distinction between cognitive and existential learning is an artificial one in the information age.

To keep the study tour academic, our initial response was to maintain faculty control and stress traditional academic prerequisites and assignments. Thus, the first study tour in spring of 2004 required an on-campus interdisciplinary course on Japanese popular culture that was open to any student but required of the study tour students. The three faculty involved in the course planned the itinerary completely, making decisions about each site, and allowing only 2 half days for students to independently pursue additional data for their individual research projects. The results were predictable. Students were stimulated and cooperative with all planned events, even going to the Tokyo fish market at 5:30 am. But they saw the activities as the teachers’, and spent any unplanned moments

exploring, Lonely Planet Guide to Tokyo in hand, what they wanted to see. They learned among other things, that public transportation stops at midnight by taking an expensive taxi ride back to the hostel at 3 am.

After this first experience with the study tour and hearing the Grimes-MacLellan (2004) article later that year, we began to restructure the course, attempting to harness the energy and enthusiasm that went into those late night outings to bars and clubs to create a trip that did not distinguish between teacher-planned and student-planned activities. It had to be a trip that developed skills like negotiating a taxi ride at 3 am in a foreign language and how to interpret purple hair on Japanese punkers. We needed to be concerned not only with academics but also with how those academic skills and knowledge related to the personal growth of our students. The following describes the way we attempted to do this by incorporating the *emic shūgaku ryokō* model.

Prerequisite Course

We maintained the requirement for a prerequisite academic course, but moved the Japanese Popular Culture course to fall semester so that spring would be free for other types of preparation. In addition, we expanded the options for how students could fulfill this prerequisite, allowing them to substitute another course focused on Japan (e.g., Japanese literature in translation or Japanese politics) or a year of Japanese language for the on-campus pop culture course.⁴ Regardless of which course they took, students were expected by early in spring semester to have completed a 12 to 15 page term paper on an approved popular culture topic. This was done as part of the fall semester coursework, but other students wishing to join the trip could work on winter break on their own, with faculty guidance. Each student was assigned a faculty “coach” to help assure that those going on the study tour would select a topic on which they could do observational or interview-based field work during the trip and formulate a hypothesis that would guide their data collection.⁵

Planning the Trip

The spring semester that the study tour takes place, all students going on the trip (we have had 10 to 12 for each of our three trips to date) must register for an additional 200-level course that meets one evening a week for 2 to 3 hours. During the course of the semester, the class discusses readings, views several films, hears short lectures to orient them to the cities we will visit, and works in small groups to plan the itinerary. Unlike the fall course, only students who will go to Japan may enroll. One of the two textbooks they are required to purchase is a travel guide, which they select individually after reviewing two different guides to Japan. The other is a book of short stories that take place in different sections of Tokyo (Rodgers, 2002), which helps the students to develop the empathy and observational

skills they will need on the trip, and in particular, to alert them to the social class and lifestyle diversity underlying the smooth surface of Japan Pop's international image.

The approach of the course is consistent with the paradigm of cooperative learning described by Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991). Knowledge is jointly constructed by students and faculty with the goal of developing students' competencies and talents. Interpersonal relationships among students and between faculty and students are critical to this goal. In the study tour course, the first day of class, students are assigned to small groups of three to four students based on their research topic, trying to have students working on related topics together. In the second week of the semester, students are asked to submit an individual "wish list" of places they need to visit for their research and of other places that they want to see based on their interests or curiosity. A faculty member compiles, organizes, and sorts a master class list into locales, making the suggestions anonymous but marking the sites needed for research. From the next class, students work in their small groups to discuss the suggestions and begin to narrow down the list to what is most important and most interesting to them. Their travel guides, faculty members, and the Internet through the classroom computer podium serve as resources. In their groups, they read about sites and identify their locations, hours, cost of admission, and how to get there on public transportation. After several working sessions, students are ready to submit their suggestions, together with the logistics and rationale, to their classmates in the form of a Powerpoint presentation. As the semester progresses, students are able to see the itinerary come together in small group and class discussions. Faculty make the final decisions about the detailed daily schedule based on their knowledge of Japanese geography and public transportation.

By the midpoint in the semester, a tentative itinerary is complete, and the focus turns to developing students' research projects. With the background knowledge of the places we will visit and the opportunities we will have for interaction with Japanese people, an understanding of the general itinerary and the related projects of classmates, and based on their previous term paper, students develop individual methodologies for pursuing their topic further than they could in the library or on the Internet. Each works with his or her "coach" to make sure the plan is appropriate for the topic and not overly ambitious for the trip. Class time during the last few weeks of the semester is spent on practical instruction concerning travel in Japan, including what to pack, money, taking public transportation, verbal and nonverbal communication, and gift giving. Because many of our students have little or no experience taking trains or buses, and a few have never eaten Japanese food, we conduct a practice session in which we take public transportation to a local Japanese restaurant where students are required to eat with chopsticks and practice Japanese table manners.

Travel

The overall goal of the travel portion of the course is that students experience first hand what they have read or heard about, develop greater expertise on their research topic, and learn how approach another culture. We also want them to encounter unexpected things. For many of our students, this is their first trip outside of the United States and they may be somewhat intimidated by the reality of having to function in a different cultural context without sufficient language skills. They may be too over-whelmed to process the experience cognitively at first. As the tour proceeds, however, they become more experienced in Japan, learn how to get around on their own, and are more adventuresome about trying new things and places. Yet as they become more comfortable, some students reflect and analyze less. One role of the accompanying faculty is to help keep students on track in terms of their research objectives and to lead them to understand that a good researcher keeps an eye out for unexpected sources.

The travel portion of the course consists of 2 weeks in the Tokyo and Kyoto- Osaka areas, staying in inexpensive hostels. Because students plan the itinerary according to their interests, the specific sites we visit change each trip. Although the focus of the course is on popular culture, each year we have included half-day bus tours to well-known historical sites such as the Golden Pavilion in Kyoto or the Imperial Palace in Tokyo for two reasons. One is that when they arrive jet-lagged, it provides a day or half day in which they do not need to be as concerned with their research, allowing them time to become adjusted but begin to practice observing and reflecting. Secondly, visiting such sites allows us to examine the relationship between popular and high culture. For example, the Golden Pavilion, build as a retreat for the elite, was never intended to be “popular,” but has now been trans- formed into a tourist attraction for the masses.

A typical day begins with a morning meeting at which the plans for the day are reviewed. We have found that despite students’ participation in the planning process, a daily handout with place names is useful. Aside from the 1 or 2 half-day bus tours, we rely on mass transportation, not only to minimize costs but also to literally bring students into closer contract with ordinary Japanese and their lifestyle. Although the sites may have been discussed in the American classroom, it is helpful to have students review for each other the reasons the place was included on our itinerary. On some occasions, we provide structured exercises such as a visual scavenger hunt or a “strange English of the day” game to help develop observational skills. Some students need assistance in seeing past the new and exotic; and despite academic readings in the fall course, many are inclined to misread familiar images and behaviors as being “American,” missing subtle differences in their cultural interpretation and use. Debriefing at the end of the day is also important, but we have experienced difficulties in accomplishing this on a regular basis. On many days, we were all exhausted. Sometimes, we did not have an appropriate space to meet and

discuss. We believe that we must do a better job in making this part of the routine from the beginning of the trip. On days that it is difficult to gather the whole group together, encouraging students to talk about their observations and interpretations one-on-one or in small groups can be encouraged. An additional way that we ask students to stop and process their experiences is through keeping a journal, in which they are supposed to write on a daily basis. The faculty members check the journals at least twice during the course of the tour and read them carefully for a grade after students write a final entry on their return to the United States.

One way that students learn to process and conceptualize is through interaction with their Japanese counterparts with whom they share, to some degree, participation in an international youth culture. Thus, each trip we have arranged to spend formal time talking with Japanese university students. Yet as Hayden and Thompson (1998) note for international schools, more may be gained from informal interactions and activities than through careful curricular planning. They seem to learn the most not from our structured activities, but from serendipity, especially responding to people as opposed to artifacts. For example, during a visit to Osaka Castle, a site initially suggested by a student studying the place of the samurai in contemporary popular culture, we encountered a popular music performance in the park. The students remembered their conversations with the musicians more than the items in the castle museum. Moreover, when we were joined by Japanese students who had formerly been exchange students at our university, our students' experiences were enriched by learning to see things through their eyes. For example, during the second tour, a former exchange student joined us for much of the trip, and took our students almost nightly to sing karaoke. He taught them not only how to do karaoke the Japanese way but also at the same time, new ways to define "fun," and our students truly enjoyed it in a way they could not had they not been guided through the experience initially.

Follow-Up

Follow-up after the conclusion of the trip has been an additional challenge in making use of the *shūgaku ryokō* model. Unlike Japanese *shūgaku ryokō* that generally occur in the middle of a school term and are based on continuing groupings of students, our trip takes place in May at the conclusion of spring semester. Once we return from Japan, our students disperse to various cities for summer jobs and classes. A few will have graduated, and even the returning students will never have additional classes together as a group. We have tried to encourage individual reflection on the trip through journals, including the culminating entry due a week after they return to the United States. Their research papers, revised with the inclusion of their fieldwork, are due a month later. However group-based activities to "process" the experience have not been possible beyond

exchanging pictures and casual discussions in the next school year, almost 3 months after our return.

Evaluating the Study Tour

Introduction

Whether because of a desire to improve a program, to respond to external pressure to justify it, or to market it to students, administrators, and parents, study abroad educators are beginning to recognize the importance of assessing student study abroad experiences (Bolen, 2007). Researchers have increasingly designed instruments to measure the effects of study abroad based on specific goals such as cultural adaptation or global awareness. The best known of these is the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) developed by Milton Bennett (n.d.). There are difficulties, however, in the use of such quantitative instruments when participant numbers are very small or when appropriate control groups cannot be identified. For example, even when a difference is found between the study abroad group and a control group of students who have remained at the home campus, it may be impossible to tell whether the difference is because of the experience in another country or whether individuals with those attitudes, skills, and perspectives self-select to participate in such programs (cf.

Anderson, Lawton, Rexersin, & Hubbard, 2006, Note 3). Moreover, although the goals measured by IDI and other instruments are admirable, they are not always well suited to short-term programs such as ours.

There have been fewer published studies of the effects of short-term programs, particularly of study tour models. Using the IDI, interviews, and a supplemental questionnaire, Medina López-Portillo (2004) compared two study abroad programs, one a semester long and the other a 7-week program. She concludes that duration is one important factor in cultural sensitivity, but that it is not the only factor. She argues that “Intercultural learning is a process . . . that students need to work at before, during and after a study abroad experience” (p. 195). Anderson et al. (2006) also used the IDI to measure intercultural sensitivity before and after business students participated in a 4-week program in England and Ireland. Their study supports the belief that even a short-term program “can have a positive impact on inter- cultural sensitivity” (p. 467).

Discussions by Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005) and Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) introduce surveys that have measured other more limited goals, which may be more appropriate to very short-term programs such as ours. Lewis and Niesenbaum asked whether students took additional courses related to the program outside of their major when they returned; whether they traveled

or studied abroad again; whether in responding to a survey, they indicated increased interest in interdisciplinary studies; whether the experience influenced students' perceptions of the costs and benefits of globalization; and whether they developed skills to gather and interpret data to better understand their own role in society. In a much larger study of more than 2,300 students who participated in short-term programs at the University of Delaware during a 2-year period, Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) measured returned students' and a control group's level of global awareness in four categories: (a) interpersonal awareness, (b) personal growth and development, (c) functional knowledge, and (d) global inter-dependence. Like Anderson et al. (2006), they conclude that "short-term programs, even as short as one month, are worthwhile educational endeavors that have significant self-perceived impacts on students' intellectual and personal lives" (p. 174).

Our assessment for this program was designed primarily to give the organizers feedback that would be useful in making improvements for future classes. We thus used for assessment purposes the students' journals, which were a required assignment and thus not anonymous, and an anonymous survey based in part on the work of Chen and Isa (2003). The survey asked the following questions:

How would you describe your overall experience in Japan?

What previous experience have you had in other countries (Where, Duration)? How did you prepare for the trip, besides what was provided by your professors? What were some of the expectations that you had? (Positive and/or Negative) What were some of the most significant surprises you encountered?

How did you feel as a communicator within this environment?

What did you learn about Japan in your interactions with students/people that you met? What were some of the challenges you encountered?

How did you resolve some of these challenges?

Describe your television/newspaper habits while in Japan. What contributed to deepening your knowledge of Japan? What did you learn about yourself?

These surveys were completed in Japan at the end of each trip. Journals and open-ended survey questions were examined by three of the authors and a content analysis conducted. We identified common themes and individual opinions that provided data for assessing the program. In particular, we asked (a) What transformation for personal growth occurred? (b) In what way was students' academic learning deepened?

Faculty involved in the trip met before reviewing these materials for a focus group style of assessment of positive and negative aspects of the trip and the course more generally. Ideas for improvement were discussed. After the second trip, faculty especially considered the additional question, (c) What

were the benefits and drawbacks of the shūgaku ryokō model?

We also gathered independent data on participants' enrollment in additional Japanese studies courses and plans involving East Asia or other countries outside the United States after leaving the university. The final version of students' research papers, revised based on the data they collected during the study tour and submitted a month after their return, were assessed for their demonstration of the student's understanding of Japanese culture and the research process.

Data were collected for our first 2 study tour programs, a total of 22 participants. From the two groups, 18 students completed the surveys. Of the combined group of respondents, 6 (33%) were females and 12 (67%) were males. The participants ranged in age from 19 to 22 years. Only 7 (38%, all male) had previous experience outside of the United States, generally of 1 to 2 weeks duration in Europe, Canada, or Mexico. We conducted a content analysis of this data to learn how the course affected students' academic and personal development, and in particular, compared the journals, surveys, independent data on course enrollments, and faculty responses from the two study tours to examine whether using the emic shūgaku ryokō model might have made a difference. We remain aware that because of the small number of students, it is not possible to assert definitively that one approach is clearly superior.

Results common to both study tours. We found positive effects on students of both the faculty-designed and -led tour and the subsequent shūgaku ryokō style experience. Some of the notable journal and survey responses that were common to both groups of students include the following. Students in both groups claimed to have had a wonderful time.⁶ They expressed that they enjoyed learning about another culture through first-hand experience. They reported that they gained a greater understanding of Japan, coming to appreciate its diversity. Some of the students' favorite or most memorable activities were common to both groups: meeting their Japanese peers, going to bars and clubs, karaoke, some of the specific temples and shrines we visited on both trips, and the opportunity to watch a practice session of sumo wrestlers.

The serendipitous occasions were especially appreciated. In the first year, during our visit to Yoyogi Park in Tokyo on a Sunday to observe fashion and "cos-play,"⁷ a Jamaican Festival happened to be going on. Students' enjoyment of that discovery appeared in many of their journals. One student's temporary need for a wheelchair because of orthopedic surgery before the trip led her to the unplanned focus on handicapped access and acceptance in Japan. On the second trip, a group of students on their way

back to the hostel came upon a local relatively noncommercialized festival where they communicated with the residents, fished for goldfish, and tried new snacks at the urging of their unanticipated hosts. Because one of the students was researching the question of commercialization and religion, it was a highlight of her trip, and based on their journal entries, her enthusiasm was shared by the others in the group.

Students in both groups also reported that they had learned about themselves. In their responses to the survey, students reported that they now felt more confident that they could live in another country. Some in both groups commented that they had matured. Both times, students became more aware of the process of communication, both across cultures and among themselves. There were few negative responses in either group to various elements of the trip.

Faculty assessment of the trips was generally positive on both occasions. Each trip had a student who created minor difficulties for the group by wandering off on his or her own or by being critical of other students but overall, we felt that things went well and the students had matured and learned from their planned activities, unplanned adventures, and individual challenges.

Both times the course achieved other goals. Each year, 2 students who had participated in the study tour without having had any prior coursework in the language enrolled in Japanese 101 the following fall. Two of the 12 students in the first course and 3 of 10 in the second took additional courses to complete the East Asian Studies minor. Whether a mark of success or not, 1 student each time transferred to another university after returning to the United States to better pursue Japanese studies in combination with a major that our university does not offer. Some students remained for additional time in Japan after the group returned to the United States, and some from the first trip returned to Japan or traveled to another country for additional study abroad experiences or after graduation. (Those who participated in the second study tour have not all graduated so we do not yet know if they will go overseas again in the near future.) Both years, most of the students demonstrated an increased understanding of both their topic and the research process in their final papers, and each time, there were several outstanding papers that were subsequently presented publicly during a university-wide research day.

Differences between the two tours. In examining the difference in the experiences of the two groups of students, it is important to note that as a group, the second round of students were slightly younger, had stronger interest in Japanese culture before the trip, and all but three had taken at least a year of Japanese language (of the three, one graduated the semester the study tour course was offered and the other two took it when they returned in the fall from the trip). This contrasts with only 4 of the 12 in the first group coming to the course with some language background.

Most students on the first trip, not surprisingly, wrote of their “frustrating experience” as communicators in the Japanese context. The second group’s responses suggest that they faced similar problems as the first group but to a lesser degree. The word “frustration” did not appear in any of the responses, and they were more able to appreciate the perspective of the Japanese person with whom they were attempting to communicate. One student expressed embarrassment “that Americans expect everyone else to know English.” Another pointed out that Japanese people seemed pleased when foreigners make an attempt to speak their language.

The difference in the ways students in the two groups expressed similar experiences was sometimes striking regarding other aspects of the trip. Both groups noted similarities and differences between Japan and the United States, but those in the first group were more likely to emphasize the differences. More from the second trip were able to see beyond the surface: “[I am surprised] how different it is, but still the same.” Whereas several students in the first trip clearly avoided Japanese-style food after one or two tries, the only complaint about the food from the second group was a note that being a vegetarian was difficult in Japan. A student in the first group found challenging “not being in charge of myself completely.” In contrast, a second group student wrote that he or she was challenged by “feeling like a foreigner celebrity [and] feeling like a foreigner nobody.” A first group student indicated that “[what surprised me was] the enormity and energy of downtown Tokyo,” whereas a second group student commented, “When I was able to love Tokyo from afar, I had much fonder feelings for it.”

Over and over, in reading and comparing their writing, those of students in the second group wrote more ambivalent and nuanced responses to their experiences. A survey question asked students what they had learned about themselves, and several in both groups wrote about their place in Japanese society as obvious foreigners who were racially different and could not speak fluently. An example of a first group student response was, “I felt like everyone was staring at me . . . I probably appeared to be very a curious, maybe even nosy, tourist.” Most of the students in the second group revealed deeper engagement, expressing concerns about their efforts to fit in or, as one wrote, feeling “awash . . . in a sea of faces. On one hand, you lost your-

self in the mass, but on the other hand, you will always be a gaijin [foreigner].”

The second group’s journal entries and survey responses also provided more nuanced views of Japan. The first group’s observations were largely of the exotic (bright lights and signs with Chinese characters, shrines, gardens, and sumo) and of their own experiences (clubs, karaoke, politeness, building muscles through all of the walking). Only occasionally did first group students comment on things they observed that did not involve them. Journal entries from the second group included more careful observations such as that children seem very independent or that “Japanese people have a really odd way of running.” They learned cultural norms through such observation, such as, “You [shouldn’t] smoke while you are walking.” The second group students took on more interesting academic questions, for example, one discussed whether pop fashion was more about attracting attention or expressing individuality. They spontaneously noted social class differences in different parts of the city. Reflecting on his own growth, one student wrote, “[I learned] that the person I am is not so determined by my environment. I still have the same anxieties, sense of humor, and desires I’ve always had.” Another expressed, “I was terrified to go on this trip . . . I felt like a different person returning to Cleveland . . . I grew accustomed to the little differences and still notice them now that [I’m] back home.”

Faculty assessment shortly after the trip concurred that students on the second trip had more knowledge before departure for Japan. They were better prepared not only in terms of the language but also for the trip itself. Because they had already used the guidebooks in planning the trip, there was not as much dependence on faculty help during the tour. The students were more invested in the daily itinerary. For example, when the baseball game was rained out, it would have been easy to just skip it, but the students had figured out how to get there, knew a classmate was doing his research on baseball, and so insisted on going another night for the make-up game. Some of the students in this second group began to collect the rubber stamp imprints of the various train stations they used because the names and places were meaningful to them. Because they had planned the trip together, students also had more awareness of the interests of the others in class, which alerted them to things they might have missed or ignored otherwise, as in the case of the local festival described above. Their small groups also allowed them to get to know each other better before the trip, and allowed faculty to observe who the natural leaders were and who could be counted on to be responsible and to bring people together. The second group indicated behaviorally a greater commitment to continuing their Japanese studies academic work.

Accounting for the differences. It is not possible to tell, however, whether these differences are results of the new approach to the study tour or can be

explained by the different skills and interests students brought to the experience. The second group had a Japanese recent exchange student to our campus with them for much of the trip, whereas the first group spent only one day with former exchange students. More students in the second group had already taken Japanese, which may account for more completing the East Asian Studies concentration. Stronger background and interest in Japanese culture may have been related to the differences in what they observed when they arrived in Japan. More reflective and nuanced survey responses and journal entries may be because of personal factors that may or may not be related to their choice to take Japanese in the first place. It is clear that there was a difference between the two groups in the level at which they experienced Japanese culture through the study tour. What we can say is that stronger preparation clearly related to deeper experience. Whereas most first group students' final journal comments were about their excitement and the desire to return, the second group were more likely to talk about how they had changed. To what extent the *shū gaku ryokō* approach contributed beyond the exposure to language and culture in their previous coursework we cannot say. We do know that it did not detract from the experience, and that students were engaged, well-prepared for their fieldwork projects, and had a sense of confidence about their daily activities they could not have had from previous coursework alone. Not a single student has complained at the additional hours spent devoted to planning that we require in the new approach.

Conclusion

The short-term study abroad program focusing on Japanese popular culture has been successful in several ways. Many students are unable to participate in semester or year-long programs because of costs, curricular requirements, and lack of appropriate experience (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). Our participants included students whose curriculum would not have enabled them to participate in a traditional study abroad experience, including 1 premedical student, 1 accountancy major, and 3 education majors, or nearly a fourth of the students in the first two groups. Although a few students have had access to parents' credit cards, most of our students work at part-time and summer jobs to pay for the trip and/or take out additional student loans. For those with financial constraints, we have been able to keep costs relatively low because of faculty-imposed budgets, but also by allowing students to understand the costs involved and contribute to decisions about where to spend the money.

Beyond the question of access, we have been extremely concerned with the quality of the students' experiences. Our fundamental concern was how to keep the trip academic. We found one answer in faculty instruction and one-on-one guidance in developing a hypothesis, planning methodology, structuring the research paper, and understanding the relation between the existing literature

and their own fieldwork. A sense of accomplishment and expertise comes across in their final papers. High levels of preparation through a highly relevant prerequisite course, meeting with peers in Japan, and in the second trip, working together to develop the travel portion of the course allowed the students to experience Japan from a different perspective than a typical group tourist. Moreover, when students plan the trip together, they have a sense of responsibility that goes beyond that for a class presentation. Enthusiasm comes from experiencing together what they have planned and from discovering what they could not have anticipated. They returned with better awareness of the diversity of Japanese society, its social and cultural contradictions, and the place of commercialized Japanese pop culture in daily life.

Students in both groups reported and evidenced personal growth as a result of facing the challenges of communication, interpersonal relationships, and standing out as physically and culturally “different.” The stronger preparation of the second group appears to have encouraged students to reflect more deeply beyond the stereotypes as they tried to make sense of Japanese culture and their experiences in it. Despite faculty skepticism that deep cultural adjustment could take place through such a short-term experience, many of the students, especially in the second group, did seem to have taken the first steps toward greater cultural sensitivity in questioning their own assumptions, becoming aware of alternative approaches to such things as “fun” and “travel,” and experimenting with bits of these new ways.

The most serious limitation of this study is that there are too few students and too many variables to say with certainty that the *shūgaku ryokō* model was responsible for these positive outcomes. However despite the extra effort that it takes for the faculty to work with the students in this way, we are convinced of its usefulness. The students were clearly engaged in the process of planning and executing the trip in constructive ways that contributed to both their academic and life skills learning. We can continue to make improvements to our approach. For example, we can use students’ background work on planning the trip more effectively by having them take turns reviewing the upcoming day’s activities rather than have a faculty member do so, reinforcing their “ownership” and reminding each other why they decided to go to a particular place to do a particular activity. We need to work out better follow-up after returning to the United States. It may be possible to use blogs before, during, and after the trip to maintain a sense of community and allow for better group processing on their return.

We also need to ask whether the *shūgaku ryokō* approach is appropriate for short-term study abroad in other locations. Part of the value for a Japan course is that it gave students an additional level of experience with aspects of Japanese culture. Some elements of the model are consistent with aspects of American educational approaches to cooperative learning, suggesting that our trip can serve as a useful touchstone for others. Yet we would encourage faculty and study abroad educators who are planning short-term

programs to look into whether emic models for travel and learning can be adapted to their programs to enrich student learning. Our experience suggests that turning over the planning to commercial study abroad enterprises not only increases costs but minimizes the potential for student learning that can come through their own participation in the process.

In their critique of international education at the beginning of the 21st century, Grünzweig and Rinehart (2002) write of the fallacies of globalism. They point out that it is widely believed that people everywhere are the same because they “purchase the same objects, drink the same soft drinks, use the same cultural artifacts and watch the same news programs” (p. 8). This belief becomes an obstacle to intercultural dialogue by denying the existence of significant differences. Our students have generally come to our Popular Culture in Japan course through their interests in things such as Hello Kitty, Dragon Ball Z, and karate. Japan represents merely the launch pad for what they presume to be global (youth) culture, and “a new backdrop for the enactment of the familiar” (Engle & Engle, 2002, p. 31). Through preliminary research and through observation and interaction with Japanese people, they come to see Japanese culture as a more complex reality and begin to learn to navigate it. Using the emic *shūgaku ryokō* approach can begin to undermine simple assumptions of globalism because it is based in alternative assumptions about human nature and the way the world works. Students can begin to feel cultural differences even before they arrive in Japan. Studying global culture through alternative cultural constructions of it is an ironic, yet appropriate way to prepare students for the reality of today’s world.

Notes

1. Dawn Grimes-MacLellan, “Three Years in Three Days: School Excursions as a Microcosm of Japanese Junior High Schools.” Presented at the Midwest Japan Seminar, Muncie, IN, October 30, 2004. This article has subsequently been published as Grimes-MacLellan (2005). Whenever possible, references in this article are to the published version.

2. In a letter to the editor of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on December 7, 2007, Julie Andreshak-Behrman, director of Experiential Education of the Foundation for International Education, London, criticized a *Chronicle* article reporting on this increase (McMurtrie, 2007) for its use of the word “trip” in discussing the short study abroad programs.

Using the word ‘trip’ to describe experiential education implies that it is not academic or rigorous but simply a form of tourism for credit. I am confident that this opinion is shared by many—if not all—of my colleagues in international education. It has taken many decades to raise the profile and credibility of overseas study in its many forms, and to move away from the notion of study abroad as a soft option.

See also Freinberg (2002) for a critique of short-term study trips and Gore (2005) for discussion of common negative beliefs about study abroad programs.

3. Formanek (1998) is primarily concerned in this chapter with countering the stereotypes of Japanese group travel in the past. She argues that although there are the continuities noted

above, pilgrimages varied by place and by participants, and that there was a historical trend toward individualistic forms of travel. Adventure and serendipity played large roles in the pilgrimage experience that she studied.

4. The pragmatic reason for this is, of course, that it also increases the numbers of students who are able to go, which helps with the financing of the trip because some expenses are fixed regardless of the number of students.

5. Extensive field projects such as the programs of the School for International Training and others described in *Forum on Education Abroad* (2007) are not possible in such a short trip, but faculty may still help students move, as culture historian Kenneth Haltman (2000) suggests, from direct experience to description to deduction and speculation to additional research to interpretive analysis.

6. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) note that the most basic level of evaluation is response because while positive response does not guarantee learning, negative response probably guarantees learning will not happen. They evaluate learning in terms of changed attitudes, increased knowledge, and improved skills.

7. Cos-play refers to the phenomenon of dressing up to hang out, generally in a public place. The costumes may be themed, such as Gothic, or beach-girl looks, or they may be based on favorite anime or manga characters. We had students on both trips whose research project involved fashion.

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