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To begin, let me introduce myself; I am a nontraditional student at UWEC and just completed my sophomore year. I am pre-professional majoring in Kinesiology with a human performance emphasis. My background is quite different than many others as I am a certified veterinary technician and also certified in veterinary massage and rehabilitation therapy. Currently I am interested in human physical therapy and animal physical rehabilitation. This study abroad program was not my first time abroad; ten years ago I traveled to Europe as part of the People to People Student Ambassador program. While in the People to People program, I was abroad for approximately three weeks. I learned about different cultures and the histories of the locations I traveled to. In addition to traveling I performed a community service project and stayed with a family as part of a homestay.

In comparison to my previous travels, this study abroad and homestay in Japan were very different. I enjoyed every minute and learned much more than I expected. Even before arriving in Japan I was learning lessons, mostly about airline security and flight connections. Once in Japan and Tsukuba Summer Institute (TSI) I learned about coaching and physical education; which at times I questioned how applicable this information would be for me and physical therapy. However as time went on, I was introduced to teaching games for understanding (TGFU). This was an incredible concept for me and I am excited to bring this home. TGFU is a concept I can use with humans but when changed slightly I am also able to apply this to animals. I want to be able to make work seem more like fun and games. Beyond concepts that were purposely taught at TSI, I was able to experience and immerse myself in Japanese culture and cuisine. This was an eye opening experience because many customs and long traditions are very different than what I was raised with. For example the lack of public garbage cans to the lack of water fountains for refilling bottles. It is difficult to describe the cultural differences beyond respect and politeness is much more common in Japan. Overall this was an incredible study abroad and I hope I am able to take what I have learned and incorporate it into my life and future career, along with the community. Amazing as this program was I have and am considering attending TSI again. I also still have my ever growing passion to travel the world and experience more.

This study abroad experience has advanced my knowledge and understanding of some of the cultures in the world different from my own and has led to a greater understanding of practices within the culture. It should be obvious that my knowledge of Japanese culture has greatly expanded as this was where the program was held. But, my knowledge of other cultures in the world has increased through talking and making friends with other attendees of the program.

The first culture I experienced, through this program, was of Japan's culture and traditions. I learned much more than I previously did about Japanese culture, in all honesty I knew practically nothing to start. People's actions are very much based in respect, being polite, and considerate of others. This included appropriate ways of eating from lifting and holding a bowl off the table instead of leaning over it to slurping noodles. Not handing money to a cashier was a new experience and took some getting used to. I also noticed that traffic and drivers rarely honked

their horn in their vehicle. This is very different from everywhere else I have been to. Beyond the actions a person does, respect extends into the language. For example adding –son to a person's name or even adding Sensei to show respect and acknowledge their status. Beyond addressing a person, I learned formal or more polite ways to speak; I tried to use Arigato-gozaïmasu and sumimasen along with general greetings.

Secondly, this study abroad experience has allowed me to learn about the cultures of students from different countries attending TSI. One main cultural difference I noticed over and over is the importance of names. Many countries use first names in general conversation or when addressing someone. However, students with names difficult for English speakers to pronounce or remember may pick a nick name to be addressed by. I feel that Americans typically have the attitude of this is my name and will use it regardless of others difficulty. But as time progressed through this program some Americans did use shortened versions of their name to make it easier for non-English speakers. Although it is not a completely different nickname the gesture is similar. Other cultures take a different approach by using their last name as a call name or using their last name in addition to their first name. So to address this person their last name and first name flow together as if it was one longer name.

This program has not only been beneficial for me to learn about other cultures, it was beneficial for my homestay family. My host mom informed me that I was not what she expected as an American. She expected some loud, opinionated person. I am quite the opposite, as I am more reserved and will speak my mind or share opinions but try to reserve them for appropriate times. This seemed to surprise her.

This study abroad experience has greatly impacted my knowledge of the educational system and the influence or lack of influence, in some instances, of sports within education. In the U.S. almost all schools offer sports of some sort within the form of physical education classes and typically offer extracurricular sports. Students are typically able to participate in multiple sports throughout the year as most sports are seasonal. However, at this point in time many schools are unfortunately facing budget issues and choosing to cut physical education classes and cut some extracurricular sports.

Japan, on the other hand, is trying to expand the physical education and extracurricular sports offered within the schools. The TSI lecture on sport and schools was incredibly informational especially when combined with touring the school. This gave me a perspective of the student and how some of the students felt. For example, many students pick a sport at a fairly young age and typically continue to participate in that one sport. The student begins to master the sport making switching sports more difficult even though they may have an interest in another. Japan is also different as sports are practiced almost year round, unlike in the U.S. where we have seasonal sports and typically do not practice much during school vacations. This year round practice of a single sport makes it much more difficult if not nearly impossible for students to play multiple sports throughout the year. Another reason students do not participate in other sports is due to having their major friend base in a single sport. All of this is providing the school actually offers sports.

During one of the lectures and again while visiting the school it was common for the separation between boys and girls especially when it comes to sports. I am not sure that I fully understand all of the reasoning behind this separation. This has definitely impacted my understanding my knowledge of sport within the educational system in Japan. It was also interesting seeing and learning about the sports that are more common for boys to participate in versus the girls. I do hope that as time goes on equality will continue to grow between the sexes. The cultural difference in pressure between the sexes was also fascinating. Even today there is more pressure for boys to do well even though Japan has multiple incredible and top performing women who play sports. One would think that women competing at an Olympic level would have just as much pressure as men in Japan but pressure is still uneven. This is very different from where I grew up. Boys and girls were and I hope are still treated equally. For example, my high school does not have a girl's American football team so one girl played and competed on the boy's football team.

I feel that UWEC's decision to send students to the TSI program impacted my host community and possibly even the whole country of Japan, especially being that this was the first time students from UWEC have attended this program. Hopefully, we were well behaved and left a good impression in Japan but, we also brought many ideas and physical education customs to the program. It was interesting to discuss the differences or similarities with other students and instructors and take each other's ideas to bring back home.

Building upon the decisions to send students to TSI, the homestay had a definite impact on parts of Japan's communities. Japanese families were able to learn about American students, their lives, and interests. For example I was able to dispel assumptions my host family had about Americans being loud and obnoxious. My family learned about my ways of life, especially daily farming, and education. I don't know if meeting me has changed their lives, but I at least gave them insight to something different. Reaching beyond the effect I had on my host family, I left an impression on a woman working at a grocery store. She had never met anyone from the U.S. before and was very excited. Although our conversation was not very long I am sure she went home and told her family all about it.

This study abroad experience was amazing and I do not feel that I can truly address the question of describing a disorienting experience challenging my assumptions or previous knowledge. I did not have a truly disorienting experience, there were many challenges and bumps in the road but I was able to overcome without being completely overwhelmed.

One of the main challenges in Japan was the language barrier. When I traveled in Europe there were many more people who spoke multiple languages, English being included and quite common. In Japan there were fewer people who knew how to speak and understand English. I had expected more people to know English, even if it was just basic. In restaurants there was a lot of pointing at menus; it was a bonus if there were pictures, and hoping for the best. The Japanese language lessons certainly helped as I used some of the words to communicate with my host family and even just going around Japan. When speaking to non-native English speakers even within the TSI program I tried to choose my words more carefully and if someone did not

understand tried to find a way to simplify what I was saying. Body movements and actions also came into play as they may have helped someone to understand. This also went both ways, especially if I did not understand someone. This experience helped me to see that even though people may not speak the same language, communication is possible if you try; especially trying to learn the other language people become much more appreciative. They see you trying to make an effort and in my experience will try to help you more.

This study abroad experience was truly incredible. I met so many amazing people with goals and aspirations I had never even dreamed of. The program itself allowed me to experience and learn about methods of coaching and teaching games for understanding. These two topics within physical education are things I never knew much about nor thought I would have interest in. TSI and this study abroad program definitely allowed me to expand and experience more than I would have just staying at UWEC.

This study abroad program has not really changed my goals or aspirations, as these are pretty set since my career path has slowly evolved over the past four or five years. However, there are many bits and pieces from the program that I would like to incorporate into activities I do or will do as part of my career. I would especially like to incorporate TGFU and using these as warm up to keep everything fun and creating games were a person is competing against themselves and not others. This program, especially the people that have done community outreach of physical education, inspired me to figure out ways for me to give back to my family and community. I would like to find ways to have the fun of physical activity used for community outreach and bring people together.



Different but the same.



Physical education and fitness will continue with this global community.