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Exploring the Benefits of Combined Outdoor Adventure Education and Dual-Immersion Short-Term Study Abroad Experiences

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Abstract

Outdoor adventure education (OAE) and study abroad share many epistemological and pedagogical foundations and have been on parallel tracks for many years yet rarely intersect. This paper has two goals: (a) to invite study abroad researchers and practitioners to consider findings and practices from OAE to further enhance study abroad, and (b) to explore the benefits of combining OAE and study abroad practices by presenting such a model. Three questionnaires (pre, post, and 1-year after) were distributed to 32 students in 2012 and 2015 who participated in a combined OAE and dual-immersion study abroad experience. Responses were analyzed to identify central learning outcomes and critical elements. Overall, the findings affirm that the combined model of OAE and study abroad provided meaningful learning and point to a number of potential benefits of combining study abroad and OAE as an effective means of enhancing shared learning goals.

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Abstract in Japanese

野外冒険教育（OAE）と留学（スタディアブロード）は認識論的にも教育学的にも、その土台とするところに共通点を持ちながら、これまで互いに関係づけて論じられることがなかった。この論文は次の2つの目標を持つ；1）スタディアブロードの研究者や実践者らが、OAE 研究の成果や実践から知見を得ること、2）OAE とスタディアブロードの実践を組み合わせることの利点を、事例から探求すること。本研究では、OAE と二重イマージョンのスタディアブロードを織り交ぜた体験プログラムに2012年と2015年に参加した32人の大学生を対象として、質問用紙が3度（事前、事後、1年後）送られた。収集された回答は、プログラムからの主たる学びは何かと、それにつながった要素を焦点に分析された。その結果、OAE とスタディアブロードを組み合わせたプログラムは、価値ある学びを提供したことが明らかになった。また両者を組み合わせることは、互いに共通する教育目標をより高める効果的なやり方として、いくつもの利点を持つ可能性を示した。

Keywords:

outdoor adventure education, study abroad, experiential education, learning outcomes, critical elements

Introduction

The fields of outdoor adventure education (OAE) and study abroad share many epistemological and pedagogical foundations. In fact, study abroad and OAE research and practice have been on parallel tracks for many years yet rarely intersect. As two experienced outdoor adventure educators—one from Japan and the other from Canada—our practices have been primarily informed by the literature of OAE coupled with years of experience using wilderness and international educational expeditions as a common mode of teaching. During a shared canoe expedition in the Canadian Arctic along with 12 international OAE colleagues, the authors committed to developing a combined OAE dual-immersion short-term study abroad experience for students from Japan and Canada. As we planned and developed these experiences, we found our way into the study abroad literature and discovered the two disciplines asking similar questions about lasting impacts and program practices such as a call to investigate if outcomes similar to those of study abroad can be “achieved by learning experiences that are similarly disequilibrating, yet located domestically?” (Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2014, p. 153) and Jessup-Anger & Aragones’ (2013) encouragement for further research regarding how to increase

interaction with host cultures. Therefore, one goal of this paper is to invite study abroad researchers and practitioners to consider findings and practices from the OAE field to further enhance study abroad experiences, particularly short-term study abroad.

Sharing cross-disciplinary OAE and study abroad research and practice has a number of potential benefits. For example, given the similar learning outcomes and critical elements of study abroad and OAE, there may be a natural synergy that can assist both fields in achieving important goals and further understanding and development of critical elements. Broadly, shared learning outcomes include personal and social development (Richmond, Sibthorp, Gookin, Annarella & Ferri, 2018; Rowen-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011) and enriched cultural understanding and tolerance, or world mindedness (Takano, 2010; Clarke, Flaherty, Wright & McMillen, 2009). Typical OAE and study abroad critical elements include a variety of immersive experiences that include, for example, challenge, meaningful peer-relationships, and time for reflection (Asfeldt, Hvenegaard, & Purc-Stephenson, 2018; Boyle, Nackerud, & Kilpatrick, 1999). Therefore, a second goal of this research is to explore the benefits of combining the practices of OAE and study abroad by presenting a model of study abroad combined with OAE. This is particularly timely given recent growth of study abroad opportunities, specifically short-term study abroad (Gaia, 2015; Niendorf & Alberts, 2017).

In addition to these research goals, two distinctive aspects of this research include examining study abroad from the perspective of Canadian and Japanese students as opposed the experience of US students which dominates the study abroad literature (Tarrant et al., 2014) and investigating the outcomes of study abroad on host culture participants which is rare.

Review of Literature

Given the goals of this research and the assumption that readers are somewhat familiar with the study-abroad literature, the focus of this literature review will be to provide an overview of the foundations of OAE in North America and summarize the OAE research regarding learning outcomes and critical elements.

Foundations of Outdoor Adventure Education

Character Development

In North America, the Scouting Movement (1907) and the creation of Outward Bound (OB) (1941) are often identified as two important roots of OAE. Both Scouting and OB first used outdoor adventure activities and expeditions such as hiking, climbing, and sailing in order to achieve goals related to

character development and civic duty (James, 2008; Morris, 1970). The visions and inspiration for both Lord Baden Powell of Scouting and Kurt Hahn of OB developed out of their experience of war, for Powell the Boar War and for Hahn, WWII. Powell's stated motivation for Scouting was as "a contribution towards the effective maintenance of the British Empire, in which, according to a contemporary politician, the seeds of decay had been sown" (Morris, 1970, p.184). Similarly, Hahn's overarching educational goal was that students would develop character and compassion that would prepare them to live well and make meaningful contributions to society; these goals applied to OB as well as Gordonstoun and other schools that Hahn founded. Key elements of the OB experience were physical fitness; controlling student's time leaving no room for deviancy; adventure in the form of risk, nature, and shared journeys; working in small groups; and community service (James, 2008). A particularly important goal for Hahn was the development of compassion which he accomplished through community service often in the form of a fire brigade and sea rescue. Hahn believed that "whoever saves a life will never take a life" (Miner, 1999, p. 61). OB came to North America in 1960 and currently offers programs globally. The "Outward Bound Process" is a well know model for OAE (McKenzie, 2003).

In addition to OB and Scouting, the residential camping traditions in both Canada and the USA have influenced the practices of OAE as it exists today. Summer camps emerged as an escape from the ills of city life by providing recreational and back-to-nature experiences for youth (Wall, 2009). Riaola and O'Keefe (1999) describe the pioneers of OAE as "men and women with a vision of the impact of group-focused outdoor learning and living could have on the lives of participants" (p. 46).

Environment and Sense of Place

In the early 1960s, OAE was influenced by a growing concern for the environment and was spurred by the publication of books such as Rachel Carson's (1962) *Silent Spring* and Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949). Early iterations of environmentally focused OAE programs focused on pollution and land use issues and often involved nature study, school gardening projects, and camping trips (Passmore, 1972). Today, OAE continues to be influenced by concerns for the environment and is recognized as an avenue for connecting people with nature and place—both locally and globally—in an effort to counteract a growing sense of "placelessness in the hyper-mobility of present times where 'globalizing' agendas are not conducive to gaining a sense of place in a constantly changing world" (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p. ix). Wattchow and Brown's comment reflect a growing urgency for OAE programs to address challenges of climate change and mounting social and economic injustices.

The emerging research and practice in OAE that tackles environment and sense of place can be seen in a number of ways. First, the increasing

appearance of the terms such land-as-teacher (Raffan, 1993), base-placed (Sobel, 2005), landlessness (Baker, 2005), place-conscious (Asfeldt, Urberg, & Henderson, 2009), place-responsive (Wattchow & Brown, 2011), land-based (Luig, Ballantyne & Scott, 2011), and wild pedagogies (Jickling, Blenkinsop, Timmerman, & Sitka-Sage, 2018) to describe teaching practices and program goals is one indicator. Second, there are an increasing number of frameworks being developed to guide teaching practices in order to facilitate the achievement of environmental and sense of place goals. These include, for example, Raffan's (1993) identification of four types of knowledge (experiential, toponymic, numinous, and narrative) that lead to the development of sense of place; Baker's (2005) four stages of landfullness for adventure-based programs (being deeply aware; interpreting land history; sensing place in the present; and connecting to home) and Jickling et al's (2018) six touchstones (nature as co-teacher; complexity, the unknown, and spontaneity; locating the wild; time and practice; socio-cultural change; building alliances and the human community). Overall, the shared goals of these and other similar frameworks and practices are to enhance OAE's ability to reconnect students to multi-dimensional aspects of place, or landscape and environment. Wattchow and Brown (2011, p. x) state: "A participant learning about the significance of a place, and how their beliefs and actions impact upon it, will be well positioned to reflect on how their community may need to adapt to the challenges ahead."

Educational Philosophy

In addition to early ideas regarding character development combined with concerns for the environment, OAE is often seen—at least from within in the field—as an educational reform movement. This reform is rooted in concerns about traditional classroom teaching and students' lack of contact with nature and society (Quay & Seaman, 2013). OAE often traces its philosophical roots to the ideas of educational philosopher John Dewey and experiential education although there are other influences both before and after Dewey as well (Roberts, 2012; Riaola and O'Keefe, 1999). Dewey, in summary, developed a pattern of inquiry that he believed represented a natural form of learning that aimed to provide purposeful and relevant learning experiences that would lead students to further growth and enhanced human living (Dewey, 1938/1963). Today, OAE scholars continue to develop educational philosophies that address the needs of today's learner, common educational constraints, and concerns for environmental issues and social injustices. For example, Beames and Brown (2016) developed the adventurous learning model to guide teachers working in diverse educational settings. While their model is not specifically directed towards OAE, it is deeply rooted in their OAE experience. The model is grounded by four pillars which support infusing adventure into classes and courses "for students to be more deeply engaged in learning that has a high degree of

meaning and relevance in their lives” (p. xviii). These four pillars are: authenticity, agency and responsibility, uncertainty, and mastery through challenge. The goal of authenticity is to make education relevant and rooted in student’s physical and social worlds. Agency and responsibility aim to offer students more ownership and independence in learning. Uncertainty dictates that the outcome of learning be unknown. Mastery and challenge intend to provide immersive experiences for students where they have repeated opportunities to develop high levels of competency.

Overall, OAE is an evolving discipline that continues to examine and develop its educational philosophy as it continues to serve as a vehicle for educational reform addressing the ever-changing needs and challenges of 21st learners and society. Moreover, there is a growing body of research that demonstrates OAE as an effective pedagogy that leads to meaningful outcomes. As the following summary of OAE learning outcomes and critical elements reveal, OAE and study abroad share considerable common ground in these two dimensions.

Learning Outcomes and Critical Elements of Outdoor Adventure Education

Learning Outcomes

Based on OAE research, Asfeldt and Hvenegaard (2014) summarize OAE learning outcomes in to five broad categories: personal skills, social skills, technical skills, human-nature relationships, and cultural and global diversity/perspectives. Personal skills include outcomes such as enhanced self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-awareness (Martin & Leberman, 2005). Social skills consist of leadership, decision making, and working in groups (Hattie, March, Neill, & Richards, 1997). Technical skills vary depending on the types of outdoor activities employed (i.e., climbing vs. skiing). Nevertheless, examples of technical skills include map and compass use, canoeing skills, and outdoor cooking (Paisley, Furman, Sibthorp & Gookin, 2008). Human-nature relationships points to enhanced understanding of, for example, ecology and geography, human impacts on nature, and enhanced appreciation and awareness of natural spaces (Asfeldt & Hvenegaard, 2014). Cultural and global diversity/perspectives include OAE experiences that shape worldviews and enable students to be more comfortable interacting with diverse cultures (Beames & Stott, 2008; Takano, 2010). Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus (2011) invite short-term study abroad research to continue to document learning outcomes of short-term study abroad as do Asfeldt and Hvenegaard (2014) for OAE.

Critical Elements

Outdoor adventure education practitioners have long believed that OAE experiences result in the meaningful outcomes identified above. However,

research aimed at understanding the specific aspects, or critical elements, of OAE programs is more recent (Beames, 2004; McKenzie, 2003; Paisley et al., 2008). Based on the OAE research, Asfeldt and Hvenegaard (2014) summarize the critical elements of OAE experiences into five general categories: course activities; new environments; intentional processing and reflection; group experiences; and physical and mental challenges. Examples of course activities and new environments include those that are new and unfamiliar such as backpacking, leadership responsibilities, and solo experiences (McKenzie, 2003) and environments that are wild and culturally unknown to the student (Takano, 2010). Intentional group processing and reflection refers to instructor led discussions and debriefing (Paisley et al., 2008), quiet and unscripted time (Morse, 2015) and journal writing (Asfeldt et al., 2018). Group experiences are characterized by the necessity for students to spend the majority of their time in small groups where they work together to accomplish the daily tasks of work projects, traveling, eating, planning, and even sleeping together (Beames, 2004). Physical and mental challenges can come in many forms such as backpacking or canoeing and service projects that include physical labor while mental challenges are often associated with self-sufficient group living and the challenges of engaging in new and unfamiliar environments and activities (Beames 2004; McKenzie, 2003).

Jones, Rowan-Kenyon, Ireland, Niehaus and Skendall (2012) and Jessup-Anger and Aragonés (2013) encourage the study abroad field to conduct further research regarding specific critical elements of transformative short-term study abroad. A similar call continues in the OAE and has recently been addressed by Beames, Mackie, and Scrutton (2018) and Meerts-Brandtsma, Sibthorp, and Rochelle (2019).

Benefits of Combining Study Abroad and Outdoor Adventure Education

There are a number of examples of programs that have effectively combined study abroad and OAE including Raleigh International (Beames, 2004; Stott & Beames, 2008; Takano, 2010). Gordonstoun School, an independent residential school founded by Kurt Hahn in 1934 prior to the creation of OB is another. Beames et al., (2018) examined Gordonstoun's out-of-classroom learning experiences (i.e., expeditions, sail training, community service, music, drama, and sports) and how students perceived those experiences to have influenced their lives. Specifically, Beames et al., set out to understand the critical elements of those out-of-classroom experiences. Key findings related to combining OAE and study-abroad include that expeditions were identified as the "most powerful and enduring out-of-classroom learning experiences" (p. 7) and that "out-of-classroom experiences seem to have a social levelling effect; most former students reported that everyone felt equally accepted and valued,

regardless of background or nationality” (p. 9). Further, students felt that as a result of their out-of-classroom experiences that they had “the ability to ‘get on with people from anywhere in the world’” (p. 9).

The notion of experiences similar to those common to OAE and Gordonstoun’s out-of-classroom experiences that are guided by ideas of experiential and transformative learning pedagogies are not new to study abroad. In fact, Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich (2002) claim that study abroad and experiential education are natural partners and studies from both OAE (Meerts-Brandsma et. al., 2019) and study abroad (Bell, Gibson, Tarrant, Perry III, & Stoner, 2014) have examined student experiences using Mezirow’s (1991) transformational learning theory. These shared OAE and study abroad foundations combined with similar learning outcomes and critical elements motivate this exploration of the benefits of combined OAE and study abroad programs.

Methods

Program Description

The two programs under study were a collaboration between University of Alberta in Canada (UA) and Waseda in Japan who offered joint dual-immersion short-term study abroad and OAE courses in 2012 and 2015 which took place in Canada. In 2012, the course was 14-days in duration and was comprised of two-days of preparation on campus (goal-setting, teambuilding, skill development, food and equipment prep.), 11 expedition days (canoeing and backpacking), and one on campus wrap-up day. In 2015, the course was also 14-days in duration and was comprised of three days of on campus preparation, a seven-day snowshoe expedition, two-days of on campus wrap-up, and a one-day community service learning project. The courses were co-taught by one faculty from UA and one from Waseda. Aside from common goals of similar OAE programs (i.e., personal, social, and outdoor skill development), one unique goal was to consider views regarding nature and environment from both Canadian and Japanese perspectives. In both years, students camped and traveled (cooked, ate, slept, navigated) in small intercultural groups of 4 or 5 students. Therefore, interaction between the two cultural groups was very high throughout the experience. The groups were assigned by faculty with the goal of gender and cultural diversity in each group.

Study Participants

Study participants included all students from the 2012 and 2015 courses which comprised 17 Japanese (including two Chinese students attending Waseda) and 15 Canadian students (32 total). The mean age (SD) was 22.1 years (3.49), consisted of 14 males and 18 females and the mean year status was 2.9 (1.24). One Japanese student had studied a year in Canada and another a year in

the US. No Canadian students had studied in Japan. Therefore, apart from the Japanese student who had studied in Canada, this was the first visit to Canada for the Japanese students.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using a series of three questionnaires. One on the first day of the course (pre-trip), the second on the last day of the course (post-trip), and the third one year after the course (one year after). Response rates for were 96.5% (pre-trip), 100% (post-trip), and 87.5% (one-year after). The questionnaires used six open-ended questions asking students to describe what they learned, which aspects of the course facilitated their learning, and how the inclusion of both Waseda and UA students impacted their learning.

Prior to coding, we combined data from 2012 and 2015 and from the post-trip and one-year-after questionnaires. Guided by Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) recommendations where data analysis was iterative and proceeded in closely linked stages as follows: becoming familiar with the data by rereading transcripts; identifying recurrent topics; developing a topic index; using an index to code data; combining related topics into themes; and further collapsing or refining categories. Once this was complete, each researcher reviewed and compared each other's coding and each produced a third set of combined categories. NVivo software was used for coding (Richards, 1999).

Responses were received in English and Japanese presenting an added coding challenge. To address this challenge, the Japanese researcher read all responses (English and Japanese) while the Canadian researcher read only the English responses. As van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, and Deeg (2010) point out, in the process of translating data in qualitative research, there is the potential for loss of meaning. To minimize this risk, we discussed the translations and coding via email, Skype, and finally through face-to-face conversation allowing us to return to the source language to affirm interpretation. Furthermore, during member checking, Japanese students read the English translations of the data.

To promote qualitative validity, we employed four of Creswell's (2014) validity strategies. First, we triangulated the data by converging data sources from two expeditions and two separate groups and collecting data at three different points in time for each expedition. Second, we conducted member checks. Third, both authors have extensive OAE experience (over 25 years each) with a variety of intercultural groups and therefore have an in-depth understanding of short-term study abroad and OAE. Finally, we acknowledge our bias which may influence our findings.

Limitations

As with all research, this research presents a number of limitations. First, the small sample size limits generalizability. Second, both authors were

instructors of the courses under examination which may be a source of bias. Third, the data were in both English and Japanese, and involved translation for analysis.

Findings

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes were coded into five themes: *personal development, leadership and relations to others, cultural perspectives, outdoor skills, and human-nature relationships*.

Personal development

Students reported a variety of learning related to personal development. For example, two Canadian students wrote: “I have more self-knowledge. Being in a tightly knit group forces you to reflect on yourself, especially when resolving conflicts” (male) and “I have gained hard skills, as well as people skills, such as communication, understanding and friendship as well as developing my own self-awareness” (female). Two Japanese students noted: “I learned ‘Never give up!’ I am surprised about myself that I have no problems living with a joy in mountains for 2 weeks, which I didn’t think I could” (male)¹ and

[w]hat I gained from this course is to cherish my everyday life as part of my life. I learned to look at myself, which I did not before. Now I can reflect everything on me and understand in the context in so far as I can feel (female). (*trans.*)

Leadership and relations to others

These experiences facilitated student learning about leadership and functioning in small groups. Specifically, two Japanese students commented that they learned “people are complex. One individual has many facets, which include both good and bad. I learnt that words the person said are not everything” (female) and “I learned how to communicate with myself, and others, and surroundings. It was because I was living with people who often asked my opinions, and under the changing environment, including the weather” (male). Similarly, Canadian students responded saying: “That we are all the same in a way and our similarities and differences bring us together” (female) and I learned “how to work as a group to reach a collective goal” (female).

¹ Japanese students responded in both English and Japanese. English responses are included verbatim with no corrections. Translated responses are followed by (*trans.*).

Cultural perspectives

The mix of Japanese and Canadian students on the expeditions resulted in significant learning about students' own and other's cultures. Interestingly, Canadian students reported learning about cultural perspectives more frequently than Japanese students. Two Canadian students wrote: "It gave me new understandings of the Japanese culture and some of the barriers that can come from communicating with another culture" (male) and the experience "increased my appreciation for Japanese culture because of the lifestyle and the candid, real dialogue with the Japanese students" (female). Two Japanese students commented that "there is no 'the Canadian'; there are wide diversity among Canadians" (male) and "Differences in values. Through discussion with Canadians, I began to doubt what Japanese often say, 'Silence is golden, speech is silver' is right or not" (male).

Outdoor skills

Learning technical outdoor skills was acknowledged by both Canadian and Japanese students. However, Canadian students identified learning technical skills more frequently. Canadian students reported: "I learned many canoeing and camping skills" (male) and "I gained experience in outdoor winter camping, something I had never done before" (female). Meanwhile, there were only three Japanese reports of outdoor skill learning. For example: "There were learning about techniques and knowledge such as hiking, canoeing, and ropes work, but they were additional or attachments to the essential learning" (male).

Human-nature relationships

Both Canadian and Japanese students identified learning about human-nature relationships. For example, Japanese students said: "I learned the nature is not a far thing from me anymore even after I go back to city" (female) and "I feel this expedition developed my ability of sensing. I became more sensitive to my surroundings in a good sense" (male). Similarly, Canadian students noted: "I realized that if humans are a part of nature, that cities are full of nature because they are full of people" (female) and I "learned how Japanese, Chinese, and Canadian perspectives differ with regard to 'nature'" (male).

Critical elements

Data examining critical elements revealed four themes: *the intercultural nature of the group, immersion in nature and the outdoors, living and traveling in small groups, and the positive characteristics of the experience.*

Intercultural nature of the group

Both Canadian and Japanese students felt the intercultural composition of the groups played a critical role in their learning. For example, Canadian students remarked: "We came together by mimicking a traditional way of

Canadian travel and I think that we as Canadians learned more about our culture through having the Waseda students with us” (female); and

the presence of Japanese students helped me to look at Canada, particularly our outdoors, from a fresh perspective. While I have always been grateful for what we have as Canadians, this only increased by being with people from another country. Working together across cultural and language differences added another layer to the experience and made our time together even more meaningful and educational (male).

Japanese students commented that:

It was a big challenge for me as it was unknown land and I could not use my native tongue. Overcoming the difficulty led me to be confident. Also, as that was culturally mixed environment, I could be more ‘true self’ than otherwise. (female).

And another commented: There so much learning I gained just because it was a mix team between Waseda and UA. The experience to understand and help each other through life in nature beyond differences of languages, cultures, values, and religions gave me big confidence. This is the learning based on the team of people with different backgrounds (male). (*trans.*)

Immersion in nature and the outdoors

Both Japanese and Canadian students pointed to the natural and outdoor setting as facilitating learning. For example, Japanese a student stated:

I remember all of my sensory experiences such as warmth of stove and people (the colder surrounding environment is, the stronger they are), absolute silence fulfilled with lives, very small sound of waving branches and bushes. Also, I remember every single scene which contain small but very qualitative happiness (male).

Another Japanese student claimed: “It was my first time to be absorbed in nature to this degree, and I gained a [sic] actual sense of living” (female).

Similarly, one Canadian student commented that “immersing myself in a new experience like wall tenting with snowshoes helped my relationship with the Waseda students grow because it was at least somewhat unknown for all of us” (male) and another that “the weather and scenery that we pulled the toboggans through. I remember most of the campsites in order and setting up the wall tents and how we got better at doing it each time” (female).

Living and traveling in small groups

The direct and intense quality of living and traveling in small groups was identified as central to their learning. For example, Canadian students noted

that the “intimacy of small groups and the amount of time we had together” (female) and another commented that “talking in our wall tents and how we got to know each other and each other’s cultures better and better over time” (female) enhanced their learning. Similarly, Japanese students remarked “[c]ompared to a large group, everyone was attentive what I was saying, and I was more active participating discussion” (female). “Eating and sleeping together brought us much closer” (female).

The positive characteristics of the experience

Students identified a number of qualities of the course that enhanced their learning. For example, one Canadian student commented: “[t]hese experiences mean a lot to me even though a year has gone by. They are still very vivid” (female) and “I think this will always be an important memory, and when I look back at our trip, I feel thankful for having experienced time with them [the Waseda students]” (female).

Similarly, Japanese students noted that “[i]t was a really precious and special experience in my life” (female) and “This is like a basement where you can come back whenever you close your eye” (male).

Intercultural Composition of the Group

We specifically asked students: *How did the inclusion of both Waseda and UA students impact your experience?* Responses make it clear that the intercultural nature of the experience was central to their learning. We identified three themes: *provided unique and rich learning, added new perspectives, and facilitated awareness of my own culture.*

Provided unique and rich learning

Students wrote passionately about the unique and deep learning that resulted from these expeditions. For example, two Canadian students commented: “I think the mix between the Waseda and UA students was the ultimate highlight of this trip. The cross-cultural experience between language, culture, story, and perspective was what made the trip memorable” (female), and another stated:

I think including both Waseda and UA students in the course made my experience more intentional. It wasn’t just about going outdoors or participating in a trip; it was about sharing with and learning from people from a different culture. It was about dialogue and reflection. By including the Waseda students, the focus of the course shifted from hard skills to soft skills (female).

Similarly, one Japanese student stated:

It was my first time to spend all aspects of my day life, such as sleeping and eating, with someone who have totally different backgrounds.

Therefore, communication was difficult, and there were times that I could not deliver what I wanted to say. I learned that in order for people with different cultures to understand each other, they need bigger energy to communicate, and that there exists people's kindness and warmth which even make such power needless (female). (*trans.*)

And another remarked: "The interaction definitely worked well. It stimulates students' motivation of learning. Because of different background of participants, we could learn both difference and similarities of each other. And these learning are rarely happen in a daily interaction" (male).

Added new perspectives

Students learned to see and understand from perspectives other than their normal everyday point-of-view. For example, Canadian students commented that "it brought perspectives and different people into the whole experience. It made the experience better because they were learning from us and we were learning from them" (female) and "I have come to see the world with a new perspective, especially in regards to nature through the Japanese viewpoint on it" (female). Similarly, Japanese students explained that "the 2 weeks in Canada made me realize that humans cannot live alone, and also humans grow among different people. I realized such things because of the members from Japan, China, and Canada" (male) (*trans.*) and "I learned importance to be mindful of human relationship as well as being tolerant. The tolerance of the students from Canada helped me, whereas I was lack of tolerance. I wanted to learn from the Canadian students" (male).

Facilitated awareness of my own culture

Japanese and Canadian students both identified the inclusion of Waseda and UA students as facilitating learning about their own cultures and nations. For example, one Japanese student commented that the experience led to "An outline of the nation 'Japan' (forming an identity of Japan within myself) by comparison to Canadian students" (male) (*trans.*) and another noted, "I approached Canadians as different culture, and with the same perspectives I found that there are somewhat "different cultures" among Japanese" (male).

The tone of the Canadian students' responses suggests that learning about their own culture was an unexpected benefit. For example, Canadian students stated:

It helped me to see what was unique about Canada and our natural spaces, it helped me to appreciate them as well. I always love the northern lights but seeing the joy of them [the Japanese students] experience it for the first time was so amazing. I enjoyed seeing them delight in it more than just watching the lights themselves (female).

Another Canadian commented:

I think that we as Canadians learned more about our culture through having the Waseda students with us. It was amazing to experience parts of the trip as seen through the Japanese eyes, and I think it help us to appreciate what we had in terms of nature and skills as Canadians (female).

And finally, a third Canadian remarked:

I feel as though the intercultural aspect of the trip was the most valuable to me. Being able to learn of our cultural differences regarding the natural environment as well as being able to experience the Rockies vicariously through the Japanese students freed me to not take for granted the things that I am used to (male).

Discussion

This research set out with two goals: (a) to merge the research and practice of OAE and study abroad, and (b) to explore the benefits of combining the practices of OAE and short-term study abroad. Overall, the findings affirm that OAE and study abroad share considerable common ground regarding learning outcomes and critical elements and point to a number of potential benefits of combining short-term study abroad and OAE. In addition, the findings show that the experiences under investigation were perceived as meaningful learning experiences by both Canadian and Japanese students. Clearly, study abroad and OAE on their own provide meaningful forms of learning. Nevertheless, the focus of this discussion will be to explore four potential benefits of combined dual-immersion short-term study abroad and OAE experiences.

A first potential benefit of combining OAE and short-term study abroad practices relates to learning outcomes. Based on this investigation, it appears that combined OAE and short-term study abroad experiences can benefit OAE by adding learning related to enriched cultural understanding as seen by the theme's cultural perspectives, added new perspectives, and facilitated awareness of my own culture. These outcomes are not reported in the OAE research of culturally homogenous groups. Overall, students identified the combination of short-term study abroad and OAE practices and the intercultural composition of the groups as contributing significantly to their learning. In fact, the intercultural dimensions of these dual-immersion experiences are infused in nearly every theme of our findings. A surprising learning outcome from an OAE perspective—although not a study abroad point-of-view (Intolubbe-Chmil, Spreen, & Swap, 2012)—was that both Canadian and Japanese students identified learning about their own culture; this was particularly true for Canadian

students which suggests that dual-immersion programs can provide significant learning for host participants.

A second potential benefit of combining OAE and short-term study abroad practices suggests that short-term study abroad might enhance learning regarding human-nature relationship, or sense of place, by incorporating nature-based OAE practices. Human-nature relationship and similar outcomes are common in OAE research and less common in study abroad research. This suggests that deeply immersive place experiences may be a particular strength of nature-based OAE expeditions. Therefore, as global concerns regarding environment and sense of place grow, study abroad may benefit from adopting practices from OAE in order to facilitate deeply immersive place experiences to facilitate human-nature relationship type learning. This is not to say that study abroad must move away for urban-based programs, or that study abroad programs are strictly urban-based. Rather, it suggests that OAE strategies used to enhance place immersive experiences in predominantly nature settings may also be able to be effectively adapted to urban settings. Nevertheless, perhaps there are parallels between immersion in nature and the outdoors with immersion in foreign places that are keystones of study abroad. Perhaps the study abroad research identification of high levels of interaction with foreign cultures is analogous and includes places such as foreign cities and landscapes.

A third potential benefit of combining OAE and short-term study abroad programs points to well-designed expedition-based OAE lending themselves to high levels of interaction among students, which students perceive to enhance personal, social, cultural, and human-nature relationship learning. When these expeditions are dual-immersion, they naturally enrich interaction with host cultures which Hartman and Keily (2014) have identified as a critical element of study abroad and contribute to Jessup-Anger & Aragonés' (2013) call for research regarding how to increase interaction with host cultures. The importance of intercultural interaction has also been identified by both previous OAE and study abroad research (Takano, 2010; Strange & Gibson, 2017). However, living and traveling in small groups is more commonly identified critical element in OAE than in study abroad. This may be because living and traveling in small groups is a more traditional and necessary practice in OAE than study abroad as opposed to living and traveling in small groups not being an effective critical element of study abroad. Therefore, study abroad, and particularly short-term study abroad, might consider OAE practices in order to facilitate high-levels of interaction among study abroad students, especially dual-immersion opportunities, as these expeditions did.

A fourth potential benefit of combining short-term study abroad and OAE—particularly dual-immersion programs—is that it may increase the likelihood that both cultural groups are having shared experience of a new and

unfamiliar environment and culture, or disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991), and may reflect the value of experiential and transformative pedagogies as identified by both study abroad and OAE researchers (Bell et al., 2014; Meerts-Brandsma et al., 2019). In this case, the disorienting dilemma included two important aspects: nature-based expeditions and the challenges of understanding and interacting with people from a new and unfamiliar culture. Therefore, both host culture students and visiting students were faced with disorienting dilemmas as opposed to just the visiting students which suggests an added benefit of dual-immersion opportunities.

These findings address a number of previous suggestions for research. For example, a number of researchers (Jessup-Anger & Anagones, 2013; Strange & Gibson, 2017) call for research to identify the nature of study abroad immersion and pedagogies that lead to transformative and cross-cultural learning. In this case, distinctive elements of the combined short-term study abroad and OAE experiences included a culturally diverse group and high-levels of meaningful interaction within those groups which students reported as key to their learning. Meanwhile, Vandermaas-Peeler, Duncan-Bendix, and Biehl (2018, p. 131) recommend examining the role of “various living situations on students’ engagement with others in the host community.” This study demonstrates that the immersive nature of the OAE experiences appears to facilitate a high-level of intercultural interaction, making it a viable format for short-term study abroad that is not commonly used. In addition, Clarke et al., (2009) recommend further investigation of the role of duration in study abroad. This research demonstrates that short-term study abroad can be transformative. Further, Salisbury, An, and Pascarella (2013) encourage broad exploration of a wide-range of experiences that prepare students for living in an increasingly interconnected and culturally diverse world; this research presents one such model. Tarrant et al., (2014) ask if outcomes similar to those of study abroad can be “achieved by learning experiences that are similarly disequilibrating, yet located domestically?” (p. 153); this research suggests that it can for host participants.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study reveal a number of ways that study abroad and OAE can be combined to support the achievement of campus missions and institutional strategic plans regarding personal development, cultural understanding, sense of place, and improved teaching and learning.

First, study abroad and OAE research both provide convincing evidence that well-designed programs are likely to result in personal development learning outcomes (Richmond et al., 2018; Rowen-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011). Therefore, personal development learning goals common to many university and college missions where preparing students to make meaningful

contributions in an increasing complex world, are likely to benefit from enhancing study abroad and OAE programs by making such programs more available to students which combined study abroad and OAE can do.

Second, as this research demonstrates, there are many benefits for domestic students who host international students. Therefore, we recommend educators and administrators design programs that allow students to travel aboard as well as programs that enable domestic students to host foreign students. Designing study abroad programs where domestic students host foreign students may also make study abroad experiences available to a broader range student. For examples, students might not study abroad for a variety of reason including time and economic constraints (Stephens, Morford, Cihon, Forand & Neri-Hernandez, 2018) but may be willing, able, and eager to host international students thereby furthering opportunities for college and university cultural understanding goals.

Third, given the growing urgency to address a myriad of environmental concerns and issues related to sense of place, study abroad programs are likely to benefit from adopting, and adapting, sense of place frameworks and practices of OAE. Sense of place related outcomes appear to be a more frequently identified outcomes of OAE than of study abroad (Asfeldt & Hvenegaard, 2014).

Fourth, maximizing interaction between culturally different groups is critical for increasing the likelihood of students experiencing the benefits of study abroad. Therefore, as we did in 2012 and 2015, bringing two culturally diverse groups together for an intense and focused experience that requires a great deal of interaction is an alternate model for study abroad worth considering. In addition, wilderness-based OAE have a particular strength for facilitating high-levels of interaction because they remove students from the common distractions of university campuses, urban centers, and internet connections. Furthermore, the needs of daily living (i.e., preparing food, setting camp) have a high level of authenticity and relevance which are key elements of experiential pedagogies and transformative learning (i.e., Beames & Brown, 2016; Dewey, 1938/1963; Mezirow, 1991). Therefore, this model may serve as a model for rethinking possible short-term study abroad formats that are well aligned with common study abroad goals as well as common university and college goals for improving teaching and learning.

Overall, this study points to a number of benefits of study abroad and OAE collaborations. Therefore, we encourage faculty and administrators to seek further collaborations between study abroad and OAE to continue providing students with the many important benefits of study abroad while at the same time addressing the needs of 21st century learners through the use of transformative and experiential pedagogies that are the foundation of both study abroad and OAE. Even so, a number of authors caution both study abroad (Strange & Gibson, 2017) and OAE (Roberts, 2012) against succumbing to the

notion that simply including a travel or outdoor experience results in meaningful learning.

Further Research

This investigation reveals a number of suggestions for future research. For example, (1) comparing the impact of study abroad on students who go abroad and those who stay at home but host a foreign group. A number of studies compare students who study abroad and those who do not, but no studies compare students that study abroad and those that host foreign students. Therefore, conducting research comparing such students would be valuable. (2) There is study abroad research investigating the impact of study abroad and student living situations (i.e., hotels vs dorms). It would be informative to add dual-immersion outdoor living to this research. Finally, (3) research could investigate additional points of intersection between study abroad and OAE in order to further understand the benefits of combining study abroad and OAE.

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