

Section 1: Critical Incidences/Cultural Experiences 2006

Australia

“Australians are much more active in conserving natural resources and protecting the environment. I have only found one restroom that has paper towels (all of them use hand-dryers to prevent waste material), and all toilets have two buttons (one for full flush and one for half flush to conserve water). Many people bring their own bags to grocery stores instead of using excessive plastic bags and restaurants use plastic containers for take away instead of Styrofoam. Politeness is also stressed here, as we have occasionally been called rude when we don't say 'excuse me' to pass by someone in a tight area such as a grocery store aisle or on the train. It's somewhat of a shame that while Australia adopts trends and customs from American culture, the U.S. doesn't pick up on aspects of Australian culture such as an emphasis on environmental protection and polite behavior.”

“Our mentors are helpful and seem to know more about our culture than we know about their culture. For instance, we were working on a cryptic crossword puzzle at lunch and the Australians would know all the American terms but we did not always know all the Australian words and phrases. I think a lot of the known knowledge about the U.S. culture comes from the broadcasting of American television in Australia because they seem more accustomed to hearing our accent. From watching the Australian news, the Australians look more at the global picture of important issues better than Americans seem to do.”

“I learned that it is easier to break old habits when you are living in an entirely new environment. I have been waking up without my alarm for the past week when normally I would never think of going to bed without setting an alarm. Normally I would sleep past noon on the weekends but since I've been here, I've had to catch breakfast downstairs before 9:30am, so that forces me out of bed. This impacts my view of Australia because it makes me think it is pretty easy to adjust to the way of life here. They are very laid back and don't worry about getting places at a certain time which is very nice.”

“The bright and cheerful 'good morning' and 'have a nice day' that I get from the receptionist when I hand her my keys in the mornings really do cheer me up and I can't help but smile. I have found Australia to be welcoming, and as for myself and my own culture, I guess there's still a lot more we could do to make ourselves more pleasant and accepting.”

“One day we took the tram to a coastal town, and we were trying to find the right tram back by looking at the map. This man who was standing and waiting for the tram walked over to help us figure out which tram to get on. He did not need to help us, yet he went out of his way to be nice. At first it was a little strange to have a stranger talk to you, but the more I use public transportation, the nicer it is to know that most people are more helpful than you might expect them to be. This is totally contrary to the 'do not talk to strangers' way of thinking children are brought up with in America.”

“I enjoy talking with the people that I am sitting next to on all the public transportation and they share some of the neat places to go in their country. On the long flight to Australia, I

sat next to a couple from Melbourne and they recommended a glacier that we should go see. I also started talking with a girl on the bus in Brisbane who goes to University of Queensland. She said that for her major in speech, students go abroad after they graduate with their four year degree, rather than study in a particular field.”

“One girl at a club did make fun of me for my accent and said she didn’t like Americans. She also said that Americans are very sympathetic of her view of America though. This makes sense since I can see why people might not like Americans. I think we are much louder than other cultures. We’ve probably annoyed many people on the train and in public places since we got here just by talking too loudly. I could be just imagining this though.”

A student noticed that he and his group stood out from the Australians, and he noticed this especially on public transportation. While taking the train home from work, his group enjoyed socializing, laughing, and making noise, while other passengers in the carriage usually remained silent. The student would often stop talking and look around to see if people were staring at them. He felt that his group received attention mainly due to their accents and their loudness. He explained: “In general, I didn’t expect that we would stand out as much as we do in a country that speaks English. We act, talk and dress differently than those around us...Overall these experiences have made me slightly more self conscious. I’m trying not to be so loud or talk as fast, which are both positive improvements.”

Japan

“I was thrust into the role of tour guide when another student and I had to escort an SDSC researcher who had given a talk that day around the busy downtown district of Namba. We had to explore the alleys to look for good restaurants, and it was much more difficult than I had expected. Still, we eventually found a place, and had a wonderful meal. The experience certainly increased my confidence as far as going out on my own and interacting with the locals.”

“Just yesterday, I wanted a lunch item that wasn’t on the ticket machine. So I had to ask the person in line behind me, and he seemed extremely surprised when I asked him to help me. He ended up to be very friendly and helped me with my problem (just like all the other times when I asked people for directions in a foreign place), but in general, strangers just don’t talk to strangers here—it always starts out awkward when that happens.”

“As for the gender issue, I did notice that the majority of women dress conservatively. I have seen a few girls with short-shorts and tank tops, but generally speaking, they are pretty covered. That bothers me a lot. It is 90-degrees outside, and I have to be covered in an Eskimo outfit and another huge blanket outside of that in order to blend in...that does not make sense to me at all. I’ve already gotten stares for wearing a sleeveless shirt—I dislike the fact that people judge me simply because I’m showing my shoulders (I’m just trying to wear light clothes that make me feel cool in the hot weather). I understand that you put yourself more at harm when you wear revealing clothes, but that stands true anywhere you go.”

“Things were new and different in the beginning, but I’m beginning to notice many of the negative aspects of Japanese culture very quickly—probably because I have had the experience of learning a new culture and adapting to it in a short time—and this makes me really disappointed at times. The very first thing I noticed here is that the roads are all very narrow. Pretty much everything is compacted into the tiniest space, and it’s very easy to feel suffocated anywhere you go (not to mention the huge number of people you see on the street everyday). After being so used to (or I should say, unappreciative of) the open space back in San Diego, I have trouble sharing the sidewalk with bikers going in all directions, and I’m definitely not fond of people who smoke everywhere you go. You already have the smallest amount of space to walk in, and if you lean toward any direction, you’ll either get hit by incoming auto traffic (people drive on the opposite side in Japan) or you’ll fall into the open gutters on the side...I had expected Japan to be a fairly law-abiding country, but I can see people breaking the law as soon as I step out of my apartment. The street and pedestrian signals mean nothing to both drivers and pedestrians—drivers often run red lights or they don’t stop for pedestrians, and pedestrians cross the street when they think it’s safe.”

“In Japan, I realize that everything is about ‘order’. The rigidness and strict standards people have are always being passed onto the next generation—whether it’s culture, tradition, conservativeness, hierarchy, etc. To a certain extent, I can begin to see the importance of keeping this ‘routine’ that maintains order in the society... People still follow the hierarchy based on social (age, status, sex, etc.) status on a daily basis, and that provides an ordered environment that people can adhere to. This ‘order’ can be seen in almost every aspect of Japan...In the beginning of my trip, I think I may have thought negatively of the order of the Japanese society, but I think I am beginning to appreciate the rigid/strict standards that anyone can adhere to at anytime. After all, it’s better to know every line than to be wishy-washy.”

“Japan’s love in life is food. You can’t turn on the TV without seeing a television about food. And this isn’t a love that turns into eating too much, it’s a love that causes Japanese to seek the world’s best cuisine and incorporate it into their own culture. The grocery stores are filled with fresh meats, veggies, fruits (which are really expensive by the way), and daily prepared dishes. By the end of the day there are discounted prices to make way for the next day’s batch of goodies. The contrast is the American food habit. We like it cheap, fast, easy to prepare and eat, and we want it to make us feel full—a satisfaction that comes from restaurants like Claim Jumper or a Chipotle Burrito. We also seem to like our foods on the far ends of the salty/sweet spectrums. Salty fries, a big burger, and a sugary coke to wash it all down. Japanese tend to like more complicated tastes that come from the delicacies of a sauce or special preparation. I love eating the Japanese way, balanced in all that you need, not just for fuel. But there are times when I miss the BIG BURGER or BURRITO.”

Taiwan

“On Monday, as we were heading to Yuen Yang Lake, our van broke down halfway up the mountain. It was an area where few vehicles pass by, but after several minutes, two people had already pulled over to try to help us out. This sort of philanthropy isn’t something you

see often in the urban U.S. I suppose I was not expecting it, because I've noticed the same kind of distance between strangers in urban Taiwan. The first person came down on a motorcycle—he wasn't sure why we were having the problem, but he was clearly more knowledgeable than the second person, who couldn't even tell the engine coolant apart from the oil. He told us to wait for the engine to cool down, then gave us three peaches and directions to his fruit stand. I had wondered for a while if people were more mechanically savvy here, since nearly everybody owns a scooter or motorcycle.”

“Interestingly, most of the people that I have met so far are very curious to learn more about the people's lifestyle in the U.S. They want to know things like how the education system runs in the U.S., what students do in their free time, at what stage in school they start doing research, how the job market is, etc. They mostly listen rather than give their opinion. And sometimes they even ask you personal questions, without the intention of invading your privacy, to both keep the conversation going and get closer to you.”

“Many of the people I have come to know here are planning to go to the U.S., and they ask a lot of questions about what life is like in the U.S. American pop culture is pervasive in the country it seems. Popular movies are constantly showing on TV, and bands such as Coldplay and Linkin Park are very popular. Concerning their expectations, I don't recall anybody saying anything explicit like 'I thought in the U.S....' (people seem careful about anything that might be offensive). However, I get the impression that a lot of what Taiwanese people know about American culture is limited to what they see on TV. I am very curious about what people think about such things, because people seem quiet about things like this unless asked.”

“The science park here at Hsinchu is like the Silicon Valley of Taiwan and the work force comprises largely of young researchers, many who graduated from the surrounding universities. It is an exciting place to work—unlike their American counterparts, all employees have a strong work ethic that emphasizes productivity and team work as the path to professional success.”

A student noted how in Taiwan, “the conventions when eating at small eateries on the side of streets can be very different. The method of service, the bill payment, and the service was very different between different nights that I went out to eat. Some places make you pay first and grab your own bowls/tea/chopsticks, while other places make you write down what you want to eat and give it to them at the front. It's very different, and hard to adapt to since it tends to vary so much.”

During a road trip to Ton Ho, a student was curious about why the Taiwanese group member who was making introductions referred to certain others as his seniors. At lunch, the student asked him if in Taiwan they refer to people as seniors if they are more knowledgeable or have higher work positions. He replied that they simply refer to their elders as their seniors to show respect. The student reflected on the cultural significance: “If you think about it everyone, no matter what their age, wants to feel belonged, useful and loved, and I think this issue becomes even more important as you age so why deprive people of this wonderful feeling, especially our own blood? I think a few instances that I

encountered among the people of this country and culture made me think seriously about this important fact and helped to shape my thoughts and my point of view.”

China

A student observed during her first week in China: “The people of Beijing are not as friendly as people in America but I have gotten used to that already. They are surprised when you say ‘Thank You’. Sales people tend to be either really pushy or ignore you completely.” The student observed during her second week: “I realize now that in China, nothing is too personal and strangers will often ask a lot of questions about where you come from and how different life is compared to China. I used to think that Chinese people were not as polite as Americans but now I realize that they are not brought up in the kind of society that expects people to say thank you, and you’re welcome. People don’t ask for things, they demand it without saying please or thank you so waitresses and clerks are often taken back when I do say such things to them. It is also normal for clerks to act very upset when you do not want to buy their products but it’s because that is how they make their living, unlike in America where most people do not work on commission.”

“Aside from people that I work with and encounter everyday, I find that strangers, clerks, taxi drivers, all react the same way when they speak to foreigners. The first thing they always ask me is, “Are you Korean?”, and then they continue to ask questions about money, like “How much money do your parents make?” and “How much is your cost of living for one year including tuition, allowance, etc?” Chinese people view America as a country of wealth and automatically assume that all foreigners have a great deal of money. I tell them that this is not always the case and many students have to take out loans and pay for their own college tuition.”

“One thing that comes to my mind is that the men here are very nice to ladies. For example, they offer to hold everything for the ladies even though it’s just a bottle of water. I remember a new friend of mine opening a bottle of water for me, which I think was weird because I am capable of doing that on my own. I feel that the men here are overprotective of women because they try to do everything for them.”

A student appreciated the diversity in Beijing: “I did not expect to see so many international people here. There are a lot of international students around here because of the universities in the area. It feels very much like home to see cultural diversity.”

On the airplane ride to China, a student noticed that all of the female flight attendants were tall, slender, fair-skinned, attractive, and youthful. She discussed the observation with her mother, who told her that China Airlines enforces strict requirements for its flight attendants. She discussed the observation with her mother, who explained that “from the airline’s point of view, the flight attendants are perhaps a foreigner’s first impression of China. They represent China Airlines, and consequentially China, to the rest of the world.” The student described: “On the one hand, my American sensibilities cried foul. We are taught to believe that ‘all people are created equal’, and thus all people should have equal opportunities. On the other hand, what my mother said also made a lot of sense. As an outsider, and especially as an American, one might be tempted to think that China is

undemocratic or even oppressive in its policies. This critical incident, however, has helped me to realize that however backwards a policy may seem (e.g. the one child policy), there is always logic behind it. This experience has cautioned me to think before I judge. Though there are political and cultural differences between different countries, reason and logic are common to all cultures.”

“Someone asked me, ‘Isn’t dating in America just like in that movie *Closer*?’ and later that night, we visited a bar named after *Sex and the City*. My co-workers tell me that the series was broadcast on TV for a while and it was very well-received! I’m horrified that my colleagues all seem to be under the impression that all Americans are as rich and promiscuous as Carrie Bradshaw, but I can certainly see why they think that we are relationship experts! American movies are saturated with love stories. In fact, I tried to think of a recent movie that didn’t have some kind of love interest and I couldn’t think of even one!”

When a student was feeling homesick, instead of seeking solitude like she usually did in the U.S., she opened up to her co-workers and colleagues and found that they were a great source of support. She learned that “sometimes, in order to not feel like you’re drowning in a sea of unfamiliar faces, you have to make the effort to make a connection...In America, we have this great vision of independence. Our American hero is the stoic cowboy, riding alone into the sunset. In China, there is more of a group mentality (maybe it’s the communism). I used to think that asking for favors was very bad, like admitting that I was weak and needed help, but my experience here has shown me that going at it alone is not always the best policy. Sometimes, an exchange of favors is a great opportunity to make friends. I think the next time that I am feeling bad at school, I will try to do what the Chinese do and seek the help of friends rather than keeping it all to myself.”

Section 2: List of Improvements/ “What to Expect”

- Students found using an ATM to be the best method for exchanging money. Students should consider ATM withdrawal limits when preparing for large transactions, such as paying rent.
- Students going to Asia are encouraged to learn the language of their host country. In certain areas of large cities in Taiwan, like Taipei, some people speak English. In Japan, very few people speak English. A student who studied Japanese for two years at UCSD and made Japanese friends through the conversation tables felt comfortable relating to others in Japan, even though he still felt as if he needed to get more accustomed to the language.
- Students who have little experience with the language of their host country should be mentally prepared for the challenge and should not expect a lot of interaction and socializing with non-English speakers. They should at least learn how to address others properly.
- Students going to Asia should consider bringing a pocket dictionary from the U.S., as dictionaries in their host countries may not be geared toward English-speaking people.

- Students should set realistic research goals for themselves and stay determined to put forth their best efforts, despite doubts from others.
- Students should know which applications they will use for their research and prepare themselves by taking classes or practicing the applications on their own time before their travels.
- Students found the people at the NCHC in Taiwan were usually available, either by instant messaging or in person.
- Students should be prepared for delays in getting situated at their host institution. Students in Taiwan waited six days before the network operations department set up their PC's.
- Students should find a hobby or bring something to do in case they have free time at work while waiting to be situated or while running programs. A student in Japan regretted not bringing his iPod, as he used the train about an hour each day.
- Students wished they had known that the time would pass by so quickly so that they could have planned extracurricular activities more effectively.
- Students should not plan on doing things that they will not feel motivated for. A student planned on using his free time to study for the GRE's, but while in Australia he decided not to, and recommends that students be realistic about what they will want to do while in their host country.
- Asian countries tend to have more crowded areas, especially on public transportation, so students should anticipate having less personal space in certain situations, and in general less privacy.
- Students should familiarize themselves with how long it takes to travel to campus (if they live off-campus) and nearby shopping areas, by walking and taking public transportation. Students in Taiwan found the city bus to be the least expensive form public transportation, but it arrived at their stop only once an hour. Students may even consider riding a bike.
- Before arriving, students should know how they will secure internet connection from their hotel/apartment/dorm and how much it will cost. A student in Australia opened an account with an Australian ISP in order to avoid large fees for dialing international phone numbers.
- Students who are light sleepers may consider bringing earplugs or a small fan to drown out noise during the night. Students in Australia stayed in a hotel near nightclubs, and periodically they could hear people partying late into the night.
- Students should be prepared to adapt to different conventions of service and payment when eating at small eateries or on side streets.
- Students should be able to improvise in the ways in which they prepare food while eating in.
- Students in Australia were not provided with a stove or oven, but did have a microwave, and their hotel served complimentary breakfast.
- Students in Japan stayed in an apartment complex which had a cafeteria on the fifth floor. There were also shops and cafeterias with large portions of inexpensive food at the Cybermedia Center in Osaka. Students found that vegetables and fruits were expensive, so students should expect meat and/or rice to be main components of their diet.

- In China, students enjoyed the inexpensive food served on campus. Students should be aware that bargaining is a common practice at Chinese marketplaces, and the customer is not always right, in contrary to U.S. custom.
- Students will find that bringing their own bags to grocery stores is helpful. Australian stores did not offer paper bags. Convenience stores in Taiwan charged extra for bags.
- Bringing stomach medicine will be helpful when getting adjusted to a new diet.
- Students going to Taiwan or Japan may consider bringing personal business cards, as it was customary to exchange them as a part of introductions.
- Students going to Japan, China, or Taiwan should bring clothes suitable for warm and humid weather, and may consider bringing an umbrella or buying one in their host country. A student who stayed in Taiwan recommends buying an inexpensive umbrella in Taiwan rather than bringing one from the U.S. if packing space is a concern, because the umbrella could break during a typhoon. Students may also want to bring insect repellent.
- Students going to China should be prepared for thunderstorms. Female students going to Japan, China, and Taiwan should be aware that women are expected to dress more conservatively in the work environment. Women generally cover their shoulders and wear high-cut tops.
- Students going to Australia should bring lots of warm clothing and raingear for the colder weather and shorter days.

Section 3: Analyses of Student Experiences

Environmental Awareness

Students noticed how energy conservation was a larger issue in Australia than in the U.S. Australians were much more active in conserving natural resources and protecting the environment. In Taiwan, convenience stores charged extra for bags. Students who were exposed to the daily practice of conservation found it refreshing and wished that the U.S. would incorporate more conservation practices.

Work Environment

Students in Taiwan waited for several days for the NCHC to issue them ID badges for access to offices, and to get situated with the appropriate computers and software. It took three weeks for one student to obtain internet access in his dorm room. He believed that having too many people in charge of one department led to miscommunications and inefficiencies, and speculated that customer service did not seem to exist in the way it does in the U.S. He used to think that American universities were inefficient due to standard procedures, but came to see that it was better than not having them at all. Students valued Taiwan's technological advancement, but believed that the universities did not utilize the technology in regard to coordinating procedures, human relations, and getting things done efficiently.

Students noticed how notions of work ethic in their host country differed from work ethic in the U.S. A student noticed that people in China emphasized more on solely

work and allowed less time for leisure, compared to the U.S. attitude of “work hard, play hard”. Co-workers at the CNIC in China were close friends, which contrasted with co-worker relationships in America that students had been familiar with. One student expressed that “Americans want a clear division between work and play, with no in-between. In China, the attitude towards work and co-workers is similar to the attitude towards family.”

The relaxed, laid-back Australian attitude surprised many students. They were accustomed to the American time-sensitive approach to work, and found that having setbacks in their research served as catalysts for a shift in perspective. One student found himself more tolerant of mistakes and realized that being tolerant of events outside of his control lead to less stress, as he found that in time, everything seemed to work out. Another student realized that her feeling of pressure from things not working as fast as she expected were entirely self-generated. This insight allowed her to relax more and stress less at work.

Body Language

Students found that compared to Americans, Chinese people were less animated, used less gesture during communication, and did not show excessive emotion. Instead they often used tone for certain emphasis. They also maintained eye contact. Girls in China would get physically close during communication, more so than in the U.S. It was not uncommon for them to hold each other’s hands in a nonsexual way while they walked and talked together. Physical contact among colleagues was common. As one student described, “Co-workers will often clasp each other on the shoulder when speaking, as if they were old friends.”

In Taiwan, some students noticed that eye contact during conversation was a sign of respect. Other students noticed that there was significantly less eye contact than in the U.S. A student observed how women maintained eye contact while they would speak to men, yet seemed to evade eye contact when not speaking or listening to men. It was uncommon for speakers to use big gestures or touch others while speaking. Students found that couples did not express their affection openly in public. They noticed that exchanging business cards was customary during introductions.

Students found subtle differences in Australian and American communication style. Eye contact, gesticulation, personal space, and timing were very similar, and Australians were neither excessive nor paranoid about physical contact.

In Japan, students noticed that eye contact when communicating was briefer than in the U.S. or ignored altogether. One student believed that in general, Japanese people were more calm and subdued. Despite many crowded public areas, personal space was valued.

Verbal Communication

Students learned that communication styles in Asian countries differed from the American way of communication. Chinese people would often ask a rhetorical

question and answer it themselves in order to emphasize their opinion. People in Beijing were not as friendly as people in America, and seemed to be surprised when students treated them with politeness. Chinese people and Australians rarely interrupted each other, which students noticed was a sharp contrast from traditional American conversations.

People in Australia would often talk over an interrupting person, as students learned from experience. Australians in some cases would allow for the interrupting comment, and then proceed with their thought, considering the comment only after they had finished expressing themselves. They also spoke for longer periods of time. Australian conversations would contain many silences, and a student describes them as comfortable silences, in contrast to how silences in American conversation tend to be uncomfortable. Students noticed that Australians communicated more in person than over the phone, and seemed to be very sincere in conversation.

People in Taiwan working in the service industry often used a polite form of speaking. Waiters at restaurants were usually very polite and apologetic if a customer had to wait. Everyday language had a neutral tone which was neither polite nor rude, even though this tone might have come across as being rude or apathetic to someone who would expect more politeness from strangers. People tended to repeat themselves, and participate in feedback during communication to ensure that information was appropriately expressed and received.

In Japan, people often used interjections like “un” and “soo desu” to let the speaker know that they understood. Japanese people tried to be very helpful when students asked them questions. They tended to listen very attentively and almost never interrupted the speaker. A student described how: “Usually, people will take few seconds before answering your question, almost as if they’re rehearsing their lines in their head before speaking.”

Communication Technology

Being in a foreign country gave students an opportunity to observe the ways in which technology impacts communication. Students found that blogging was just as popular in Taiwan as it is in the U.S. In Australia the cost of calling to and from a mobile phone was relatively expensive because few companies had monopolized the market, and students found no mobile phone plans with free nights and weekends. Students deduced that people were not as inclined to use their cell phones because they did not have a free connection. Internet in Australia seemed to be more expensive and less abundant than in the U.S., and most students were unwilling to pay for internet use in their hotel. Cell phones were ubiquitous in China; even street vendors had cell phones. One huge communication medium in Japan was cell phone e-mail. A student noticed how most people on the trains often typed on their cell phones while commuting. He reflected, “It makes me wonder if it is changing the way business, friendship, and family communication is done... via text.”

Transportation

Students in Japan were surprised at how common it was for residents to use their own cars for transportation, even though personal transportation was less common than in the U.S. Students found public roads in Osaka to be less reliable than in the U.S., and that few people would drive defensively. One student described how every car on the road “seems to be tailgating, suddenly stopping, and taking quick turns”. For these reasons and the cost-effectiveness of public transportation, students favored the trains and subway. In Taiwan, motorcycles were ubiquitous. Both men and women rode motorcycles and students were surprised to see women dressed formally for work riding motorcycles. Students in Beijing were told that buckling up in a car is a “foreign” sign. Students found that public transportation in Australia was inexpensive and fast, and went to many different places. Taking the train to work was faster for students than riding in a car. It was convenient for students to take the train to the center of the city if they needed access to restaurants and shops. Some students became comfortable navigating through Melbourne as a result of using the train, tram, or bus to travel around the city. This gave them a greater appreciation for public transportation and a desire to better familiarize themselves with the city of San Diego upon their return.

Food Culture

Students found that Taiwan had more night life than the U.S., as many eateries stayed open late. Students learned how Japanese food culture was very health conscious and centered on fine cuisine and quality food. Some students found it challenging to have smaller portions at restaurants or pay more for fresh produce, but they enjoyed experiencing food in a new way. Students found that bargaining was very common in China, and they wished they were better prepared to bargain at marketplaces. Students noticed that in general Australians seemed more fit than people at home. While students realized how unhealthy the American food culture can be, most of them missed the food from home by the end of the program.

Attire

A student in China was surprised to see that although people dressed conservatively, it was not as conservative as she had originally imagined, and it was mainly in the workplace. She noticed how women in Beijing “often wear short skirts and little tank tops with a strong influence from Korean and Japanese trends”. In Japan, women were also expected to dress conservatively, and one student was very displeased by this standard, as she found it impractical to wear warm clothing in such warm weather.

A student in Australia reported how, “women put a lot of effort into compiling a very sophisticated outfit. These outfits usually consist of boots, tights, gloves, scarf, hat, jacket, pants or skirt, and belts. Surprisingly, I was not expecting Melbourne to be such a fashion hub that it is. I suppose that is because there is a lot of trade here, but you hardly hear about anything ‘Australian’ other than Ugg boots in the US. This small incidence surprised me a lot because in San Diego we just wear jeans and tank tops all the time. Sometimes I feel that people, mainly other women, look at us just because we don’t look as complex. Perhaps part of this could be explained because we live in a very trendy area.” Another student at a nightclub saw that “Melbourne is definitely the

most fashion forward of all the Australian cities. This was quite evident while people-watching on the streets but it was even more obvious in the nightclubs.” She was tempted to go shopping for new clothes all the time, and she noticed “how often the girls here like to check out what you’re wearing or give you ‘the once over’ as they call it.” She said, “I found out that I enjoy observing new fashion trends; I’m just too thrifty to try and keep up with them.”

Kinship

Students learned how Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwanese cultures viewed old age as a privilege and placed emphasis on respecting elders. Elders were appreciated because they had had many life experiences and could share their wisdom with new generations. Students observed how co-workers in China were closer friends than co-workers in America. One student noted how: “One’s company or ‘dang wei’ is something that stays with you for life.” Students also felt a kinship among their colleagues and friends at their host institutions. In Australia, students enjoyed having lunch regularly with their co-workers to socialize and solve cryptic crossword puzzles together. They planned to make a cryptic crossword as a gift for their friends at Monash University before leaving, which would include some of their inside jokes as answers.

Globalization

Students found many American stores and restaurants in their host countries. There were many Wal-Mart stores in Beijing for instance. Many students realized the profound cultural, economic, and political impact the U.S. had on their host countries as well. Students noticed few cultural barriers between Australia and the U.S., and viewed Australians as being very aware of American culture and politics, mainly due to the Australian coverage of American media. Life in Japan was more westernized than students had expected. Students found that the “average Japanese” was very similar to the “average American” in many ways. When students understood this connection they were more able to enjoy their experiences in Japan. People in Taiwan were curious about people’s lifestyle in the U.S. They asked students about the education system, how students use their free time, when they begin doing research, and about the job market. They mostly listened to the students’ responses, and if they asked a personal question it was done so with the intention of keeping the conversation going and getting to know the student better.

Addressing Stereotypes of America

Although perceptions of the U.S. varied from person to person, students noticed particular trends in how the people of their host country viewed America. Students found that addressing stereotypes of America gave them a context to reflect upon their culture and lives in a unique way, and it enabled them to gain a better grasp of American culture as well.

A student in Japan noticed that the people she conversed with at the Cybermedia Center had a positive image of the U.S., especially if they had prior experience living in the U.S. A friend of one the students in Japan thought that everyone in America

supported George Bush, which the student found to be humorous. He and other students often conversed with colleagues and friends about the cultural differences between Japan and America, and he agreed with many of the American stereotypes his colleagues had, including “fixations with big food, big cars, etc., and lack of mass transportation”.

Students came across Chinese people who viewed Americans as wealthy. Strangers, clerks, and taxi drivers in China asked students what their life was like in America, as well as their standard of living and financial situation. One student explained to others that not all Americans are automatically wealthy. Students’ colleagues at the CNIC often asked the students if they were dating anyone. Friends and colleagues viewed Americans as relationship experts. A student tried to convince her friends and colleagues that she was not a Casanova of relationships, but to no avail. She believed the popularity of American cinema in China, with sitcoms and movies showcasing romance and sex, gave Chinese people the impression that American media accurately reflects the majority of Americans’ lifestyle.

New Perspectives

Being in a foreign country for nine weeks gave students a new perspective on their lives. Students learned that Australian news took into account a more global picture than American news. They discovered that even though Australians were more reserved than most Americans, they were more outgoing, approachable, and open to talking with strangers. A student noted how: “It appears people don’t have the same inhibitions of Americans who often keep to themselves, avoiding any unnecessary interaction with others, especially strangers. Instead, they are far more willing to go out of their way, even after a long day, to help others like us lost ones.” This allowed her and other students to approach strangers with more ease and ask for help when in need. They also wanted to do more to help others. A student in Japan realized, “Japan’s not such a bad place”. She reflected: “After being here for only two weeks, I’m already becoming more appreciative of things back at home. I also admire the people that live out their lives everyday here in Japan...it’s really not an easy task sometimes.” A student in China said: “I think when I get back I will be looking at things in a different light. Being immersed in a new culture for nine weeks has ironically made me more aware of American culture. I used to think that ‘American’ was not really a culture because everything seemed so ‘normal’, but after seeing America through the eyes of an outsider, I can now recognize certain ideas and practices as very distinctly American.” Many students felt a resolve to spend less time inside and more time going out to meet new people and explore new places upon their return.

Anxieties about returning to America

Many students expressed their anxiety about returning to America. They were worried about starting school again or securing a job. They were anxious about returning to their relationships because they feared they had missed out on other people’s lives. Some students were apprehensive about re-adjusting to their “old lives”, but they were

grateful to be returning to San Diego food, weather, the many comforts of home, and their friends and families.

Section 4: Effects of Program on Students' Future: How has this experience changed you and your goals for the future?

Australia

"I have evolved a new view of my home country from the eyes of the Australians. I have learned that other countries take the United States more seriously than we probably think about when we are actually in the country. The Australians keep a close watch upon everything from popular culture to politics. I found it interesting to be in a foreign place when such chaos was happening in the world where the US has such an influencing factor."

"From working on my project I learned so much about applying science globally since e-research can be done virtually anywhere and we have communicated with different people for work. I have learned the importance of cooperation between different people and that things usually do not happen overnight...teamwork and collaboration are very important in science. If you are frustrated, or something crashes that is out of your control, things will generally pick up the next day...if you are stuck on a problem, perhaps working on something else and coming back the next morning will inspire new ideas...if we already knew everything, there would be no need to research...even if progress is slow, it is still a contribution to the scientific world...if you relax when you work, you tend to be cleverer approaching problems. Most importantly, in the real world, things do not always work on the first try, but by being persistent you can achieve the end results. Keeping a positive attitude is key."

"When I return to the U.S., I know I'll want to explore San Diego much more than I have in the three years that I have lived there. Since it's so easy to get around here (via train, tram or bus), I feel like I already know the city of Melbourne better than I know the city of San Diego. One of the first things I notice when I go back will likely be the huge difference in public transportation, which is a big issue since I don't own a car, but hopefully I will be able to convince my friends to go out more often."

"Most importantly, I've learned that miscommunication is unavoidable, but kindness is not so easily misunderstood. That when communication is difficult, simple gestures and mannerisms can make a world of difference. A smile can go a long way to helping someone feel more at ease, and holding the door for someone makes them more inclined to hold the door for another."

Japan

"I think the most valuable lesson that I've learned is that collaborative work is a lot more productive than trying to solve a problem by myself. I have been spending many days trying to do research about streaming data from one cluster system to another. Recently, we had a lecturer from Taiwan come to Osaka University to present NCHC research on

tiled display systems. Through discussion with him, I discovered some other ways to approach the problems I'm encountering right now. So now, I'm not only an American student working in Japan, I'm an American student working in Japan collaborating with a researcher from Taiwan."

"I look forward to seeing my family and friends. I think I won't know what exactly I left behind until I go home and compare the experience from the ones I had this summer. I definitely think that I have taken many things for granted back at home. Although I'll miss all the fun and adventures I had this summer, I feel that it's time to go home and return to my old life with the new perspectives and ideas that I learned in the past three months."

"From my experiences here, I think I will have many new things I've learned that will become part of my life back home. Working on such an independent level will definitely have an effect academically. I think I've learned a lot when it comes to problem solving and making strategies for work."

Taiwan

"I think this trip definitely made me a much more flexible person, in terms of living style. I take things much easier now especially if they're not the way I want them to be. I also feel that this experience has made me more independent, in this case I mean academically and career-wise. The environment is different from school where you're mostly told what to do with a little place for independent work. In my case, a broad general description of the project and what its desired goals were was given to me; however the details of what should be my main focus and the approach I should take in order to make that goal happen were up to me to figure out."

"I believe that so far one of the amazing aspects of this culture that I have explored, and I have been very much touched by it, is the respect and love that they have for their elderly. In my culture (I am from Iran, so I as well come from an eastern culture) elderly are also very much praised and respected...I really admire this aspect of the Taiwanese culture."

China

"Being in China has taught me not to take things for granted. I've realized how much of a bubble I live in back home and that I have never really appreciated the comfortable life I've been blessed with until I was exposed to so much poverty and hardships that people here face everyday. Even here, I feel guilty spending money on a nice meal or a piece of clothing because although it translates to a reasonable price in U.S. dollars, in China it might be one person's monthly salary or possibly even more."

"The most important thing I hope to integrate when I return is the hope that one day I will be able to come back to work. I don't want to let go of this dream, but being here has shown me how important it is to know the language and not being able to read and write is a huge burden at times. Although I will not be taking Mandarin classes at UCSD, I've gotten a set of Chinese learning books and plan to devote a bit of time each week to practice."

“The most valuable lesson that I have learned so far in my host environment is survival of the fittest. China, especially in large cities (e.g. Beijing), is overpopulated. It is extremely difficult to find a job here even with a college degree. I learned from my colleagues that China is trying to mass produce college graduates. Therefore, a college degree no longer ensures a job. People here work long hours and get only a fraction of what we get in the U.S. for the same, if not less, amount of work. The job market is incredibly competitive here. I learned that the global job market in general is getting more competitive and that only the best will survive.”

“At first, I was apprehensive about my project because it didn’t seem to involve a lot of my major, bioengineering. After learning so much though, I’m actually glad that my project wasn’t closely related to my major. I’ve learned that the real world isn’t divided into majors, and most work requires knowledge of many areas of science. I’ve also discovered something new that really interests me—drug design. As my team leader at CNIC wisely observed, ‘A doctor can save lives one at a time, but a good researcher can save millions of lives with one discovery.’ This has certainly made me think twice about what I want to do in the future!”