

# HISTORY BECOMES HERITAGE

## SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS TO WAR MEMORIALS IN JAPAN AND THE USA AAS conference Toronto, Canada 2012

### ABSTRACT

This paper lays out the findings from an interdisciplinary study of iconic museums and memorial sites in Japan and the USA and the impact of school field trips to those sites on the ways the Pacific Theater of World War II is remembered. Data was collected through surveys of high school and college students, through on-site field observations of student behavior, and through examination of the museum and memorial site displays, brochures and websites. In the larger study, data from Japan and the USA is contrasted with data from Korea, where World War II is virtually absent from the current remembrance discourse except in relation to Japan's colonization of Korea. This particular analysis and the conference presentation are based on Japan and the USA, on observations recorded in photographs and video as well as on quantitative data derived from over 500 student surveys.

Findings: Japanese students are distinctive in the frequency with which they express concern about war-induced suffering. After school field trips students in both the USA and Japan demonstrate increased respect for their own nation, inspired in part by their new appreciation for its richness, in the sense of varied local scenery and differing cultural traditions. Schools in Japan are committed to serious student involvement in the social and organizational systems which make such trips possible. US schools are more informal and less uniform in their approach to planning and executing school trips. Student attitudes towards patriotic sentiment result in comparable changes in the two countries.

“Those who think museums are about the past have got it wrong.  
Public practices of remembrance are always about the future. . . . specific ways of enacting public history  
initiate the task of inheritance” p. 113, 114<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

This paper marks the conclusion of a six-year long study which has examined the transmission from generation to generation of histories and memories of recent wars in the USA, Japan and the Republic of Korea. The work began as a rather simple study of the impact of school study tours to World War II museums and memorial sites (Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Tokyo-Edo museum etc.) on Japanese secondary school students. Over the years the research agenda has grown significantly, making international comparisons by adding the USA and then South Korea, and broadening the time span, backwards to cover Japanese colonization of Korea and forwards to include the Korean War and subsequent US/Korean joint military operations in Vietnam and Korea. For the purposes of this conference and presentation, the argument folds back in again -- focusing on World War II and on Japan and the USA. For those interested in Korea and in other historical eras, additional material is available on the *History Becomes Heritage* section of [my website](#).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roger I. Simon, “Museums, Civic Life, and the Educative Force of Remembrance.” *Journal of Museum Education*, Volume 31, Number 2, Summer 2006, pp. 113–122

<sup>2</sup> The visual material which structures the conference presentation is also available in more detail on the project website. [blogs.evergreen.edu/meyerknh](http://blogs.evergreen.edu/meyerknh)

School tours in general covered a variety of activities blending war remembrance with international travel, or with visits to theme parks, which are particularly popular in Japan and Korea. In each country, students also headed out to experience the joys and challenges of the natural environment. American students often left the school grounds to “do,” to “act” competitively doing sports and playing music, or simply with pride if theirs was the group chosen to play at Disneyland or the Mall in DC. They went to “young business leader” conferences, and visited Arlington Cemetery at the same time. They might be learning French and the class traveled to Paris to develop their conversational skills while they learned about World War II in Europe. Japanese students very rarely report any kind of action component to their outings. They leave the confines of school to enter into a wider world, and it is not necessarily even a serious world. High school skiing trips are clearly fun, and yet the students reported that though skiing was their first priority, they learned as well about the people and life and culture of northern Japan. And when they came back from Okinawa or Tokyo they had a new appreciation for the people who have gone before, a new sense of the national agenda and experience. Since a given tour often mixed memorial and other destinations, in this study the impact of the entire journey was considered as a whole.

Bernard Bailyn, in distinguishing education from schooling, labels education: “the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across generations.”<sup>3</sup> War memorials and museums are embedded in the “cultural curriculum,”<sup>4</sup> the vehicle for becoming socialized into the national consciousness, a process that is one strand of children’s education. Students on school trips in both countries number in the millions every year. In 2009 Nagasaki saw 715,000, a large majority of them school visitors. The National Air and Space Museum has more visitors than any museum worldwide and every day the majority are school-aged young people. In the surveys nearly 100% of the Japanese students went on multi-day educational trips and well over 50% of the Americans did so as well. Anyone resident in Washington DC sees such groups day after day. School trips, have become a purposeful part of the transmission of national consciousness. Exploring the contemporary public meanings that attach to war-related sites in Japan and the United States also has numerous dimensions of which school visits to memorial sites are only one aspect. The nature of the national consciousness to hold the memories of the war years of the mid twentieth century is not a settled affair in either nation. Furthermore the US and Japan still diverge as they

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<sup>3</sup> Bailyn, Bernard, *Education and the forming of American Society*, Cambridge MA 1960 p.14 quoted in Wineberg Sam et al, “Common Belief and the Cultural Curriculum: An intergenerational study of historical consciousness” *American Educational Research Journal*, Mar 2007, Vol 44, No. 1, pp. 40-76, p.70.

<sup>4</sup> Wineburg Sam, Susan Mosborg, Dan Porat and Ariel Duncan. “Common belief and the cultural curriculum: An intergenerational study of history” *American Educational Research Journal* 44, 1 (Mar. 2007): p.43. Wineberg lists the following as components of the US cultural curriculum for war and peace: Forest Gump, Ken Burns documentaries, school sponsored trip to Washington DC, parents’ stories, Homer Simpson, rapper Immortal Technique and satirist Jon Stewart.

explain their war to today's generations of children.<sup>5</sup> Still, in both places group travel to historical and other national sites succeeds in transforming students' sense of historical facts into a sense of national heritage, a heritage for which they are personally committed. Surveys and field observations demonstrate that these trips are much more than "schooling." They are clear examples of Bailyn's vision of "education."

Although school trips fill only a few days in a student's life, their impact can be strong. Active learning theory helps explain their durable effect.<sup>6</sup> The transformation of student thinking takes place in part because learning becomes a whole body activity, moving out of the classroom and into the very places where the history took place. Equally important transformations take place because the history is fixed into a wider context, as students see how they connect personally to the history of the nation as a whole, to its cultures and peoples and to specific local regional features. Furthermore, this new appreciation is developing under conditions which allow student friendships to become more intense, while enabling them to experience directly some previously more mysterious sides adult life -- drinking, handling money and how the teachers behave out of school. Student learning is framed and supported both by intensely personal and by formal public standards of socialization.

Considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to deriving the meanings, purposes and limitations of national historical narratives as laid out in school textbooks. Academics debate the "accuracy" of the historical facts presented, and make comparisons between the stories of the same events published in different countries.<sup>7</sup> In the US, raucous political claims echoed around the attempt to lay out a "national" history curriculum, a goal initiated by the first President Bush and implemented by his successor, Clinton, in the mid 1990s. In 2011, similar debates swirled around the powerful Texas board which controls

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<sup>5</sup> These countries are by no means unique in conveying partial and evolving accounts of their wars. See for example Sebald, W.G., (born German but working as an adult in the UK,) who examines his homeland's refusal to discuss and critique Allied bombing of German civilians in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, New York, Random House 2002. The Chinese who these days denounce Japan for its war time activities, ignored the international aspects of that war entirely during Mao's period. See Cobel, Parks M. "China's 'New Remembering' of the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance 1937-47." *The China Quarterly*, 2007, Issue 190, June, pp 394-410. Henry Rossen's work illuminates the difficulties in France: *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1945*. Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Morgan, April and Lucinda Peach., eds. *Ethics and Global Politics: The Active Learning Sourcebook*, Stirling VA: Kumarian Press, 2004. Cole, Elizabeth., ed. *Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation*. Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007. Torney-Purta, Judith, Rainer Lehmann, Hans Oswald and Wolfram Schulz, *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen*. Amsterdam: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2002.

<sup>7</sup>Foster, Stuart; Nicholls, Jason: "America in World War II: An Analysis of History Textbooks from England, Japan, Sweden, and the United States of Elementary Social Studies Textbooks, 1978-1995," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, v20 n3 p214-233 Spr 2005..Santoli, Susan P, "The treatment of World War II in the secondary school national history textbook of the six major powers involved in the war," *Journal of Social Studies Research*, Winter 1999. Torney-Purta, Judith, "Adolescents'Political Socialization in Changing Contexts: An International Study in the Spirit of Nevitt Sanford," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 25, No. 3, p465-478, 2004. Hanai, Kiroku, "A textbook contradiction", *Japan Times* April 24 2006

statewide content and therefore influences national textbook authorship. Anxieties rise up regularly in Japan as well, whenever conservatives, who deride mainstream histories of World War II as “masochistic,” make yet another “patriotic” text available to schools. This in turn prompts outrage in South Korea and in China along with complaints that even mainstream Japanese textbooks fail to express enough chagrin for the war and cultural damage which wracked both nations during the first half of the twentieth century. That field trips might have a significance greater than textbooks came as one of the earliest findings from this study -- survey respondents consistently proved unable to recall the details of any classroom academic preparation, neither sources nor content, before they left on their study tours, while numerous details of the trip’s wider learning, the destinations and organizing systems proved quite easy to recall. I will return to this topic at the end of this paper in a brief discussion of action options implied in this finding.

Perhaps surprisingly, plans for new war memorials and museum exhibits in both countries continue to draw as much genuine public debate and disagreement about the wartime era as do new textbooks. It can take no more than a preliminary proposal for a memorial, even as little as a specific panel of text to generate domestic and sometimes international controversies. Plans for the newest museum in Tokyo, the Showa-kan, were derided by progressives and other nationals for their focus on civilian suffering, which is believed to be reinforcing the implication that Japan was the victim of World War II, an impression still easy to gather both at Hiroshima and at Nagasaki. In the US, public controversy about the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum’s preliminary design for an exhibit about the Enola Gay, the plane that delivered the Hiroshima bomb, led to a Congressional investigation and the resignation of the museum’s director.<sup>8</sup> One might think that for the US, a national memorial commemorating WWII would be relatively uncontroversial, and certainly the site on the Mall in Washington DC opened in 2004 caused much less stir than the Vietnam Memorial wall, but even that memorial stirred controversies about its siting and its triumphalist message.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to the cynical view of Japan’s sense of history, common in the US as well as in Korea and China, controversies and debates inside Japan about Japan’s role in

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<sup>8</sup> See for example: Smith, Kerry, “The Showa Hall: Memorializing Japan's War at Home,” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 24, No. 4, (Autumn, 2002), pp. 35-64, p.41, Hein, Laura and Akiko Takenaka, “Exhibiting World War II in Japan and the United States,” *Japan Focus e-journal* <http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/2477>; Breen, John, “Yasukuni Shrine: Ritual and Memory” *Japan Focus e-journal* <http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/2060>, Seraphim, Franziska, *War memory and social politics in Japan, 1945-2005* /Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Asia Center, 2006; Harwit, Martin, *An exhibit denied : lobbying the history of Enola Gay*, New York, NY : Copernicus, 1996; Wallace, Mike, *Mickey Mouse history and other essays on American memory* Philadelphia, Temple U Press, 1996; Macdonald, Sharon and Gordon Fyfe. *Theorizing Museums:: representing identity and diversity in a changing world* Oxford ; Blackwell Publishers 1998

<sup>9</sup> Scholars who might suggest that there was no dispute about WWII should examine the dissertation *Reciprocity of sight: the rhetorics of contestation and commemoration on the National Mall*, University of Illinois, 2006 Jennifer A. Jones describes the debate as part of a long standing and evolving view of the uses to which Americans put the Washington DC Mall.

World War II are often as intense as those in the USA, and certainly more so than debates in China.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of any controversial elements, this study demonstrates that visits by Japanese and American students to World War II memorial sites and museums are likely to increase in students their sense of national identification, their respect for their own history, and the value they place on their own homeland.

## METHODOLOGY

The study collected data in three different forms: 1) observations of student behavior at key destinations for school field trips, recorded in field notes, on video and in photographs, 2) official statements in brochures, websites and wall-mounted plaques describing the significance of the sites visited by schools, 3) about 250 surveys administered in classrooms in each country which asked advanced high school and college students about their experiences on school field trips. The first phase, in 2006, took place in Japan with a follow-up in 2008. Phase 2 in 2007 and 2008 took place in the United States and phase 3 took place in Korea in 2009 and 2010. The tools used in the analysis this data are interdisciplinary. The survey design and simple statistics followed standard social science protocols. The interpretive categories are derived from scholars in moral education and political psychology, and from research into historical consciousness and public memory.<sup>11</sup> This particular study is unusual in that it integrates a focus on what teenagers on school trips *do* at museums and memorials, and what they *say* about their travels, with a focus on what the museum displays *do* and *say*, thereby connecting the “consumption” of museum/memorial content with its “production.”

1) SITE VISITS Each site visit lasted several hours and almost all the sites were visited more than once. Each visit entailed observations made out in the open – at the Thousand Cranes memorial in Hiroshima for example, or at the Arlington Cemetery in Washington DC and also observations inside the neighboring buildings usually called museums. Observations were also made at key transit locations -- at airports, on Japanese high speed, Shinkansen trains and in bus stations etc. Often I was able also to record the spoken site-specific explanations given by tour guides and teachers. Occasionally I interacted with students or their teachers, but only to ask which schools and regions they came from. In Washington DC I also traveled on the major tour bus circuits, recording the guides’ comments about the significance of the

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<sup>10</sup> Seaton, Philip A. *Japan's Contested War Memories : The 'Memory Rifts' in Historical Consciousness of World War II*. London: Routledge, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Public memory [is] a phenomenon that cries out for interdisciplinary cooperation in its study. For example, without doubt, the ultimate repository of memory is the individual human mind, yet its collective characteristics are everywhere to be seen, in family stories handed down, in conventional wisdoms that govern political and social activities, in monuments, museums, and holidays that invite remembrance on a massive scale. Edy, Jill A, “Review of *Framing Public Memory*. Edited by Kendall R. Phillips., Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press. 2004.” *Political Psychology*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2005, p.654.

sites. In Japan on-site evidence was collected at Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Okinawa, Osaka Peace Museum, Kyoto Peace Museum, and in Tokyo at the Yaskuni Shrine and Yushukan (museum), the Edo-Tokyo history museum, the Showa-kan and the Sumitomo peace museum. In the United States I focused on sites in Washington DC, observing at the war memorials on the National Mall: WWII, Japanese War Experience, FDR, Vietnam, and Korea, and visiting the Smithsonian buildings housing the National Air and Space Museum and the Museum of American History.<sup>12</sup> An associate visited Pearl Harbor on my behalf.<sup>13</sup> The findings about sites and student behavior are based on records that include over 15 hours of video and about 1800 photographs.

2) SURVEYS Over 500 surveys were administered in Japan, and the USA. The students who completed the surveys were not selected to represent any particular sampling of school or college populations, so generalizations and statistical inferences are not appropriate. The numbers provided in this paper are purely descriptive of the particular people surveyed. In Japan most students were in the Kansai region in central Japan, specifically in Himeji, Kobe and Osaka attending either high school or college, and they were mostly life-long residents of central Japan. A small number were based in Kyushu in the city of Miyazaki and in Tokyo. In the United States, the students were all in Washington State when surveyed. However, since American families move quite frequently and students often travel out of state for college, these respondents represented high schools in many parts of the country, the west coast predominating. In Japan and the US students attended both public and private high schools and colleges. Some of the students in both countries were studying the other country – Japan/Japanese language in the US and the United States/English language in Japan. The surveys were administered in the classroom in the presence of the teacher. I administered the surveys myself and was given complete freedom to introduce the survey process as I chose. Teachers did not see the answers given by their students, and there is no reason to believe that the fact they were in their teacher's presence had any particular influence on the ways students responded.

Respondents identified their school trip destinations as they chose. To understand the opportunities for studying and thinking about World War II, I knew from pretests that Japanese students would tell me about visits to Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Okinawa. US school visits are much more varied, but it seemed very likely that some of the American students would describe about visits to Washington DC and visits to

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<sup>12</sup> On previous occasions though not directly connected, as part of this project I also observed schools visiting the Philadelphia Independence Mall the new Constitution Museum and the Holocaust Museum.

<sup>13</sup> In South Korea I visited war-related sites including the DMZ, Soedaemun Prison, the National War Museum, and sites associated with democratization, including the city of Gwang-ju and the Independence Museum in Choenan.

Hawai'i.<sup>14</sup> In coding the remaining destinations responses were clustered as Key Big Cities – Tokyo/New York, as theme parks – Disneyland/Huistenbosch etc., as Nature – rural near home/environmental education, International – which included all out of country trips, and Local Key Sites – Kyoto & Nara for Kansai/Home State cities for the US. For Japanese respondents it proved necessary include a special entry for “skiing.” For Americans there turned out to be a broad category that, rather than being place specific was activity specific and represented the many ways US schools send students out to perform or compete – athletics, music, theater, model UN, Y camp etc. A second data entry system coded and interpreted this kind of American travel experience. The last item on the survey offered students open-ended space to describe three things they learned on their trips. These answers too were coded in clusters: war/peace, behavioral norms (friendship, rules, independence), local features (history, culture, language and food). Items that did not fit the clustered categories were transcribed in the student’s own words. It is from the open-ended questions that the study draws most of the data about the enduring learning which resulted from their travels.

3) TEXTS AND DISPLAYS In collecting data for this project, decisions about how and whether to record specific views and texts were governed by the behavior of the people visiting the sites, more than by the intensity of academic debate about the sites. There were occasions when I focused on placards and views that particularly caught my own attention as a knowledgeable visitor, but most of the time I was guided by the behavior of students, recording what they stopped to observe. While this paper and presentation include a small number of images, a larger collection of photographs with commentary and short videos, to illustrate the museum displays and audience behavior are available on the [History Becomes Heritage website](#). And though they are defined as historical settings, many memorial settings



also offer specific opportunities for ritual and spiritual contemplation. At such places, the Japanese collect displays of origami cranes while Americans tend to proffer standard remembrance wreaths. These historical sites are also settings in which students, particularly in Japan are invited to explore and be moved by stories of specific individual suffering, and Japanese students are also encouraged to leave written reflective comments at the sites as well.

<sup>14</sup> The US survey gave students a chance to list the places they went on family trips. 23% of the trips went to Hawai'i, None of the school trips included Hawai'i.

## Findings

Shugaku Ryoko, the Japanese term for school field trip, is a pervasive part of the Japanese educational system and has been for several generations. 97.7% of the Japanese junior high school students said they went on trips. The percentage saying they had been on a high school trip seemed lower, only 76.5%, but nearly half that drop is attributable to the respondents who had not yet been, since they were surveyed in a class that was planning a trip to Thailand for later that year. Setting aside those cases, percentages for Japanese high school and junior high school trips were comparable. American students were far less likely to travel as part of an organized school/team/club trip. Only 44% went in junior high school; the number went up to 63.4% in high school.<sup>15</sup>

In both countries patterns of visiting in junior high differed from high school visits. War and peace and places of national civic importance were more often the destination for junior high students. In Japan 33.2% of junior high visits were to Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Okinawa. By high school that number had been cut to 17.8%. Tokyo was a destination for over 20% of the junior high school trips and only 10% in high school. The big attractions for Japanese high school students were virtually non-existent in junior high – 10.9% set off on international travels and 30.7% went skiing in northern Japan. For Americans, junior high visits to Washington DC represented 8.9% of the total and only 2.6% of the high school visits. Americans too increased their international travel in high school 20.1%, although they were already going abroad in fairly frequently in junior high -- 9% of the trips, -- often to our neighboring countries Mexico and Canada.<sup>16</sup> While US surveys produced only limited numbers of written student responses, six days of site visits made it possible to observe the behavior of hundreds and hundreds of students in Washington DC.

The site visits support the survey findings that school tours occur within each country in their own distinctive form.<sup>17</sup> At all Japanese sites, students visited in large groups 40 – 100 strong. They wore school uniforms, and classes and schools followed one another from one segment of the site to the next. They carried out very similar activities – prayers at a shrine as they delivered strands of origami cranes,

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<sup>15</sup> In the US some students are in “middle” schools 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade and others in “junior high 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>” In Japan all students are in junior high and both junior high and high school enroll only three grades each. For ease of reading in both countries I use the Japanese labels for schools throughout.

<sup>16</sup> In the United States the survey ended with comparable questions about family-centered visits to specific places (both historical and not) including the Gettysburg battlefield. Once again Junior High school age trips predominate though not as dramatically.

<sup>17</sup> Destination types have distinctive characteristics within each country as well, regardless of age group: Americans put considerable energy into visiting nature – environmental education, rural camping and mountain climbing – junior high US 10.9% (Japan 4.5%), high school US 14.2% (in Japan 3.2%). By contrast 20.4% of Japanese junior high visits included theme parks (though there were few such trips in high school) and Americans in both age groups almost never went to theme parks: US junior high 1.5%, high school 3%. Combined with the Japanese high school trips to Hokkaido for skiing, their visits to theme parks suggest that the Japanese, despite their international reputation for an academic and demanding school curriculum, send their teenagers off campus to have fun. By contrast, the United States, whose national political choices are often reviled by other nations for a lack of environmental mindfulness, actually puts considerable public effort into outdoor and environmental education.



advice and stories from a local docent, lunching in a specially assigned museum conference room, out of



Tour Guide dispensing box lunches

identical bento boxes. Theirs were shared, school oriented and common experiences. By their clothing and by their patterns of movement, US students suggested neither that their visit was compulsory, nor that it linked into any particular plan of political socialization for the average US teenager. By implication, the process supported individualism and an informal approach to the culture and nation. The only American exception was at Arlington National Cemetery when suddenly these same students resembled their Japanese counterparts -- uniform behavior and a professional guide. Elsewhere U.S.

school visitors intermingled freely and sometimes indistinguishably with families on holiday and other ordinary tourists. While American students often wore matching T-shirts, their slogans told many different stories: a senior high school graduation celebration, a school band visiting Washington, a local school from Washington DC on a field trip.<sup>18</sup> On their site visits, US groups quickly broke up into small sub-groups of 4-8 students, often each individual paired with a “buddy” for company, and each group explored and toured most of the displays as they chose.<sup>19</sup> Though they gathered together at meal times, they ate in the public cafeteria with the rest of the visitors. It came to seem as though young Americans were taken to Washington DC for almost personal reasons, to seek out their own share of the nation’s inheritance,<sup>20</sup> while young Japanese traveled to Hiroshima and Okinawa to pay their respects to their national ancestors, and in doing so they were joined to a national family, and might be asked to take on ongoing obligations to live in honor to these ancestors.

### Education: The context and the specifics

The evidence of the educational consequences of these travels comes from the content provided by the museums, from the brochures and other materials describing travel options and from student responses

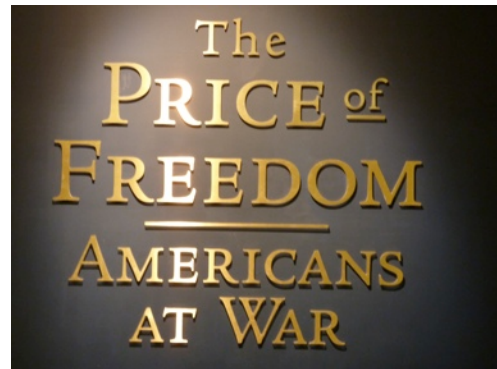
<sup>18</sup> As an observer in the US it was virtually impossible to tell the difference between a professional guide and a teacher. In Japan the distinction was always clear. The guides wear a uniform like the students, and the teachers are in ordinary work attire, though when the weather is hot they are likely in shirt sleeves not jackets. It is also often difficult to tell in the US, whether particular people of any age are even traveling as part of a large group. Some groups do wear matching T-shirts and if they do, the uniform belongs to adults and students alike. In many US groups teachers and students and guides all wear unremarkable clothing. Furthermore, since each school field trip includes a large number of adults, the most effective way to distinguish a tour from a family is to guess that on a weekday four to six teenagers, all about the same age, whether with an adult or alone, are almost certainly part of an organized group.

<sup>19</sup> Hein, George - *Learning in the Museum*, New York, Routledge, 1988, and museum education specialists who see learning as a process of knowledge construction which can only build on what students already know, would probably consider this the ideal way to visit a museum.

<sup>20</sup> Timothy Luke’s exploration of the differences between history and heritage in museum displays about the Americanization of the West in the US helped clarify this distinction. *Museum Politics*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

to the open-ended questions at the end of the survey, describing the memorable features of the trips.<sup>21</sup> The longer I worked with the surveys the clearer it became that the comments about war and peace were part of a broader kind of learning that took place on these trips. Visits to Washington DC and to Tokyo, to Okinawa and Pearl Harbor connected each new generation to the past. And though it is clear that access to a potent experience was a reality shared by Japanese and the Americans, there are several significant differences in the messages in museum displays, in the cohesion in the plans for the the trip and in the social dynamics of the experience.

The National Air and Space Museum in Washington DC, the site to which all students visiting DC seem to go, teaches the heroic sides of U.S. military prowess. It offers almost no suggestion that the Allies bombed cities and civilians in WW II. Even the Enola Gay, which dropped the Hiroshima bomb, is shown simply as a machine with a detailed display on the cockpit and a minor display about it's most famous pilot, but there is nothing on the atomic bomb cargo, and nothing on the target. The NAS Museum displays rockets and planes, moon rocks and space suits, and has a large area devoted to the environmental research made possible by U.S. technology. Americans are "doers" in the museum, and they try at all times to do "good." At its sister museum on American History, that good in wartime is unequivocally defined as "freedom." Unintended consequences are not addressed. When constructing a new display NASM tries to make Americans proud of the successes ahead in the future. In June 2008 the museum was opening a new section devoted to the technological marvels in unmanned aircraft on reconnaissance and carrying out bombing raids. As the guide put it, these planes would be flown "by a man thousands of miles away wielding a joy-stick." His words evoked a kid's video game and not the heavy damage that would be wrought by drones, as the media now describe the unmanned aircraft, as early as 2011 in the wars around Afghanistan.



By contrast, the Japanese museum and memorial displays are focused on the suffering in World War II. Some of the suffering is made to look undeserved because it is juxtaposed with photos of smiling, perhaps callous U.S. pilots and military planners. Most of the suffering, however, is not directly linked to a particular perpetrator although controversy is very likely to emerge in Japan, as it did over a display in Okinawa, if a museum is thought to suggest that the Japanese government had any direct role in making the citizens suffer. While Hiroshima is the most famous site, and the numbers killed there the largest brought about by a single plane, for the school visitors the memorial to the school-girl nurses at Himeyuri seems to have a more poignant impact. A wall shows the photos of 250 school girls, in uniforms just like the ones the teens are wearing today, who were forcibly conscripted as nurses in the closing weeks of the

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<sup>21</sup> The surveys made no effort to distinguish learning from JH and HS tours.

war and then forcibly ejected from the safety of underground hospital caves days before the ending, to try to survive above ground in the face of advancing U.S. forces. Most died. Many Japanese memorial museums these days offer story books and computers, where they spell out what is known of individuals



who died. At Himeyuri, these large-print folios are in a quiet and darkened room. And when the students finally leave, they are invited to write their feelings and to leave their reflections at the museum. The last wall of at the memorial posts constantly updated copies of these reflections.

Japanese students in surveys and on site demonstrated that they left the museum with profound empathy for these girls so the Himeyuri museum has succeeded in its stated goal: “The museum renovated the entire exhibition in 2004 so that we can better communicate our message to the younger

generations.”<sup>22</sup>

Linked to museum and memorial focus on war’s suffering, Japanese students in the survey’s open-ended questions mentioned war and peace issues quite frequently, much more often than the Americans. Over 20% of the Japanese students had such issues on their minds versus only 2.1% in the US, even though nothing in the survey process suggested to either group that this was my central concern. Some Japanese visited the Diet and Tokyo and the visitors to Washington always went to see the Capital, so there were comments also in both groups referring to politics and government, but nothing like as many as the Japanese comments about war and peace.

item	Japan%	US %
War and peace	21.7	2.6
Skiing	10.4	1.1
History national or regional	22.5	18.7

According to the survey, on their return to school about half the students in all cohorts reported sharing photos and talking with family. The key national difference between the more formal educational side of the trip was that at least half the Japanese students also wrote follow-up reports, though almost none made public presentations. Students in US junior high school were similar, but by high school 75% of the Americans were entirely free of follow up obligations at school.

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<sup>22</sup> Explanatory plaque at the entrance to Himeyuri Memorial, Okinawa. English provided by the memorial.

### On-site tour group behavior

Once at the museums, US roving student groups were more varied than their Japanese counterparts in whether and how much any of them are absorbing “content.” At the National Air and Space Museum, the center of historical information about WWII in Washington DC, teens tended to wander past the displays, focusing seemingly randomly on an occasional particular item. Of two boys who seemed to be quietly watching a film on carrier-based air crews, one turned out to be texting on his cell phone while the other was gazing vaguely off into space. If an adult was expounding seriously on the displays to associated teens, they were most often members of a single family rather than a school group, usually an older man explaining things to a child, most likely his son. The exceptions to this rather random behavioral pattern were at Arlington, and also at the Vietnam War Memorial where the wall’s design itself combined with the fairly constrained physical space tended to keep people moving as a group at about the same pace and most people engaged in the same activities – touching names, staring at reflections in the shiny black surface, stopping to stare at a note or momento.

In Japan the students also wandered inside the museums quite freely, much more so than they explored outside. For example in the Peace Park at Nagasaki, the guides lectured their groups on the significance of the green bell and the enormous statue. Then they stood aside while the groups went to pray and deliver their origami cranes. Then each one pointed her group in the direction of the various museums



and sent them off unescorted. Inside the museums the students walked around in ones and twos. I never attempted to record what the students said to each other at the displays, but it was clear that Japanese teens tended to look longer at each place and they talked among themselves rather less than their US counterparts. In neither country did one see many groups with formal worksheets that they would be expected to complete, though each group which had them seemed serious. The student work book provided by the Okinawa Peace Memorial Museum combined “fill in the

blank” fact questions with another classic Japanese teaching tool: “fill in the thought bubble” in which the student tries empathically to imagine what a person, say hiding in an underground cave with wounded soldiers, might be thinking.

Most Japanese visits also included prayer-like rituals and at those moments their professional tour guides slipped into the background, the teachers moved forward and students were the primary performers. In front of Sadako’s crane memorial in Hiroshima, a group from Gifu prefecture (several hundred miles away), draped in ponchos because of the pouring rain, sang several songs. An older group from a different region waited patiently despite the rain, until it was their turn to approach. This new group bowed without singing. In Nagasaki several classes delivered long strands of folded origami cranes. In Okinawa each group gathered at their own prefectural memorial. No-one in Japan regards school as a religious

experience, and yet these students were both moving their hands in classic prayer posture and participating in rituals which mimic the major annual commemorative ceremonies on each site. And they and their teachers had clearly prepared ahead of time at school to make the ritual go smoothly. The closest thing to a ritual occasion for US students in Washington DC was the walk up the hill at Arlington Cemetery to visit John F. Kennedy's grave and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier nearby. For this walk, the leaders might be professional guides or teachers. No-one stopped to pray at Kennedy's grave which officially has nothing much to do with either war or peace. At the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier rather than performing ritual themselves, groups that arrived at the right time could watch the soldiers take part in changing of the guard.

If there is one way in which Japanese and American students resembled each other closely it was in the commitment to shopping while on school tours: US junior high 55%, Japan junior high 81%, US high school 55%, Japan high school 55%. Japanese students, of course, are required to return with gifts and souvenirs for members of their families and every museum shop, shrine arcade or tourist street is crowded with places to buy carefully wrapped boxes of local sweet foods. In gift shops in Washington DC students seemed to be focused on buying site-specific souvenirs and memorabilia for themselves, also very locally oriented though almost none of them involved food and none at all involved careful wrapping. US museums are unceasing in their commitment to an educational mission – they offered history books and videos for all ages, coloring books and techno-toys that combined teaching and entertainment. But most American teens on school tours were carrying away t-shirts and candies; it was older men, perhaps with war memories of their own, who were leafing through the books.

#### Travel: Planning, Community and Behavior

These travels can only really be understood if one also examines the social dynamics of the trip. In the surveys, after their comments on their destinations it was these features of the journey, not the prior academic work which remained salient. Students were asked to identify who made decisions about where and when to go, asked who decided on practical details – packing, hotels, costs and who came along on the trips. Even though field observations had prepared me for the result, it was still startling to see from the surveys how completely the Japanese family was absent and equally startling to see how much the American family was involved, even when the trip was officially a school trip. Over 99% of the Japanese junior high school students said parents had no say any part of the trip: where, how long, activities, hotels etc. In describing high school trips, not one of the students even mentioned their parents at all, except of course for finances. For Americans, for about 50% of the trips parents had a say in decisions about where to go and large numbers went along on the tour themselves.

In the field, the absence of family in Japan was self-evident. At train stations and airports, the travel agent (often from the national, though not government Japanese Tourist Board) managed the discipline and organized the teens. Once in Hiroshima or wherever, the visitors traveled by bus and their “teachers”



were the bus guides, who are trained to describe the details of the site, and whose presence ensures that, no matter where they come from, the students are given very similar information and instructions about the significance of the site and how they should visit it. Lest the American reader imagine this to be stern and authoritarian, that is not the case. The bus guides are commonly young and friendly women often just out of junior college. They regularly joke with the teenagers, and even huge Japanese tour groups following a guide

with a flag normally look considerably more relaxed and engaged in what they are seeing than American teens in groups of four or five wandering rather aimlessly with someone else's parent who knows very little more than they do.<sup>23</sup> If American teenagers are encouraged to develop a historical consciousness, the impetus to do so and the support for their activities is heavily shaped by their families. In Japan, participation in this process is not optional, and the learning which results is uniform not casual and variable.

Student responses suggested that learning about social behavior was at least as important as new historical or other knowledge and here there were some similarities as well as major differences. In both countries the students commented frequently on friendship and on having fun or bonding with their classmates. They talked about sharing hotel rooms, about relaxing together and about sharing music. Since long distance travel is so complex, the schools in both places placed a significant emphasis on being seen in public and the students commented on learning how behave according to wider social norms. It was surprising nonetheless to see that Americans were distinctly more likely to comment on behavioral issues than the Japanese, though anyone who has traveled with a Japanese group on a bus will not be surprised to learn that there was a particular focus on punctuality among Japanese students.<sup>24</sup> Students in both groups also commented that they needed to learn about money and handling money. Americans were noticeably more likely to comment that these trips were developing their independence.

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<sup>23</sup> Individual Japanese families do play one very important part in this educational project – they pay, and shugaku ryoko travel is not truly optional. Anecdotally I learned that it was not unusual for the school to present a 100,000 yen bill (roughly \$800-1000) for a 3-5 day trip. By contrast the local community often ends up subsidizing a good deal of the cost for American students. In pilot testing the questionnaire an American student listed “fundraising” as one of the three things he learned and anyone who has had a child in US schools will be all too familiar with the car-wash, bake sale, raffle and other out reach systems for funding trips. In the surveys between 30% and 40% of the Japanese student responses said that parents handled the costs while quite a large percentage, over 15%, indicated that they simply didn't know. The US survey results demonstrate that handling the finances involved a wide variety people working together and American students seemed noticeably more likely to know who was involved, with only about 8% responding “don't know.”

<sup>24</sup> I was surprised partly because Americans seem so disorganized and casual when out in public. The only group I encountered in Washington DC that seemed particularly focused on presentation to the wider community were the student “ambassadors” visiting as part of the People to People program.

item	Japan%	US %
Friendship and fun	25.8	19
Behavior and Cooperation	26.9	38.4
independence	8.1	17.2

In both groups there was less certainty about where the money decisions were made than there was about who made choices about hotels, packing, schedule etc. and it is no surprise, given the dominance of teachers and travel professionals in Japanese school tours to discover that the adults controlled a good deal of the logistical planning. To American audiences it probably *is* a surprise to learn that teachers in Japan even control what the students could pack and bring with them. American students in high school overwhelmingly decided this for themselves. In all Japanese trips for all ages, the *activities* while on the road were more likely to be designed by students than was the case in the US. Among American students those in high school students had more say over plans, though at 19% they were far less influential than Japanese students. In Japan 40% said junior high activities were decided by students, (with and without teachers) while for high school trips that control was in the hands of 32%. Pre-departure, Japanese students were commonly assigned to very small self-managing groups and asked to take complete control of the group themselves, sharing responsibilities, scheduling and leadership.

In the field the “planning” control gives way to the actual control over the details of where each student goes and what they do. Observations provided information about movements and behavior in a way that surveys could never have done. Out in the open air, Japanese students tended to move around as an entire class, 40-50 students led by their particular guide with a single teacher in attendance. No other adults were visible at all. After a brief overall introduction, they moved across the site in a set order – cranes and prayers, lecture about the specific artifacts – sculptures bells etc. and then a closing conversation with the guide. The guides were teaching history, they were conveying facts and they made explicit in what ways they wished the students’ consciousness to be affected by the experience. In Hiroshima, students often also experienced an encounter with a Habukusa, a conversation designed to affirm among the students the suffering that resulted from the war. At these “content driven” moments teachers stayed on the periphery. American students normally maneuvered the sites in more amorphous fashion, gathering briefly as a whole, then fanning out, then gathering. When they reconvened there might be a question and answer session about the site, but the questions came from the students not the adults. Adults were not testing for expected knowledge, they were responding to questions raised by the students about the sites. Among American tour groups it was very common that the group talk was about logistics, where they were headed next, how long they would have to get there etc. People to People, a highly organized nation-wide system of tours for teenagers, was the only group to include students in rituals, delivering wreaths to the memorials on the Mall.

### Conclusion and Next Steps

As Hannah Arendt said more than once, an essential feature of future-oriented learning is that students encounter debates about public issues and that they do so in public places. From this project comes clear evidence that students encountered public issues in public places. The following samples of comments from the surveys across both groups show that whether the education was designed to be formal and uniform or individualized and informal, each learner expressed their findings in quite personal ways.<sup>25</sup>

#### Japan

- 1) *I thought that history was deep.*
- 2) *I was surprised that when I visited the historical museum in Singapore. I saw the display about the atomic bomb in Japan. The bus guide mentioned about a variety of stories during the whole tour.*
- 3) *We went to the foreigners cemetery and we learned about the oppression of Christianity so I found the change of the Japanese culture comparing the present because we are not so religious now.*
- 4) *There are a variety of cultures even in a small country like Japan. Local people keep that cultural traditions and the local people are proud of their own culture.*
- 5) *The importance of knowing history.*
- 6) *History especially the war in Okinawa in detail.*
- 7) *In Okinawa, as one of the most damaged cities, I heard the story from a person who lived in wartime. I also went into the bomb shelter. So I learned the horror of war and the importance of peace (life).*
- 8) *In Hiroshima I studied about the atomic bomb. I went to the Peace Memorial Museum and heard the story. I had even read the historical sources but couldn't know the horror of war without visiting there.*
- 9) *at the preparation study, we studied the cruel events of war which I did not know yet, and at Okinawa I saw the bomb shelter and the memorial with my own eyes and I feel deeply that we must never make war again.*

#### U.S.

- 1) *Austria — how they had supported Nazi Germany until they were then rewarded and how wrong they were.*
- 2) *Washington DC — saw monuments, learned about wars, went to museums, learned about the holocaust.*
- 3) *Washington DC -- historical artifacts and other treasures.*
- 4) *how historical events continued to affect the places which they have taken place.*
- 5) *how historical events happening thousands of miles away had affected me & how I live now.*
- 6) *I visited monuments, learned about monuments and wars also the culture of the areas we visited.*
- 7) *New York City - w/model United Nations. Learned history, international studies, food of NY and met people.*
- 8) *the world is bigger than what I thought I knew.*

What is missing however, is much sense that the students encountered any public debates about the issues. In Washington DC the bombing of Hiroshima looks heroic and essential, the only way to prevent thousands and thousands of allied casualties; in Nagasaki it looks cruel. How could the Allies drop a

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<sup>25</sup> Korean surveys were markedly more uniform, as though the students did not want to risk an individual opinion.



second bomb and on a Christian community no less? Is there any way for students in each place to see, indeed to experience a debate between these two perspectives? It is clear that in these times the textbooks students use in class will hardly serve. For those interested in historical consciousness and public remembrance, many students find school field trips do provide an engaging and indeed a memorable experience.

#### A final speculation

Recently I have been wondering whether digital innovations when added to a field trip curriculum might make available to students a more multi-dimensional history, might serve Arendt's aspirations for public *debate* in public places. Suppose the museums allowed the creation of a multi-site, Japanese, and American "app" that would supplement school visitors' experiences of their own history, by making available, using mobile and digital technologies, compressed versions of war memorial and museum displays in the other country, and also displays from other museums in their homeland. Imagine, if you will, a group of students, say from Wisconsin, standing in front of the Enola Gay airplane at the Dulles branch of the National Air and Space Museum. The descriptive plaques right next to the plane are neutral and technical, but smart phone in hand, one of the students calls up images of a considerably more detailed display at the Nagasaki museum which spells out step by step how Japanese analysts describe the decision-making behind the two atomic bombings. Yet another student might be searching the Los Alamos Museum for more information on the way American weapons experts describe the steps leading to those same two days in August 1945. By extending the active learning options beyond the individuals present at the museum, by connecting information about the weapon's designers with information about the victims who suffered the bomb's effect and with the physical plane itself, the learning possibilities for students on a visit to the US capital deepen markedly. Japanese students at the Showa-kan in Tokyo, immersed in the suffering of the city dwellers, might get a chance to see the displays at the museums in Okinawa and see what lives were like under the command of Japanese troops in a combat zone. Apps already exist which serve as models -- The British Library exhibition on Illuminated Manuscripts, the explorer app for the American Museum of Natural History, and an app guiding visitors around Boston's Freedom Trail show what is possible. Of course to make a multi-museum app would require a collaborative approach among several museums. Given the standing many museums have as repositories of the national consciousness, they might turn out to be no more interested in such a varied approach to the ideas than the authors of approved textbooks. Were the opportunity to arise, however, results from this study strongly suggest that the impact on students would be an education in the complexities of multi-national wars and peace-making, it would be much more than mere schooling.

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