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Promoting Japan: One JET at a Time

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Introduction

There is broad recognition that the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program is an important project undertaken by the Government of Japan.[1] Such assertions are based on raw numbers of participants, diplomatic and academic intuition, and collected anecdotes. There is, however, no publicly available research considering the JET Program as a public diplomacy endeavor evaluating what effects former participants attribute to the JET Program. This study presents a theory- and data-driven foundation on which to stake claims about JET as a public diplomacy program. Introducing original survey data collected by the author in 2011, this study evaluates the responses of more than 500 American JET Program alumni and begins shedding light on the value of JET as a long-term, government-sponsored, public diplomacy program.

Described as a "grass-roots international exchange between Japan and other nations" the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program has more than 54,000 alumni worldwide.[2] Although the United States is only one of the 39 countries whose citizens have participated over the program's twenty-five year existence, Americans comprise approximately 50% of all JET alumni and in 2011 Americans comprised 57% of all JET Program participants.[3]

Since 1987, the JET Program has brought young, college educated people from participating countries to Japan in one of three capacities: Assistant Language Teacher (ALT), Coordinator for International Relations (CIR), or Sports Exchange Advisor (SEA). The majority of program participants work as ALTs teaching English

in Japan's junior and senior high schools. CIRs work in municipal and prefectural administrative offices as liaisons for planning international activities. SEAs, a type of CIR, coordinate international exchanges in an athletic context.[4] Paired with Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) in public school classrooms, ALTs are part of what some have come to see as the Japanese education system's large-scale language instruction experiment. The official program homepage declares JET "has gained high acclaim both domestically and internationally for its role in enhancing mutual understanding and for being one of the world's largest" exchange programs.[5]

Although a well-known international exchange program, JET has been the subject of surprisingly few formal studies examining its value in that context. Instead, much of the research has focused on the challenges associated with the program's English language education component where native speakers are placed in public schools.[6] From an English language education standpoint results are mixed,[7] rendering the JET Program vulnerable in the Japanese political environment, particularly in the aftermath of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami amidst the increased scrutiny of government spending.

Periodic rumblings from within the Japanese political establishment about the potentially uncertain future of JET, even before the March 2011 disaster, have led to public declarations of support for the program from the United States, not least of which have come from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton[8] and other high-ranking government officials. Speaking of the only two Americans killed in the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami—both of whom were JET program participants—Clinton referred to the large network of program alumni and the funds they raised in support of recovery efforts. Others have offered similar commentary.[9] While the function of the JET Program as a public diplomacy tool may be evident to alumni and to individuals involved in the daily

management of U.S.-Japan relations, there is no publicly available research to help illustrate that point. This study seeks to begin filling that gap.

The JET Program website notes "After completing their time on the Programme, many former JET participants use their experiences in Japan to continue enhancing relations between Japan and their home countries."[10] The study presented here sheds light on how American JET alumni continue to interact with Japan even after their formal participation in the program has ended. Results suggest the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program is an effective public diplomacy program yielding benefits to Japan well after alumni have moved on to new chapters in their lives. While the Japanese government may not have a nationally coordinated, top-down alumni tracking and retention regime allowing them to make generalizations about the characteristics of JET alumni, the former participants themselves —at least the more than 500 American alumni who responded to this survey—report feeling a continued sense of obligation to interpret Japan for the people in their lives well after their experience with the JET Program has ended.

The study presented here does not ask whether JET has rendered Japan the "favorite foreign country" of program alumni. Rather, it attempts to identify various ways in which participation in JET has affected the lives of alumni and the ways in which this influence may be of benefit to Japan in the medium- to long-term. Presenting results of the researcher's 2011 survey of more than 500 American alumni, this study interprets alumni responses through the prism of the possible public diplomacy and soft power promotion effects of JET. Results suggest that increased familiarity with or affinity for Japan on the part of American alumni does not equate to consistent bias in favor of that country. But this should not be interpreted as a public diplomacy failure for Japan. Considered in a broader context, more informed public opinion in the United States can lead to

improved cross cultural understanding, more thoughtful government policy making, and more nuanced assessment of behaviors in times of uncertainty. From the perspective of the continued U.S.-Japan relationship then, alumni exposure to Japan through the JET Program appears to yield subtle but important benefits for both countries over time.

In a speech marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the JET Program, one American alumnus, who is now U.S. coordinator for the Japan Center for International Exchange, commented on the American policy environment: "[T]he vast majority of the emerging leaders and experts under the age of 45 who are working in fields that involve US-Japan relations are former JET Program participants. This seems to be true in government, policy research, business, academia, arts, and cultural exchange, and it is clear that these JET alumni have started to become valuable resources for US-Japan relations."[11] The following discussion helps illustrate this observation in more vivid detail.

The research presented here discusses data collected from a large pool of American JET alumni about their degree of connection to or affinity with Japan even years after participation in the program. Parameters for data collection were derived from public diplomacy theory and assessment of alumni responses proceeds in accordance with the nascent literature of public diplomacy evaluation. What begins to emerge is a detailed picture of the varied fruits of Japan's long-term investment in a multi-purposed public diplomacy program.

As with most social science research, this study provides answers to some questions but raises many more in the process. Conclusions acknowledge the value of the volume of alumni data collected here, laying the groundwork for further analysis of JET as a public diplomacy program, and exploring implications for understanding public diplomacy theory and evaluation efforts more generally.

Literature Review

History of the JET Program

Writing in *Importing Diversity: Inside Japan's JET Program*, David McConnell notes the program was borne of Japanese concerns about the country's international image.[12] Designed as an antidote to negative perceptions about what in the 1980s was seen as the Japanese economic juggernaut, JET was conceived as a program to expose large numbers of foreigners to Japan while at the same time exposing large numbers of Japanese citizens to foreigners.

Created in 1987, JET is a joint program of three Japanese government ministries: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), originally known as the Ministry of Home Affairs; and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), originally known as the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Coordinating and administering the program at the local and prefectural level across Japan is the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR). The 25-year old endeavor has been described as "a significant test case for top-down internationalization in a historically insular society."[13]

Most JET Program participants are Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), but as the official program homepage notes "There are also many other participants, from both English speaking and non-English speaking countries who are Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) and Sports Exchange Advisors (SEAs)."[14] In 2011 there were participants from 39 different countries. Participants sign up for one-year tours of duty with the option to renew annually up to four times. The upper age limit for participation has been raised over time from a previous cap at 35-years old to a more open-ended consideration for renewing participants.

Highlighting the varying missions of a program run by multiple national ministries, McConnell quotes officials from each of the three main program sponsors. A Ministry of Home Affairs official suggested the purpose of JET was to force local governments to "open up their gates to foreigners." Meanwhile, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs official said the program's primary goal was to "increase understanding of Japanese society and education among youth" from participant countries. A representative of the third agency, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, declared that improving Japanese students' and teachers' "communicative competence in English" was the primary policy goal for JET.[15]

One of the earliest studies of JET described the program's focus as "'internationalisation at the local level,' introducing local communities to foreign culture and upgrading the system of foreign language teaching in all public junior and senior high schools, thereby producing a large pool of high school and university graduates who are able to promote Japan's increasingly active participation in international activities."[16] Whether this has actually been the result remains a question many educational researchers have asked, often with less-than-glowing reviews.

That studies of JET's educational value may yield mixed results is not surprising. The variety of ministerial quotes and the early descriptions of the program illustrate McConnell's point that "from the very moment the idea for the JET Program was conceived, its administrative structure and implementation were affected by competing goals and rivalries."[17] This sentiment is echoed by another, more recent writer, whose study, based on observation of interactions between ALTs and JTEs in a Japanese classroom, concludes JET's top-level policy goals are not necessarily translated into the daily implementation of the program.[18]

Another study of program implementation noted the dynamic created by having multiple ministries overseeing the program "has ensured that there has been some tension between the Ministry of Education, whose main concern has been with the English teaching aspect of the Programme, and those ministries who have pursued other policy goals through the Programme."[19] Those "other policy goals" are evident in the quotes by ministry officials that McConnell offers. A more contemporary study suggests an ongoing disconnect between stated policy goals and actions taken to implement them describing the situation as "contradictions between the declared goals of the programme and the operational policy established for achieving them."[20]

Concluding his 2000 study, McConnell suggests that justification for the existence of the program has evolved over time. JET was introduced with an emphasis on getting Japanese localities to open up and "internationalize" but these sentiments have "gradually given way to a preoccupation with encouraging foreign guests to greater sympathy toward and understanding of Japan."[21] It is this potential for disconnect between overall national interests and more specific educational interests that has emerged in studies of JET as an educational program. It is perhaps for these reasons that studies of the JET Program as a public diplomacy effort have not been as prevalent as one might expect for a program of JET's size and duration. It may be that evolution of the program's mission over time is responsible for the dearth of studies examining components other than educational value.

JET as an English Language Instruction Program

McConnell offers a pithy analysis of the difficulties of implementing and maintaining the JET Program in Japan. He writes while there have certainly been foreign policy objectives involved in the creation and maintenance of JET "the relevance of foreigners

to the daily priorities of local boards of education and schools is ambiguous at best."[22] He concludes, "If we judge the program by its success in achieving its formal goals—promoting conversational English and the acceptance of diversity—then the policy lever being applied to its implementation seems inadequate."[23] As suggested above, concerns about inconsistencies between stated policy goals and program implementation emerged early in discussions of JET and are still evident today.

Others evaluating the English language instruction aspect of the JET Program in more detail have come to similar conclusions. The effectiveness of team teaching—a creation of the JET Program—is a frequent topic of discussion as is debate about the power differentials between ALTs and JTEs in the classroom and the cultural difficulties inherent in such pairings.[24]

A survey of Canadian JET alumni in 1997, for example, found former participants underwhelmed by the efficacy of JET as an English language instruction mechanism.[25] As two scholars later asked, how effective can JET be as a teaching initiative when "most of [the participants] are young college graduates with little or no teaching experience."[26] Such observations are common among those attempting to assess the pedagogical benefits of JET.

Origins of the JET Program's difficulties in meeting Japan's English language educational goals are identified in an early study of JET with one researcher noting "that team teaching began without any form of pedagogic research to validate it as an effective educational innovation."[27] That the team teaching approach advocated by the JET Program may not lead to success on the part of students or satisfaction on the part of instructors—either JTEs or ALTs— is therefore not surprising. Indeed, every new crop of ALTs raises similar concerns after a few months in the classroom. It is

only when considering JET in the context of Japan's broader foreign policy goals that the actual value of the program begins to emerge.

However, one scholar evaluating JET from the perspective of foreign language instruction disagrees. "Bringing foreigners into face-to-face contact with ordinary Japanese people was an important aim of the JET programme," he argues, "but this was always secondary to the main aim of improving foreign language teaching in schools."[28] McConnell's work and others', however, suggest this is not the case. One explanation for these inconsistencies in program definition is that the goals of the JET Program have evolved over time to meet the political and budgetary challenges it faced in the Japanese domestic political environment.

Summarizing his interpretation of the goals of the JET Program, McConnell writes, "The JET Program is not ultimately concerned with fostering some idealistic movement to create a global village or to blur absolute lines of national sovereignty; instead, it focuses on getting Japan better press and getting Japanese better understanding of outsiders, enabling them to avoid unanticipated counterreactions and thereby raise their own relative status in the world."[29] Such commentary leads directly to discussion of JET as a public diplomacy program with goals reaching far beyond improvement of Japanese students' English language skills.

McConnell's 2000 book is a comprehensive discussion of the origins of JET, including input from a variety of actors in the Japanese institutions responsible for the program's initiation, implementation and management. Other studies have examined the effectiveness of team-teaching as a language instruction method and have determined that the program's approach is neither the most effective nor the most satisfying experience for ALTs, JTEs or their students.

Although soft power expert Joseph Nye has described the JET Program as a successful public diplomacy undertaking,[30] there is almost no formal academic research about JET as a soft power generator for Japan. While Nye and others speak of soft power and public diplomacy as efforts to go the "last three feet"[31] in developing, maintaining and deepening relations between countries, JET is often presented as a successful enterprise on that front, but until now only anecdotal information has been provided to bolster these assertions.[32]

Public Diplomacy

Historian Nicholas Cull suggests a straightforward definition for public diplomacy: "[T]he process by which an international actor conducts foreign policy by engaging a foreign public."[33] A document produced by the USC Center on Public Diplomacy offers a similar definition describing public diplomacy efforts as "the ways in which governments… communicate with citizens in other societies."[34] There are multiple definitions of public diplomacy, but most contain references to government-led foreign policy endeavors designed to promote direct communication among citizens of two countries outside the boundaries of traditional state-to-state diplomacy.

Thinking about JET as public diplomacy, one expert on U.S.-Japan relations highlights the link between the JET Program and the Japan-aware network of alumni it has seeded around the world. He writes, "The program was started with the purpose of internationalizing Japan's local communities by helping to improve foreign language education. But it also creates grassroots channels between Japan and the rest of the world and develops the next generation of supporters of Japan."[35] If, as argued by another Japanese scholar, "the JET Program is one of the most, if not the most, successful exchange programs that the Japanese government conducts as part of its public diplomacy,"[36] then it is beneficial to undertake a study assessing that success. The study presented here does this in the American context.

Whether JET succeeds as a means toward "internationalization" or English language instruction for Japan is not the point, McConnell argues in a 2008 book chapter. He writes, "What the Japanese have done is to meet the guests at the door with a great display of hospitality. Assured that they are only short-term guests, the hosts then focus not on whether the foreigners are integrated into Japanese society but on whether they are treated hospitably and enjoy their stay."[37] Whatever the consequences may be for internationalization or English language education, from a public diplomacy standpoint this is a recipe for success.

Writing about soft power and the difficulties of both creating and wielding it, Nye observes "Incorporating [it] into a government strategy is more difficult than may first appear…[S]uccess in terms of outcomes is more in the control of the subject than is the case with hard power… The results often take a long time… [and] the instruments of soft power are not fully under the control of governments."[38]

McConnell concludes and this survey seeks to confirm that "In the long run, the JET Program probably serves Japan's interests not through the creation of a pro-Japan faction among JET alumni but through the creation of a cohort of young people who have experienced Japan in all its diversity and can thus add critical insights to public and private conversations about Japan in their home countries."[39] The survey findings presented below indicate this is indeed the case.

McConnell also notes that although alumni's formal connections to Japan may fade over time, there is a continuing maintenance of the Japan experience through "the ongoing consumption of Japanese artifacts, news, and food in ways that are personally meaningful. In one sense, their soft power potential is mostly latent, but they also

may exert a subtle yet powerful influence on family, friends, and acquaintance simply by 'talking up' Japan."[40]

Although one writer expresses concern about McConnell's interpretation of JET's outcomes, suggesting he "harbors doubts over the much-touted JET program, as participants separate their interest in Japanese culture from the state,"[41] developing a long-lasting interest in Japan accompanied by informed and nuanced views of the people, the country and the government would seem an ideal outcome for an international exchange program. Indeed, this mirrors language often used in describing public diplomacy and promoting soft power. It is exactly this kind of lingering soft power influence that the 2011 survey of American alumni of the JET Program sought to identify.

Theorizing about Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is an emerging topic of scholarly research with immediate policy implications. Public diplomacy may be "one of the most interdisciplinary areas in modern scholarship,"[42] but it is also one of the most amorphous, with theories still in development, agreed-upon terminology as yet unestablished, and criteria for measuring impact nebulous at best.

Referring to American public diplomacy efforts in particular but succeeding also in classifying typical public diplomacy efforts as practiced by most nations, one study identifies five categories of public diplomacy efforts: international broadcasting, media diplomacy, political action, public information, and education and cultural programs.[43] For the purposes of discussion here, the JET Program is placed in the educational and cultural program category.

According to international communication scholar Eytan Gilboa, one of the shortcomings of public diplomacy research to date has

been that "most studies are historical, and they mostly deal with U.S. experiences during the cold war."[44] He continues, "Historical accounts of public diplomacy are significant, especially if they are analytical and not just anecdotal, but their contribution to the development of theory and methodology in public diplomacy has been limited."[45] This study of the JET Program seeks to begin filling some of the theoretical and methodological gaps Gilboa and others have identified by employing theory in discussion of a public diplomacy program of a country other than the United States and by using data collected in a scientifically rigorous fashion instead of through anecdote.

Gilboa suggests the cascading activation model proposed by Entman[46] as an appropriate theoretical mechanism through which to make arguments about the impact of public diplomacy programs.[47] Entman's history of writing about framing in the mass media context[48] has influenced more than two decades of political communication research and Gilboa's reason for connecting Entman's framing-based cascading activation model to public diplomacy is its ability to "connect policy, media and public opinion."[49] This makes sense as the cascading activation model and other explanations of opinion leadership operate under the assumption that "some actors have more power than others to push ideas along to the news and then to the public"[50] and one expects this would be a desirable process when exercised by former public diplomacy program participants.

Sociologist William Gamson, however, notes the cascading activation model excludes the public from the process of framing, reframing and understanding of events. He writes, "The role of social movements and of citizens as collective actors in framing contests largely disappears in Entman's model."[51] Although Gamson's review of Entman's work is not offered in the context of public diplomacy, the implications are clear: If the ability of the public to influence what decisions leadership makes, what stories the media tells, and

how those stories are told is removed, then the *raison d'etre* for promotion of public diplomacy programs disappears altogether. If the public is neutered then this is a serious criticism of Entman's model and its potential applicability to public diplomacy.

Political scientists Matthew Baum and Philip Potter propose a more comprehensive model for explaining the democratic assumption that "citizens' opinions play some role in shaping policy outcomes, including foreign policy."[52] Calling for increased synthesis of previous studies examining the mass media, public opinion and foreign policy outcomes, Baum and Potter suggest that a market equilibrium model based on information as the prized commodity might better explain dynamics among the public, the media and foreign policy outcomes. If one considers the true value of the "last three feet" in public diplomacy to be the personal exchange of information among citizens without mediation by governments or press, then the market equilibrium model Baum and Potter propose might be particularly well suited to these discussions.

This study of the JET Program profiles the public in the form of American alumni. Developing a better understanding of the people who participate in a public diplomacy program like JET may help build knowledge not just for explaining how such programs work in practice but also for predicting both the applications and implications of public diplomacy programs in theory before real world resource investment and implementation. Treating alumni of a program like JET as members of the public in an opinion leadership model may yield useful insights into understanding how and when public diplomacy programs can be most effective.

Nye argues that public opinion expressed by foreign publics is one of the most reliable indicators of a nation's reputation.[53] Another scholar writes, "cultivating and managing a favorable international/world opinion toward a nation-state has been the mandate of public

diplomacy, the so-called 'public face' of traditional diplomacy."[54] It makes sense then for this evaluation of the JET Program to include discussion of alumni opinions about Japan, the Japanese people and policies of the Japanese government. With those definitions in mind, this discussion of the JET Program using survey responses from American alumni begins overcoming the supremacy of anecdote "as the primary method of recording program success."[55]

Further explanation of the dynamics of public diplomacy implementation comes from another scholar who writes "three time frames are essential to defining public diplomacy. One is driven by the relentless demands of around-the-clock news and media relations. A second time frame relates to communication campaigns on high value polices… A third time frame involves long-term engagement—relationships between people and institutions—in the realms of ideas, culture, shared knowledge, reasoned dialogue and vigorous debate on issues. Investments in this time frame are made for decades and generations."[56] Data presented and interpreted here identify instances in which American alumni of the JET Program exercise influence in all three time frames. Whether or not it was initially intended to function as a public diplomacy program, JET is now certainly producing results consistent with one.

Evaluating Public Diplomacy

As the preceding discussion indicates, theoretical understandings of public diplomacy are still developing. Another frequently observed shortcoming of the field is lack of uniform methodology for evaluating public diplomacy programs once implemented.[57] One frustrated researcher laments "the impact of any public diplomacy is notoriously difficult to measure."[58]

In a simple table of program evaluation, the Department of State divides a public diplomacy program into five stages: inputs, activities,

outputs, outcomes, and impact.[59] The table suggests that indicators of outcomes may include increased awareness on the part of the target audience, increased knowledge on the part of the target audience and more balanced presentation of the country in subsequent media coverage. Indicators of these outcomes are incorporated into the JET alumni survey discussed here.

Still, a recent bibliography of public diplomacy program evaluative literature illustrates the extent to which there is no standard template for assessing the value of programs even roughly categorized as public diplomacy.[60] American diplomat Robert Banks compiled the resources and it is a valuable collection, but it also demonstrates that the state of public diplomacy evaluation has not advanced measurably since the resurgence of academic interest in the subject since the end of the cold war generally and since 9/11 more specifically. Banks' publication provides multiple examples of U.S. efforts to evaluate public diplomacy and international exchange programs and a review of those materials yields a few templates appropriate for application to this study of the JET Program.

A 2002 assessment of the Fulbright Scholar Program, for example, asked to what extent the exchanges in question had served the national interest and influenced the participating individuals and institutions.[61] These are valid inquiries for inclusion in this JET Program study, although the cited document offers no parameters for measuring the hoped-for outcomes.

Similarly, a 2007 State Department report about the School Connectivity Program identified four items to be considered when evaluating program success.[62] However, the present study's attempt to evaluate JET as a public diplomacy program rather than an educational exchange program renders some of the 2007 report's questions too education-specific to be practical. Still, among the usable items is identification of the need to "determine whether

the Program has increased understanding between citizens and communities… among countries, regionally and internationally."[63] The other three variables evaluated in that report are not relevant to the research presented here, however, broader issues of sustainability and questions about the possible multiplier effect of the program are suitable for consideration in this discussion.

The need for a clear cut test case in evaluating public diplomacy programs with something more than anecdotes is well recognized. Among practitioners and scholars alike the ability to evaluate and accord some measure of success or failure to programs intended to go the "last three feet" might be referred to as the discipline's holy grail. In his compilation of evaluation resources Banks notes "PD evaluation is a complex topic that reaches across several disciplinary boundaries and is susceptible to numerous different approaches, tools, and methods."[64] He also observes that his report's section dedicated to evaluation of cultural programs is the thinnest of all categories "perhaps not surprising given its reputation as one of the more difficult PD components to measure."[65] That is, however, the category of public diplomacy program within which JET fits most neatly, so the challenges of the task here are clear.

Amid his presentation of examples of evaluation, Banks refers to the benefits of undertaking such efforts. He suggests that program accountability resulting from appropriate evaluation can lead to longer-term political stability. Moreover, he argues that careful definition of expectations can lead to reasonable evaluations, therefore insulating public diplomacy programs from the dangers of inflated expectations and capricious political decision-making. He takes pains to note this is not about lowering standards, but rather, about setting them and then identifying ways to assess whether those standards have been met and then sustained over the long run. It is an irony that short-term projects are more consistent with the immediate considerations of politics and public policy evaluation

more typically, but it is in the long-term that the benefits of public diplomacy programs can be best observed. Nevertheless, as Banks argues, careful program evaluation can force policy makers to "confront assumptions and to answer the 'So What?' question."[66] Answering such questions can help ensure longer-term program viability. Moreover, it can force policy makers to address these issues up front resulting in more effective application of resources over time.

Banks also identifies different characteristics of public diplomacy evaluation efforts and emphasizes the importance of "impact" over "process."[67] Questions in the JET alumni survey were designed to evaluate overall program impact rather than seeking alumni assessments of the program's operation as an English language instruction program as earlier studies have done.

Another pair of evaluative categories Banks identifies is the apparent dichotomy between quantitative versus qualitative data in evaluation of public diplomacy efforts.[68] Numbers are compelling and they can be easily represented in graphic format, however, qualitative data acquired through one-on-one interviews and focus groups can also yield valuable insights into a program. As with much other social science research, a mixed method approach seems most appropriate to assessing the outcomes of a 25-year old program like JET at least when approaching it in an exploratory way as this public diplomacy-oriented study does.

Speaking ultimately about program outcomes, Banks observes these are not within the control of a program's sponsoring organization since they are measured by the "receptivity of the target audience."[69] This is consistent with earlier writings about public diplomacy efforts and how attempts that smack too strongly of propaganda can backfire with intended audiences.[70] The study presented here reports outcomes for the JET Program as reported by American

alumni. Responses comprising both quantitative and qualitative data suggest—consistent with years of anecdotes—the success of the JET Program from a public diplomacy perspective. It is important to note, however, that this analysis does not address the question of JET's pedagogical value to the foreign language classroom nor does it address the issue of domestic public or political support in Japan for continuation of the program in a time of constrained resources.

Ideally an evaluation rubric would be designed alongside the program itself at the outset. Clearly was not possible with the study presented here. Good social science research also requires that a defined population be available from which to sample and that the target audience be surveyed both pre- and post-exposure to the program in question in order to gauge effects. These were not variables under the control of this researcher. Given these limitations, however, this study was conducted in as rigorous a fashion as possible. Details are provided in the following section.

Methodology

Approved by the researcher's institutional review board (IRB), the *Survey of American Alumni of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program* was available at a university-provided online survey research site for five weeks in March and April 2011. Invitations to participate were circulated via multiple JET Alumni Association (JETAA) chapters around the United States by email, Facebook and Twitter. Requests for participation and for assistance in contacting American JET Program alumni were also distributed via several Japan-focused websites, U.S.-based Japanese consulates, English-language media focused on Japan and East Asia and on one unofficial but highly trafficked JET alumni website, JETwit.com. Information about the survey and requests for participation were also circulated across the public diplomacy research community and throughout the U.S.-Japan policy community in Washington, DC and elsewhere.

All those contacted were encouraged to spread the word about the survey and to encourage participation among American JET alumni.

Using this snowball approach, the survey received more than 500 valid responses all of which were collected online. Other researchers have used a similar approach when collecting data from decentralized populations.[71] One researcher acknowledges the shortcomings of the non-random selection of respondents saying "The convenience sample limits the ability to generalize results. Even though respondents were solicited from a wide range of [places], they were not randomly selected…"[72] That same research also identifies other Internet-related studies that have employed similar methods.[73] To quote one discussion of this type of sampling, "Though not ideal, such nonprobability sampling is an acceptable method when random sampling is not possible."[74]

Armed with data collected by this survey in the manner described above the best that can be achieved is a measure of alumni opinion about Japan and self-reporting about the influence of JET on the rest of their personal and professional lives. Self-reporting is a notoriously weak mechanism for measuring impact of anything, however, as a starting point for an exploratory study such as this it is a reasonable place to start. Moreover, given the dearth of official, centralized alumni directories this online snowball technique was the most practical mechanism for eliciting widespread participation.

It is important to note that data for this survey were collected in circumstances one expects were perhaps strained for targeted participants. The March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident in Japan occurred within two weeks of the survey becoming available online. While these circumstances may have had the effect of causing the JET alumni community to activate in ways not before seen and thus may have driven a larger than expected degree of interest in the survey during the five weeks it was available, the

researcher certainly wishes there had been no such disaster causing the JET alumni community to coalesce in the way it did. Nevertheless, response to the survey was significant with results only adding more credence to assumptions that JET alumni feel strong connections to Japan even long after finishing the program.

This research seeks to answer three general questions about the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program and its American alumni from the perspective of a public diplomacy endeavor:

RQ1: How does the JET Program fit the criteria of public diplomacy within the currently-evolving definitions, models and theories?

RQ2: What is the average profile of an American JET Program alumnus?

RQ3: How can JET's value as a public diplomacy program, particularly in the United States, be measured/quantified?

The answers to the above questions comprise the first-of-its-kind exploratory study designed to evaluate the influence of the JET Program as a public diplomacy initiative in the United States. The mixed method approach employed here exploits the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative research offering the possibility of more complete answers to the research questions. Evaluation of the data collected provides new context for evaluating the impact of the JET Program, while at the same time, offering insights into the continued development of theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing public diplomacy as part of a broader foreign policy strategy.

Findings

General Demographics

If public diplomacy is about countries reaching out to foreign publics, then a profile of a public that has participated in the target activities is useful information to have. Presentation of findings from this JET alumni survey therefore begins with general demographic information about the Americans who have participated in Japan's large-scale public diplomacy effort.

With respect to composition of respondents and their participation in JET, 86% of alumni participated as Assistant Language Teachers. See Table 1 for breakdown of participation categories. Concerning length of tenure on the JET Program, almost a quarter spent just one year on the program, almost half spent two years on the program and more than a third spent three or more years as JET participants. In terms of placement, more than half of respondents reported having been assigned to a rural area of Japan.

TABLE 1: CATEGORY OF PARTICIPATION IN THE JET PROGRAM

Category of Participation	Percentage
Assistant Language Teacher	86%
Coordinator for International Relations	9%
Sports Exchange Advisor	1%
Monbusho Educational Fellow (precursor to JET)	2%

Note: Of the 587 respondents to this question, 2% declined to identify their category of participation.

Half of respondents reported being between 25 and 34 years old while a third of respondents fell into the 35–44 year-old range. 56% of respondents identified as female, 43% as male and 2% as

transgender or other. Concerning race or ethnic group, 79% reported being White, 14% Asian, 4% Hispanic or Latino, 3% Black or African American, and 6% either declining to respond or selecting "other."

Geographically speaking, with respect to program recruitment, more alumni reported being from California (14%) than from any other single state. However, recruitment for the JET Program seems particularly strong in the American heartland with 40% of alumni coming from nine Midwestern states.[75] Although alumni originally hailed from across the Midwest, many report having settled in other regions since JET. 15% report living in California, 15% in Illinois, and a combined 15% in the District of Columbia, Virginia and Maryland. It cannot be confirmed by the data, but one suspects the Illinois concentration is focused around Chicagoland and the DC, Virginia, Maryland population is centered around the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

Education History

The JET Program requires all participants to have completed an undergraduate degree before joining the program, so this survey asked alumni how much time elapsed between completion of their undergraduate degree and their departure for Japan with the JET Program. 63% reported having joined JET less than a year after graduation. 6% reported waiting more than 5 years before joining JET with the longest period reported being 13 years. 91% of respondents had completed no graduate or professional school degree before joining JET and undergraduate majors tended strongly toward the social sciences.

With respect to study of the Japanese language, 64% of alumni reported having studied Japanese before joining the JET Program and 49% had actually traveled to Japan before participating in JET.

This suggests at least 50% of American JET alumni already had a strong interest in Japan before applying to the program. Concerning recruitment, this may provide insight into where the most fruitful marketing of the program can be accomplished. From a program management standpoint this information could help ensure the most effective use of recruitment resources.

Participation in JET appears to be a good predictor of future graduate or professional school with 49% of respondents reporting having acquired at least one advanced degree since completing the program and another 18% currently engaged in the process. A master's degree is the most common additional education at 83%, but law degrees (8%) and doctoral degrees (6%) were also reported.

Motivations for Participation in JET

Alumni reported a variety of reasons for participating in JET. The most frequently cited reason was a desire for cross-cultural experiences, cited by 90% of all respondents, but the opportunity to travel (73%) and to study the language (70%) were also regularly mentioned as motivation. Other motivations included taking advantage of the teaching opportunity (54%) as well as the chance to save some money (28%).

Reasons provided for participation in JET are listed in Table 2 below. It is noteworthy that the majority of respondents indicated positive motivations for participation. Indeed, some alumni took advantage of the open-ended section of this question to criticize inclusion of negative options at all. This is additional—albeit anecdotal—evidence of alumni support for JET.

TABLE 2: MOTIVATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN JET

Motivation	Percentage
Cross-cultural experiences	90%
Travel opportunities	73%
Language study opportunity	70%
Teaching opportunity	54%
Money-saving opportunity	28%
Defer job search	16%
Defer further education	13%
Unsuccessful job search	6%
Unsuccessful graduate school applications	1%
Other	25%

Note: 537 responses to this question were collected. Respondents were asked to indicate all options that applied to their situation.

Professional Experience Post-JET

With respect to employment after participation in JET, 70% of alumni reported they are currently working full time and 25% of those who are employed are working in the private for-profit sector. 17% are working in higher education and 12% are working in elementary or secondary education. Table 3 provides more information about the sectors in which JET alumni presently work. When asked if they had ever been able to locate a job through contacts with JET Program alumni or related connections only 25% of respondents answered in the affirmative. In terms of rank, just over ten percent of alumni reported being at a senior level in their organization, 46% reported being at a middle level and 25% reported they are currently employed at the entry level.

TABLE 3: SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT POST-JET

Sector	Percentage
Self-employed	7%
Private, for-profit organization	25%
Higher education (public or private)	17%
Elementary or secondary education (public or private)	11%
International organization in the U.S.	4%
International organization outside the U.S.	1%
U.S. military	1%
U.S. government (excluding military)	7%
State or local government (excluding education	2%
Private non-profit (excluding educational & international organizations)	6%
Other	7%
Not employed	10%

Note: 518 responses were collected concerning current sector of employment.

When asked how well their experience with the JET Program had prepared them for their current career, 44% said "adequately", 23% said "more than adequately", and 24% said "very well."

Looking broadly at the professional applications of JET, 36% of alumni strongly agree that their experience with JET led to an expertise they would otherwise not have developed. 75% strongly agreed with the statement that they are proud of their JET Program experience although when asked whether their experience with JET was considered prestigious by their colleagues, only 17% strongly agreed. Regardless, 65% of alumni agreed with the statement that the JET Program was a good thing to have on their resume. Overall, 82% of respondents agreed that participation in the JET Program had

helped their career at least somewhat. These are remarkably positive numbers.

JET Alumni as Citizens

In the political context, 57% of alumni described themselves as liberal, 37% as moderate and 5% as conservative. When asked to offer party identification, 55% reported being Democrat, 5% Republican and 27% independent. A variety of other political preferences were also provided in the "other category", ranging from Tea Party to Green Party and "left of Democrat."

In the context of political efficacy, 47% of alumni strongly agreed with the statement that it is their responsibility to keep informed about public affairs and another 62% strongly agreed that it is their duty as a citizen to vote. Alumni disagreed strongly (44%) with the statement that their votes do not matter in an election. One third of alumni consider themselves patriotic and indicated that they know how to get involved to make changes in their communities.

JET alumni are a politically active group with 49% reporting having attended a political protest or rally in the last 5 years. Other reports of political activity are available in Table 4 below. In addition to the below political activities, 1% of alumni report having actually run for public office and those attempts were successful 50% of the time. Given the overall profile presented here and the relative youth of the sample population, one expects to see increasing numbers of JET alumni running for elected positions across the United States in the future.

TABLE 4: REPORT OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY WITHIN THE LAST FIVE YEARS

ACTIVITY	Percentage
Attended a political protest or rally	49%
Contacted a government official	65%
Volunteered or worked for a presidential campaign	11%
Volunteered or worked for another candidate, issue or cause	19%
Given money to a presidential campaign	31%
Given money to another candidate, issue or cause	36%
Worked with others in the community to solve a problem	55%
Served on a community board	22%
Written a letter to the editor	18%
Commented about politics/public affairs on message board/internet site	47%

Note: 419 respondents answered this question. They were asked to indicate all activities in which they had participated.

Media Habits

Overall, American JET alumni are regular consumers of the media. When asked whether they regularly follow news about Japan in their daily lives, 68% reported they were "likely" or "very likely" to do so. Overall, however, alumni are displeased with the coverage of Japan they find in U.S. media, with 45% declaring themselves at least "somewhat dissatisfied" with the coverage. In addition, 65% of alumni feel it is at least somewhat important to respond to misrepresentation of Japan in the media. Given the political profiles of alumni as presented above, this would seem to be a valuable voice advocating for accurate coverage, and perhaps even increased

coverage, of Japan in the United States. This should be seen as evidence of public diplomacy success for the JET Program.

JET alumni prefer National Public Radio as their primary news source and report *The New York Times* to be their major newspaper of choice. Just over half of all alumni are also regular consumers of Japanese media with major English language newspapers and NHK being the most frequent media outlets to which they turn. Others report consuming Japanese language news media commensurate with their Japanese language ability. The availability of content online is clearly a significant factor in alumni ability to continue to feel connected to Japan after returning to the United States.

Connections to and Knowledge of Japan

29% of alumni reported their work requires some proficiency with the Japanese language and 51% of respondents have taken the Japanese Language Proficiency Test with 51% of them reporting a score of level 2 or 1.[76] Similar to the 29% who reported Japanese language proficiency as a requirement of their job, 31% reported their work requires familiarity with Japanese culture. That nearly one third of alumni find themselves still engaged within the Japanese cultural context after completing the JET Program hints at the significance of their participation in the program well into their careers.

With respect to knowledge about different aspects of Japan's public policy environment, the policy category with the most respondents calling their knowledge "good" or "very good" was the education system at 77%. Japan's foreign policy and commitment to gender equality were two other leading issue areas (32% and 30% respectively). The gap of 45% between the first and second and third policy issues most familiar to alumni is significant and hints at an opportunity for further orientation of JET Program participants into the Japanese policy environment during their stay in Japan. In

addition, with more than half of all JETs assigned to rural areas, there is also an important opportunity to expose JETs to agricultural issues which was the policy area in which respondents reported having the least knowledge (55%). Japan's technology policy (49%) was the second most often mentioned issue area about which JET alumni report having little knowledge and this, too, might be an area where JET could seek to further educate participants.

Perspectives on Japan and the JET Experience Overall

Alumni provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about JET and about the benefits they derived from participation in it. Perhaps most important from a public diplomacy perspective, 85% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that the JET Program gave them a deeper understanding of Japan. 77% strongly agreed that their experience with JET had been valuable and another 66% of respondents strongly agreed that they had gained new awareness of social and cultural diversity among different nations.

Respondents also indicated they had acquired a great deal of knowledge about Japanese culture and way of life through their participation in the program (83%) and also reported gaining "some knowledge" about Japan's political relations with the United States (56%), although this, too, hints at possibilities for future exposure of JET participants to the nature of their home countries' bilateral relationship with Japan.

Perhaps the most impressive result from this survey was in response to the "feeling thermometer" question. Asked to provide their overall impression of Japan on a feeling thermometer ranging from 0 (very cold or unfavorable) to 100 (very warm or favorable), the average impression of alumni was 84.96. That is a significant approval rating. Anyone seeking to evaluate the success of the JET Program as a public diplomacy initiative will need to take this strong

support for Japan among former participants into account as a strong indicator of program success.

There are certainly other, anecdotal measures that can offer strong support to JET. For example, 96% report their experience with Japan has influenced their family and friends' views of Japan, with 99% of them reporting the influence has been positive. In addition, 63% of American alumni reported having returned to Japan at least once since completing the program and 97% reported encouraging friends and family to visit Japan. Moreover, 65% have initiated contact with Japan-related organizations in the United States since completing the JET Program. As a feeder for tourism, for general promotion of Japan and its news, and as a steady source of people interested in ongoing citizen engagement between Japan and the United States, JET looks like a gold mine for the Japanese government.

Commenting on the value of the JET program, many alumni observed that the program's effectiveness as an English-language education program is less impressive than it could be. However, even those offering that rather negative assessment of the English instruction aspect of the program explain the program's true value derives from the cultural and other exposures to Japan that JET facilitates. In short, according to alumni, the real value of JET is as a public diplomacy program, not as an experiment in English language education.

Discussion

The purpose of public diplomacy is to reach out to foreign publics without relying on official, government relationships or the mediating role of mass communication channels. The JET Program has various missions, including a focus on English language education in the public schools. Although the majority of alumni who responded to this survey worked as ALTs in the Japanese education system, their

evaluation of their JET experience and its value reaches far beyond the metrics of the language program. As alumni reflect on their experiences they see the cultural exchange value of the time they spent engaged in this work. The value of Japan's efforts to bring large numbers of young, college educated Americans to live and work in Japan for a year or more is worth assessing from a public diplomacy perspective and this study is an attempt to begin doing that.

Former program participants are educated, informed and culturally aware citizen ambassadors for Japan even years after participation in the program. These alumni, many of whom who had some early interest in Japan, traveled outside of their comfort zones and engaged in what Japan has long called "internationalization." These largely White, majority female participants between the ages of 25 and 34 from the American Midwest spend an average of two years working in rural Japan as Assistant Language Teachers.

Alumni report being drawn to the program for both idealistic and realistic reasons, but the majority emphasize their interest in having cross cultural experiences, studying a foreign language, seeing the world and gaining some teaching experience. The opportunity to save some money and to defer future professional or educational decisions were practical reasons for participating, but they were secondary to more idealistic concerns.

After completing their tenure with the JET Program, alumni frequently pursue further educational opportunities with half of them seeking advanced degrees. Although the majority of alumni participate in the program as ALTs, only a quarter of them have pursued professional paths post-JET that involve teaching. Ten percent of alumni are currently employed by the government at the federal, state or municipal level and these positions are not education-related. Another ten percent of alumni work for local, national or international non-profit organizations and one quarter

of alumni work in the for-profit private sector. In other words, JET alumni work in all sectors. This is an enviably broad diffusion of educated, Japan-aware people across the American economy.

But these alumni are more than workers in the economy. They are also citizens. They tend toward the liberal side of the American political spectrum and they usually vote Democrat, although there is a strong independent streak apparent in the data. Many alumni report believing they have a responsibility as citizens to follow politics and public affairs and to vote in elections, even in local elections where the stakes might be perceived to be lower. Alumni do more than vote, however. They participate in community improvement efforts, they make donations to political campaigns and they support non-profit organizations. Some have even run for office at the federal, state or municipal level. Others have been appointed to public commissions or special issue committees in their communities, at the state level, or even nationally. While these activities do not relate directly to their JET experience, one can be certain that with the influence they report JET had on their lives, part of that experience infuses all their activities. This is most evident in alumni's regular interaction with Japan-related organizations. Many are active with local chapters of the JET Alumni Association, but others have reached outside the JET network and have become involved in local Japan-focused groups and broader internationally-oriented organizations. Although it may seem trivial, JET alumni are also regular patrons of their local Japanese restaurants and others report their homes resemble mini Japanese museums. As McConnell suggests, these are simple ways for alumni to maintain a connection to their Japan experience and even these small ways of keeping that connection can influence the other people in their lives.

JET alumni are also regular consumers of the media, both American and Japanese. They have a critical eye when it comes to reporting about Japan and they feel compelled to correct the record—

even if just among their immediate circle—when they believe Japan has been misrepresented. In this sense, alumni act as opinion leaders. Given alumni's reported interest in Japanese media, especially the English language newspapers, it would be interesting to know what percentage of U.S.-based clicks for the Daily Yomiuri or Japan Times are coming from JET alumni. One suspects it is a significant percentage. For future outreach efforts, such media outlets would be an effective way to reach large numbers of alumni should the Japanese government choose to do so.

Alumni believe themselves to be well informed about Japan, particularly about education, but they recognize the limits to their policy knowledge, listing agricultural policy and technology issues as the most serious shortcomings in their knowledge about Japan. Interestingly, alumni report decent knowledge of both Japan's foreign policy and its commitment to gender equality. Given that alumni are, by definition, foreigners, that they would pay attention to Japan's foreign policy is not a surprise. Additionally, given that more than half of the alumni responding to this survey are female, significant awareness of gender issues in Japan is also not surprising.

Linguistically, nearly one third of alumni report their employment requires some proficiency with the Japanese language and slightly more report their work requires familiarity with Japanese culture. More than half of all alumni have taken the Japanese Language Proficiency Test with half of them reporting intermediate or advanced scores. Performance at those levels requires significant dedication of time and commitment which may be read as another indicator of alumni's continued interest in Japan after finishing the program.

Continuing interest in Japan is demonstrated in other ways besides association with Japan-related organizations and continued study of the language. That 63% of American JET Program alumni report having returned to Japan at least once since finishing the

program is a strong indicator of continued connection. That these alumni further report encouraging family and friends to visit Japan is also noteworthy. Such numbers may form the basis of a persuasive argument in support of JET as a tourism promotion program.

By many of the measures often used to evaluate the influence of public diplomacy programs, the JET Program can be judged a success. The survey data presented here confirm the anecdotal information and intuition hitherto guiding discussion about the importance of JET as a long-term, government-sponsored public diplomacy program.

The results reported here represent only a portion of the data collected. Data still to be analyzed include open-ended responses about the overall affect of JET on their lives as well as open-ended responses to a request for descriptions of Japan. That data will be presented in a later study. The purpose of this introductory discussion is presentation of a profile of American JET Program alumni while also hoping to stimulate future avenues for research related to JET and to public diplomacy more generally.

Given limited availability of official JET Program participant data, an independent survey such as this offers the best possibility for broadening discussion of JET beyond existing works evaluating its efficacy as an English-language education program. However, with 39 countries now participating in JET, the results of a survey of one country's alumni are far from representative. That said, given the importance of the U.S.-Japan relationship, having insight into factors that may be increasingly contributing to the nature of that relationship is valuable indeed. Moreover, given that 50% of JET Program alumni are Americans, some of the findings here may lead to identification of similar trends among alumni of other countries or at least, begin a discussion about the kinds of questions that might be posed to alumni from other countries.

With respect to recommendations for Japan as it continues the JET Program, a clearer statement of program goals and more open communication with alumni would likely further bolster the program domestically, particularly in the current budget tightening era but also internationally as alumni take their sympathetic-to-Japan views with them through their careers. Indeed, although evaluation of large educational and cultural exchange programs is challenging, the preliminary results of this survey suggest it is possible to collect information that can be of benefit to program supporters both at home and abroad. Such information also has the added benefit of leading to establishment of more realistic expectations for a public diplomacy program, bringing with it a measure of political protection and predictability, shielding it from unfair portrayals of program goals and misrepresentation of complicated, sometimes mixed results.

Conclusion

As significant as this survey's confirmation of previously only anecdotal evidence about the public diplomacy success of the JET Program may be, the study has limitations. Among them is the fact that this research is focused only on the self-reported responses of JET Program alumni. For an exploratory study, however, self-reporting is generally seen as a valid mechanism for data collection.

This study is also limited to assessing the responses of American alumni of the JET program. American alumni are estimated to number around 20,000 which is estimated to be about 50% of all JET program alumni, but that does not mean that Americans are properly representative of other JET participants. Additionally, as noted earlier, the method of respondent solicitation was not ideal. With no centralized list of alumni contact information available it was necessary to rely on a "snowball" approach to contact possible participants. The result is that although more than 500 U.S. JET

alumni participated in this survey, these alumni may not be fully representative of all U.S. JET alumni.

The data presented are by no means intended to be the final word on JET as a public diplomacy effort. They do, however, help begin the conversation about the large network of JET alumni in the United States and the purposes to which their time, energy, resources and affections can be put for further promotion of the U.S.-Japan relationship. Moreover, acknowledging the lack of existing models for comprehensive studies evaluating the effectiveness of public diplomacy programs, this report also hopes to further the conversation about how, when and why national public diplomacy efforts should be evaluated even when it is difficult to establish standards for measurement.

These findings provide interesting hints about the potential of evaluating public diplomacy outcomes beyond what one might expect to be typical parameters. Responses to questions about behavior including travel and seeking out information about Japan, for example, suggest JET participants behave in ways influenced by JET. Of course, it is not possible to compare these alumni responses with those of unsuccessful applicants to the JET Program in order to assess whether their attitudes about Japan, civic engagement and professional development are similar. It is also true that the respondents to this survey were self-selecting. It was not a short survey and respondents took time to complete it after having heard about the survey through a snowball distribution of invitations to participate and they did this at the time when Japan was at the center of the global news cycle. It is possible that JET alumni who were largely unimpressed with the program steered away from completing the survey since only a few respondents were consistently negative in their evaluations. This is good news for Japan because those with negative feelings about JET are apparently disinclined to take the time to express their dissatisfaction.

With the data collected for this survey, it is only possible to provide a profile of American JET alumni. Why U.S. alumni of the JET Program share certain characteristics and what the origins of those characteristics might be are beyond the purview of this work which is essentially a post-test for a twenty-five year-old public diplomacy program that is marketed to the majority of participants as a teaching exchange program rather than as a public diplomacy or citizen exchange experience.

The JET Program has succeeded in creating a large cadre of foreigners with special interest in Japan. That the Japanese government, for all the resources it has poured into the JET Program, does not appear to have formally nurtured a network of JET alumni is surprising. This leads to the observation that as a public diplomacy program JET clearly has had some success but it is perhaps in spite of formal Japanese efforts to promote continued connections to Japan post-JET rather than as a result of them. From the American perspective, the tragedy of the March 2011 earthquake represented an opportunity for alumni to unite in their affection for Japan and the Japanese people. Thanks to interactive communication technologies it was possible for typically disparate groups of alumni to connect and act in solidarity. One hopes this sense of community can be maintained and nurtured, not just by alumni themselves, but also by the Japanese institutions sponsoring the program in the first place. One further hopes that it will not take another tragedy to refocus alumni interest on the one thing they all have in common: an abiding interest in and affection for Japan.

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Emily Metzgar is assistant professor at Indiana University's School of Journalism. Her research focuses on public diplomacy, political communication and social media. She received her PhD from Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication in 2008. She is also an alumnus of the Japan Exchange & Teaching (JET) Program. She worked as an assistant language teacher (ALT) in Shimane Prefecture from 1993 to 1995.

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