

THE SOCIAL STUDIES, GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND JAPAN

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In the lead article of this issue of the Iowa Social Studies Journal, Professor Strien stresses that the destinies of Japan and America are intertwined with one another and that Americans of all ages can no longer afford to be uninformed about this relationship and other global transformations. The challenge of helping the next generation to develop a global perspective is a formidable one. Fortunately, teachers do have guidance in this area. Over the last decade the field of global education has matured to the point where there is a general consensus about the purposes of global education, and what teachers need to know to teach global perspectives. Teachers need knowledge and understanding of: cultural universals and cultural diversity, global systems and their interconnections between countries and individuals, global issues, and a global history that offers a perspective of the evolution of cultures, global systems and issues, Anderson (1979), Becker (1979), Cleveland (1986), Goodlad (1986, 1987), Hanvey (1978), Kniep (1986, 1987, 1989) Lamy (1987).

In October 1989, the NCSS adopted Social Studies Within A Global Education as their recommended scope and sequence for infusing global perspectives throughout the social studies curriculum. This document synthesized the main ideas that had been developed during the last two decades, and then specified four content themes from which to design instruction for a global perspective.

1. **The Study of Systems** - including the economic, political, ecological, and technological systems which are pervasive in our interdependent world.
2. **The Study of Human Values** - both universal values defining what it means to be human and diverse values derived from group membership and contributing to world views.

3. **The Study of Persistent Issues and Problems** - including peace and security issues, national and international development issues, local and global environmental issues, and human rights issues.
4. **The Study of Global History** - focusing on the evolution of universal and diverse human values and the historical development of contemporary global systems, and the antecedent conditions and causes of today's global issues.

GLOBAL EDUCATION, JAPAN, AND CULTURAL VALUES

Using Japan as an area of focus has many advantages in helping students develop a global perspective. One can easily study Japan from any of the four theme areas of global education. Japan is a significant actor in the global economic, political, and technological systems of the world. It has a rich mixture of eastern and western values that can be compared to other societies, a topic I will return to later in this article. As a significant global actor and as an advanced technological society it confronts many global issues. Witness Japan paying nine billion dollars to help support the recent Gulf War and her developmental assistance to many nations. Japan has a rich history with many opportunities to illustrate the diffusion of knowledge among different cultures.

Second, it is a country in which our everyday lives are inextricably linked, but one in which most students, as well as most Americans, have many unexamined beliefs which result in xenophobic dispositions. Because a significant goal of the social studies is to have pupils examine their beliefs, teachers can use Japan as a case study to illustrate different aspects of global education. After all, the primary goal of education is to develop intellectually autonomous individuals who are committed to rationality with the requisite skills, knowledge, and disposition to participate effectively and responsibly in a society that is increasingly global in dimension. As teachers we are obliged to create opportunities for this condition to become a reality in our classes.

Finally, using Japan as a case study provides students with the opportunity to study and think about the diversity of cultures and people in the world. This is an essential element in the development of a global perspective. As teachers we must help our students understand that the culture in which people live shapes their values, beliefs and attitudes, which in turn have a direct bearing on their behaviors, world views, life styles,

tastes, and preferences. Teachers must also show there is commonality within diversity. As Kniep (1986) notes,

"All peoples have developed a material culture: housing, foods, dress, tools, possessions etc., that fits their needs and environment. They have a unique form of aesthetic expression, work, and play language and other systems of communication. They have evolved social organization and a means for social control, formal and informal systems of education and transmission of social values, traditions and rituals for expressing their world view and beliefs, and mechanisms and organizations for carrying out various economic functions".

The instructional activity that follows is designed to be an initiatory activity to have students begin to study cultural values surrounding the topic of the changing roles of women in Japan and in the U.S. This is a topic of great importance from an equity perspective in both societies and one that should be motivating for students given their belief patterns about this topic. Additionally, it is an area where students may study both divergent values and similar values between two cultures about a topic of importance to both societies.

CHANGING ROLES OF WOMEN IN JAPAN AND THE U.S.

Directions: The following is a list of statements that may apply to women in Japanese and U.S. societies. Please indicate the extent to which you think each statement applies to Japan and the United States by circling "1" if the statement strongly applies, "2" if the statement applies, "U" if you are uncertain, "3" if the statement does not apply, and "4" if the statement strongly does not apply.

	<u>Japan</u>	<u>United States</u>
1. Many women are dissatisfied with their status and want change.	1 2 U 3 4	1 2 U 3 4
2. Women with the appropriate education and skills compete effectively for professional and managerial positions.	1 2 U 3 4	1 2 U 3 4

3. Women and men have clearly defined roles in society.	1 2 U 3 4	1 2 U 3 4
4. Women make most of the important family decisions regarding family leisure activities, education of children and financial matters.	1 2 U 3 4	1 2 U 3 4
5. In dual career families men are willing to help out with family responsibilities and household chores.	1 2 U 3 4	1 2 U 3 4
6. There is official government endorsement of equal opportunity in all phases of employment.	1 2 U 3 4	1 2 U 3 4
7. Virtually equal numbers of men and women attend four year colleges and universities.	1 2 U 3 4	1 2 U 3 4
8. Most women who enter the job market work full time.	1 2 U 3 4	1 2 U 3 4
9. Increasingly, women are earning decision making positions in the political system.	1 2 U 3 4	1 2 U 3 4
10. Cultural barriers to equality between men and women are diminishing.	1 2 U 3 4	1 2 U 3 4

Once the students have completed the inventory, the instructor would tally the results and have students explain their ratings. Early on in the discussion it will become apparent that each society has similar issues and problems with the changing role and status of women. What is different, however, are the values of each culture, and these influence the climate of social thought and action toward the just resolution of the status of women. Next, the instructor should have students examine the answer sheet below for the Japan portion of the inventory and then have them examine their initial ratings in light of new information.

ANSWERS TO THE CHANGING ROLES OF WOMEN IN JAPAN

1. There is discontent with many women in Japan, particularly young educated women. Yet the dissatisfaction is not as large as one might think. A recent Japanese government survey indicated that more than one third of the women and half of the men feel that a man's place is at work and the women should stay home. Pressure from the young is starting to break down the rigid sex roles but the process is slow, in part because many women are not sure they want the change.

2. Many women face blatant discrimination in the job market despite their education and skill level. It is not unusual for headhunters to bypass women from prestigious universities like the University of Tokyo in favor of their male counterparts. Consequently, many well educated women end up being secretaries despite their initial aspirations for professional or managerial positions. Women are often referred to as "OLs" - office ladies.

3. Traditionally Japanese society has valued strictly defined behavioral expectations for both sexes. These are taken for granted by a wide variety of people, and this has greatly influenced the roles of men and women in the family.

4. The relative crystallization of sex roles in the family gives the women greater power and independence than American women in similar roles. While it is true that many women in Japan are deferential to men in the work-place, men in turn are completely deferential to women in household matters. The husband may be the breadwinner but each month he hands over his earnings to his wife and she then doles out his monthly allowance. Women make other important decisions for the family including where family savings are to be invested, child rearing and how and where the children will be educated.

5. Many men put in sixteen-hour days when commuting time is added. This doesn't leave much quality time for children. In a 1988 government survey among couples who both work, men spend an average of eight minutes each day on domestic chores, including child care. Women in contrast spend three and a half hours on domestic work.

6. In 1987 legal discrimination of women ended in Japan with the passage of the equal employment opportunity law. Companies now must offer women career track opportunities with training and promotion opportunities. Japanese women have not jumped at the opportunity. Many still prefer clerical positions.

7. About 15 percent of all women attend four year colleges compared with 35 percent of the men. In college almost half of the men major in the social sciences which include economics and law, both subjects favored by government and big business. Only 17 percent of the women major in the social sciences.

8. Nearly 50% of women have jobs outside of the home but 1/4 of all female employees are part-time. Less than 1% of women are in management level positions. Women who work full time earn only 50% of what men earn.

9. Only 1.4% of the seats in the lower house of the Diet are filled by women.

10. Although Japan has officially ended legal discrimination, many elements of the culture work against equality between men and women.

Source: the above information was drawn from "Japanese Women Rewriting Tradition", by Kumiko Makihara in *Lear*, February, 1990.

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