

SECTION II - GENERAL FINDINGS

OVERVIEW OF BOX

"Japanese Family 1966" addresses itself to a basic problem in social studies - how to communicate to young children a real sense of another culture. In creating a "culture" box, certain issues keep recurring: What can one say about another culture? What should one say? In what form should the unit be presented? What materials communicate best? What can the children be expected to learn? One is always haunted by the fear of being non-authentic, non-representative, of adding to established stereotypes, of leaving false or even bad impressions. One is plagued by what ought to be addressed and what might be misinterpreted.



We wanted children to get inside Japanese culture, to be able to look at it from the inside. We decided, therefore, to use the family as our vehicle. We knew already that we had a great deal about families. We knew that the relationship between Japanese and American families would give us a good basis upon which to build a context which would be meaningful.

MATCH Box Project

U.S.O.E. Contract No. OE-4-16-019

FINAL BOX REPORT

JAPANESE FAMILY 1966

BY SUSAN SCHANCK

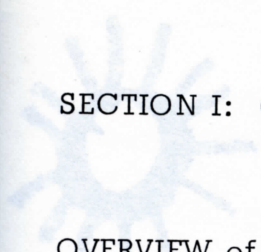
BINDA REICH

BOX DEVELOPED BY BINDA REICH

SUSAN SCHANCK

PROTOTYPE COMPLETED SEPTEMBER 1966

EVALUATED FALL 1966



SECTION I: GENERAL FINDINGS

OVERVIEW of BOX

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We wanted children to be able to get inside Japanese culture, to be able to look at it from the inside out. We decided, therefore, to use the family as our touchstone. Children already know and care a great deal about families. The similarities between Japanese and American families would give us something to build upon and would provide a context which would make the differences meaningful.

The Box falls into three main sections. The first section consists of two lessons in which the class is introduced to Japanese families and some of the things that would commonly be found in their homes. The class is divided into five families: the Tanakas, Hondas, Kawais, Yoshidas, and Yamakawas. These families represent various middle class occupations and backgrounds. Each child has a specific role in his family. The children remain in their families and in their roles throughout the use of the Box.

The fathers of the five families are given Family Guides which help them to run their families. These Guides are coordinated with the Teacher's Guide. They are the father's tangible source of authority as well as the source of instructions for guiding his family through the lessons. Each Family Guide opens with a letter which establishes the spirit of the whole Box.

Most respectfully yours,

Binda Reich
Susan Schanck

Binda Reich
Susan Schanck



Mr. Honda
Musachino
Japan

Honda Sama:

We are very sorry, and apologize for being so bold as to write to you without an introduction.

We also hurry to beg your forgiveness for being so direct as to actually tell you what to do. But we cannot come personally to make your acquaintance and help you while you are studying Japan. Therefore we are forced to write what we hope will not be a bothersome letter.

During the time that you study Japan you will have to act as the father of the Honda family. This means that *keeping the Honda Family Guide is your responsibility*. You may let other members of your family look at it, but you should keep track of it.

The instructions in this guide are for you to read. They tell you how to help your family learn about Japan. You should read the instructions for each lesson before it begins, so you can run your family operations smoothly. If you have any questions ask your teacher. Be sure to ask the questions when your family isn't around so you won't lose face.

We humbly hope you have fun being Mr. Honda and learning about Japan.

Most respectfully yours,

Binda Reich
Susan Schanck
Binda Reich
Susan Schanck



Family Guides also contain role cards for each member of the family. These describe the roles of each member of a Japanese family and explain how each role player should behave in the classroom.

For instance:

DAUGHTER'S ROLE CARD

You are the daughter. You are LEARNING how to be the ORGANIZER of a home. HOW TO CARE for things, and how to keep HARMONY.

IN JAPAN

Outside your home:

You go to school. You study hard, especially those things that will help you to be a good housewife and mother. You play with your friends after school. You like to read comics and girls' magazines, and listen to records.

At home:

You read, study, and watch television. You help your mother with the household chores and are served after your brothers. You try to bring honor to your family. You are expected to do favors for your brothers.

IN THE CLASSROOM

You try to follow the directions that are given you as well as possible. You try to bring honor to your family.

You don't bother the father of your family with little problems; ask the first son or the mother first.

You try to act like the mother of your family.

After being assigned roles and discussing them with each other and the teacher, the children are introduced to their own Japanese family room. A low table is provided with the Box. The teacher sets this up with some of the things that might be found in a Japanese family room, such as comic books, a real Japanese family album, calligraphy

brushes and ink, a magazine and, of course, a television set. (the TV is in reality a 8 mm film loop projector which comes with 8 loops on various aspects of Japanese life.) Both the roles children play and the objects in the family room have enough familiarity for the children to really identify with them.

The next part of the unit consists of three lessons. In them the children get a deeper sense of what it is to be Japanese by doing things that the Japanese do in the way the Japanese do them. Each family works with a different set of everyday Japanese objects which are much less familiar to them than the Japanese objects they have seen so far. The children learn the behavior patterns that occur in the family room when the objects are being used there.

The two major Japanese religions, Buddhism and Shintoism, are studied by the Tanakas; they make a Buddhist altar and learn how to pray at it. The Hondas learn about Japanese shoes. When and where different kinds of shoes are worn tells them a great deal about Japanese houses and the correct manners for moving about in a house; they make different kinds of floors for their family room. The Yoshidas learn about Japanese food, table manners, and how to eat with chopsticks. Both modern day and traditional clothing is studied by the Kawaiis. They learn how and when to wear both boys' and girls' kimonos. The Yamakawas learn how to make a flower arrangement and the ways in which the Japanese bring nature into their homes.

Culminating this independent work is a series of skits or demonstrations planned by the families to show each other and their teacher the proper use of their set of objects. The Hondas go first. They put down the paper mats they have made for the family room and show which shoes are properly worn where. (The four families who follow must now change their shoes appropriately as they go in and out of the room.) The Tanakas now set up a Buddhist altar and say a prayer and explain the two Japanese religions to the rest of the class. The three families who follow them must now change shoes properly and say an appropriate prayer before they give their skits. The Yoshidas show how to eat a meal, the Kawaiis demonstrate how to wear kimonos, and the Yamakawas make a flower arrangement and hang a scroll in the family room. The family room is now complete and can be used, with proper manners, whenever the children would like.

Following the demonstrations is another set of three lessons which delves even deeper into Japanese families. These lessons define precisely what a Japanese family consists of and give the history of each of the five families. Each family has its own illustrated Family History book which tells the story of that family since 1860. The families learn the distinction between our concept of a family tree which includes all our ancestors and the Japanese concept of a family line which includes only ancestors on the father's side. The children decide which of the ancestors in their histories would be included in a family line by using the Japanese family line rules. These rules help explain why the present day roles are the way they are. Interrelated with the stories of individual people in the Family Histories are descriptions of the political, economic, and social events which have shaped Japan into the country it is today. In the final lesson of this series the children bring their knowledge of the past to bear on their families' occupations now. By first acquainting the children with present day Japan, then allowing them to take a deep dip into the past, and finally bringing them back to the present, we hope their understanding of Japan and the Japanese people will be deepened.

EFFECT on TEACHER

We hoped the Box would bring about a change in the teachers' and children's attitudes toward Japan, that Japan would be felt not just seen, and that this attitude would be applied again and again whenever they came across a strange or different culture. We hoped, too, that it would give the children a reason for caring about the geography, economics and history of Japan.

In terms of the overall success of the Box, 83% of the teachers rated their experience with it as "high" or "very high". Teachers felt that the lessons worked well together and that the Teacher's Guide was clear and fairly well organized. When asked to compare teaching with the Japan Box with their usual methods of teaching, teachers reported the following: 96% rated "class interest in the subject" as "more than usual", and 63% rated the children's "apparent learning of the subject matter" as "more than usual". The Teacher's evaluation forms contained many comments such as "Every moment was fun, and yet their learning was so real which they certainly proved with their endless questions and constant enthusiasm." 100% of the teachers said they thought the children

knew that they had learned something and knew what they had learned.

Many teachers felt their relationship with the children was changed by their mutual experience with the Box. They said such things as "We seemed to become a closer-knit group," and "I became less of a director and more of an equal - a sharer and a fellow-discoverer." "The children felt freer to ask questions and I to answer them."

When asked which lesson they liked best, most teachers said Lesson I or one of the 3 lessons in the middle section. They also thought the children liked these best. Both teachers and children liked the last set of lessons least. The concepts in this set were difficult to grasp and the activities not as real or interesting as in the previous lessons. Also, the Teacher's Guide definitely lacked background information for the teachers.

Many teachers, who were initially dubious, stated that they were amazed at what their children were capable of doing. If the Box did nothing more than indicate to teachers what children were capable of, once their enthusiasm, humor and imagination had been sparked with the right materials, it would be a significant contribution.

EFFECT on the CHILDREN

From the children's point of view, the Box was a success because it encouraged them to do "fun things" in a school situation. They also got to control and plan something on their own, often for the first time in their school lives, and the results were revealing both to them and their teachers.

The interest that the Box had for the children seemed to carry over to their lives outside of school. Many teachers commented on the number of parents who were interested in the Project because their children talked about it at home.

The family, as the focal point of the Box, was more powerful than we expected it to be. There was a real emotional impact which captured and held the children's attention. They fell into their roles easily and, therefore, were really able to concentrate on the new things they were learning.

One teacher gave some nice examples of her children's involvement in the role playing situations:

"Claudia - intelligent but domineering - as wife of unintelligent, also domineering husband - said 'It took me an hour, but I finally learned a Japanese woman keeps her mouth shut'.

Cocky, bombastic David, after answering two questions incorrectly, despite frantic whisperings from his family, confessed to school secretary: 'Boy, did I lose face today!' And he buckled down.

A miracle of character reformation in Honda-son - Steve, a class problem - became a model head-of-house, possessive of order in family room because his family made mats."

DISCUSSION of GENERAL FINDINGS

The information we have gathered from the data has given us many clues about concrete ways to improve the Box. The order of the lessons should be changed so that there isn't a let down at the end of the Box. The teacher certainly needs more information on the last three lessons, and more connections need to be made with American children's own experiences so that she can better understand the implications of the events in the Japanese Family Histories.

We think that much of the success of the Box rests on the role-playing/family strategy. Our feeling is that perhaps children at this age are beginning consciously or unconsciously to be more aware of and to question what's happening in their own families: Just why is Dad's rule law? By seeing the rules for a Japanese family's behavior written out, by acting them out themselves, and by finding out why they came to be the way they are, the children are perhaps able to make more sense of their own world.

The form which role-playing takes in this Box seems significant. Perhaps role playing isn't even the right word. What happens in the Japan Box is more like a serious game of playing house. The rules of the game as it is played in Japan have been adapted to fit the way the game is to be played in a classroom in America. Sammy Jones, for the sake of the game, changes his name to Sammy Tanaka and follows the rules for playing any Japanese father. He

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doesn't have to try to become someone else inside - only outside. The activities that he is carrying out are real. He directs his family in making a Japanese altar, tells mother to see that all the family dishes are put away or acts as a go-between for a member of his family and the teacher. The nice thing is that when the rules are really followed, very "Japanese" things happen: father is praised and gains face for something good his daughter did, or is blamed and loses face for her misbehavior; from happenings like these, a real internal understanding takes place.

When the child, with his own experience of life, meets Japan through this Box, we think there is a spreading of interest and real learning about both Japanese and American families. We can only guess about the self-knowledge generated by the Box, but we do know from our data that the children do understand and care about Japan. As one teacher said, "I think the rest [class with exception of 3] learned something for life - an insight, glimpse into another world; an art, a grace, a beauty; an attitude, a skill, a curiosity to know more - an understanding of the kinship of man - one or more of these, every participating member now possesses about Japan."

The success of the Japanese Family Box raises many issues. Would "the family" be a good way to approach other cultures or did it work especially well for Japan because the Japanese themselves are so conscious of family roles and rules? Are there other situations - economic, political, etc. - in other cultures that could be made into a role-playing game that would captivate children in the same way that the family roles did? Would the same kind of role-playing game work at other grade levels or is it particularly appropriate for the 5th and 6th grade? Future Boxes would do well to explore these issues.

WATERPLAY

BY NANCY OLSON

BOX DEVELOPED BY NANCY OLSON

ERMA HIRSCHFELD

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