A global education framework for teaching about the world's women. (Women of the World).

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In our work at Ohio State University and within the Columbus, Ohio, community, we interact daily with women from other world regions. Whether they are well-educated international students or refugees who have little formal schooling, these women share similar reactions as they interact with Americans during their first year here. First, they are surprised at Americans' outdated information or ignorance about their cultures, countries, or even their continents. "They think of Korean women from the war fifty years ago," says one woman. "They can't imagine us with cell phones and college educations." Others observe that some Americans prefer stereotypes to reality. "The first questions they asked were: Did I live in a mud hut? Wear clothes? Have lions in my backyard? When I showed them photos of Harare, my school and my family's home, the students told me that they wanted to see the real Africa!" says a woman from Zimbabwe.

The women have not been here long before they encounter American prejudices. Although a few are actively harassed, the more common problem is invisibility-being ignored by teachers and students, store clerks, co-workers, or neighbors in their community. Some wonder why Americans act as though foreigners are not worthy of attention or respect. "Is it because Americans have such power that they think we are not as good?" asks one. These experiences contradict the image many of these women had of the United States as a land of equality and opportunity.

What are American social studies teachers doing to improve their students' knowledge and attitudes toward women around the world? In research with global educators over the past fifteen years, we have identified a number of practices that teachers use to improve student learning about the world and its women through global perspectives. (1) Whether these social studies teachers ground their work in world history, post-colonial theory, area studies, cultural studies, multicultural education, or women in development, they share a common goal: student understanding and appreciation of past and present events, global connections, and issues though the eyes of diverse women. Global educators share a commitment to moving beyond Eurocentric perspectives to teach the voices, experiences, ideas, and worldviews (2) of women in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East and of people of color in the United States. Some call this inclusion "moving the center" from a curriculum centered on American and European worldviews to a curriculum that is inclusive of worldviews of the majority of the world's peoples. (3)

In this article, we describe how teachers are integrating global perspectives into their instruction to increase student understanding and interest in gifts and women of other cultures. We begin by examining some assumptions that have constrained American understanding of the world's women, and teachers' perceptions of problems in teaching students to think globally about women. Then we outline and illustrate some of the practices teachers have developed to increase student knowledge, create interest, and reduce prejudice. Refer to Table 1 for an overview of the curricular problems teachers face and examples of practices they have developed to overcome these problems.

Overcoming the Legacy of Imperial Worldviews

Over the past thirty years, American multicultural and global educators and international post-colonial scholars have explored relationships between Eurocentric curricula inherited from the British and the poor quality of information in mainstream academic knowledge about women of color in the United States, Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Central to these fields of study is a concern about the enduring misconstructions and misrepresentations of "The Other"--people of color in the United States, people living in poverty, immigrants, or people in other countries. (4) The question of why The Other is misrepresented is of special interest to people who come to the United States from other countries and find that even well educated Americans have stereotypes, misperceptions, and lack of

understanding about their countries and cultures.

One such scholar is Edward Said, a Christian Palestinian who grew up in Egypt, came to the United States as a college student, and became an eminent scholar at Columbia University in literary theory. In his straggle to understand why Americans had more myths than insights into the Middle East, he analyzed European and American literature in the contexts of European and American history. In his seminal work Orientalism, Said demonstrates how European explorers, intellectuals, missionaries, settlers, travel writers, and others created scholarly misinformation because they relied on their own cultural frames of reference to describe, catalog, and interpret the cultures of Arabs, Muslims, Asians, Africans, and others. Five hundred years of this orientalist scholarship served both political goals and cultural beliefs in that it clearly differentiated Europeans as superior to other peoples and affirmed the European right to rule and "civilize" Africans, Asians, Arabs, Indians, etc. Said's later book, Culture and Imperialism, is especially useful to social studies teachers. In it, Said examines the historical effects of orientalism on the great masterpieces of the Western tradition. (5)

John Willinsky has applied Said's ideas to social studies and language arts in Learning to Divide the World. By examining how histories, geographies, and literature written under imperialism "live on, for many of us, as an unconscious aspect of our education," we can see how the legacy of imperialism shapes mainstream academic knowledge through its framework of opposition (us and them), its priorities in content (centered on Europeans), its divisions and constructions of the world's peoples (Japanese through European eyes), and its "scientifically underwritten racism." (6) Whether the divisions are The Orient/The Occident, First World/Third World, civilized/uncivilized, or industrialized/ developing nations, the imperial traditions of Eurocentric scholarship delineate an "us" (the white men who created the dominant power and represent its ideals) and a "them" (the Others who are divided from "us" by their inferior cultures, poverty, politics, language, or other differences).

How does the educational legacy of the British Empire continue to influence what young Americans learn about the world's women today? Although multicultural and global educators have made progress in challenging many misconceptions, here are some ways that imperialist thought may continue to shape the knowledge, perspectives, and attitudes of students today toward the world's women.

Imperial Assumption #1: White men are responsible for the events, actions, literature, and ideas that merit study. Effects on Student Learning: Students learn little about the world's women.

Assumption #2: Whites must describe, name, and interpret "Oriental," Indian, or African cultures, histories, and beliefs as people in those cultures cannot be trusted to author their own histories, literature, etc. Effects: Students learn to trust white (mostly male) scholars and professional organizations; they also learn to use colonialist language (e.g., the Orient) and pejorative names Europeans gave to people they "discovered" (Bushman, Hottentot, Pigmy). Students may not even recognize that women in other countries have different ideas, priorities, and issues, or that they perceive global events differently from men in their own countries or women in the "West."

Assumption #3: Women in Africa, Latin America, or "the Orient" are inferior intellectually and morally and need the help of white men and, to some extent, white women, to become more developed socially, economically, and politically. Effects: Students perceive that women in other countries are not like themselves; they are to be pitied, ignored, or feared.

Assumption #4: Because they are inferior, there is no need to study the ideas, languages, and literature of women in Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East. Effects: Students study French rather than Chinese, read about colonialism through British authors, not African or Indian writers; and they learn little about ideas, institutions, experiences, and issues that concern 80 percent of the world's people.

Assumption #5: Distinctions that are important to women in one culture or country are ignored when those distinctions do not exist or are not valued by Europeans historically or Americans today. For example, in Sierra Leone, most Mende women and their mothers, grandmothers, and great grandmothers belong to the Bundu society, a "secret society" for women that serves as a major influence throughout their lives. Because Europeans and Americans have no such institution in their societies, they usually ignore or misinterpret Bundu, as they have no reference point to appreciate its power. Effects: Lack of complexity and insider distinctions often lead to overgeneralization, trivialization, and misconceptions about women.

Assumption #6: It is more interesting to learn about "pure" traditional lifestyles, exotic rituals, or bizarre practices of African, Indian, or Arab women than it is to study ordinary, average women in these

societies. An example of this phenomenon is the choice some teachers make to teach about Masai women in a unit on East Africa when they are as representative of Kenyan or Tanzanian women as the Amish are of American women. Effects: Students perceive these women as interesting for their extreme differences or as exotic backdrops. (7)

Global educators challenge the biases of imperial worldviews and provide ways for students to learn about their commonalities with girls and women in other cultures, examine the complexities of girls' and women's lives, and understand the significance of women in global economic development, conflict resolution, and environmental change.

Teaching about Women through Global Perspectives

In countering imperial worldviews, global educators use the perspectives, ideas, and experiences of men and women in diverse world cultures to teach understanding of the past and present. Their practices can be categorized under five approaches. See Table 1 for practices under each category.

1. Confronting exotica, stereotypes, and misinformation directly.

Global educators are purposefully aware of media depictions of other cultures, religions, and events, and continuously assess the stereotypes, misinformation, and lack of knowledge about other cultures that students bring to class. They target problems through activities that replace faulty information with new knowledge and help students identify how exotic images and stereotypes can affect people's understanding, attitudes, and actions in daily life.

2. Teaching multiple perspectives through primary sources and contrapuntal literature.

Whether it is a historical event or breaking news, global educators teach students to examine diverse points of views through literature, speeches, diaries, historical documents, and other primary sources so that they develop in-depth understanding of the complexity of human conflicts, cultures, changes, and issues. Electronic technologies are especially useful for providing access to primary sources from women's organizations, girls' websites, and news stories. (8)

3. Developing student skills in analyzing how people's norms, beliefs, and values shape their worldviews and the knowledge they accept as truth.

Unless they understand how culture shapes people's knowledge, behaviors, and decisions, students cannot develop global perspectives of the major world conflicts, social changes, or economic and environmental issues that affect the daily lives of the world's women. Students need to study insider perspectives in order to perceive other people's perceptions of right and wrong, valued behaviors, obligations, and rights and responsibilities.

4. Teaching about interactions of power, prejudice, injustice, and worldview.

Global educators provide ways for students to understand power in a global context and the effects of discrimination and injustice on women's lives. Students critically examine the values and worldviews that underlie mainstream academic knowledge, information in the popular media, and language use. Teachers help students become aware of how people with cultural capital or economic and political power shape the knowledge and language that is transmitted from one generation to the next. Materials such as Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World, Teaching Tolerance, and On Prejudice: A Global Perspective and more than three thousand other resources reviewed at www.coe.ohiostate.edu/mmerryfield/global_resources/ default.btm can provide teachers and students with primary sources and analyses of these complex issues. (9)

5. Providing students with cross-cultural experiential learning.

There is no substitute for authentic learning with people from other cultures, especially if the experiences are structured around equal status and collaborative goals that have meaning in students' lives. (10) Global educators find many ways to increase their students' experiences with women and girls different from themselves through work with international students from local universities, immigrant organizations in the community, service-learning projects, exchanges through e-mail or videos, and by taking students to other places in the United States and overseas. Today, many schools have culturally diverse populations. Their challenge is getting students to learn about, work with, and appreciate classmates of

different races, religions, national origins, and linguistic backgrounds. Global educators recognize that a monocultural, monolingual school is one of the most difficult places to teach global perspectives, as students are more likely to lack experience in working as equals with people different from themselves. (11)

Illustrations

How do these practices interact as social studies teachers plan, teach, and assess their courses? Here are some examples that demonstrate how global educators have integrated these practices.

Example from a second grade classroom

Four Somali refugees enroll in a second grade classroom along with twelve African Americans and seven white children (most of whom have migrated from Appalachia). At first, the other children don't want to sit next to the Somalis, and the teacher hears negative stereotypes that the children have about each other. Through social studies and language arts that focus on communities, the teacher and students explore the backgrounds and cultures of the students in the room, and study their commonalities through short stories that take place in rural communities in West Virginia, Ohio, and Somalia. Students learn about women in the local community through visits from an African American woman police officer, a white woman who makes prizewinning quilts, and a Somali woman who shares her experiences in screening baggage at the local airport. The teacher uses events in the community--an attack on a mosque and students being banned at a local convenience store--to help students discuss prejudice and think about actions people can take to be treated fairly. Students work in small heterogeneous groups to compose letters to their mayor about problems they see in their neighborhood. The children develop the habit of listening to and working with people different from themselves.

Example from a seventh grade world cultures course

At the beginning of a unit on the Middle East, the teacher asks students to identify words and images that they associate with women of the Middle East so that class activities can directly address misinformation. When students depict Middle Eastern women as Arab, veiled, uneducated, and hidden away, the teacher has students examine maps and statistics of religious diversity across the region so that they can visualize all of the religions and ethnic groups of the Middle East and understand that not all Middle Eastern women are Muslim or Arab. Students then search online newspapers and magazines from the region to create a collage of data on girls' and women's lives, which includes excerpts of their writing, illustrations, and explanations of their day-to-day dress, their work and leisure time, and examples of their activities in their communities. To personalize the lives of women and increase the complexity of students' knowledge, the teacher has students work in small groups with ten Muslim women from Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iran who share photos and stories of their families and lives back home, answer questions, and discuss their own concerns about their countries. As an assessment activity, students develop a brochure to share with local media that explains how stereotypes of Middle Eastern women can be replaced with more accurate and complex information.

Example from a high school twentieth-century world history course

Students study the ideas, actions, and lives of average women to learn how women work for social, political, and economic justice. Following the theme of "power from below," (12) they research cases in which economically underprivileged women have overcome enormous odds to make changes that improve their lives and the lives of their children. (13) The cases are selected across regions and time periods to capture events in which oppressed women have questioned power structures in order to preserve cultural traditions, earn economic rights, or improve the education, health, and safety of their families. Here are some examples: South African women mobilized against the apartheid government and fully participated within the national struggle for independence. (14) Women in Argentina, known as "mothers of the Plaza de Mayo," organized protests to bring to justice those who were responsible for the disappearance of their children during the military rule in the 1970s and the early 1980s. (15) In Uganda and India, communities of women have formed independent small-scale credit organizations to lend money within the group because economically "poor" women are often denied credit by banks. Women's organizations in Africa, Latin America, and Asia continue to address women's reproductive health rights. In Brazil and India, women in indigenous organizations have continually sought the preservation of forests and ancestral land in an effort to protect their cultural heritage, economic security, and ways of life. (16)

The effects of a global education go beyond academic understanding of gifts and women in other world regions. In interacting with women from other cultures and examining their perspectives, experiences, and ideas, young people come to see their own country and culture in new ways. Their worldviews grow more complex, and their lives are enriched with new experiences and friends. They become engaged in issues and problem solving that bridge cultures and borders. They become not only citizens of their community and nation but also citizens of the world.

TABLE 1

Practices to Improve Student Understanding and Attitudes toward the World's Women

The Problems	Teaching Practices That Do Not Address the Problems
Lack of good information * Students have misinformation (stereotypes, exotic images, misconceptions, sweeping generalizations) and a general lack of up-to-date knowledge about the world's women.	* Ignore or affirm stereotypes about women of other cultures. * Teach exotic differences about women of other cultures. * Ignore commonalities between American women and women of other cultures. * Teach simplistic generaliza- tions about women in different world regions or countries.
Lack of insider knowledge * Students lack knowledge of and access to the contexts of the lives of girls and women in diverse cultures; especially critical is the lack of primary sources and insider knowledge written by girls and women.	* Teach about other cultures and events from one point of view, usually American mainstream academic knowledge that is constructed by white middle class scholars. * Ignore resources or ideas that conflict with current U.S. foreign policy. * Teach mostly about men. * Assume that views expressed by women in other countries are irrelevant, inferior, or a threat to the American way of life.
Lack of understanding of the politics of knowledge and language * Students do not understand how knowledge and language are constructed within cultural, gendered, and political contexts nor do they appreciate the long-term effects of historical factors on mainstream academic knowledge in the United States or other countries.	* Teach American mainstream academic knowledge without examining its assumptions. * Do not use knowledge construc- ted by others (U.S. minorities, women in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, etc.) that conflicts with the mainstream. * Use language to teach about other cultures that men and women in those cultures perceive as inappropriate or biased.
Lack of understanding of people's experiences with oppression * Students do not understand imperialism, colonialism, oppression, prejudice, and injustice as experienced by peoples, especially women, around the world past and present.	* Often ignore oppression and injustice in other countries unless it places the United States in a positive light. * Often gloss over American injustice and oppression or imply it was all in the past.
Lack of equal-power relationships	* Are not concerned with their

with people different from
themselves
* Students have insufficient
cross-cultural experiences with
girls and women of diverse
cultures.

The Problems

Lack of good information
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generalizations) and a general
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Lack of insider knowledge
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Lack of understanding of the
politics of knowledge and language
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knowledge and language are
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nor do they appreciate the
long-term effects of historical
factors on mainstream academic
knowledge in the United States or
other countries.

Lack of understanding of people's
experiences with oppression
* Students do not understand
imperialism, colonialism,
oppression, prejudice, and

students interacting with women
or girls of other cultures.
* If cross-cultural experiences
are planned, the experiences
place Americans in a superior or
more powerful role.

Global Educators' Practices that
Address the Problems

* Give pretest or another
assignment to identify stereo-
types, misconceptions, and
biases.
* Provide knowledge and learning
activities to directly address
misinformation, limited
knowledge, and biases.
* Ensure students understand the
differences between information
on a historical period and
women's lives today.
* Develop student skills in
differentiating exotic content
from a culture's norms,
complexity, and everyday life.
* Have students examine how
exotica and other misinformation
affect people's understanding
of women of other cultures.

* Help students develop the
habit of examining the points of
view of other cultures' women
on events and issues under study.
* Have students read literature,
history, news, websites, and
other primary sources written by
women in other cultures.
* Help students appreciate the
value of learning to see the
world though the eyes of women
in other cultures.

* Have students develop critical
reading skills to recognize
bias, perspectives, and
underlying assumptions.
* Have students learn to evaluate
effects of cultural and
historical factors in the
construction of knowledge and
language usage in their own
and other cultures.
* Provide activities in which
students analyze how a person's
worldview shapes how he/she
makes sense of historical and
contemporary events and issues.

* Teach events and issues in
which people have been and are
being treated badly by local peo-
ple, their own governments,
explorers, settlers, other

injustice as experienced by   countries, ethnic or religious

peoples, especially women, around   groups, businesses, or global
the world past and present.   organizations.
     * Use primary sources by men and
women in other cultures to teach
about injustice and ways people
have fought or withstood
oppression and discrimination.

Lack of equal-power relationships   * Find ways for students to work
with people different from   in equal or interdependent
themselves   status with girls or women of
* Students have insufficient   different cultures.
cross-cultural experiences with   * Provide long-term or ongoing
girls and women of diverse   cross-cultural learning instead
cultures.   of ad hoc experiences in which
students cannot build
relationships.
* Arrange situations in which
students experience being in
different linguistic, gender,
or cultural contexts.

Notes

(1.) Merry M. Merryfield, "Responding to the Gulf War: A Case Study of Teacher Decision-Making during the 1990-1991 School Year," Social Education 57 (1993): 33-41; Merry M. Merryfield, "Shaping the Curriculum in Global Education: The Influence of Student Characteristics on Teacher Decision-Making," Journal of Curriculum and Instruction 9 (1994): 233-249; Merry M. Merryfield, "Pedagogy for Global Perspectives in Education: Studies of Teachers' Thinking and Practice," Theory and Research the Social Education 26, no. 2 (1998): 342-379; and Merry M. Merryfield, "Why Aren't Teachers Being Prepared to Teach for Diversity, Equity, and Global Interconnectedness? A Study of Lived Experiences in the Making of Multicultural and Global Educators," Teaching and Teacher Education 16, no. 4 (2000): 429-443.

(2.) In this article, the term worldview refers to the lenses through which a person views other cultures and the planet. A person's worldview is shaped by his/her family and upbringing, community beliefs and values, experiences, and knowledge. Worldviews are dynamic, changing over time.

(3.) Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Moving the Center: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom (London, England: James Curry, 1993); and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Decolonizing the Mind (London, England: Heinemann, 1986).

(4.) For work on representation, see C. M. Archer, Living with Strangers in the U.S.A. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Regents/Prentice Hall, 1991); Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature (London, England: Routledge, 1989); Lisa Delpit, Other People's Children (New York: The New Press, 1995); Laurie Olsen, Made in America: Immigrant Students in our Public Schools (New York: New Press, 1997); and William G. Tierney and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., Representation and the Text (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1997).

(5.) Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York: Random House, 1978); and Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993). See also Edward W. Said, Covering Islam (New York: Vintage Press, 1997).

(6.) John Willinsky, Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 4.

(7.) J.M. Blaut, The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Determinism and Eurocentric History (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993); Patrick Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent," in Henry Louis Gates, ed., Race Writing and Difference (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1986); and Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London, England: Routledge, 1992).

(8.) Teachers can have students compare Japanese historical timelines that privilege literature, art, and

music with American timelines that focus more on military and political events. For example, see www.cit.kyoto.jp/ index_e.html for a timeline of the history of Kyoto, Japan.

(9.) Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson, eds., Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World (Milwaukee, Wis.: Rethinking Schools, 2002). Teaching Tolerance is a magazine free to teachers from the Southern Poverty Law Center, www.teachingtolerance .org. Daniela Gioseffi, ed., On Prejudice: A Global Perspective (New York: Doubleday, 1993).

(10.) David W. Johnson and Richard T. Johnson, "Social Interdependence and Cross-Ethnic Relations," in J. Lynch, C. Modgil, and S. Modgil, eds., Cultural Diversity and the Schools (London, England: Falmer Press, 1992).

(11.) Milton J. Bennett, "Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity," in R. Michael Paige, ed., Education for the Intercultural Experience (Yarmouth, ME.: Intercultural Press, 1993); and Angene H. Wilson, The Meaning of International Experience for Schools (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993).

(12.) Lynn Stephen, Women and Social Movements in Latch America: Power from Below (London, England: Latin American Bureau, 1997).

(13.) For example, within the Native American educational context, see K. Tsianina Lomawaima, The Story of Chilocco Indian School: They Called It Prairie Light (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994). Within the African American educational context, see J. D. Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Both studies describe the racial context of U.S. education and point out how communities created educational possibilities despite being marginalized in U.S. society.

(14.) A. Kemp, N. Madlala, A. Moodley, and E. Salo, "The Dawn of the New Day: Redefining South African Feminism," in A. Basu, ed., Women's Movements in Global Perspective (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995).

(15.) Jean Franco, "Beyond Ethnocentrism: Gender, Power and Third-World Intelligentsia," in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds., Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

(16.) See, for example, Vandana Shiva, Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development (London: Zed Books, 1989).

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