

## Chapter 3

### Results and Discussion of Subject Interviews

The findings of the first part of the study are summarized below. These data were the result of the interviews conducted with public individuals experienced and interested about Japan (Table 1). Their comments established the criteria for the subsequent analysis of social studies textbooks and curriculum guides.

#### Subject Characteristics

The importance of involvement with Japan to the respondents' lives showed substantial divergence. One subject in the political field has had only sporadic and ceremonial contact whereas others in business and academics make their living from Japanese contact on a daily basis. The majority of respondents interact with Japan and/or the Japanese people on a regular and frequent basis. Japan impacts on their professional and/or personal lives on the average of at least once a week.

Formal background knowledge about Japan before contact with the country and its people was little or none for every subject. Only three subjects had the benefit of academic courses relating to Japan and these were of a solitary nature, and not part of a concentrated course of study. Many subjects endeavored to learn about Japan at the point of their initial contact with the country through personal study which varied in depth from cursory to thorough. It should be recognized that the three Japanese nationals are exceptions to the above categories for obvious reasons.

## Curriculum Direction

Endorsement for Japanese studies in British Columbia schools was strong from all but one subject. The one exception did not oppose Japanese studies but could only endorse it as part of a world studies concept and not as a separate unit of study. Every subject has or is willing to share his or her expertise on Japan by speaking to groups of students or interested individuals.

Consistency of opinions about specific topics was more difficult to discern. For example, ten subjects expressed opinions on learning the Japanese language. One person, rated as "not extensive" and "weak intensity" within the political category, felt the language was too difficult to learn. However, a Japanese politician strongly endorsed Japanese language training, indicating that the Japanese are learning English and that we should learn Japanese in order to conduct business.

Eight subjects from business and academia supported language from a linguistics-training point of view. Their common opinion was that the process of engaging in Japanese language training would facilitate a valuable understanding of the mind frame of the Japanese people and would indicate to the Japanese a willingness and commitment to interact seriously.

Every subject expressed the opinion that a study of Japanese history must be part of a secondary school curriculum on Japan. There was equal consensus that Japanese history cannot be taught as an isolated chronological account of events. Every subject indicated the need to know about Japanese history because of its impact on the norms and attitudes of the Japanese people today. More articulate subjects defined the history study as requiring a thematic or contributory focus

to help Canadian youth understand the historical roots for why the Japanese act and think the way they do.

Two subjects emphasized the need to shift from a European-centered approach in our secondary school history courses to one that includes an Asian component. Four subjects pointed out how much more aware Japanese youth are of their own historical roots than Canadian youth are of theirs.

Many of the subjects expressed opinions about the need to learn specific Japanese cultural traits. Those traits that were mentioned by two or more subjects included the role of women in Japanese society, religion, the importance of the family, aesthetics, Japanese patience, and education.

Every subject was quick to recognize and careful to explain that the culture of Japan is inseparable from and interdependent with all the other topics on Japan. The consensus was that a study of Japan must approach culture from a multi- or interdisciplinary approach. For example, history was commonly mentioned as a basis for understanding present-day culture.

Four subjects stressed how different Japanese culture is from ours but the representative of the Japanese government wished to emphasize the similarities between Japanese and Canadian culture. A cultural study of Japan was considered important for many reasons. It was considered necessary to avoid offending and embarrassing the Japanese and thus losing business. A careful study of Japanese culture would eliminate misconceptions like the Shogun syndrome and fear through ignorance. Three subjects indicated that a study of Japanese culture would engender sensitivity and humility towards the Japanese

and thus foster more meaningful interaction. Seven subjects mentioned that a careful study of Japanese culture would help to eliminate a racist attitude from Canadians due to ignorance and from Japanese due to a perception of an arrogant attitude on the part of Canadians and accompanied by a reluctance to learn about Japan.

Eight subjects commented on the study of Japanese-Canadian relations. An interdisciplinary approach was emphasized. It was felt that we had to learn as much as possible about the Japanese as a people, what their wants and needs are both in Japan and within Canada, and more about our own economy so as to discuss relations intelligently. This information was deemed necessary to assist Canadians to negotiate from a position of strength and equality based on sound knowledge. It was emphasized that the industrial age allows instantaneous communication but that Canadians must be culturally equipped to ask the right questions. The subject representing the Japanese government encouraged B.C. students to concentrate on Japan because of the relatively close proximity and intense degree of B.C.-Japan relations.

Six subjects offered opinions specifically related to a study of the Japanese economy. It was felt that in general British Columbia students must learn about Japan's position in the world economy and specifically examine how Japan has attained economic superpower status. The importance of up-to-date information in this field was stressed. This information will likely help the next generation to more successfully conduct trade with the Japanese.

Ten subjects offered opinions on the topic of Japanese geography. It was felt that the geography of Japan (e.g., climate, vegetation,

population, physiographic regions, locations of cities, ethnic, and geographic diversity) is an essential part of a general background knowledge about Japan. Within this group, three subjects made reference to the importance of knowing Japan's relative location to the other nations of Asia.

Eight of the ten subjects discussing geography saw it as a topic important to an understanding of the culture of Japan and the Japanese people. They felt that geography should be discussed in the context of how it influences Japanese architecture and the Japanese people's sense of space and privacy.

From a business perspective geography was seen as necessary to an understanding of the Japanese economy. The huge domestic market in Japan, the impact of fishing, and the lack of distribution problems were cited as examples of where a knowledge of Japanese geography is critical.

Under the broad heading of "Other Topics" two subjects commented on the need for student exchanges between Canada and Japan. The importance of the "real life" dimension was considered more than just an extra feature of a Japanese studies program, but rather as an essential ingredient. The representative of the Japanese government noted that of the 30 "twinning" (special friendship arrangements between particular cities and towns in Canada and Japan) half were in British Columbia, and that this program offers an excellent opportunity to facilitate student exchanges.

Several subjects stressed the need to study Japan as a comparative study with Canada. Students should be taught the similarities and differences between Canada and Japan in geography and

business, for example. An advantage of this approach for Canadian students is the gaining of knowledge about their own country.

Two subjects felt that any study of Japan should include an historical look at China. It was pointed out that Japan borrowed so heavily from China that at least a cursory look at this country was a prerequisite for Japanese studies.

Two subjects talked about the need to understand Japanese attitudes in business and everyday life. Both subjects saw this understanding emerging from a cultural approach to Japanese studies.

#### Analysis of Rank-Order Data

At the completion of the interview, subjects were asked to rank-order a list of predetermined social studies topics. These topics, language, history, culture, economy, geography, and Japanese-Canadian relations, were chosen for their consistent appearance in textbooks and curriculum documents on teaching about foreign countries. The list was introduced at the end of the interview so as not to limit topic discussion with the subjects during the interview.

A Spearman rho analysis of the rank-order data using a two-tailed table for Pearson's correlation coefficient to evaluate rho, indicated a positive agreement between the opinions of academics and businesspersons,  $r(4) = .87, p < .05$ . Similarly, the agreement between the opinions of businesspersons and politicians approaches a level of positive significance,  $r(4) = .79, p < .1$ . An even stronger positive relationship was seen between the opinions of academics and politicians,  $r(4) = .95, p < .01$ .

In general, the respondents ranked culture and history as most

important and substantially more so than the other topics. Economy and geography were ranked virtually the same with language close behind. Japanese-Canadian relations received the lowest ranking. Table 6 shows the average rating of each topic for each group of subjects. Topics were ranked in order of importance in a curriculum focussing on Japan. Numbers ranged from 1 (most important) through 6 (least important).

### Discussion

Japan-oriented Canadian professionals in business, politics, and academia expressed strong and concise opinions on what is important for British Columbia secondary school students to know about Japan. Although no other study of a similar nature for the development of Japanese studies material has been identified, the strength of the subjects' opinions is consistent with the programs described, and the suggestions of noted individuals and groups quoted in the literature review. Subjects unfailingly remarked on the growing importance of Japan's world economic position, supporting the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects of Canada's reference to the next century as the "Century of the Pacific" (Macdonald et al., 1985). The emphasis on culture parallels the educational section of the 1985 Annual Report of the Asia Pacific Foundation (Bruk, 1985). The recommendations by subjects that Japan should be studied throughout the educational system and as a separate unit supports concern expressed in the literature review that the present British Columbia high school social studies curriculum guides do not sufficiently encourage teaching about Japan as a discrete course.

Average Ratings of Rank-Order Data Indicating Relative Importance of  
Various Topics for a Japanese Studies Curriculum

Topics	Ratings		
	Academics	Businesspersons	Politicians
Language	3.8	4.3	4.6
History	2.1	3.3	1.3
Culture	1.8	2.3	1.6
Economy	4.1	3.3	3.6
Geography	4.1	2.8	4.3
Jap-Can R.	5.0	4.8	5.3

Note. Jap-Can R. = Japanese-Canadian Relations



The subjects' opinions give clear direction for curriculum development in Japanese studies. Japanese language training was identified as important. The words of the Japanese government official mildly chiding Canadians for not making the same effort to learn Japanese as the Japanese are making to learn English should be taken seriously. Subjects saw language training as a means of helping to attune students to the mind-frame of the Japanese people. The recommendations that language training be approached from a linguistics perspective--as a tool to orient students to Japanese thinking--and that the Japanese language be studied for its cultural clues as much as for second language fluency, suggest that high-school Japanese language courses should strive for reasonable conversational ability while at the same time using language learning as a sensitizing device for understanding Japanese culture.

The rank-order data placed a high priority on the study of Japanese culture and history. Interpretation of these ratings from the interviews reveals the opinion that neither of these topics should be taught in isolation. The same opinion was evident for geography and economy. Learning and knowing about the history, geography, and economy of Japan should be seen as a window for understanding culture. Culture is the umbrella topic. Subjects spent considerable time explaining how specific eras and geographic features contributed to present-day culture and how the Japanese economic position has emerged historically and geographically. The implication for curriculum development is that a fundamental appreciation of Japanese culture is essential and best understood through a topical approach consisting of history, geography, economy, and language all based on the theme of what each contributes

to present-day Japanese life-style and personality. Subjects were careful to explain that the teaching of any of the above topics in isolation would be a mistake; a course on Japan should be sequential across many grades. There was a strong indication that high school is too late to begin serious study of Japan but that it should begin in elementary school with a carefully defined and coordinated program leading through to a culmination at the secondary level.

Consideration should also be given to an expanded course covering Japan as but one, albeit an extremely powerful one, of the nations of Asia. A strong case could be made for a high-school course on all of Pacific Asia. That question was beyond the scope of this research but is certainly a topic for further investigation.

It cannot go without comment that the topic of Japanese-Canadian relations received little quantitative support. This should not be interpreted to mean that the topic is not of value but rather that it is best understood from the perspective of an economic analysis of Japan's position and strength in the world economic structure. The interdependency of world economies demands this approach.

### Limitations

It could be argued that the strengths of the subjects' opinions is related to the selection process of the researcher. Sampling of subjects by convenience on a reputational basis might limit the generalizability of the study. However, this approach to subject selection was necessitated by the nature of the research question. It was not reasonable to ask unqualified individuals for their opinions on a country that they knew nothing about. As well, it should be noted

that the sample was diverse within categories. For example, businesspersons represented large international companies but also small one-person operations. Similarly, politicians ranged from municipal to international. The high degree of correlation between groups of subjects supports strong consensus. Still a larger study including a stratified random sampling of high-school social studies teachers for example, might be useful for comparison with the results of this study.

The objectivity of the researcher might also be brought into question in this study. Did his interest in Japan result in bias and inadvertent hints during the interviews? The researcher had no vested interest in the results; his job was not dependent on support for a Japanese studies course, for example. The strong Japanese orientation of the subjects suggests that their opinions would be the same regardless of the leanings of the researcher but a replication study by an impartial researcher might be in order before major curriculum changes were implemented.

### Summary

In summary, the data from this research indicate that practising professionals in Japanese affairs clearly recognize the importance of Japan to Canada, strongly endorse the need for educating the young about Japan, and have definite opinions as to the nature of a Japanese studies course. Curriculum development should focus on teaching about the culture of Japan and the Japanese people through an interrelated examination of the history, geography, economy, and language of this island nation. Each of these topics should serve to illustrate and illuminate the Japanese people today.

The results of the summary prompted an exploration of the resources presently available on Japan and in use in British Columbia secondary schools to determine how closely they parallel the opinions of these recognized experts dealing with Japan in business, politics, and academics. Once that is done work can begin with respect to the task of improving and developing materials designed to provide the next generation of Canadians with the best education for interacting with British Columbia's trading partner and neighbour across the Pacific--the nation of Japan.