

“IT, the Family, and Gender: Coping with Socio-economic Change in the Information Age”**

Hiroko Hara, PhD.

Professor, Department of Life and Social Welfare

Faculty of Arts and Sciences

the University of the Air (for distance education)

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Information behavior in Japan** and the use of “personal media” (HARA 1, 2, 11)
 - A. “Two surveys on information behavior” by the Institute of Socio-Information and Communication Studies, the University of Tokyo (HARA 1-9, 14-16)
 - a. 1st Survey (1995)

informants: men and women in Japan aged 13-59, 1,025 valid samples (returned rates?)
method: time-budget survey** and questionnaire (multiple choice and short answers)
 - b. 2nd Survey (2000)

informants: men and women in Japan aged 13-69, 2,017 returns (returned rates: 67.2%)
method: time-budget survey** and questionnaire (multiple choice and short answers)
 - B. Surveys by the Research Institute for System Science, NTT Data Corp. (RISS surveys) (HARA 11-13)
 - a. “International comparative survey on ITC and outlook on daily life”(1997)

informants: men and women in Tokyo ages 20-69 (499 valid responses)
men and women in Silicon Valley ages 20-69 (301 valid responses)
men and women in Stockholm ages 20-69 (305 valid responses)
men and women in Seoul ages 20-69 (320 valid responses)
men and women in Shanghai ages 20-69 (307 valid responses)
method: visit and interview (Tokyo, Stockholm, Seoul, Shanghai)
interview (Silicon Valley)
 - b. “ITC and lifestyles in Japan—people oriented toward information” (June 2000)

informants: men and women in Japan aged 18-69, 2,075 returns (returned rates: 69.2%)
method: questionnaires
3. Comparison of the use of “personal media” by sex and age
 - (1) PC use at present in Japan: male>female, 10’s<20’s>30’s>40’s>50’s> 60’s, full-time workers>homemakers (HARA 3-6, 9)
 - (2) How people in Japan learn to use PCs and WPs: from families and acquaintances, PC schools;

female>male (HARA 4)

(3) Reasons for not using the Internet: male=female (HARA 8)

4. Attempts to overcome “digital divide”—a variety of PC courses

(1) Those wishing to use the Internet in Japan: female>male; household income: high>low (HARA 7)

(2) Annual changes in the percentages of individual Internet use in Japan: male/female gap tends to narrow from 1997 to 2000 (HARA 11)

(3) Regional gap within Japan in using the Internet: 1997> 2000 (HARA 12)

(4) PC courses for old people, IT courses offered at local community/women’s centers in cities throughout Japan

(5) IT courses at workplaces

(6) A gap in the amount of international news obtained according to proficiency in English (voluntary translators)

(7) Japanese women caught between the gender structure in Japanese society (eg. low GEM***) and the economic measures (as demonstrated by GDP/GNP) as a part of global society

Japanese women have not been able participate in workshops and other important meetings on gender equality including WID/GAD, held by international organizations and NGOs.

NGOs in Japan are not financially well-supported, mainly because of the current tax system. Therefore, Japanese women often have to attend international conferences at their own individual/private expense, but there is a limit to this kind of financial resources.

As a result, Japan as a whole is delayed in keeping pace with the international trends (currents) involving gender equality including WID/GAD

5. Information age and family/gender

(1) Activities by women’s organizations: sending news/information about the movements by governments and private civil societies at international, national, and municipal levels to the members in Japan (and abroad)

<example>

1) Information Network on Policies for Gender Equality in Japan (JJ Net) (August 1996-): information related to women’s policy not available on newspapers and TV

2) Japan’s Network for Women and Health (January 1994-): information on women and health, population policy, UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), relationship between NGOs and governments, etc.

(2) Benefit of fax in (1): Family members and colleagues at workplaces, when they see the faxed messages on women’s policy, are likely to change their stance toward gender equality.

(3) Benefit of e-mail in (1): easy to forward to friends

(4) A wide spread of SOHO and e-shopping eventually might enable men to manage both their work

and family responsibilities in the future, like women do right now.

(5) Learning how to budget time and nurturing the ability to judge (ability to select information):
With whom to exchange mobile phone mails: friends one often sees (SIC mobile phone survey****)
(HARA 10)

(6) Promotion of family exchanges through mobile phone/mobile phone mail.

(7) Advantages for people with disabilities

6. Requirements for overcoming “digital divide,” or coping with socio-economic changes in the information age

- a. Infrastructure: how to overcome gaps by class, region, disabilities, and language
- b. mind-set: improving the ability to select information and nurturing imagination and creativity (within and outside the IT community)
- c. crisis management: issues in technology and institutions, attitudes of users
- d. other factors: artistic value of handwritten letters and characters (eg. calligraphy), relations between other forms of art and IT

7. Conclusion

Explore “how men and women can learn equally,” rather than “how to preach equality between men and women” as we have been doing.

In order to overcome gaps by class, region, disabilities, and language, let us elaborate “appropriate solutions” according to specific cases, while taking necessary measures in international community.

* translation by the chairs of this Shimane session (avoiding the use of the words such as “divide” or “gap”)

** translation by the Institute of Socio-Information and Communication Studies, the University of Tokyo

***GEM: Gender Empowerment Measure: A UNDP Report in 2000 (UNDP, *Human Development Report 2000*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 279) defines it as “a composite index using variables constructed explicitly to measure the relative empowerment of women and men in political and economic spheres of activity. Three indices—for economic participation and decision-making, for political participation and decision-making and for power over economic resources—are added to derive the final GEM value.

****The SIC mobile phone survey was conducted by the Foundations for MultiMedia Communications (FMMC) in Japan in 2000. The details are given in its report “A study on the advanced use of the Internet, mobile phones, and PHS.” (See <http://www.fmmc.or.jp/fmmc2/fm5012-3.html>)