



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Open Pedagogy Fellowship Sustainable Development Education Goal 10

Masai Women: inequalities in the Masai Culture and their effect on Masai Women and their future

Tara L. Tetrault, MAA

Introduction: As John Dewey taught educators in the beginning of the twentieth century that students absorb and remember more when they have to practice the lesson themselves. I use this technique to reach anthropology students how to do their ethnographic fieldwork and analysis. I believe it benefits our students because they learn how to observe and document human behavior, gain what anthropologists call the "insider view" and then take that new knowledge to help resolve local problems. Today, I am applying the same techniques to designing this UN Lesson Plan on the Masai Women. Teaching students about the Masai Culture using the Kinship and Marriage unit gets students to focus on some of the underlying structure of the Masai Culture that guides when women will do and setting some of their direction for their future. According to the older ethnographies about the Masai to be married means to be lead. Some of the un-said message is women will not be given the authority to use money. If they are unable to make financial transactions, it limits their mobility. In this same ethnographic footage students learn about the coming of age ceremonies girls go through to become married, viewers learn what is meant to be married in the transaction, in the sisterhood, and in the workload that is expected of all women.

Anthropology & Community Development Over Time: Students use see an ethnographic film in the 1970's to learn about the Masai culture, Women's work and economic power. First, students learn about the longitudinal field anthropology study in the 1970's and 1980's where the anthropologist worked in the community. They filmed and interviewed women going through the growth process to adulthood, entering their new families home, and learning about the work expectations as a newly married woman. Students will discuss this, as well as the cost these women had to bare as a result. Next, students learn about the photographer who worked with Masai

women in the 1990's and started a fund raising organization to send girls to secondary school. Today, a generation later some of the Masai girls are attending college.

Goals: Your job as students is to learn about each project, report on each, and thoughtfully react to the projects giving the pros and cons of each. The last part of this unit is to create a virtual or real example of how to help humanity. This can be a how to help the women we learned about or how to aid a cause of your own. Be creative, have fun, and enjoy learning and doing something hands-on 😊

Follow these steps for a more detailed explanation of what to do 1st, 2nd, 3rd:

1. The first goal of this unit is to understand the UN Directive on Inequalities.... Women are often left with children to provide for yet carry the most restrictions on what they are allowed to do, if they are allowed to work and if they are allowed to earn money. This works to secure them in a system of poverty

2. Learning from the films and website, draft a detailed Cultural Background (knowing what's been done to date): Earlier studies by ethnographer, Melissa Llewelyn Davis 1974-2020 and photographer Barbara Shaw 1990-2013. The ethnographer captured the growth, acknowledges the use of FGM as a part of a girl's growth to becoming ready to marry. In the Masai marriage means to be led. Marriage and initiation of a young Masai girl into the Masai culture are also illustrated in the film. The Masai practice polygyny and they marry outside (exogamous) their extended family but when a Masai girl marries it is said that she leaves her family behind for good. This is traumatic for a young girl and she is initiated into a new family with new sisters who taunt her as part of the initiation process.

Finally, examine the cultural landscape and material culture to the learning how the Masai make a living, and in particular to understand life as a girl and woman. Last, to learn what outside Masai and American organizations are doing to help educate and train the Masai girls, as well as the grown Masai men and women in the Masai culture. Women were not allowed to purchase items. In this context how important might the artifacts the Masai women be?

3. Alternatively, knowing what you do about the Masai of the past, examine **the Masai Girls Education Fund.org website**. Here, you will be learning about how the MGEF Started, what they do for the girls, how they raise money. Describe this in your second part of your report. Add your reaction to include: 1) what the strengths of what MGEF has done? 2) What are the weaknesses? 3) what do we need to see happen for the Masai Girls?

Finally, describe how we as a class might help an organization like the MGEF. How can we make a change happen? How might we help raise funds or enhance what MGEF does? There is no right or wrong answer here so be creative, think outside the box. You can design a website as a group; or create a public or artistic event that aids the Maasai.

4. **This report or your alternative MGEF proposal is due two weeks after you see the film and discuss it in class.**

1) Assignments or Deliverables:

- 1) Your 3-page report on the Masai Past

- 2) Your Report on MGEF OR A creative project on the Maasai is due by the end of the semester.

