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Japanese Immigrant Women’s Identity Formation and Belonging in the United States

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Asian American Studies

by

Yukino Torrey

2023
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Japanese Immigrant Women’s Identity Formation and Belonging in the United States

by

Yukino Torrey

Master of Arts in Asian American Studies
University of California, Los Angeles, 2023
Professor Min Zhou, Co-Chair
Professor Valerie Matsumoto, Co-Chair

This study examines the relations and dynamics between contemporary immigrant Japanese women and Japanese American community members in Northern California. For my thesis, “contemporary Japanese immigrant,” or shin Issei, is someone who immigrated to the United States after 1980, and “Japanese Americans” refers to people who immigrated from Japan to the United States before World War II and their descendants.

This study centers the oral histories/life narratives of seven contemporary Japanese immigrant women and one Japanese American who are involved in one of two key organizations in a Northern California community — a Buddhist Church and a Japanese American museum— or have been referred to me by someone who is connected to one of these two organizations in some capacity. My project connects and analyzes their stories through the lens/frameworks of gender, transnationalism, and belonging. I argue that centering the lived experiences of shin
Issei, or contemporary Japanese immigrant, women who are involved in the Japanese American community highlights the ways in which participating in Japanese American community spaces can help new immigrants gain a better sense of self, identity, and belonging. I find that gender and transnational connections have shaped the lived experiences of contemporary Japanese immigrant women, particularly the way that they find or navigate belonging in the Japanese American community. On the one hand, contemporary Japanese immigrant women find space in the Japanese American community to maintain parts of Japanese culture that they cherish without being subjected to the same gender expectations that they experienced in Japan. On the other hand, the transnational connections that contemporary Japanese immigrant women maintain, through practices such as language, may also serve as an effective avenue for collaboration across generations.

This study primarily reflects the perspectives of contemporary Japanese immigrant women. Although my study is not representative of shin Issei women and Japanese Americans because of data limitations, the stories of these shin Issei women show that there are contemporary Japanese immigrants who are seeking out and involved in Japanese American community organizations. Furthermore, I have shown that the ethnic community space can allow shin Issei people and Japanese American community members to engage with and learn from each other. Examining this engagement process sheds light on how shin Issei people find self and navigate generational differences in Japanese American community spaces.

Through my research, which centers the lived experiences of shin Issei, or contemporary Japanese immigrant women, I find that involvement in Japanese American community spaces help new immigrants gain a better sense of self, identity, and belonging. Although my M.A. thesis focuses on contemporary Japanese immigrant women and their relations with Japanese Americans, I hope that my research questions about belonging in the context of gender and
transnationalism will be helpful for other scholars and community members who are examining the different ways that social connections form in ever-changing communities comprising several generations of people from different backgrounds.
The thesis of Yukino Torrey is approved.

Professor Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo
Professor Tritia Toyota
Professor Valerie Matsumoto, Committee Co-Chair
Professor Min Zhou, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles
2023
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Furthermore, I appreciate the support that I have gotten from people in the Japanese American community in Northern California that I reached out to, and I want to express my gratitude to all the people who have shared their time and support for my research. Some of the participants in my thesis went out of their comfort zones to do the oral history / life narrative interview with me over Zoom and in English, to support my work and share their stories.

I would also like to thank my parents and family for the support and guidance that they have shown me for my academics and all aspects of my life growing up. There are no words to express how much I appreciate your guidance and support through my journey of figuring out identity for myself, as a mixed-race person.
Introduction

This study examines the relations and dynamics between contemporary immigrant Japanese women and Japanese American community members that they interact with, in Northern California. For my thesis, “contemporary Japanese immigrant,” or shin Issei, is someone who immigrated to the United States after 1980, and “Japanese Americans” refers to people who immigrated from Japan to the United States before World War II and their descendants.

This study centers the oral histories/life narratives of my eight participants who are either involved in one of two key organizations in a Northern California community — a Buddhist Church and a Japanese American museum — or have been referred to me by someone who is connected to one of these two organizations. Seven interviewees are shin Issei and one is Japanese American. My project analyzes their experiences through the lens/frameworks of gender, transnationalism, and belonging.

I am a mixed-race, U.S.-born child of a shin Issei immigrant, and hope that this project can shed more light on current relations between the two groups and what future engagements might look like. And I hope that centering the voices of my participants, no matter how small the group, illustrates that there are people working to form these connections and experiencing both the challenges and possibilities of working through generational differences.

My experiences as a shin Nisei person who has received much kindness and learned a great deal from participating in the Japanese American community while growing up have informed my aim of grappling with how to form connections between these two groups with different histories and how that affects the existing Japanese American community. I am particularly interested in the complexities of belonging and connection between two very different co-ethnic groups, and how to process or read for them, especially when there may be
few commonalities. This is something that I am learning from my participants, as they are setting an example of finding commonalities between both groups while acknowledging important differences between them.

Furthermore, I think that highlighting the stories of my participants is an act of finding the connections between both generations. I write this thesis with hope that my work will advance positive relations between both groups, but I also acknowledge that it is important to examine the tensions and challenges that arise when working to form these connections and that they might be able to inform future relations between both groups.

The main research question that my thesis poses is: How do shin Issei women navigate identity, difference, and belonging when engaging in Japanese American community spaces? The thesis also addresses related questions: What is unique about the lived experiences of shin Issei women compared to others in the Japanese American community, who are born in the United States? How do shin Issei interact with Japanese Americans who have been born in the United States, and how do these interactions in shared community spaces affect the ways in which shin Issei navigate identity, difference, and belonging? Through exploring these questions, I claim that centering the lived experiences of shin Issei, or contemporary Japanese immigrant, women who are involved in the Japanese American community highlights the ways in which participating in Japanese American community spaces can help new immigrants gain a better sense of self, identity, and belonging.
Chapter 1
Research Design and Methodology

This study is primarily concerned with how shin Issei women navigate identity, difference, and belonging in Japanese American spaces. Identity markers such as “shin Issei” and “contemporary immigrant Japanese woman” will be used throughout this thesis, but it is important to be aware that these terms may not resonate with all of my participants who immigrated from Japan to the U.S. after 1980.

The term “shin Issei” as scholar Eri Kameyama states, comes from “‘Shin’ meaning ‘new’ in Japanese” and “is a term used by scholars and members of the Japanese American community to distinguish the new wave from the old wave of Japanese immigration.”¹ Kameyama describes the “old wave” as “the period between the late 1880s when Japanese immigration first began to 1924 when nearly all immigration was halted by the National Origins Act.”² and the “new wave” as “any Japanese immigrants entering after the end of World War II in 1945. [And,] In this new wave there are a few different cohorts that are worth noting: war brides, chuzaiin (or business people from Japan, stationed temporarily in the United States), students, tourists, and entrepreneurs.”²

The majority of my research draws on oral history/life narrative interviews I conducted with seven contemporary Japanese immigrant women and one Japanese American community member. My original goal was to interview an equal number of participants who identify with both groups, but more participants who identified as contemporary Japanese immigrant women responded or were referred to me than Japanese Americans. I created two separate sets of interview questions over the summer of 2022, tailoring the questions for individuals from both groups.

² Eri Kameyama, 24.
groups (See Appendix 1 for detail). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the logistics of my being in Los Angeles, my oral history/life narrative interviews were mostly conducted virtually using the Zoom virtual meeting platform. In this thesis, I have used pseudonyms for all my interviewees (see Table 1). I also use secondary sources and other materials to supplement the oral history/life narrative interviews.

As I have previously stated, although the term “shin Issei” can be used for all individuals who immigrated from Japan to the United States after World War II, the shin Issei / contemporary Japanese immigrant women with whom I spoke all immigrated to the United States after 1980. These women’s stories add more diversity to what it means to be a shin Issei / contemporary Japanese immigrant. For example as Table 1 illustrates: Sakura married an American, Naomi first arrived pursuing further education and then got married, Hoshi first arrived as a student, Satsuki was ultimately able to obtain U.S. citizenship, but first came to the U.S. accompanying her husband who was assigned to work in the U.S., Rina came as a student and eventually married an American, Ume came to be a minister / reverend of a Buddhist Church, and Moe arrived as a child with her parents. Their stories and reasons for not returning to Japan or making their time in the United States less temporary (which may reflect their perception of Japan) add more dimension and complexity to the shin Issei / contemporary Japanese immigrant experience.

Moreover, at the time of my interviews with the seven contemporary Japanese immigrant women, most maintained a green card. Five of these women have green card status, and of the women who are not under green card status, one has a religious visa as a Minister/Reverend at a Buddhist Church, and one participant has U.S. citizenship.
Table 1: Description of Contemporary Japanese Immigrant / shin Issei women Participants under Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym of Participant:</th>
<th>Immigration Status at the Time of Interview:</th>
<th>Migration Path:</th>
<th>Connection to Japanese American Community:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sakura</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Married to an American</td>
<td>Works at a Japanese Language School that is tied to a Buddhist Church, however this language school is not religiously affiliated with the Buddhist Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>First arrived pursuing further education and then got married</td>
<td>Museum Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ume</td>
<td>Religious Visa</td>
<td>Came to the U.S. to be a Reverend / Minister at a Buddhist Church</td>
<td>Reverend / Minister at a Buddhist Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moe³</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Arrived as a child with her parents</td>
<td>Author met through Japanese American Museum connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoshi</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>First arrived in the U.S. as a student</td>
<td>Employed at a Japanese American Senior Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satsuki</td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>Accompanying her husband who was assigned to work in the U.S.</td>
<td>Volunteer at a Japanese American Senior Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rina</td>
<td>Green Card</td>
<td>Came as a student and eventually married an American</td>
<td>Employee at a Japanese American Senior Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ Moe might express her identity differently, but I use terminology such as “shin Issei” and “contemporary Japanese immigrant” in this thesis, so please refer to Chapter 1 to be more aware of the way terminology is used in this thesis.
For outreach to potential participants I used both direct contact and outreach to two main organizations: a Buddhist Church and a Japanese American museum in Northern California. This outreach mainly took the form of emails with leaders at these organizations who could distribute my outreach letter to their networks and referrals from people who are connected to these two organizations in some capacity. I have volunteered or worked with five of my participants.

Many early immigrants from Japan were involved in agriculture throughout the West Coast, and as Eri Kameyama writes, “The prewar Japanese immigrants set up *nihonmachi* (Japantowns) in various parts of the West Coast…” which also includes areas in Northern California.⁴ And as Kameyama elaborates and this thesis will explore further in the context of Northern California, “The prewar establishment of a community space shaped the local environment in which the new wave would settle and start their new lives.”⁵

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Chapter 2

Contemporary Japanese Migration to the United States

To briefly provide context on early immigration from Japan, immigration from Japan to the United States “began in the mid-1800s.” One of the main reasons for the immigration of predominantly men at this time was economic conditions in Japan. And as previously stated, in response to the economic conditions at the beginning of the Meiji government many of these immigrants pursued agricultural work in the West Coast of the United States. To expand upon this, it is important to look at general trends in contemporary immigration from Asia to contextualize contemporary immigration from Japan. As Min Zhou wrote, “The passage of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, which favored family reunification and skilled migration, was a significant turning point in Asian immigration.” Zhou elaborated on the impact of this legislation, saying that it “led to the exponential surge of Asian immigration.” She expanded on the reasons for immigration from Asia during this time period saying that, “Global economic restructuring, rapid economic development in Asia, and increasing US political, economic, and military involvement in Asia have all combined to perpetuate Asian immigration to the United

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7 Tritia Toyota, 19.


10 Min Zhou, 95.
States.” The context and impact of economic restructuring for contemporary Japanese immigration will be examined further.

My research highlights two major unique characteristics of contemporary immigration from Japan to the United States, gender and transnational experiences.

The gendered experience of contemporary immigrants from Japan is the first characteristic that will be explored in this chapter. In Tritia Toyota’s article, “The New Nikkei: Transpacific Shin Issei and Shifting Borders of Community in Southern California,” she states, “A major difference is that while Issei (first generation) were mostly young men, shin Issei are overwhelmingly young women.” Furthermore, she adds a class dimension to the characterization of contemporary immigrants from Japan saying, “Equally important, both nineteenth-century Issei and newer arrivals can be characterized as labor migrants forced to seek better economic opportunities abroad. [Furthermore,] categorizing shin Issei as labor is a distinctly different approach from much of the research on newer Japanese migrants.”

Toyota examines the nuances of the intersection of class and gender for contemporary immigrants from Japan, careful to acknowledge that the “political and economic circumstances were dissimilar” from the earlier immigration from Japan (immigration in the nineteenth century), and looks at contemporary immigration from Japan within the context of “contemporary global economic restructuring.” She writes, “With catastrophic rapidity, the post-war ‘miracle’ of the Japanese bubble economy collapsed. Led by Tokyo, the world’s largest mega-urban region, the rest of Japan plunged into recession and historic levels of unemployment.

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11 Min Zhou, 95.


13 Tritia Toyota, 5.

14 Tritia Toyota, 10.
unthinkable after decades of growth and rising lifestyles.”\textsuperscript{15} Moreover, she found that “In fact, the most common reason cited by younger Japanese coming to the U.S. is their increased unemployment status. For women, those economic responses also occur within gendered frameworks.”\textsuperscript{16} Gender may become an even more prevalent aspect of the experience of contemporary Japanese immigrant women during this time of “economic restructuring”, since Toyota claims that “Both men and women workers were affected, but young women, who are more often excluded from full membership in the employment system, paid a heavier price.”\textsuperscript{17}

Another characteristic of contemporary immigrants from Japan is their transnational existence, and it is important to think about the transnational aspect of the experience of many shin Issei people. Tritia Toyota’s notion of transnationalism is useful here.\textsuperscript{18} Toyota explores the ways that both Japanese Americans and contemporary immigrants maintained “continuing contacts with Japan that were both real and imagined.”\textsuperscript{19} My contemporary Japanese immigrant participants also found ways to continue their connection to Japan while in the United States. For one woman, Ume, it may include daily practices like making Japanese food.\textsuperscript{20} Ume said, “I always like, enjoy my mom's udon. So, I always missed her recipe. So, I want to try to cook it, and then… feel the sense of Japan. Even [though] I am in [the] United States.”\textsuperscript{21} And for some shin Issei women, like Satsuki, food and family are major ways that they maintain connections to

\textsuperscript{15} Tritia Toyota, 11.
\textsuperscript{16} Tritia Toyota, 10.
\textsuperscript{17} Tritia Toyota, 10, 12.
\textsuperscript{18} Tritia Toyota, 8.
\textsuperscript{19} Tritia Toyota, 8.
\textsuperscript{20} Ume, interview with the author, January 2023.
\textsuperscript{21} Ume, interview with the author, January 2023.
Japan. Satsuki said, “Now I have two grandkids so I wanted to pass the Japanese culture to my grandchildren.” She explained, “for the New Year, whenever my grandchildren comes for the New Year, I always prepare Japanese food…” Beyond holidays and cooking Satsuki also stated,

Yeah, but what’s most important, is the Japanese language...I sent my children to a Saturday school. Saturday school is a Japanese school. They teach Japanese language and some other subject in Japanese language like mathematics ... using the same textbook as Japanese elementary kids... Yeah, so my daughter is doing the same thing to my grandkids. She's sending her children to Japanese school as well.

Satsuki’s story shows that her prioritizing sharing Japanese culture with her children may have had an intergenerational effect: her daughter has also incorporated some of the things that she grew up with such as going to Japanese school for her children as well.

For contemporary Japanese immigrant women who maintain green card status, this may also be one way to maintain connection to Japan. As Toyota writes, “Many shin Issei have married Americans—of all races and ethnicities—and received green cards that permit residency. But resident alien status does not mean U.S. citizenship and most shin Issei who arrived in the 1980s have not naturalized.” Toyota explains other ways that contemporary Japanese immigrants might get a green card saying, “A temporary work visa was often another route to gaining permanent entry into the U.S. Rather than return to Japan when their work stints were

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22 Satsuki, interview with the author, February 2023.
23 Satsuki, interview with the author, February 2023.
24 Satsuki, interview with the author, February 2023.
26 Satsuki, interview with the author, February 2023.
27 Tritia Toyota, 14.
completed, *chuzai-in* also became permanent resident aliens, getting green cards that permitted employment.\(^\text{28}\)

Family was one of the main reasons behind maintaining their green card for some of my contemporary Japanese immigrant women participants. As Rina, who is a green card holder and the mother of a young child explained,

> *So, this is because, you know, he is half Japanese, if he ever wanted to, Japan doesn't do dual citizenship, but he can until he's twenty-two. So up until his little life of twenty-two years he wants to move there or live there or something. He will have that option. And I'm able to provide it to him because I have the Japanese passport now you know, and I don't think I would have been able to do that for him if I didn't.*\(^\text{29}\)

Rina continued, “Yeah, for now. I'm happy with having my green card. The only [difference] I guess, I don't have to do jury duty and I can't vote. That's the only difference that I notice. But everywhere else it's fine. You know, I don't really notice any inconvenience to being a green card holder.”\(^\text{30}\) Aging also becomes a reason to maintain green card status, as Hoshi, another contemporary Japanese woman participant who is a green card holder, explains,

> *Since Japan doesn't allow dual citizenships we are not thinking about becoming a citizen here... Yeah, if they allowed it, we probably got just a citizenships. But that's because they don't allow it. We just keep Japanese. Who knows, we might be going back, right? Because medical insurance and stuff, is too expensive here. When you get older, you know, in Japan, it's I don't know how much [it] is now, but before it was free for older people...*\(^\text{31}\)

For Rina and Hoshi, family and aging have been factors in the decision to maintain their green card status.\(^\text{32}\) I think that for Japanese immigrants such as Rina and Hoshi these questions around

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\(^{28}\) Tritia Toyota, 24.  
\(^{29}\) Rina, interview with the author, February 2023.  
\(^{30}\) Rina, interview with the author, February 2023.  
\(^{31}\) Hoshi, interview with the author, January 2023.  
\(^{32}\) Rina, interview with the author, February 2023. And Hoshi, interview with the author, January 2023.
being a green card holder have a deeper meaning and illustrate that the decision to maintain it is an example of their transnational experience and existence.\footnote{Rina, interview with the author, February 2023. And Hoshi, interview with the author, January 2023.}

Lastly, for my participants who are involved in Japanese American organizations, the Japanese American community can also be a space where they are able to maintain these transnational connections. Rina, who is an employee at a Japanese American senior center, said, “I do think that in some ways they have embraced, you know, the Sansei, or the Japanese American folks who are around, they've embraced the really nice parts of Japanese culture, Japanese people, that's, carried on through the generations.”\footnote{Rina, interview with the author, February 2023.} One example that she mentions is a New Year’s custom: “And they (Japanese Americans) still practice, like, I love how families still do mochitsuki taikai, during New Years. And, I mean, cuz my family never did that. But you know, there's places we can go to be involved in mochitsuki. But, you know, families do that together here.”\footnote{Rina, interview with the author, February 2023.} Mochitsuki is rice pounding to make rice cakes called mochi in Japanese.\footnote{See glossary for more information on mochitsuki.} Moreover, Rina talked about how her job at a Japanese American senior center allows her to be in a Japanese-speaking environment,

\begin{quote}
I definitely use my Japanese a lot there, which is, so great. Because a lot of the staff do speak Japanese, and some speak better Japanese than they do English. So, you know, my Japanese, it's fluent, but it's definitely not like professional level. But it helps, you know, with my job to speak it. And I know, there's the clients who come in, some just don't get to speak it and they want to and that's their native language. And so, you know, I totally talked to them, like, they're my grandma, you know, like, I don't talk to them in the polite Japanese keigo, which may be the right thing to do, but I'm just more comfortable, acting like I'm their granddaughter…\footnote{Rina, interview with the author, February 2023.}  
\end{quote}
Through her work at a Japanese American senior center, Rina has found positive parts of Japanese culture that are maintained in the Japanese American community but not as prevalent in contemporary Japanese society and she has continued her connection to Japan through being exposed to cultural events such as mochitsuki during the New Year season, and the comfort that she gets from working in a Japanese-speaking environment.38 Another contemporary immigrant Japanese woman, Sakura, also mentioned a positive connection that she found with the Japanese American community through her work at a Japanese Language School tied to a Buddhist Church (however as stated in Table 1, this Japanese language school is not religiously affiliated with the Buddhist Church).39 Sakura said, “So it's … a …good thing I'm working for the Japanese school to remind me that I had that wonderful culture that I grew up with that I should appreciate more.”40

However, although Rina and Sakura provide examples of positive identification with Japanese American culture, it is important to keep in mind that there are differences between the two groups as well.41 As Toyota notes, “Ideologies and group practices the original Issei brought with them to the U.S. more than a century ago have been inculcated in subsequent Japanese American generations. Critics have characterized Japanese Americans [as] ‘living like museum pieces from feudal Japan,’ but Nikkei claim ownership of this common history in the U.S. and see it as an identifying strength not shared by newcomers.”42 There are both positive experiences for contemporary Japanese Immigrant women that may result in the Japanese American

38 Rina, interview with the author, February 2023. See glossary for more information on mochitsuki.

39 Sakura, interview with the author, November 2022.

40 Sakura, interview with the author, November 2022.


42 Tritia Toyota, 16-17.
community being a place where transnational connections to Japan are strengthened, as well as tensions that come with their participation in the Japanese American community. These are the experiences that my thesis will continue to unpack.
Chapter 3

An Exploration of the Lives of Contemporary Japanese Immigrant Women

The gendered experiences that contemporary Japanese immigrant women may face, which Toyota addresses, are central in the life narratives of my interviewees, such as Moe, despite differences in economic context.\(^{43}\) Moe, who immigrated from Japan as a child when her parents decided to pursue post-doctorate education in the United States, describes her mother’s experience working as a doctor in Japan: “My mother had shared with me just some of her experiences as a female doctor not being respected sometimes by her male peers, being questioned often or being told to, like, pour tea. And even though she's, you know, an MD, PhD, like, that's the highest degree in a sense that you can get, and yet she was still facing a lot of sexism.”\(^{44}\) According to Moe, these negative work experiences were some of the main reasons that her mother wanted to leave Japan, and “...because she had experienced a lot of sexism in the workforce as a female doctor, so she didn't really have a very positive view of Japanese society. So, I think they kind of wanted to raise me outside of that. And because of that, kind of stayed away for most of my life from Japanese and Japanese American things.”\(^{45}\)

Moreover I found Moe’s statement very powerful in addressing gender role expectations, and the way that they may inform her broader understanding and perspective on Japanese culture: “I mean, I'm fluent in Japanese. So, they raised me to be fully Japanese. But I feel like, in a lot of ways, they also kind of shielded me from that sort of, from raising me within that context, because they wanted me to be different. They didn't want me to be like a traditional

\(^{43}\) Tritia Toyota, 12. And Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.

\(^{44}\) Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.

\(^{45}\) Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.
Japanese woman.”\(^{46}\) She explained what she perceived a “traditional Japanese woman” is through the role of a wife, saying,

*In Kyushu. Yeah, they have this, reputation of being called "Kyushu danshi", but it's like this male prototype of, masculinity, of being the man of the household of like, women should be, you know, in the back of the house. That's why, there's that term, "okusan", right, which is another way of saying, wife, and "oku" means, back of house, right, or, like back of, so you're kind of telling, you're saying that the woman is like, in the back of the house. It's like, that sort of mentality.*\(^{47}\)

She also said that she has personally encountered some of these expectations or thinking around gender when she would go back to Japan, mentioning, “In Japan, yeah, teachers would tell me… don't sit with your legs apart, sit with your legs together. You know you’re a woman, you need to be a little bit more meek, don't talk so much. Don't share your opinion so much.”\(^{48}\) For Moe, societal gender expectations were influential and impactful in her life:

*So, yeah, that was kind of my experience of like, what I understood gender norms to be in Japan versus living in the States, and not knowing where to fit my understanding of like, how do I understand my... femininity? How do I understand what it means to be a woman, that was always kind of a struggle for me, because going back and forth between the two cultures growing up was definitely a source of tension of that.*\(^{49}\)

She grappled with these questions when growing up, observing the dynamics in her own family, doing martial arts, and even participating in the Queen Program for the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco.\(^{50}\)

In addition to the context that Toyota provides for contemporary immigration from Japan, it is important to highlight her discussion of the interactions of contemporary Japanese

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\(^{46}\) Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.

\(^{47}\) Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.

\(^{48}\) Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.

\(^{49}\) Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.

\(^{50}\) Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.
immigrants in Japanese American community spaces in Southern California.51 Toyota states, “The formation of these transnational nodes in areas such as Southern California and the integration of contemporary Japanese arrivals were facilitated by existing structures in long-established Japanese American communities.”52 And to expand and look deeper at the context of the “existing structures in long-established Japanese American communities” to which Toyota refers, which may be similar to the Japanese American community spaces that many of my participants are involved in, I have found Valerie Matsumoto’s work City Girls informative in also framing this context from a gendered perspective.53

One of the main arguments that I found from Matsumoto’s work is that “Every milestone, no matter how small, signaled a step forward in reconstructing brutally disrupted lives and reclaiming space in the world from which they had been exiled. In this process, girls and women played dynamic roles in regenerating Japanese American families and communities, as well as advancing into new economic, social, and political arenas.”54 To get to this argument, Matsumoto looks at the development of organizations in the Japanese American community from before World War II as well as after the war.55 She states that “As club members, cultural mediators, and workers they helped shape prewar enclaves in southern California and forged enduring networks of friendships.”56 To illuminate the ways that women continued to be at the center of Japanese American community formation she writes, “In the difficult period of postwar

51 Tritia Toyota, 11.
52 Tritia Toyota, 11.
54 Valerie Matsumoto, 222.
55 Valerie Matsumoto, 2.
56 Valerie Matsumoto, 11.
resettlement, young Nisei women continued to serve as representatives of the ethnic community and particularly of selected elements of Japanese cultural heritage." Matsumoto’s research illustrates that in the work of Japanese American community formation women have often been at the center, and my research shows that this continues to impact Japanese American communities, as well as how this might influence the involvement of the contemporary Japanese immigrant women and their experience in the Japanese American community.

Rebecca, a Yonsei (fourth-generation) Japanese American woman and the museum operations manager who I met at a museum event, discussed gender dynamics in the Japanese American community and how Japanese American women continue to shape their communities.

And I feel like just because the museum's volunteer force, it is, probably disproportionately female. Like, it's mostly the office right now it's all women. Right... So, you know, I think it's safe to say that women are fundamentally doing the majority of the work. However, when you look at our board composition, right, the leadership of the museum, it's mostly male, I think it's like over 75% male. Or, there's only two women on the board.

She connects this to the work of other organizations and in general remarks on how involved women are in Japanese American spaces. Rebecca expands on this, pointing out gender imbalances that she witnesses in the Japanese American community:

And so, you know, there is this, again, this sort of the imbalance that I mean, I feel like it's persistent, probably throughout, well, you know, America, but also, you know...speaking specifically of the Japanese American community, there is this,

57 Valerie Matsumoto, 212.
58 Valerie Matsumoto, 222.
59 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
60 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
61 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
62 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
She continued, “... but at the same time, I still don't feel like a lot of the women who have done a lot of the work have gotten credit, in the same way that, sort of a lot of the men in the community have been celebrated. So, I mean, it's hard not to think about that a lot.”

Moreover, she clarifies “And, you know, it's not in a way that I feel like...Japanese Americans are actively trying to enforce this sort of gendered formula on organizations, but you know, I feel like, again, it's something that has always existed in our culture.”

She commented that “it’s hard not to think about (gender).” Her observations of the crucial work women are doing in Japanese American organizations shows that they have continued playing key roles, highlighted by Matsumoto, from the prewar and early postwar periods.

Rebecca addressed gender dynamics in Japan as well. She stated, “... because I know...you're talking about Japanese Americans who, you know, emigrated, or immigrated, in the late 1800s, early 1900s, versus like, ‘80s, and onwards, right. And, you know, if anything, I would, I think that Japan is an even stronger, even more gendered culture, standards, and norms.”

Rebecca also addressed the diverse reasons that she understands shin Issei or contemporary Japanese immigrants may leave Japan, highlighting the possible gendered aspects of their decision:

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63 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
64 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
65 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
66 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
67 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022. And Valerie Matsumoto, 222.
68 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
69 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
And for women too... I do feel like, you get that same variety in people in contemporary Japanese women who emigrated, some come, because they’re wives of businessmen, right. And some come because they're students or some because they're artists, and they just want to really be in this environment. And so you do get that variety, you do get, like the women who are very traditional, and who, like, you know, sort of, they kind of perpetuate sort of those gender roles, in some ways, but then you also get the ones who came here, specifically, because they did not like the gender roles in Japan. And they want something different here. And you see, I feel like I see that just as much as I do, you know, women who it's very traditional, and they stick to sort of, their Japanese lady enclave. And kind of focus all their activities, sort of around a very Japanese centered thing, but some of them it's because they're not here for long, right, they're just here on a short contract.

Rebecca’s words reveal some of the tensions regarding the ways that inclusion of contemporary Japanese immigrants in Japanese American community spaces might impact the conversation around gender, while also acknowledging the different perspectives of contemporary Japanese immigrant women.

And so sometimes I do think that, so even, the, this newer infusion of Japanese American people, like, you know, possibly they might, there might even be some stronger entrenchment in that segment, and definitely, with some of the shin Nisei and shin Issei men that I've met, or encountered, they seem to have very, very specific ideas about, male and female roles in society. And so, you know, for women, too, I imagine that, [and] I feel like I have observed ways, and where that much sort of more rigid, sort of male female division. Like I've definitely seen, a lot of evidence of that being alive and well, so yeah, it is interesting to think about, how that all mixes in, like how that either changes or reinforces, different expectations.

I found significant and unexpected Rebecca’s observations about gender roles in Japan and how they may affect the ways contemporary Japanese immigrants participate in and influence the Japanese American community.
Eri Kameyama expands on the ways that shin Issei or contemporary Japanese immigrant women might participate in the Japanese American community, in her article, “Shin Issei Identity & Place in the (Japanese) American Community.” She states that contemporary immigrants from Japan have “expertise in Japan” and that is something that they can contribute to the Japanese American community. I am not sure if Kameyama intends this “expertise in Japan” to extend to contemporary cultural practices in Japan (including language, etc.), but I wonder if and in what ways shin Issei women contribute this kind of cultural knowledge when they engage with the Japanese American organizations.

Kameyama’s research is helpful for connecting Matsumoto’s work on Japanese American organizations to what Toyota has said about the ways that contemporary Japanese immigrants utilize Japanese American community networks. Kameyama’s challenges both contemporary Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans, saying, “It is not just the responsibility of the Japanese Americans to reach out to the Shin-Issei, but equally important is that the Shin-Issei not dismiss nor disregard the institutions that the Nikkei established in the United States before the war.”

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75 Eri Kameyama, 38.

76 Eri Kameyama, 38.


Chapter 4

Making Sense of Self Through Navigating Identity and Belonging

To look at belonging and identity development with a cross cultural analysis, Xing Lu provides an example from the Chinese American community, examining the experiences of parents and children at a Chinese language school in Chicago. Lu states,

This study offers an understanding of the dynamics of the acculturation process and the fluidity of community formation in the United States. It challenges the conventional notion that middle-class Asian Americans are well assimilated into American society or they are identified with their ethnic enclaves only. It exemplifies how communication serves to create and transcend cultural identity. Finally, it suggests that biculturalism, as opposed to Americanization, is related to positive adjustment for immigrants and their children.

Lu asked their participants about their relationship to and perspective on Chinatown, in addressing the experiences of contemporary immigrants from China. This question sheds light on an aspect of my research regarding the dynamics among Japanese American community members and contemporary immigrant Japanese women in Japanese American communities, because it addresses what the relations might be like between Asian American communities and contemporary Asian immigrants, through the experiences of contemporary Chinese immigrants.

Among the immigrant parents Lu found that there was “a rejection of an identity that is associated with Chinatown.” For example, “one father believed that ‘Chinatown is a place

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80 Xing Lu, 203.

81 Xing Lu, 204.

82 Ibid.

83 Xing Lu, 203.
better suited for early immigrants, and the Chinese school is better suited for new immigrants in terms of interests and backgrounds. Early immigrants chose to live in Chinatowns for survival. We choose the Chinese school as our new community for better quality of life.’’

Another parent shared a similar view: “The cultural environment in Chinatown is so unfamiliar to me. People there speak different dialect and have a different background from us. Some people live in Chinatown their whole life. Their views are limited and they do not integrate themselves into American society.’’ Many parents viewed Chinatown as serving different functions that do not meet their social and intellectual needs.

Lu found more distance between the two generations in Chinese communities in the United States, and there is scholarship that indicates similar trends in the Japanese / Japanese American communities. In her research on language patterns of “Japanese children temporarily residing in the U.S.,” Fumiko Okamura-Bichard stated, “The subjects’ parents belonged to a unique community of their own, separate even from the local Japanese-American community, due to the transient nature of their residence, the nature of the fathers’ business and professional activities, and the mothers’ lack of communicative skills in English.”

However, I think it is important to see that there are also both contemporary Japanese immigrant women and Japanese Americans who are navigating these challenges in different and complex ways. Rebecca, a Japanese American Yonsei who was introduced previously, said,

I think, so the first time I really met or engaged with, contemporary Japanese immigrants, and shin Issei and shin Nisei, people, was probably in college. And again, it really made me rethink what I had assumed was what a Japanese American was, which was like Sansei or Yonsei or Nisei like you know, old school Nisei, and that we have this tie to the internment and incarceration. And, to me, that was the definition of, that was a huge part of what it was to be Japanese American. … I also like the foods, there were specific foods that all Japanese Americans ate, like Spam musubi and teriyaki chicken and stuff. And then when I met people who were more contemporary, like contemporary Japanese

84 Xing Lu, 213.
85 Xing Lu, 213.
immigrants, that was the first time I really realized that Japanese American culture is not the same as Japanese culture. And in a way I saw, [and] I realized that like, wow, it's like kind of its own culture, that in a little, in some ways it reflects, an older Japanese culture that got kind of immigrated over and then got frozen in time and then mixed in with, like, you know, American culture, and made its own kind of, its own thing, but that it was not Japanese culture.87

Rebecca’s experience reflects that, on a personal level, interaction with contemporary immigrants has influenced and reinforced her identity as a Japanese American.88 From a different perspective when Hoshi, a contemporary Japanese immigrant, discussed connections between contemporary Japanese immigrants and the Japanese American community, she said, “... most of my Japanese friend doesn't have connection with Japanese American[s]. I'm a exception I think.”89 Hoshi’s perspective suggests that there is some reinforcement of generational boundaries between contemporary Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans by contemporary Japanese immigrants as well.90

However, both Hoshi’s and Rebecca’s personal experiences also show that similarities between both groups are being sought as there is more engagement between both groups.91 As Hoshi stated, “I found it similar, between Japanese American and Japanese.”92 And, although Rebecca’s experience illustrates a reinforcement of her identity as a Japanese American, this new identity exploration that she experienced also allowed her to include aspects of “contemporary”

87 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
88 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
89 Hoshi, interview with the author, January 2023.
90 Hoshi, interview with the author, January 2023.
91 Hoshi, interview with the author, January 2023. Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
92 Hoshi, interview with the author, January 2023.
Japanese culture that she learned or saw during interactions with contemporary Japanese immigrant and shin Nisei peers.\textsuperscript{93}

\textit{You know, and, I mean, they both had similar roots, but, you know, had gone different directions a little bit. And, that was like, sort of the first time, meeting people who were from Japan, or like, you know, were shin Nisei. It made me feel like, realize I'm not Japanese, like, I'm definitely Japanese American, you know, and ... I don't really know much about Japanese culture at all, but, it was amazing for the exposure. Because, I got exposed to so many more new foods that I had, you know, I had never had, like, Okonomiyaki... I'd never had takoyaki or like, taiyaki. And there was just so many elements of Japanese culture, a contemporary Japanese culture, that I did not know about. And so it actually, really, I think it really changed ... kind of my own identity... it really infused my understanding of Japanese American culture with much more contemporary Japanese influences.}\textsuperscript{94}

Rebecca also expressed the desire to find commonalities between both groups.\textsuperscript{95} For example, she finds the similarities in the holidays that are celebrated across generations, such as New Year’s or “oshogatsu,” and weaves together other points where connections might be found, saying,\textsuperscript{96}

\textit{And, I really want to see that a lot more. I really do want to find ways to find common points that we can all engage on, that touch on, like... a sense of shared history, because there are definitely things that even if you've never been [to] Japan, you kind of know what oshogatsu is, you know what I mean? Or, Even if you [have] never been to Japan, like you understand the importance of farming in our share[d], you know, like agriculture was a big thing in Japan. And it was a big thing for Japanese Americans here. And ... connecting around things that are shared across our cultures, despite having very different immigrant experiences. Yeah, I feel like we need to do that more. And to find those things and not necessarily expect newer contemporary Japanese immigrants to conform to like, I guess what we think of as, the traditional narrative of Japanese Americans and

\textsuperscript{93} Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.

\textsuperscript{94} Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.

\textsuperscript{95} Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.

\textsuperscript{96} Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
Rebecca also grapples with the difference between the two generations in complex ways, particularly when discussing the different historical contexts that contemporary Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans come from. This may reflect her work at the museum, which “focuses mostly on earlier waves of Japanese American immigrants. So, it's not always necessarily the type to attract the shin Issei and shin Nisei as much, which we're trying to change, because I would like them to be included in the conversation around Japanese American. Just history, art and culture.”

Later, Rebecca elaborates on this point saying,

>You know, they went through some really terrible devastation over there. But we don't really engage and talk about, like, the different traumas that happened to both communities in that same time period, because it was very traumatic for both sides in very different ways. But really, the Japanese American community I feel like really only focuses on talking about the internment story, versus like, how many stories are out there that really shaped the contemporary Japanese immigrants like they might have, they probably have a war story too, you know, it's just not defined by like, one single thing, but you know, if your family was in the Hiroshima or Nagasaki area, of course, it was very, you know, there's probably a lot of history and trauma there that yeah, it was different location and a different thing ... we just don't hear those stories. And at the museum, we haven't really shared those stories. And I would like to see us really go after those and start to have some of those conversations.

Naomi, a contemporary Japanese immigrant woman who is also involved in the museum as a volunteer, added another layer to the difficulties of sharing and educating about history across both generations, saying, “it's so hard to learn about Japanese American history in Japanese…even [if] they come to the museum or Japantown… it's not accessible for this kind of

97 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
98 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
99 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
100 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022.
history and culture and community.”  101 However, Naomi is working to change this trend through her involvement at the museum: “So, I started being a Japanese language leads. And also as a staff member I'm also trying to contact more Japanese people and started doing advertisement on the Japanese newspaper.”  102

Moe’s accounts of her experience being a part of “the Queen program over at the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco that happens every year” provide a clear example of how she, as the daughter of contemporary Japanese immigrants, navigates her identity in the Japanese American community.  103 She states, “But it was also very hard in the sense [but] that it's really fun because I had a group of other, four other women who all of them were a part of the Japanese American community growing up…in various ways.”  104 She discussed the dynamics between her and the other members of the program:

*So they were all the ones that kind of taught me a lot of things that I just didn't know about, like, whether it be the internment history, whether it be just general practices of, what does an omatsuri? what does the Japanese American festivals look like? Because they look so different from the Japanese festivals that I grew up with. What does you know, like etiquette look like and everything right? Like they taught me that and meeting them … was one of the most impactful things of my life and to this day we still hang out all the time.*  105

She elaborated on this, discussing the tensions and difficulties she faced in the Japanese American community:

*And yet, why I say it's also really hard, is it was hard because I remember from day one being questioned, kind of like, why are you here? You're Japanese. You're not Japanese American, like there is this othering? Sometimes explicit, sometimes more subtle, but you definitely feel like you're not quite included in the community*

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101 Naomi, interview with the author, November 2022.

102 Naomi, interview with the author, November 2022.

103 Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.

104 Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.

105 Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.
at times. And it was very hard because on the one hand, like so I was the queen of my year. But ... what that means is that you have to represent the Japanese American community. And I was really proud to be because I feel like Japanese American also includes people like myself who were born in Japan don't necessarily have a family history of internment don't have, like, has a different history entirely right? Because my family experienced World War II in a very different way. But ... I'm still Japanese American, I identify as Japanese American, I don't quite identify solely as Japanese.  

She explained how she continues to grapple with these issues: “And, yeah, I think there was always this constant struggle to, like, show that I do belong and that I can contribute. So that was a huge challenge for me throughout the two years that I was volunteering, and I think I'm finally now finding a place. But I still, you know, still struggle often with that part of my, yeah, identity.”

The conversation about identity continued to be an important aspect of Moe’s life narrative. Later when discussing generational terminology in the Japanese American community, she stated,  

Yeah, I definitely try to actively not use it (generational terms). And I don't really try to categorize others with it too. I know some people, it's like a source of identity and pride for them. And I totally respect that. But for me, to expect me to do the same as like, I just don't conform to that... so when people ask me like, so what are you? are you shin Issei? I just say, I was born in Japan, I moved here when I was five, that's always my answer.

Later, when asked what she misses about Japan, Moe began by mentioning konbini (convenience stores in Japan) and cultural aspects such as respect for elders and others that are part of the way you are expected to treat people, but then she shifted the tone of her response, saying, “But an easier way for me to answer this is what are things that I don't really like about the Japanese

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106 Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.  
107 Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.  
108 Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.  
109 Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.
culture that I grew up in? That for me is easier only because I can identify a lot.”

When asked for clarification on how she views Japanese identity, and she said,

*I think I mentioned this before, but I feel like a lot of women, but also a lot of people are in general are kind of expected not to really share necessarily their thoughts sometimes, like, it's sometimes expected that, silence is a little bit better than sharing an opposing view. You work as a group, and that group mentality is great at times for group activities. But at the same time, it doesn't allow room sometimes to have a voice of dissent. And it doesn't create space for that, like, there's that famous Japanese saying about, you know, the nail that sticks out gets hammered down, right? I hate that phrase. I think it's ridiculous, but it's a common thing that you hear and you experience in Japan, like sometimes you just don't, you shouldn't stick out. Sticking out is not good.*

Moe also added a gendered perspective to the experience of the challenges of being different in Japan, saying, “Being different is not good at times. And it's seen as rude, or it's seen as impolite, especially for women. I think the tension with women speaking up, or saying something different is a lot harsher. And the punishment for that is a lot harsher.”

Sakura also referred to the Japanese saying about sticking out when she was discussing the difference in the ways people express themselves in Japan versus the United States.

Moe also contrasts her idea about Japanese identity with her views on the United States saying, “And so I view the U.S. [as] a place that actually embraces the differences a lot more, and embraces uniqueness and you know, sharing your own thoughts, like that is celebrated. And yeah, so for me, it works well.”

Moe’s statement illustrates how contemporary Japanese immigrant women like her might construct and view Japanese identity, and illustrates reasons that they may seek belonging in communities such as Japanese American communities where they may experience more agency in choosing the

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110 Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.
111 Moe, interview with the author, November 2022.
112 Moe, interview by the author, November 2022.
113 Sakura, interview with the author, November 2022.
114 Moe, interview by the author, November 2022.
parts of Japanese culture that they wish to participate in.\textsuperscript{115} Expanding on this theme, Naomi described how her understanding of the Japanese American community changed as she became more involved saying, “...the Japanese American community and culture took good thing from Japanese side and American side. So it's combined. That's why... I felt really comfortable with them…”\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{115} Moe, interview by the author, November 2022.

\textsuperscript{116} Naomi, interview with the author, November 2022.
Conclusion

The oral histories / life narratives of my participants show both the possibilities and the challenges that arise when forming intergenerational connections between contemporary Japanese immigrant women and Japanese Americans. And these connections are happening during events like the “Ties that Bind Conference,” at a time when Japanese Americans are actively grappling with the changes in their community, as the second point in their “Declaration for the Nikkei Community” states, “the Nikkei community is growing in diversity.”117 Moreover, the second point elaborates, “We must embrace this diversity which includes anyone with any Japanese ancestry or who wishes to identify with the Nikkei community. We are of mixed heritage; we are recently arrived immigrants and have come here since the end of World War II…”118 The directives at the end of the declaration place an even stronger emphasis on reaching out to and including different contemporary generations of immigrants from Japan: “We must create a new way of understanding our community which goes beyond generational designations. This new understanding, complete with new terminology, will expand our scope and capture the full essence of the diversity and commonalities within our community.”119

As Yen Le Espiritu reminds us in her work, “Coming Together: The Asian American Movement,” when thinking about the Asian American community in general, “This process of pan-Asian consolidation did not proceed smoothly nor did it encompass all Asian Americans…However, once established, the pan-Asian structure not only reinforced the


118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.
cohesiveness of already existing networks but also expanded these networks.”120 And as Genevieve Clutario and Rana Jaleel have stated, “Human connections do not just happen, but require constant work and care, especially when faced with systemic forms of exclusion and state forms renderings of migrants as dangerous and disposable.”121 Although from a different context, as I stated previously my research has explored the difficulties and potential of intergenerational engagement in the Japanese American community.

My study has limitations, which mainly stem from the small size of my study. Moreover, I was only able to speak with one person who identified as Japanese American, so I was not able to explore the influence and impact that contemporary Japanese immigrants have on Japanese American communities. In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and my being in Los Angeles my interviews were not conducted in-person; although my participants were very accommodating and allowed me to interview them virtually, that is another factor to consider.

Although the Japanese American community is still working to address gender imbalance within organizational leadership and to recognize the work of women in Japanese American community building, my research suggests that, perhaps through participation in Japanese American community activities, contemporary Japanese immigrant women have been able to connect with parts of Japanese culture that they want to retain without the gender expectations they found constraining in Japan.122 Moreover, the unique ways they have been able to maintain transnational connections to Japan, such as language, have become useful as a way for them to


122 Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022. And Valerie Matsumoto, 222.
engage with and help meet needs in the Japanese American community.\textsuperscript{123} Rina’s work at the Japanese American Senior Center and Naomi’s role at the museum provide examples of this.\textsuperscript{124}

My interviews with Rebecca, Naomi, and Hoshi show that Japanese Americans and contemporary Japanese immigrants lack knowledge about each other’s histories and experiences, which can reinforce boundaries between them; however, they are also finding commonalities and ways to use their differences (such as language) to support one another which could serve as a foundation for intergenerational collaboration.\textsuperscript{125} In the future I hope to see more collaboration between people from both generations in academics and in community organizations to make visible the impact of contemporary immigrants and their descendants on Japanese American communities, which I was not able to do with my thesis. My research reveals that some shin Issei and Japanese Americans are interested in creating positive connections and working through the challenges that come with forming cross-generational connections in the Japanese American community, and I hope to continue to learn and grow alongside them. I also hope this thesis will make readers more aware of both the potential challenges and possibilities of intergenerational collaboration.

\textsuperscript{123} Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022. And Tritia Toyota, 8.

\textsuperscript{124} Rina, interview with the author, February 2023. And Naomi, interview with the author, November 2022.

\textsuperscript{125} Rebecca, interview with the author, November 2022. And Naomi, interview with the author, November 2022. And Hoshi, interview with the author, January 2023.
Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

1) Interview Questions

*Questions that are for contemporary Japanese immigrant women participants:*

- Would you share about where you grew up?
  - What are some activities that you did as a family or growing up in general?
  - What holidays did your family observe? How were they celebrated?
  - What were your dreams and aspirations growing up?
  - What kind of work did you do in Japan?

- When did you immigrate to the United States?
  - On what kind of visa did you arrive?
  - Do you have a green card?
  - Do you think about becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen?

- What kind of work have you done in the United States?

- Are you married? If so, how did you meet your spouse? What kind of work does your spouse do?

- If you are comfortable, could you share why you decided to leave Japan?

- When you first came to the United States, what was your first impression of it? Did that impression change over time? If so, how?

- Are there any parts of Japanese culture that you maintain/continue in the United States? If so, would you please share why you continue to practice these parts of Japanese culture?

- Were you taught gender-role expectations for girls and women? Were there different expectations for daughters and sons in your family?
  - Another way of phrasing this question: What is your understanding of gender-role expectations in Japan?

- Were there any aspects of life in Japan that you missed when you moved to the United States?

- If you are comfortable, please share a bit about your identity/background/ How you identify in your own words?
  - Have you heard of the term shin Nikkei?

- How do you define community involvement?/What does community involvement mean to you? What organizations are you involved in currently and what organizations have you been involved in in the past?
  - What made you decide to be involved in _____________ organization?

- What were your first impressions when you got involved in Japanese American community organizations? How or did they change as you spent more time in the organizations?

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126 Some questions are inspired by or from the “Family History Sample Outline” from the UCLA Library Center for Oral History Research
○ If you are a Japanese language teacher would you please share with me if your participation in these organizations has impacted the way that you teach Japanese to your students?
● If you feel comfortable, do you know/would you please share how your family was affected by different events in Japanese history, for example World War II?
  ○ Continuing off of that question before coming to the United States, did you know how Japanese Americans were affected by World War II?
● What do you think are the differences and commonalities between shin-Nikkei/Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans?
● Where do you see connections between shin-Issei/Japanese immigrant and Japanese American groups? Do you think connections ought to be made between the two groups? If so, where and how?

**Questions that are for Japanese American community members:**
● Would you share about where you grew up
  ○ What are some activities that you did as a family?
  ○ What holidays did your family observe? How were they celebrated?
  ○ What were your dreams and aspirations when growing up?
● Please describe the community where you grew up.
● Did you grow up practicing any Japanese customs (holiday celebrations, etc.)?
● If you are comfortable sharing, could you share what generation you are. Also if you are able I am wondering if you mind sharing what you know about your family’s history (for example: maybe how your family was affected by World War II).
● Have you visited Japan? If so, what were your impressions of and experiences in Japan?
● Is there something that stands out to you when you have interacted with someone who is shin Issei/contemporary immigrant from Japan? If so and you feel comfortable sharing, would you talk about that experience? Did this experience change over time? If so, how?
  ○ What setting have you interacted with Japanese immigrants?
● What kind of education and/or career did/have you pursued?
● How do you define community involvement? What does community involvement mean to you? What organizations are you currently involved in and what organizations have you been involved in in the past?
  ○ What made you decide to be involved in _____________ organization?
● What do you think are the main differences and commonalities between shin-Issei/Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans?
● Where do you see connections between shin-Issei/Japanese immigrants and Japanese American groups? Do you think connections ought to be made between the two groups? If so, where and how?
Appendix 2: Glossary

1. *Shin Issei or contemporary Japanese immigrants*: For my research contemporary Japanese immigrants and shin Issei refer to Japanese immigrants who immigrated to the United States after 1980. As Eri Kameyama explains, “‘Shin’ meaning ‘new’ in Japanese, is a term used by scholars and members of the Japanese American community to distinguish the new wave from the old wave of Japanese immigration.” In addition, please refer to Chapter 1 for more information on terminology for this group. When I refer to a specific generation from this group, the appropriate generational term in Japanese is added, similar to what is used in the Japanese American community, such as Issei, Nisei, Sansei, and so forth, after the word shin. So for example, to refer to the immigrant generation from this group would be shin Issei; and the second generation, or U.S.-born people, from this group would be, shin Nisei, and so forth. I have also included in this group individuals like Moe who immigrated to the United States with her parents, so although within the family unit she may be considered a different generation than her parents, since she immigrated to the United States after 1980 I have included people with a similar experience in this cohort as well.

2. *Japanese American and Nikkei*: As I stated previously, I have defined “Japanese Americans” as people who immigrated to the U.S. before World War II and their descendants. To expand on this, at the Ties that Bind Conference, “Nikkei” was defined as “anyone in the U.S. of Japanese ancestry, and is inclusive of Japanese nationals, Japanese Americans and mixed Japanese racial groups who wish to identify with the Nikkei community.” Moreover, Densho Encyclopedia

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128 Tritia Toyota 22.

129 Moe, interview by the author, November 2022.

states that “Nikkei” is defined as, “Japanese emigrants and their descendants living outside (and sometimes inside) Japan. A broader term (since it includes Japanese Brazilians, Japanese Canadians, etc.)…” They also explain that “‘Nikkei’ has come to be used as an alternative to ‘Japanese American’ by some. As a newer term, how exactly one is to use it—and who is or is not Nikkei—is still being worked out.” And as I stated in my definition for shin Issei and contemporary Japanese immigrants, to refer to different generations in the Japanese American or Nikkei community the appropriate Japanese generational term is used: “Issei, first-generation immigrants from Japan (in the 19th and early 20th century); Nisei (U.S.-born second generation), children of Issei…; Sansei (third generation), children of Nisei…; Yonsei (fourth generation), children of Sansei…; Gosei (fifth generation), children of Yonsei…”

3. *Mochitsuki* is rice pounding to make rice cakes for New Year’s. As Soji Kashiwagi states in his article, “Mochitsuki Tradition: Mochi Making the Old School Way,” “if you make your mochi the ‘old school’ hand-pounded way, you know how much work goes into good luck, longevity, and happiness for the new year.” This “‘old school” hand-pounded way” as Kashiwagi explains, means that the rice is “Pounded with large wooden mallets (‘kine’) in a large granite bowl (‘usu’).” He also adds, “But nowadays, with the advent of modern-day technology, many groups and families have done away with the labor intensive hand pounding, and have switched to the popular made-in-Japan mochi-making machines.”

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132 Ibid.

133 Tritia Toyota 22.


135 Soji Kashiwagi.

136 Soji Kashiwagi.
about the practice of mochitsuki, Kashiwagi states, “What started in Japan has been carried on by generations of Nikkei from California to South America to everywhere in between…In Nikkei communities in California and across the country, the annual mochitsuki still takes place in Japanese American churches, Japantowns, and at the homes of Japanese American families.”

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137 Soji Kashiwagi.
Bibliography


