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Editor's Introduction

This year's *Japanese Journal of American Studies* carries "Family" as its special topic. The topic was selected in 2013 (when the Supreme Court ruled the federal Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional), but its relevancy has not waned after two years.

In April 2015, we were told by John Stamos ("Uncle Jessie") that a new spin-off series of *Full House*—named *Fuller House*, appropriately—is coming to Netflix in 2016. The legendary original sitcom, set in San Francisco of all places, presented an iconic American family to viewers all over the world, and gave a good sense of how a house can be "full" in America. The show experimented, even while reinforcing classic family values, with the idea of an expanded family, where friends and relatives comes to give each other a hand in child rearing. With any luck the new spin-off will provide an updated—and *fuller*—image of how America is changing and developing the concept of a family in the twenty-first century.

Then about a week after the *Fuller House* announcement, the Supreme Court justices were reported to be divided over the same-sex marriage ban imposed in some states. In the *Obergefell v. Hodges* session, in which they heard the legal arguments from both sides of the same-sex marriage debate, one of the justices, Anthony Kennedy, said, "It's very difficult for the court to say . . . we know better," showing qualms about the Court altering the traditional definition of marriage. Another justice, Samuel Alito, was more concerned about polygamous marriage making its way into society if gay marriage is found to be valid under the Constitution. These justices are apparently afraid that a legal decision, being artificial at best, might somehow undermine the age-old institution of marriage, which is considered by some to be the linchpin of human society.

But, as Amy Davidson of the *New Yorker* clarifies (in "Justice Alito's Polygamy Perplex," April 30, 2015), the situation is not that simple. If

the current gay-marriage ban in, say, Tennessee is upheld, a gay man can legally marry another man in New York, move to Tennessee (where such a conjugation is void), and then legally marry a woman, allowing a polygamous relationship even under current law. Preserving the legal status quo, with some states able to void out-of-state marriages, there is already room for hypothetically legal polygamy. The present situation can be even worse than Justice Alito fears. He might as well echo Uncle Jessie's favorite line, a la Elvis: "Have mercy!"

Attempts to change the definition of marriage (and in consequence that of a family), however, have been made throughout the history of the United States, starting with the Oneida community and the Mormons. These groups, along with other experimental communities, tried to expand the boundaries of what constitutes a family. Immigration and racism also have given rise to the most excruciating and grueling question about the status of a family in society. In a sense, "family" has always been on America's mind. Looking at various aspects of the concept of family throughout the history of United States, this year's *Journal* gives a full picture of how the institution has developed in democratic and capitalistic society.

Let me give a brief review of what is in this issue.

The first two essays, one by Nam Gyun Kim, former president of the American Studies Association of Korea, and the other by Jun Furuya, former president of the JAAS, are based on lectures given at JAAS's 48th annual convention held in Okinawa last year. To hear about the births of the two kindred associations, ASAK and JAAS, in Okinawa was a memorable experience, and we are honored to include these lectures in our journal this year. Though the two essays are not directly related to our special topic, we sincerely hope that this publication will become an important step toward building a fruitful relationship between the two associations as part of a family of kindred-minded scholars.

The essays following the two presidential addresses are roughly arranged in chronological order by their topics. First comes Masahiko Narita's "The Phenomenology of Family-Killing Fatherhood: Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland; or the Transformation: An American Tale* and Dubious Reason in the Early American Republic." Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland; or the Transformation: An American Tale* is a story of a gruesome familicide committed by an insane father, which was greatly influenced by a true story of upstate New York farmer James Yates's atrocious murders of his

wife and children in 1781. Narita argues that Brown faithfully depicted how drastically changed was the moral landscape of Revolutionary America. At that time, under the powerful sway of "reason," the traditional fatherly authority and closely knit emotional ties among family members were rapidly disintegrating. Narita reads the fall of the Wieland family as a representative case in which too much trust in reason caused irrational violence and chaos in the human psyche, and in the fledgling republic.

Next comes Takuya Nishitani's essay on another famous American author, Herman Melville. In "Melville's Experiment with Domestic Fiction in 'The Apple-Tree Table,'" Nishitani turns to Melville's short story "The Apple-Tree Table" (1856), which has been relegated to obscurity and has been thought, even by Melville scholars, to be far less serious than his other work, at most an entertaining light comedy. Nishitani argues, however, that the story is one of Melville's masterpieces, especially in its art of narration. By examining how Melville critically used the mode of domestic fiction and recast the conventions of the genre, Nishitani convincingly shows that the story contains, in its recesses, a vein of dark pessimism about domestic life in mid-nineteenth-century America.

We then move to the topic of immigration in Miya Shichinohe-Suga's "Japanese Interracial Families in the United States, 1879–1900: What the Census Manuscript Population Schedules Reveal." In this essay, Shichinohe-Suga discusses Japanese immigrants who chose to form international, interracial, and sometimes multicultural families in the United States from the late nineteenth century to the turn of the twentieth century. Her essay is based mainly on population schedules as historical resources. She explores records from 1870, 1880, and 1900 on the mainland, mostly in California and New York State, and in doing so, Shichinohe-Suga illuminates the characteristics of early Japanese interracial families by examining their patterns, demographic distribution, and the race categorization of interracial couples and their multiracial children.

Rie Makino's "Absent Presence as a Nonprotest Narrative: Internment, Interethnicity, and Christianity in Hisaye Yamamoto's 'The Eskimo Connection'" investigates Hisaye Yamamoto's portrayal of the Japanese American subject as an "absent presence" in her lat work, "The Eskimo Connection." The 1970s, in which the story was published, was the decade of ethnic protests, and there were two movements, the Japanese American Redress movement and the American Indian Movement, that emphasized the ethnic unity of Native Americans and Japanese Americans. Yamamoto's narrative in this short story, according to Makino, effectively

illuminates the Japanese American subject, which resisted adopting both the ethnic protests in the 1970s and Christianity as used in the US discourse of national ideology. Makino argues, by highlighting both the presence and absence of the Japanese American subject, that Yamamoto uses Christian discourse as a parameter of national ideology to visualize or (in-visualize) American ethnicity.

Akira Hongo wrestles with the questions surrounding a gay family in Broadway musicals. His "Family and Four American Gay Playwrights" focuses on how gay playwrights have tackled the question of "family." To emphasize the present situation and show the change that has gradually taken place in America, Hongo discusses four plays staged on Broadway, moving backward into the past. These are: Terrence McNally's *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (1994), Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy* (1979), Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), and Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* (1945). The first two plays, Hongo argues, challenged the heteronormative family by showing an extended family based on friendship and integrating a biological family and a gay family; the latter two criticize, he further elucidates, the heteronormative ideal of a uniform nuclear family by using playing and "camp," and by using a narrator who refuses the ideal but loves his biological family.

Coming to one of the most debated questions surrounding the family in America, Chitose Sato's "'Mixed-Status Families' in the Age of Welfare Reform" addresses the question of welfare and immigrant (or "mixed-status") families. In the United States, the number of mixed-status families, which consist of immigrant parents and children who are US-born citizens, has rapidly increased over the last decade. Sato analyzes how mixed-status families have created a complicated category of welfare recipients, often referred to as child-only cases, in which undocumented immigrant parents receive public assistance through their citizen children. This increase in the number of child-only cases with undocumented immigrant parents, Sato notes, moves anti-immigration forces to regard this phenomenon as a serious threat to white middle-class taxpayers. Sato's answer to the question of whether undocumented immigrants are abusing welfare benefits through their citizen children is in the negative.

Finally, addressing another of the most discussed questions, Ayumu Kaneko's "The Same-Sex Marriage in the Age of Neoliberalism" looks at a mostly ignored connection between politics and gay marriage. Legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States has made significant progress

in part due to efforts of the marriage-equality movement, which promotes equality between married heterosexual couples and same-sex couples. Kaneko argues that the movement has enticed gays and lesbians to assimilate into mainstream society (which idealizes the middle-class nuclear family), emphasizing that the legal marital relationship is the primary institution of safety, security and stability. Kaneko concludes that this idea has reinforced the neoliberal concept of governance in which the responsibility for providing a safety net should be transferred from the public sector to the private sphere of intimacy and domesticity.

As always, I would like to thank Katy Meigs for her continuing assistance as copy editor for the journal and Shizue Kaminuma for her unwavering support in materializing this journal. They are, indeed, part of our family. Most of the articles published in the *Japanese Journal of American Studies*, including those from back issues, are freely available on the Internet (http://www.jaas.gr.jp). We invite responses and criticisms from our readers and hope that the journal will continue to be an important player in the field of American Studies.

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Editor