The Japanese Journal of American Studies, No 3 (1989)

# Japanese Americans in Contemporary American Society: a "Success" Story?

*Masako Iino*

## I

## Introduction

With the exception of mariners who happened to arrive on the coast of the United States earlier, the U.S. immigration statistics record the first Japanese in 1861. The largest Japanese immigration to the United States was at the turn of the century (Cf. Table I), when the "New Immigrants" from Eastern and Southern Europe and Asia suddenly increased and aroused public concern. Japanese immigrants inherited the prejudices of the West Coast's anti-Oriental racism when they took over the jobs an earlier generation of Chinese had held until they were excluded by the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. From that time through World War II, the Japanese in the United States were often considered to be a sinister element, a so-called "Yellow Peril," and mistreated or discriminated against, on the ground of their unassimilability or threat to white labor. The culminating example was the wartime evacuation and internment of all who were of Japanese ancestry, including the American-born second generation with American citizenship, which was, from the standpoint of the government and majority of the United States, justified as a military necessity.

Since the 1960's, however, Japanese Americans have been labeled as one of the most "successful" ethnic groups or a "model minority" in the United States. Already in early 1966 an article appeared in the *New*

Table I
Japanese Immigration to the United States

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1861–1870 | | 186 | |
| | 1871–1880 | | 149 | |
| | 1881–1890 | | 2,270 | |
| | 1891–1900 | | 25,942 | |
| | 1901–1910 | | 129,797 | |
| | 1911–1920 | | 83,837 | |
| | 1921–1930 | | 33,462 | |
| | 1931–1940 | | 1,948 | |
| | 1941–1950 | | 1,555 | |
| | 1951–1960 | | 46,250 | (1.8)* |
| | 1961–1970 | | 39,988 | (1.2)* |
| | 1971–1975 | | 26,005 | (1.1)* |
| | 1976–1979 | approx. | 18,300 | |
| Total | 1861–1975 | | 391,381 | (0.8)** |

Note: No record of immigration from Japan until 1861.
*Percentage of the total immigration to the U.S. during same period.
**Percentage of the total immigration to the U.S. from 1820 to 1975.
Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *1975 Annual Report*; (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976); U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract 1982–83* (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1984), No. 130.

*York Times* under the heading, "Success Story, Japanese-American Style." In it William Petersen says: "By any criterion of good citizenship that we choose, the Japanese-Americans are better than any other group in our society, including native-born whites. . . . Even in a country whose patron saint is the Horatio Alger hero, there is no parallel to this success story."[1] It is strongly implied that Japanese Americans had succeeded in becoming accepted into white, middle-class society without causing much friction.

In fact, such impression seems to be supported by a study of the 1970 and 1980 Census data.[2] According to the 1980 data, the median years of schooling completed was 13.1 for Japanese, compared to 12.5

[1] William Petersen, "Success Story, Japanese-American Style," *New York Times Magazine*, Jan. 9, 1966, pp. 20ff; William Petersen, "Success Story: Outwhiting the Whites," *Newsweek*, June 21, 1971, pp. 26–27.

[2] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 1970: Subject Reports: Japanese, Chinese and Filipinos in the United States*, PC(2)-1G (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973); U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 1, *Characteristics of*

for the U.S. population as a whole; the median annual family income was $27,354 for Japanese, compared to $19,917 for U.S. families as a whole. The 1970 data show that the prevalence rates of outmarriage in the U.S. for ages 16–24 were 38 percent for Japanese females. Although "success" is a difficult concept to define and cannot be measured by one criterion, these Census figures support the success image of Japanese Americans in contemporary American society.

In this paper I would like to examine whether such a description of Japanese Americans as one of the most "successful" ethnic groups or a "model minority" in the United States is appropriate in contemporary American society, and whether Japanese Americans are so much a part of American society that their ethnic solidarity has been weakened or has disappeared. As Japanese Americans in contemporary American society present a very diversified and complicated picture, it may be impossible to come to any definite conclusion. But I would like to present at least some tentative findings.

## II

## PRESENT CONDITIONS OF JAPANESE AMERICANS

### 1. Geographic Distribution

Before the Second World War, the Japanese American population was concentrated in the West Coast states (Cf. Table II). Almost 90 percent of the entire Japanese American population lived in California, Oregon, and Washington, with 74 percent of this concentration in California. This fact was an important cause of anti-Japanese feelings in the region. The figure for the West Coast dropped to 55 percent in mid-1947,[3] and remained about the same - 58 percent - in 1950. (Cf. Table II)

*the Population*, Chapter C, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Part 1, *U.S. Summary*, PC80-1-1C (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1983); U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 2, *Subject Reports: Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States; 1980*, PC80-2-1E (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1988). *Subject Report*, PC80-2-1E (1988), is not based on exactly the same types of information on the population including Japanese Americans as those that *Subject Reports*, PC(2)-1G (1973), is based on. For example, the data of the prevalence rates of outmarriage are not available in *Subject Reports*, PC80-2-1E (1988). It is due to the government's policy not to include in the census the data relating to personal matters of the population, as it has been explained.

[3] Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America: Japanese in the United*

Table II
Distribution of Japanese American Population in the Continental U.S.

| Yeat | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 126,948 | 168,773 | 260,195 | 588,324 | 700,747 |
| % of the U.S. population | 0.09% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.3% |
| (1) | 89% | 58% | 69% | 65% | 64% |
| (2) | 74% | 50% | 60% | 57% | 57% |
| Top 5 states with largest Japanese American population | California 93,717 | California 84,596 | California 157,317 | California 213,277 | California 261,817 |
| | Washington 14,565 | Illinois 11,646 | Washington 16,652 | Washington 20,118 | Washington 26,369 |
| | Oregon 4,071 | Washington 9,694 | Illinois 14,074 | New York 19,794 | New York 24,524 |
| | Colorado 2,734 | Colorado 5,412 | New York 8,702 | Illinois 17,645 | Illinois 18,550 |
| | New York 2,537 | Utah 4,452 | Colorado 6,846 | Colorado 7,861 | Texas 10,502 |
| | | | Cf. Hawaii 217,304 | Cf. Hawaii 239,618 | |

(1) Percent Japanese Americans in the 3 West Coast states of total Japanese American population in the continental U.S.
(2) Percent Japanese Americans in California of total Japanese American population in the continental U.S.
Note: Figures for 1970 and 1980 include the new states of Hawaii and Alaska.
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract 1982–83* (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1984); U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population (1970), Subject Reports: Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos in the U.S.*, PC(2)-1G, (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1973); Harry H. L. Kitano, *Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture* (1969) (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 210–211.
Percentage figures are my computation.

An important cause of this shift was the effort of the U.S. government during and immediately after World War II to disperse the Japanese American population. It is generally known that, during the war, over 110,000 Japanese American residents in the West Coast area were evacuated and interned in the ten relocation centers hastily built in Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. Even before the movement into these relocation centers was completed, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) had started working on

*States and Canada During W. W. II* (Melborne, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1981), p. 166.

procedures for getting the Japanese Americans out of the centers.[4] The armed forces and war industries were draining some agricultural areas of farm labor and the Japanese Americans in the relocation centers seemed to be a likely source of help. And the WRA hoped that the resettlement program would scatter them. "In administrative thinking," an official report says, "not the least of" the "obvious benefits" resettlement would bring was that "it would disperse persons of Japanese ancestry throughout the country."[5]

It was reported that approximately 10,000 evacuees left the centers during 1942 for seasonal agricultural work principally in Idaho, Utah, Montana, Colorado, and eastern Oregon.[6] In January, 1943, the first WRA field office was established in Chicago to help those who left the relocation centers to resettle in the Midwest. Additional field offices were established in various places in the East and the Midwest, including Cleveland, Kansas City, Salt Lake City, Denver, New York,

[4] Robert A. Wilson and Bill Hosokawa, *East to America: A History of the Japanese in the United States* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1980), p. 216.

The War Relocation Authority commented on the problems produced by its policy as follows:

[T]here was the paradox—the inherent contradiction—that lay in the very nature of the WRA program as it eventually developed. On the one hand, WRA was constantly striving for the greatest possible economy, efficiency and community service in the operation of relocation centers; on the other hand, it was . . . encouraging the most energetic, most skillful, and best adjusted evacuee workers, with every device at its command, to leave the centers and resettle in ordinary American communities. (U.S. Department of the Interior, War Relocation Authority, *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation* [Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1946], p. 82.)

[5] U.S. Department of the Interior, War Relocation Authority, *Impounded People* (Washington, DC: G.P.O. 1946), p. 218.

The literature on the evacuation and resettlement of Japanese Americans during W.W. II is abundant, ranging from the WRA reports to the stories of evacuees' experiences. Among them, those which focus on the resettlement period are: Leonard Broom and Ruth Riemer, *Removal and Return: The Socio-Economic Effects of the War on Japanese Americans* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1949); Dorothy S. Thomas, *The Salvage* (Berkeley, CA; University of California Press, 1952): U.S. Department of the Interior, *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation* (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1946); U.S. Department of the Interior, *Impounded People* (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1946); U.S. Department of the Interior, *People in Motion: The Postwar Adjustment of the Evacuated Japanese Americans* (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1947).

The research on the resettlement of Japanese Americans is under way by a group of scholars; Teruko Kachi, Teruko Kumei, Alan Moriyama, Yoko Murakawa, Noriko Shimada, Sataye Shinoda, and Masako Iino.

[6] *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation*, p. 32.

and Little Rock.[7] And many Japanese Americans left the centers, attracted by the job offers of the companies in such places like Seabrook (New Jersey), Brigham (Utah), and Chicago (Illinois). About 4,300 Nisei students left the centers to be enrolled in universities and colleges in the East, helped by the WRA.[8] Some had gone into the armed forces. By the time the evacuation orders were rescinded in early 1945, nearly 52,000 Japanese Americans had resettled in other parts of the country than the West Coast under WRA's resettlement program.[9]

The government's policy to disperse Japanese Americans seems to have been successful, as evacuation and resettlement did create "new permanent centers of Japanese American population."[10] The most striking case is Illinois. It had only 462 Japanese Americans in 1940, but suddenly became a state with the second largest Japanese American population in 1950. Since then Illinois has stayed in the ranks with over 10,000 Japanese Americans (Cf. Table II).[11]

However, the majority of those who had left the centers for the East eventually returned to the West Coast, particularly to California. The return was not immediate because hostility against them still remained there after the war. In many cases "the younger, more employable members" of the family who had relocated to the East after leaving the centers returned to the West Coast to join their parents who had returned to the West Coast on leaving the centers.[12] There were some Issei who had resettled in the East but eventually returned to the West Coast many years later. Some Issei returned more than twenty years later when they retired from their jobs in Chicago or other places.[13] For many Issei, the West Coast area was a second home, and they could not settle down in any other place, even though it took them very long to reestablish themselves in the West Coast area.

Thus, as Table II shows, the percentage of the Japanese Americans

[7] Wilson and Hosokawa, *East to America*, p. 218.

[8] This was a much larger Nisei enrollment in colleges and universities than in any single prewar year, and it provided "the first impetus to resettlement out of the centers." The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Washington, DC:G.P.O., 1982), p. 180; Robert W. O'Brien, *The College Nisei* (1949) (rpt, New York: Arno Press, 1978), p. 60.

[9] *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation*, p. 151.

[10] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, p. 167.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 159–161; *Personal Justice Denied*, p. 242.

[12] *Personal Justice Denied*, p. 242.

[13] Author's interview with an Issei (Summer, 1983).

who lived on the West Coast rose to 69 percent in 1960, which was faster than the growth of Japanese American population on the rest of the mainland. The 1970 and 1980 censuses show that still close to 60 percent of the mainland Japanese Americans live in California. Also, about 38 percent of the Japanese Americans in the continental U.S. live in Los Angeles.[14] These data clearly show that Japanese Americans are still not very thinly dispersed, though they remain less concentrated than they were before the Pacific War.

2. Occupation

In regard to the occupations of Japanese Americans, the 1980 Census shows that 28.5 percent of the persons (33.5% of the males and 23.1% of the females) employed are managerial and professional (Cf. Table III), and this figure is much higher than the national figure, 22.7 percent (23.6% of the males and 21.5% of the females).[15] Also, progress is clear among Japanese Americans, since the 1970 statistics show 21.5 percent (and the 1960 statistics show only 14.8 percent) of the Japanese males employed were professionals.[16] A study of the employment of university faculty shows that the percentage of the Japanese Americans employed as faculty and administrators is much higher than that of the majority white population.[17] Japanese Americans were well-represented among faculty in both 1960 and 1970.

This is because the level of education they have received has been quite high. The 1980 Census shows that median school years completed by persons aged 25 and over is 13.2, compared with the national figure 12.5.[18] According to the study by Gene N. Levine and Darrel M. Montero, in 1973, 88 percent of Sansei (third generation Japanese

[14] *Time*, June 13, 1983.

[15] *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 2, *Subject Reports: Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States: 1980*, PC80-2-1E, Table 33 (p. 405); *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 1, *Characteristics of the Population*, Chapter C, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Part 1, *U.S. Summary*, PC80-1-1C, Table 89 (p. 45). Percentage figures are my computation.

[16] *Census of Population, 1970: Subject Reports: Japanese, Chinese and Filipinos in the United States*, PC(2)-1G (1973), Table 7 (p. 31); U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 1960: Subject reports; Non-White Population by Race*, PC(2)-1C (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1963).

[17] Richard B. Freeman, "Discrimination in the Academic Marketplace," in Thomas Sowell, *ed.*, *Essays and Data on American Ethnic Groups* (Washington, DC.: The Urban Institute, 1978), p. 171.

[18] *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 2, *Subject Reports: Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the U.S.: 1980*, PC80-2-1E, Table 33A (p. 413); *1980 Census of Popula-*

Americans) have attended college.[19] The major reason for the high level of education among Japanese Americans is often attributed to a distinct cultural tradition of Japanese[20] of placing great importance on education. Issei were not highly educated and were engaged in occupations requiring little education, such as contract gardening and farming. But while they tried hard to establish their so-called "middleman position,"[21] they exerted great influence on their Nisei children to acquire education and to get ahead in their schools. This tendency has been extended to Sansei.

The study of occupational structure of Japanese Americans in the resettlement period by Leonard Broom and Ruth Riemer[22] revealed this trend in occupational changes of Japanese Americans. With the evacuation the ethnic economy had been more or less destroyed and the returnees moved into the employment of non-Japanese corporations. Farm ownership and management and unpaid family labor declined and craftsmen/operatives and professionals increased between 1940 and 1950.[23] Present situations seem to meet the expectations made by Broom and Riemer that "clear tendencies are emergent in the occupational structure and these patterns will become of greater importance within the fifteen years as the Issei retire and die."[24]

While accepting the fact that there has been rapid progress in occupations, some scholars find that Japanese Americans are still not fully integrated into the occupational structure of the larger society, but are underrepresented in some occupations such as upper-level management, communications, construction, and entertainment.[25] As cultural

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*tion*, Vol. 1, *Characteristics of the Population*, Chapter C. *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Part 1, *U.S. Summary*, PC80-1-1C, Table 83 (p. 21).

[19] Gene N. Levine and Darrel M. Montero, "Socioeconomic Mobility among Three Generations of Japanese Americans," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 29 (1973), p. 45.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 44–45; Audrey J. Schwartz, "The Culturally Advantaged: A Study of Japanese-American Pupils," *Sociology and Social Research*, Vol. 55 (1971), pp. 343–44.

[21] Edna Bonacich and John Modell, *The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity: Small Business in the Japanese American Community* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1980), p. 14.

[22] Broom and Riemer, *Removal and Return*, p. 68.

[23] Bonacich and Modell, *Economic Basis*, p. 99, Table 6:1.

[24] Broom and Riemer, *Removal and Return*, p. 68.

[25] Harry H. L. Kitano, *Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture* (1969) (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976), p. 102; Eric Woodrum, "An Assessment of Japanese American Assimilation, Pluralism, and Subordination," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 87 (1981), p. 165.

factors influence career choices, underrepresentation should not be necessarily explained as the result of direct discrimination. Nevertheless, there are signs of Japanese Americans' occupational disadvantage. For example, it has been pointed out that "except in all-Japanese business, very few are executives or administrators or in publicly visible positions."[26] A survey of decision-making executives in 50 major corporations in California in 1970 revealed that only two corporations (4 percent) had ever employed Asians at the executive level.[27] According to this survey, a general distrust of Asians prevailed along with a concern that their placement in executive positions would elicit adverse reactions from potential customers. Also, many complaints have been filed by Asian Americans, mainly in civil service, charging that they have been continually passed over for promotion to supervisory positions by whites who had scored lower on the written civil service exams.[28] The usual explanation given when the cases are investigated is that the Asian American candidate did poorly on the oral interview compared to his white competitor, implying that Asian Americans lack the personality traits necessary to assume supervisory positions, such as aggressiveness, verbal fluency and self-confidence.

This may not be so much because discrimination against them still exists in the larger society, but probably because Japanese Americans are considered to be capable of certain categories of jobs which exclude executives or administrators, as the explanation above may suggest. "We've been stereotyped," said a Sansei, a human rights specialist for the Washington State Commission for Human Rights, "I've been told by employers that they like to hire Asians for technical positions because they seem to be able to do that kind of job well. But why aren't Asians vice-presidents? . . . Cabinet secretaries?"[29]

Also, when we look at the types of occupations held by many Japanese Americans, such as jobs connected with real estate, insurance, banks, savings and loan associations, law and medicine, which

[26] Kitano, *Japanese Americans*, p. 102.

[27] Amy Tachiki, *et al.*, *eds.*, *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (Los Angeles: The Regents of the Univ. of California, 1971), p. x.

[28] Governor's Asian-American Advisory Commission, "Report to the Governor on Discrimination Against Asians," (Based on hearings conducted in Seattle, Washington, 1973), quoted in Bob H. Suzuki, "Education and the Socialization of Asian Americans: A Revisionist Analysis of the 'Model Minority' Thesis," *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 4 (1977), p. 42.

[29] *Pacific Citizen*, January 27, 1984.

are considered to be typical middle-class jobs, they are still primarily dependent upon the ethnic community.[30] Another look at the statistics explains that, while the percentage of those who hold professional and technical jobs is high, those who belong to the four lowest-paying job categories (private household workers, service workers, farmers, and laborers) are still numerous (17.0 percent of the Japanese American males employed, and 19.7 percent of the females employed) (Cf. Table III).

Table III
Major Occupations Held by Japanese Americans

(16 years and over)

| | Total | (Female) |
|---|---|---|
| Employed persons | 382,534 | (183,518) |
| Managerial and professional speciality occupations | 108,998 | ( 42,306) |
| Technical, sales, and administrative support occupations | 130,965 | ( 84,352) |
| Service occupations | 48,969 | ( 31,538) |
| Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations | 16,747 | ( 2,418) |
| Precision production, craft, and repair occupations | 38,233 | ( 6,822) |
| Operators, fabricators, and laborers | 38,622 | ( 16,082) |

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 2, *Subject Reports: Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States: 1980*, PC80-2-1E (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1988), Table 33 (p. 405).

## 3. Income

The median family income of Japanese Americans is 37 percent above the national figure[31] (Cf. Table IV). This is a great advance since the figure was only 99 percent of the income of the whites in 1959.[32]

However, when the fact that they concentrate in California, Hawaii, and New York, where living standards and costs are high, is taken into

[30] Kitano, *Japanese Americans*, p. 104.

[31] *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 2, *Subject Reports*, PC80-2-1E (1988), Table 32 (p. 400) and Table 35 (p. 432); *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 1, PC80-1-1C (1983), Table 93 (p. 51).

[32] William Petersen, *Japanese Americans: Oppression and Success* (New York: Random House, 1971) p. 120.

Table IV
Income of Japanese American Families

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| All families | 167,795 | % |
| Less than $5,000 | 5,953 | 3.6% |
| $5,000 to 9,999 | 11,293 | 6.7% |
| $10,000 to 12,499 | 7,748 | 4.6% |
| $12,500 to 14,999 | 7,622 | 4.5% |
| $15,000 to 19,999 | 18,023 | 10.7% |
| $20,000 to 24,999 | 22,604 | 13.5% |
| $25,000 to 34,999 | 39,417 | 23.5% |
| $35,000 to 49,999 | 35,133 | 20.9% |
| $50,000 or more | 20,002 | 11.9% |
| Median income | $27,354 | |
| Mean income | $30,520 | |
| Percent families with income less than poverty level | | 4.2% |

Source: Same as that of Table III; Table 32 (p. 400) and 35 (p. 432). Percentage figures are my computation.

consideration, the figures are not as significant as they appear. In California, their family income is only 27 percent above the state average.[33] There are some other facts that should be taken into consideration. First, one of the reasons for their high family income is their high proportion of multiple income earners, and their average personal income is only 27 percent above the national average.[34] Second, the 1980 Census shows that both median years of schooling and median age of Japanese males are substantially greater than the corresponding medians for white males, and when age and education are held constant, the gross differences in income narrow, if not disappear.[35] Another point to be noted is that many Japanese Americans may still earn relatively good incomes by working long, exhaustive hours as self-employed gardeners, shopkeepers or small farmers.

[33] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 1, *Characteristics of the Population,* Chapter C, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Part 6, *California*, PC80-1-C6 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1983), Table 71 (p. 114) and Table 97 (p. 150).

[34] *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 2, *Subject Reports*, PC80-2-1E (1988), Table 32 (p. 400) and Table 35 (p. 432); *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 1, PC80-1-1C (1983), Table 95 (p. 55). 63.5 percent of Japanese-American families have two or more income earners.

[35] *Ibid.*

The sociologist Richard B. Freeman presents evidence which suggests that faculty of Oriental descent, mainly Chinese and Japanese Americans, suffer from some discrimination in the marketplace.[36] He surveyed 42,000 teaching faculty at 301 universities and colleges in 1972–73, and found that Chinese and Japanese American faculty were paid less than white faculty, even when the number of publications per faculty member was considered. His analysis suggests that because of federal affirmative action and pressures for increased black academic employment, the Asian minorities, who are well-represented in universities, have faced some continued lower quality-adjusted incomes.

This pattern of group income disadvantage is also reported by the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights.[37] Their analysis of mean earnings adjusts for occupational prestige, age, education, annual weeks worked, hours worked the previous week, and average income in the state of residence. With these adjustments, Japanese American males earned 88 percent (as for females, 58 percent) of that of white males in 1975. This can be interpreted as "evidence of continuing economic discrimination,"[38] that is, discrimination "in terms of unequal returns for human capital resources" against Japanese Americans.[39]

Thus, the current socioeconomic position of Japanese Americans is "clearly middle to lower middle class."[40] Though they have significantly higher educational achievement than the general population, they receive less income than their educational accomplishments would suggest.

## 4. Political Activities

On the political scene, now there are two Senators (Daniel K. Inoue and Spark M. Matsunaga, both Democrats from Hawaii) and three Congressmen (Norman T. Mineta and Robert T. Matsui, both De-

[36] Freeman, "Discrimination in the Academic Marketplace," pp. 167–201.

[37] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Social Indicators of Equality for Minorities and Women* (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1978), pp. 53–56.

[38] Roger Daniels, "Majority Images/Minority Realities: A Perspective on Anti-Orientalism in the United States," *Prospects*, Vol. 2 (1976), p. 258.

[39] Morrison G. Wong, "Post-1965 Asian Immigrants: Where Do They Come From, Where Are They Now, and Where Are They Going?" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Vol. 487 (September 1986), p. 167. See also Wong, "The Cost of Being Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino in the United States: 1960, 1970, and 1976," *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 27 (1982), pp. 197–217.

[40] Roger Daniels, "The Japanese," John Higham, *ed.*, *Ethnic Leadership in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), p. 60.

mocrats from California, and Patricia F. Saiki, Republican from Hawaii) of Japanese ancestry. Five among about 535 members of the Congress is quite an achievement, considering that they are from less than half of 1 percent of the population, though they do not necessarily represent the interests of Japanese Americans as an ethnic group. Particularly, the two Congressmen were elected in the districts where the Asian population is only 6 percent.[41] This fact clearly shows that they were not supported by their ethnic communities only, but they represent moderately liberal communities. They represent the new, positive image of the Asian American, "an image that fits very well into the Statue of Liberty myth of successful middle-class acculturation within a generation."[42] They certainly are part of the larger society.

Also it has often been reported in the press recently that Japanese Americans are tending to be influential in the political arena by making financial contributions to political campaigns. When former Vice-President Walter Mondale held parties in California to raise funds for his election campaign in 1984, an average of 230,000 to 300,000 dollars were raised at each party, and almost 15 percent of the amount was contributed by Asian American citizens including Japanese Americans, the Headquarters of Mondale Presidential Campaign reported.[43] According to a member of the Reagan Reelection Committee, Japanese Americans appeared at the fund raising parties where they contributed 50, 100, or even 500 dollars per person.[44] Needless to say, this is evidence of Japanese Americans having reached the stage where they can afford to do so. The background of this phenomenon is also explained by a Nisei, who was at one time the president of the Japanese American Citizens League, as follows: that Japanese Americans began to feel the necessity of joining in political activities since the issue of redress for Japanese American evacuation and internment during World

[41] Alan Ehrenhalt, *ed.*, *Politics in America: Members of Congress in Washington and at Home* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1983), pp. 101-03; 129-30; *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report: Election Special, 101st Congress*, Vol. 46, No. 46, November 12, 1988, p. 3294.

Patricia F. Saiki was elected in 1986. Alan Ehrenhalt, *ed.*, *Politics in America: the 100th Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly inc., 1987), pp. 389-90; Thomas E. Cavanagh, *ed.*, *The JCPS Congressional District Fact Book* (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political Studies, 1984).

[42] Daniels, "Majority Images/Minority Realities," p. 257.

[43] The *Asahi*, June 4, 1984.

[44] *Ibid.*

War II was taken up in the Congress in the 1970's, until when Japanese Americans, particularly Nisei, used to protect themselves by being quiet and not getting involved in political activities. "We have found out," a Japanese American told a reporter of the *Asahi*, "that politicians would not listen to us unless we offer contributions to political funds."[45]

It is true that for long Japanese Americans were not vocal about their political rights. It was only in the 1970's that Japanese Americans began to use their economic influence on politics. However, they must have long been aware of their political rights, or rather, their lack of these rights, because of their historical experiences in the United States: they were discriminated against in their jobs and housing at the turn of the century; they were excluded by the Immigration Act of 1924; politicians made use of them for their political purposes. These and many other incidents were related to the fact that Japanese Americans (Issei) did not have voting rights. Against this background, the Japanese American Citizens League began to be active in advocating the rights of Japanese Americans. The JACL, which was organized by Nisei in 1930, took over the position of the Japanese Association, the most important Issei organization which was closely related to the Japanese consulate, when many Issei leaders in the Japanese American community were arrested by the FBI immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. This change of leadership in the Japanese American community was the turning point in their attitudes toward the larger society, though it was not a smooth one.

The JACL tried to convince Japanese Americans to cooperate with the evacuation procedures of the American government, though its leaders were often condemned by many Japanese Americans, particularly the Issei and the Kibei (second generation Japanese Americans who were educated in their formative years in Japan), for "selling the Japanese communities down the river."[46] The JACL's official creed, which was read into the Congressional Record in 1941, clearly shows the stand that the JACL was taking at the time of war with Japan. Part of it says as follows:

> Because I believe in America, and I trust she believes in me, and because I have received innumerable benefits from her, I pledge myself to do honor to

[45] *Ibid.*

[46] Bill Hosokawa, *JACL in Quest of Justice: The History of the Japanese American Citizens League* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1982), p. 203.

her at all times and in all places; to support her Constitution, to obey her laws, to respect her flag; to defend her against all enemies, foreign or domestic; to assume actively my duties and obligation as a citizen, cheerfully and without any reservation whatsoever, in the hope that I may become a better American in a greater America.[47]

After the war, the JACL worked energetically through lobbying in Washington, D.C., for the interest of the Japanese Americans as a whole, though not all Japanese Americans were in accord with them. Largely due to the effort of the JACL and with the great help of such organizations as the American Civil Liberties Union, such issues as payment for wartime evacuation claims, elimination of alien land laws, and citizenship for the Issei, were resolved. And since the latter half of the 1970's, they have been working hard in the redress issue. Change in the attitudes of the society as a whole toward ethnic groups and their problems in the United States has helped the JACL's efforts, which resulted in the establishment of the Investigation Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, the so-called Bernstein Commission, in 1980. After two years of investigation, the Commission recommended the Congress to compensate 20,000 dollars to each Japanese American who had been evacuated or to his survivors.[48] Some Japanese Americans were against the idea, considering that a demand for monetary compensation would cheapen the sacrifice they had made and might provoke a widespread backlash. Some Issei, with the traditional sense of values, considered it a shame to accept money as a proof of the U.S. government's apology.[49] Still the JACL is considered to have achieved its objectives.

Thus, the JACL has played an important role in accelerating ac-

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 280.

[48] *Personal Justice Denied;* The *Asahi*, June 17, 1983. President Reagan signed the redress bill, H.R. 442, into the law on August 19, 1988. In so doing, the President offered an official apology to internees on behalf of the U.S. government, granted monetary reparations to surviving former internees, and established an education fund to be administered by the Department of Justice. The money to pay the 60,000 surviving internees, however, was not appropriated until September 29, 1989.

As for the role that the Japanese American Citizens League played in the redress movement, see: John Tateishi, "The Japanese American Citizens League and the Struggle for Redress," in Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor and Harry H. L. Kitano, *eds.*, *Japanese Americans, from Relocation to Redress* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1986), pp. 191–95; William Hohri, "Redress as a Movement Toward Enfranchisement," *ibid.*, pp. 196–99.

[49] Author's interview with Issei and Nisei individuals (Summer, 1983).

culturation of Japanese Americans and has contributed to the progress of their political status. It began after World War II, when many Issei, who had been without complete civil rights, and even some Nisei, both of whom had experienced the evacuation and internment, realized for the first time that they were entitled to be vocal about their own rights. That they should be politically assertive about their own rights was the most important lesson they learned through their experiences.[50]

## III

## AMERICANIZATION WITH COSTS

### 1. Sansei

The main body of those who have been active in advocating political rights are the Sansei, many of whom were born during or after World War II. They comprise about 32 percent of the whole Japanese American population.[51] In the late 1960's and early 1970's some Sansei students, influenced by the black power movement, though not actively backing it, became militant advocates of ethnic identity. They advocated such concepts as the Third World Liberation Front and Yellow Power. They called themselves "Bees" with black and yellow stripes and a sting, compared with "Bamboo" for the Issei, which, frail but strong, easily bends in whatever direction the wind blows, and yet eventually springs back straight, and "Banana" for the Nisei, yellow on the outside but white inside.

They criticized the Nisei as "whitewashed," as being too quietly conforming to white values,[52] without actively protesting prejudices. They considered that the Nisei attained "the good life" (that is, sufficient prestige and material possessions to satisfy one's desires and with the approval of whites) at the expense of surrendering what the Sansei considered to be their human rights.[53] Though such Sansei, who were affected strongly by the liberal ideals of the 1960's, were a minority, it

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1982-83*, 103rd ed. (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1984), No. 43. Percentage figures my computation.

[52] Minako K. Maykovich, *Japanese American Identity Dilemma* (Tokyo: Waseda Univ. Press, 1971), p. 74.

[53] Letters to the Editor, *Hokubei Mainichi*, April 11 and 13, 1970, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 3.

is apparent that there are great socio-cultural and psychic differences between the Sansei and the Nisei. The Sansei have been "Americanized," even to such a degree that most of their elders consider them "too American."[54] According to a Nisei, the Nisei are "the last of the *Japanese* Americans; the Sansei are *American* Japanese."[55] Some of these differences are based on generational experiences: few of the Sansei are old enough to remember or have experienced the effects of wartime internment; most Sansei have not grown up in homes marked by a noticeable cultural division between America and Japan; most Sansei have benefitted from the relative material success of their parents and have received parental support for their educational pursuits without difficulty; few Sansei have borne the oppressive burden of racial discrimination or anti-Japanese prejudice.[56]

Although the Sansei may not accept the idea that they are "the beneficiaries of Issei and Nisei struggles and perseverance"[57] wholeheartedly, there are numerous indications of the Sansei's Americanization, besides education, occupation and income, which were mentioned above. They include their religious affiliation, organizational affiliation, visiting pattern, dating pattern, and outmarriage, i.e. marrying with non-Japanese Americans.[58] To take one example, religious affiliation clearly bespeaks tendencies toward acculturation. According to Darrel M. Montero's research in the mid-1960's of the Issei, 65 percent were Buddhist and 35 percent were Christian. The Nisei figures are: Bud-

[54] Levine and Montero, "Socioeconomic Mobility," p. 45.

To illustrate that many Nisei perceive a definite and irremediable loss of appropriate Nisei character, Stanford M. Lyman gives an example of Nisei using the term Sansei to indicate "the existence and cause of social impropriety." "Thus, in the face of an individual's continued social errors in my presence, a Nisei explained to me, 'What can you expect? He's a Sansei.' " Stanford M. Lyman, *The Asian in the West* (Reno: Univ. of Nevada Press, 1970), p. 62.

[55] Lyman, *The Asian in the West*, p. 63.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[57] *Ibid.*

[58] There are many works of sociological study on three generations of Japanese Americans. They include: Gene N. Levine and Colbert Rhodes, *The Japanese American Community: A Three-Generation Study* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981); Darrel M. Montero, *Japanese Americans: Changing Patterns of Ethnic Affiliation Over Three Generations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980); John W. Connor, *Tradition and Change in Three Generations of Japanese Americans* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977); Maykovich, *Japanese American Identity Dilemma*; Gene N. Levine and Darrel M. Montero, "Socioeconomic Mobility," pp. 33–48.

dhist, 37 percent; Christian, 54 percent; and nonbelievers, 9 percent. As for the Sansei, figures are 24 percent, 56 percent, and 20 percent respectively.[59] John W. Connor's survey shows that about 70 percent of the Issei, about 65 percent of the Nisei and 50 percent of the Sansei identify themselves as Buddhist.[60] Connor's figures shows a less dramatic drop in the percentage of Japanese Americans who affiliate themselves to Buddhism than Montero's figures. Still a lessening of those who affiliate themselves to Buddhism, which is considered to be one of the most important elements of Japanese cultural tradition, by generation, is clear.

Another indication of the Sansei's acculturation may be their high rate of outmarriage. Nationally, in 1970, about 12 percent of married Japanese American men and about a third of married Japanese American women had spouses of a different race.[61] According to a study of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno, and Honolulu, in the early 1970's about 50 percent of recent marriages of Japanese Americans were outmarriages.[62] The majority of these outmarriages were to Caucasians (72 percent), with Chinese next. Another nationwide survey of Japanese Americans in 1972 found that 67 percent of the Sansei who were engaged or dating steadily had chosen non-Japanese partners and about three-fourths of the non-Japanese partners were Caucasians.[63] Compared with the fact that in the 1920's only 2 percent of all Japanese American marriages in Los Angeles were with non-Japanese partners and only by the late 1950's did the percentage rise a little over 20 percent,[64] it is a great change. The rise of the outmarriage rate in the 1950's was caused partly by the entrance of about 25,000 Japanese "war brides," though many of these marriages ended in divorce.[65] But the rise of outmarriage rate in the 1970's should be considered as a sign that the Sansei are more a part of the larger society

[59] Montero, *Japanese Americans*, p. 62.

[60] Connor, *Tradition and Change*, p. 129.

[61] *Census of Population, 1970: Subject Reports*, PC(2)-1G. Table 5.

[62] Akemi Kikumura and Harry H. L. Kitano, "Interracial Marriage: A Picture of the Japanese Americans," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 29 (1973), p. 69; John N. Tinker, "Intermarriage and Ethnic Boundaries: The Japanese American Case," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 29 (1973), pp. 55, 212.

[63] Levine and Rhodes, *Japanese American Community*, pp. 176–78.

[64] Levine and Montero, "Socioeconomic Mobility," p. 69.

[65] Amy Iwasaki Mass, "Asians as Individuals: The Japanese Community," *Social Casework*, Vol. 57 (1976), pp. 160–61.

than of the Japanese ethnic community. It should be noted that the rate of the Sansei's outmarriage should not be viewed as unnaturally high. It may simply be part of the natural progression of generations that can be observed among any ethnic group in the United States. What is particular about the case of Japanese Americans is that the change was sudden and great as Nisei outmarriage was "unnaturally low."[66]

These examples, though only two, are enough to show that the Sansei have moved further away from the Japanese ethnic community than the Nisei. At the same time, it has been observed that among the younger generation the high grade point average of earlier generations of Japanese American students was found to be gradually declining toward the norm, while social problems among them were rising.[67] Already in 1971 William Petersen wrote that the delinquency rate among Japanese youths then, though still lower than that of any other ethnic group, was higher than it used to be and possibly rising.[68] In the mid-1970's it was reported that rates of drug addiction, problem pregnancies and unwed motherhood, and maladjustment in school were rising among Japanese American youths.[69] This may be another sign that the Sansei have been Americanized and are getting away from the traditional norms of Japanese American community, such as reverence for education and a heavy sense of obligation not to do anything that is embarrassing to the family and the community. It may be argued that true incidence of crime and delinquency among Japanese American youths was higher than the low official rate, because Japanese Americans with the traditional Japanese sense of values might have tried to hide "the source of embarrassment or shame or at least a negative characteristic."[70] If this argument is accepted, the rise of the delinquency rate among Japanese Americans may be inter-

[66] This was because the Nisei came of age during and after World War II, when Japanese Americans were a particularly unpopular group. Also, a Nisei could not, by law, marry a Caucasian until November, 1948.

Paul R. Spickard, "Mixed Marriage: Two American Minority Groups and the Limits of Ethnic Identity, 1900–1970, "(Ph. D. Dissertation, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1983), p. 367.

[67] Kitano, *Japanese Americans*, p. 26; Thomas Sowell, *Ethnic America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 179.

[68] Petersen, *Japanese Americans*, pp. 139–42, 208.

[69] Mass, "Asians as Individuals," p. 161.

[70] Tachiki, *et al.*, *Roots*, p. 85.

preted as evidence that Japanese American community has become less closed to the larger society since the late 1960's.

On the other hand, some explain that the excessive pressure placed on them to succeed in school can be the cause of this increase in the use of drugs and other types of deviance.[71] In other words, the traditional norms of Japanese American community and ethnic pride were a source of strain for the Sansei. Even though they have been Americanized and accepted by the larger American society, traditional Japanese norms still have influence on them. Just because, as many sociologists agree, they have closer family ties, a greater sense of duty and obligation, and a greater fear of failure than do the Caucasian students,[72] the Sansei feel the family expectations as great pressure. It is ironical that the very factors that helped Japanese Americans to advance their status in American society have become the causes of the Sansei's "moving down, toward more typical norms of dominant society, including their share of deviance and disorganization."[73] As a Nisei journalist Bill Hosokawa put it, while the Sansei "receive strong overt messages from their parents to become 'white,' i.e. to subscribe to the legacies of American society, almost exclusively," they are "subconsciously stirred by covert messages to identify with their ethnic culture by their Nisei parents."[74] As a result they are "in a quandary over their identification with their dual cultural heritages—the American and Japanese—thus creating a sense of estrangement, on some levels, in relation to both".[75]

The degree of the Sansei's assimilation to American society found by many sociologists has not been without cost and dilemma. It may also be evidence that the Hansen's Law, "What the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember," applies to Japanese Americans. Even the high rate of outmarriage among the Sansei, which can attest to their greater interaction with the majority group, is accompanied

[71] Stanford M. Lyman, "Japanese American Generation Gap," *Society*, Vol. 10 (1973), pp. 55-63.

[72] Conner, *Tradition and Change*, p. 305. Cf. Victor Nee and Herbert Y. Wong, "Asian American Socioeconomic Achievement: The Strength of the Family Bond," *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 28 (1988), pp. 281-306; Peter Rose, "Asian Americans: From Pariahs to Paragons," in Nathan Glazer, ed., *Clamor at the Gates* (San Francisco: ICS Press, 1985), pp. 181-212.

[73] Charles F. Marden and Gladys Meyer, *Minorities in American Society*, 5th ed. (New York: Van Nostrand, 1978), p. 318.

[74] Wilson and Hosokawa, p. 300.

[75] *Ibid.*

with a degree of "skepticism and anxiety,"[76] as a study on Japanese American outmarriages in Los Angeles county reveals. According to the study, the fear of not being accepted by both spouse's families was often expressed by those who married out. It seems that the Sansei have one foot in both cultures and may be fully accepted by neither.

2. New Issei

Another factor that complicates the situation of Japanese Americans in contemporary American society is the recent Japanese immigrants called "New Issei." Since the new immigration legislation of 1952, many Japanese immigrants have entered the United States (Cf. Table I). Some are quota immigrants, others are relatives of American citizens, and still others entered under the refugee relief acts.[77] Considering that the total number of immigrants from Japan during the period between 1861 and 1979 was 411,000, the entrance of about 46,300 in the 1950's, which includes war brides, and about 40,000 in the 1960's is rather large.

There has not been much research done on these new Issei, partly because the data on them are scarce. And it seems to be difficult to generalize about them since they are not so homogeneous as the older Issei in terms of age, occupation, and social class. But at least they have come to the United States at a time when discrimination against Japanese Americans or any other ethnic groups is less than in the prewar period, and, except for the latter half of the 1970's, economic conditions in American society have been good, and when Japanese Americans have had few occupational and residential problems. Also

[76] Akemi Kikumura, *Through Harsh Winters: The Life of a Japanese Immigrant Woman* (Novato, CA: Chandler & Sharp Publishers, 1981), p. 135.

[77] *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1982-83, Nos. 131 & 133.*

Immigrants admitted as permanent residents under refugee acts

| | 1954-79 total | 1961-70 total | 1971-77 total |
|---|---|---|---|
| total | 918,842 | 212,714 | 450,420 |
| Asia | 196,216 | 19,207 | 147,415 |
| Japan | 4,371 | 554 | 27 |

they are from a contemporary Japan that is much closer to the American world than was the Japan of the older Issei.[78] Due to these factors it should be easier for these new Issei to adjust themselves to the society they have entered than for the first Issei many years ago.

Nevertheless, they tend to concentrate and their assimilation seems to be slow. The first Issei and other Japanese Americans who have been here for a long time are usually cool to them. One old Issei woman recently complained that "those young new Issei behave so badly and seem to be destroying what we have established here through hard work. Contemporary Japanese seem to have discarded what we have maintained as Japanese tradition and pride."[79] To the first Issei, these new Issei certainly seem to reflect changes in modern Japan.

It is also reported that the Sansei tend to be contemptuous of the new Issei, who are often of their own age, as FOBs (Fresh Off the Boats), and the Nisei are embarrassed by those who speak no English.[80] Thus these new Issei can be described as being in a marginal position in relation to both the Japanese American culture and to the white middle-class culture. And this element has added another complexity to the Japanese community which has undergone great transformation.

3. Signs of New Anti-Japanese Feelings

Contemporary Japanese Americans have been facing some antagonistic feelings in American society. It is true that popular prejudice as well as statutory bias has abated or largely disappeared since the end of World War II, though feelings of dissatisfaction and protest can still be observed among some Japanese Americans. However, in the 1970's, particularly after 1975, when the South Vietnamese government collapsed and a large number of Vietnamese refugees entered the United States on a refugee program (130,000 in 1975), public attitudes toward Asian Americans as a whole changed. Historically public opinion has always been resentful of immigration when times were hard, and the attitudes of the public toward the influx of Vietnamese was no exception, since it coincided with a serious economic slump. Also, the "Gook" stereotype, which portrays Koreans, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and other Asians as "subhuman beings . . . who all look like the treacherous Chinese Communist enemy," played an important role

[78] Kitano, *Japanese Americans*, p. 161.
[79] Author's interview with an Issei (Summer, 1983).
[80] *Time*, June 13, 1983.

in shaping the behavior of Americans toward Asian people.[81] Public opinion was not only against these refugees but also opposed the American government's program to receive them.

Japanese Americans do not show much sympathy with those new arrivals. Rather, they "seem to agree that they are superior to" them.[82] At the same time, these new immigrants are often resentful of Japanese Americans who seem to them a part of the larger society which is against them. And, with such conflict among the Asian American ethnic groups, Asian Americans as a whole are under the influence of "residual reminders of the traditional anti-Oriental attitudes that had once been a conspicuous minor theme of American racism."[83] Japanese Americans are also affected by such attitudes.

Another element of anti-Japanese feelings in contemporary American society is friction in the relationship between the United States and Japan. Historically, the U.S.-Japan relationship has always been a factor of great importance that influences the attitudes of the American public toward Japanese Americans, as was observed in such incidents as the decision of the San Francisco School Board to segregate Japanese and Korean pupils in 1906. The evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans at the time of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor is another illustration of how the position of Japan as a nation and her relations with the United States greatly influenced the fate of Japanese Americans. Today the issue between the United States and Japan is not military but trade. It was reported in 1982 that anti-Japan and anti-Japanese feelings caused by the friction in U.S.-Japan trade "were having a serious influence on Japanese Americans again."[84] One of the founders and one time president of the JACL, Mike Masaoka, declared that "U.S.-Japan relationship is the worst since World War II," and described the conspicuous similarities between the 1930's and today "except that Japan is not a military threat to the United States now."[85]

The incident in which a young Chinese American was beaten to death by two employees of an auto company in Detroit in 1982 also

[81] Tachiki, et al., *Roots*, p. 2; Thomas Kessner and Betty Boyd Caroli, *Today's Immigrants: Their Stories* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 31–70.
[82] *Time*, June 13, 1983.
[83] Daniels, "Majority Images/Minority Realities," p. 209.
[84] The *Mainichi*, June 4, 1982.
[85] *Ibid.*

showed clearly that the anti-Japan and anti-Japanese feelings could be turned against Japanese Americans. In Detroit, where the unemployment rate was high then, auto workers were resentful of Japan and Japanese who were related to Japanese car exports. The Chinese American in this incident was taken for a Japanese American. A year later the court decided the accused would be fined 3,000 dollars. Considering that the court decision as well as the incident itself were "full of race prejudice," Asian civil organizations, including the JACL, started to protest against the decision. A member of the JACL is reported to have said on the occasion that "it is always Japanese Americans who are made scapegoats when the relations between the United States and Japan deteriorate."[86]

## IV

## CONCLUSION

It has been argued in this paper that the socioeconomic status of Japanese Americans in contemporary American society has risen. They have established themselves in American society very rapidly, considering the fact that many of them had to start from scratch after World War II.

Nevertheless, their situation is not as good as the statistics might imply. Japanese Americans are not completely dispersed all over the United States. They still have difficulty in getting appropriate jobs despite the fact that they are highly trained and educated, and are still dependent on their ethnic community, even though the rate of those with professional occupations among all Japanese Americans employed has significantly risen. Their economic status is not as high as is expected. A comment of one Nisei that the "success" of Japanese Americans is only "moderate"[87] can be shared by most Japanese Americans. They have escaped the lower end, but they are "stuck in the middle."[88] Japanese Americans cannot be labeled a "success" unless they have significantly penetrated the upper management and decision-making positions in American society.

And, even though they have become "relatively successful,"[89] some

[86] The *Asahi*, June 4, 1982.
[87] Author's interview with a Nisei (Summer, 1983).
[88] *Ibid.*
[89] Tachiki, et al., *Roots*, p. 84.

Japanese Americans themselves have argued that the high psychological cost they have paid for this apparent success has far outweighed the socioeconomic benefits. According to this point of view, many Japanese Americans "have become white in every respect but color,"[90] and their over-anxious attempts to gain acceptance have caused them to suffer from severe psychological disorders characterized by lack of confidence, low self-esteem, excessive conformity and alienation.[91] Harry Kitano considers this phenomenon resulting from "either a servant or a second-class mentality" they have developed.[92]

A more radical point of view suggests that these success stories were widely publicized at a time when the country was facing a serious racial crisis and the actual status of Japanese Americans was deliberately distorted to fit the "model minority" image in an attempt to discredit the protests and demands for social justice of other minority groups by admonishing them to follow the "shining example" set by them, thus reinforcing the underlying value structure that created the "success myth" in American society.[93] Although this kind of interpretation may not be shared by the majority of Japanese Americans, advocating such a radical view on the side of the younger generation of Japanese Americans itself shows, ironically, that they are no longer silent. They have found their voice and are gaining influence in political activities, thus losing an important element of a model minority.

There is also, in certain quarters, "a growing disquietude about the image of widespread . . . *embourgeoisement*"[94] of Japanese Americans. Not only pressures within their community but also expectations from others outside it put many young Japanese Americans on "rather narrow career trajectories" that demand high grades and unstinting effort, and that emphasize the necessity to stay the course or lose face." As a result, close observers note, they are feeling the effects of psychological and emotional strain.[95] Reports from college health services show that "more and more Asian American students are seeking counseling and that their concerns are usually related to the fear of

[90] Amy Uyematsu, "The Emergence of Yellow Power in America," Tachiki, et al., *Roots*, p. 9.
[91] Suzuki, "Education and Socialization," p. 25.
[92] Tachiki, et al., *Roots*, p. 84.
[93] Uyematsu, "Yellow Power," pp. 9–13.
[94] Rose, "Asian Americans," p. 184.
[95] *Ibid.*

failure."[96] The record of academic achievement now seems to be "a source of pain as well as pride" to Asian American youngsters, as illustrated by the comment an Asian American boy made: "If I don't go to an Ivy League school, I feel I would let my ethnic group down."[97]

At the same time, they are still somewhat vulnerable to discrimination and antagonism in the larger society. They may be overly sensitive. It may be that to be part of the "American dream" leads to "heightened sensitivity to instances of prejudice and discrimination," and "dissatisfaction remains at a high level" as expectations are much higher than before.[98] The fear of Japanese Americans that they might become scapegoats again when relations between the United States and Japan deteriorate also shows that the status of Japanese Americans in contemporary American society is still not completely established. This fear may be a symbolic element of their ethnic identity itself.

[96] *Ibid.*

[97] Dennis A. Williams, "A Formula for Success," *Newsweek*, April 23, 1984, pp. 33–34.

[98] Harry H. L. Kitano and Stanley Sue, "The Model Minorities," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 29 (1973), p. 9.