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**A Sense of Belonging: Local Sansei Women's Experiences  
in Hawai'i.**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy  
In  
Social Anthropology**

**At Massey University, Palmerston North  
New Zealand**

**Yumiko Ann Olliver-Richardson  
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## Abstract

While Issei (first) and Nisei (second) generations of Americans of Japanese Ancestry (AJA) in Hawai'i have been well documented, limited literature exists in relation to non-Issei women, and the Sansei (third) generation. Based on six months of fieldwork in Hawai'i and, in-depth interviews and personal inventories of thirty Sansei women, this dissertation primarily provides an ethnographic investigation into the diversity and complexity of what it means to be a Sansei woman in Hawai'i, focusing on themes identified by Sansei women - of the past, values and social relationships. Drawing on these themes, this dissertation explores how they relate to a 'sense of belonging' in Hawai'i. It also considers the significance and politics of Local identity and the consequences of emphasising the existing historical stereotypes and narratives for Sansei women, AJA and Locals in Hawai'i.

**Key Words:** Americans of Japanese Ancestry, ethnicity, gender, generations, history, Hawai'i, identity, Issei, Japanese Americans, Local, marriage, motherhood, Nikkei, Nisei, picture bride, Sansei, sense of belonging, values, women.

For Okaasan, Dad, Grandma and Grandad, Ojiichan, and Obaachan.  
Thank you for igniting my passion for talking story long before I knew  
what it was.

For women, past, present and future, who share the gift of talking story  
and touch lives.

*Remember to always give back.*

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## Introduction

As Japan opened itself to the world during the late 1860s, groups of Japanese emigrated to a variety of destinations including North and South America, regions of Asia, Europe and Hawai'i, resulting in a global presence of what Japanese term *Nikkei* ("persons of Japanese descent, and descendants, who have immigrated abroad and created unique communities and lifestyles within the context of the societies in which they live"<sup>1</sup>). For many *Nikkei*, there is an explicit consciousness of their place within a generational hierarchy in relation to the arrival of Japanese migrants to a specific destination. As Montero (1980:8) writes:

The Japanese are the only ethnic group to emphasize generational distinctions by separate nomenclature and belief in the unique character structure of each generation group...each generation establishing its own rules of status and definitions of boundaries. Reinforced by their own generational identity, members of a group sought to reinforce some degree of conformity within that particular generation.

The Americans of Japanese Ancestry (AJA)<sup>2</sup> who reside Hawai'i also place this emphasis on generational distinctions. Using the terminology utilised by *Nikkei* world-wide, the generations are counted as follows. Those that arrived first to the islands are known as the *Issei*. *Issei* refers to the first generation, in relation to their arrival, unlike western culture which determines the first generation as those that are first-born in

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<sup>1</sup> Definition from the Japanese American National Museum International *Nikkei* Project Website: <http://www.janm.org/inrp/>

<sup>2</sup> I grappled with what terminology to use when referring to *Sansei* women of Hawai'i. I felt uncomfortable calling *Sansei* in the islands Japanese Americans. This implied a conscious awareness and emphasis on Japanese culture that co-existed with American identity. This was not the case in Hawai'i. The 'Japanese' aspect related to ethnic ancestry. Most *Sansei* considered themselves to be American or 'Local' and differentiated themselves from being 'Japanese-Japanese' I therefore felt the term Americans of Japanese Ancestry (AJA) to be more adequate (although it whitewashed over the diversity among those I interviewed, particularly those of Okinawan ancestry). The reference to ancestry also highlights the importance placed on the past that is significant in this research.

a new country. The AJA born in Hawaii are known as *Nisei* (second generation), who survived WWII and established a place within Hawai'i's society. The *Nisei* generation gave birth to *Sansei* (third generation), whom this thesis is concerned with. Subsequent generations are known as *Yonsei* (fourth) and *Gosei* (fifth) generations. In addition a generation is not bound by age, but refers to birth descent from the Issei. Hence, Nisei and Sansei ages can vary greatly, for example if an Issei arrived in 1880, and another in 1920, their Nisei children's ages may be some fifty to sixty years in difference.

Each generation is associated with specific characteristics, traits and role models for subsequent generations to admire and to recognise their own position within the generational hierarchy. While Yonsei and Gosei AJA are considered to be less concerned with the significance of generations, Sansei in Hawai'i still identify with this categorisation. The two generations that precede Sansei, the Issei and Nisei, have been documented extensively. However, there is limited information relating to the Sansei experience both in Hawai'i and around the globe<sup>3</sup>.

This dissertation, based on fieldwork in Hawai'i, participant observation and interviews with thirty Sansei women, explores what it means to be Sansei in Hawai'i, focusing specifically on the experiences of Sansei women. For Sansei women in Hawai'i their individual identities are tied not only with others of their generation, but also with those who preceded them (their mothers and grandmothers), and proceed them (their children). Their identity is intertwined within other identities including that of being Nikkei, AJA, and American, and with an emerging *Local*<sup>4</sup> identity in Hawai'i.

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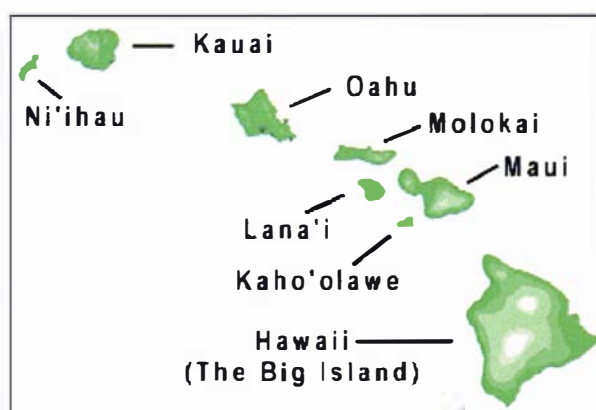
<sup>3</sup> The literature associated with AJA and different generations is discussed on page 10.

<sup>4</sup> See page 9.

The remainder of the Introduction describes the physical location of the research and Hawai'i's ethnic diversity, history and Local culture. There is an overview of available literature about AJA in Hawai'i and a brief discussion of the significance of the past in 'belonging' in the islands.

## Locating Hawai'i<sup>5</sup>

The islands of Hawai'i lie 3860 kilometres off mainland America<sup>6</sup>. A state of the United States of America since August 21st 1959, Hawai'i consists of eight islands: Hawai'i, (also known as the Big Island), O'ahu, Kaua'i, Mau'i, Moloka'i, Lana'i, Ni'ihau and Koho'olawe (see Figure 1). The capital of the State, Honolulu, is located on O'ahu, the most densely populated of the islands, and is an nine-hour direct flight from Wellington, New Zealand<sup>7</sup>. The island's main source of income was once the exportation of crops such as sugar, coffee and pineapple. While coffee is still grown in the islands, and the Dole pineapple plantations are still operating, Hawai'i's economy is now heavily reliant on tourism.



**Map 1: State Map of Hawai'i.**

Source: [http://www.global-town.com/about\\_hawaii/images/state.gif](http://www.global-town.com/about_hawaii/images/state.gif)

<sup>5</sup> There are variations in the spelling of 'Hawai'i'. I have opted to spell it in this manner, however where texts use other forms such as 'Hawaii', the spelling has been maintained

<sup>6</sup> Information from [www.worldtravelguide.net/data/haw/haw/haw.asp](http://www.worldtravelguide.net/data/haw/haw/haw.asp)

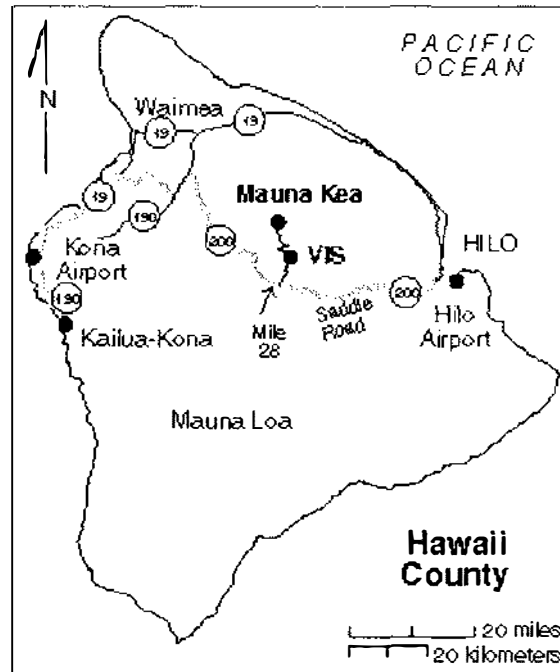
<sup>7</sup> This is where I departed from when heading to the field.

Hawai'i has thirteen climatic regions, supporting rainforests, green flatlands and arid volcanic landscapes, but the islands generally remain between eighteen and thirty degrees Celsius year round, depending on the season. Similarities in fauna and typography exist among the islands, however each has their own distinct variations in landscape and weather. This was reflected in the three islands, Hawai'i, O'ahu and Kaua'i, visited during fieldwork.

The island of Hawai'i (see Map 2) is the biggest of the eight islands. I stayed in Hilo, the main town on the east side of the island. Located approximately thirty miles kilometres from the Volcano, thick clouds of 'vog' (volcanic smog) linger constantly over the township. Known as the wettest place in Hawai'i, Hilo is showered by over 200 inches<sup>8</sup> of water each year. During my four-week stay in Hilo, there were constant showers that sprinkled the ground. While rain helps cool the air, vog often traps the sun's heat. In Hilo the days are warm and muggy; the nights are a cool respite from the humidity. Along the island's east side warm-watered beaches heated by volcanic activity can be found. The mountain ranges are filled with waterfalls hidden behind the lush tropical rainforest that thrives there. There is a 'laid back' and almost sleepy atmosphere in Hilo. Hit by two hurricanes in the last century, the town has rebuilt many of its buildings. Absent from the skyline are tall high-rise office buildings or hotels. Absent too are the throngs of tourist that are often visible in other locations throughout the Aloha state.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.farmersalmanac.com/storeis/10best.html](http://www.farmersalmanac.com/storeis/10best.html)



**Map 2: Map of the Big Island**

Source: [www.ifa.hawaii.edu/mko/visiting.htm](http://www.ifa.hawaii.edu/mko/visiting.htm)

The west coast of the island is a contrast to the voggy Hilo. Bathed in sunshine, the main town, Kona, is a tourist haven for those who prefer rest and relaxation to the hustle and bustle of Waikiki on O'ahu. Beaches are lined with hotels and tourist-oriented operations, yet like Hilo, tall office buildings or large shopping centres are not part of the township.

Travel between Kona and Hilo is facilitated by a highway circling the island. The road penetrates an arid landscape, reflecting the island's volcanic history. A panorama of hardened black lava predominates the journey between the towns. Petrified trees stand where living plants once swayed, isolated roads weave to secluded beaches or Hawaiian sacred sites. On the outskirts of the townships evidence of plantation activities remain.



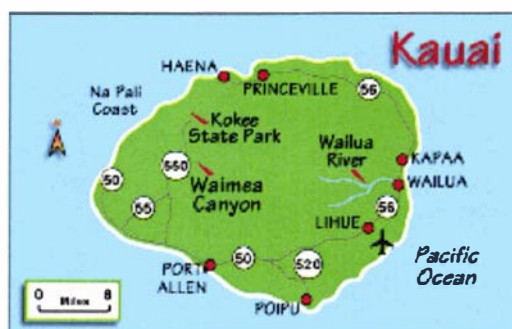
Map 3: Island of O'ahu

Source: [www.caraveljapan.com/Hawaii.htm](http://www.caraveljapan.com/Hawaii.htm)

O'ahu (see Map 3) is the most commercialised of the islands. The south side of the island is a jungle of hotels, shopping centres in tall office buildings. Honolulu is the state's main business district. It stretches from the ocean front towards the mountains. East from Downtown is the tourist mecca of Waikiki. Its beaches are lined with palm trees, beach-front hotels and restaurants. O'ahu has two diagonal mountain ranges (Waianae and Ko'olau) in which are embedded waterfalls and sacred sites. The remainder of the island consists in part of an urban sprawl with small shopping malls and rural housing that stretches around the island. O'ahu's visual landscape varies from office towers, scorching red dirt, pineapple and sugar fields, and mountainous greenery to the rolling waves of the North Shore. Scattered throughout the island are a number of military bases, including Pearl Harbour. The military presence is a strong reminder of Hawai'i's inclusion in the United States.

Kaua'i (see Map 4) is a small island also known (in the islands) for its rainy weather. Like Hawai'i, its east township, Lihue, tends to receive

more rain than the drier and sunnier west coast. The island echoes a similar atmosphere to Hawai'i, quiet and sleepy, with the rich greenery of coffee, sugar cane and tropical plants lining its roads. Similar to the Big Island, many of Lihue's buildings were rebuilt after the devastation of hurricane Iniki that struck in 1994. Instead of vog covering Lihue, there is a lingering sticky smell of heated sugar from its sugar factory, the only tall structure in the landscape.



Map 4: Kaua'i

Source: <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/usstates/smallmap/kauai.gif>

## Ethnicity in the Islands Today

The ethnicity of Hawai'i is as varied as its topography and scenery. In 2000 the U.S. Census Bureau reported the following figures of the population of Hawai'i who participated in the census (1,211,537 people) and identified themselves as either one or more races<sup>9</sup>. The breakdown is as follows<sup>10</sup>: 58% Asian, 39% White, 23.3% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 2.1% American Indian and Alaska Native while 3.9% noted some other race. Latinos or Hispanics make up 7.2% of the total population. Of the 92% that are not Hispanic or Latino, the 2000 Census reports that 22.9% of the population is 'White alone'.

<sup>9</sup> The term 'race' here is employed in the same way in which the census utilised it.

<sup>10</sup> The US Census Bureau notes that the combination of races could be one or more of those listed. The sum of the six percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report as being of more than one race ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

Hawai'i's ethnic make-up contrasts greatly with the USA mainland where 75% of the population are White and less than 4% are either Asian or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Many of the ethnic groups in Hawai'i maintain aspects of their culture which are visible in society through festivals celebrating ethnicity and Local customs and values (such as the removing of shoes before entering a house, or the emphasis on tolerance of others), to the culinary delights of the island, including Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Chinese and Hawaiian.

### **A Brief History of Hawai'i**

The diversity that can be found in the islands originates from the sugar industry that flourished from the early 1800s through to the mid-20th century. Prior to the arrival of immigrants in the 19th century, tribes of indigenous people resided in the islands under chiefly rule. They are believed to have arrived in Hawai'i from Tahiti between 300 and 750 AD. In 1778 Captain Cook anchored on the West side of the Big Island at Kealakekua Bay. He named the islands the Sandwich Islands in honour of the Earl of Sandwich. According to some historians, Cook was welcomed to the islands as the God Lono<sup>11</sup>. Cook's fleet departed the islands in February of 1779, only to return soon after to repair their ships, damaged in high seas. While awaiting repairs in Kealakekua Bay fighting broke out between Cook's men and the Hawaiians, resulting in the death of Captain Cook.

In 1810 King Kamehameha the Great entered into battle with individual tribes and united the islands of Hawai'i into one kingdom, establishing a Hawaiian monarchy. During his reign coffee and pineapple

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<sup>11</sup> See Destefano (1995) who outlines Obeyesekere and Sahlins' ongoing discussion of Cook's arrival and death in Hawaii.

were introduced to the islands and, with sugar, they would become a staple in Hawaii's economy. Shortly after his death, missionaries began to arrive, whose descendants would establish the sugar industry. As the indigenous population declined, plantation owners sought other supplies of labour. Aided by the Masters and Servants Act of 1850, allowing any worker over the age of twenty to be contracted to work for not more than five years, and stipulating the conditions under which both master and servant were to oblige (Hazama and Komeiji 1986:5), plantation owners were able to recruit workers initially from China. King Kalakaua who reigned from 1874 – 1891, was particularly interested in increasing Hawai'i's population, and believed that "the Japanese and Hawaiians spring from one cognate race" (John M Kapena, cited in Saiki 1985:28, Kotani 1985: 18). He actively encouraged Japanese labourers to come to Hawai'i, through establishing relationships with the Emperor of Japan.

Fearing an uprising by the large number of Japanese labourers in the plantations, owners sought other ethnic groups to work in Hawai'i. Immigrants from Portugal, Puerto Rico, Korea and the Philippines arrived. Disparity in pay and conditions existed among the ethnic groups, in an attempt by plantation owners to avoid unification and mass strikes. Despite this attempt to 'divide and rule', plantation workers joined in a unified strike in 1909 and again in 1920. They were protesting poor pay and working and living conditions. Changes to plantation conditions and reimbursement resulted. As Hawai'i's sugar plantation grew, the United States became increasingly involved in the island's affairs and the US military established a presence there. To avoid the heavy tariffs of exporting sugar to the mainland, the plantation owners announced a provisional government, and Hawai'i was declared a territory of the United States in 1898. This provisional government overthrew the

Hawaiian monarchy in 1900. Hawai'i would become the 50th state of the USA in 1959, almost twenty years after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour during WWII.

Changes to the world economy after WWII resulted in changes for Hawai'i. Sugar and coffee could be obtained in other regions at a more competitive price. Many immigrant labourers left the plantations and established other businesses in Hawai'i. The islands became a major tourist destination, with numerous hotels, spas and golf courses being built by mainland and overseas investors.

## **Local Identity<sup>12</sup>**

The immigrant history in Hawai'i, has resulted in a population whose ethnic ancestry is visible in physical appearance. People here are identified by their ethnic background, whether they are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Portuguese, Filipino, Haole (white) or hapa (mixed). The most visible population at any public gathering, or at the local shopping mall is Asian. Haoles, Native Hawaiians and other non-Asian groups are a physically identifiable minority. To overcome tensions brought about by political, social and cultural diversity, 'Local' culture and identity has emerged. This concept will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis, however to contextualise life in the islands, a brief outline of Local is necessary. Local culture is both an inclusive and exclusive term. It includes those who have generational heritage in the islands, those who participate in Local culture whether it be through speaking pidgin or eating Local foods and those who behave in a Locally acceptable manner:

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<sup>12</sup> 'Local' is a term used by long-term and island born-residents to refer to themselves, their culture and traditions. Because Hawai'i consists of so many different immigrant ethnic groups, originating from countries such as Japan, Korea, China, Portugal and the Philippines, Local differentiates residents from those in their home countries, the mainland and indigenous Hawaiians. Hawaiian is a term reserved for indigenous peoples of the islands.

with modesty, humbleness and not drawing attention to oneself. It excludes those who do not have a history with the islands, those who were once perceived as the dominant oppressors on the plantations (the Haole), tourists and military personnel. Local culture is demonstrated through the knowledge of words and phrases, songs, food, places (*local kine grinds* (eateries), *obake* (ghost) story locations), seasonal events that relate to different ethnic groups, tolerance of others, a sense of humour relating to the stereotypes of each ethnic group, a deep love of the islands and the ocean that surrounds them, and dress style (casual – aloha print shirts, *mu'umus*, jeans, shorts, T-shirts and slippers (jandals)). When you are in the midst of Local people at a Local gathering such as a concert or a street parade, there is a sense of aloha – thinking of others, friendliness and openness. There is never a sense of urgency and slowness or lateness is commonplace.

### **Americans of Japanese Ancestry in Hawai'i: Available Literature**

The generational emphasis of AJA in both Hawai'i and the mainland has provided neatly defined categories for research, focusing on a specific generation, or the differences between them. Literature on AJA tends to reflect the historical importance of generations and falls into four main areas: historical accounts of AJA; ethnic maintenance/transformation; AJA in Hawai'i; and a limited collection on AJA women.

The first category of historical accounts tended to focus on AJA who live in the mainland, with Hawai'i's AJA included as an interesting anomaly (occasionally as a chapter) to their story. The bulk of this writing occurred during the 1970s and 1980s, with work such as Kitano's *Japanese Americans: the evolution of a subculture* (1969), paving the way for

subsequent literature on AJA migration and ‘success’ as an immigrant group to the United States (Maykovich 1972, Conroy 1972, Levine and Montero 1973, Peterson 1971, Osako 1986, Daniels 1988). Generational studies such as those by Levine and Rhodes (1981) and Takahasi (1997) focus on the historical impacts that have resulted in changes in the AJA community. From this focus emerges the second category which often overlaps with the first: concern with ethnic maintenance and/or transformation. In 1996 Spickard published a comprehensive account of AJA migration, history and social change in *Japanese Americans: the formation of an ethnic group*. Included in this category are concerns with values (Moore 1999, Montero 1980), intermarriage (Kikumura and Kitano 1973, Tinker 1973, De Vos 1973 ),and acculturation (Kar et.al 1998, Conroy 1972, Alder 1998). The combination of these concerns are manifested in detail in Kendis’s study (1989) of Sansei AJA in the mainland, *A Matter of Comfort – Ethnic Maintenance and Ethnic Style Among Third Generational Japanese Americans*. Hers is one of the few studies that focus solely on Sansei generation<sup>13</sup>, since most generational related literature tends to focus on either the Issei or Nisei generation (Tamura 1994, Kimura 1998), or to address a combination of generations such as Levine and Rhodes’ (1981) *The Japanese American-Community: A Three Generation Study* and Takahashi’s (1997) *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics*.

In Hawai’i there is a large body of literature relating to AJA in the islands. Many of these trace the arrival of the Issei and capture their contribution to the Local community. Dennis Ogawa’s historical collection of documents, articles and newspaper articles over a hundred-year time span, *Kodomo No Tame Ni* (1978), and his easy to read account of JA life in

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<sup>13</sup> Yamamoto (1974) is another author who has written specifically on Sansei.

the islands in *Janken Po* (1978) are illustrative of the type of works that have been written about AJA in Hawai'i. Following suit are Komeiji and Hazama's *Okage Sama de: The Japanese in Hawai'i* (1987) and Centennial Commerative Collections that appeared in the 1980s. There have been generational specific texts written (Tamura 1994, Yamamoto 1974), and many non-fictional stories relating to plantation experience that also capture the themes of hard work, sacrifice and contribution of other AJA collections. Included in this body of literature are classics such as *All I Asking For is My Body* (Murayama 1988) and *Lucky Come Hawai'i* (Shirota 1998), that relate the harshness of the plantations where many life lessons were learnt by young Nisei.

Included in Hawai'i's Japanese American literature is some writing on AJA women, including Young and Parish's *Montage: An Ethnic History of Women in Hawai'i* (1977), and Saiki's *Japanese Women in Hawai'i: the First 100 Years* (1985). Recent articles by Chai (1992) and Chinnen (c.1997) have focused on Issei women and AJA women's historical contribution to the workforce respectively, adding to a growing body of literature relating to AJA women in general. Some of these works have discussed the differences in generations of AJA women (Alder 1998, Nakano 1990), others have concentrated on Issei women and picture brides (Von Hassell 1993, Ichioka 1980, Kikumura 1992, Mengel 1997), in some situations questioning the representations of Issei AJA women. Very little however, has been written about Sansei women in Hawai'i.

With regards to Local literature, there exists an abundance of fictional writing such as that by Lois Anne Yamanaka and Jessica Saiki. Critiques and discussions relating to the concept of Local have been limited to a small number of writers, the most active being Jonathan

Okamura and Dennis Ogawa and Glen Grant. Their writings are explored in depth in Chapter Six.

## **An Immigrant Past: the Basis for Belonging and Stereotypes**

For Locals, the past provides them with a sense of belonging. Sharing in the collective history of Local requires ethnic groups to construct their own collective memories in relation to the dominant narrative that exists in American society. For AJA this is a two-fold process. Firstly there is the 'Nation of immigrants' myth, "a master narrative of hard work and triumph" (Trask 2001:2), that is repeatedly stressed in American national history. Immigrant groups came to America to seek their fortune and despite hardships have become 'successful', thus contributing to the nation through economic, cultural and political means. Secondly AJA and other ethnic groups in Hawai'i need to construct collective histories to include aspects that are fundamental for 'belonging to' the islands<sup>14</sup>. While highlighting achievements and contributions to Hawai'i's and American society, there is also a strong emphasis on the shared experiences of suffering, hard work and exploitation at the hands of an outside, white oligarchy. In addition to shared food, stories, culture and behaviours that developed as a means of 'survival' in multi-ethnic plantation situations are considered to be the cornerstones of Local identity and culture today.

These elements have impacted on the representation of generational AJA groups. However, studies that address aspects of AJA generations and generational differences have failed to take into account

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<sup>14</sup> This collective history located in the larger American narrative of a 'nation of immigrants' denies the presence and history of the indigenous Hawai'ians (Kosa 2000:69).

the historical constructions and stereotypes associated with each generation (Takahashi 1997:10). History and the representations of people (and gender) in the past is “always a product of the present, constructed in relation to prevalent contemporary discourses” (Read 1996:119), and political agendas of social expectations and control. This has impacted on generational stereotypes and perceptions of AJA women in the islands, as reflected in Chinen’s (1997:20) comment:

We need to understand the experiences of the four generations of women as tied to the social contexts in which they were and are currently located. Consequently, our generational images – the honoured but quiet Issei obachans, the active Las Vegas jaunting Nisei grandmothers, the harried Sansei middle-aged boomers, and the indulged Yonsei Japanese American Princess – represent the results of different experiences, which emerge out of the social relations and systems of oppression operating in Hawai’i in different social periods.

Bearing this in mind, this thesis establishes an understanding of an AJA generation that has seldom been included in research. It explores the concept of Sansei through the experiences and words of Sansei women before addressing the social context which shapes and impacts on their perceptions of themselves and of the generations before them. It then considers the social and political elements of the islands that have resulted in history acting as a marker of ‘belonging’ to the community. Finally by analysing a museum display of AJA culture and how AJA express ‘belonging’ in this public medium, it exposes messages and social expectations that have rarely been questioned by AJA, AJA women in Hawai’i and women world-wide.

## Chapter One: Methodology

### In which the anthropologist talks story<sup>1</sup> about fieldwork

*Stories give meaning to the present and enable us to see that present as part of a set of relationships involving a constituted past and a future. But narratives change, all stories are partial, all meanings incomplete. There is no fixed meaning for the past, for with each new telling the context varies, the audience differs, the story is modified and as Garfain writes, "retellings become foretellings". We continually discover new meanings. All of us then, as anthropologists and informants, must accept responsibility for understanding society as told and retold"*

(Bruner 1997:227)

### Motivating Factors

Initially my dissertation topic focused on an area completely unrelated to third generation, (Sansei), American of Japanese Ancestry (AJA) women in the islands of Hawai'i, and the politics of 'Local' ethnicity. My original topic addressed the relationship between New Zealand and Japan, and the way in which this was impacting on New Zealand culture. However some months into the research my interest began to wane. Under the advice of my supervisors I sought out a subject area that would sustain me throughout the research and the writing of the doctorate. They recommended investigating an area in which I held a personal interest. For most of my life I had resisted studying 'Japanese' culture, but now I found myself seeking information about others like myself, who had Japanese ancestry and resided in non-Japanese countries. Through on-line research I came to learn that there were Issei (first generation), Nisei (second generation), Sansei (third generation), Yonsei and even Gosei (fourth and fifth generation) living in the State of Hawai'i.

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<sup>1</sup> Talk story, is a term used in Hawai'i, to refer to people coming together to share stories about themselves, their memories and 'small kid time'.

As I clicked through the web sites on the Nikkei (Japanese now living abroad), I realised<sup>2</sup> I had discovered a community in which I held a personal curiosity.

I discussed my considerations of studying AJA in Hawai'i with a former lecturer which led to a meeting with a Sansei women from Hawai'i, living in Palmerston North. She loaned me a wonderful collection of books about Hawai'i AJA and shared with me some of the cultural aspects of her island home. These books included *Kodomo No Tame Ni* (For the Sake of the Children) (Ogawa 1978), *Kankyaku Immin* (Leures, 1985), and *Lucky Come Hawai'i* (Shirota, 1988). They provided an introduction to the historical representation of AJA in Hawai'i. In addition I scoured the Massey University library's limited and dated collection on Asian Americans which focused on ethnic maintenance and differences of AJA.

Through a review of available literature (both books and online), three issues became apparent. Firstly I came to understand that a heavy emphasis on history and the past shaped contemporary AJA experience, especially in Hawai'i. Texts both fictional, and non-fictional, about AJA in Hawai'i were filled with accounts of plantation life, World War Two and the rise of the democrats to power, resting on an undercurrent of themes that highlighted sacrifice, suffering, triumph over adversity, and their contribution to Hawai'i's society. From these historic accounts emerged the second point: aside from a heavy emphasis on picture bride narratives, women's roles and experiences were often overlooked in both historical

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<sup>2</sup> One of the first questions that needed to be addressed when writing the thesis was which style of English was I to use? Most of the references I had were written in American English and the interview indexes I had sent out also used this form. My New Zealand English spelling constantly brought up red underlines when I used an American word processor, and the whole discrepancy became frustrating. My final decision was a hybrid approach. Any quotes from American texts or Sansei were to be written in American English. While I realise the frustrations associated with this from an editing and also reading perspective, I feel this maintains a stronger sense of 'voice' for Sansei women, and visually distinguishes my voice, thoughts and argument (in New Zealand English) from theirs (in American English) in the written text.

and contemporary texts. Finally, there was very little available literature on Sansei in Hawai'i. Their experiences and oral histories were not being collected or documented in relation to where they were now in life.

When I arrived in the islands, I was given the final and biggest motivation for focusing on Sansei women that came from the interviewees themselves. Their contribution of time and sharing of information became a driving factor behind completing this thesis. Local Sansei recognised that theirs was a story that remained untold, and while motivations for sharing their narratives differed, they were all enthused by the fact that someone was interested in studying *them*.

### **Talking Story on the Net: Finding a Home in Hawai'i**

As mentioned, the Internet featured strongly in shaping the focus of my research and in establishing contacts before going into the field. The speed at which communication took place was particularly important due to the limited time I had prior to departure (which was less than six months). Through e-mail correspondence I was able to learn about AJAs' lives in Hawai'i and on the mainland (particularly in California). As time progressed it became apparent that I was communicating predominately with men. There are several probable reasons for this, including the possibility that the Internet at the time was used more predominantly by men than women<sup>3</sup>. The male correspondents would frequently ask me why I was not studying Sansei men, rather than women.

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<sup>3</sup> GVU 1998 conducted a survey between October and December of 1998, which indicates that 33.6% of Internet users were female and 66.4% were male in this period. They also found that in the USA, with which I was communicating, 35.8% female and 64.2% male. Other Internet sites also supply similar demographics, such as Hitwise and MySiteInc.com.

Many websites<sup>4</sup> did not discuss AJA women in great detail, aside from their role as picture brides. There was very little written about contemporary women's experiences and few women were online to communicate their views and attitudes to me. Some that did (see Chinen c.1997), looked at the history of women's role in Japanese American society. The absence of women online in terms of correspondence, discussion groups and mentioned in websites about AJA in Hawai'i, further encouraged me to focus on AJA women.

There were issues of safety to consider as I initiated contacts with people on line. Because of the dominant male presence in Internet communication, I had to continually consider the motivation behind men's willingness to assist me, and also conduct online background checks about the people I 'talked' with. Fortunately, I did not encounter anyone with bad intentions! Overall, the e-mail communication provided an excellent avenue to hear people's views, thoughts and backgrounds. I was pleasantly surprised at the extent to which some people were willing to provide contacts, yet I was also disappointed by the lack of assistance from others.

Without the Internet, I doubt that I would have been able to make the necessary arrangements to live in Hawai'i prior to my departure. Traditionally the 'rite of passage' into fieldwork has been at least eighteen months to three years in duration. With financial constraints, and a teaching commitment in the second half of the year, I was only able to commit to the field a period of six months. The weak New Zealand dollar against the American made it impossible for me to afford to rent a place in the highly inflated areas of Honolulu. Up until the final months of

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<sup>4</sup> For example: <http://www.katonk.com/>, <http://www.nikkeiheritage.org/main.html>, [http://www.kent.wednet.edu/KSD/SJ/Nikkei/Nikkei\\_homePage.html](http://www.kent.wednet.edu/KSD/SJ/Nikkei/Nikkei_homePage.html), <http://nikkeiview.com/>.

preparation for the field I was doubtful as to whether I would even be able to go to the field. I turned to the online AJA network to seek assistance, posting my need of housing on Bulletin boards and discussion groups. I was willing to pay board or to do some kind of work in exchange for accommodation, but I also realised that six months was a long time to have an unknown young New Zealander encroaching on your household. E-mails came back with people informing me they would ask friends, families and colleagues, yet there was little concrete assistance provided. Later I would come to understand that many people in Hawai'i live in extended family situations, with very little room for extra long-term guests.

Finally, three months before I was to depart, I received an e-mail from Thomas<sup>5</sup> who sent me the details of a home-stay organisation known as the International Hospitality Center. Amid a flurry of letters and faxes they found two families who were willing to host me during the six months of my fieldwork. One family lived in Hilo on the island of Hawai'i (commonly known as the Big Island) where I was to spend the first three weeks. The other family was headed by a gentleman named Donald Whye with whom I was to live for the remaining five months on O'ahu. He and I began e-mail correspondence once the arrangements had been made, preparing me for life in the islands. I was introduced to my

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<sup>5</sup> Researchers often have to consider the identity and privacy of those that contributed to their data and work. In the past it was common practice to give all participants and people involved in the research aliases in any written texts. When interviewing Sansei I explained what their interview would be used for, explored possible readership (including the Local community) and discussed with them whether they would prefer aliases or their own name in the written dissertation. Many women wanted their own names to be used, others preferred to have aliases. Among those who wanted aliases two gave names they wished to be used so that they could recognise their own narratives. To protect their privacy and those they mention in their interviews, I have used first names only, unless indicated otherwise by contacts and participants in the field, and do not indicate which names are alias names. In addition all people referred to by the women in their narratives have had their names changed to further ensure their privacy, unless otherwise stated by participants.. When referring to my own friends, family and contacts, I have sought permission to include their names. All were obliging with the proviso I presented them in a positive light!

'father' and 'sister' from Australia and my 'brother' from Russia. (The two exchange 'siblings' were being hosted by Don during part of my stay). Home stay was an interesting and affordable means of living in the islands, a perfect solution to the accommodation problem. Aside from the nominal fee to the IHC, my home stays were provided free of charge.

## **Talk story considerations**

Preparing for the field also required intense consideration as to how I was going to collect my field data. I had decided that a combination of participant observation and interview methodology would be used to gather the necessary information. Fieldwork ethnographies such as those by Rabinow (1978) and Powdermaker (1967) prepared me for some of the personal issues I could face in Hawai'i. I also knew that I would need to consider the ethics involved in interviewing Sansei women and began to prepare consent forms and interview guidelines to discuss with my two supervisors and with Dr Jeff Sluka, Chair of the Ethics Committee of the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Through discussions with these three key people, I prepared a draft consent form which outlined the general area of discussion, informed the participants that the interviews and research would be conducted in conjunction with the ASSA/NZ Code of Ethics. I included the option for an alias and gave participants the right to terminate their participation in the research at any time<sup>6</sup>. Once I was in the field, I added clauses relating to the tape-recording of interviews and of the taking and utilisation of photographs to the consent form. I also included an area for women to ask for a summary of the research findings and/or a copy of their transcripts and audiotapes

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<sup>6</sup> This in fact happened, usually prior to the interview taking place, much to my frustration.

(see Appendix V). This form was e-mailed to Dr Sluka and my supervisors for their appraisal from the field<sup>7</sup>.

During this period I explored different techniques used in interviewing and collating research data. Prior to departure I had begun communicating with a researcher who was writing her dissertation on Issei women in Hawai'i. Through our correspondence, she provided me with insight to AJA and Local culture in the islands. One e-mail in particular raised issues of concern with regard to interviewing Sansei women. The researcher wrote:

hey Miko!  
just a quick note before bed.  
it is hard to get folks to talk beyond stereotypes. just a warning. in hawaii there is additional suspicion of outsiders or non-“locals,,” also, the mixed race thing complicates things further. although my family has been in hawaii for 5 generations and I grew up between hawaii and california, because I looked mixed, can pass for Haole (white) locals, even family, are suspicious of talking with me. theres an old folks center in a very rural town where I go every year (if possible) just to hang out and “talk story”. it takes years and continued follow-up to get people to talk. and if you whip out tape recorders – fegget about it! just a warning. don't be discouraged<sup>8</sup>.

This threw me into a panic and I began to wonder what would help ‘ease’ any tension my research participants may feel in ‘doing’ the interviews. Thankfully I did not encounter the resistance this researcher had described<sup>9</sup>, but her ‘warning’ prompted me to consider ways to ‘connect’ with my participants, to make the strange (i.e. me) familiar to them, so they would feel comfortable and discussion could be better facilitated.

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<sup>7</sup> Ethical issues were also raised during the ‘writing up phase’ of the research as will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> Original spelling and grammar from the original e-mail (August 1998)

<sup>9</sup> There were two who women declined to be tape recorded, however they were happy to talk about their experiences

I decided to take to the field a collection of photographs of my 'life' to share with my participants. This small collection included pictures of my family at my graduation, my Japanese grandparents and myself dressed in the traditional kimono, family gatherings, New Zealand grandparents, friends, pets and my fiancé. I intended to share these photographs in the hope of revealing something about who I was, adding a 'human' touch to my researcher persona. The use of photographs would become a part of some of the interviewees' discussions.

### **The Researcher Talks Story**

Prior to, during and post-fieldwork, some aspects of my research were altered as new knowledge and understandings emerged. However, there were important elements that remained constant and shaped the development of the thesis. Anthropologists have realised the personal 'baggage' they carry with them into the field impacts on their data collection, interaction and ultimate 'world view' of their ethnographic experience. My 'personal baggage' is extremely important not only in understanding the motivation for the research (as outlined in the introduction), but also my approach, interaction and analysis of the field.

Firstly I was female. My gender and age were relevant not only with regards to the interviews, but I suspect, and begrudgingly admit, also the extent to which people were willing to assist me in the field. If I had been a male researcher exploring this topic, it would be debatable whether the sometimes intimate nature of the narratives shared would have been discussed. I was twenty-five when I went into the field. All of the women interviewed were older than myself. Many times I felt as if I was listening to the wise sages of the community instructing and informing (and at times warning) me of the things life held in store. In addition, those such

as Grandpa Roy and my friend Rick, who provided me with contacts and shuttled me from one destination to the other, took me under their wing. They expressed concern for my safety as a young woman in the community, and also demonstrated great pleasure in sharing with me Local experiences such as cuisine, traditions and celebrations as a knowledgeable 'grown-up' does with a child experiencing things for the first time.

I learnt the significance marital status can have in the field from two female lecturers who had conducted their research in the field of India. Although they were not married while in the field, they created the pretence that they were in order to maintain respectability in the community they were researching. Had they not, they believed, their status would have been heavily frowned upon, and fieldwork would have been difficult. Going to a Western community I had not thought that my marital status was of any significance. My then boyfriend had asked me to marry him shortly before I departed for Hawai'i, but promised to visit during my fieldwork and make it 'official'. I maintained that I was engaged throughout the entire duration of my fieldwork which provided me with some degree of 'distance' from would-be suitors, and also constructed my identity further as a 'learner' not only of Sansei identity, but also 'woman's life cycle'. Re-listening to the taped interviews, reference is often made to my upcoming marriage and the things I could expect to encounter as a married woman.

Ethnicity and cultural background also became important features in the way my participants interacted with me, and in my interpretation of the field experience. I had spent the majority of my life in New Zealand, with some periods living and attending school in Japan and Spain. I considered myself an 'average Kiwi kid'. My social perceptions and

expectations, language and education had been formed and influenced by the institutions and social constructs of New Zealand society. Yet I was culturally different to many of my Kiwi kid counterparts. While my father was a local born and bred European New Zealander, my mother was born, raised in and migrated from Japan. She had passed on values and cultural behaviours specific to her culture. I spoke Japanese at home, enjoyed Japanese food and lived in a home environment that compromised and blended two distinct ethnicities. While my name denoted my mixed heritage (although in the late 1970s and early 1980s few people in my home town had been exposed to Japanese names or culture), my physical appearance would often leave people guessing. Throughout my life I had days when I felt I 'fitted' in my society, yet most days I felt like an anomaly. I would often attempt to distance myself from the Japanese 'side', regarding it as a "representation of cultural otherness" (Bakalaki 1997:504). I was always seen, and tended to view myself as two culturally distinct and separate halves. Living in Hawai'i taught me to think of myself as a 'blended whole'.

Doing fieldwork in Hawai'i stimulated reflexivity about my own sense of place, and also raised questions relating to my 'location' categorically in the field as an anthropologist. What was I? I was not a 'native' anthropologist as aside from an ancestral link to a Japanese homeland, I really held no connection with the people I was researching. I was not American, had not resided in Hawai'i and was not Nisei. Hawai'i was not my 'home'. Nor was I a 'halfie' to use Abu Lughood's (1991) definition of an anthropologist researching a culture with which they share ancestry. I did not share AJA experience in the same way as if I was perhaps studying Japanese culture in Japan as Kondo (1986) did. As an anthropologist I had few guidelines or role models to help 'locate' me in

relation to the field or guidelines to suggest how my own ethnicity contributed or detracted from the analysis of data and experience in the field. Yet at the same time there was something strangely familiar and 'comforting' about Local culture and the people I met in Hawai'i, and oddly, I found that I related more to them than I did to those in my own country. There was even a word used to describe my hybridity: "hapa-Haole". Literally this means 'half-white', yet unlike words such as 'half-caste' or 'mixed blood', I felt no negativity associated with this terminology and embraced this given category.

In Hawai'i, I found myself in an environment where no one questioned my ancestry. The familiar in the Local enabled me to see similarities in ethnicity and experience between my own background and those living in the islands. Narayan (1993), in her article "How Native is a "Native" anthropologist?" writes that "(I) nstead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts on which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have pre-existing experience absorb analytical categories that rename and reframe what is already known" (1993:617 – 686). Because of the level of 'comfort' I felt while in the islands, it encouraged me to explore categories I was already familiar with, leading to a development in understanding the role of history in ethnic identity and an exploration of other shared experiences.

My research principles also remained unchanged throughout the entire ethnographic experience. Even when writing up the research and new theoretical approaches began to shape my work, these fundamental beliefs were still paramount. The first of these is that my work is feminist in approach. It aims to address some of the inequalities women have and continue to face within their society. History is but one area where this occurs. Hence, this dissertation focuses on the way in which historical

myths have impacted on Sansei women's lives both negatively and positively. Secondly, empowering participants is of importance. Not only does this involve considering and protecting their privacy and rights, but collaborating with them and using their voices in ethnographic presentation where possible. Finally, 'giving something back', however idealistic it may appear, has also been an issue when doing this research. I have held constant the desire to produce something that may contribute to Local society either in terms of presenting a different perspective; generating discussion or simply capturing a snap shot of pre-millennium Sansei women in Hawai'i. These three issues have also contributed to my approach, methodology and style of writing.

## **In the Field**

In the early hours of January 7th 1999 I left Wellington New Zealand, for the warm destination of Hawai'i. I arrived on January 6th, crossing the dateline and confusing my host father who arrived late and apologetic to the airport, having been woken up from a deep slumber by Hamish<sup>10</sup>, my then fiancée, calling to see if I had arrived safely. I spent the night at Don's home before departing the next afternoon for three weeks in the home of the DeVores' in Hilo. The DeVores were a devoted Christian family, who upon my arrival whisked me off to a BBQ for the local Christian school that was in the process of construction. While the beliefs of the family differed from my own, and at times compromised my research and conflicted with my personal and academic ethics, the church community did provide an environment for my primary interviews. It was here, after a stilted phone call, that I discovered that my initial research proposal to investigate cultural maintenance was far too rigid

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<sup>10</sup> Now my husband

and would not result in what I felt was essentially of importance to the research, namely capturing the voices and experiences of Sansei women.

On the Big Island I interviewed three Sansei women. The first was Joyce<sup>11</sup> who shared photographs and artefacts her grandmother had passed on to her. Working from the interview guidelines I drew up, Joyce's interview was a delightful and honest account of her life. The other two women interviewed while on the Big Island had been introduced through the church community. They too provided an interesting account of their lives and some of the history associated with it. All three women exchanged their interviews for presentations about Japan or New Zealand to their school and home-school classes.

## **Networking Participants**

At the end of January I returned to O'ahu to take up residence with Don in Pearl City. There, I contacted the people who had forwarded me their phone numbers via e-mail and snail mail while I was in New Zealand, and arranged meeting times. From these contacts I met Laura via Elden, and several of the women that I interviewed at the *Mo'ili'ili Blind Fish Tank*. Through the latter group I was introduced to Arnold Hiura, editor of the Hawai'i Herald who interviewed me and published an article in the periodical which generated many phone calls, including some from the other islands. The article was also the catalyst for meeting Local 'grandpa' Roy Ashitomi who assisted me by arranging interviews with hapa Sansei and acting as chauffeur on many occasions. Don also introduced me to Sansei through his personal and work networks.

In addition to networking, I posted flyers (see Appendix II) at several locations including the Japanese Cultural Centre (where Jane

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix I.

Komeiji kindly set up three interviews with more mature Sansei women) and at Rick's hairdressing salon. Women who acted as participants would take flyers to pass onto friends and colleagues whom they thought would be interested in participating. Don and I would regularly attend local festivals and craft shows where we would hand out flyers to women who expressed interest in the research. This resulted in the inclusion of a wide range of women from a variety of backgrounds in the research.

### **Variations in Demographics**

During the interview with Arnold Hiura, he queried how I was going to find Sansei women from different walks of life. Did I have a criteria for the type of Sansei women I wanted to include as participants? I responded that I wanted to talk to *any* Sansei women who were willing to talk to me. There were no limits on age, marital status, occupation, economic background or sexual orientation. Any Sansei woman who considered she fit the broad category of Sansei would be considered and interviewed. As a result I met women who were not only Sansei, but also Sansei-Nisei or Sansei-Yonsei. I interviewed Sansei women with disabilities; single, married and divorced women; women who were economically and socially diverse; and women from varying occupations. I also interviewed Sansei women who did not necessarily identify themselves ethnically as Americans of Japanese Ancestry, but were Okinawan, Chinese-Japanese or hapa-Haole. This resulted in a total of thirty interesting interviews and narratives with which to work, and while the diversity among Sansei was obvious, the similarities, were also of significance. Both aspects became central in the creation of this

dissertation. These indicated that 'Sansei' incorporates a wide variety of women from different ethnicities and backgrounds.

## **Interviews as Talk Story: Preparation, Processes and Techniques**

Arranging and conducting the interviews generally occurred in the following manner. I would first either contact the woman (as a result of being passed on her information or returning a call), or she may have contacted me (in response to a flyer or the newspaper article). I would introduce myself and explain to her the research I was doing, what it was for and what participating in the research would entail (a thirty minute to one-hour interview depending on how long they wanted to speak for). I outlined the ethics that I followed in conducting research and gave them the opportunity to consider whether they would like to participate. If they stated they would be interested, I would take down their address and mail them the consent form, interview guidelines and an introductory letter about the fieldwork and myself<sup>12</sup>. On most occasions the women were happy to set up an interview date during this initial phone call, usually within two weeks of the conversation. Some women preferred to review the information sent to them first, after which I would follow up with a second call and then arrange an interview date and time. The day before the interviews I would again phone the participants to confirm the appointment.

The interviews were generally conducted in public settings such as work places or restaurants. This was in part due to the women's busy schedules and fitting in interviews between their classes, work, appointments, or over a meal. Some interviews were conducted in the

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix III, IV and V

home of the participants (those who were now retired) and two interviews took place at my host father's home.

Talking story was fascinating. In some situations I had met and spoken with the women earlier so there was a shared background to the interview setting which eased some tensions. In other cases I was meeting the participants for the first time which required a period of rapid 'getting to know you' before turning on the tape recorder and beginning the interview. I attempted to make myself familiar with my participants by sharing an assortment of photographs of myself. This visual collection provided them with a brief introduction as to who I was, my ethnic background, and my family and friends, before they began their own narratives.

The idea of using photographs as a means of sharing and capturing aspects of life was an appealing tool that could be included as part of the process of interacting with the Sansei I interviewed. I toyed with the various options that would encourage a type of photo-elicitation in the interviews, such as the possibility of providing the women with pocket cameras to take photographs of things that were significant in their life. This however posed problems of time and cost with the developing of films prior to interviewing. There was the option of providing a set of photographs to generate discussion, but at the time, my knowledge of Local and AJA culture was too limited to know what would be relevant and appropriate to use. I decided to ask the women to bring with them any objects and/or photographs they felt were relevant to them and would assist in talking about who they were. Not all the women brought personal collections with them, but those who did, provided an interesting insight into their lives. These collections are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

The interview would be initiated with a volume and sound check where the woman stated her name, date of birth, place of birth and ethnicity. Most women would refer to the interview guidelines as they narrated their life history. Some required questions to prompt them into discussions, while for others their narrative flowed freely. As they spoke I occasionally raised questions to expand on or clarify things that they mentioned. Those that had brought items with them to assist them in their interviews would discuss these at the conclusion of their interview, using them to develop areas they may have touched on, or to reinforce a previous point. One of the interesting aspects of the interview was the final question I would ask the women: "Why did you choose to participate in the research?" The answers ranged from "I was curious to see what you were doing" to "It's part of the aloha spirit"; from "I wanted to present a different aspect of Sansei life," to "I thought it was a good process to go through". I came to realise that not only were these Sansei helping me achieve my goals, but they had their own motivations and reasons for participating, including a sense of 'leaving something behind'.

At the conclusion of the interview, I would stop the tape and thank the woman for her time and for sharing her experiences. Idle chatter would follow, in some situations the woman would think of something that she wanted to add to the interview. The recorder and microphone would have to be retrieved and restarted, before again concluding the interview and initiating the informal farewell banter. It sometimes felt cold to pack up my 'instruments', hug the participant (which always took place) and walk away having shared personal stories with them. With some of the women I formed close long-term friendships after the interviews, for others, the interview was the extent of their interaction with me and the research.

Conducting interviews is a true pleasure for me. I enjoy listening to people's experiences and interacting with them face-to-face. Replaying interviews is almost as enjoyable, in doing so one can pick up on aspects that you may have failed to notice as concentration can wane from time to time, especially during a long interview session. Because of time constraints, I decided that rather than transcribing the entire interview I would index topics of conversations with key points to send out to the women for their review before I left for New Zealand. I had anticipated the indexes being relatively brief (two pages), however most 'index summaries' were between eight and ten pages long. Omitted in these indexes in comparison to a full transcript, was 'obsolete talk' (such as 'ums', 'ahs') and repeated words or sentences. These indexes provided plenty of detail which was to prove useful during the 'writing up' phase of the dissertation. As I indexed the interviews, themes began to emerge that highlighted aspects Sansei women had in common, and areas that indicated diversity as well. These emerging themes of reference to the past, construction of female role models, values, long-term relationships and motherhood became the building blocks for this dissertation.

Having completed the indexes they were then photocopied and sent out to the participants several weeks before I returned to New Zealand. I included a letter explaining my shorthand (see Appendix IV), and I encouraged the women to make adjustments, additions and comments if they so desired. Some of the women returned their indexes covered in red pen, editing parts of their interview they did not feel was relevant, or that they wanted to clarify and explain further. Spelling errors were also corrected. There were Sansei who after their interviews, on reading their indexes gave me additional information that they had taken the time to write down. These are included in parts of the dissertation and

demonstrate that for some Sansei, the interview generated further thoughts and comments. Those that chose to comment or alter their interview indexes did so before I left the islands. Shortly after, I returned home armed with bundles of papers and numerous cassette tapes to begin the writing up phase of the dissertation.

### **Why Life Histories Through Interviews?**

Before discussing other forms of research I conducted in the field and the writing up process, I would like to clarify why I chose this method of research. I had a very limited time frame in which to collect the data necessary for my dissertation. This was coupled with a general lack of direction as to the specific focus of the thesis would be. By gathering life histories through interviews, I hoped to “let the evidence lead to a conclusion” on which to rest my thesis. As I reviewed the interviews the themes that emerged became the crux of my dissertation. This approach proved to be very fruitful in gathering data and the emergence and formation of this thesis. In addition, the busy lifestyles of the women shaped my decision to use single interviews as my main source of data collection. I realised prior to entering the field that it would be difficult to participate and observe Sansei women’s daily lives or to focus on any one person as a case study. Not only were their schedules busy, and the geographic locations in which they resided were scattered over the island(s), but we operate in a western society which discourages constant observation and following people about. Both my participants and I would have felt very uncomfortable if I had decided to shadow them as they went about their daily lives!

## Participant-Observation

### *Volunteering and working*

Anthropologists occupy a strange place in a society while conducting field work. We do not fall into the category of sojourner or tourist, and we differ in some respects to other academics that have a history, relationships and already reside in a community. Ordinarily, people in my age group on the islands would be employed full-time. They would not have the freedom and flexibility to browse the museums, attend functions and visit people any time of day or night. Having this flexibility enabled me to interview women when and where it suited them. However, without a regular routine it was difficult to meet and make contacts in the community. I decided to volunteer two days a week at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i (JCCH). I began working in the Resource Center, assisting on Wednesdays, with the documentation of newspaper articles and library resources. The Resource Center held a wealth of information, and by being a member and volunteer of JCCH, I was able to borrow books and videos free of charge.

As I became more familiar with the people and the building, I was befriended by the older Nisei and Sansei ladies who volunteered at the center's gift shop. On Fridays, I began volunteering at the gift shop, listening to them 'talk story' as we hand-wrapped chocolate in gold paper. They shared a tremendous amount of knowledge with me, from their memories of Hawai'i during WWII, to *ono* (delicious) recipes they made for our lunch.

Towards the later part of my field experience I was given part-time employment at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa, assisting Dr Ogawa with his summer course on Japanese Americans in Hawai'i. The

experience reinforced my knowledge of Local AJA culture and provided me with an opportunity to mix with students of the islands.

I was also given casual research work by an Internet solutions company. The work focused on Nikkei, which in addition to providing a boost to my dwindling funds, allowed more exploration of online resources relating to my research. It gave me a chance to experience first-hand a local business environment in the islands.

### *Visiting History*

Collections of local AJA history were initially visited to provide a visual complement to the literature I had read prior to arriving in Hawai'i. During my time in the field I would repeatedly walk around the JCCH's *Okage Sama De: I am what I am because of you* exhibition (literally 'the significance of', meaning the significance of the past), looking at the photographs and artefacts on display, relating the imagery and messages to my interviews with Sansei women. I wandered through the Japanese American National Museum's extensive travelling exhibition: *From Bento to Mixed Plate*, and began to interrogate the representations of AJA women and questioned the glaring absences of women in certain historical eras. What these exhibits essentially promoted in terms of collective historical memories was the importance of the plantation experience in giving rise to Local culture and Local values, the role of Issei women as picture brides<sup>13</sup> and the significant contributions of Nisei men to the USA war effort and political changes in Hawai'i.

Plantation life was, and often still is, an explanation provided as to why there is a perceived harmony between ethnic groups in the islands;

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<sup>13</sup> Picture Brides were women who came from Japan to marry Issei men. Matchmakers would introduce couples through an exchange of photographs and letters. Often couples had never met in person prior to marriage. Some picture brides were surprised at the difference between photograph and husband in person when they disembarked from the ships in Hawai'i.

why certain values and behaviours exist; and why there is such a 'mixed plate' of culture in Hawai'i<sup>14</sup>. I visited the Plantation Village in Waipahu in an attempt to better understand the experiences of first generation migrant life. On display were a variety of ethnic plantation homes, buildings and artefacts. Our tour guide spoke with a great sense of pride about an eclectic Hawai'i consisting of migrants who overcame the hardships of their dwellings and worked to become the people who have the Hawaiian's *Aloha*<sup>15</sup> spirit today. Rick also drove me to one of the last remaining plantation communities, weaving his way between the rows of identical wooden houses, differentiated only by the clutter on the *lanais* (verandas). Standing alongside the pineapple plantations, inhaling the staining, fine red dust, and feeling the pounding heat of the sun, I, like those who live in the islands, came to appreciate what the Issei and other early migrants had endured when they first arrived to toil on the plantations.

I also began to realise why the picture bride is held in such esteem. Historians, both Local and non-Local, have perceived the plantation work as laborious for a man, more so for a woman. The perception of women as the 'fairer and weaker' sex suggests they had to 'endure' more than men because of their assumed physiological (and perhaps psychological) attributes. Men, in history are commended for 'sticking at it' but the nostalgic tales of women who would *gamman* (put up with) under these harsh circumstances are forever captured in the annals of Hawai'i's Local history. There were times I commended the inclusion of women at all in

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<sup>14</sup> Ogawa (1978b), Grant and Ogawa (1993). For further discussion on this issue see Chapter 6.

<sup>15</sup> Aloha refers to a general feeling of kindness and empathy towards others and living things. Among promoters of the Aloha spirit is this saying: A is for *akahai*; meaning kindness, to be expressed with tenderness, L is for *lokahi*; meaning unity to be expressed with harmony; ● is for *olu'olu* meaning agreeable to be expressed with pleasantness; H is for *ha'aha'a*, meaning humility, to be expressed with modesty; and A is for *ahonui*, meaning patience to be expressed with perseverance (information sheet created by Pilahi Paki).

the history of the islands, yet at the same time, it raised questions as to why they were only included in this manner and what was excluded in later collective histories. These musings were also significant to the development of this thesis.

## Discovering Local

One of the primary experiences and realisations made in the field based on participant observation and interviews, was the importance of and pride (for some) of this 'Local' identity. This was first discovered through a potluck dinner and an appalling interview in Hilo. At the potluck was a delicious spread from poi to rice balls, hot dogs to *mochi*. Local *Haoles*<sup>16</sup>, assuming that because I was from New Zealand and would not know this 'Local food', gave me detailed explanations about the method of cooking and descriptions of each plate's flavour. Although I was not Local, and despite the 'shared' knowledge of Japanese cuisine resulting from my heritage, for the majority of my stay, Haole would explain 'Local' food and culture to me, while others, particularly AJA, would assume I already knew.

Here I was introduced to a young woman of Korean- Japanese ancestry. She was due to return to college on the mainland within the next two days. After much insistence by my host mother, I called her the evening after the potluck to conduct a phone interview. I was not well prepared and I hung up the phone feeling very frustrated. My questions had focused solely on her Japanese ethnicity. I wanted to know what made her Japanese, only to discover that this was *not* how she identified herself at all. She identified herself as *Local* and viewed the activities in her

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<sup>16</sup> The word *Haole* is used mostly to refer to those who are 'White'. In the past it was a term used by Hawai'i'ans for those who were not *kanaka maoli*, a 'true-person-from-here'.

life as part of belonging to the Local culture. At the time I could not see the significance of this important part of her Sansei identity. However as I continued my research, I began to grasp the intertwining of Local identity and AJA ethnicity. First and foremost AJA in Hawai'i were Local, which intermingled having Japanese Ancestry, being American and living in Hawai'i. Secondly, they were ethnically or perhaps 'heritagely' Japanese, but they were definitely different to their mainland counterparts.

Understanding the concept of Local and what it constituted became an important part of understanding Sansei identity in the islands. One of the fundamental aspects of understanding Local was physical appearance and how issues of race would often come into play.

While 'race' is discredited by social scientists because it does not serve as an adequate means of categorising people based on their physiological attributes, it is still used in 'everyday life' especially in Hawai'i. In a society that has "often been heralded for its relatively harmonious race relations" (Grant and Ogawa 1993: 37), physical appearance is of relative importance in distinguishing between 'Local and non-Local'. Local generally implies non-white. Haoles occupy an unusual place in Local society. African-Americans or Blacks are discriminated against and considered to be non-Local. Physical difference between what Locals refer to as 'fresh off the boats' (FOBs), recently-arrived immigrants, and Local are identified, not just in clothing, but by skin colour, hair, body shape and behaviour. Yamamoto (1974:116) notes that "often the tenor of an initial interaction between a "Local" and a stranger depends primarily on whether the stranger appears to be "Local" or not". It was very evident that my 'race' and physical appearance impacted on my research, relationships and experiences in the islands.

Being Hapa-Haole is not only something which was common place in the Hawai'i, but also desirable and recognisable. I was constantly taken aback by the number of people who identified me as 'hapa-Haole' and could determine that my ancestry was Japanese-Haole. In New Zealand I am somewhat of a 'racial' puzzle, constantly being asked 'what are you?' On one occasion in Kaua'i, I was singing karaoke with Local and mainland Japanese American National Museum (JANM) members at a tavern. A young man approached me. 'You hapa-Haole-Japanese?' he asked. I nodded. "Oh, you look like my ex-wife" he said. On another occasion my host-father, who was a Haole from the mainland and had lived in the islands for over five years, would continually highlight the distinction between him and myself with regards to Local. One evening I made some comment about 'us Haoles' in opposition to Locals. In New Zealand I had always classified myself as Pakeha, and as an 'outsider' or 'new-comer' to Hawai'i I considered myself to be 'Haole'. Don looked at me and laughed. "You're not Haole," he commented "you're hapa-Haole, you're Local like them" (meaning other Locals).

These anecdotes serve more than just a humorous look at pick up lines and confused categorisation in Hawai'i. They demonstrate how 'normal' and 'common' my physical appearance was, and how physical 'racial' attributes are assigned to Local and non-Locals. Asian racial characteristics are often aligned with Local identity.

The potluck I referred to is an excellent demonstration of the 'race-relations' in the islands. Haole would realise my accent was not Local, and would take great pride and pleasure in instructing me about the 'Local way of life'. Non-Haole Locals would acknowledge that my accent was different, yet assumed because my ancestry was 'common'

to those in the islands, that I would automatically have Local knowledge. One afternoon I was sitting with the ladies at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i (JCCH), and one of them commented on my manners and behaviour. She stated that my mother had taught me about the right customs and manners and attributed these to our shared Japanese heritage.

It was then that I began to question the ideas of race and ethnicity. As a result of these experiences, I pursued a different approach in understanding ethnicity and the concept of Local. There were times when I was treated as 'Local'; people assumed that I was Local until my Kiwi accent manifested itself. I would often be asked: 'You from he'ah?' before my accent gave me away. Some of the AJA I interviewed and formed relationships with believed that there was a bond between us, based on the shared ancestry of my Japanese mother and one or both of their parents. In addition to my own sense of 'place' in Hawai'i, this was difficult to comprehend. The Sansei I interviewed had been born and brought up in the islands of Hawai'i, one of the states of the USA. I, on the other hand, was a hapa-Haole Nisei, who had been born and brought up in New Zealand. Aside from structural similarities between New Zealand and Hawai'i, both being island communities, and both having been impacted by colonialism, the only 'link' I really had with these people was a shared 'ethnic' history of 'coming from' the same country of origin – Japan. I did not share the plantation experience, or the history of struggle and triumph. Yet increasingly I felt I was treated as a Local. Increasingly I *felt* Local. My anthropological objectivity suggested that I could be 'going native'.

However I eventually came to the conclusion that being Local has to be more than simply sharing a biological origin, be it from Korea,

Japan, Portugal or any other country. The comments about manners and behaviour made by the lady at JCCH alerted me to the idea that having a 'sense of place and belonging' in Hawai'i is not solely about 'ethnic' origins, particularly as Local is 'cross-ethnic', but based on particular terms of shared knowledge, values, beliefs and history. I realised I would need to explore these elements to understand the multiple layers of Sansei identity in Hawai'i.

## Chapter Two

### Who and What are Sansei?

In understanding what it means to be Sansei in Hawai'i it is important to determine who members of this group are. Drawing on the narratives and words of Sansei women interviewed for this research (individuals are introduced in Appendix I), this chapter explores social definitions of the Sansei generation and issues which influence who chooses to identify with Sansei. Having considered what the term 'Sansei' encompasses, this chapter then focuses on common themes that emerged from the personal inventories of eleven Sansei women, highlighting a recurring thread of 'belonging' to the Local community, and indicating that a heavy emphasis on the past, social relationships and values exists among Sansei women in the islands.

#### **What is 'Sansei'? More Than Just an Age Group**

The Sansei generation, as previously outlined, is a group collectively recognised in relation to their *descent* from previous migrant generations, *not* in terms of their age. The large age span of those who offered to be interviewed (from twenty-six to eighty-two) indicates that for AJA, generation is not solely about being born during a particular time (for example a decade, or during a specific event). Being Sansei is based on where a person is born in relation to immigration history of their parents and grandparents. If your grandparents were immigrant, your parents were born in Hawai'i, and you, their child, was also born in Hawai'i, you were Sansei.

There are, however, perceived attributes associated with each generation. As Kitano (1969:5) points out, generational reference is often used 'to refer to character types and behaviour...the phrase "Oh he's an Issei" is supposed to convey to the listener an adequate explanation of certain behaviour types". This was highlighted by those who felt that they were 'less Sansei' and more another generation (Nisei or Yonsei). At twenty-six, Christine considered herself a 'young Sansei' and stated she identified more with Yonsei. When questioned why she answered: "I guess because we are becoming more Americanized, you just don't know much about your culture. Like doing things, like Japanese cultural things, just for the sake of doing it. Not knowing why." When asked about what she considers typifies Sansei she said: "I guess in a way closed minded, but still strong in their values - Japanese values."

Sansei women, between the ages of seventy and eighty, suggested that they did not fit into the Sansei category either, because of their age and upbringing. Dorothy, aged seventy-five, mentioned that she did not know many Sansei women, and that many of her friends were Nisei. Jennie, seventy-four and an inter-generational Nisei/Sansei, echoed Christine's sentiments that Sansei women are closed minded: "My contemporaries are very prejudiced, they didn't want their children getting married to different racial groups, but I could accept my children becoming friends. I think my being able to accept others, made me a little different from my contemporaries..." Yet she found it difficult to identify characteristics and attributes of third generation AJA: "What is typical (Sansei)? What is typical. I don't know. I know I keep saying I'm Nisei/Sansei, half-and-half..."

For Beatrice, her age of seventy-one was a factor that set her apart from 'other' Sansei women: "Like I said, I'm much older than most Sansei women and I was raised differently, because I didn't have any Japanese background. I have a lot of Sansei friends but they are much younger, well I shouldn't say much younger, at least 10 years or more, or around there."

## **World War Two and Sansei Identity**

Beatrice's observation of her age difference in comparison to other Sansei in Hawai'i was reflected in the ages of the women interviewed. Research participants ranged in age, with the majority falling between the forty and sixty years of age. This also reflects the Baby Boomer trend of post-World War II in America. When breaking down the data to actual ages, rather than decades, there were no Sansei women interviewed between the ages of fifty-five and seventy - a fifteen-year gap. As only a limited number of Sansei women were interviewed, it is unfair to suggest that they are representative of all Sansei in Hawai'i, however, when considering the age span, this 'gap' raises significant issues that are possibly reflective of the history of AJA in Hawai'i, in particular the role of World War II on AJA identity.

Sansei women over the age of fifty-six were born, or were children during the Second World War. While birth rates in general may have been down because of the absence of men, identifying as Sansei, or even AJA, could possibly have been impacted by other factors. During WWII, the Japanese in Hawai'i were not subjected to the internment of their mainland contemporaries, as this would have proved to be logistically complicated (over 100,000 AJA would have been transported by boat to the mainland). Internment would have threatened the collapse of the local economy as Japanese constituted more than a third of the population at

the time. (Spickard 1996: 101). However, the war against Japan raised serious doubts about the loyalty of Hawai'i born Japanese, especially the Nisei. Despite being American citizens, they physically resembled 'the enemy', resulting in rumours of espionage and disloyalty. Attempts to downplay Japanese ethnicity and identity began to occur to combat the hostility and suspicion toward them. Ogawa (1978b: 314- 315) writes:

Having the face, culture, language, diet and dress of the enemy during a war necessitated caution and cultural suppression. It also necessitated super patriotism...many Japanese realised that they were expected to perhaps go just a little further in their denunciation of fascism and their complete repudiation of any ties with Japan...Language schools and Buddhist temples were closed down... speaking Japanese in public could still result in insults; having Japanese flags or other nationalistic artefacts would be viewed as treasonous. At night Japanese families buried in their backyards or under their homes samurai swords, flags, or any treasures from Japan which they feared might link them with the enemy. ... On the island of O'ahu in 1942, almost 250 Japanese names were officially changed to Chinese, Hawai'ian, Portuguese, or even Scottish names. The Fujita's became the Ah Nees, Haraguchi changed to Kanekoa, Matsugora to Figueira, and Nakamura to McFarlane.

Perhaps the suppression of Japanese ethnic identity also resulted in the suppression of identifying generationally with Japanese ancestry. Sansei women born and growing up during this period may have had negative associations with both their ethnicity and ancestry, which continues today. It is also of significant interest that WWII is rarely mentioned in the interviews conducted with Sansei women. Those over seventy make brief references to the War, as they were attending college during this time (unable to work because of their ethnic heritage) and also in relation to the timing of courtship with their husbands. Yet most Sansei do not speak about their parents', or their grandparents' experience of the Second World War. It occupies a space of silence that is only acceptable to break when talking about 'Nisei soldiers', those who served in the 442nd

Regimental Combat Team, the 110th Battalion, the Varsity Victory Volunteers (VVV) and the Military Intelligence Service (MIS). While numerous books and reports have been written in relation to Nisei servicemen, and the mainland internment experience<sup>1</sup>, a cloak of silence still surrounds the stories and experiences of those who remained on the islands.

## **Hapa Sansei**

Sansei women's identity may have also been questioned if they were a product of an (illegitimate) union between a Nisei mother and a Haole serviceman. One hapa-Haole woman interviewed was particularly bitter about the shame associated with her 'hapa-ness'. She felt that because her mother was Japanese, her mother was embarrassed and ashamed of having a hapa daughter who was both conceived and born out of wedlock. This stigma may also have resulted in fewer hapa women, particularly in this age group

There were the only two women of hapa-Haole descent who came forward as participants. Other Sansei hapa women included a hapa-Korean, and a hapa-Chinese<sup>2</sup> woman. While I interviewed only a small number of Sansei women, the few hapa women included in the research raises questions as to whether or not Sansei identity tends to be limited to those of 'pure' Japanese or Okinawan ancestry. The terminology of Nikkei (Japanese who have emigrated from Japan) such as Issei, Nisei and Sansei, while applicable for those whose parents may be of mixed generation, such as Nisei/Sansei, is perhaps a term that those of hapa ethnicity identify

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<sup>1</sup> Such as *Japanese Eyes, American Hearts: Personal Reflections of Hawai'i's Nisei Soldiers* Hawai'i Nikkei History Editorial Board St (ed) (1999); numerous web sites are also dedicated to this subject.

<sup>2</sup> Hapa in this case referring to half Japanese, half Korean or Chinese.

less with. Several researchers have explored the issue of ethnic identification in intermarriage (Kikumura and Kitano 1973, Stuart and Edwin 1973, Tinker 1973) although generational identification is an area in which further investigation should be conducted.

## **Characterising Sansei Women**

During the interviews, I asked the women what they thought characterised Sansei women. Their answers included loss of the Japanese language, pursuing their careers, and, as June suggested taking “more time for themselves. I think we take more time for ourselves, doing something that we want to do, not just whatever our husbands want us to do.”

The majority of women referred to maintenance of culture and values. Home life and family were highlighted as having importance for Sansei women. Sandra candidly added to this opinion stating:

Basically the Japanese values of hard work and honour are still there. That you don't wind up a bum, that you're not dysfunctional and you hold down a respectable steady job, that you raise your children, that you stay on good terms with the family and that kind of thing. It's the real, what you call the American dream...it coincides with the Asian work ethic, the Protestant Asian work ethic.

Yet values, while important (and will be explored in more detail elsewhere), are not the only elements of Sansei identity. Locating the women in the historical context of their generation and within their contemporary situation also contributes to what constitutes Sansei as a generation. Lisa Ann reflects on the forces at play in Sansei identity:

Many women that I've aligned myself with, it's not by chance, we are drawn together because of similar situations, of values that we have, trying to merge Issei grandparents, Nisei parents, middle America, localism, bringing that all together, living on the mainland, travelling, bring that all together in this mix and saying 'this is that

atypical Sansei women that we are'. And it's perfectly ok. If we want to go and sing Karaoke the way we do, that's fine, if we wanna go throw a traditional birthday party for whoever... *Yakudoshi*<sup>3</sup>, whatever, that's fine. If we want to fold a thousand cranes because we think whatever it will bring us, we'll do that. But if we go off and study astrology or consult the eight ball or go to have an aura reading or you know – that's all a part of who we are.

Lisa Ann, while referring to 'atypical Sansei women' (all Sansei who talked story for this dissertation were arguably 'atypical'), suggests that the unique positioning of AJA and Sansei in the islands is created by factors that impact on and affect their lives including their history, their forbearers, mainland America and 'Localism'. These themes were reflected in narratives and in the 'personal inventories' brought to interviews by of eleven Sansei women.

### **Personal Inventories: Highlighting Belonging**

The objects that the women brought to the interviews are similar to a 'cultural inventory' that some anthropologists collect of homes and possessions when doing research. Collier and Collier argue that a cultural inventory can "become a detailing of human functions, the quality of life and the nature of psychological well-being" (1986:45). A cultural inventory explores space and the way in which objects around homes are positioned in relation to each other. Sansei women presented a 'personal inventory' using items to explore how objects in their home and surroundings provide them with a sense of belonging to both AJA and Local ethnicity. Their discussions are also a type of photo novella which "uses people's photographic documentation of their everyday lives as an educational tool to record and to reflect their needs, promote dialogue,

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<sup>3</sup> *Yakudoshi* is a traditional Japanese celebration of sacred ages.

encourage action and inform..." (Wang and Burris 1994: 179). Using these items, they described aspects of their personality and the relationships they have in society that defines who they are.

A similar method was employed by Chalfen (1988), who investigated Japanese American identity through the use of family albums (most of these were arranged and commented on by men). He argues that in this instance "(T)he theme of "belongingness" seems well suited to an analysis of any photograph album. Home-made photography lets ordinary people demonstrate how they belong, "fit in", or are connected to people, places events and ideas in meaningful ways" (1988:14). He highlights six categories<sup>4</sup> of "belongingness" in the personal photography of Japanese Americans, including Belonging to the Family and Belonging by Memory.

Chalfen suggests that latter category is of great importance to JA, and considers it a 'Japanese' trait. Citing Lebra's (1976) analysis of Japanese behaviour he argues that "the notion of belongingness is not restricted to a person's contemporary existence, nor to the confines of one's actual lifetime. In concert with the notion of *ie*<sup>5</sup>, past intimate relationships are also highly valued..." Japanese identify themselves by both *shozuku* ("current belonging") and *susshi* ("origin")" (Lebra 1976: 22-23)" (Chalfen 1988: 15). While I disagree with the notion that AJA emphasis on belonging by memory is related to origins from Japanese ancestry, (as many ethnic groups emphasise belongingness through memory and history<sup>6</sup>), I do believe that this concept has importance for

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<sup>4</sup> 1. Belonging to the Family; 2. Belonging to School Groups; 3. Belonging to Church; 4. Belonging to Sports Teams; 5. Belonging to the Work Place; 6. Belonging by Memory.

<sup>5</sup> Japanese for 'house' or 'home'.

<sup>6</sup> For example the Ulster Protestants in Ireland (Buckley 1989), Cabezali et.al, (1990) who discussed the construction of women's identity in Spain during the Civil War, and explored the way in which they continued to be represented in the present, and the impact these representations

Local Sansei in relation to factors that will be outlined in subsequent chapters.

Using the photo novella method which “provides participants the opportunity to spin tales about their everyday lives” (Wang and Burris 1994: 179), and applying the concept of “belongingness” to their personal inventories, it becomes clear that Sansei identity in Hawai’i is concerned with both *‘belonging to’* particular institutions and social groups, and also *belonging by*<sup>7</sup> history, memories, and relationships.

The following discussions of Joyce, Terrie, Hilma, Elo, Margaret, Beatrice, June, Keilani, Joanne, Laura and Christine about their personal inventories reveal important aspects about what it means to be Sansei within a Local context.

### **History, Memories, Family and Social Relationships**

Eight personal inventories and their accompanying narratives highlight the intertwining of the past to the present and Sansei identity, incorporating local imagery and myth and the importance of sharing the past with subsequent generations. In Joyce’s personal inventory the black and white pictures, the book written by her aunt and the embroidery done by her grandmother on her journey to Hawai’i as a picture bride, link Joyce with a relational history of Issei migration, plantation experience and stories of hard work, sacrifice and suffering.

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impacted on contemporary Spanish women, and Fussel, (cited in Climo 1995: 176), who investigated the high obesity rate of children of migrants from Europe in Minnesota.

<sup>7</sup> This concept is further discussed in the subsequent chapters.



**Figure 1: Joyce's personal inventory.**

Clockwise from top left to right: black and white photograph of the family after they arrived, her grandparents' wedding photo, Joyce's daughter's graduation photo, Joyce's graduation, *Teapot Tales*, nursing pins, photograph of Joyce after she shot a wild pig.

One of the first items Joyce talks about in our interview is the book *Teapot Tales* (see Figure 1) written by her aunt, which relates the experiences of Joyce's Grandmother:

I was going to read this book before. I read it several times, but the exact dates and things are in here...my aunt, my father's sister wrote this book. It's called teapot tales because they would drink *ocha* and talk about her past. It will tell you the year and her life in Japan leading to coming to Hawai'i and what year. Must be

1920s...my father was born in 1920...it must be in here somewhere. If not, I can ask my auntie...

Each of my three daughters has one to pass onto their kids, because this is where I came from.



**Figure 2: Joyce's Grandmother's embroidery.**

Joyce went on to discuss an embroidery (see Figure 2) her grandmother did on her journey from Japan to Hawai'i, which then led into commentary about the photographs she had brought with her. The collection of contemporary photographs of her immediate family provides a sense of belonging by the existence of ongoing relationships with her family and the wider community.

This was...my grandmother before she came from Japan...you know how women have to learn crafts. She dyed a whole bunch of kimono, cleaning and dyeing. I don't remember the name of this you know, she sewed it on a machine. She had a lot of them, but a lot got stolen on the boat over. She did this I guess on a machine. I have two of these, no three of these at home. Must be going on almost ninety or a hundred years. But the church family re-framed it for me because the glass cracked. She is very important to me, my grandmother.

She had others like scenes in Japan. The chickens in the yard. A lot of them got stolen also. She brought a whole bunch of them. She's a big part of what makes me the way I am. She raised all of her nine

children to be respectable, kind, loving adults, and I don't see too much of that, where all the entire family is well grounded, secure responsible adults. I think it all went back to her, because my grandfather, her husband, he must have been good and you know you can read about them in the stories (*Tea Pot Tales*), he died from diabetes complications.

This is a picture of him...(*Joyce points to a black and white family photograph*).

These are the original photographs (*there is writing in Japanese on the back*).

This is my Mom and Dad. They met here in Hawai'i, but they went to Japan to get married and their honeymoon. Somehow between the two of them, I really value what they taught me about work and...my Mom worked hard...

*Referring to a photograph of her family at her daughter's high school graduation*

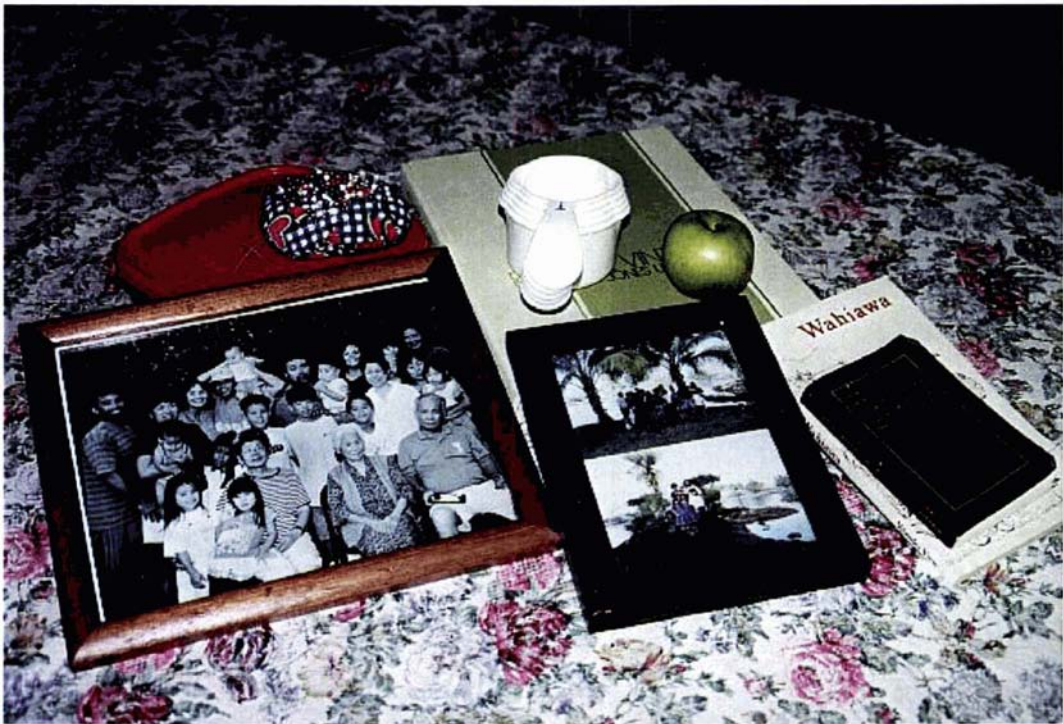
I value my family a lot. My own personal family. My husband and my three girls. When I was married for a year that's when I became a Christian, that's when I learned family rules, how to apply the Bible to the family and about communication...

My daughter graduated about two years ago from high school. She's a junior now at college and she's going into guidance counselling. She loves working with people.

I gave my three girls Japanese middle names. We thought it was important even in that to pass down something Japanese. I dunno why. It's just something to do.

Like Joyce, Terrie brought a collection of photographs with her to the interview that related to her past, represented her values and demonstrated the importance of belonging to Local culture through ongoing relationships with family and the community (see Figure 3). Picking up a frame containing family portraits she said:

This is very important to me. Both sides of the family (Austin's side of the family and my side of the family and our immediate family). This is a big part of my life. The family is very important, but we don't get to see this side of family because they live in O'ahu. Another island, so it's hard to get away with the whole family, but you just accept it.



**Figure 3: Terrie's personal inventory**

Clockwise from bottom left to right: photograph of a family reunion, pin-cushion on top of a Tupperware container, measuring cups, and apple on Terrie's high-school year book, the book *Wahiwa*, her Bible, photograph of another family reunion.

Terrie's personal inventory included a book about the Wahiwa plantation where she had worked. It links to both the values the past has generated in the present such as the importance of hard work, and to the historic collective memories of the plantation:

I like this one because I didn't have any pineapple field gear. I learnt how to work hard as a young person, because our dad always pushed us to work hard and do our best. People think that physical labour is not that great you don't get paid much. But this is where I learned a lot of character – you stick to the job and you work hard to get the things that you want and sometimes you may not be as smart as others. But I think that if you work hard and you apply yourself you can do anything that you want to do. Here I worked in the pineapple fields and it was hard work. I tell my kids too bad that you couldn't work there- really back-breaking work. Every summer I came home from college I worked there. At high school worked as a waitress in my uncle's shop and other *okuzuyas* (sells sushi, teriyaki for bento).

Included, (but not photographed) in Terrie's personal inventory was her wedding ring, indicating the relevance marriage has for her, and leading to a discussion about her views of fatherhood for men:

My marriage is very important to me. This is very special. I was talking to this lady who said "In another life I want to come back as the husband." And I said, "Why?" "Cause then I can just lay around and do nothing." I said, "I hope that it's not a portrait of your husband," and she said, "It is." And it made me sad. To me I would like to come back as the husband, if there was reincarnation, (but I don't believe in that). But it's a special time when dads can come and have a special bond with the kids and it's really neat when they do have that. I must say that Austin is a good dad and I am grateful the Lord led us together to do things.

Sharing and being involved with the community and church is also an example Terrie highlights of 'belonging by' actions and relationships to Local ethnicity. She had brought a Tupperware container to the interview as a symbol of this:

As part of our ministry for our family, we bake or make a meal for those that are sick or just a special day for them that we like to create a meal and the kids all take part in it. So we make the dessert and we make a salad and we all do the main dish, make a card and then we take it over – for their birthday or if they're down and out, or if they're going through a hard time. So this is part of me and my family.

For Keilani, photographs, artefacts and news articles provided a connection to her parents who represent the past, her values and a great part of her identity (see Figure 4). One of the first items she presented during our discussion was a collection of shell leis that both she and her father had made. Within the narrative is not only a connection to the memories of her father, but Keilani also reveals an important connection to the land. Belonging by interacting with the island animals, waters and land is another element of Local identity. The shell leis and a newspaper

article published about Keilani's father were used to prompt a discussion about her sentiments about him and nature:

As I told you my Dad did a lot of stuff and this is...it was a craze. My dad is the kind of person that if you are going to do it, he's gonna go all out and do it. And you know, and I know he went, I don't know how many days. Days and days and days to go sift through the sand and pick up all these puka shells and stuff like that. After he passed away I had to clean up the house, I brought back a lot of these things. And now, I don't know if it's because I am older and I appreciate it more that I looked at this and I kept it. This guy spent a lot of time. Each one, and putting it together. And then as I say, he's the kind of person that when he does things he's not one that's really meticulous. Some people when they do it they are really meticulous. But his one, he'll do it and get it done. I kinda kept this because of how he put this together. His style of putting the finishing together. I am tempted to take this apart, yet I don't know. But this is his style...instead of taking the whole thing apart, I kept it as this and I did the new clasp on it. I did dive for these shells (another lei). I have been diving for shells for the last 12 years. Along the shorelines and picking up along the beach. There's lots. This is just one part of my dad's...he also carved, he carved stone, he carved wood. He mounted heads of animals, he mounted birds...I think we kinda learned from that.

The other thing that I've found people have done is write about my dad, so this is a fax<sup>8</sup> of things I made, I fax things I don't recall! It talks about family, so maybe later on if you want to read it. This one talks about him being a fishing person. In addition to this, I think I was in eighth grade when they started this farm where they raised taro and sold it, which still continues today. My two brothers have taken it over and now my other brother is maintaining farm property that they had leased from the Wailuku sugar company...this our back yard – dad is working, always working, cleaning, if he's not cleaning, he's planting vegetables, always doing something.

Like Joyce and Terrie, family photographs, (particularly those in black in white) link back to ancestral roots. Black and white shots of women in kimono remind Sansei of their Japanese 'origins' and emulate the imagery made popular by documentation of the picture bride. In

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<sup>8</sup> Keilani uses the term 'fax' to refer to photocopies.

addition photographs of multiple extended kin, usually of reunions or special family gatherings, help create a sense of place and belonging by family.



**Figure 4: Keilani's personal inventory**

From the back clockwise: photograph of Keilani's mother, black and white family portrait, shell leis, cookbook, another family portrait, photograph of her father, a news article about Keilani's father.

The importance of *o'hana* (family), and Local identity through belonging to family is a repeated theme in Sansei narrative. Keilani's dialogue about her photographs reveals a personal myth that exists within her family:

*(Pointing to a black and white picture)* This is a picture of my Mom. This is her at a younger age. The thing is my Mom claims to be pure Japanese (*laughs*), and I guess, she has one brother in Japan and two brothers here, so basically she was the only girl. And I know we used to go to graves, and she told me that they were babies that my grandmother had that were stillborn. So she supposedly had other siblings but they died at birth. But when you look at her picture and you look at her brother's pictures, she doesn't pull<sup>9</sup> all Japanese, but

<sup>9</sup> Locals use the word 'pull' in the context of what ethnic group a person's physical appearance tends to reflect. For example a hapa child who looks Haole will be told that they 'pull more

she would get really upset when we told her she wasn't pure Japanese.

Here's my dad's family picking up a large black and white family portrait (*picking up a large black and white family portrait*). I think this is me, 'cause if we look at this, this is my grandmother, she died soon after. This could have been my grandfather's funeral. I'm not sure. This is my father, this is his younger brother, this is the one that he raised. And then this is my Aunty. Here is my Mom. See you look at my Mom, she doesn't look Japanese. These are some other aunties. This is the only Aunty on my father's side who had kids. She had five kids. (*She continues to describe other family members, then pointing to the youngest looking child in the photo says:*) I think this is me because I was sort of the last one born from this group of children.

Giving to others, like family photographs, is another means Keilani uses to express her Local ethnicity through belonging by social ties and relationships in the community. A cookbook symbolised this aspect and also highlights the importance of sharing food and 'belonging by shared sustenance'<sup>10</sup>:

When my daughter graduated from high school, she loves to cook and throughout her years she entered into different recipe contests and stuff...so I like to give this to you. We put it together as a gift when she had her graduation party for the people who came to the graduation party. This book and its basically recipes that she's won, like how she dedicated this book to people that helped her...

For Beatrice, photographs of family and friends (see Figure 5) expressed her Local identity by belonging by family. Belonging by social relationships was also apparent through the extended and ongoing contact she had through her personal interests and church activities:

(*Referring to some family photographs*) I have some pictures of my husband and family. 'Cause I think they're important. That's our oldest granddaughter; she's in college now. That's my family. These are some of the other grandchildren.

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Haole'. If a child looks more like its father he or she may be described as 'pulling more his/her father's side.

<sup>10</sup> Terric's ministry also involves the sharing of food with others.

**Yumiko:** How many grandchildren do you have?

**Beatrice:** Eight. This is the youngest grandchild. He'll be one in June. This is our youngest daughter, and this boy is her son. They all vacation together so the children are all mixed in there (*in the photograph*). They're similar ages so they have a lot of fun together.

We have a lot of friends that we are very very close to. Here's some of them. These are people I worked with. We went to *Don Ho's*. This is just recently because she came back for a visit. These are the people that I'm really close to. Some of these are my childhood friends. This is the first good friend I made. Well she was the family friend when I was a child. She's the first friend that I made when I went into 7th Grade when I changed schools. This is the gal I lived with in New York. She and her husband were there. Her husband was an artist. This gal and this gal and um...these two, and she lived with me when I went to college. So they're really long time friends. Now this is the gal that gave me your name. This is her house. My friends are really important to me.

I love having people over. Every Wednesday we have a group that meets here. They're meeting here tonight. We're having a potluck. These are some of them.



**Figure 5: Beatrice's personal inventory**

Back row: Bible, board game, song book, cook book, a greeting card.  
Front row: collection of photographs that include her family and friends.

(*Pointing to a cookbook:*) I like to cook and I like having people over.

(*Beatrice picks up a card:*) This is ministry I started at our church. My life's been a lot involved with helping people who are ill. I started doing it many many years ago. I was in the initial group that started what's called HUGS now, where they take care of children

that have life-threatening illnesses. We were the first group into that. And then when, I forget how many years we were in there, they had changed their philosophy and they were not going to use volunteers anymore and use only professional staff. So we moved to hospice. So I volunteered in hospice for many years. After I got sick, well I said I guess I have to cut back a little...I started this before I got sick and it's keeping me busy. People within the church family we try to provide meals or companionships or visits or whatever. So we have a group of volunteers and I'm kind of in charge of sending them off to do whatever. One of the volunteers put together and made these cards that we can use.

*(She motions to the board game box:)* And I love playing games. We love to do those things. We just came back from a weekend in the country with some friends. We enjoy camping and doing stuff like that. With our two younger children that have all the young kids we've gone camping and done stuff. So we're enjoying that kind of thing. And I still have my Mom to care for and my Aunt so I have a very full life!

Another woman whose extensive collection of photographs indicated a strong sense of belonging by *o'hana* (family) and by ongoing relationships with family members, friends and activities in the community was June (see Figure 6, below). Even the cat is considered a family member!



**Figure 6: June's personal inventory**

Back row from left to right: High school reunion flyer, family photograph, portrait of June and her husband, family gathering, *Precious Moments* doll.

Front from left to right: knitting instruments, photograph of her grandmother, baseball card, photograph of the cat, mahjong pieces, soy-sauce packet, photo with her mother, and stethoscope.

June had put a great deal of time and thought into her personal inventory, and had arranged it beautifully on the coffee table of her lounge. Some of the photographs she mentioned in her discussion were not included in the photo I took of her collection, but are listed here. Her narrative indicates the way in which memories of the past contribute to her sense of belonging in the islands and to her sense of self. The list below is a commentary of the items as June described them during our interview, reflecting an oral history of herself and family and locating her life within a local setting:

*Photo of June and her mother*

This is my Mom and myself. I guess I am about 3 or 4. This was my dog.

*Photo of her parents*

These are my parents. My father died about 22 years ago. This was my son's first birthday, it was also their silver anniversary. And that's me and my husband and that's my brother.

*Photo of the old apartment*

This is the apartment we were living in. This is one of the children. We would gather out here and have our little pot-luck dinners. This is when my husband was skinny! And when I was skinny. He's not skinny like that anymore! I guess he is the biggest part of my life.

*Photo of her husband*

This was last Christmas. It doesn't look like the same person does it? (laughs)

*Photo of Rafiki the cat*

And our grandson. Rafiki. Did you see 'The Lion King?' the Baboon is called Rafiki. And he's grey like that. He came to us with the name already. And so they said, oh he was meant to come to our house 'cause now he's Rafiki Iki!

*Photo of her old school*

This is our old school. That's my teacher. That was intermediate school. And this is a band roll. And see this is our high school days

*Photo of Kakapoho*

This is one of my favourite places. This is Kakapoho. It's 30 miles from Hilo and Martha had a beach house there. And I have fond memories of the place when I was a youngster. When we first went there, there was no electricity in the beach house. So we had to bring lanterns and buy a block of ice before we go there and put it in the ice box. A real ice box. And these were pictures of Kapohoho – my kids love it. This my son, and this is Susan, and this is a friend with us.

*Mother's house*

This is inside of my mother's house and it still looks like that now. My father was into photography. These are the two girls. Did you see in the *Bento to Mixed Plate* exhibit, there's a table like this,

and chairs? See my Mom had the same thing. See, there's the chairs, and the table is in the kitchen. When she saw the exhibit she was "Oh, I got a table like that!"

June's mentioning of the *From Bento to Mixed Plate* exhibition and the connection between similarities of her own memories and those displayed in the exhibit are indicative of how such displays can reinforce ethnic identity. She continued on, showing activities reinforcing her identity through family:

*Photo of performing hula girls*

Every Christmas we have a family party. We have it here every Christmas. And the kids used to perform. This is my youngest. I think the first one we had, we decided to perform. They were so funny. They were so cute. This is Janice's daughter.

*Photo of Grandmother from California*

This is my Grandmother from California. She always had an apron on like that. And her stockings. She always wore her stockings. She's the one who lived till 103.

*Photos of Family Reunion*

And these are some from the reunions. This was from the first reunion we had. And my Mom was still alive then. This is in Tahoe. So we switch back and forth between the mainland and Hawai'i.

The following discussion about a photograph of June's workplace develops into a story about her mother who was a Californian Nisei. It contrasts the stereotypical Issei and Nisei *obaachans*<sup>11</sup> (grandmothers) of the islands with her mother's less Local appearance.

*Photo of her office*

This is my office, and my Mom. For a while I had her go to adult day care because she couldn't stay home alone, she had a mild stroke. Actually she would stay at home and she would just sit there in front of the TV and it was really bad for her. So I put her into this

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<sup>11</sup> This stereotype is further elaborated on in Chapter Four.

adult day care and it just opened up her life. So she would come with me to work and she would catch the bus, then come back. She would always say “they don’t think I’m Japanese.” Well she was fair and she spoke so well. And I would say “you know Mom, you know why,” (‘cause a lot of times she would wear her muumuu and a lauhala<sup>12</sup> hat, and at the day care, after lunch they would walk you and she didn’t like the caps they have). “Obaachans don’t usually wear a lauhala hat. That’s why they don’t think you are Japanese!”

Unlike June, Hilma did not have a lot of time to prepare an identity inventory as her interview was done on the spur of the moment.

Hilma’s personal inventory (see Figure 7) came from items she located within her office. Two of the three items were related strongly to family, heritage and continued relationships. The third item, her Ephemeric reflects her personal interest in astrology, but it has been included in this topic area. As her narrative develops on this item, she mentions her family, highlighting again the importance of *o’hana* and belonging by long-term, established relationships in Local ethnicity:

*(She places a framed picture of herself and her husband on the table:)* I guess like for me that is my present life. Present meaning within the last maybe twenty years I would say. This life being in marriage and being with John and I like this picture because as you can see this is my birthday party. Elo and I we had...she’s in there with the other hat on this side. I cut her off because there were a whole bunch of people on this side. I just wanted this part here. But my friend who is downstairs with the jewellery she made these ridiculous hats for all the people who were born in May. That was myself and Elo and another friend of mine, and another friend. And we all kind of had to wear the same hat all night long. I also had such a wonderful time. I love that picture because I remember that evening. We just had a great time. We were drinking sake. You can tell. John, my husband, his background is an accountant, a CPA, so you rarely see CPA’s wear a very plastic eye...he’s a Certified Public Accountant. He’s worked himself a good job.

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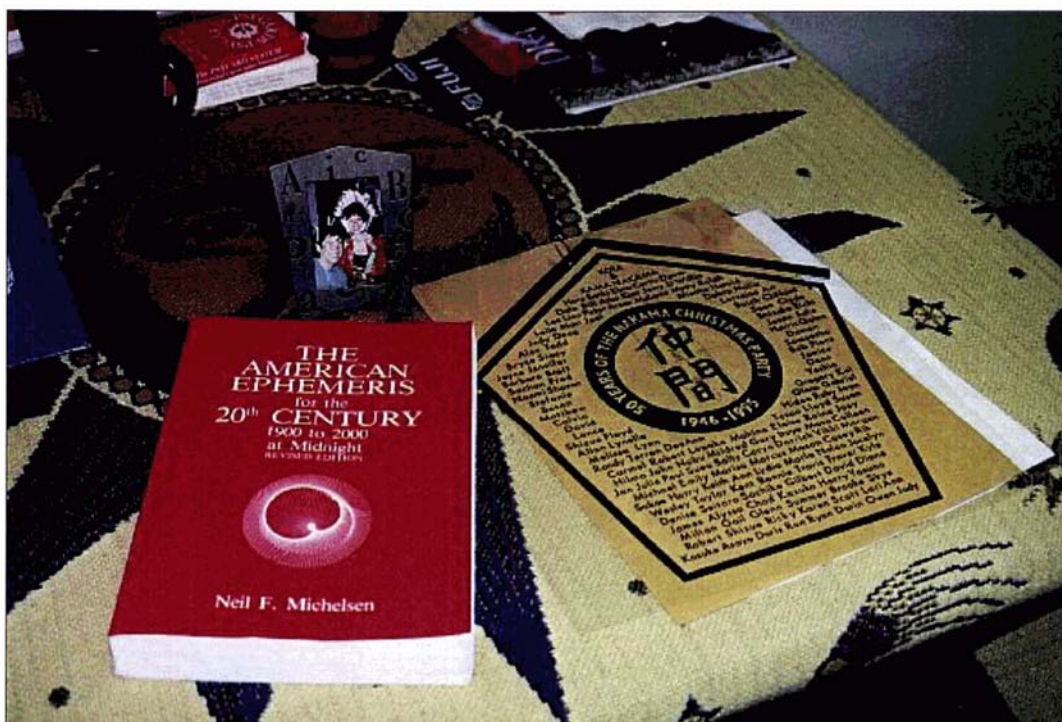
<sup>12</sup> *Lauhala* (woven from palm leaves) hats were worn when working out in the plantation fields and are rarely associated with AJA wearing them now days.

*Ephemeris:*

If they said grab something, anything and then you have to go and I didn't know anything about whatever, no conditions, I would probably bring my Ephemeris. Ephemeris is like from...this one is from the year 1900 to 2000, so I would probably have to have the one from 2000 and beyond 'cause that's right around the corner. It's on eclipse so it really reads nothing to other people, but for me it has the symbols up on the top of all the planets and the sun and the moon, so it tells you the sun on the first day of December 1941, like say for example at 4.37pm... see how this is all gibberish... the day was Monday, it just so happens 1941, at midnight at Greenwich time the sun was at 7 Taurus, the moon was at 13 Taurus and then it goes right on. It gives me a snapshot of the constellation where the planets were on what constellation, what sign they were in, on any particular day. Then I kinda think, this would amuse me to no end, it's kind of like, it could be better than a book for me because I could make the stories up myself. I think that ok, this person was..I could look back and say, let's check out Mom's birthday. Let's see what's today. I would look at her birthday and go to whatever her birthday is and would skip to right now. Which would be February 20th 1999, and I would compare where the planets are today to her static chart for her at birth and I would make up these scenarios like ok, today she might be lounging around the house or whatever, maybe it's not an important day. I always thought to myself if I had to make that choice what book would I bring? And I would have to say I would bring that. I wouldn't bring any other book. And then the other thing I thought of was this:

*The Nakama Family Tree:*

This to me is kind of like a family tree, I guess of my father's side of the family. My mom's side all I have is a Japanese family crest. But this represents the family tree because it starts off with my grandparents and then how many kids they had and then it would go right down the line to all the cousins and second cousins that I have. And that's, I thought that's kind of um... it would replace all the photos that I have. Because every year I have taken the Nakama annual Christmas party and I take pictures. I think what's interesting about that is, we do, what's neat about it is that every year we've done it for how long. So I thought the closest I could get is just photos, but this of course is here (at work).



**Figure 7: Hilma's personal inventory**

From left to right: Ephemeris, photograph of Hilma and her husband, Nakama family tree.



**Figure 8: Elo's personal inventory**

From left to right, back: photograph of Hilma and Elo as babies, Elo and her family.  
Front: photograph of Hilma and Elo's birthday party when they were toddlers.

Hilma's personal inventory contrasted with that of Elo's (see Figure 8), her twin. At the end of her interview, Elo collected three photographs she had in her office to include in her personal inventory. As with the other Sansei women, photographs of the family were of primary importance. Her collection included a picture of herself and Hilma as toddlers. For Elo, being a twin was a crucial part of her self-identity. The other black and white picture she incorporated was at one of their early birthday parties, surrounded by cousins and other family members. Her third photograph was of her immediate family, which includes her own children and those of her fiancé taken in front of the *From Bento to Mixed Plate* exhibition sign, indicating her involvement with this project.

### **Belonging by Education**

Both Terrie and June believed their education represented an important part of their Sansei identity. Terrie's personal inventory included a copy of her College yearbook that held a great deal of significance in relation to her Christian identity. June incorporated her intermediate school into her inventory. Because her mother was from the mainland and her accent differed from others living in Hilo, June's education re-affirmed her own Local identity. As outlined previously, the school you attend is important in establishing social ties and belonging by education. This was obvious with Margaret, for whom high school had poignant memories as she felt that this was when she was last 'her true self' before she married.

Education is something that is highly valued in general by AJA in Hawai'i<sup>13</sup>. Joyce speaks of her own education and that of her children as she explains why she included her nursing pins in her inventory:

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<sup>13</sup> As discussed in chapter Five.

I just have here...because my Mom valued education...right after high school I got married and for thirteen years I was a housewife, serving in the church, not really branching out into education, just concentrating on raising my three girls properly. What happened was, when my husband had a back injury in 1989, he was home for a year and we were forced to reconsider what we were doing. How will I support the family? So it was decided I would go out and try and get an education and see what kind of job I could get. And that's when I went back to college. I was going to go into psychology because my brother had a serious mental illness and I look back on my Mom's side... they never told us about it, but I could see where a generation would have suicide or depression. And then I realised you know, there is some inherent something here. That's why I wanted to go into psychology. And I began to learn about serious mental illness. It's not just family causing it, but there is something else going on. Then I decided on nursing. To me it was very important to graduate from an Associate's degree first, there wasn't a BSN programme available to me then, and then I got my BSN. These are nursing pins. The nursing ceremonies they have pinning ceremonies by candle-light according to Florence Nightingale carrying the lamp and going to help everybody. We have candle light ceremonies and then they pin you with the nursing pin. To me, graduating from college, doing something like that was something I knew my family probably wanted for us. For me it was important to do that, for my children too. Now they value education they had to see me struggle and see I was student too.

## **Personal Inventories with a Difference**

In the above discussion, the relationship between the past and belonging in Local identity were central themes of the narratives associated with the personal inventories of these Sansei women. However, three Sansei women (two who were 'younger' than the majority of Sansei interviewed who were over forty, and one with a disability), presented personal inventories that did not focus on past images or family photographs. Instead, their narratives directed attention to the importance of their sense of self within the space they currently occupied. While Local

ethnicity and identity were addressed at times during the interview, it was in a manner different to other Sansei women. Their objects reflected women who were less concerned with 'belonging' and focused more on 'being'. They faced personal challenges in their lives at the time of the interview that were a large part of identity inventory discussions. This highlights individual experiences of Sansei women in the islands and acknowledges that 'Sansei' is not a homogenous category.

Laura brought with her to our interview at my host father's home an interesting collection of photographs of her business venture that she had undertaken over the Christmas period along with an assortment of other items. After receiving her transcript, Laura took the time to write a short autobiography based on the content of the interview transcript. She felt this was more succinct than her transcript, and her self-written comments about her personal inventory and identity are used here.

Amongst Laura's objects were a collection of seashells, candles and saltwater fish related items (see Figure 9). They highlighted the things she received satisfaction and contentment from:

I love to collect various shells from our Island's seashores. I find candles to be very romantic, therapeutic and peaceful, especially the aromatherapy (scented) ones.

As a hobby I enjoy raising saltwater fishes as they have vibrant colors and personalities. Aquariums are also therapeutic and offer tranquillity. This can be an expensive hobby, but I'm looking forward to starting up my aquarium again!

Laura had also brought to the interview a photograph album that contained pictures of different *lauhala* baskets that she had made as gifts and as part of her 'business venture' (see Figure 10). She commented:

During the past couple of years, I would give away gift baskets and other projects as gifts that I'll put together. I found a passion in Hawaiian Baskets (*Lauhala*) and friends told me I should make a go. I

did all right for the first time during the holidays (Christmas). It also opened doors to parties and weddings. I got more creative as various occasions could come up (e.g. Valentines, *Yakudoshis* etc). Right now, it's been slow so I need to create again. I want results and a career in sales/marketing and hopefully be able to be a Sales rep for a local T-shirt company and or other jobs where I can also bring in my gift baskets.

Her focus on creativity reflects her personal need for developments and challenges. The mentioning of 'work' ties in with the values of Local culture often captured through historic representations and memories. She goes on to talk about her apartment. Here she reflects on her memories of the men in her family and how in this sense the past has impacted on her personality to some degree:

*(Picking up the photograph of the view from her apartment (see Figure 11):) I consider myself ambitious and independent, I guess I got that from my Grandpa and Dad. I live in a one-bedroom apartment near Waikiki. The cost of living here in Hawai'i is high, but I love my independence, peace of mind, and eager to reach my goals. I'm always challenging myself and where I am right now in my life is the biggest challenge of all.*

Of the three women in this category, Laura was the only one who mentions a direct connection from the past to the present.



**Figure 9: Laura's personal inventory.**

Clockwise from top bottom of photo: plastic shells, dolphin, gold crane on top of box of sand and seashells, cigar case, candle and *lauhala* basket.



**Figure 10: Laura's business venture: *lauhala* baskets.**



Figure 11: The view from Laura's apartment.

Joanne had brought with her an array of books, articles, papers and pictures, all of which she had been involved with in writing or producing in some way. Her interview worked through these chronologically, highlighting her skills as teacher, writer, film curator, photographer and journalist. Included in her identity inventory are the following items:

*Mine's* (book title)

While I was teaching I was asked to write a booklet on Japanese families. "Mine's" is an expression in Hawai'i. It is grammatically incorrect, but it is a pidgin expression. What happened is that I collaborated with my friend Mary Morioka and we were contracted for six weeks. So we did research, I did photography. It was part of the Hawai'i State Multicultural Awareness Pilot Project

Both Laura and Joanne demonstrate their 'belonging' to Local ethnicity by an implied knowledge of Local culture. Laura's business venture is very Local based: her baskets are made from a traditional Hawaiian craft of *lauhala* weaving; many of the items she puts in there

such as *Palaka* material or *poi mochi* are distinctly local items; they were presented at Local cultural events such as the *Yakudoshi*. Similarly Joanne's knowledge of Local enables her to write about and photograph Local families and culture, and to challenge some of the imagery and assumptions associated with the past. Her narrative went on to explain the transitions in her career from photography to film and how she utilized her positions to challenge Local social norms and expectations:

*Photographs taken in Bali and India*

I taught for ten years and developed my career as a photojournalist. I sold my first article. But I got into an accident where I dislocated my ankle, so it set me back because I couldn't carry 25 pounds of equipment anymore and I had to modify my life. Because I modified my life, I became interested in films.

*Flyer from film festival*

I was contracted to do a film festival for the Honolulu Academy of Arts – the centennial of the arrival of the Japanese of Hawai'i... Everyone was celebrating the centennial in a beautiful way – kimono shows, art shows. I asked the question why did they leave? I started doing research. I had scholars talking about immigration. I learnt about *Karayuki-san* women who were sold to be prostitutes. There was a film called *Karayuki-san*. The director went to Malaysia to interview Japanese prostitutes. They said that they left not to wear beautiful kimonos, but because we were so poor. She was beautiful and she was an untouchable in Japan (*Karayuki-san*) and her brother was a peddler. He couldn't touch the product – he would pass the products to each customer with chopsticks. This was the Japan that we had. What was interesting was that I knew I would anger people. I was ready for this. We had a discussion after it. I warned the programme director of the film content and about conflict. But we had to start educating people. It was a sell-out festival. I did three festivals.

This was a woman's festival "*From Geisha to Samurai*". It was about the portrayal of Japanese women in films. The next festival was in 1991 and was a request from the city council of Honolulu. It was *Kurusawa: Perceptions of Life*. I was given two weeks to come up with a proposal otherwise the money goes back into the general funds.

The next item she had brought with her was an article entitled: *The Syndrome Study of Late Effects of Polio in China*. Here she noted that in Hawai'i and the USA she is not conscious of her disability as she is in other countries:

I worked for the University of Hawai'i Medical School which took me to Micronesia and Ponape. In 1994, a co-worker and I got a grant to study the handicaps of polio in China. Spent twenty-one days in China in the country studying people with polio. I am not conscious of my disability in Hawai'i or America, but when I go overseas I am very conscious of it because there is a stigma. In my research I found that in China people with disability were called Kung-fin "no person" – you were not a person. You were not in existence. The revolution happened and Do Xa Ping Son changed the status to a person with a disease. When I was in China I became very conscious of my disability. They were quite amazed that a person with a disability can have a professional job. Why I do all these things – it gives me an understanding of myself in the context of culture.

It should be mentioned that Local imagery of AJA, both past and present, rarely includes people with disabilities. Perhaps Joanne's focus on 'a sense of belonging' is different to other Sansei women because she challenges perceptions and assumptions of 'typical' AJA women. Her sense of belonging rests not on connections between the past and the present, but mainly through her work, her contributions to the community and her writing (she writes for the *Honolulu Weekly* and is currently working on a play).

Christine arrived at her interview with a collection of books to use as her identity inventory. Her discussion of each of these titles and why she chose to bring them reveals an interesting dimension of a younger Sansei's identity, less connected to the past, and more concerned about the present.

Three of the books that Christine brought with her reflect the challenges she faces personally and how she feels about herself, contented sometimes, confused and worried about the choices she has in life at other times.

*The Little Prince*

Oh this is my favourite book. I guess mostly because, like I still...to me it represents not growing up and not losing that quality about yourself and that's where I feel I am kinda stuck at, not wanting to grow up and change for better or for worse.

*Is it Time to Make a change?*

This one because I'm always trying to change myself, fulfil myself sometimes. Just always in a constant state of limbo

*Madame Bovary*

Madame Bovary because I guess I feel a strong, I have a strong identity with her because she's always, I dunno if you've read the book, she's always searching for more, never satisfied with what she has. She kind of dies like lonely and poor, everything she did is lost.  
(laughs)

Two other books included in her identity inventory, *The Beauty Myth* and a *Marie Claire Magazine*, indicate to some extent the relationship between, and the influences from, the mainland and Hawai'i. While she laments the fact she buys into the fashion industry, she also highlights that in Local culture, images of ideal 'beauty' are different to the mainland and she finds it easier to 'come to terms' with her physical appearance because she belongs to Local culture.

I'm kind of a contradiction. And I feel like a lot of women are in this culture, I mean American culture. Like you're kind of torn between you know, consumed by beauty, yet knowing that's superficial, kinda just tugging between the both of them, like fashion and stuff like that, that influence my life. It kind of screws you up I think because you don't want to be buying fashion magazines because that's so superficial, but at the same time, it's a reality. Even like reading this magazine they have like fashion, how to make

yourself more beautiful or whatever, but then they have articles like “American Women forced into Arranged Marriages” so it’s just the contradiction. Like I feel like part of me is a feminist, and another part of me is consumed by the beauty industry.

Especially I think here, and for Asian American women, I mean Asian women in general, it’s doubly hard, because you don’t fit the standard, and so, I don’t know, it’s hard, trying to find yourself in this environment. But I mean I’d say in Hawai’i, it’s the easiest, where you can come to terms with not being the ideal American Beauty.

The personal inventories of the eleven Sansei women highlighted themes that are central in understanding my approach to Sansei and Local ethnicity. For eight of the women who included personal inventories in their interviews, relational history is a fundamental aspect in determining who they are. On-going social relationships through community activities and work are also important. For Laura, Joanne and Christine, although their personal inventories did not emphasise relational history, continued social relationships are expressed through work and also in questioning of aspects of the way in which people ‘belong’ in Hawai’i. Why these elements are emphasised by Sansei in their expression of ‘who they are’, becomes more apparent within the historical context of Hawai’i and AJA in the islands, as explored in the following chapter. The themes and voices introduced in this chapter thread their way through the remainder of the thesis, in the exploration of Local ethnicity and Sansei, AJA and Local identity.

## Chapter: Three

### The AJA Experience in Hawai'i: Difference, Exclusion and a Sense of Belonging

Identity in Hawai'i is determined by both exclusion and inclusion of other groups. Groups that AJA in Hawai'i strongly differentiate themselves from are mainland AJA (referred to by AJA in the islands as 'Kotonks'), mainland Haole Americans, tourists and what are often referred to as Japanese-Japanese (those from the 'homeland'), and other immigrant groups in Hawai'i. Understanding the influences of history (both that of migration and the islands) helps contextualise the present social situation of AJA in the islands, and distinguishes their experiences from other groups. However in juxtaposition with the *differentiation* and *exclusion* is an identity that is based on *inclusion* and *belonging* to a wider group identity of the islands: Local. Incorporating the voices of Sansei women, this chapter traces the migration history of mainland and Hawai'i AJA, explores the issues of exclusion and inclusion in AJA experience and identity and considers the impact of Local ethnicity on Sansei identity.

#### Buddah Head Versus Kotonk

As noted in the introduction, when talking with AJA in Hawai'i, they are quick to indicate that the experience and nature of Local AJA (Hawai'i based AJA) are remarkably different to Japanese and Nikkei (Japanese immigrant generations) elsewhere in the world. AJA in Hawai'i strongly believe that:

...there are underlying differences among the cultures of the Haole, Japanese American and Japanese which means that no group totally identifies with or wants to identify with the other groups. While the Japanese American of Hawaii shares many of the same features of

both Japan and America he (sic) has, over the course of one hundred years of Island living, developed an identity separate from either of the monoliths of the Pacific. And it should be noted that the Japanese American of Hawaii also feels to some degree separate from his Japanese American counterpart on the mainland, the Kotonk (Ogawa 1978a: 15).

Local AJA call mainland AJA 'Kotonks' (hollow heads), while Local AJA are referred to as 'Buddah heads'. There are different explanations behind this terminology which is believed to have originated during WWII when mainland and Hawai'i AJA met each other in large numbers for the first time during their service to the USA. Research suggests that the term Kotonk came about as it "imitated the sound made by coal being shovelled into pot-bellied stoves by these Mainland Japanese-Americans when they were assigned to housekeeping detachments at Army points" (Kotani1985:119). Another common explanation related to the sound of Kotonks' heads being knocked together. Similarly, Ogawa (1978a: 15) and Kitano (1969:165) suggest that Kotonk comes from a disagreement between mainland and Local AJA, resulting in a scuffle where a mainlander was knocked to the floor, hitting his head on the floor, making a *kotonk* sound. Yet another story suggests that *kotonk* was the sound resulting from a coconut hitting an AJA from the mainland on his head.

Less is written about the origins of Local AJA's mainland given name of *buddahead*. Kotani (1985:119) suggests that:

Although "buddahead" could refer to the Japanese Buddhist priests who shaved their heads, it was also a slurring of the Japanese-English phrase "buta head", meaning "pig head".

While the origins of the terminology plays on onomatopoeic sounds, there is a definite suggestion of animosity between these two groups. During WWII, the differences between the two groups were often highlighted. Nisei from the mainland were usually minorities in their

hometowns or cities. They displayed characteristics of cultural assimilation into mainstream America and were considered 'too Haolefied', too Caucasian, by Local AJA.

While history maintains that these differences were overcome in combat, the belief that mainland AJA are too 'Haolefied' continues in the islands today. The differentiating pidgin language of Local AJA is often contrasted with mainland 'American-speak'. One island AJA noted: "They think they speak so much better than Locals. They think they speak good Standard American English. They think they have good pronunciation, enunciation and articulation" (cited in Ogawa 1978a:16). Mainland AJA are "considered standoffish and uptight, overly concerned about surface appearances, materialistic, too careful about impressing the majority group, too acculturated...too Haolefied" (Kitano 1969:165) by Local AJA in Hawai'i. Differentiating themselves from their mainland counterparts is important to Local AJA.

## **History Differentiates Experiences and Outcomes**

The history of these two groups contrasts greatly, and has contributed to differences in 'cultural maintenance' and assimilation. Japanese who arrived on the mainland during the mid 1850s have been described as 'the wrong people, in the wrong place, at the wrong time' (Kitano 1969:15). The majority of Japanese migrants to the United States arrived in California during a time of discontent in the State against Chinese migrants when an influx of Chinese occurred after the discovery of gold. The 'Chinese Problem' had resulted in legislation for Chinese exclusion, physical violence, harassment and restrictions. As the Chinese began to leave anti-Oriental California, the Japanese were arriving.

Early Japanese settlers in California initially worked as agricultural labourers, later working their own land as tenants or purchasers (Kitano 1969:18). As a result they became serious competitors with Californian farmers. To combat this, the Alien Land Law of 1913 was introduced. It stated that Japanese aliens were to lease land for a maximum of three years only, and any land already leased or owned could not be bequeathed. The law was amended in 1930, depriving “Japanese of the right to lease agricultural land; the act was designed to prevent the Issei from acting as guardians for the property of a native-born minor if the property could not be held legally by an alien himself” (Kitano 1969:19).

Further discrimination against Japanese migrants and their children followed. Issei were unable to become citizens of the United States and were stereotyped as being “undesirable... lower in the scale of civilization than the whites... They have no morals... Nobody trusts a Jap” (Sacramento Bee May 1 1910 cited in *ibid*:28). In San Francisco Japanese and Korean children were segregated to the city’s Chinese school, but President Roosevelt managed to persuade the school board to reverse their decision. He negotiated with the Japanese Government to sign the Gentlemen’s Agreement that put an end to Japanese workers migrating to the US mainland in the summer of 1908 (Spickard 1996:30). The flow of Japanese migrants continued however, as wives and families arrived to join workers established in the United States. In 1924, under the Immigration Act, Japanese migration was completely terminated. No further Japanese migration to the USA occurred until 1952.

World War Two brought further discrimination against AJA in the mainland. Mass hysteria against Japanese after the bombing of Pearl Harbour in Hawai’i, coupled with the belief that AJA were possible spies

for Japan and a threat to the United States resulted in the internment of 112,000 Japanese Americans (Spickard 1996:104). While officials suggested that internment of AJA was 'for their own good' (Ogawa 1978b:283), to protect them against threats and attacks from non-Japanese in the cities where they resided, the decision was based more on 'national security' and 'military necessity'. Lieutenant General John L. De Witt summarised the government's sentiment and concern over AJA loyalty to the USA, stating:

A Jap's a Jap. They are a dangerous element, whether loyal or not. There is no way to determine their loyalty...It makes no difference if he is American; theoretically he is still a Japanese and you can't change him... (cited in Spickard 1996:98).

Following the war, AJA dispersed themselves throughout America and became upwardly mobile middle-class members of a 'model minority'. Some fought for redress for their internment during the war, others joined 'Asian power' groups. However according to Spickard (1996:145 –160) since WWII, there has been a decline in numbers in the AJA community and in the practise of Japanese culture. Prejudice towards AJA in the mainland continues to be an issue.

AJA in Hawai'i have also encountered racism and prejudice throughout their history in the islands, yet the environment in which they have lived and continue to live, has resulted in differences from their mainland counterparts. Their initial arrival in the islands contrasts with the experience of Japanese on the mainland for two reasons. Firstly Japanese workers were concentrated together on plantations and lived in an environment which highlighted and encouraged ethnic differences. Secondly, as plantation workers, Japanese migrants were not directly in economic competition with Haole. However because Hawai'i became a territory of the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, AJA

became discriminated against by legislature such as the Gentlemen's Agreement (1907 and 1924)<sup>1</sup> and the Immigration Act (1924)<sup>2</sup>. Like their mainland counterparts, questions of whether Japanese loyalty lay with the United States or the 'homeland' have existed since the turn of the century. As the Japanese Empire expanded, there were fears in Hawai'i of Japan controlling the islands because of the large numbers of Japanese.

Confusion and apprehension rose as WWII brought conflict between America and Japan. Ogawa (1978b:237) writes:

As the 1940s approached, the Island community, a community criss-crossed by the undercurrents of racism, paternalism and liberalism, would determine the acceptance or rejection of the Japanese as loyal Americans. Both the Issei and Nisei, to varying degrees, had adapted themselves to Island living, had become acculturated to patterns of life which were foreign to Japan. But significant traces of Japanese culture and way of life remained even for the New Americans. And as relations between Japan and America deteriorated, these aspects of Japanism in Hawaii heightened tensions, fears, distrusts, and expectations. The question of loyalty would ultimately be answered...if war were to develop.

On December 7th 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour. While there were rumours of AJA involvement in the attack, and accusations of spying for the enemy persisted, AJA in Hawai'i did not suffer the same internment as their mainland counterparts. At the onset of the war, just over 1000 Local Japanese were detained and interned. This group consisted of prominent figures and leaders in the AJA community, considered a 'threat' by officials to the USA. However, the large Local Japanese population were not rounded up and placed in internment

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<sup>1</sup> The Gentlemen's Agreement was a "voluntary pact between the United States and Japanese governments, (which) virtually ended the immigration of male workers from Japan and, in addition, prohibited Japanese laborers from leaving Hawaii to work on the mainland" (Ogawa 1978b:11).

<sup>2</sup> "The 1907 Immigration Act was a partial exclusion which allowed the entry of certain groups of immigrants, the 1924 Exclusion Act prohibited any Japanese from entering the U.S. to work or to live. It halted all Japanese immigration" (Hazama and Komeiji 1986:31).

camps. Issei and Nisei, who at that time constituted one-third of the population of the islands, had become an integral part of the Local society and economy, to relocate them to internment camps would disrupt “the very core of the Island community (and) would mean crippling Hawai’i and consequently the Pacific war effort” (Ogawa 1978b: 283). There were also logistical issues related to relocating over 100,000 AJA in Hawai’i. Moving them all to the mainland was not only costly, but would also tie up ships desperately needed for the war.

Furthermore, the Japanese in Hawai’i had established ties with many aspects within island society including the Haole business community and the military there. This, Ogawa believes, was the determining factor in the decision not to relocate Local AJA. AJA on the mainland had entered American society at a time when hostility towards Asians was strong, and had competed against Haoles in agriculture and business, further adding to the resentment, prejudice and racism against them which came to a head in WWII. For those on in the island:

the ties of friendship between Japanese and non-Japanese were an outcome of the Issei’s and Nisei’s identification with the “Local” Island lifestyle – it is difficult to hate neighbours and friends who share the same interests, the same endearing attachment to their island home...The decision to leave the population of Japanese in Hawaii intact was the outcome therefore of the nearly fifty years of Japanese efforts to turn Hawaii into a permanent home and of non-Japanese to accept the Issei and Nisei as welcomed members of the Island community (Ogawa 1978b: 284).

Because AJA had the “face, culture, language, diet and dress of the enemy (this) necessitated caution and cultural suppression. It also necessitated superpatriotism” (Ogawa 1978b:314). AJA needed to adopt measures that would ensure their Americanism would be realised. ‘Things Japanese’, such as language schools, Buddhist temples, kimonos, Japanese

flags and photographs associated with Japan were all eradicated and destroyed. A “speak American” campaign was launched, encouraging ‘Americanisation’ of AJA (Kotani 1985: 104, Hazama and Komeiji 1986:144). The most prominent recorded display of loyalty to the United States came from Nisei men who chose to fight for their country, proving Japanese-American loyalty, and their rights as citizens. Almost 20,000 Nisei served in the US Army, the majority were from Hawai’i; some, as mentioned before, were mainland AJA, recruited from the internment camps. The Nisei soldier who served in either the 100th Infantry Battalion (also known as “one *puka puka*”, *puka* meaning hole in Hawaiian (Hazama and Komeiji 1986:151)), or the 442nd Regimental Combat team are heralded in Local AJA history. “They compiled “a record of heroism unparalleled in the history of American warfare: 15,513 medals and 9,486 enemy casualties for a unit of 3,000 men, In doing so, they earned a place in history and, they hoped, a measure of legitimacy for their people” (Spickard 1996:122). The Nisei soldier endures today in AJA Local history, focusing on loyalty, valour and bravery, contributing to both AJA and Local ethnic pride.

For AJA in Hawai’i, despite hostility experienced by some on the islands, and the cessation of ‘Japanese’ practices, the close knit community and support of other ethnic groups assisted in the ‘revival’ of AJA culture and identity once the war ended. Some AJA benefited greatly from the GI Bill, providing Hawai’i with an educated AJA work force. As Jennie, a Local Nisei/Sansei observed:

The year that I graduated the war came and my classmates all went off to war. They volunteered. They were the famous 442nd boys. They went off to war. Then when they came back with the G.I.Bill, you know, the government issued it, they could go to college. Many of them could not have afforded to go to college, but the War brought some of those benefits. Many of my classmates that

might not have gone off to college all went off to college. And the good ones became lawyers and doctors you know, good business people, so they all went into politics too. So they were my classmates. So I was involved with them because I knew them well. Danny Inoyue and I were old friends, Senator Inoyue. Patsy Mink, she who is a representative now, she and I were at the university together and many politicians I've known them through college days so it was natural that we got involved and helped them.

AJA in the islands "make up a powerful group with a number of alternatives not readily available to their peers on the mainland" (Kitano 1969:165). Living in a community where ethnicity is valued, without a dominant Haole culture, has encouraged the 'maintenance' of what could be considered 'Japanese' traditions and culture, which has not survived to the same extent on the mainland. This history of the two groups has resulted in different perceptions of AJA. Pauline, (who migrated from the mainland) highlights the differences between mainland and Local AJA:

The Japanese community in the mainland and the Japanese community here are so different. In the mainland there is a lot of desire to assimilate, to buy into the American dream, to be as white as you can. In Los Angeles as I was growing up in the teenage years, the Japanese kids my age, the Sanseis, were very schizophrenic. They didn't know who they were. They just knew that being Japanese wasn't hip. You know, so they usually grew up in another neighborhood. So the Japanese in my neighborhood became Chicano. The ones in my husband's neighborhood where he was growing up became black, and the ones that were hanging around the upper middle class became Jewish (*she laughs*) not religiously, but you know, their aspirations to join with another group, so they became very schizophrenic. It wasn't until much later when there was an ethnic awareness, a pride, that Asian Americans in general came into their own and that wasn't until the 70s, towards the end of the Vietnam War. But, so, the Japanese community in LA, the elder Issei, were very Japanese, the Nisei tried to be good citizens because they had to prove themselves after the war. The Sansei were my generation were the wild bunch, you know they were just all scattered and did whatever they wanted to. Then the Yonsei, the next

generation down, my niece, started going back into, still assimilating on the mainland. So my niece is very white, even though her father is Mexican with an accent, and Mom is a model Japanese American. If you talk to her on the phone you would never know she was Japanese.

Here in Hawai'i, very interesting, you don't have that kind of paranoia at all. Because the Japanese are such a long well-established group in the islands, they don't have to be anybody else but themselves. They kept the Japanese traditions a lot better than anywhere else, even in Japan. They still have *mochizuki*<sup>3</sup> at New Years, they observe the *Yakudoshi* and all those little things that I don't even see happening on the mainland. My Mom never cooked with any of those traditions, but they were passed down here in Hawai'i, preserved. And even in Japan when I went to visit over there, they don't know what they're doing in Hawai'i. The new generation don't care. That's kind of interesting. So here I kind of find vestiges of an old Japan, pre-war Japan. And the people here are very warm, generally very sweet. They haven't been tainted by all the horrors of urban living. There are still communities that are very tight-knit, you have your JA centers, you have your Okinawan centers, Okinawan presence is very strong here too. You have a lot of immigrants coming in all the time and there are special services for them.

### **Not Like the Tourists, Not Like the 'Homeland'**

For AJA and other second and third generation Locals, Local-ness acts as a useful means to differentiate themselves from tourists and FOBs (Fresh off the Boats). Japanese tourists are referred to as *bobodahs* (pumpkin heads), and are looked upon almost with contempt. AJA, however, are not the only group in Hawai'i who are concerned about tourism. The consequences of tourism, including an increased cost of living and the lack of benefit to the Local economy from outside-owned tourist operations, contributes to the exclusionist hostility towards tourists by many Locals. There is a sense of resentment towards Japanese investors

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<sup>3</sup> Pounding of rice to make *mochi*.

and Japanese tourists who contribute to the growing demands the tourist industry is placing on the limited resources of Hawai'i (Okamura 1994: 167-169).

One of the key identity markers differentiating Local Japanese and a *bobodah* is clothing. Being Local means 'how fo talk, how fo walk' and also 'wot fo wear'. Driving through Waikiki one afternoon, my companion and driver spied a Japanese woman dressed in a tight mini-skirt with a thigh high split running up one side, a tight top, excessive make up and platform high boots, sporting a jagged haircut, dyed a rusty orange colour. "Check out that *bobodah*," he commented as we passed her. "How do you know she's not Local?" I asked him. "If she was Local," he replied, "she would be wearing T-shirt, shorts or jeans and slippahs." Similarly at the beach, female tourists were easily identified from Locals. Those who wore bikinis were tourists; Local girls all wore board shorts.

Tourists are also excluded by their lack of knowledge of Local ways. For Laura, Local knowledge of cultural items are very important in distinguishing Locals from tourists. As part of her personal inventory, Laura came armed with photographs of some of the crafts she made and sold as a small business venture during Christmas. These consisted of *lahala* woven baskets, which she likes because it is "Hawai'i" and represents "Aloha", yet what struck me the most was her comment about the *palaka*<sup>4</sup> fabric she uses in her gift sets: "It is a Local fabric, not for tourists." According to Laura, tourists will buy the cheap polyester flower print aloha shirts, and have no knowledge or understanding of *palaka*.

With an influx of Japanese tourists in the islands, AJA have found themselves face to face with people from the land the Issei came from. Despite this contact, many Sansei I interviewed had no need to question

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<sup>4</sup> *Palaka* is a fabric associated with plantation-times. A pattern of woven plaid cotton usually, black, red or navy blue and white, which is very durable.

their ethnic identity while *in* the islands. Often the realisation that they were less “Japanese” and more American or Local occurred when they left the islands. Andrea recalls her experience when she visited Japan:

(It) made me realize that I am more American than Japanese. That was really interesting. Physically I look Japanese, appearance-wise and so when I was in Japan they would assume that I was Japanese until I opened my mouth and at that point it was ‘oh my god’ and they looked at me as though I was strange. That I was a foreigner, that I was an alien – it was like why is this Japanese person not speaking Japanese or speaking English so fluently? They couldn’t understand it. That’s when I started explaining I’m American, I’m a Nikkei-jin. I think at that point it was the second most powerful instance in my life where I identified as an American.

The first most powerful was when I was a college student. I embarked on a program called *A Semester at Sea* where we travelled around the world with 500 other college students from across the US and visited about 14 different countries. And again I was the only Asian on board and travelling to different countries again, people thought I was from Japan or they thought I was from Hong Kong or China, and again I had to explain “I’m American, I’m from the United States.” And throughout my entire life until that point I’ve never had to explain to anyone that I’m an American.

I really got to appreciate my home base. Hawai’i is my home base, this is where I was born, this is where I was raised. No matter how far from Hawai’i, I leave or travel, this is still my home where I’ll always come back to.

Lori encountered a similar situation when she visited Japan:

I think maybe if anything my feeling is we’re maybe kind of the middle of maybe the past and the future, we’re kind of the in-between link of the two. And how do I explain that? I guess because growing up in Hawai’i somehow, I guess, I realized this when I went to Japan for the first time in 1997. As I grew older, I mean when I was younger I knew I was Japanese by blood and, you know, I identified myself as that but I guess there was always that thing of not liking who you are as you are growing up, but as you grow older, you tend to want to know and learn and find out who you are even what it is to be Japanese. So I always wanted to go to Japan. So when I did go to Japan for that month that I was there, I really began to appreciate

my ethnicity and my heritage a lot. I was there for a month in May. Actually, I went up there to perform for a festival.

When I first went there too, I had kind of a little bit of a difficult time when I wasn't identified as being Japanese. I had a hard time understanding that concept a little bit, but afterwards I kind of accepted it. Oh, you're Japanese American, you're not Japanese. It made me feel a little bit angry at first but afterwards I guess I started to understand maybe the concept or why there is that division between.

**Yumiko:** Do you feel more JA or more Japanese?

**Lori:** I would say probably, that's really hard to say because even when I think about it, there's like Japanese from Japan, there's JA and when you're born and raised here too, sometimes you feel like you're a totally different Japanese altogether. You're Japanese-Hawaiian<sup>5</sup>. I don't know if that's because we're on an island and we're divided from the bigger mass of the United States, but sometimes I feel that too. That there's a third division.

The 'third division' that Lori describes is that of being *Local*. This is a crucial point in understanding what it means to be Sansei in Hawai'i. Neither Japanese, nor American, Sansei women were above all else Local.

### **Not like Mainland Asian Americans or Haoles**

"Americanization" has undoubtedly had an effect on identities of AJA and Locals within Hawai'i. Unlike Asian-Americans on the mainland, there has been little need to question ethnic identities in the islands due to the fact that there is no ethnic majority in Hawai'i. Mainland AJAs and Asian Americans are caught in a constant battle trying to establish their legitimacy as Americans in a place where "(W)hiteness...is equated with being American; Asianess is not" (Tuan 1999: 111), and are under pressure

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<sup>5</sup> For Lori 'Japanese-Hawaiian' means 'an AJA who lives in Hawai'i. The term Japanese-Hawaiian usually applies to a person who is of Japanese and Hawaiian ancestry.

to 'be ethnic' because of their physical appearance. In Hawai'i, being an American forms part of AJA identity, but not in the same sense as it does for their mainland counterparts. They are not part of a pan-Asian group which needs to identify itself against a dominant White group. In Hawai'i almost all ethnic groups are recognised, and there has been no need to mobilise a group based on pan-ethnic identity. Okamura notes that there are "few specifically Asian American organisations or social movements in Hawaii" (1994: 161) which he believes is related to the significance of the 'pan-ethnic' Local identity that Hawai'i residents have an affinity with. American-ness in Local AJA Sansei women's identity was not explicitly addressed, unless it was used to highlight differences with 'Japanese-Japanese'. While Local-ness preceded American identity in most cases, there are recognised links with the mainland through legislature, national events and television.

### **Sitcom Mom's – the All American Ideal**

For Sansei and AJA, television portrayed a mainland 'ideal' they and others throughout America admired but most definitely were not. During the late 1950s and early sixties Americans were affected by the television families that were beamed into their living rooms. Sitcom families were middle-class, white, consisting of father, mother, and two or three children; the father worked, the mother did not. The television sitcoms such as *Father Knows Best*, *Leave it to Beaver*, and *The Donna Reed Show* have been heavily criticised for the portrayal of mother figures as "wasp-waisted, perfectly coiffed moms who never lost their tempers...(were) benevolent, self-effacing, pearl-clad moms who love to vacuum in their high heels" (Douglas 1994:26 -36). These families

however, were perceived by many as the traditional American family (Nakano 1990:227).

Yet for the majority of American women, the June Cleavers and Harriet Nelsons were not accurate reflections of their lives. Douglas (1994:44-45) when describing her mother and those of her friends in the 1950s writes:

They worked all the time, with little or no acknowledgement, while their ignored kids watched T.V. shows that insisted that good mothers, like true princesses, never complained, smiled a real lot, were constantly good natured, and never expected anything from anyone...we got it, even as kids, that there was a big difference between June Cleaver's attitude towards life and Mom's. June Cleaver was never harried, and my mother was always harried.

Sitcom families of the period were impressed in the minds of many of the Sansei women interviewed. In one of the earlier interviews, Elo contrasted her neighbourhood with that portrayed in *Leave It to Beaver*:

The neighborhood we grew up in was very eclectic in a cultural way. One neighbor was Japanese...we had a Hawai'ian woman who lived on the side of us and another Chinese family in front of us. There was a mix of people in the community and we lived right across from the Chinese graveyard...

We grew up watching *Leave it To Beaver*. In the early sixties, it was a very family oriented show where you have the father in the suit going to work every morning and the mother who is the housewife in the dress, and she stays home all day, takes care of the family and goes shopping, and the two sons. And I remember thinking, boy, we're not a *Leave it to Beaver* family and we don't live in a *Leave it to Beaver* community where all the homes are these white picket homes. Here we are living across from the Chinese graveyard, with the Hawaiian lady next to us...

Elo's comments caught my attention because they revealed to some extent how mainland and 'mainstream' America was captured and included in Local Sansei women's lives and memories. She suggested that

television images have influenced or been a part of their identity formation, particularly as they contrasted with the lives and images the Local environment presented. This became more apparent as the subject was raised in subsequent interviews.

Some of the women acknowledged that sitcom families were an ideal that they wanted to emulate. Pauline, had grown up in the mainland and reflected on the desire to replicate the television family of the sixties:

Things on television at the time were very white, they were quite mainstream America. When I was growing up in the fifties, TV was a relatively new item in the house. But people more and more were getting them. Black and white set. I didn't know color existed until the sixties<sup>6</sup>...everything back then was g-rated, none of this stuff which we have now which is questionable. So it was very innocent. But the TV shows were how you wanted to be. *Leave it to Beaver*, *My Three Sons*, *Donna Reed Show*, all those families where they had a mom and a dad, couple of kids or so, a dog or a cat and everyone was having a good time in the suburbs. You know, that was the American dream and that was imprinted on all of us. Now, growing up in a ghetto area, that wasn't what we saw day to day now. What we saw was poverty and crime you know, people struggling all the time, so it was a really peculiar thing. So when I tell people that I grew up tri-cultural, I grew up in my household I was Japanese, in school I was American, but in my neighborhood I was Mexican, the kids I played with on the street. So television was a good part of my education. Television, that's how I learnt English so fast, and of course they only used proper English on television, so I learned my English that way.

These sitcoms presented an ideal that people wanted to attain. Gail recalls watching these "All American Family shows, with *The Donna Reed Show*, one with Robert Young and *Leave it to Beaver*". She acknowledged that everybody wanted to be like them, but were not. Similarly Amy stated, "everybody watched *Father Knows Best* and thought that they were

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<sup>6</sup> There was an irony in Pauline's comment for me, being New Zealand born, as this was when black and white television arrived in New Zealand!

the ideal family.” For hapa-Haole Terry, she recalls identifying with them to some degree. She mentions some of the programs of her childhood:

*“I Love Lucy, Leave it to Beaver, The Nelsons (Ozzie and Harriet). I remember them because they were about family life and we could identify with them and the kids. It was the All-American family – the epitome.”*

June also identified with many of the television programs of her youth, including *American Bandstand* which she felt identified her as the ‘American teenager’. She admits that during her teens “I guess I never identified myself with someone from Japan.” Television acted to some degree as a means to reinforce the fact that AJA were not only Local, but American also.

Television sitcoms also projected an image of how women were expected to behave. For Margaret, these sitcoms highlighted the rules and behaviour women of her ‘era’ were supposed to follow:

*The traditional Ozzie and Harriet, Leave it to Beaver, Father Knows Best, where the traditional housewife took care of the family, she had no goals, she resolved problems. She was the wise one, but she had no self. She was the mother and she was the wife and we idolised that. She was the perfect mother and the perfect wife, always with the dress and the apron, in the kitchen, taking care of the family, in the bedroom putting away the laundry. Sitting with the husband after dinner and sharing. We idolised that because that’s what we were told to be yeah.*

While there were many Sansei who recalled these programmes, younger Sansei mentioned others for different reasons and highlighted aspects of American culture that Sansei over forty-five did not mention. Lori recalls a variety of programs and suggests personal reasons why these may be relevant to her:

What did I watch a lot? I watched *All In the Family* a lot. I really enjoyed that program because I felt it dealt with the times really well in a humorous way and also a very serious way. And let's see, what else did I watch? I don't know if they really affected my life, but I guess they were just shows that I guess the people, you know, the family would watch like once in a while. What else was there? I remember watching *The Avengers*. Somehow I really liked Emma Peel's character, so I guess they did affect my life. I did like female characters that were very strong and, you know, and I remember *Charlies' Angels* too! (*She laughs*) But basically people watched that for the hair I think.

Christine, at twenty-six years of age, had grown up with a different type of family sitcom to others of the Sansei generation. Throughout her interview Christine raised points about ethnic tension and differentiation that other Sansei did not refer to. In some respects her age reflects a different era of Local and American history, one in which challenges to 'mainstream' America occurred and ethnicity became an important concept in self-identity. In addition Christine grew up in a period where television was flooded with networks and a huge variety of programs. She commented that there were so many programmes and it was hard to list them all, however she stated:

I think the only one that sticks out is probably the *Cosby Show*. I guess cause that's the point in my life when I was paying attention to television more, I dunno, maybe in a sense it had more to do with seeing people of color rather than White America always.

This raised an interesting point that older Sansei acknowledged but did not explore at length. While Elo realised that their Local neighbourhood was not at all like the Cleavers' picket fence one, she, like other Sansei felt that the Cleavers were the ideal 'All American Family' and 'everybody wanted to be like that'. Pauline was the only Sansei who discussed whether or not aiming for this ideal also meant aiming to be

'white'. Her childhood on the mainland may have contributed to this perspective. On mainland America, AJAs were being heralded as the 'model minority' (Kitano 1969) for their ability to blend into mainstream society and work their way to middle class status.

After World War II, Nisei in the islands also climbed the social and economic ladder towards middle-class status. The desire to be like a sitcom family appeared to coincide with messages of achieving middle-class status that were being promoted during the late 1950s and 1960s. Sansei women often commented on the urging of Nisei parents to 'better' themselves. While it is not within the scope of this thesis to explore the correlation between socio-economic mobility and television imagery, it needs to be recognized that the images of June Cleaver or Harriet Nelson are still relevant to Sansei, be it because they are images that represent middle-class success, or because they are a symbol of American-ness<sup>7</sup>, that Local AJA both reject and embrace in identifying and locating themselves.

### **AJA in Hawai'i: Not Like Other Immigrant Groups**

AJA in Hawai'i distinguish themselves as a group from others (such as mainland AJA and Japanese tourists) with whom they may be confused of. They recognize themselves as a unique group of people whose history has shaped their present, and while they are 'American', they are not representative of the All American (Haole) ideal. However AJA are often perceived by other groups in the islands as an 'elite' or majority, despite evidence to the contrary. Once the majority within the islands, AJA are still visibly prominent in the work force because they occupy many service-oriented roles within the public sector. Sansei

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<sup>7</sup> Hawaii became the fiftieth state of the USA in 1951.

women commented on this issue during discussions of AJA visibility in the islands:

*Gail*

I think they're very visible. They do a lot of community work, a lot of them do volunteer work. A lot of them are in government work, a lot of them are very successful in what they have done. Some of our great leaders of the island or the State are Japanese Americans.<sup>8</sup>

*Junet*

Very, very visible. After the war, the Japanese were pushing ahead for education, they are in predominately higher political positions, even our Governor was Japanese. They have worked hard and earned their level in Hawai'i, they are a very respected race.

*Lori*

I think they are pretty much visible because we are, we do have a big population here. So I think we do contribute a lot to the local culture too, you know like it extends. So I think we are highly visible.

*Andrea*

AJA are very visible. Number one would be employment. I think if you look at our, for example I'm entering the teaching field in our state department of education I think the majority of teachers at schools are Japanese Americans. If you look at government positions or even at State legislature. I think Japanese Americans account for a large proportion of our State Legislatures. Japanese Americans have a real strong foothold in Hawai'i. Perhaps because of the long history? Perhaps also because of their work ethic. Their emphasis on education, they have really risen to positions of power and prestige. And which is often also looked down upon by other ethnic groups. They'll look upon JA as 'oh you're the guys with all the jobs, you're the guys with all the money, you're the guys with all the nice fancy cars and stuff like that. So even within the different ethnic groups there is some stereotyping going on.

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<sup>8</sup> Senator Daniel Inouye is an example of this.

'Typical' images of AJA exist, particularly of the Sansei generation.

As one woman put it:

There's the typical Sansei where they have a corporate job, they work in the corporate...they're college graduates, masters, doctorate. Very many of them, there's that one track. They're the corporate who's who now, moving into those circles, VIPs of whatever. Entrepreneurs of their own company, you know CEOs of their own company...

Part of the perception that Japanese Americans have all the jobs and are economically successful is a result of their representation in the work force in positions where they are in contact with the public. They are "well represented in the State Department of Education as school administrators (52%), elementary (63%) and secondary (50%) school teachers, and clerical staff (50%) (HSB 1990c:A3)" (Okumura 1994: 172). Because of their older median age they are one of the largest groups in the work force, which also contributes to perception of their 'dominance in Hawai'i'. Christine highlighted the tension that stereotyping and this perceived 'visibility' caused in the islands:

I think that we are a strong presence here and we're kind of like...I never knew this until I got into college, but just, we're kinda viewed as the whites are in America in the general United States. In the sense where we hold all the power and key positions we kind of feel the back-lash – I just feel like a lot of people have negative images of us here who aren't Japanese American. Even myself I have negative views on Japanese Americans here and on the mainland. I mean a lot of them are true, like we're, they're clannish, and they're always hanging out together. I guess they have a strong identity, cultural identity, urbanization and such. I dunno. Like a lot of Hawaiian people they think poorly of Japanese Americans. You just kind of feel the hostility sometimes. I dunno if it's in my head or if it's real.

Okumura (1994: 173) supports the sense of negativity Christine has experienced as an AJA in Hawai'i. He argues that Japanese have become the scapegoat group in the islands:

towards which the hostilities of other ethnic groups are directed...they may perceive their collective identity and acceptance as local being threatened, especially since the negative stereotypes applied to them such as "dominating", "arrogant" and "clannish", are clearly non-local characteristics.

He goes on to suggest that as a result of experiencing this hostility, AJA

downplay their Japanese American identity...*emphasising the local* (my emphasis) dimension of their ethnic identity...(In doing so they reaffirm their social ties with other local groups and to Hawai'i as a special place for them to live, work, and maintain family and friendship bonds (ibid:174).

As will be discussed in depth at a later stage, it has been suggested that AJA have emphasised the concept of 'Local' as a means of justifying their legitimate right to reside in the islands and as a response to a perceived 'backlash' towards AJA. However, Local is something that almost everybody refers to in the islands. It is a term that describes the unique culture of Hawai'i which different ethnic groups have contributed to and are influenced by. It is an 'umbrella' ethnicity under which a variety of ethnic groups continue to maintain their own unique identities and invariably influences Sansei women in the islands today.

Preceding further dialogue about Local ethnicity is a collection of chapters that presents Sansei women's thoughts and narratives within the context of Local-ness. Addressing topics such as long term relationships, role models and values, and the significance of history, readers will be

familiarised with 'belonging' in Hawai'i through Local Sansei women's perceptions and experiences.

## Chapter Four

### Belonging By Long Term Relationships

During the late 1970s and throughout the eighties, research on AJA marriage and ethnic maintenance proliferated. However the majority of literature that was published focused on aspects of intermarriage and the impact of this on cultural/ethnic maintenance of different AJA communities in the United States (Levine and Rhodes 1981, Kikumura and Kitano 1973, Tinker 1973, Connor 1984). There has been little discussion on the way in which marriage and relationships are experienced and perceived by AJA women, in either same or mixed-ethnic marriages. Most married Sansei women that I interviewed, did not mention their spouses' ethnicity until I asked. They did not discuss their choice of partner with regards to ethnicity, except for Sandra who reflected on cultural differences between herself and her ex-husband, particularly in the context of her present partner who is AJA.

It was while reflecting on discussions about marriage that I came to realise two important aspects of Sansei identity that I had overlooked through personal assumptions. Firstly, I recognised that it was *I* who was interested in issues of ethnicity, its maintenance and impact on AJA Sansei lives. For many of these women, ethnicity was not a point of focus. The relationship between their ethnic heritage and current identity was not on their agenda of communication with me about what it meant to be a Sansei woman in Hawai'i, particularly when it came to discussing marriage and relationships. Of more importance for them was conveying the sense of being Local, as has been discussed in previous chapters.

Secondly, I found that I had imposed my own personal assumptions of what constituted 'womanhood' or women's experience by writing interview guidelines in a chronological order that reflected my expectations of life's path for a woman. The interview guidelines were as follows: History (of grandparents), childhood, school, college, work, marriage, motherhood, cultural and community life (see Appendix III). The rigidity of these guidelines did not allow for the experiences of women for whom some of these categories did not apply.

This was first made apparent to me at the beginning of one of my interviews. The woman sitting across the table from me picked up the papers I had sent her earlier in the week informing her about my research, which included the guidelines. She straightened the piece of paper with the guidelines on it in front of her.

"You know, I looked over the things that you want me to talk about and I don't know if I can help you much."

I looked at her inquiringly.

"This interview is going to be pretty short," she continued, "because I'm not married and I don't have any children or the stuff that you have down here."

The impact of my gender-centric ideas hit me and I struggled to cope with the situation. Until I met this woman, most of my interviews had fallen into the pattern suggested, with the only variance being the decision not to have children, pre-marital pregnancy or divorce. I awakened to the fact that some women experience their lives differently and by trying to constrict all of them within socially expected roles and behaviour, I was further contributing to the disempowerment, or the erasure of the alternate trajectories of life I wanted to expose. It was my turn to shuffle the paper uncomfortably and seek a way to include the

narrative of this woman that I had overlooked. I needed to amend the script.

“Let’s talk about the choices you have made in your life and how you feel about them,” I suggested.

The interview that followed was one of the most revealing and detailed I had conducted, not just in terms of the content that was shared, but also in terms of exposing my own preconceptions about what constituted a woman’s life and the ‘order’ in which it occurred. I assumed that women who were ‘Western’ and ‘Japanese’ went to college, worked, got married and had children and perhaps continued to work during/after marriage and motherhood. While the guidelines were supposed to be ‘triggers’ for thought and discussion, they constructed the areas that I believed would and should be discussed, closing the opportunities of discussion on issues that I had not been exposed to during my own short life, or areas that others wanted to elaborate on. Despite being a woman it had not occurred to me to consider an alternative way for Sansei women, or women in general to be represented. I had not envisaged the sense of inadequacy, or anger that I may have triggered in some of the women whose lives did not conform to my guidelines. Following this interview, I ensured that my mail out information notified the women that their interviews did not have to follow these guidelines, but they were just suggestions for areas of discussion.

Within anthropology and Western society at large there is a tendency to conceptualise women within the realms of kinship, marriage and the family, and their roles as wife and mother. Those who are neither mother nor wife are still evaluated in relation to their marital status with

comments such as ‘I am still single’, and their choice of being ‘child-free’<sup>1</sup>, subtly reinforcing the ‘standard’ against which they are assessed. Restricting women within these categories only limits understanding of women and reinforces the institutions that relegate them to these two roles.

Therefore it was with mixed sentiment that I organised my research findings into discussions on relationships, marriage and motherhood. I have been hard pressed to find an alternative to these categories, still, they shape the reality of most Sansei women’s experiences, either because they enter into these roles or because they have chosen to resist and avoid them. By providing a collage of the different meanings and experiences that Sansei women have of these gender roles, the significance that they have for these women can be better understood.

### **Marriage - of Unavoidable Importance**

Despite my misgivings about my assumptions of marriage and intimate relationships, this was an area of importance and focus for all the women interviewed. Marriage and associated topics such as dating and divorce have great importance for Sansei women. Here their voices and narratives highlight the diversity and similarities of Sansei experience of life in relation to long-term relationships. Issues of race, attractiveness and AJA stereotypes are explored and details of personal decisions, challenges, marriages and divorces are revealed which have often been overlooked in text and display collections about AJA (women) in the islands.

For the women I interviewed, being involved in an intimate long-term relationship (marriage or co-habitation) was of great significance in negotiating their identity. Some women mentioned that they married

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<sup>1</sup> Women and men who are without a permanent partner with child define themselves within this conceptualization as ‘single-mothers’ and ‘single-fathers’.

simply because that was what was expected of them, while those who were not (yet) married, except for one woman, all aspired to be. Those who had divorced were also either involved in or seeking a committed intimate relationship.

Perhaps it was because of the announcement of my own engagement while I was in Hawai'i, to a fiancé waiting at home in New Zealand, that some women were particularly eager to share their stories with me, from courtship through to their current relationship with their partners. I received a real sense that I was being told 'life goes on after the wedding but not always as you anticipate it will', and many women commented on the way in which discussing aspects of their marriage helped them to reflect on and consider their lives and marriage.

### **The Dating Game – Race 'ing' in**

As mentioned previously, the majority of women did not mention their husband's ethnic identity until such point as I asked them. There were however discussions about whom their parents felt it was appropriate to date<sup>2</sup>, reflecting historical views on inter-ethnic relationships that exist in Issei and Nisei generations.

Spickard (1996:147) has noted that for AJA society

(I)nterracial romance and marriage was a steady theme of community debate from the 1960s on...most Japanese American families quickly made their peace with inter-marriage, although there was a decided Nisei preference that their children choose White (sic) or other Asian mates over African Americans or Latinos.

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<sup>2</sup> Despite tactful attempts on my part to understand what constitutes 'dating' in Hawai'i, it was never revealed if this involves going out on socially, and/or involves a sexual relationship.

Of the thirty Sansei women interviewed four were married to non-Japanese American husbands. One woman had married a Korean/Japanese American, while three had married Haoles. Only Sandra had married and later divorced a Black Brazilian man. She reflected on why she had not dated Local Japanese boys, and why a marriage to a Black man was not frowned upon by her family:

I was a late bloomer. I had one platonic boyfriend in High school. Lasted a year. Nothing was really serious until college. Never lasted longer than two months. They were always, they were never Sansei boys. Always other races.

Because my grandparents were all from different places, my maternal grandparents were very Christian, we were not Buddhists, I think we had a very different lifestyle and stray away from the norm of your stereotypical Nisei/Sansei family. All of the Black people who came to our church had Japanese spouses.

My Brazilian husband was Black. It was always this race thing. I was never told you may date only Japanese. Where a lot of my friends were told that, I was never told that. When I had already established the pattern of never bringing Japanese boys home then they started to question. What is this? How come? Well, none of them ever asked me! There were some that I found attractive, but I knew them in class and none of them would ever come out and ask me to any proms, because of my outgoing nature they were scared of me. The local guys were scared of me.

When we had finished our interview, I stopped the tape recorder and we chatted causally about relationships and cultural adjustments, particularly as her children were hapa and so was I. "Oh," she said, her eyes lighting up animating her face, "there was something else you might want to record that I thought of." I switched the machine back on as Sandra talked candidly about her grandmother's view of dating people of different ethnicity and how different Sandra found the experience:

With regards to dating people outside your race, that my grandmother would say to me that – she was quite an open-minded

woman too. She was the one who told my mother let me be left handed, instead of correcting me and forcing me to use my right hand, like everybody else would.

She told me when I think I was in college, she says, "Well you know it's fine to know people from other races and have friends from other races but you must think of your children."

And I said, "Well what do you mean think of my children? Because I have lots of friends who are half this and half that. My cousins are half white".

And she says, "Yes, but we know that each one of them at one time or another wished he was either full white or full Japanese." There are two boys and two girls and it is obvious that the two older boys made it clear: "I wish I was pure Japanese, I wish I was pure haole." I don't know about the girls. One of those girls is the one that lives in Spain.

But then my mother would say, "In the long run, you're going to find out that you're happier with some one who has the same background as you."

And I said to her, "You know what, I don't know anyone with the same background as me."

Ethnically my background does not have the same kind of family orientation.

Sandra's Issei grandparents were not plantation workers as the majority of Japanese immigrant workers were. They were friends of John Dole and were more educated than other Issei in Hawai'i. Because of this difference in ethnic heritage to other AJA, Sandra felt that her experiences of being Sansei were not the same as others. However, her current boyfriend is AJA and she commented on how different she found the experience. Knowing that my future husband was a New Zealander who had no background in Japanese, Sandra suggested that I may find a lack of appreciation of Japanese customs because there is no shared cultural knowledge:

I found it quite different. So interesting now I know what she means 'cause, I guess this is a big worry for you, the first time I ever served my boyfriend a bowl of *miso* soup, I made Japanese one night and...

Sandra demonstrates the act of preparing the Japanese *miso* soup and placing it carefully in front of her partner. She then takes on the role of her partner, picking up the bowl, sipping the soup and indicating his pleasure in the taste of the soup. Sandra laughs. Without the shared cultural knowledge of how good *miso* soup tasted, her partner would not have appreciated the soup.

Andrea, a 'single'<sup>3</sup> Sansei woman found that there were predetermined ideas about which ethnic group were more appropriate for her to date. She has dated a lot but as far as being in relationships, she has probably had about five significant ones. Andrea has chosen not to marry which at times had caused conflict with her mother. During our interview I asked if her mother had any particular expectations about her dating.

Andrea responded:

Oh sure, oh sure. You will date an Oriental. My grandmother was even stricter she was like you are not allowed to date an African American that was completely unacceptable. You could not date a Caucasian that was also not acceptable. She had this ranking system. It was perfectly ok to date a Chinese because he would be Asian, a Korean because he was Asian, but of course the preference was Japanese, or even more specifically for my grandmother because she was from Okinawa, an Okinawa boy would be the ideal mate for me. Mother however was a little more open-minded. She did however have other expectations as far as marriage and children, which I strongly was against. Which we've had many, many battles over. And I think she has finally come to accept.

She laughs and admits that she has dated "basically Japanese, oriental. And my current boyfriend is Chinese. That's interesting."

Dating, ethnicity and the 'ideal' male appeared to be more of a concern for younger (thirty-five and under), single Sansei than it was for

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<sup>3</sup> While I feel uncomfortable using the term 'single' women as it suggests that marriage or being in a relationship is the norm, I feel it is more appropriate than using 'unmarried'.

older, married Sansei women. Christine, the youngest Sansei I interviewed explained to me what dating involved in Hawai'i:

Everyone's shy a lot. I mean in the Asian, local community the guys aren't really forward. I think the girls in relationships kind of take the reins. I don't know, like everyone, people don't date, just date with different people. It's kind of frowned upon if they do. It's always like you're in a serious relationship. On the mainland, they talk a lot about dating two or three people.

I then shared my personal experience of dating in the islands. Within twenty-four hours of my arrival in the field I had unwittingly wandered into the 'dating game', breaking all the unspoken rules of the ritual as it occurred in Hawai'i. I quickly learnt that romance and attraction did not follow the same codes in all English speaking countries. I had met an AJA male on the plane during the flight from Honolulu to Hilo. He chose to sit next to me and for the duration of the fifty-five minute flight we chatted about the islands and my research. He offered to assist me with finding Sansei to talk with (he was also a Sansei), and we exchanged phone numbers. 'Sam' called me later that week and we arranged to meet on the Saturday night with his friends whom I assumed were going to be able to help me in conducting my research. Strangely, Sam left his loud and somewhat intoxicated friends at a local tavern and we went to a 'local' restaurant alone for dinner. This was not only my first experience of 'dating', but also my first introduction to the deceptiveness of décor in local eateries. The longer I stayed in Hawai'i, the more I found that the quality of food in a restaurant was relational to it's furnishings – the more shabby and tatty that they were, the better the food!

Over a meal of teriyaki butterfish and rice, we talked about a variety of things, including my then boyfriend back home. Sam's face fell into his lap and the atmosphere of the evening changed from being casual

and relaxed to extremely strained. I realised that I had made a social faux pas, but was not sure what it was I had mistakenly done. Sam explained to me that “in Hawai’i, if you go out with a guy at night then it is a date.” He suggested that in the future I go out during the day with people I intended to be ‘platonic’ with. Having always had a mixed group of friends with whom I went out with ‘platonically’ during the evening, including being alone with a male friend, I abruptly learnt that this behaviour was considered abnormal and ‘teasing’.

Sam and I split the bill and he hastily drove me home, obviously extremely perturbed about the situation that had unfolded. I assured him that I understood ‘the rules’ and we ended the evening. He attempted to make contact with me later during my stay on O’ahu, but I did not feel comfortable in his company. I made it a policy to never to go out in the evenings with a male. The only exception to this rule was my host father, my ‘adopted’ AJA ‘brother’ and my dance partner.

## **Ideals and Stereotypes**

Christine was amused by my ‘dating’ experience and she continued to talk openly about dating and the men that she found attractive:

I started dating in college. My first boyfriend was hapa-haole and then I only dated three people in my life. My second guy was Japanese American and then another was another hapa-haole guy.

**Yumiko:** What attracted you to them?

**Christine:** Well in Hawai’i, you know, I’m sure, you’ve seen that hapa-haole people are you know, everything here. Top of the food chain. So you’re raised to think that. Still the American ideals of beauty, I don’t know, you’re not really raised to, at least in our family, you don’t really appreciate your own, beauty I guess so I guess that was a way to say, I dunno, “I’m good enough, or I can get someone like that”

Twenty-eight year old Dianna also commented on the attractiveness of hapa boys: "I like local guys. I like mixed guys, they just appeal more to me."

Such comments about hapa beauty were often made. Yet in the past being hapa was not always desirable. Hannah, a hapa-haole Sansei found that even her own mother rejected her because of her ethnic make-up. Hannah's mother had a relationship with a G.I during WWII and Hannah was conceived. She does not know what happened to her biological father, but talked candidly during the interview (which she declined to have recorded) about how 'being hapa' set her apart from others. "Neither the Caucasian nor the Japanese boys wanted to have anything to do with you. Now, it's very different and times have changed. Boys want to date hapa, they're considered ideal." Hannah believes that it became acceptable to date hapa about the time she graduated from high school.

Ogawa, (1978a:56) through his research on AJA in Hawai'i, found that the conceptualised ideal of beauty differed greatly from the mainland. He writes:

it is not uncommon that when you ask many locals, be they Asian, Polynesian or haole who they feel are the most beautiful people in Hawaii, they will respond "Someone of mixed ancestry." That is, the Filipino-haole, the Japanese-Hawaiian, or the Japanese-haole are the people who possess the best physical qualities of the different races. This response illustrates the intermingling of the most dramatic or attractive physical features of a people to produce a hybrid beauty unique to Hawaii.

While younger Sansei considered hapa partners desirable, some of the married Sansei women provided a stereotype of AJA men. Their descriptions paint a sombre picture of a studious man that women would

*not* want to marry. Joyce told me that what attracted her to her husband was the fact he was ‘not your typical Japanese boy’:

He was not the pen-in-bag boy. There’s a joke in Hawai’i about the traditional Japanese, with the side comb and the dark rimmed glasses, holding a pen and bag, real studious you know. He was taller, not real tall, but taller than me which could be anybody. He just had a confidence about him, he was darker and there was a little roughness about him...I guess it was god really taking care of me because he could have been any jerk or bum and drop me when I got pregnant, and that thought, it never entered my mind. I was just brought up to be trusting to adults, the people around me you could just trust. So it never dawned on me what could happen in life.

He has the Taisho mentality. You know that pride, but maybe all men have that. He does have some, I think it was more developed.

Keilani describes her husband as a ‘typical Japanese’ man:

My husband is Japanese, Local Japanese. I don’t know if any of the other interviews have mentioned, but there are some traditional characteristics of Local Japanese boys. I mean I think if they grew up in the islands they like the islands. They don’t want to move, they’re satisfied staying here. They don’t want to move a way. You have those that will move to the mainland but the ones that are real strong, you know live here in the islands. You know. He has some prejudice I think, you know, although I think, he doesn’t say it, I think even for my daughter I think he would prefer that she would marry an oriental, and oriental person. But what is that to say today? There are all kinds of things...

Guess Frank De Lima, have you heard of Frank De Lima? He’s a comedian down in Waikiki. Kinda says stuff and that’s traditional too. We were growing up in the middle sixties, early seventies – black-rimmed glasses, thick black-rimmed glasses, that’s my husband, very straight, I mean you know, sticks to tradition, you know, that kind of stuff I think.

Dorothy an ‘older’ Sansei, who was seventy-one years of age, mentioned that Japanese men and their roles are changing. She was very lively during our discussion about the changes her Nisei husband and others of his age group were adapting to:

One of the interesting things is my husband is second generation, so Japanese men didn't do the laundry or hang the laundry or whatever. After we moved here, he was not going to be seen hanging the laundry or picking it up. But today, those men are seen hanging the clothes! Then Tony Kobuda, he's a Nisei, he was brought up in Japan, but when we go for walks around the block, he's there doing the dishes! There have been some real great changes around Hawai'i.

## Hopes and Aspirations

Of the six women interviewed, who had not married during their life, two women, Joanne and Andrea, do not consider it something to which they will aspire to. These women are content as they are, without the need to be involved in a long-term intimate relationship. Andrea views marriage as:

...a way to have kids legally, conveniently. Marriage is not a goal in my life, and I have never seen it as a goal, maybe when I was a really little kid, like at elementary school. You know you think about it. But as I got older, it's never been a goal in my life and that was kind of a contradiction to what my Mother had expected. But I think she's come to terms with it.

Joanne, who has cerebral palsy, was very candid in her reflections of her relationships, her view of marriage, the limitations of men in Hawai'i and discrimination:

I dated quite a lot of men. In 1977 I fell in love with a young man in Singapore and he asked me at the end of summer to marry him. But I couldn't live in Singapore. (I was in Singapore studying.) So that ended, I dated other men. I formulated my values in the sixties. At that time we had this idea that marriage was stagnant. Most of Hawai'i is very stagnant.

I have been very fortunate to meet some interesting men in my life and have good relationships. Many of the interesting ones are not here. It is difficult in Hawai'i to meet men who are intellectually compatible and accept a disability and accept a very strong-minded individual, because as a child I never learnt to compromise. I was

compromised in many ways - you have to learn how to compensate when you have a disability. It stopped me from taking notes. I had to improvise my own shorthand system. I learnt to compromise some things,. There is a hell of a lot to compromise for, trying to fight the system just to survive. It is a hell of a compensation just to survive.

When it comes to compromise in relationships, I get very impatient. I can deal with indirect discrimination...I wasn't discriminated because of my disability or because I was a woman, but because I talked too much. In this society if you are outspoken you are branded. I have had to live with this branding (for lack of a better term) and it has helped me to find males who are very flexible to accept the idiosyncrasies of me.

Christine, Dianna and Laura all look forward to marriage and have their own expectations of marriage. When asked about marriage and motherhood Christine echoes the societal expectations that continue to suggest that this is woman's intended role in society:

I look forward to it. I guess you know, that's what you're supposed to do and stability I guess in some weird way, and just 'cause I want to have a family. I feel like that it will make me less selfish and more focused, and mostly just not selfish. I feel like I am very.

Dianna currently working in a massage parlour in Honolulu, has hopes of getting married in a few years and has strong ideas about what she expects:

**Yumiko:** Do you want to get married one day?

**Dianna:** I think when I'm 31- 32, around that age.

**Yumiko:** What do you expect marriage to be like?

**Dianna:** I hope it's, you know, I hope he's honest, 'cause I see so many men, now come in and I can't believe what they do. They're not honest, they fool around behind their wife's back. I don't want that. I want the guy to be honest with me, that's the most important thing, no matter what, I don't care. I hope I'm happy.

Thirty-five year old Laura had recently ended a long-term relationship. We met through Elden, a mutual friend and a friendship quickly developed. Laura was my female confidante and companion during the six months I was on the island, introducing me to many island customs and traditions, and listening to my concerns and problems as I did hers. Marriage and relationships were often topics we discussed both during the interview and during my fieldwork. In a letter dated June 2000, Laura says she is 'still single'. While Laura would like to have a permanent relationship in the future, she feels that marriage is:

... a big, big step. I take it very seriously. Unfortunately right now there is like a 60% I think of divorces. So you know in some ways it scares me because in my family there are divorces on in fact both sides of the family, my cousins and like that, so I think if I get married, Miko, it has to be forever. I know nothing is forever but any relationship you have to let it grow. To me it's like a yard, you have to maintain it, you have to water it, nurture it and it takes two people. That's why dating and developing that courtship is so important. The scary part is that we both grow. I'm still growing, I'm still learning and hopefully you're in sync. But I believe that it can work, but you got to make it work. So I believe that marriage is a big step. It's trust and everything, of being loyal, communication, being on the same wavelength, sharing the same goals. If you both wanna raise a family you both have to feel the same way and it's unconditional love, you can't be selfish, it's a give and take kind of thing and sacrificing a lot too.

During our interview I enquired if she felt pressure because she was 'single':

At times I do because it's a natural thing. It's not just coming from Mom and Dad; it's relatives or friends. You know a lot of my friends have kids now, 'cause I'm in my mid-30s now, it's that clock thing you know. To me, when it comes to marriage or for that matter even having children, it should be for the right reasons, not because its your clock is ticking. I always look at it that it's God's plan too.

Kay was the oldest of the Sansei women who were not in permanent relationships. If she found the right person she would get married “even at my age,” she quips. In the past she felt pressure to get married but “not anymore. At one point my grandmother would say you know, oh *jikki* – there is such a thing as *jikki* – like Christmas cake.” She is philosophical about what she expects from marriage and the type of relationship a husband and wife should have:

Well I am currently single. I guess I have always known that I required or I needed a lot of freedom and for me, choosing a mate was a matter of compatibility, intimacy, rather than status or you know that kind of thing. So I would say, if I were looking for wealth, status, I would be married today (laughs), but that is not my thing. I always knew from the very start that it would have be a matter of all or nothing. And it turned out to be nothing!

As far as you know, my idea of marriage, to me, submission you know, there has to be only one head in the household and I feel it’s the man. I would want to be considered a partner with equal values and you know, equal respect, but as far as decision making, I think after discussion, it would still have to be up to the man. So that being the case, then I would have to respect and trust that person because he’s going to be making decisions for my welfare. So anyway – that’s kind of my concept of marriage. That’s ideal again – what’s ideal very rare. I think communication ahead of time and being open and honest is important too.

## Weddings

Many of the women went into great detail about their wedding, describing the ceremony and the preparations of this significant day. Some of the descriptions were revealing about relationships with parents and parental expectations. Lisa Ann, Hilma, Elo and Keilani discussed in detail their weddings. For Lisa-Ann and Keilani, meeting their parents’ expectations, reflecting *oyako ko ko*, respect to your parents, was particularly important in the preparations of their wedding ceremony:

*Lisa Ann*

I always thought I would have a free style wedding. I really did. I wanted to have you know easy going. I realised as we started to plan it like many brides do I guess, this wedding is not for you, it's for your parents and luckily I'm not a frilly person at all, you don't need to have all the trappings you know, I never have. But I told my mother whatever you want and I didn't want to make it costly, I told her we would pay for it and she paid for some of it but you know I took out a loan and I decided I wanted to pay for the loan myself and things like that. We got married. One thing I did promise her though, actually I promised my grandmother this, my mother's mother. None of her grandchildren got married in her church – the *honganji* – they all got married in a Christian church or on the mainland or in Honolulu or somewhere else and nobody at her church of all the grand children she had which was kind of sad for her. So I said "You know Grandma when I get married I'll get married at the *honganji* for you" "Oh thank you" But then she died at ninety-four years old.

I got married in my grandmother's church so I said that's for you, this is for you. I loved that church anyway. I think it's so pretty. We made it very simple. My touches were I had my friend who's a marbling artist, she marbled all these ribbons, pearl grey ribbons. My one extravagance – pearl grey ribbons for the favours. I had these little potted flowers. She had marbled these papers all multicoloured and we tied it with the ribbon and on each table. And my mother is very much...the tradition here is that usually one person gets the center piece for each table. But she didn't want to do that. She wanted all of her friends to have something to take home. So I had to have all these potted flowers... but they were very happy so I figured, that's what the wedding is for. All these people in a sense in that community who are a part of your coming up. It's a kind of a celebration of that. So it was very much for my mother. Very simple we didn't do a hotel wedding or anything like that. The local University men had a catering service, through their cafeteria so that was fine. Everybody had a good time. It was compromise. Mostly it was inviting my mother's friends. One thing we did keep it down to well ninety-nine percent of the people I did know. They were close friends from when we were little.

*Keilani*

I was the youngest and my sister went away and she got married even before finishing school and so my father didn't give her away. My older brother he didn't want a wedding and then my other brother had a wedding but he had his on the mainland so I was the last hope. So I had to have one of those traditional weddings like they have here in Hawai'i, where you get married in a church and have a big reception that kind of thing. It's not like where you have it here like at the hotels and all that kind of stuff. So I had it back on Maui, but I had it on a golf course area – we had to decorate it. On Maui when you have parties all part of the tradition is to get involved with the decorations and the food preparations and then you know, the whole thing to the clean up.

I got married in a Buddhist temple in fact the church is behind my parents' home, we have a Buddhist temple adjacent to my parents' property. It's a traditional Buddhist ceremony you wear gowns and stuff. I had four maid-of-honours<sup>4</sup>. I guess I was kind of different in that although they wore the same style gown, each of them wore a different color, pastel color gown. And my husband had white tuxedo and then at the reception we had all these flowers that were pastel colors. In fact my other girlfriend helped me with the decoration of the hall and she did a really nice job with all the greenery and flowers hanging down.

Elo describes her wedding:

I believe in religion. I believe that everybody should believe in the god that they believe in – I don't really see where a church is necessary. In the sense that if you decide to pray and you are under a tree that god will hear you no matter where you pray from. My upbringing was Buddhist. We went to church about once a year – I tie this into marriage because this dictates as to what kind of wedding you will have – you are talking families involved. I was lucky to pick someone who was not particular about church – it was a garden wedding and took about 5 minutes. We had a Reverend that was kind of non-denominational. He was a Christian pastor, but there was nothing said – you know how they give you the half hour of sins etc. it wasn't like that. In Hawai'i you get someone to sing the Hawaiian wedding song. It was right next to the beach – the Sheraton at the Beach. The tourists can see the whole wedding. We

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<sup>4</sup> Keilani's expression.

had a big wedding – about 600 or so people, My family is huge. I will have about 40 direct aunts and uncles and 2nd and 3rd cousins from the nucleus of that generation. Half of that was all just family. Arnold and I think we're just eloping! If I had to do it all over again I wouldn't – it was hard work. But I have the nice memories. When you get married the first time do it up, the photographer – go the hundred yards.

Some women opted for a small civil ceremony, particularly if their parents were not present or because of certain circumstances. Sandra was pregnant and living in Brazil away from her family. She and her husband were married by the justice of the peace. Sansei such as Dorothy and Gail, married on the mainland, also without their parents' presence. There was little discussion about how this may have impacted on their relationships with their parents and whether or not it was what their parents wanted and expected.

Yet weddings were not always joyous occasions. Both Joan and Margaret who have divorced, reflect on the way in which from the beginning of their marriages things were not as they had hoped, dreamed and planned. Typical images of a happy bride in white were tarnished and from the initial stages of their matrimony their marriages fell short of the ideal.

### *Margaret*

The wedding was not necessarily traditional because I didn't have the full traditional wedding gown. It was a private ceremony and a medium-sized reception. Traditional in the sense that there was a ceremony and there was a reception. And a honeymoon. I can't really recall being so overly happy. Perhaps I was but I can't recall.

Joan

They (*her husband's family*) had a go-between, they decided what you were going to do. You sat at this table with these people. They decided what your wedding was going to be like. I wanted a Christian wedding because I'm Christian, they wanted a Buddhist wedding so they got the Buddhist wedding. They had everything that was going to happen in the ceremony etc, etc. My father-in-law couldn't make it. One of his sister-in-laws passed away at that time so at the last minute he couldn't make it. Everyone came over here one at a time because it's bad luck to travel and I don't know how many trips we made to the airport. He flew me over on my own for a month and then we got every thing ready and the rest of the family came. And it was pretty formal ceremony you know. This is the guy who was supposed to be...he was one of the best catches in his area, because his family was very well off and they wanted to do everything you know the right way. So that's how it happened. I don't know 'cause I was stuck in a hotel with all the relatives it was not the honeymoon- not like a real fun honeymoon.

## **Expectations and Actualities**

One of the questions that generated discussion was on aspects of pre-marital expectations, and reflections on the actualities of marriage for Sansei women. Both Lisa-Ann and Hilma recalled how they found themselves falling into gender roles that they were not comfortable with, yet it took time for them to become conscious of these aspects of their relationships with their husbands. Hilma's story incorporates the processes through which she and her husband came to understand the behaviours and the way in which 'traditional' role models and expectations manifested themselves in their marriage. Through counselling they were able to address these issues and adjust gender roles in their relationship. During our interview I asked Hilma "Did you change after you got married?" She replied:

Yeah I did! I didn't think it was going to (*she laughs*)...naïve maybe that I didn't think it was going to change, but it did. When I

got married... dating John and living with him for just about, not more than maybe four months to getting married. What happened right after, all of a sudden I felt that, suddenly I felt that his expectations of me changed. That now, that we were married, he would quote unquote, had to be "husband-take-care-of-wife" quote unquote. And I felt some of that kind of pressure from him. At one point in our marriage, I think, me being the person... I mean the way our parents brought us up was we were all our own person. So I didn't have this thing about having to cook and clean and this kind of expectation put on me. If you know what I'm saying, that traditional housewife thing. But I felt that he had that expectation. And so because I wanted to be a good wife and all that I started to get into that kinda groove and I started thinking, this is really funky, because I never thought that it would be quite that obvious.

You know, I think for the first four years it was difficult, I hadn't acknowledge that, I wouldn't let myself acknowledge that my husband as kind and courteous and everything would have that kind of expectations of someone just 'cause you're married. All of a sudden it's more like instead of you married someone you love and like to share this life, it became very mundane so like you married this person so that you don't have to do laundry, or iron your own shirts or whatever, you know, this typical Japanese male type I felt, or traditional marriage kind of roles.

Hilma felt that the type of employment she was involved in affected and impacted on her husband's expectations of what a 'wife' should do and how she should behave. The situation caused Hilma to reflect on traditional expectations of women as wives. Her older sister is over ten years older than Hilma, and as she discusses, is still very 'traditional' in terms of gender roles.

So I think it was at that point that I realized, ooh, he is pretty traditional. Although he's not born in the forties or the fifties, I mean the forties, like my older sister who is very traditional – she cooks, she cleans, no question about it, she knew her role, no problem. But for me, it was like different 'cause when I realized that I had to acknowledge that and I had to make a change. What am I going to do? Should I do the housewife stuff or continue this business, be happy doing the business or what - right?

I think um... we went to counselling and everything like that and that was fine. And I think the counselling helped because it helped me to understand where he adopted all those values. Of course, right where he grew up. Mom and Dad are very like that, she does all the cooking. My house, my Mom doesn't do the cooking so I had to make these analogies right and make all these connections. And see and try and understand from his viewpoint why my attention leaving the home and him was sorta like saying I don't love you and so it weakened the marriage a little.

So when we started to acknowledge each other's upbringing it was really good 'cause he understood why I wasn't, all of a sudden it didn't seem...it wasn't not important, it was important, but I didn't think that it was that important for him and that he would take it so I guess be hurtful, that I wasn't paying attention to the home and I was just always at work. Even though it was ok for him. That was what I couldn't understand, even though it's ok for him not to work so hard and for him not to be home, why is it not for me? What makes my work less important than his? That's what I used to tell him and he couldn't answer 'cause he knew that it was partly true. And so then we stopped talking for a little while, I mean, we really didn't communicate. We talked, but not communicate.

My discussion with Lisa-Ann, who has been married to her husband for eight years, also highlighted the way in which traditional expectations of the wife's role manifested itself in her marriage. As I listened to Hilma and Lisa-Ann talk about these experiences I felt I was being 'warned' against the potential 'pit-falls' I might find myself confronting once I became married:

Like you, I always thought it (marriage) wouldn't change me. And in some sense it did at the beginning. I felt like that there were things that I should be doing, and of course my mother constantly fed that to me. And you know I had come off of a traditional period in my life, where a previous relationship I did everything for him, from cooking, although he was very untraditional, when it came to home life I did all the cleaning and I just kind of carried that over into my marriage. You know the woman did the house cleaning. I knew in the other part of my mind, this is bogus, you know, that's not what it's suppose to be, or for me, that's not what I am choosing. So it was a negotiating with myself to let go of those things and to

not feel bad about them. To know that I married really to live the life I wanted to. It's a constant, you know, change that we go through. Each stage in our marriage has been different you know.

Lisa-Ann's final comment that her marriage was constantly changing highlights the fact that marriage is not a stagnant situation, but like culture, is fluid, continually going through adjustments that each partner brings to the relationship. It requires a negotiation of needs and expectations that continue through the duration of the relationship.

Jo Anne Yukimura's interview consisted mainly of her work and contributions as Mayor of Kaua'i. Towards the end of our interview the discussion turned to her relationship with her husband and the impact her career had on their marriage and family life. She mentions 'models' of Japanese women that surround AJA women in the community and the way in which these influence and shape women's behaviour, including putting other's needs before your own, although Jo Anne admits she did not do this in relation to the development of her political career. It was a very touching and emotional account of a woman reflecting on the support and love of her family, and recognising just how important they were to her:

Well you know it's interesting because I don't remember this, but my sister remembers it. She remembers coming to our house once and finding the sink filled with dirty dishes. Piled high with dirty dishes and she says we were both waiting to see who was going to be the first one to start washing them. And I don't remember that (she laughs) but yeah. It amazes me how easy it is to fall into the servant role. Yeah. And I mean we're trained. You know the Japanese woman, it's like ingrained and you get models all over. And so, and putting aside your own needs and so forth and doing it, although I'll tell you, in my career I wasn't doing that.

And when I look back I see how unconscious I was a lot about my relationship with my husband and daughter, you know, 'cause they would wait for me and I'd be like hours late for something, and

they got to a point where they stopped waiting for me. And actually when I got out of office I started, at first I would feel like an outsider because they were so bonded and so close and it was like it was real adjustment period for all of us. But I wonder why John married me maybe for companionship and that was the last thing he got. I was so often not around. We used to go to Kauke from the day after Xmas to New Year's. So the last week of the year we'd always go to Kauke. And that's where we got married and it has a lot of special meaning to us. And so from the time we were married we'd do that every year and when I got to be mayor, I'd say ok you guys go up, go on ahead and I'll go up in a day or two and sometimes I wouldn't show up for two or three days. Because of all the things that had to be handled – I thought and I wasn't real good at balancing, I thought they're fine and I never realised how much my absence hurt them you know. And they were real good and they adjusted. I mean it's pretty miraculous that John is still with me after twenty-one years in the light of that time. So there was that. There's also that John and I we're both first-borns and its not a really good...first-born or only child I think it's the same kind of cluster of characteristics. It's not easy you know.

It was in 1992 before the hurricane that I think our relationship was really troubled then and I began to realise what was most important. I realised that all my work as mayor I did on the foundation and strength of family. When that was ok I could go and do my work and when it wasn't nothing mattered, I could hardly do my work and so I realised from my family, with Mom and Dad, that was always a source of strength I remember that and then my next family with my husband and daughter was the other foundation, I really began to realise that...In 1994 when I lost I think I was feeling so much the tension between my professional work and my private life and I chose. Even though I wanted to win so badly I had the general plan update, which was my main goal of being mayor, which was to create a vision for the island to enter the millennium with, a really clear vision that would pull us all together in the community and planning and visioning are my strengths, but I didn't get to that. I lost before I did that. But I got my family back.

There were moments in my relationship with John that were so wonderful I could never have believed that they were possible in those times when it was really hard. Which is why I really want to urge people to stick it out. Not tolerating it, but stick it out working at it.

A sense of resentment and resistance to expected gender roles and the way in which these manifested themselves within a marriage became points of contention in some relationships. Like Lisa-Ann, Hilma, and Jo Anne, some Sansei women found the role of domestic 'servant', wife and mother resulted in a loss of identity and a conflict within themselves about their real purpose in life. Unable to address these issues adequately, some marriages collapsed, resulting in divorce. Both Margaret and Joan found the way in which they had been raised, compounded with the expectations and upbringing of their husbands led to situations where they felt they were not individuals, but replicas of 'traditional', docile women. Margaret highlights this through her opening statement when we began talking about marriage:

Let me clarify something first. I am a product of my generation. What was expected of me was to be a mother and wife and I fulfilled my role, I was never asked what do you want to be, what are your dreams, what are your goals? Because my husband, my ex-husband was also a product of his time his role was to get an education, his role was to get a profession, forge a family. And my role was simply to take care of the family. Not knowing, really not knowing any better, that's what I did and did and did and did, until I reached the point in my life where I started to think 'there's got to be more than this'. It's unfortunate I had to find out that way because when I packed up and left I really broke three hearts: my two sons' and my ex's. It's really difficult for other people to understand that. No, I did not leave him for another man; I left him for me. I think women have an easier time understanding that it's really difficult to have others understand that – it's not really important as long as my sons understand that and they're still struggling with that.

Joan's marriage also left her without an identity. She outlined the history behind her marriage and her own reasons for agreeing to the relationship. Her story reflects some of the 'obligations' her parents expected her to fulfil before she married, and aspects of AJA beliefs about

marital relationships between husband and wife. Like Margaret, because Joan felt she could no longer negotiate the life expected of her with her desires, compounded by the fact she was unable to have children and therefore could not 'provide one', failing in her husband's and in-laws' perception of her role as wife.<sup>5</sup>

I went to college but didn't finish. I got married to this guy who was very well off in the mainland. He provided for me for about, I mean we were married for twenty years. For the first ten years of my marriage, its like I signed everything under his name "Mrs X" and pretty soon I thought, wait a minute, who am I? So I went back to school, got a teaching degree, but his family didn't like it because number one, I think they wanted the obedient wife which is why I was picked. This is farming family and very incorporated. Everything is inherited that they have so you will be provided for, but you won't be able to hold a position or have a real voice in the family. You were used as a hostess I would think, because I went to a lot of wonderful places and met a lot of people but always as a hostess.

He was two years younger which I didn't want in the beginning. 'Cause I don't think younger guys are real mature you know. And we did get married, but everybody was protesting or accuse you, are you pregnant, you know, they have all these questions, he was like nineteen and I was twenty-one. So we waited until he was twenty. We had planned another wedding but they didn't like that, they thought that he was too young. His family is the reason why I'm so strong today.

I asked Joan what her expectations of marriage were when she married.

She replied:

That's a good question because I was kinda naïve. I was real wild before I got married. In those days it was like that's really wild and racy. I dated men of cross-culture which is something you don't do in those days. I had a lot of friends, I was pretty popular and to other Japanese people like your family, that's not good. You're too colourful, you're too independent. So I got married thinking it was pretty safe, I could get married, this guy will take care of me, and

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<sup>5</sup> Joan adopted a child with cerebral palsy which added to the family's sense of her inappropriate behaviour.

what I had done before, my history would be erased. So I spent the next ten years just being a good wife. My mother taught me to be a good wife is very honourable to marry a man of good standing, he brought you everything you ever needed, but you didn't own it. You knew that they bought it for you, but it always stayed in their name, like the cars and everything. Just to live there and not complain and try to do your best and try to be a good mother, daughter-in-law and wife

Almost all the women spoke of some adjustment in their lives and relationships with their husband, and also a change in domestic workloads and the roles expected of them. Joyce discovered she was pregnant and married soon after she left high school. She anticipated her Issei grandmother rejecting her for disgracing the family, however Joyce found her to be accepting of the circumstances. She spoke of the difficulties she had during the initial stages of her marriage. As divorce was not something she felt she could consider, Joyce found other means of coping with the situation. She turned to Christianity and discovered how she could work with her husband:

1977, I got married right after high school. I met him on my graduation night. I immediately fell in love with him, I don't know why (laughs), no, no, I do know why. But what happened is that I got pregnant. But what I really valued about my grandmother - she was still alive then - when I went to share the news with her I was expecting some rejection, but she said *omedeto*<sup>6</sup> and she was congratulating me and the love and humbleness that she showed, that just made me continue going on and not being ashamed or anything.

And then we got married you know, I think I knew him for five months, that's like 1977, that's twenty-one years already. But if it wasn't for the Christian values on how to work on communicating and working on your marriage, after that one year of marriage, I was thinking to myself, what do I do? Japanese don't believe in divorce. My parents didn't raise me up to believe in divorce. And so at that time I felt trapped. But then a good friend of his, a neighbor lady

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<sup>6</sup> 'Congratulations' in Japanese.

who still comes to this church, she took me to a ladies' Bible study. That's where I learnt 'wives be in submission to your own husband', learning how to work with your husband, not as a doormat kind of Japanese way, but in a loving way.

Jan found the adjustment to married life a little easier than other Sansei as she no longer had to care for her two younger brothers that she had been living with. She described the preparations she and her husband went through before their marriage, and the advice that was passed on to them by the priest that married them:

I had a small wedding, 'cause I didn't have a lot of money and neither did he, I thought he had money and he thought I had money but it wasn't. It was funny because I'm an Episcopalian and I'm a very strong Episcopalian. Father Lindscott from the church said he wanted my husband to be baptised and confirmed and my husband would do it on the basis of getting married but it didn't truly mean anything in his heart. So he put it to Father Lindscott, "You know I'm doing this only because I want to get married not because I want to become an Episcopalian and Christian, and I know we can make things work and dadiddadida."

So then Father Lindscott said, "I'll have to find you a very liberal Episcopalian priest."

So that's how come we got connected with Ilolani School, because the priest that married us was very liberal and he was Dr Gifford. And he married us at the church, my husband liked him and he had this wonderful philosophy about marriage when we went to see him, you know when you have your talk with the priest about marriage is not a fifty - fifty thing. Sometimes its going to be sixty-fourty or whatever, but someone has to give in and you'll never succeed if you just say fifty- fifty, you gotta put in your fifty percent. Someone always has to put in a little bit more, next time the other person puts in a little more or less.

So we got married in an Episcopal Church and I was happy (laughs). And my parents were still in Japan and we made it. My parents had never met him before and I think they were quite happy because I think they thought I was going to be an old maid. 'Cause at that time, if you were twenty-five years old, that was kind of late. So I think they were very happy about the situation.

Actually at the beginning it was less work for me because I was taking care of two boys – my two brothers - so when I got married, I only had one person to think about. There was less ironing, less this, less that (*laughs*).

-What did I expect it to be like? I guess like a fairy-tale I think. No, actually I knew that my husband was an only child you know, with no father and things like that, so I knew in the beginning and we talked about it before we got married, about him having to be the sole supporter of his mother and that has happened. But you accept it, and you have to.

## **The Right Age**

Both Joan and Jan mention expectations about what was considered an appropriate age to marry in Hawai'i. Joan felt that she had married too young, and Jan mentioned that at twenty-five, a woman was 'late' in marrying. Other women also discussed the 'right age for marriage'. Those who had separated after an 'early' marriage like Joan, often attributed the part of the break down of their marriage to the young age at which they married. Hannah, Elo and Teresa who were divorced all felt that they married too young and did not know enough about life to understand the implications of marriage.

Hannah said that once she finished high school, she really wanted to get away from her mother so she married at the age of nineteen. She believes that part of the reason the marriage didn't last long - it lasted less than five years - was because she was too young and so angry. Her Local AJA husband was unable to meet her expectations of marriage. Hannah was unhappy and had expected her husband to make her happy. When she realised that there was something wrong within her that was causing the unhappiness, she sought psychiatric help. Hannah married a second time to a Local hapa, but this marriage also ended.

Teresa whose first boyfriend became her first husband when she was three months pregnant also mentioned her feelings that 'being too young' contributed to the ending of her marriage:

We were just too young. We wanted our freedom. We never dated, We felt like we were robbed of our young life. I was married for five years. Five years after the first marriage ended, I got remarried.

Teresa's second marriage ended after eight months of marriage. She attributes this to the twenty-two-year age gap between them. She says of that marriage:

The second time around when you have children, then you want a father for your son, so you get into marriage again. I guess I loved the guy...it's been sixteen years since I got divorced so I have been single all this time. The second time was on the conservative side. I'd come home from work, cook dinner...the second time I guess with him being older, set in his ways – boring!

Lori, who eloped with her first husband, divorced soon after and has since remarried, revealed in her interview aspects of her perceptions of an appropriate marrying age and roles associated with being a wife:

I actually got married a lot earlier than I expected. So that caused me to move Maryland on the East Coast. I lived there for 2 years. The marriage didn't work out and um I was debating whether to stay and live there because I did have a group of friends who were very supportive during this hard time of my life, but I decided to move back home because I missed my family and if I moved back home I maybe would have a better chance maybe if I wanted to go back to school...

**Yumiko:** What age did you expect to get married?

**Lori:** Oh I think probably I expected maybe in my twenties but a lot later. But I think probably because maybe being the youngest and you feel like you're always playing catch up with your older brothers and sisters, I think I had that feeling and plus maybe I really wanted

to be independent of my family, maybe at the age I was still a little hesitant about doing it on my own so I think that maybe caused me. I was about twenty, twenty-one.

**Yumiko:** What were your expectations of marriage?

**Lori:** Expectations were to just probably marry someone who would really be like a best friend, someone who is very supportive of you.

**Yumiko:** In reality?

**Lori:** The reality was far from! I think probably we were in love or we loved each other but I think we had different expectations and as we probably got to know each other better we knew each other. He was actually from New York. Very different world! Actually my first marriage, we just eloped actually! (*laughs*)

**Yumiko:** So you teach, and you're working with hair, what other things do you do?

**Lori:** Trying to be a good wife!

**Yumiko:** So you're remarried now?

**Lori:** Yeah, I did remarry and the person in my life actually he is very special and he's really like my best friend and supports me in whatever I do. Yeah he's the closest thing to being a soulmate.

**Yumiko:** How do you see your role as a wife?

**Lori:** I see myself as being really like a support for my husband, being like I mentioned before, like really like a best friend and someone he can depend on when he needs a little bit of a boost or encouragement. So really being there to support him and um, but really losing like your own identity.

Like Lori and Teresa, Elo felt that she married too early and now believes that it is important for young women to 'wait' before getting married to know what it is they really want in a partner. She recalls her

feelings in her first marriage and compares and contrasts them with her feelings for the man she is currently involved with:

Had my first high school sweetheart – he was two years older. I was engaged to him in my senior year, but it didn't pan out. To be in High school and have a diamond ring – kind of unheard of. We broke up – I think when I started to go to college and he was UH. You start changing. I think at High school I had boyfriends – puppy kind of things. A few months I later met my first husband and we were married about seven months after we actually met. I don't look at it like being a mistake. We were married for sixteen years. I think in retrospect in general – I think that girls should wait. I went from three different kinds of relationships from when I started dating to when I got married. When I look at it I think people should wait if they can.

When I first met my first husband it was strange because you know how you get attracted to some one – I was very attracted to Arnold – everything about him. He blows me away because he is brilliant – he is creative, yet he has an extreme business streak you don't find in writers. I was attracted to him because we connect – you kind of just melt when you meet him. I didn't find my first husband attractive at all. He's a real sweetheart. We met through mutual friends. Had common friends. I used to ride dirt bikes. It's not a passion for speed, but to try things that are new. People should, if they are healthy why not? So I bought a dirt bike – on the mountain. That's how we met that way. Just talking and fell in love, got married. I think it was too fast, we didn't know about each other – what it would take to bring up kids and make it work.

I am not a good person to nurture someone who is not caring enough about making it on their own. I don't like people who ask for money on the street – we owe you money? Life is hard for everybody on this planet so don't hold up a sign 'give me work' you should be able to find a job or a skill that's what the community does as a whole for people. I will help people if they are working hard. My first husband was too complacent about the sort of stuff. After 12 years we separated and tried again for 3 years and it just slides into the same routine. And that was it.

If you fall in love with someone then you should get married and share a life together. In that sense I am really old fashioned, because my friends say that just because you're married doesn't mean you have to have everything joint –which is the point of marriage! I think

it is a good institution for learning and everybody should do it at least once.

Women who heeded such ‘advice’ and ‘waited’ to get married, such as Hilma and Lisa-Ann feel that they were more prepared to cope with the different aspects of married life as they were more mature in making their decision. Keilani, who like Hilma and Lisa Ann co-habitated with her husband before marriage, discusses the issue of ‘older’ marriage that had been raised previously by Jan and Carol:

Well see, I guess I got married later in life, you know, not real lately, but I was twenty-eight when I got married. So my husband was thirty, so it was considered a little later than normal and we were kind of living together prior to that you know, so I dunno, I guess you get married and you want to have a house and you know those kinds of stuff. And we were able to buy a house. I guess maybe the way I was brought up I wasn’t one to have anything really fancy. So even our house today isn’t the fancy, fancy kind, it’s just a cracker box house you know, it’s a little old house, but we have a roof over our head, you know.

I guess everybody gets married. If I had my way I wouldn’t get married. Maybe at that time, when you’re young, for example one of my Four-H<sup>7</sup> kids when I first came here to Wahiwa, I was about twenty-five I think and one of the Four-H kids, I don’t know if they really knew my age or not, they might have calculated it. I was really close to a lot of the girls in Four-H and stuff and they were only in High school. They would say Miss Long, if you’re twenty-five five and you’re not married, you’re an old maid. You know. I guess their expectation is they’re in high school and twenty-five is you know adult.

While no one would say specifically what was an appropriate age to marry, it appears the general consensus is that if one had not completed tertiary education, then this was too early, and anything over twenty-five

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<sup>7</sup> Four-H is a club in Hawai’i for young people. The four Hs stand for ‘Head, Heart, Hands and Health’

was, when Sansei women were of 'marrying age' was too late. Despite this, many of the women felt that, at twenty-five, I was marrying too early.

## Separation and Divorce

Statistically, AJAs in the past were less likely to divorce. However Mengel (1997) argues that divorce has always been an option for AJA women to enable them to take some control of situations that they found to be intolerable. Of the thirty women I interviewed, six women had been divorced. Three had remarried, of whom only one remained in the second marriage, while two others were currently in long-term relationships. Within the AJA community it is a subject where little research exists, which is unfortunate, as I found that the women who had experienced the ending of their marriage reflected on social roles and expectations of women vary deeply.

Joan, Sandra and Margaret were very open in their discussions about divorce and the impact that it had made on their lives. Joan felt she had to divorce the family, not just the husband she had married, as they were hindering her autonomy as a person. She could make no decisions alone, nor pursue the things that she wanted to. The divorce, while being hard on herself and her son, has liberated her.

Margaret also felt that divorce allowed her autonomy and a chance to develop as a person, rather than stagnate in the roles of mother and wife. However there are still many issues that she has had to come to terms with. Her transcript is a fascinating read as she dramatically highlights the expectations and roles that AJA society (and American society at large) demand of a woman, incorporating the roles of wife and mother, with the values of submissiveness, duty and *gamman* (putting up with one's lot):

**Yumiko:** How did divorce change your life?

**Margaret:** It's a turnaround. I have been legally divorced for a year and two weeks. However, I packed up and left three and a half years ago. I dragged the divorce for various reasons, not because I was doubtful but for personal reasons I dragged it out until it became a little too costly so I completed it.

First of all, it gave me control of my life. I now carry the key to my life. I'm rediscovering the girl that I left behind. I went into intensive therapy after I packed up and left because I couldn't handle it, I wanted to go, but I couldn't handle it because I left my family. Mothers don't leave their children. So I had to solve that in me. So I went into therapy. There were so many great things that helped me turn the page in this part of my life. I'm not a hundred percent there because when I start talking about leaving my family, it still gets to me. But I had to save myself because I've been a wife and a mother all of my married adult life.

The woman, Margaret, got lost in the shuffle. So I needed to rediscover her, I needed to enliven her again. And the only way I could do that was to leave the black pit that I was in, because I had a husband who was not supportive, not understanding, couldn't care less. "How I tolerated a man like that," I asked my shrink – "what made me, all these years stay with a man like that?" "She said it was duty. I am a product of my generation. It was my duty and I did it. And I took care of the world. I took care of the world and I did not take care of Margaret the woman.

So I tell those people today bring a balance in your life, you have your career, hang on to it because that identifies you also, because when you become a wife and a mother, of course you take on different roles, but you cannot lose yourself like I did, I lost my self. So I am rediscovering my ways again. I've always loved to dance so I am back into dancing. I could never go dancing. He never took me dancing. In that twenty-seven years we were married I have too many fingers to count the gifts he has given me. Not that he was stingy, he was not. He was just never thoughtful. So therefore I was unimportant and therefore my sons looked upon me as unimportant because their father is the model and so I bought it – I was not important, I bought it all these years. Through therapy 'to hell with that, I am important', but you don't really think about it when you're groomed a certain way which is to nurture the family, to nurture the

world, solve their problems and fulfil their needs, show them the way.

There have also been positive changes in her relationship with her family as a result of the separation:

The four of us, my two sons, my ex husband and I, can sit down now and have a good dinner and we can laugh which we never have done in twenty-seven years which sounds idiotic. We never laughed, we never had a good time at a dinner table, we can do that now. For a few reasons. My attitude has changed, so has my ex-husband's and because I don't see my family every week, there are things to share and I've developed a really great sense of humor so I can tell them stories in a way I didn't think I could and make them laugh, and I think laughter is such a great medicine.

Within Margaret's narrative there is a sense of duty and *gamman* to her husband, especially for the sake of the children. Eventually her own need for her happiness superseded these obligations and she became both free and critical of the social mould in which she feels women of her generation are cast.

Sandra found that she could no longer continue to tolerate the situation in which her marriage to her Brazilian musician husband placed her. She describes the situation that led to the ending of her marriage:

I was going to school and struggling to make ends meet and raising three kids, and I was pretty much raising them on my own, 'cause my husband was always gone, on the mainland. He'd come back for a few months and then go off again. So I felt like a military wife in many ways. It was a lot of pressure but it had to be done so I kept plugging along. Kept plugging along to the point that let's see...we got divorced early 1993. I was, I guess with the advent of my studying interpreting, new job as a teacher, finding myself in different ways, I was singing with a salsa band, I was no longer concentrating on promoting his career. That's my opinion of it. And our worlds had become so far apart he was going off and playing his music, and concerned with what he was doing, and he was

squandering money. He had a car accident and broke his vertebrae, he was pretty much out of the work force. When he got better he'd still go back to the mainland.

**Yumiko:** How did the divorce make you feel?

**Sandra:** Well it was a relief because I felt like all this time I...someone put it one way: two draft horses pulling a heavily loaded cart up a hill and one horse decides to get on the wagon and be part of the load while the other horse keeps pulling the wagon up the hill and it gets just a little bit too hard. So you're not going to pull your load, you're not on the team anymore.

It was very stressful, especially on the children. They understood my position yet of course they don't want their parents to split up. He did not work out the divorce. He did not want it. He felt everything was ok, but I was not happy, not happy at all. He started accusing me of fooling around. I was highly insulted – I was working so hard. How could I? How insulting could you get? You know you're not even helping me out so I don't need this anymore. I had reason to doubt his fidelity when he was on the road too, 'cause he was very flirtatious if you have any idea how flirtatious Latin American men are!

Elo believes that divorce is becoming more commonplace in today's society. As she reflected on her immaturity and the impact it had on her marriage and subsequent divorce, she like Sandra, voiced her concern of the impact that divorce has on children:

All my previous dates or when you go steady with somebody there is always that attraction – but I was not attracted to my first husband. I found him interesting, different from how I am. I think being 22 maybe because I hadn't experienced life enough to know what it is to live with somebody – you find differences and unfortunately divorce is something that happens everyday now – half my friends are divorced and onto their second marriage now. It is still hard for the kids and have to gather things from one home to another. It is an inconvenience to say the least. Forget homework, papers to be signed – not to mention a whole bunch of psychological things that they have to go through. It is such an individual thing. You are never going to know if that person is right unless you jump

in. Dating is one thing, living together is another and the final commitment is the final change in the relationship.

Divorce illustrates that Sansei women may *gamman*, and persevere for the sake of the children to some extent, but they will also think of their own needs and seek to fulfil their lives for the sake of themselves. Sansei are challenging the roles of wife and mother that have been expected by AJA and mainstream America in their ongoing lives and choices.

### **Absences in discussions**

Through discussions with Sansei women about marriage it becomes clear that married life is not stagnant but means constantly changing and adjusting to different environments and conditions. Emerging from the narratives is a sense that some of these stories include experiences that women in 'Western' countries may also encounter, such as the wedding ceremony, adjustments after marriage and divorce, as well as those that may be particular to AJA Sansei women.

From these interviews, it could be concluded that Sansei women, for the greater part, seek to be in committed long-term relationships such as marriage. For those who are not in such a relationship and for those who have been in the past, marriage is still perceived as a 'desirable' goal. Matrimony and life as a 'wife' are considered important aspects of Sansei women's lives, and contribute to shaping their identity and expectations of their roles within marriage and to the wider society. While traditional views are being negotiated and challenged, there is still an accepted belief that marriage is part of the 'rite of passage' to womanhood.

However, variants of long-term relationships in American society were missing in the group of thirty women I interviewed. Only one

woman, at the time the interviews were conducted, was co-habiting (living together in a de facto relationship) with a partner. Hilma, Lisa Ann and Keilani had lived with their husbands for some years before marriage. Laura had recently ended a long-term relationship with her live-in boyfriend. This however, does not suggest that AJA women do not co-habit with their partners, but perhaps Sansei women are less likely to co-habit than perhaps Yonsei or Gosei women. Further research needs to be conducted into understanding this aspect of AJA society and what co-habitation means, implies or is interpreted as being.

From my fieldwork, it could be assumed that all Sansei women are heterosexual, as I did not interview, nor did I meet any lesbian Sansei women while I was in Hawai'i. I do not believe that this is the case. Perhaps Sansei lesbian women do not identify strongly as Sansei or even AJA, or perhaps there is a social taboo on the topic that would prevent them from feeling they should participate in this research. My own sexuality as a hetero-sexual hapa researcher may also have impacted on the places that Sansei women were sought for interviews, and the relevance Sansei lesbians may have felt the research had for them. There is little exploration of the lesbian community within Hawai'i and Japanese Americans, although increasingly research and commentaries about and by lesbians are becoming available under the umbrella of Asian-American (lesbian) women's identity.

Also absent from the interviews are Sansei women involved in relationships with married men, or other extramarital relationships. This again may have been 'swept under the carpet' as a taboo subject, or one that women did not wish to mention, desiring to present themselves in the best possible light. This may reflect certain beliefs about what is acceptable behaviour for AJA women in relation to marriage and motherhood within

a heterosexual model of a family. For Local Sansei women the role of 'wife' or 'partner' contributes to a strong 'sense of belonging' to Local culture. This is further contextualised within relational history<sup>8</sup>, which for Local Sansei is particularly significant in relation to parents and values as will be discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>8</sup> 'Relational history' refers to having a history or connection with people, places and events through your social relationships (Howard 1996:263).

## Chapter Five

### Belonging by History: Role Models and Values<sup>1</sup>

For AJA in Hawai'i belonging to an ethnic group is grounded not only in ongoing social ties, but relies heavily on history. Reinforcing their ongoing social relationships with family, their talk story sessions heavily emphasised relational history through discussions about their grandparents and parents, particularly their mothers and grandmothers, who embody the immigrant and plantation past of the islands. This past is also recognised as having created an environment where particular characteristics (tolerance, acceptance and hard work) have become fundamental to survival in the harsh conditions, and have since been acquired by other Locals in the islands.

Family, for AJA, provides and reinforces role models and acts as a catalyst for the sharing of past memories. Ogawa (1978a:48) stresses the importance of considering family in understanding AJA. He writes:

...the Japanese American family must be viewed as an institution which involves many factors. Primarily the family is the transmitter of the ancestry and heritage of the Japanese

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<sup>1</sup> While I have used terminology based on the Meiji Japan's value system, and used by scholars to discuss AJA values, these terms are no longer used by AJA in Hawai'i. Scholars have utilised this traditional terminology to categorise values and ideas that differed from western American values, tracing them back to those of Japanese origin, and therefore applying the same Japanese terms. Despite the loss of both Japanese terminology for certain values, and loss of the Japanese language, certain aspects of tradition and culture from Japan still persist in Hawai'i today. When I categorised the values that the women whom I interviewed believed as being important in their daily lives, it was I who identified the way in which they related to the traditional terms. In the written dialogue relating to each concept, I have attempted to capture the words and narratives that the women used in conveying these values and ideas to me. The categorisation in the following discussion has resulted from my interpretation of the stories and values the women spoke of without using specific terms such as *haji*, *giri*, *on* and *oya ko ko*.

As I listened to the women speak, I found myself identifying with their stories about obligations and hard work, and began to realize that these values that scholars had identified and written about do in fact constitute AJA identity, and to a large extent, my own. Although the terms originating from the Japanese language such as *on* are not used by the women themselves, the things that they conceptualize continue to exist at many levels. Perhaps, if my own experience did not embrace such concepts, my understanding of them would have been less. What I was initially resistant to acknowledge became a vital part of my understanding of Sansei women and belonging to Local ethnicity.

Americans in Hawai'i. The history, the traditions of the people are rooted in the family history, one learns about his (sic) generation, his (sic) values and his (sic) identity in Hawai'i.

Sansei narratives about their family members support Ogawa's assertion. Sansei perceptions of their grandmothers and mothers and associated Issei and Nisei behaviour are markers against which Sansei women compare and contrast their own experiences and identities. Beginning with a reflection on female role models within AJA families and progressing to a discussion on significant values as highlighted by Sansei, this chapter explores the way in which Local ethnicity for Sansei women is manifested through relational history and imparted through shared values and expectations.

### **Issei Women: Introducing the Picture Bride Myth**

Local historians, in assembling contemporary accounts of immigrants in Hawai'i apparently wish readers to believe that the immigrant experience for Issei AJA women was homogenous, all supposedly coming to the islands from Japan as picture brides. A deeper discussion of the implications of this representation has been reserved for a later section of the thesis (see Chapter Seven), however, a brief introduction to this stereotype helps contextualise aspects of Sansei experience.

The Issei picture bride is typically represented as a hard-working and self-sacrificing woman from Japan whose marriage had been determined through the exchange of photographs with her prospective husband who had moved to Hawai'i to earn his fortune. Andrea's grandmother was a typical picture bride:

My grandfather came to Hawai'i in the early 1900s as a contract labourer to work on the plantation fields...He was single. He then, I

guess, decided he wanted a wife, he was going to stay here. So through, I don't know how the process had occurred, he requested, actually he's from Okinawa, and this is the grandparents on my mother's side, they're from Okinawa. He requested to his family in Okinawa, I guess, that he wanted to get married, and would they look for a bride for him. So what they did, they sent pictures of various women through which he selected my grandmother. So then she sailed over to Hawai'i on her own as a picture bride, met him here on O'ahu, got married and started a family.

Andrea's narrative does not reveal how her grandmother felt when she met and took up marital life with her new husband. Most picture brides had never met their prospective husbands, and some were aghast to discover the man who greeted them when their ship docked had no similarities with the photograph they clutched. Issei men would sometimes send outdated photographs of more handsome friends to woo their brides to Hawai'i. They had been promised wealth and a life of luxury, but were expected to toil in the sugar, pineapple or coffee plantations alongside their husbands.

Despite these conditions most picture brides are portrayed as having long, happy and satisfactory relationships with their husbands. Those who did not, (women who were abused or tolerated alcoholic partners), "just accepted their fates and endured as their families grew. A few brides ran away and sought refuge with other Japanese in the city" (Hazama and Komeiji 1986:66). Those that remained with their husbands often did so "out of a sense of duty to the wifely role as they understood it" (Spickard 1996:37). Joyce was one of the five women whose grandmother fits the common perception of Issei as picture bride. Her grandmother's story reflects some of the common elements of the picture bride experience and introduces values of hard work and frugality:

My grandmother was unusual because even in Japan she led a very different life. They let her do what she wanted. She was hurt as an infant. Her mother left her in the care of a young older child, and she fell into a fire. Her mother felt guilty about it. She was really independent and broke away from Buddhist things, after her arrival in Hawai'i she became a Christian right away.

I was raised with my grandmother in the house. She spoke only Japanese and broken pidgin English. She cooked things like *nishime*<sup>2</sup> and fed us well...she cooked food in a very frugal way...not being wasteful...

My grandmother was very pleasant. Her mannerisms were what I see and wish we would keep in a sense. She would think about what she was saying to somebody and didn't blurt it out. Now we are raised up different already, so we blurt out what's on our mind...my grandmother was very humble.

I couldn't speak Japanese, but I could understand grandmother and speak back to her in a whole bunch of broken Japanese. Pidgin, English – I would sit in front her and watch soap operas and I would interpret...how did I do that?

She was a traditional Japanese grandmother. You don't see too many now, they are all passing on...she raised all nine of her children to be respectable, kind, loving adults. I don't see too much of that nowadays where all the entire family is well grounded, secure, responsible adults. I think it all went back to her because my grandfather, her husband, he must have been good...he died of diabetes complications... The Japanese woman took care of the children and the home, so she must have done that. He (Joyce's grandfather) used to go off drinking and gambling....

As a result of the difficult working conditions, and for some surviving loveless marriages and abusive husbands, picture brides are hailed in Local history and society for persevering for the sake of the children (*kodomo no tame ni*). Picture brides, and hence Issei women are portrayed "as passive, hardworking women, dutifully accepting and adhering to their designated roles of wife and mother" (Mengel.1997:19). Their enduring hallmark in Local history became

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<sup>2</sup> Slow cooked vegetables and meat.

“hard work and sacrifice for the sake of the family coupled with enormous resourcefulness” (Nakano 1990:24).

*Why did they Come?*

Literature on Japanese immigrant women’s history had generally assumed that the reasons for picture bride marriages were based on filial piety, and duty to the family. Fan (1996:75) states,

there were many reasons for women to come. Most just obeyed their parents’ arrangements...Others were motivated by economic need. Some daughters became picture brides to help their families through difficult times or to put a brother through school.”

They become relegated to the status of wife and mother without questioning the autonomous reasons for leaving Japan. Criticism of this perspective has encouraged consideration of alternative ways of representing and considering the factors that influenced immigrant women’s decisions. Chai (1992:126), based on her interviews and research with Korean, Okinawan and Japanese picture brides in Hawai’i concludes:

Each woman had her own story, based on individual desires and aspirations, about how she made her decision to become a picture bride, and each had idiosyncratic circumstances such as premarital pregnancy or being an old maid. For most women, lack of alternatives made marriage a means of achieving individual goals of adventure, social status enhancement, or a free independent life. In fact some women were so eager to come to Hawai’i that they arranged their own marriages.

A picture bride, Shika Takaya (cited in Nakano 1990:26), while on board the Mexico Maru in 1917, reflected on the rationale of some of the women making the journey from Japan to a new country. She wrote in her journal on the topic:

I believe we all go to America for one of the following reasons:

1. Hopes of becoming rich
2. Curiosity of this civilized country called America
3. Fear of mother-in-law in Japan
4. Sexual anxiety in those who have passed marriage-age
5. Dreams of an idyllic, romantic life in the new land.
6. Lack of ability to support self
7. Filial obedience: sacrificing self to obey parents wishes.

In addition to the possibilities that Takaya lists, Japanese immigrants left Japan because of the economic crisis that had arisen as a result of Meiji restructuring. Jobs became scarce, and those with jobs suffered under poor conditions. Economic hardship affecting individuals and families pushed potential immigrants out of Japan to seek both employment and better working conditions. (Spickard 1996:11-12). Joan, whose grandmother was also a picture bride, explained her grandmother's motivation for leaving Japan as follows:

My grandmother ran away from home because she was one of eight children and they were all boys. I think they were all boys and she was the only girl. She had to work hard in the fields and cook breakfast, lunch and dinner, do all the washing...and she thought if she came to Hawai'i to work in the pineapple fields, she would have an easier life, only to find out it was just as bad. She was on my father's side.

Of the thirty interviews I conducted, only five of the women had Issei grandmothers who came to Hawai'i as picture brides. Others had arrived as children, or accompanied their husbands. Spickard (1996:35) suggests that this is not unusual to find in AJA society, arguing that:

(W)hile the picture bride story is memorable, it was not true of all Issei women. Interviews with Issei in recent decades have turned up many who say they knew one or two picture brides when they were young and heard of others. But very few women interviewed will admit to having been picture brides themselves, and very few men say they were picture grooms – in fact, it seems likely that the more common practise was for Issei men to return and bring wives over than simply to send for them sight unseen.

The *Yobi Yosei* period, during which Issei women were believed to have arrived, lasted just under twenty years, from 1908 until 1924, when the Asian Exclusion Act severely halted Japanese immigration to the United States and Hawai'i. While immigration of women occurred before that period, and not all women who arrived on the Islands were picture brides, there has been little documentation of their different experiences. The following stories from three Sansei women reflect the diversity of Issei women and demonstrate that picture brides are possibly more a socially constructed myth of desired behaviour of women, than an actual reality:

*Sandra*

My paternal grandmother came here at age four. My grandmother grew up in town. She attended Royal Elementary School and she stayed downtown, the building still stands there. My Uncle had a hat store, in those days every one had to wear hats when they were outdoors...and she stayed in town with her uncle and aunt and on the weekends she would get on the train and go out to Wahiwa and visit her parents. She was essentially a city girl. She was shipped off to Japan to Ferris Girls' School in Yokohama and went to High school there. During that time my grandfather, his family somehow knew my grandmother's family so she would go and visit them and she would see my grandfather around – he was older...so the marriage was arranged for those two. So she came back to Hawai'i after she finished High School, she and her friends had all these great aspirations about what they wanted to do. I found out before my grandmother passed away at age ninety-two, that she had wanted to be a scientist and that she had wanted to go to Europe right after high school graduation, but her father said no, you come back to Hawai'i and you marry Tsukiyama, a high school education is good enough for a farmer's daughter. So she came back and got married at age nineteen.

*Gail*

I remember my grandmother on my Mum's side being really feisty, she was a real business, you know. She took good care of us when we were ill, when we stayed home from school. It was the

grandma on Mom's side that we called *Baba* that took care of us. She ran, in addition to a restaurant, she ran a rooming house for single men. So she was like a real strong ....they came home noisy, late, you know, having a good time in the evening, she would scold them if they made too much noise. She picked up their one or two local lingo type words because she hardly spoke any English. We lived alone as a family, but it was always close to the area where our grandparents were.

*Jan*

My father's side of the family, my grandmother and grandfather came as contract labourers to Maui. My grandmother and grandfather had a ...were somehow talking about divorce and things like this. I think it was too hard on my grandmother and it was kind of scandalous. She went back to Japan, found a way to get money to go back to Japan, and at the same time my grandfather went back and when they went back to Japan they got a divorce. I think in the meantime, there was something about my grandmother having an affair in Maui, so you know, so she was just not used to that type of lifestyle. So she returned to Japan....my grandfather had custody of the children...

### **Nisei: Gaman and Kodomo no tame ni**

Unlike the picture bride stereotype, there is no specific representation associated with Nisei women. In Hawai'i, Nisei women moved out from the plantations into urban areas and entered new occupations such as domestic work, laundry or dressmaking (Chinen 1997:23). Some older Nisei were not able to complete their high school education, working to enable younger siblings with better opportunities, limiting their own futures. While similarities existed between Issei and Nisei women, Nisei women were able to speak English, drive a car and read the paper, which provided them with more opportunities than their mothers had (Nakano 1990:103). Becoming 'Americanised' involved both maintenance of some Japanese ethnicity, and subtle changes for acceptance into American society.

Many Nisei women changed their Japanese given names to American ones:

*Margaret*

My mother, who has the onset of Alzheimer's, lives with me, and I am her caretaker. Therefore I try and get her affairs into order. She is seventy-nine years old. I have recently discovered, in fact last week that she goes by the name Doris Yamasaki. Her legal name is Matsue Yamasaki but she picked up the American name Doris because she liked it and it was customary way back then to pick up any English name you preferred, versus a Japanese name. She has therefore signed everything Doris Yamasaki, Doris Yamasaki, Doris Yamasaki. And that is not legal. Every record on her reads Doris Yamasaki...when her mother re-married, she simply just picked up that second marriage's name, not legally. So my mother is actually an Oda, Matsue Oda. But since the remarriage she has picked up Matsue Kondo, which is not legal, and then she got married to Yamasaki, so it's quite a tangle! It is very interesting though that the ladies of the second generation picked up English names that they liked.

Nakano (1990), whose book *Japanese American Women: Three Generations 1890 – 1990*, concentrates mainly on Nisei women, suggests Nisei women were all well educated, but their employment opportunities were impacted by World War Two. They married Nisei men, formed strong ties with the Japanese society, and became involved in politics. She concludes however that Nisei women “lived for and through their children. Their children's successes or failures became their own” (1990:198). They also fulfilled traditional roles such as taking care of elderly parents, rather than putting them into a nursing home<sup>3</sup>.

Despite being more 'American', certain values that are associated with the picture bride continue to be reflected in perceptions of Nisei

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<sup>3</sup> Many Sansci women mention grandparents living with their family.

women. The quiet suffering of Issei women is believed to be strengthened by the enduring Japanese values of “acceptance of one’s lot in life (*shikata ga nai*), endurance and perseverance (*gaman*), admiration for hard work, and appreciation (*kansha*) for every blessing that life had to offer...Their indomitable spirit and strength belie their stereotypical image of being quiet and passive” (Bishop Museum 1992:4). These same values are apparent in the Nisei generation. As Ogawa states that many Issei “families tried to maintain Japanese values such as filial piety, obligation to community and authority (*on*), reciprocal obligation (*giri*), a fatalistic acceptance of unforeseen circumstances in life (*shikata-ga-nai*), and a fear of shame (*haji*)” (1978b:191).

When speaking about their Nisei mothers, Sansei women have a tendency to reflect on the hard work and sacrifices that their mothers made. Nisei women are represented as upholding the Japanese values of *gaman* and *shigata ga nai*. In the following recollections of their mothers, Lisa Ann and Jennie discuss the maintenance of Japanese traditions and values, such as *giri*, *gaman* and *oya koh koh*. Although Jennie feels her mother was not a ‘typical Nisei’, other stories reflect similar interpretations of Nisei mothers’ characteristics and actions. Elo also highlights the hardships her mother endured, and how much both parents, especially her mother, worked while Elo was growing up. It is apparent that hard work and sacrifices were made for *kodomo no tame ni* – for the sake of the children, ensuring that their Sansei children would have better lives than they experienced:

*Gail*

My Mom, being the eldest, didn’t complete high school because she had to help in the family business, you know, so she made sure

that we went to a good high school even. We had choices; we could do more than she could.

*Lisa Ann*

My mother wanted to be a nurse. There were three nurses in the family. Her sisters talked her out of it so she became a hairdresser, which kinda turns out to be like a nurse because you are confidante and a healer to your customers... She started her own business at 22, which was very unheard of, but you know, hairdressing and barbering were an avenue for AJA women at that time... I admire my mother. Her business helped the family survive. She supported her mother who was early widowed because my grandfather died during a cane accident... Her in-laws lived with us, so she took care of them. The way that she was raised because she didn't have a father, then your father-in-law becomes your father, you must do for him as you would your own father. My mother did that for many years and I didn't know that. We were sheltered from all those kinds of financial goings on. She pretty much, when I look back at it, single-handedly supported all of us. My brother, myself, my father, her two in-laws and her mother. She did that all by hairdressing. She worked very, very hard...

*Jennie*

She was a wonderful lady. She was born here so she could understand our local ways. I went to McKinley High School and we wanted to go to the football games and he (*her* father) would not allow girls to go to games, he didn't think it was necessary. But I wanted to go. My mother could understand that. I was working on the Daily Opinion, the school paper and she told my father, "She has to cover the story, can you imagine, you know cover the sports story. I wasn't doing that, I was doing the headlines. And my father said, "If it is for school, you may go."

My mother spoke more Japanese. Although she was born here, she was raised by her elder parents, who spoke only Japanese. She was very Japanesey. ...I didn't know we were poor...but we survived.

My mother as a Nisei, not a typical Nisei, she was very Japanesey, very "*hi hi*"<sup>4</sup> she always listened to my father, never

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<sup>4</sup> "Yes, yes".

talked back and I used to feel sorry for her many times, you know worried about my mother. My father was so strict, he expected perfection out of her. There were times I was really angry at my father. My mother was the saving grace when we grew up, you know. When we wanted to go on dates she would see to it that we did go out on dates...She was very understanding.

My mother was almost like someone coming from Japan I thought. She did everything that a Japanese woman was supposed to do – *Korairu*, she had to *korairu*<sup>5</sup> and listen to him and what ever he needed, his needs were all met. We had the prohibition. When I grew up, I remember my mother making beer in the closed area, and if you were caught you could have been in trouble, but my father loved his liquor, so she used to make it...she did all that just to please him...but she did it to serve him. Sometimes I felt that my father didn't appreciate my mother, and yet my mother always reminded me later on, if it weren't for my father we may not have gone on to school the way we did, or learn things because he was so into us learning things.

*Elo*

The hardships my Mom had to endure seem more severe (than my father is)...She was the fourth or third daughter and they wanted a boy. When she was born everybody was at the house waiting to see if she was a boy and when they saw she was a girl, they all went home. That kind of sets it up. They had lots of kids...All she did was come home to the laundry, lots of diapers, waiting for her to come home from school. Her stories are tainted in that depressed scene. She had to do that because it was family.

Margaret, a recently divorced Sansei woman described the Nisei generation as one that valued tolerance (*gaman* and *shigata ga nai*):

My Mom's generation was simply to tolerate, no matter what. I think it took a really different woman to leave her marriage for the second generation...My mother was not happy, she has never spoken to me about it, but it was so obvious she was not happy in the marriage, but she remained.

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<sup>5</sup> Endure and be subservient to.

Like the Issei women before them, Nisei women perpetuated the values of hard work, *gaman*, *shikata ga nai*, and persisting with a marriage, despite unhappiness or conflicts with their husbands. Both Issei and Nisei embody and transmit AJA values that originated in the Issei women's homeland of Meiji Japan. Lisa Ann recognized the role and impact of the Issei in the transmission of their values to subsequent generations, and explored why they continued to persist in Hawai'i today:

When I think about them, (grandparents) I realise they were a generation that grew up without their parents, they didn't have grandpa or grandma, *obaachan* or *ojiichan*, to watch over them, they didn't have aunts or uncles, they didn't even have their siblings in many cases...they were really totally pioneers on their own. Interestingly they brought with them, what, in that short time as teenagers, was instilled in them. They brought that Meiji Japan with them to Hawai'i, raised us with those values. Raised their children to go to Japanese school, to obey them, to not talk back, to do what they are supposed to do, to tow that line "traditional line" that they themselves did not adhere to. I always thought that was so ironic. They had a hard life, but they had a very independent life in some sense...freedom in a sense of, they...were not a sandwich generation that kind of thing. So they never cared for ailing parents. Then I thought of my parents, they never had *obaachan* and *ojiichan* to dote after them, or to watch them – they only had their parents and their siblings, and the community. The Japanese community became their extended family.

Hazama and Komeiji (1986:240) echo this view on the way in which Meiji values have been passed on through the generations, impacting particularly on Sansei:

The Sansei were the first generation to have been in close contact with grandparents, in addition to parents, all of whom placed a high value on *Kodomo no tame ni* (for the sake of the children). The Issei and Nisei grandparents and parents have also passed on to them what are essentially the Meiji era values of deference and respect towards parents, elders and persons in authority, the need to work hard and to be frugal, the desire for education, the importance of family cohesiveness, and a strong sense of obligation. They also

imparted a deep sensitivity to social interactions calling for self-restraint, self denial (korareu), and a heightened sense of gratitude and appreciation toward everyone who has helped.

These values were to form a core part of Sansei talk story sessions, connecting Sansei to both their Japanese past and locating them within the context of Local.

## Haji

After an interview at the Gazebo Restaurant in Liberty House, Kay sent me a short note with some of her thoughts that had been stimulated by our interview on the issue of shame and family secrets. She writes<sup>6</sup>:

*Our parents' generation had a practise of refraining from passing on "not good" experiences and information.*

*Eg.-1) As an older adult, on hearing of older folks' "secrets" (shameful pasts), which were known to some others in their generation but kept from us "kids". It's quite disillusioning, and makes one realise that the Japanese were not as much morally upright as they were good at hiding behaviour such as adultery, desertion, etc. Much of this was recognised by simple reticence, or "hush-hush".*

*2) I learned of my father's family's wartime evacuation in 1991, when news broke that they might be eligible for redress by the US govt. My father told me the story only because I had to write it up to file their claim. When I asked why he hadn't told us of it earlier, he simply replied "what for?" My guess as to reasons for withholding such significant information: 1) to avoid the pain its memory would evoke. 2) It seems they believed such information was unbeneficial, therefore dismissible. They believed that government orders simply had to be obeyed. Their unquestioning submission to authority, such as to doctor or govt. agent; markedly distinguished their generation from ours. It carried I believe, into the home – between husband and wife in many cases.*

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<sup>6</sup> The style, wording spelling and punctuation Kay used in her letter to me has been kept in this reproduction of her writing.

What Kay is referring to here is one of the important values Ogawa (1978) believes governs much of the behaviour of AJA in Hawai'i : *haji* or shame which:

(I)s a very real control on the individual's behaviour. Shame is based on the external sanctions of what others think and say about you. The concern is not what you think about yourself, but what others think and say about you (ibid: 1978a:44).

It is the feeling of shame or guilt one feels for the consequences of one's actions. Its prevalence may explain why women who did not fit the picture bride ideal (such as those who divorced) are not included in historical recollections, either collective or personal. The significance of this value is explored in more detail in relation to public representations of Local AJA women in the final chapter.

### **Kodomo no tame ni – for the sake of the children**

*Kodomo no tame ni*, for the sake of the children is an enduring theme reflected in the values upheld both in the past and currently by AJA in Hawai'i. The narratives of Sansei women echo the imagery of the maternal, suffering picture bride who sacrificed so much for the sake of her children. Ogawa (1978b: 361) suggests that in AJA culture:

(O)ne didn't succeed just for oneself, but for the sake of the family. The successful Nisei business man could bring home pride to his parents, his relatives, his family name through an affluence historically denied to his ethnic group. The value of *kodomo no tame ni*, for the sake of the children, would always be secure.

The importance of ensuring that the children benefited was incorporated into two other key values of Meiji Japan: *shikata ga nai* and *gaman*. *Shikata ga nai*, putting up with one's lot and making the most of whatever life handed out, it encouraged the notion that AJA are "passive by nature and culturally predisposed to accept whatever came" (Spickard

1996:101)<sup>7</sup> that existed in non-AJA American society. *Gaman* encourages perseverance without complaint. It encourages the idea that “no matter how great the obstacles one must stick to one’s task...one should simply stick it out to achieve one’s goals” (ibid: 1996:72). These values are manifested in other values that Sansei women highlighted in their interviews, including the importance of hard work and education.

### **Work, work, work**

Hard work is considered to be a value strongly upheld by AJA society. For Sansei women the expectation to be hard workers is an essential part of belonging to Local society, through both relational history (of Issei and Nisei demonstrating this trait) and because working hard “is an ingrained part of their heritage” (Hazama and Komeiji 1986:220).

Many of the women interviewed highlighted the value of hard work that their parents have passed on to them, both in discussions of values and while reflecting on their parents’ life as Sansei grew up. Lisa-Ann mentioned the way in which her mother strived hard as a hairdresser and supported her extended family. Fathers too were remembered as hard workers. Laura describes her father’s passion for work:

My father and Uncle George...started their own business, mostly my Dad did, he started a drapery business called R.M. Saiki, cause my Dad’s name is Ralph. My Dad had it for about thirty-five years. He’s semi-retired now, but it’s so funny, he can’t give it up. I don’t know if it’s part of the pride of the Saiki blood.

Margaret also commented on her admiration of her father’s work ethic and abilities, despite his limited education:

I have never met another human being who was as hard worker as my Dad. At times he worked three jobs to supplement his

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<sup>7</sup> This notion was particularly strong in the justification for AJA internment, both by AJA and non-AJA.

income. My Dad was just a workaholic. Even at home he would vacuum. Do just about everything except anything to do with clothes, the laundry, the ironing he did not touch. I recall seeing him mopping, vacuuming, cleaning, doing yard work as well as taking care of his car. He had like a ninth grade education because he had to quit and go to work. But for someone who was so under-educated, he knew the basics of electricity, automobiles...

When recalling the stories of hard work and effort that both parents and the women themselves endured during their childhood, the women told them with a humble pride. There was little sense of complaint (that this was the life they had to endure), and while not explicitly stated, their narratives also reflect a sense of quiet gratitude in recognizing their parents were working for the sake of their Sansei children. Both *gaman* and *shikata ga nai* can be seen within these two following narratives that demonstrate the value of work and the financial rewards that work could bring, which were passed onto these women by their parents.

*Joyce on the value of work*<sup>8</sup>:

The work ethic was really strong, and the education ethic. They raised us to work hard. They were farming. My father was a farmer so what we would do from early in the morning till late at night, we were working – in the weekends because during the week we were in school. I think that really kept us together because we were a family working together. We did the farming, my mother did things with flowers and picking things in the forest. So in the weekends we'd pick the greens and carry the bundles on our heads... they would give us a little money for each bundle that we brought out. It taught us to work and how to discipline ourselves.

Work, work, work. You stick at the job. If you want to earn some money, you do work. So I think that is something I really value now I

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<sup>8</sup> As Joyce talked of her life as a Sansei woman in Hawai'i, I recognized many similarities between her experiences and my own. Her recollections of working for money, encouraged by her parents at an early age, triggered recollections of my own parents encouraging me to earn half the cost of a trip to the capital city. Parked at the end of a street, while I knocked on doors selling sweets, my parents ensured that both my safety and my work ethic were intact at age eleven.

can see.

I really value what they taught me about work. My Mom worked hard. With her extra money she would send us to hula lessons, if we wanted to try gymnastics, judo...

Twins Hilma and Elo's individual stories revealed colourful experiences and illustrated the values that they had internalised during their childhood. Both parents worked while they were young, encouraging the twins to become involved in their father's business when they were only eight years of age:

*Elo reflects on her parents' working:*

My father was a cook and the roles were sort of switched around in that my mother spent more time out of the house. Mom was bookkeeper. They both went out at the same time about 3.30 in the morning to set up the cafeteria. Our sister would look after us and Mom would come home when she had to go to school. Dad would stay at work until 2:30 in the afternoon. Mom would do the laundry and everything, then go back to the cafeteria for the lunch hour. When both closed the restaurant, she'd be home for a little while, then she'd go work at Sears, part-time. We both saw my Dad cooking dinner more than we saw our Mom fixing dinner. The roles that you grow up with (women cook and boys take out the trash) in our house wasn't like that. It seemed to us that she was out of the house working longer hours. My Mother was very neat. We had to clean the house up almost everyday. That was not chores that anybody could get out of...my brother had to wash dishes, wash laundry...and the chores were rotated. By eight, we had to clean the whole house. When I think about my kids compared with us – oh they would just die.

When the girls were eight years, their father opened a concession at which time both Hilma and Elo were introduced to and expected to take part in hard work:

*Hilma recalls with amusement working at the golf concession:*

All these times that he owned these concessions, Elo and I were pretty much required by my Mom to help him on the golf

course. To help him every weekend. So on Saturdays we would help her rather, Saturdays we would help her at home and then maybe we could go over to our friends after we did like house-work and stuff, and then on Sundays we'd have to help him on the golf course. He'd open for breakfast and open lunch and maybe early dinner, but he was always home by eight. But it was a long day for him cause he started out at 4:30 in the morning and so on Sundays we would all jump in the car at 4:30 in the morning, I still remember this like, in our pyjamas we were really young then so we could wear pyjamas to work. We'd get there and our Mom would change us and stuff, we must have been about nine when we first started, eight rather when we first started. It was kinda fun when we first had to help – my dad had his own business and you know, then it got tiring, after about a month of Sundays getting up early! We'd go and help him like prepare sandwiches and stuff and have it ready so that when the golfers would go you know, the first nine holes they would stop into the snack bar area and they would buy sandwiches or whatever and drinks, and they would continue the next nine and then you know. Later they would come back to what they call the nineteenth hole which is...then they would sit and drink and have appetizers and stuff, so that was kind of fun. And I think for my dad that was good, cause my dad really loves golf and he still golfs. He golfed from when he was about twenty years old. It was kinda interesting that he was so lucky to be able to support a family and have that love of being in an area, a kind of business he really enjoyed.

While recalling their involvement in physical work during their youth and childhood, and focusing on the efforts of their parents', the women had a tendency not to describe in detail the type of work they are currently employed in<sup>9</sup>. The concept of work has changed over the decades, moving from labour intensive industries such as sugar and coffee to more service-based type employment. Many of the women interviewed were employed as secretaries, nurses, educators, researchers or in the service sector. This is typically where AJA tend to be employed in

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<sup>9</sup> The value of *enryo*, which enforces modest behaviour may also contribute to women not talking about their own employment. *Enryo* is “a powerful incentive to be more modest. The effect of ...rhetorically minimized one's positive attributes and accomplishments, and those of one's family, even if one was in fact competing hard to get ahead” (Spickard 1996: 72)

Hawai'i. Because the work is less labour intensive in comparison to historical perceptions of what constitutes 'work', Sansei may not feel that mentally taxing work is actual 'work'.

As Kitano (1969:131) states, the Japanese work ethic is one in which "hard work was looked upon as a desirable goal in itself and there was often a feeling that occupations that somehow appeared unrelated to sheer sweat and toil (music, show business) were less desirable". Plantation work, the extra labour that Issei women took on of laundering and cooking for many of the single men on plantations (Chinnen 1997), all involved physical hard work. Nisei women too, are recognized for their efforts as cooks, laundry women, hairdressers and domestic servants. Their labour also contributed extensively to the war effort during World War Two.

The two narratives that follow highlight the AJA work ethic in two contrasting, yet complementary ways. Terry's story shows the pleasure of physical hard work she experienced while at college and also incorporates the value of *gaman*, while Sandra's narrative explores the conflict that can occur when a choice of career is not considered 'work' by parents with alternate expectations.

*Terry talks about picking pineapples:*

Physical labor is not that great. You don't get paid much. This is where I learned a lot of character- you stick to the job and you work hard to get the things that you want. And sometimes you might not be as smart as others – if you work hard and apply yourself you can do anything that you want to do. I worked hard in the pineapple fields and it was hard work. Really back-breaking work. Every summer I came home from college I worked there. During high school I worked as a waitress in my Uncle's shop and other *Okozuyas*<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> A Japanese-style store that sells sushi, teriyaki and other food for bento (Japanesc-style lunches).

Sandra related the problem of what was perceived as 'work' with her choice of career in music.<sup>11</sup> Her story was told, in animated fashion, partly narrative, partly in conversation with her absent family:

It kind of surprised them that I actually went into music. I was nurtured in the arts. Once I decided to make music, they suggested I go do a music major, but I don't think they expected me to become a professional musician. Everybody knows that music doesn't make any money. It should be something that you fall back on and get yourself a real profession. I'd gone this far, what did they expect me to do? You're the one who gave me the toy piano for my first Christmas present. You're the one who gave me the record player and all these things. You're the one who sent me to piano lessons, put me in dance lessons, art classes. I was not sent...well I was sent to math tutoring, but it wasn't heavy, heavy "you're going to be a doctor, you're going to be a teacher". It was never any of that. I was always promoted on the artistic side...but "Gee you need to get a real job to make some real money" kinda thing came up. So gee, what am I going to do with the music, all this music that I've done all my life. That was kind of a surprise<sup>12</sup>.

### **Oya ko ko, Giri and On**

Sandra's experience of her parents' questioning her career choices reflects an ideology that Ogawa believes characterises the parent-child relationship of AJA society: "unconditional filial piety" (1978a: 42). Because the parents have worked so hard for the sake of the children, the children are now obligated to their parents. The child is taught from the earliest ages to honour and respect parents and is obligated to please them" (ibid 1978a:42). What the AJA child (who in the case of the Sansei interviewed is now an adult) 'owe' their parents is not limited to care of

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<sup>11</sup> I nodded in agreement with her experience, recognising similarities with a situation that arose with my mother when I had wanted to pursue an acting career and was told by my mother that it was not a 'real job'.

<sup>12</sup> Sandra pursued her passion, singing in a band and continues to do so, while teaching music in schools today.

their parents when they are aged and reach retirement<sup>13</sup>. It manifests itself through the child respecting the wishes of its parents, and through achieving more than his or her parents were able to. This is termed *oya ko ko* or obligational respect towards parents (Hazama and Komeiji 1987:234). Its concept includes courtesy and understanding that are considered important in family support. Ogawa (1978a:42) describes this relationship of filial piety as follows:

To the Japanese American parent, their child's obligation is natural and proper. After all, who brought the little one into the world? To whom does he (sic) have to give his (sic) undying thanks and gratitude? Who took care of the child when he (sic) was a helpless infant, nursing, pampering, protecting and nurturing so that he (sic) could be healthy and strong? Wasn't it the parents who made up the sacrifices while the child was growing up? It was they who did without so that the child could have, have, have. Instead of eating out at restaurants, they saved their money so that the child could buy musical instruments for the school band. The mother never bought new clothes but sewed her own dresses so that the daughter could have money for new clothes at expensive, modish shops. Money was saved for the children's education and to pay for the increased automobile insurance for juvenile drivers.

*Oya ko ko* also involves two other important values in AJA society that scholars have identified which are not limited solely to parent-child relationships, but extend to all factions of society: *giri* and *on*. *Giri* "is created out of a moral obligation to reciprocate what one person gives to another...a moral obligation to repay kindness with kindness" (Ogawa 1978a:69 & 71)<sup>14</sup>. Lisa Ann talks of how the value of obligation manifests

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<sup>13</sup> It has been noted, however, that Nisei preferred to care for their elderly parents at home rather than put them into nursing homes "especially since those that are available are managed by Whites and are considered 'foreign' environments for their parents" (Yanagisako cited in Nakano 1990: 200).

<sup>14</sup> I found myself involved with *giri*-reciprocation with the family who lived next door to my host family. Soon after we moved in, she brought some fruit and vegetables to us to welcome us to the neighbourhood. The next time I did some baking, I took a small portion of it to her home. The following day she returned with some *mochi* (sticky rice cake) from a party she had been at. I received some dried fish, some of which went next door. The reciprocation carried on, on almost a

itself at the Artist's collective she is involved with. She says that the collective:

It shows what the Sansei generation is like in a sense of course. We bring with us Nisei values of working together, asking your friends for help, you know you're going to be obligated to them – you give, I give; you help me, I help you. We take care of each other; we've become our own extended family.

*On*<sup>15</sup> is a “special kind of gratitude where a debt is so great that it is almost impossible to completely repay. It also reflects the idea that one never becomes what he or she is without the support of others.”<sup>16</sup> Different examples of this sense of obligation and reciprocity became apparent during the interviews I conducted. Keilani spoke of her parents' respect and obligation towards Keilani's grandparents' requests:

When my Mom and Dad got married and they had my sister. My grandparents, my father's parents, were still having children, and so my Mom and my Father had to raise the last two boys they were ten and eleven. My grandfather came over to my father's house and said, “I cannot raise these kids anymore.” He said it in Hawai'ian and I can't say it the same. He said he wants my father to take care of the two boys. So in that respect my Mom, too she kinda raised these two boys from ten and eleven years until high school. So I guess they're struggling too, right, they had to raise them.

Another poignant story where both *giri* and *on* manifested themselves strongly in a woman's sense of *oya ko ko* to her father was that told by Jan. Her narrative reflects the extent to which *on* impacted her, forcing her to leave Sacramento where she attended college for a year, to

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weekly basis. Her final gift to me was two hand-made ginger leis. I still feel indebted to ‘give back’ to her.

<sup>15</sup> The sense of obligation between parties is not only limited to parent-child relationships. There is the expectation that for your loyalty at a work, the company will take care of you. Gail expresses this sense of obligation when talking about her redundancy from the hospital where she was working at: “All those years of security. It felt like you were part of that family and that they would always take care of you because of your loyalty. Maybe it went back to the way I was raised. Loyalty meant a lot to me. For a whole year I just couldn't go back. I changed my physicians and everything.”

<sup>16</sup> Journal entry description of *on*, taken from the video *Kokoro- the Spirit of '85*.

support her brothers, as this was both desired and expected of her by her father:

**Jan:** I went back to Japan when my Dad asked me to come back and help out cause my brother had to go to school. In old Japanese traditions, the boy was more important to go to school than the girl.

**Yumiko:** Did this bother you?

**Jan:** Well at the time I'm sure I was hurt, but you know your obligations. In those days you always listened to what your parents said. You might have objected but your father's word was the word and you did it. So I stayed and worked in Japan for a while, then I came to Hawai'i. Then my two brothers and I lived together, and while they were going to school, I was going to work and we all lived together, until the time Gary got married and I got married right after that...As soon as my brother graduated, then I could get married. My Dad kinda made me, kinda promise, that I would see my brother got through school and had an education which was important to my father because he did not have an education. The one thing he wanted to do in his lifetime was educate his son.

Jan also recalls the obligation her mother felt she had to the doctor who assisted in arranging the adoption of Jan's daughter:

This last trip that my niece and daughter and my Mum and Dad went to Japan. My mother wanted to take her (Jan's daughter) back to the doctor's wife, and the reason is that is well, the doctor died in the meantime, but my mother wanted to take a bottle of whiskey and something to put on the altar for the doctor to say "her job was finished" because my mother went with me to Japan, when I went to get my daughter. And at that time my mother told the doctor, "Don't worry, I'm her grandmother. I will take good care of this baby with my daughter." This was her way of saying "My work is finished, I've done it. I've seen her through her grammar school, intermediate school and I've brought up this fine granddaughter...dadi..dadi..da....I guess the doctor's wife was pleased.

## Education

*Oyako-ko* is not just an obvious responsibility to care for the parents and respect their wishes. The implication of this value is also tied into the importance of education and the expectation that the Sansei women would obtain a college education. There was a sense of responsibility by Sansei women to have what their parents did not in terms of education, and to succeed and achieve more than their parents did. Their stories reflect the gratitude they felt towards their parents for ensuring they went on to tertiary education, and also demonstrates their belief that they would not be who or where they are without their parents' support.

Sharon talks of the importance her mother placed on education, particularly as her mother's own formal education was limited:

I went to the University of Hawai'i and about my third year I said, "Mom, I don't want to go to school anymore, I want to work". (I was working part-time in a law firm). I didn't want to study anymore. I wanted to work. I wanted to make money, but my Mom, I guess for her, it was important for me to get an education because she never finished college...I guess that she really felt bad that she didn't finish college. She made sure that we did.

Similarly, Gail's mother's restricted formal education was also a reason to ensure Gail and her siblings were educated, although Gail did not continue onto college:

My Mom, being the eldest, didn't complete high school because she had to help out in the family business, so she made sure we went to a good high school.

The Japanese strived a lot to get ahead. I mean, the veterans laid the groundwork for us and a lot of them became influential leaders and so forth. I think their hard work and perseverance had made a lot of them where they are today. That probably because our parents emphasised so much in getting ahead and being educated, than maybe some of the other ethnic groups.

Tied in with the concept of *Oya ko ko*, is a combination of *haji* (shame) and *on* (gratitude), part of what Ogawa (1978a:38) terms as 'The Family Image': "A Japanese Family cannot be average, run-of-the mill or mundane. The family must be the best at whatever they attempt; their image must be unblemished and exemplary". One woman commented that the pressures of this were not always pleasant:

"The family is important. Do all you can to help them to the point that you debilitate yourself. You become unhappy or go without."<sup>17</sup>

Sandra also felt the pressure her family placed on her to uphold a certain image, both in her chosen career (as discussed previously), and academically. Unlike other Sansei women, Sandra's parents both had a formal education, which perhaps increased the pressure placed on Sandra to excel.

The examples that we always had, was that everybody was a high achiever, but they didn't really make a big deal about it that you have to do this or you have to do that. But when it got to be grade time, if you brought home a B, it was always, well this is my mother's line, "Oh, that's ok but you can do better than that. B's ok, but you can do better than that." And my father would always say: "You're smarter than I am" and he was valedictorian of his high school class. So I was like "yeah, ok."

When I was in Junior High School and High School, my grades started to drop. And so they threatened to send me to an all girls' school if I didn't bring my grades up. So yeah, I worked. They didn't make a big fuss about applying you to a private school. My Dad said, "I went to Roosevelt, my brothers went to Roosevelt, you guys can go there too." So there wasn't any pressure that you had to go to the best schools. It was all "You do the best that you can, cause you're already smart and you can do it."

My grandfathers were both college-educated, my parents were both college educated so you're just expected to do that.

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<sup>17</sup> Christine age twenty-six.

The importance of the family image was also portrayed in Joyce's narrative that reflected on the importance of education. She too highlights the expected behaviour Sansei women were to follow through the course of their lives, where college and work preceded marriage and motherhood. Joyce became pregnant out of wedlock soon after finishing high school and completed her Nursing Degree after she had raised a family:

My Mom valued education. Right after high school I got married and I was a housewife serving in the church, not really branching into education. Graduating from college was something I knew my family probably wanted for us. My oldest brother didn't succeed because of his mental illness. My second brother got his girlfriend pregnant. He had to get married early...for me I didn't go to college right away. My sister went down the right path in the sense of what society says you should do – get to college and then get a job, then have a family. So to me it was important to do that. For my children too. So now they value education, they had to see me struggle when I was a student<sup>18</sup>.

The sense of obligation to succeed was also captured by Carol, who like Joyce, was a qualified nurse. Her narrative incorporated a sense of obligation to her scholarship and to her AJA heritage:

I actually found that I didn't really enjoy nursing, but I felt I had to stick it out and I think that was the Japanese in me. I felt I had to stick it out because I was on scholarship and I felt obligated and so I dunno, now when I look back, I would think nothing of switching, especially I think at that time it was mainly secretary or nursing that gals went into, there wasn't all this other thing going on.

She highlights other values that she felt were emphasised throughout her life by her parents:

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<sup>18</sup> Yet again, as Joyce spoke, I found myself recognising elements of my life in her story. Many times, I had been reminded by my mother that an early, out of wedlock pregnancy was disastrous and would bring shame on both my immediate and extended family in Japan. The desired path for my life had been prescribed, and I have been striving to attain it as I have progressed through the life cycle.

Values are still very Japanese. Valuing an education, getting a good job, getting married is a big thing still, raising a family, trying to make sure that the kids behave right and you know, toe the line. Make something of themselves. I find nowadays, women as well as men tend to do too much maybe for the kids, from homework to projects, to household personal things. I don't know if it is really necessary. Maybe it is. I don't know. Just comparing them today to when we were growing up, they're just doing so much for the kids. We just grew up on our own, our parents couldn't help us with homework or anything. We just had to do it so we did. Whereas now, Mom and Dad are writing their work....

Behave. Stay in line, obey your elders, study hard, do better than we did. We'll (parents) pay for your education, wherever you wanna go to study. Education was the biggest thing I think. Make something of yourself.

Many Sansei woman commented on the way in which their parents stressed the importance of a good education, and made personal sacrifices to ensure that Sansei had the best opportunities to 'get ahead' in life. For some Sansei, the role model of their hard working parents for *kodomo no tame ni*, has come full circle and Sansei are now doing similar things for their Yonsei children. Keilani illustrated this continuance of cultural values in her narrative. She recalls her parents' hard work, struggle and sacrifice for her education, and then demonstrates the same sense of struggle for her own daughter's education, replaying and reinforcing the sense of filial obligation between parent and child.

One of the things that my parents have instilled in us from a very young age, in all of us, is to have a college education. I think they did their part in providing us the guidance financially to put us through school. And I think that's one of the things that for my parents, for them, an accomplishment of raising family and putting their children through college. Each of us today have an acceptable job, except my sister who is a housewife, although she did complete her college education. My older brother is the State Forester on Maui; my late brother right above me was an Administrator at the Kula Memorial Hospital. I work here as an extension home economist. So I think, you know, thinking back and reflecting and seeing that my dad had

a 4th grade education, my Mom just an 8th grade education, they worked, they struggled, they did all different kinds of jobs – not jobs, ways to earn money and make sure that we had provided a college education.

I guess I tried to provide both my children with things and I guess maybe a little too much I think, looking back. Things that I didn't get or didn't receive as a youngster. That's what I tried to provide for my daughter and also now my son. Things like, although I did take lessons, different things, there were some things that my father said, oh you don't have to do and they were in that sense they were encouraging to do that kind of stuff. But I think in today's society too, the way we get our kids lined up, you know, in hula and ballet and all different kinds of activities and so I tried, I made sure that you know, she was directed into different areas. For example she did take ballet from a very young age and I did start her in 4H too. When she graduated from high school she was pretty accomplished. My daughter is going on 19. She's a freshman at University in Oregon and she's very fortunate in the sense that you know, I guess being that we could afford, you know, an education, and we did send her to Punahoe<sup>19</sup> School. I'm really glad that we did send her there, as we look back, it was a struggle, even though we're still struggling today, but the amount of finances we did put into her education was well worth it.

Jan also reflects the ideology of providing her child with many opportunities and a good education. "Of course you want to get them into the best schools," Jan says of her daughter, "so in order to get her into the best school", Jan took a job as a secretary at a prestigious institution which enabled her to afford her daughter's attendance there. She muses:

I only had one child, so it was my way of keeping in touch. It wasn't so good for her, but great for me...you're always taught to live within your husband's means.

I wanted my daughter to have piano training, music training, dancing, this had to be a part of her education. So she started hula at four years old, she took up piano at 3 years old.

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<sup>19</sup> A prestigious school on O'ahu.

The stories of the Sansei women illustrate how important the ability to provide for *kodomo no tame ni* is for AJA. Lisa Ann's decision not to have children further highlights this, as it was primarily based on her sense of not being able to adequately provide a child with the best opportunities. Her narrative also explores what she wants to be able to give a child if she has one, and considers her own mother's choices between career and motherhood:

Part of it, I realize how financially hard it would be – the between how I'd want my children to be raised, what I'd want to give to them. I know I would have tremendous guilt if they suffered too much. Not that I would want to spoil them and they would have everything, but if I couldn't give them something that I felt, you know, would be cool to have, or if we couldn't live in a house with a yard, I would be unhappy that they couldn't have that. For me, that was a standard I set. My friends say, "so you're raised in an apartment, big deal" right? But I felt that the stress for me would be too much. I know that I would want the trappings if I had a child. But if I'm without a child, the trappings are not so important for me, the trappings become different. I make different choices.

I didn't want to repeat what my mother had gone through for myself. I'm struggling, as it is, you know, to make ends meet. If I bring a child, then I'll become, because my mother did not do many things that she wanted to. *She did* many things but she would have done way more, you know. I asked her that once, I talked to her about it and I said: "If you knew what you knew now, would you have had children?" She said, "No," – not to say that she didn't love us, because I know that she loves me fiercely, but she said, "No, you know, I think I would have chosen a career. I would have chosen a career, I would have had a different life." So that gave me permission to be that, as far as I was concerned. I said, "Would you be upset if I didn't give you anymore grandchildren?"

She said, "Oh no, because I have two grandchildren. I have a granddaughter and a grandson. I'm happy with that. That's enough for me." And she said, "Besides, I don't think I can afford anymore grandchildren."

She's a doting grandparent and she would feel awful if she couldn't give to them in that way. So again the permission came in my mind. It's like hey I don't have to, I really don't have to.

All she was asking is to find work that you love and do it well and be some kind of use to your community and husband. And in some sense, what she was doing was giving me permission to do, I looked at it as, to do the things she couldn't, and you know how parents are always setting it up: "I want you to have to advantages I didn't have." Well, this, in a very different way, not through money, but opportunity. So she was giving me freedom to live the life that maybe she would have chosen. Maybe not, but maybe, so I'm taking it.

### **To Mother or not to Mother – that is always a question**

Lisa Ann's decision not to have children highlights the value of *kodomo no tame ni* and the extent to which reproduction is considered an important role for women in both Japanese and Local culture. In addition, mothers and grandmothers, perceived not only as wife, but as sacrificial mother, highlights the way in which history has shaped this ideal and how it continues to be manifested in Local Sansei women's sense of self. 'Motherhood', either the participation in, or avoidance of, are elements that the interviewed women focused on and believed influenced and were influenced by their personalities and life choices.

In 1990, Cabezali et.al discovered that historic images present a model for future generations, when they researched the way in which the image of woman-as-mother was reinforced during the Spanish Civil War and has endured, unchallenged, in Spanish history. The message for women's behaviour during this period was: work, abnegation and sacrifice, their role was as primarily as mother and nurturer. This parallels the message symbolised by the Local picture bride. Subsequent images of women in Spain have been constructed on these same foundations (1990:166). Their study found that the women they interviewed about this era selectively retained only those features which identified them with the essential nature of women (as mother) as transmitted by the myth

(ibid:167). The work that the women of this era were involved with as militiawomen, workers and political activists is neither remembered nor recorded, even though, in leaving out their actions and contributions, the civil war of Spain cannot be explained.

History worldwide rarely presents women in roles other than as a supporter of men - wife, mother or caregiver. While the picture bride can be heralded for providing a reminder that women had an important role in local history, it still tends to ratify the role of wife and mother, with an addition of worker, primarily to support and strengthen the aforementioned roles. Furthermore social categorisation of women has been shaped and influenced by assumed 'natural' roles of wife and mother. Women who chose not to be mothers are often classified as 'childless', which has associated negative overtones and further implies that having children is a 'normal' role for women. Opting not to have children is often perceived by societies as a somewhat selfish choice. As a result, the myth of woman-as-wife-and-mother offers a model of behaviour for women of subsequent generations. For Sansei in Hawai'i, the development and repetition of this myth has been captured in the values passed on from Issei and Sansei generations.

Within the narratives of the women, some mention the sense of expectation they feel to conform to this role. This is not to suggest that they regret having or not having children as the case maybe, but it is a reflection on their part of social expectations that play a part in their decision to become mothers. Gail sums up the social attitude of the time when discussing her expectations of marriage:

I always thought it would be like, you know, meeting a nice person, someone that would care and help and be responsible and just raising children and having fun with them. I guess probably based on your own dreams when you're a little girl, the thing to do was, you grew up, you got married and you had a family and you

take care of your children and you're a good mother, you know. So it was very simple.

Here we see how social expectations shaped the role and life Gail felt she should lead as woman, wife and mother. Motherhood was considered an integral part of marriage and woman-work and life. Keilani found that once she was married there was an expectation that she and her husband would have children:

For me we never started a family right away. We had a lot of animals. We had dogs, at one point we had five dogs and might have had four or five cats, so maybe they replaced the animals. Next door, they had four boys, and one of the little ones would tell the parents "How come next door they only have animals, they don't have children?" But I think too at that time my husband wasn't ready to settle down to have children. In fact he was saying, "I don't think we should have children." I guess his thinking was the type of world situation. It's not as bad as it is today, but he was thinking about that. But eventually everyone tells you that you gotta get kids. If you don't have kids, you know, it's not fun and all this, you know.

So by the time I had my first one, my daughter, I was thirty-three and yeah...see I travelled a lot too. After I had her, you feel satisfied. You don't have to travel and all that kind of stuff. You do occasionally but not that often.

Lori in her discussion about her and her husband's joint decision to have or not to have children also alluded to the pressure placed on them by family to reproduce:

**Yumiko:** Have you talked about children?

**Lori:** We have, but I guess, both of us, one thing that going into a very serious relationship we did discuss, we felt that children were important but they weren't like a priority or like a goal that both of us really would strive for. So if it happened it did, but they're not really like a focal point.

**Yumiko:** Do you have pressures?

**Lori:** Yes we do. Mostly from my husband's side. I think maybe my parents would like us to have children, but maybe they don't really express it verbally as much, but my husband's side of the family, usually when we go and visit them, they always like mention it several times.

Like Lori, other Sansei had made a conscious decision not to have children within their relationship. Lisa-Anne acknowledged that originally her life had been mapped out to allow for child-rearing. However later on she realised that this was not a commitment she felt in a position to fulfil with her husband:

We have no children. He always wanted to have children and I thought I did too at first, and I kind of geared my life that way. And as I became more aware of the things that I wanted to do, I thought, maybe I don't want to have kids, part of it is, I realise how financially hard it is and the pull between how I would want my children to be raised, what I would want to give them, I know I would have tremendous guilt if they suffered too much.

Hilma however, asserted that motherhood was not something she had ever considered and her husband was comfortable with this decision:

**Yumiko:** Do you have any children?

**Hilma:** No. We decided this life, not to have any together. I never really, even before when I was a little kid though. People would ask me, how come? Is that just with him? It's like no, it's weird that I found somebody who had the same agenda as I did as far as children was concerned, so when I was young I felt that my life would not be any more complete if I had kids and I always, when I was growing up, I always knew from when I was young, that if I was going to have kids, I was not going to have them for any other reason other than I wanted to have kids period. And I never did.

Hilma acknowledges that outside pressures can force a woman to have children, yet she felt strongly that the only reason she would enter into motherhood was if *she* wanted to. One Sansei woman, Pauline, does

not have children because her husband does not want them, yet she has other outlets for what she describes as her ‘maternal instinct’:

I think it was his choice, not mine. I would have loved to have kids you know, seeing that our family was so small to begin with. It would be kind of nice to augment a little bit. I think he was afraid of fatherhood. He was not ready for the full notion, and I didn’t want to push him either, if that’s what he wanted. So that was all right. I have my kitty cats. I have a direction for this maternal instinct that I have so my kitty cats benefited greatly from that. I hoped that we would have kids maybe for his sake. He was an only child too, and so it’s like maybe that would be a good thing.

### **Happiness and Hardship – some Sansei memories**

For those who had children, their experiences reflect a combination of joy and recollections of hardships during their pregnancy and initial stages of motherhood. The experience of ‘motherhood’ captures the values of *gamman*, self-sacrifice and *kodomo no tame ni*. Elo spoke of the joy of motherhood; the physical pain of childbirth and the ways in which life changes once a child becomes a part of their world:

It was exciting. Of all the experiences you go through as a woman that has to top them all. I look at my friends and think it’s a really big decision which people think really light of. To consciously not have a child is a big decision. I never thought that I didn’t want to have kids. I felt really comfortable about having kids. The physical side was excruciating. I was really proud of myself. I went to Lamaze classes. I’m really tiny and my daughter was seven pounds seven ounces. She was a big girl! I labored twenty something hours. People talk about the labor and then they talk about how far you pushed...they had to create a vacuum and push her out! The poor little thing. The process took so long. She had a cone head! She looked like a cone head when she came out. I kept passing out cause I was exhausted. My son was longer. All my body is out of whack because of my children.

I really give women credit when they decide not to have kids. It is an easy role to play and it is a part of a woman’s natural maturation. They get married and have a child. You have a life with a child and you have to consider that in almost everything you do. In

something as simple as using the bathroom, going to a restaurant, to going to the movies, the mall, shopping. The little things that your independence, that you take for granted is totally weakened. You are limited in time, and financially.

June found that her life was changed dramatically once children entered the equation. The importance placed on the child and its needs resulted in a change of priorities for her. She warned me:

It's a totally different lifestyle having my son...You're not the most important thing anymore right? Wait till you have a baby, you'll find out (laughs), it takes over your whole life.

Both Jennie and Sandra, distanced from their parents during their pregnancy, found that childbirth and adjusting to the demands of motherhood were difficult periods.

Sandra's pregnancy had many associated difficulties; made worse by the economic position she and her husband were in while living in Brazil. Like other Sansei she notes that motherhood was a role deemed as 'normal' by society and is currently struggling on her own to raise her two children:

It is just something that you are expected to do and it's tiring and taxing, but it's something that you are expected to do. You love the baby. Of course I wish I had more help. Actually at that time, you really appreciate your mother and I know physically it was very hard. Many times I felt very helpless. When my son was six weeks old my parents came and we went to visit my relatives in Sao Paulo. They brought us a car. They brought us a stroller. Money was so bad. My husband's career was way down so I think I took a break from singing for a few months and then I had go back because we had no money. So imagine doing all your wash by hand, including towels and jeans and things by hand in cold water...

Older Sansei like Jennie (seventy-one) and Beatrice (seventy-five) also experienced difficulties during pregnancy and adjusting to becoming mothers. Their narratives reflect memories of hardship, sweetened now by

the joy of watching the children grow, mature and develop careers and/or families which these women now enjoy and indulge. Jennie describes how despite the difficulties, she found solace in the support of her mother and her husband:

Well, I'm not disappointed. I think coming from a very poor background I married into a family of sufficient means so life was very comfortable for me. I was never wanting for anything because they would provide you. I came to Kaua'i and lived with his folks and Jiro worked hard. The first years were hard because the grocery store was open and I was pregnant with Joanne and I had to help at the store. And I was going through this awful sweaty – you know the nausea, and Jiro's brother is such a strong businessman he had no compassion for anybody who was not feeling well.

My first pregnant years were really hard so I worked as a cashier and I did what I could and Jiro worked hard from morning till midnight. The store was open till nine o'clock and after the store was closed they stacked the shelves and left the market ready, and clean up. So it was a long day. While I was working I was there, but once I got home I was all alone, going through this awful sickness. But I was only three months when my girlfriend who was one of my bridesmaids was getting married in Honolulu and she asked me to come and be the bridesmaid, so I flew to Honolulu and I remember at the airport, I was just ready to get off the plane and I saw my mother and my sisters were waiting, I just burst out crying so happy to be home, you know. In those days you don't fly as often as you do now and I thought I am not going back to Kaua'i. So that night at the wedding I had such a good time I was just getting over the sickness and I danced and danced and it was like old times and I thought, I am not going back to Kaua'i, but of course I had to come back.

I had Joanne. It was not the easiest having a baby and living on Kaua'i because my family was in Honolulu although my aunt and uncle lived here, my mother's brother and his wife. So I could go to them. And I remember Christmas day, they worked so hard Xmas Eve Jiro came home, he was so exhausted, Xmas day was like any other day and I just packed up Joanne and went to my Aunt and Uncle and said 'I'm getting out of here' you know. It was a crazy schedule of long hours of work, of being lonely and feeling sorry for myself. But it becomes minor after the years.

And of course my mother always came whenever I had a baby. She came and helped me. And his mother, Jiro's Mom, tired to help

me when I had my second child, instead of my mother coming she said that she would help, but she was more *ojosan*<sup>20</sup>, you know, she grew up ... in Japan where she was born into a rich family and maids all over her. She came to Kaua'i and *ojichan* was so doting and helpful that he did all the cooking. He was a cook too. He was a cook for this family on Kaua'i. So *obaachan* didn't have to do the cooking. She couldn't help me. She was just not a home person. So when I talked to my mother on the telephone, I said I'm trying to do it myself, and she said 'I'm coming over'. She flew from Honolulu to help me, especially after my son John was born and I had Joanne and John. But it was lucky my Mom could come, cause *obaachan* could not help at all, she just wasn't able to do any home chores. She didn't do much cooking too, so I had to do a lot of that. So we lived together.

It was not the easiest and yet, Jiro has always been a very kind person. Never abusive, always kind, worked hard and was willing to learn whatever he had to learn. Meat cutting, appliance repair work, so I never lacked for anything. Financially we were able to have what ever we needed. And the children came and they all did well in school, our life, I really can't complain. And Jiro and I have had a good relationship.

For Beatrice, children were something she had looked forward to having and while it was difficult, it was a period she enjoyed. Like Jennie, she looks fondly upon those initial years of adjustment:

I looked forward to having a family I guess because my childhood was rather lonely. I wanted to have a lot of children and they would have each other, cause my brother was four years younger, so, and he being a boy, you know we weren't much company. So I wanted to have a lot of children that was one of the expectations I had. And of course I wanted to enjoy doing things with my husband. I think I met all that. (Motherhood) wasn't easy, because I had no idea (laughs!) actually housekeeping because I had never done much because my mother prefers to do everything herself. So you know, learning all that it was kind of hard and then having children, not enough sleep and all that, but I enjoyed it.

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<sup>20</sup> Princess, or some one who is waited on.

## Adopting Motherhood

While there were women who chose not to have children, there were Sansei women interviewed who wanted children but were unable to physically. Jan and Joan chose to adopt their children. Jan spoke candidly about the desire for children she and her husband shared, and the solution they found to satisfy this:

We always wanted children, that's why I was close to all my nieces and nephew, because we wanted children and they were a part of our lives. We knew that although they're a part of you they're not truly your own. So I couldn't have children, so we decided to adopt. And it was funny because my husband didn't want to adopt locally here. And he didn't want a mixed baby because he thought well we're both Japanese and so I decided, I went around checking out things and I was going to get one of these airlifted babies from Vietnam, or I was going to go and get one through the Hope Foundation, but that did not suit him. He said, no, I can't accept that. But when I found out about this lawyer in Japan having a Japanese baby he loved it.

So we made up our minds, and when we got the call, I was about, I was thirty-four and he was thirty-six at that time, so we were on the older side. But we decided...it came about so that it was the thing to do, you know. So ever since then, our lives changed and it was the best thing that happened to us. It was an organisation in Japan, but an attorney here. When I picked her up she was 6 weeks old. And it was through a Dr Kikuta in Japan who was kind of notorious in Japan, he did not believe in abortions and he was kind of kicked out of the medical profession because abortions are something in Japan that I guess are accepted. He didn't like the idea of babies being left in lockers and thrown in trashcans and things like that. So he always took care of these mothers at his clinic.

During her interview, Joan addressed the expectations of her husband's family to be a good daughter-in-law, wife, and mother. She felt she was expected to 'provide' a child in her marriage, yet her ex-husband's family did not condone her adoption choice. For a long period

during her marriage Joan felt as if she was not a 'complete' woman.

Adopting Paul has both shown and given Joan her inner strength:

Motherhood is great. I adopted Paul. It was something ...motherhood is something I always wanted but also it's the bittersweet part of my marriage because I think he wanted a child and I couldn't provide. So I adopted this child and they didn't want this child because he had special needs and also he was adopted which is something you don't do. He has been I guess you uncover a lot of things about yourself so in adopting him, I found out how strong I could be because you have to protect this kid but you cannot be overprotective, you have to let him fight too. I think he was the reason for my divorce. And I had to make a choice. Would it be this kid or would it be the family, always smothering me and telling me what to do?

Paul has been a constant source of I guess what a person can do if they are surrounded by love is what Paul is all about. Because when he was born they thought he was severely retarded. I guess typically that's what they always think. And as they grew up and they have all the surgeries and stuff and start doing the things that they are doing it's like every day you appreciate it. Paul is a tri-plegic it means he's paralysed in three different areas. But to see him use left hand or use the left and the right one and unscrew a jar or anything like that. He's had so much therapy, but you appreciate all the little things to him. Even though he's rebellious right now and he's like get away I don't need you, he never really...one thing I worry about is that he never really cried over this divorce cause his dad was a workaholic. So to be here is like a big vacation. He still gets to see his dad. He's been like the rock. You carve him and he stands there and just says ok, this will pass. I don't know where he got that from. It's like this kid, it's like wow, cause I don't know if I would have made it as well if I didn't have him to provide for. He's normal in every sense of the word, so watching him grow up is wonderful. I always wanted to be a parent and when I found I couldn't be a parent I was really depressed. And I knew it would get a lot of heat from this family.

## **A Way to Happiness**

Joan's son provided inspiration, hope and happiness through her troubled marriage and difficult divorce. The value of *kodo mo no tame ni*

brings pleasure and happiness to women, and in some circumstances children are women's solace in an otherwise unhappy situation. Like Joan, Margaret found strength in her children. Recollecting motherhood brought a smile to her face during her interview:

Motherhood was like an answer to my way to happiness because there was already trouble in the marriage that first year. I recall when I gave birth I looked at my baby and I said you are going to be my sweetheart, you. It shows how bad it already was.

**Yumiko:** How long before you had the next baby?

**Margaret:** Eleven years. It is wonderful to see what a miracle really means to look at the little face and see those two little eyebrows and things – it's just a miracle. I really didn't orchestrate anything, it just grew perfect. It was just a miracle. I gave birth twenty-nine years ago to my first child, eighteen years ago to my second child. By my second child, Lamaze was already in heavy and in use and it is a wonderful class to take. I gave birth in a lot more pleasant surroundings and I was awake. I was not awake in the first round. I was on drugs because it was standard procedure...

I decided to have another child simply as a gift to my older son. A wrong reason to have a son, which I don't care. The purpose was so that my older son would never be alone. So this was his gift. My older son wanted a brother so badly I did not dare have a daughter. I just did not dare have a daughter. So I was so glad. He came to the hospital with me during labor and waited for his brother! And he carried his little brother as soon as I had give birth. However they were too many years apart and they never grew close which was a disappointment to me. And when I left they had to fall on each other. That turned out great for them. Unfortunately I had to leave.

**Yumiko:** What are some of the highlights of motherhood?

**Joan:** Like watching your son perform for the first time in a play when he was like three years old and standing in front of the microphone in his white shirt and white pants and big red bow tie and singing "we wish you a merry Christmas" it was just one of the most precious moments. The joy that a child brings to me there is no higher level.

Younger Sansei women who had yet to marry spoke hopefully of the joy and changes in their lives they anticipated children would bring. Christine (twenty-six) also echoed the social expectation that marriage and motherhood are things “you’re supposed to do”, yet she also viewed it as an opportunity to change what she considered as oppressive societal rules such as *gamman*, and to alter her own behaviour:

I look forward to motherhood. I guess you know, that’s what you’re supposed to do and stability I guess in some weird way, and just cause I want to have a family. I feel like that it will make me less selfish and more focused, and mostly just not selfish. I feel like I am, very.

**Yumiko:** What values would you like to pass on to your children?

**Christine:** Just developing a close relationship with my kids, and just having a friendship with them I think is my main goal. I guess certainly family, but not to the point where you limit your own needs and happiness. I guess I want them to develop a strong sense of self and self-confidence. Cause I don’t feel like we did grow up that way.

Twenty-eight-year-old Dianna holds high hopes and expectations of marriage and motherhood. She expects her husband to be honest, unlike the men who frequent her occupation. She would also like to have children yet holds no illusions about the effort children take:

I want twins. I want it all at one time. I’m going to go to a doctor and make him make me have twins...

**Yumiko:** What do you think motherhood will be like?

**Dianna:** Lots of aunties (laughs)! I mean I helped my sister raise her son. I know it’s hard, changing diapers and all that. And I want somebody who will help me raise them. Cause my sister she didn’t really have – she got pregnant from her boyfriend and he was never really there. So I want a husband who is there, faithful and everything.

## **From the Specific to the General**

Discussions of Sansei experience and narrative have revealed how they demonstrate a sense of belonging to Local through social relationships and relational history. Their personal narratives focused on two important issues relating to how Sansei perceived themselves: as Americans of Japanese Ancestry and as Locals. To understand the existence of Local, it is necessary to address the politics of the social environment contributing to the creation of Local as an ethnicity, and to consider if Local does in fact constitute an 'ethnicity' from a theoretical perspective.

Moving from the specific experiences of Sansei women, the subsequent chapters explore approaches to Local, the politics associated with this, and the significance of Local ethnicity for AJA women.

## Chapter Six

### Local - Defining What it is Not, Who it is Not and its Significance for AJA Ethnicity

#### Defining Ethnicity: theoretical approaches.

When addressing the concept of ethnicity in anthropology, it is necessary to discuss the theoretical debates and their historical context in which they are located. While the debate surrounding definitions of ethnicity is wide, for the purposes of this chapter, a brief overview of some of the different historical and theoretical approaches towards ethnicity will be provided. AJA ethnicity in Hawaii will be considered in relation to these approaches.

Most discussions and edited collections of essays on ethnicity begin by presenting the two broad and historically contextualised approaches to ethnicity (for example Hutchinson and Smith (1996), and Eller (2002)), before exploring alternative views that have since emerged. Generally the first approach considered is that of the ‘primordialists’. This approach was popularised by Clifford Geertz (1963), who was influenced by Shils (1952) and his argument that certain social bonds – personal, primordial, sacred and civil ties – persisted in all societies. Geertz suggests that certain attachments can be perceived as ‘givens’ and attributed by individuals to blood, race, language, religion, region and custom, and hence, ethnicity is based on these ‘givens’. However, while ‘primordality’ is perceived by individuals to exist in these bonds, it is not inherent in them (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996).

The primordialist approach to ethnicity has been severely criticised for assuming that ethnicity is a static and ‘natural’ phenomenon, for perceiving ethnicity as ascribed, and for lacking ‘explanatory power’ (ibid). This approach assumes that ethnic groups are “immemorial, discreet and persisting units” (ibid: 8) and fails to integrate other types of social identities.

While the majority of scholars researching Asian American ethnicity downplay the significance of primordial ties, there are others who argue that such ties, particularly those “based on a common language, religion, physical characteristics

and history associated with their home country, are major sources of their ethnicity for Asian immigrants” (Min 2002:7), to the USA. Min (2002) believes that primordial ties to a home country have great significance, particularly for second generation Asian Americans. His argument is based on the notion that second generation AAs have no choice but to live with ethnic culture in their immigrant home. He draws on fifteen personal narratives of professional AA where they indicated that their ethnic identity is largely based on “ethnic culture practised at home in their early years” (ibid: 8). However, this approach fails to account for the persistence of AA (including AJA) ethnicity in subsequent generations, and ignores other factors that have contributed to the development of Asian American ethnic groups in the USA.

In contrast to the ‘primordialist’ approach, is what Hutchinson and Smith (1996) term the instrumentalist approach. Instrumentalists, such as Cohen (1974) view ethnicity as a “social, political and cultural resource for different ethnic groups” (ibid: 8). Individuals are able to create unique identities from the variety of heritages and cultures available to them. This approach has been critiqued for the potential to ignore both the wider environment in which competition occurs, and the ‘affective dimensions’ of ethnicity.

Hutchinson and Smith (1996) categorise three alternative approaches to the primordialist and instrumentalist approaches: transactional, social psychological and ethno-symbolic approaches to ethnicity. Eller (2002) has categorised these three views under one label: ‘circumstantialism’

Barth (1969) considered one of the most influential theorists on ethnicity is considered a transactionalist. This approach views ethnicity as a unit of ascription and is based on boundaries which determine ethnic grouping. Barth argued that it was not the cultural content of an ethnic group that is significant, but the cultural boundaries that reinforce the group’s existence. Barth viewed ethnic groups in terms of social organisation and considered them to “function as categories of inclusion/exclusion and of interaction” (Eller 2002: 77).

Barth, like all circumstantialists, acknowledges that boundaries are permeable, however he has been criticised for “assuming the fixity of bounded ethnic identities and failing to differentiate types of ethnic allegiance, the

resources open to various ethnic groups and their individual subjective dimensions (Francis 1979; Wallman 1986; Epstein, 1978)” (Hutchinson and Smith 2002).

Eriksen (1993) explores Abner Cohen’s (1974) criticism of Barth’s approach to ethnicity as a categorical ascription that defines “a person in terms of his (sic) basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background” (1969: 13). Cohen argues that this approach is in fact still primordial in nature. He presents an alternative instrumentalist view, which divorces culture from ethnicity and focuses on the functional aspect of ethnic identity. For Cohen, ethnicity is used as a” form of informal political organisation where cultural boundaries are invoked so that the group’s resources or ‘symbolic capital’ can be secured” (Eriksen 1993:55). However, as outlined previously there are limitations associated with this approach, especially the assumption that ethnicity does not require historical or cultural conditions because it is assumed to rise from social conditions.

The importance of the historical perspective is not overlooked by the social psychological approach. Horowitz (1985), recognised as for pioneering this view, asserts that ethnicity is ascriptive, highly contextual and is shaped by social processes. This approach accepts that ethnic groups may change, or even become extinct over time. His premise emphasises kinship myths and group honour and incorporates the historical perspective including “the role of intelligentsia, collective memories, and pre-existing group antagonisms” (Hutchinson and Smith, 2002: 10).

Ethno-symbolists also focus heavily on the history of ethnic groups in relation to their “persistence, change and resurgence”, and are concerned with how these pasts shape the present community (ibid). Ethno- symbolists such as Armstrong (1982) and A. D. Smith (1986) place an emphasis on myths, memories and symbols. Smith outlines a prescriptive list of six factors that identify what constitutes an ethnic group: a collective name; a common myth of cultural descent; a shared history; a distinctive shared culture; an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity (1986: 22-30).

The social psychological and ethno symbolist-approach are similar to what Min (2002) terms the social construction perspective, which emphasises the

importance of 'ethnic culture' yet, recognises that these are not necessarily "given, fixed, inherited, or vertically transmitted over generations" (ibid: 13). This perspective "considers ethnicity, not as fixed, but as a fluid and dynamic, socially constructed in people's concrete social interactions with others" (ibid.) and asserts that individuals have multiple identities that they will select in relation to a specific situation. Ethnic culture, for social constructionists, is both created and mediated.

This is the approach has been adopted by contemporary ethnic theorists who are less concerned with cataloguing cultural traits, and more concerned with the "processes by which ethnic groups, identities and even cultures themselves are constructed" (Eller 2002: 82). There has been an emphasis on recognising that ethnic groups are products of the present. Eller (2002: 46) emphasises the 'presence of the past', suggesting that "this memory, this thought, will be naturally filtered through the lenses of the present: present social experience, present opportunities, present discourse, present interest."

Eriksen (1993) follows a similar approach. Where previous ethnic theorists such as Smith have outlined prescriptive lists of what constitutes ethnicity, Eriksen argues the ethnicity is both relational and extremely subjective. Using Barth's premise that culture is not necessarily the defining factor of an ethnic group, Eriksen explores different elements of what could be considered ethnicity. Quoting Moreman, he argues that ethnicity is an "emic category of ascription" (1993: 11), and postulates that to qualify as an ethnic group, a group must have contact with at least one other group, and must be recognised as different by both groups. Ethnicity, according to Eriksen, is neither ascribed, nor achieved, but is a fusion of both approaches.

Eriksen also discusses *ethnic identities* that are particularly important when ethnicity (in this case) is under threat. Ethnic identity is maintained through ethnic symbolism: "language, religion, kinship system or way of life" (1993: 68) and "embody a perceived continuity with the past". Like Eller and Smith, Eriksen highlights that both ethnicity and ethnic symbolism are conditional on the social context, and both must be convincing for the ethnic group members and must be acknowledged as legitimate by non-members.

Eriksen's argument is particularly significant in relation to recognising AJA ethnicity in Hawai'i. While Hawai'i AJA are similar to their mainland counterparts in terms of country of origin, their history and ethnic symbolism have been strongly shaped by a shared identity among the different ethnic groups who reside in the islands, of belonging to Hawai'i. This identity is known as Local and is significant in recognising Local AJA as a unique ethnic group.

## Local

The concept of 'Local culture', as something unique to the islands of Hawai'i, emerged during the mid-1820s when contact between missionaries and indigenous Hawaiians led to the assimilation of American values and traditions in Hawaiian social structures (Okamura, 1980). The term 'Local' is believed to have first been used and emphasised to distinguish between Hawaiian-born and mainlanders during the Massie<sup>1</sup> trial in 1931.

Since its emergence, there have been various assessments of the concept of Local, how it developed and what it includes. Ogawa (1978) and recently Ogawa and Grant (1993) approach Local as a product of poly-cultural elements, where different groups residing together contribute to a culture or identity. Yamamoto (1974) perceives Local as something that combines a sense of 'belonging' to Hawai'i, and an 'oppositional' identity to the economic forces of control at the time. Okamura (1980), on the other hand, argues that Local is a result of historical 'accommodations' by different ethnic groups. He also expands on Yamamoto's discussion, applying the oppositional approach of ethnicity as a response of exclusion to outside economic pressures and control.

The majority of writing about 'Local' at both an academic (as outlined above) and literary (for example Yamanaka (1996), Takaki (1984), Saiki (1991))

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<sup>1</sup> Thalia Massie, wife of Navy Lieutenant Thomas Massie was allegedly raped by five local youths of Japanese, Hawaiian-Chinese and Chinese ancestry. As a result of conflicting evidence, the judge declared a mistrial and the defendants were granted bail. While on bail, two of the accused youths were attacked by Navy men. One of the youths was shot to death with the involvement of Thomas Massie and Thalia Massie's mother, Mrs Fortescue. They were subsequently arrested and found guilty by a local jury of mixed ethnicity of murder. Mainland pressure resulted in a pardon for those involved with the murder, and locals were left with a bitter taste of injustice. Mainland Haole elite could commit a crime and not suffer any consequences (Kotani, 1985:77-84). Rosa (2000) expands on the relationship between this event and the emphasis on Local.

level has been by insiders, those who are Local and know the islands or who have resided there for a length of time, rather than outsiders. My ‘outsider’ experience and understanding of Local-ness combined aspects of these approaches. However, in my efforts to understand the concept of Local, I discovered that it is easier to describe what it is *not*. The situation in Hawaii does not fall into any neatly labelled categories that social scientists have created to understand social phenomena. Local is neither multicultural nor a form of nationalism, although it does reflect aspects of American national identity in constructions of myth as will be discussed later in this chapter. Local displays attributes of an ethnic group, yet its nature challenges assumptions about what constitutes ethnicity.

### **Local: Not Multicultural**

Text books and exhibitions relating to plantation and Local life in Hawai’i<sup>2</sup>, suggest that the plantations encouraged and contributed to the mixed plate of Local culture, both in terms of food and ethnic blending. Migrant groups were ethnically segregated and paid different wages to allow the Haole oligarchy to rule by a practice of ‘divide and conquer’, which ensured their heterogeneous power was maintained. By actively enforcing ethnic differences, plantation owners believed there would be little risk of workers unifying to fight for better wages and conditions. Grant and Ogawa (1993) suggest that this encouraged ethnic diversity and tolerance within the plantation system, and as a result, created multiculturalism.

This notion of Local as something which focuses on the “blending, sharing or mixing of cultures of the different ethnic groups in Hawaii” (Okamura 1980:122) is promoted by Grant and Ogawa as a “historical process that created diverse ethnic communities without the presence of a racial or cultural majority, promoted aloha (spirit of racial tolerance), and encouraged an amalgamation of Pacific, Asian, European, and Anglo-American cultures into a new brand of *local* behaviour, language, folklore, racial attitude and interracial marriages”

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<sup>2</sup> One of which will be discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

(1993:140). It is this view that permeated much of the AJA descriptions of their history, their contribution to, and interpretations of Local identity<sup>3</sup>.

Okamura (1980, 1991,1998) critiques the idea that Local is a blending of cultures, arguing that it is based on an incorrect assumption that all ethnic groups in the islands contributed equally to Local culture, overlooking the social processes and politics that existed and continue to exist between groups. The impact that mainland American institutions had on migrant and Hawaiian populations is also minimised. Rather than a blending or sharing of ethnicities, Okamura (1980:124) believes that Local culture emerged as a result of an accommodative process – there were “adaptations that each ethnic group, either incoming or already settled, made in its initial and evolving relations with other groups in Hawaii society”. Turning away from the suggestion that Hawai’i is a multicultural society, Okamura (1980: 124) focuses on the politics of inclusion and exclusion of Local particularly at a racial level. Local refers to non-whites<sup>4</sup> and excludes groups such as “Haoles, African Americans, immigrants and other newcomers, the military, and tourists”<sup>5</sup>. He further proposes that Local identity is a form of resistance that has “arisen as a consequence to the threat to Hawaii posed by the changing number of mainland Haoles, Asian and Pacific immigrants and tourist and industry developers” (1980: 135).<sup>6</sup>

Okamura (1998) argues that Hawaii cannot be considered multi-cultural because of the ethnic groups it excludes, particularly in the construction of Local identity. Haole are often considered to be outside the category of Local. While the Local-Haole conflict appears to be racial, it “is in reality only a blatant manifestation of a deeper conflict” (Yamamoto 1974:113). Based on the premise that Local ethnicity relies on a ‘shared sense of belonging’, Haole cannot be Local because of the absence of a shared history of resistance against a predominately Haole oligarchy. While the historically-presented blending of cultures on plantations is questionable, for Locals the, “historical fact of their *common*

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<sup>3</sup> Other ethnic groups such as Filipino and Korean also celebrate their identity in this way.

<sup>4</sup> Okamura (1980:128) acknowledges that there is a distinction made between mainland Haoles and ‘Local Haoles’, referred to as kama’aina, (literally island child). Local Haoles earn this status over time through residency and participation in local life and social relationships.

<sup>5</sup> Here immigrants refer to recent migrants, as opposed to those who are second or later generation migrants. These are commonly referred to as F.O.B (fresh off the boat) by local people.

<sup>6</sup> Both these points will be discussed elsewhere in this chapter

*experience* as plantation labourers ... is the basis of their Local identity” (Okamura 1980:126, my emphasis). Because Haole do not share in this ‘common experience’ they have a tendency to be considered as part of the out-group.

Further related to their exclusion from Local is the position they have held in the past, and continue to do so in the present in terms of the social, economic and political control of the islands. Historically, Haole have always been the dominant and controlling economic force of Hawaii. Haole are associated with business and Federal level decisions that have been made that impact negatively on the islands: “(E)ven the annexation of Hawaii to the United States in 1898 was predominately a tactical move engineered primarily by business interests in the islands, and the tourists flooded into Hawaii, taxing the natural resources and the life styles of the people” (Yamamoto 1974:113). In-migrants from the mainland, including military personnel and professionals who are considered ‘undesirable’, compete for jobs with Local residents (Okamura 1980:130), further adding to the conflict between Local and non-Local.

Local represents “the shared identity of people in Hawai’i who have an appreciation of and a commitment to the islands and their peoples, cultures, and ways of life, which are perceived as being threatened by external forces of development and change, e.g. tourism and foreign investment” (Okamura 1994:174). Because there is a perception that social and economic changes impacting on the quality of life in the islands “have the common element of being external in origin” (Okamura 1980:130), those who can be identified with being ‘outsiders’ and non-Local come to represent a threat to Local people’s lifestyle. Both Haole and Japanese from Japan represent collective groups who are physically visible and who, through tourism and business, are threatening Local cultures. Okamura and Yamamoto believe that the inclusion/exclusion aspect of Local identity in Hawai’i is strongly influenced by these external forces.

Local is also a politically loaded tool which “represents an expression of opposition to outside control and change of Hawai’i and its land, people and cultures” (Okamura 1994: 162). For residents of the islands, it unifies the diverse ethnic groups under the giant umbrella of Local, yet for Local to actually work, these ethnic groups need to exist and be recognised as separate groups. Without them, the notion that Hawai’i is a culturally diverse place, yet all can live in

harmony through sharing and tolerance would be unable to exist. Points of conflict and contention between ethnic groups may have resulted in the emphasis on Local to accommodate and smooth over socio-political differences<sup>7</sup>.

## **Local: Not an Indigenous Identity**

Okamura (1998:282) suggests that the indigenous Hawaiians further challenge the multi-cultural perception held in the islands as they:

(A)re advancing their unique and therefore privileged status as the native people of Hawai'i. The Native Hawaiian movement thus poses a critical challenge to the model of the multicultural Hawai'i and its liberal emphasis on tolerance, harmony, equality of opportunity and a shared Local culture and identity... Native Hawaiians are asserting that they have not benefited from or participated in the various dimensions of the Hawai'i multicultural model, and therefore that multicultural Hawai'i and multicultural America hold little promise for them.

This also presents a challenge to the ideology of Local. While Local draws on aspects of Hawaiian culture and identity and integrates them into the notion of what Local culture is in some situations (such as aloha, or protecting the land), it glides over the needs and concerns of indigenous Hawaiians to be recognised as such (Rosa 2000:94). Local, according to Rosa is:

...a cultural identity but is also an inherently political identity that can be used by those who wish to gloss over and minimize the historical differences between Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians. Identifying as a "local" in Hawai'i today for example, can be interpreted as a reactionary response by settler peoples who perceive the sovereignty movement as a threat to the solidarity among Hawai'i residents.

Those who are not Hawaiian may interpret Local as a 'right to place'. By creating an ethnic identity that attempts to include insider groups of Hawaii, Local legitimises groups, other than Hawaiian, and their 'right' to be in the islands<sup>8</sup>. This is not explicitly suggested, yet arguments such as that postulated

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<sup>7</sup>This was evident in narratives of some Sansei women.

<sup>8</sup> Schools of thought vary on the relationship between local identity and Hawaiian identity. Sansei women did not discuss Hawaiian rights (except for one who recalled the political demonstrations briefly). There is possibly more said by their silence on the topic than verbalisation about indigenous rights. During the six months I was in Hawai'i there was very little mentioned with regards to this issue. However Pamela Sachi Kido's article *Local Identity in a (Trans) Nationalist*

by McGregor (1989:95) may act as a catalyst for Local to symbolise a legitimisation of presence:

It is only in Hawaii that the Hawaiian people can perpetuate the Hawaiian language, culture, spiritual beliefs and values. The Japanese, Filipinos, and Chinese can go to their homelands to find their heritage. The Hawaiians only have Hawaii.

Yet for many Locals, they feel they too have only Hawai'i<sup>9</sup>. Their 'blood' ties with a particular ethnic group or migration history, such as AJA with Japan, does not necessarily imply that they believe they have a continuing 'tie' with the country of their 'origin'. For this reason many ethnic groups particularly the AJA do not constitute a diaspora<sup>10</sup>. Many Locals have lost contact with family members in their 'home' country and for the majority of AJA that I interviewed, Hawai'i is their home. They are neither Japanese nor American, they are Local.

### **Local: Part of a Nation?**

In theorising the possible reasoning as to why Local exists in Hawai'i and not in other situations where mixed ethnic groups reside (such as the USA mainland, Australia or New Zealand), the impact of the USA nation-state may provide some rationale. In a chapter on 'Ethnicity and Nationalism' Banks (1996) describes nationalism as an idea where there is a 'natural congruence between a country's name (however often changed), a fixed territory (however much disputed), a group of people who are considered citizens (however varied they are), and a political system that administers that country (however much despised)' (Banks

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*Hawaiian Space* <http://www2.soc.hawaii.edu/css/dept/owr/Pamela.html> (8/8/98), discusses some of these viewpoints in detail.

<sup>9</sup> A similar sentiment is felt by Indians living in Fiji and generations of Pakeha in New Zealand who have no knowledge or ties with their ancestral homes in Europe.

<sup>10</sup> I base this argument on the following definitions of Diaspora: "Diaspora" refers to the doubled relationship or dual loyalty that migrants, exiles, and refugees have to places – their connections to the space they currently occupy and their continuing involvement with "back home" (Lavie and Swedenberg 1996:14), and "A diaspora is a network of people, scattered in a process of usually non-voluntary displacement, usually created by violence or under threat of violence or death. Diaspora consciousness highlights the tensions between common bonds created by shared origins and other ties arising from the process of dispersal and the obligation to remember a life prior to flight or kidnap (Gilroy 1997:328 cited in Temple 1999:18).

1996:124). Looking at his introductory description of a nation, Hawai'i falls under the jurisdiction of a nation state. As the 50th state of the United States of America, the islands' inhabitants are part of the territory of America and are governed by the political system of the USA. Local people of the islands are members of the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983:15) of the nation known as the United States of America. Cohen (1985) believes that belonging to a nation results in a sentiment that is "deficient or unfulfilling in some way. Faced by national and transnational units (such as the European Union) people have become 'politically introspective and reach back to more convincing levels of society with which to identify' (1985:106)" (cited in Banks 1996:147).

Could Local identity have in part emerged as a result of those in Hawai'i experiencing a sense of dissatisfaction in being a part of the USA? Cohen suggests that communities (such as the rural community of Whalsay, Ireland where he conducted his fieldwork) are "self-aware formations, internally divided and different but subsuming their complexity 'within shared and relatively simple forms for the purposes of...interaction with the outside' (Cohen 1982b:8 cited in Banks 1996:14). His theories highlight issues relating to questions of identity formation, particularly when applied to the situation of Local in Hawai'i. At a community level, Local identity subsumes the different ethnic groups and produces an identity that differentiates itself from outside forces as Okamura (1980) suggests. Not only is Local constructed in opposition to tourism and outside investments, it is used to highlight the islands' uniqueness in contrast with an American nation. The mainland, and its associated culture, is constructed and perceived as being less desirable than that of Hawai'i, yet at the same time belonging to America is considered by some to be an enduring marker of self-identity. Rosa (2000)

and Kosasa (2000) suggest that Local identity echoes the American national ideology of a 'nation of immigrants', particularly in the construction of their history.

### **Local Identity: Diversity, Sharing and Belonging**

Cohen also believes that Local communities are formed internally and "acquire their significance from the meanings which their *own* members perceive and attribute to them" (Cohen 1982:9 cited in Banks 1996:144, original emphasis). Applying this idea to Local-ness in Hawai'i encourages focusing on the content of an identity, rather than understanding its existence in relation to outside forces. Cohen recognises that in order for a 'Local', as opposed to national or global identity to exist, it has to come from within the group. Certain symbolic elements are given meaning by group members and are also given to social forms or objects upon which they build and base an identity, foster social cohesion and are the basis for membership. Such symbolic elements in Hawai'i include the history of plantation life, values, role modes and stories as previously indicated in Sansei women's narratives.

According to Cohen, "people assert community, whether in the form of ethnicity or of *Locality* when they recognize in it the most adequate medium for the expression of their whole selves" (1985:107 cited in Banks 1995:147, my emphasis). In the case of Hawai'i, Local is a 'community' or 'identity', combining the different ethnic groups that reside there.

This was reflected in a package of news clippings I received from Grandpa Roy just prior to Christmas 2000. It contained articles about 'A Place at my Table' forum, where island people explored the concept of Local. The articles highlighted the importance of a shared sense of belonging. Their titles such as: *Shared experiences a common thread among*

'Local' people, and *No shame, but you can't be Local if you not from heah*, echoed the importance of Locality and knowledge of cultural elements in Local ethnic identity. Leahey in his article *Pidgin puts all 'us guys' on the same level*, describes Local culture in the following way:

...everything we experience in Hawai'i is local. It is of this place. And while it is true being local involves being born, raised and educated in Hawai'i, being local is much more than that.

The best, quickest definition for who is local was uttered by a member of my family at a family reunion. He said: "Local is 'us guys.'"

"Us guys: takes in the full spectrum of local existence. The definition reflects a gigantic sense of place, for Hawai'i is geographically isolated, and as an island chain, it has lent itself to be a special society. *Local culture is a realization that you are a part of everything and everybody and everything is a part of you.*

Simply put, Hawai'i's local culture is not a melting pot – a melting pot melts everything down into one gooey mass. It is a vibrant stew of cultures that mass to the overall culture. Each supplies its own flavour and is celebrated for doing so...

We must remember that the basis for local culture is the Hawaiian<sup>11</sup> culture. It underlies every aspect of being local.

Being local is like concentric circles that extend way out. It includes people who don't even consider themselves local or people who've moved away but still consider Hawai'i their home..."

(Leahey Honolulu Star Advertiser 22 October 2000. My emphasis)

Local identity emphasises shared features, and at the same time recognises different ethnic groups. It "transcends ethnic diversity to incorporate groups and individuals of differing ethnicity into a greater social and cultural complex in which commonalties are emphasised and

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<sup>11</sup> This refers to indigenous Hawaiian culture, based on the spirit of 'aloha'.

differences are disregarded...(it refers to)... the common experiences, values, activities, and beliefs among groups...(and)...overcomes the very clear political and economic status differences among ethnic groups" (Okamura 1980:131). In one of the interviews Andrea explores the way in which Local "transcends the limits of particularistic traditions without renouncing ethnic identities" (Grant and Ogawa 1993:149):

Because of the many different ethnic groups in Hawai'i, each ethnic group is respected for their own cultural traditions, you're not expected to blend in or share an American quote cultural value system, but you can maintain your own. And I think that was the neat part about growing up in Hawai'i, was as a family we were able to maintain those Japanese customs and traditions that came over from Okinawa, that came over from Japan until this day I still maintain some of those. For example like on New Year's Eve, eating soba, Japanese noodles. We still do that. Or in July we celebrate Obon season. We continue to do things like that. We continue to go to the Japanese temple, memorial services for those who have passed on. We eat mochi on girl's day (she laughs). So a lot of it is still maintained, it's nurtured and I don't know if I lived any where else I could continue to practice or support it as long as I have in Hawai'i.

I don't know if it's Hawai'i, because the nature of Hawai'i and that there is no majority ethnic group, every body is ok. There's no minority group, maybe other than what we think of as Caucasians as being our minorities.

The search for 'common ground' is often conducted through an establishment of social relationships. This is particularly poignant when Locals meet other Locals at social gatherings. I was always introduced as an anthropologist from New Zealand. The Local doing the introduction, on the other hand, would often ask what school the other person went to, or question whether or nor they had a friend or relative in common. As my circle of contacts and friends grew, I found that Locals would seek a person that we both knew early in the conversation: "You interview Annie? She's my sister-in-law's Aunty's friend, you know!" Having a

'person in common' assisted in both the interview process and knowledge of the society. Lum's (1998:12) introduction to *Growing up Local: an anthology of poetry and prose in Hawai'i*, candidly captures the type of interaction that occurs in introductory social settings:

If you are a visitor, sometime soon after the introductions you'll likely be asked, "What school you went?" Locals know that the question refers to what high school you attended. And, that the next question might invariably be, "You know my cousin? He grad in '97." Invariably, after a few more questions, a connection is made to a relative who attended your school or a mutual acquaintance who lives in the neighborhood or sometimes the discovery of a distant family relationship ("Eh, my cousin married to your sister-in-law!").

At the same party, the kids call all the older females "Aunty," whether they are related or not. Local kids have innumerable "aunties" not all by blood, but all who act as family. In fact, a high school study hall teacher once confessed that the most powerful warning she could use on misbehaving students was, "I know your father," which made her like an "Aunty," a part of the family.

The "What school you went?" question has its roots in the native Hawaiian way of identifying oneself by geography and genealogy....the question "What school you went?" rather than being a question that divides us, is fundamentally an effort to discover how we are connected.<sup>12</sup>

Elements of this perspective are further evident in an e-mail I received from a Sansei friend in Hawai'i. Prior to writing this chapter, while I was in New Zealand, I had been electronically 'discussing' the concept of 'Local-ness' with a Sansei AJA in Hawai'i. No mention of these

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<sup>12</sup> Within a few days of my arrival in O'ahu, having spent three weeks in Hilo, I quickly learnt the importance of identification with schools while sitting in a truck in rush hour traffic on the motorway to Honolulu. A huge bumper sticker was splashed across the rear window of the pick-up truck in front of us bearing the words "Kamehamecha" with an emblem beside the word. My first thought was that this could be related to the sovereignty movement, heralding a great Hawaiian King. However, after discussion with the driver of the truck, who also had the same sticker on his rear window, I learnt that Kamehamecha was in fact a school, primarily for indigenous or part-indigenous Hawaiians. McKinley High school was well known for the large numbers of AJA that attended, particularly during the Second World War.

theories had been made in our e-mail discussions, yet it was interesting to see his definition of what constituted Local identity:

Local mostly means dat one individual knows many tings about da kine local modern culcha. Dey can be somewhat ignorant about the past and the future, but dey need fo know da present day slangs, da hang outs, wea fo go, wot fo do, who to know, how fo talk, how fo walk, what to eat, etc.etc. etc. Actually this question is harder to answer than I initially thought

There seems to be degrees of localness that is determined through a hierarchy of values (just like Maslow's needs):

1. birthright, length of time in place,
2. social connectedness
3. cultural and physical understanding of place
4. spiritual connected

These determined the degree of localness that in individual is view as having. If you got all four at a pretty high level, you local all da way brah!<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the emphasis on social relationships, there is evidence that history and shared memories of the past contribute to Local pride and identity. There is a shared focus on the migrant experience, relationships, values and a message of triumph over adversity. Food is also an important feature in Local life and many women interviewed mention pot-lucks, activities associated with eating and specific types of meals that Locals are familiar with. However it is social relationships, particularly those that were intimate and/or with family, and relational history expressed through ancestry and behaviour that were dominant themes in the AJA women's narratives.

### **What Local Is:**

Local, is the common name used in Hawai'i to identify whatever is considered unique to those who reside there. This terminology can

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<sup>13</sup> The e-mail includes some elements of pidgin English. It has been reproduced here using original spelling and grammar.

cause some confusion, particularly as social scientists often employ the term local in opposition to global (Friedman 1994, Miller 1995, Wilson and Dissanayake 1996) when addressing micro and macro issues of globalisation. In Hawai'i, while there are global/local issues to be considered, those in the islands use the term Local as an ethnonym, a label that categorises behaviours, values, material goods, actions and cultural practises under an ethnic group name. "Hawaiian" cannot be used for those things that fall under this heading, as it is a term reserved for application to indigenous Hawaiians and their culture. Some may describe Japanese Americans who live in Hawai'i as Japanese-Hawaiians, but those in the islands will argue that this label implies a person is of both Japanese and indigenous Hawaiian descent. Hence, Local avoids the politics associated with indigenous Hawaiians (yet recognising the contributions of Hawaiian culture as a foundation for Localness), and avoids selectively identifying one of the many ethnic cultures as the main contributor or inventor of Local culture. The fact that Local is not associated with or recognised as an identifiable ethnic category or location such as Japanese, Australian or Brazilian should not detract from the reality of its existence as an ethnic marker, identity and group as the following section will explore.

Many of the inhabitants in Hawai'i have immigrant histories and this forms the descent 'myth'. Arriving from distant lands, they toiled in the plantations, and overcame their cultural differences to become the Local people of the islands today. Immigrants and Hawaiians share a history of struggle and oppression against a Haole oligarchy, and recognition of sacrifices made to attain the 'harmony' of today. While this is not necessarily the case for all ethnic groups within the islands,

Local history is symbolically constructed on the basis of plantation heritage to act as a common bond or ancestry.

Locals believe that Local culture emerged from the politics of plantation life where immigrants and Hawaiians faced a common enemy: the dominant Haole class. It “signifies a historical relationship based on commonality among working class people of color and their differences from white” (Rosa 2000:99). While a common ‘ancestry’ in the sense of biological or blood ties was not shared, there existed a commonality of cultural aspects that led to co-operation amongst immigrant groups, and has since become a crucial part of shared history for Locals in Hawai‘i. Local author Lum (1998:12) describes the establishment of common values among immigrants and indigenous people:

They entered a native Hawaiian culture that valued interpersonal relationships and love for the land. Their own values of family loyalty, obligation, and reciprocity coincided with those of the native Hawaiians: an orientation that valued harmony between people, minimised personal gain or achievement, and shared natural resources. This cultural accommodation on the part of the native Hawaiians and immigrant labour was born out of a tradition of hardship, struggle, and conflict that counters the romantic notions of blended cultures, or a multiethnic Hawai‘i based on a democratic sharing of cultures.

As evident in the talk story session of Sansei, plantation life and ongoing memories and stories of hardships endured are reflected and represented in daily life in the islands by Locals. Historic exhibitions such as the Plantation Village in Waipahu and those in the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai‘i, remind third and fourth generations of the back-breaking work experienced by immigrants at

the turn of the century on the plantations. The wearing of Palaka shirts and shorts is symbolic of the immigrant history of Hawai'i, as are the black and white photographs of the self-sacrificing picture brides, the Local pidgin language, and the celebration of diverse ethnic festivals.<sup>14</sup>

Okamura (1994:64), reviewing Ogawa's (1981:7 cited in Okamura 1994) belief that Local culture is embedded in cultural activities and behaviours, argues that:

Hawaii's peoples have created a culture in which everyone feels they can make a contribution, be a part of. It is a culture which provides a sense of shared experiences or 'points of commonality' where people come together and create a mutually beneficial and enriching experience." These points of commonality would include eating certain foods (e.g., plate lunches), the practice of particular customs and habits (e.g., "low-keyed" and considerate interactions. Modes of entertainment (e.g., ethnic jokes) and shared folklore (e.g., supernatural beliefs). With the exception of social interactions, all the above common areas are trivial and can hardly serve as the collective basis for a shared culture that is supposed to underlie social relations in Hawai'i.

Food, as noted previously, particularly the sharing of it, plays an important role in symbolising the idea of multiculturalism and Local identity. In Hawai'i, consuming Local food, having knowledge about Local food and enjoying the variety available contributes to a person's Local 'identity'. The exhibition title *From Bento to Mixed Plate: Americans of Japanese Ancestry in Multicultural Hawai'i*<sup>15</sup> reflects the way in which food forms a vital part of Local identity and the way in which ethnic groups have contributed to 'Local-ness'. *Bento* is a Japanese word for packed lunch. Plantation workers would often take their *bento* to eat while working out in the field. Each ethnic group would take something different and history books suggest that the sharing of culinary delights between the different immigrant groups led to the 'mixed plate' that is a modern day mixture of one scoop rice,

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<sup>14</sup> The importance of this shared history will be expanded on in the remainder of this thesis.

<sup>15</sup> This will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

one scoop potato salad and meat prepared in a selection of ways. The combination of ethnic foods is only limited by the imagination, with popular dishes such as *loco moco*, *manapua*, *poi mochi*, *poke* or *sashimi* and the famous *Spam musubi* being heralded as icons of Local-ness.

Social events were always conducted around meals. Many of the interviews I conducted were often preceded or concluded with a meal and, on some occasions, during a meal! It is real pleasure for Locals to provide and share food, and is an essential part of maintaining social relationships. Sharing and giving is considered part of the 'aloha spirit'. The neighbours of my home-stay were constantly engaging our household in the sharing of food. Someone would go to a party and have too much *mochi*, so they would bring it to us. I had been given too much smoked fish at another gathering and that was taken next door in reciprocation. The neighbour had an abundance of mangoes and left some on our doorstep. The exchanges would continue on a weekly, sometimes daily basis, establishing not only a sense of friendship, but also an opportunity for social interaction and relationships which were built as time progressed.

Keilani, reflected on the accepted value of sharing in the islands, as she talked story about her experiences on the mainland:

I guess going there and learning the culture is a little different you know, people's upbringing is so much different. Here in Hawai'i we have the aloha spirit, you know you share, you know, families stick together it's just a sharing, but when you go to the mainland you know, everything is for yourself, you know. And I was shocked when the girls, I asked one of my friends if she had an extra snap if she would give it to me. She wouldn't give it to me, she wanted to sell it to me, for five cents. Cause here in Hawai'i, if you just want a snap<sup>16</sup>, you're just like here you can have it you know! Kinda thing. And the other thing too is the other thing now that I chuckle about it when you get French fries you just share your French fries, Oh yeah you want? And everybody just take from it or not. Over there you buy your French fries or hamburger then that's yours, you know and

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<sup>16</sup> Snaps, Keilani told me are hair ties.

if you share, they go: “You don’t want yours?” You want yours but you just share, and that’s the way we’re brought up here – you always think of the next person and you share your whatever you have.

While for many Locals, Hawaii presents a front of a happy multicultural society, the tensions within the community are very real. Part of the criteria for ‘being Local’ is the ability to understand the way in which tensions are dealt with, through the use of humour. I asked twenty-eight year old Dianna what Local meant to her. She responded:

It means raised in Hawai’i, I guess in Hawai’i everybody has their own, their own...when you joke around with some one from Hawaii they catch on, when someone’s from outside and you joke about something, they’re like what? And we have our own language, but I don’t use that much.

What Dianna is referring to is the type of humour found in the islands. Many Local jokes and comedy acts play on the stereotypes of the different ethnic groups in the islands. While around the world ‘ethnic’ or national ‘jibing’ often takes place, it is the blatant and accepted stereotyping and racism, accepted ‘good naturedly’ by Locals that distinguishes Local humour and its role in Island life. Dennis Ogawa (1978a) in *Jan Ken Po* lists over ten pages of ‘Local jokes’ and ‘stories’, demonstrating this type of humour. Ogawa (1978a:156) believes that this humour acts as a means for coping with the tensions between ethnicities. He argues

(T)he jokes told among Island people are again an example of the process which residents of Hawaii have learned: slight self-depreciation for the sake of group harmony. By being the brunt of the joke, each ethnic group in effect “humbles” itself; no one is so important, so significant that they can’t be made fun of. No group is free from the light gibes or puns which accompany this aspect of

Hawai'i's humour. Again, it is expected that the listener will not find these jokes racially derogatory or insulting, but good-natured fun.

Many jokes are presented in, or contain the 'Local language' that Dianna mentions, known as Pidgin<sup>17</sup>. This adds to the sense of 'Localness', excluding those who do not understand the language nor the humour of Hawai'i. Ethnic jokes such as those told by Frank De Lima or Don Ho (Local comedians) are often met with horrified reactions by mainland tourists, yet "Island people cannot appreciate such criticism because this style of humour is not meant to insult, but to reaffirm that one shares in the "local" culture" (Ogawa 1978a:156). Below are two Local style jokes. The first Ogawa included in his examples of Local humour, which he believes reveals "many dimensions of the intercultural nature of the Islands" and are told "as a way to facilitate communication between the races (sic) by easing tensions and establishing an atmosphere of good humour" (1978a:160). The other is from a 'Local' web site and is written in Pidgin English:

There were three boys, one Chinese, one Japanese and one Hawaiian playing together. The Chinese boy said, "When I grow up I am going to be an astronaut and fly to Mars". Then the Japanese boy said, "I am going to be an astronaut too, but I am going to Mercury."

Then the Hawaiian boy said, " When I grow up I am going to be an astronaut too, but I am going to be the most famous astronaut of all. I am going to the sun!"

The other two boys started to laugh. The Hawaiian boy asked, "Why are you two laughing?"

The Japanese boy answered, "Why, as soon as you get near the sun, it will be so hot that you'll burn up."

"You think me stupid or what?" the Hawaiian boy said. I going nighttime!"

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<sup>17</sup> Pidgin is defined by linguists as Creole.

### Local Style Jokes: No Look Good

One day, a farmer's horse had died and he needed another horse to pull his plow.

As the farmer was walking down the road, he saw a horse eating grass in the pasture and questioned the owner. "How much money would you like for that horse?"

The Filipino man replied, "He not por sale. Him no look too good."

The farmer looked at the horse and said, "He looks fine to me!

How much for the horse?"

The Filipino man again said, "Excuse me sir, but the horse, he no look too good."

The farmer got a little frustrated and gave the man three hundred dollars and said, "The horse looks fine to me. I'll take it."

The Filipino man said, "Tank you sir! But the horse. He no look good."

The farmer just got the horse and walked away shaking his head. He went home and hooked the horse up to the plow. The horse went everywhere except straight.

After a careful examination, the farmer discovered that the horse was blind! He was angry and went back to the Filipino man and said that his horse was blind.

Again the Filipino man replied, "I told you sir. He no look to good!" (Got it? No Look Good?! Can't see well?)<sup>18</sup>

Pauline who had migrated from the Mainland to Hawaii fifteen years ago commented on the ethnic diversity she finds in Hawai'i and echoes the contrasting sense of humour between Hawai'i and mainland America:

...you've got a very Asian group here – a hotch potch of Asian. And they all coexist with everybody else who lives here. The whites that came here as missionaries, the offspring of missionaries, all the different ethnic groups that came to work as labor, so you have the Filipino population, you've got the Chinese that were a strong force back with the Japanese, you know, the Japanese Exclusion act right? All these Asians that came, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos and then we have a lot of Latins now here. Puerto Ricans, the Rinkis they call them. I have to say that Hawaiian folk have a good sense of humor about their ethnicities. Now they call each other all kinds of disparaging names all in good fun

<sup>18</sup> (Submitted via email by Papabu) <http://www.e-hawaii.com/fun/jokes/nlgood.htm>

and accepted as such.. And it's been part of the popular comedy acts Locally. You can call a Filipino a bok bok which is the sound of a chicken, that's what they're associated with, chicken. And Pake for Chinese, Pake is tight fist with money and Buddah head or boboro, I'm a boboro or a Katonk – because I'm a mainland Japanese, you know hollow head. So all these little fun insults which are done in good spirit. You couldn't do that on the mainland, oh no! You could not make those kind of ethnic slurs cause all of a sudden you're going to have a class action suit against you or something or someone is going to sue you for slander or whatever else, so it's a whole different attitude.

However, this type of ethnic humour, Barringer (2000) warns is experiencing a growing “mainlandization” concerning this and other manifestations of racism, which may well signal a coming change” (2000:3) Those who are “(n)ew Filipino immigrants, Samoans, “Portugees”, Koreans and Southeast Asians all come in for stereotyping and sometimes down right discrimination”, and while he laments the censorship of Local comedian Frank De Lima, he suggests that without caution, it could also signal dangers ahead.

Undoubtedly, being Local means living in the islands of Hawai'i. Local ethnic identity is reserved for island inhabitants only, placing particular emphasis on growing up in the islands. Those who leave the islands lament for Hawai'i on dedicated websites. There are gatherings in the mainland for Locals attempting to help alleviate the homesickness experienced by those now distant to the shores of Hawai'i. For Locals, Hawai'i is their 'homeland'. Unlike indigenous Hawaiians, non-Hawaiian Locals have a different bond with the land. History provides details of blood, sweat and tears poured into the land when working the plantations. Those who own their own properties treasure their allotment with pride. So much of the island is in the hands of the outside investors who are perceived by Locals to have no

real concern for its future. Local identity, in relation to land, is a concern particularly with regards to its protection and preservation of it for future generations. Because many Locals are not 'first peoples' as indigenous Hawaiians are, conflicts may occur in relation to the land issue. To avoid this, there is a focus on 'protecting' the land, rather than the 'right to' or 'ownership' of land.

### **A sense of solidarity**

Okamura (1994) is quick to point out the tensions between certain groups in the islands. However, there is a sense of solidarity derived by Locals based on the tensions between outsiders (such as investors, tourists and the military), and those for whom Hawai'i is home, not an exploitable resource. From within the group, there is a sense of what being Local is and includes, reinforcing relationships between groups and ethnicities under the label of Local. Recently a forum in Hawai'i entitled *A Place at the Table*, where representatives of various pockets of the community discussed the significance of 'Local', took place. During the opening session, key threads were identified as constituting the group's understanding of Local:

The first was a general agreement that there is something-someone-who, for want of a better word, can be called "local." Just what that is remained a more elusive target.

Perhaps "local" is more like art or pornography. It may be impossible to describe, but we know it when we see it. In other words, we know what it is to be local, we just define it in our own way.

A second thread had to do with the sense of yearning, or longing, to be accepted into that unique Island culture...Leahy, born and raised in Hawai'i, talked about...how those who put down their roots here feel a special sense of place. He spoke of the pleasure and pride in being able to speak pidgin...

A third thread went in a different direction...there is a shared sense of pain, a sense of loss or even resentment that belongs to some but not all who live in Hawai'i.

For those who come from immigrant or plantation backgrounds, it might be that famous "subtle inferiority of spirit"...

Finally, there was a common thread among those who showed up for the first meeting that, for better or worse, we are all in this together; this is where we have made our stand.

(Burris, *Honolulu Advertiser* 22/10/00)

Local is recognizing the shared cultural, historical and political elements that combine to provide a sense of solidarity within the group. For AJA, certain histories and narratives are recovered and reinforced to both belong to the Local identity and to differentiate themselves from other ethnic groups in the islands and on the mainland.

### **Americans of Japanese Ancestry and the Politics of Local**

In 1974, Yamamoto conducted a study on Sansei AJA in Hawaii and the emergence of the concept of local. He argued that Sansei chose to emphasise Local over Japanese or Japanese American identity as a result of a developing identity crisis. Okamura (1994) expands on this suggestion, proposing that the AJA emphasis on Local stems from structural forces outside the islands and discontentment with certain values of their parents' (Nisei) generation. At the time the 1974 study was conducted, Yamamoto (1974:69) found that the hostility towards Japanese investment in the islands was causing a "perceived connection between the distrusted Japan Japanese and Hawaii's Japanese Americans". There was a growing realisation by Sansei "that they were neither fully Japan Japanese, "(c)stablishment" Japanese American, American, nor Hawaiian" (ibid:70) and therefore, Sansei "subconsciously shifted the focus of their cultural identification from being Japanese American to being Local. Identifying with Local both enlarged and diminished the scope of their cultural referent of identification" (ibid:91). The current Sansei AJA emphasis on Local encountered during fieldwork, twenty-five years after Yamamoto's study, could quite possibly have

been an extension of these early sentiments and may have been influenced by similar histories and experience as Sansei in his research.

## **Remembering AJA, creating Local**

Accounts of AJA history continue to focus on shared experiences and contributions by AJA to Local history and society. While I was in Hawai'i I was fortunate enough to visit two exhibitions, (one of which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter), commemorating the history of AJA in Hawai'i.

These were not exhibits that focused on Local ethnicity, but emphasised *AJA ethnicity* and their struggles, successes and contributions in the islands *within* a local context. They tended to focus on plantation experiences, the Nisei soldier and the role of AJA in the Bloodless Revolution. Public history, particularly that which is represented in museums is “one of the influential venues through which we derive our sense of “place” in society...(and are) ...critical sites that help define who and what make up our society and how we came to be the way we are” (Odo 1999:145). By focusing on plantation life and ‘success’ of AJA in Hawaii’s society in public history, there is an attempt to smooth over the conflicts AJA face in the islands, highlighting points of commonality and contribution, rather than issues of difference. Thus, AJA public history continues to emphasise AJA ethnicity within Local identity. Their ethnic difference is maintained at the same time other ethnic identities, including Local identity, are being constructed and affirmed.

## **Inventing an identity – AJA and the construct of Local**

Before I departed for Hawai'i I had been corresponding with several helpful AJA in the islands to prepare me for my research there. One Sansei man had the following to say about AJA identity, but I did not understand his analogy, until I had spent several months in the field, and begun writing my ethnography. He stated:

AJAs view themselves as an integral part of the whole. As with any culture, the Japanese are proud of their contributions to Hawaii. You will hear the Japanese refer to the accomplishments of prominent

AJAs. It is true of any culture. (Senator Dan Inouye, former governor George Ariyoshi, the most decorated military unit in American history 442nd 100th Battalion, etc.) ...Perhaps it could be compared to an aquarium full of different species of fish. Removing one type of fish would not destroy the aquarium, however, it would make it less colorful. We all cherish our contribution to the aquarium it would still exist if we were no longer there.

(e-mail correspondence 19/09/99)

The significance of his statement had little impact until I viewed the way in which AJA constructed their history and identity in relation to the concept of Local. Another comment made by a Sansei woman, also highlighted the way in which AJA history had focused on key individuals or characters, such as the Nisei soldier and the Picture Bride, in shaping how AJA viewed themselves. Elo concluded her interview with the following comment when asked why she chose to participate in the research:

It was more than just helping you, especially after I looked at it (the interview guidelines). I thought it was a good process to go through. You never look at your life quite in sections. You live and our daily lives are so busy that you never think about these categories of life until maybe you're a grandma and I'm talking to my grandkids or whatever. I thought you were interviewing people like Maisie Hirono<sup>19</sup>, or the lieutenant governor or these notable women who had made these good marks on Hawai'i. I didn't think it was a study of just Sansei women. So I was happy to do it. If you can leave something behind in a sense of history whether it is photos or writing is good.

Elo's comments reflect the value placed on history and the recording of history held by AJA. Several Sansei women mentioned that this was one of the reasons that they participated in the interviews. It also demonstrates that 'just Sansei' or 'just ordinary AJA' do not necessarily feel that they are represented in the construction of AJA history and identity. Sandy, another Sansei participant echoed the sentiments of Elo's statements:

I come from that tradition already...this is our legacy, taking down oral histories, things like that I wanted to help. Since my Dad does it with World War Two vets, and my Mom did all her work with relocation things so, this is the first time that I saw anything that would apply to *me*. And I thought oh yeah, I can help.

The historical dimension of AJA in Hawai'i is an important one to consider when discussing Local identity and ethnicity in the islands. It highlights the way in which local identity relies on ethnic groups for its 'authenticity', while

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<sup>19</sup> Hawai'i's lieutenant governor

at the same time the reverse is also true. Local AJA depend on the label of Local to distinguish themselves from 'others', (defined as 'outsiders'), and to claim a legitimacy of 'place' in the islands. The interplay ethnicity and Local identity has led to an emphasis on certain elements of history and the invention of myths, culture and tradition which provide this legitimacy for AJA and other ethnic groups in Hawai'i.

Bearing this in mind, AJA interpretation and representation of *their* history and contribution to society in Hawai'i, suggest "invented traditions are concerned with establishing a legitimating continuity with the past, not with the understanding of historical discontinuities and the evolution of social contradictions" (De Valle 1985: 56). It is this premise that serves as the crux of the identity of AJA in Hawaii. Certain invented traditions, such as a primary focus on plantation roots, despite 'evidence' of social disharmony between ethnicities, an emphasis on a stereotype of women who came to the plantations, the role of the Nisei soldier which minimises prejudices and ignores the contribution of women, and the political activities of a Nisei elite, form the foundation for AJA ethnicity and legitimises membership within Local identity. The implications of this representation of history, particularly for women, will be considered in the subsequent chapter.

## Chapter Seven

### The Limitations of Belonging: A Feminist Critique

*Museums can be viewed as arenas of cultural production and reproduction, where present concerns and past mythologies about women are routinely woven into a self-assumed patriarchal version of gender identities and relationships.*

(Katriel 1997:676)

Because Local identity rests on social relationships and relational history, and draws heavily on the past, Locals have created a specific public narrative of history, especially in relation to the AJA experience. As demonstrated in previous chapters, Sansei women in Hawai'i are still, to some extent, shaped by 'traditional' (in terms of both Japanese and American ideals) roles and expectations. They are expected to be heterosexual women, who will, at some stage in their lives, be involved in a long-term relationship, reproduce, and behave in accordance to a set of values that they have inherited from their ancestors and their Local history and environment.

Local identity focuses heavily on belonging by shared history, and therefore it is necessary to consider how, in public arenas, Local AJA history is portrayed. However an emphasis on a specifically constructed history can result in spin-offs of disempowerment and 'voice-lessness' for groups who are directly and indirectly affected by specific representations (or absences of them).

Drawing on an exhibition entitled: *From Bento to Mixed Plate: Japanese Americans in Multicultural Hawai'i*, this chapter explores how AJA women are portrayed (in museum exhibitions and texts) in public representations of their history. In critiquing this exhibition it becomes apparent that shared public Local AJA history marginalizes the experience of AJA women in the islands, and relegates women's role in

history to that of the picture bride. This portrayal of AJA women may be a result of the important Local AJA values that the picture bride embodies, however there are implications of this depiction for other generations of AJA women, Local and Asian-American women, and for women worldwide.

### **From Bento to Mixed Plate – Re-presenting the Past in the Present.**

The Japanese American National Museum (JANM) exhibition *From Bento to Mixed Plate: Japanese Americans in Multicultural Hawai'i* (FBMB) had been on display at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu from October 1997 to January 1998. It had travelled to Los Angeles between March 1998 and January 1999, and was to be displayed in Kaua'i during March for two weeks, before finishing the year at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. An introduction to the exhibition reads as follows:

*From Bento to Mixed Plate* tells the story of Americans of Japanese Ancestry (AJAs) in Hawai'i from immigration to present. When they arrived in the Islands as laborers, Japanese immigrants carried their lunches, called bento to work in the fields in sturdy metal containers. They filled the bottom part of the container with steamed, white rice, and shared the simple food in a removable top section with co-workers of other ethnic backgrounds, who, in turn, shared theirs. Today, this tradition of sharing food continues in the rich multiethnic society of modern Hawai'i, often symbolized by the popular *mixed plate*, which typically included foods from different cultures served together on a single plate, bound by the common ingredient of rice. Like the *mixed plate*, each ethnic group in Hawai'i today strives to retain what is unique about their own heritage, while embracing a common sense of identity with each. The Island residents commonly refer to this way of life as "local".

(From Bento to Mixed Plate Exhibition Flyer JANM: 1)

Rene of JANM gave me the opportunity to attend and visit the exhibition. She had written to me while I was in New Zealand, preparing to come to the field, and made the necessary arrangements to enable me to fly to Kaua'i and be involved with the opening.

The exhibition was set up in the Kaua'i's War Memorial Convention Hall. The Hall had been transformed to house the exhibition by partitioning it and creating imaginary 'rooms' via positioning make-shift walls in strategic places to ensure the 'flow' of visitors on the chronological journey through AJA history.

At the door was a volunteer wearing a *palaka* shirt who greeted visitors and handed out introductory leaflets. *Palaka* is more Local than an *Aloha* shirt (Hawaiian print shirt), and much more difficult to find. At first glance, *Palaka* looks like a type of gingham. Yet unlike gingham, which is printed on to the fabric, the thread is woven into the pattern to produce the effect, making a thick and durable material from which shirts and shorts are made. Because of its durability, it was considered the uniform of plantation workers who wore it as they worked on sugar cane, coffee or pineapple plantations. The *palaka* vest is a primary indicator in the exhibition of the importance of historical and Local identity.

#### *Present-day Local Life*

The first space the visitor encounters is located in the 'present', combining historical elements with a contemporary setting of the garage. Exhibit designer Stephan Doi (1991: 8-9) describes the overall structure and setting of the exhibition as being:

drawn from rural plantation-environment familiar to people of Hawai'i. We tried to achieve a casual atmosphere of informality by creating stylised structures such as the "garage", "living room" and

“picnic table”, where visitors are invited to “make themselves at home” and “talk story” with gallery guides, volunteers, and other visitors. ... Viewers begin and end their journey in a contemporary setting underscoring the fact that our story portrays a living, constantly evolving culture.

FBMP achieves this in the ‘garage’, taking the visitor back in time to hear the stories of plantation retold by Issei (First Generation) and captured on video. The visitor can sit at the old metallic table or on pews to watch this video, amidst past and present artefacts such as a surfboard and a *mochi* pounder. On one of the shelves sits a *shaka* cat<sup>1</sup>.

Adjacent to the garage is a living room complete with a video of people discussing *The Politics of the Mixed Plate*. Visitors can sit on the sofa and view the video or peruse the collections of photographs that are mounted in albums on the table in front of it. Images of AJA in Hawai‘i are portrayed in black and white and in colour through formal portraits, and photographs of work, children and siblings. Photographs also line the walls, and a bookshelf contains recipe books and ghost stories by local authors.

### *Issei and Plantation Roots*

From a contemporary setting, the visitor then walks towards a chronological time display of AJA in Hawai‘i. Arnold Hiura (1997:6) believes that “(E)ach era – from immigration, to plantation, to WWII;

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<sup>1</sup> The cat had been highlighted by Local curators, as something that represented a sense of Local identity. On the cover of the FBMP catalogue are two ceramic cats, both in an upright position with their left paws held up to their left ears. In their right paws, they were holding an object that covered their bellies. The cat that sat slightly in the background was similar to those that adorn shelves and doorways throughout Japan and Hawai‘i. Almost every store has one facing the door. The cat, known as a *maneki neko*, is beckoning in good luck and prosperity. In its right paw, it holds a gold coin. There are many *maneki nekos* of different colour, holding up different paws to beckon in other types of luck including good health and honest friends.

Sitting in the foreground of this traditional *maneki neko* is a *shaka maneki neko*. This ‘cool cat’ has the same stance as the traditional one, however instead of beckoning, it is doing the *shaka*. Instead of a gold coin, the cat is holding a surfboard. Local is about taking a tradition, mixing it with different traditions and adding that Local flavour – like the *shaka* cat.

from the transformative '50s, through the turbulent '60s and '70s to the plate present – has led us to this place that AJA's presently occupy...our lifestyles and the identity that we claim as "local Japanese"". It is this sentiment that is created as the visitor progresses through the exhibition.

Plantation life is portrayed in a video story, recalling the arrival of Japanese immigrants, the stories of picture brides, and the adjustments that had to be made to survive in plantation camps. Artefacts from this era are also displayed including the *kaukau*<sup>2</sup> tin, a *luna* (overseer) whip, plantation clothing, cane knives and still photographs.

Historic roots, values, and traditions that were fundamental in plantation living continue to be of great importance in AJA and Local identity. During an interview, Lisa Ann noted that the current values and traditions practised today by AJA are not Japanese in the contemporary sense, because Japan no longer practices many of these traditions, such as *yakudoshi*<sup>3</sup>. Similarly Girls' Day and Boys' Day are celebrated separately in Hawai'i, while in Japan they have been joined as Children's' Day (photographs of Sansei and Yonsei flying *Koinobori*<sup>4</sup> on Boys' Day are included towards the end of the exhibition in the Sansei and Yonsei section). As discussed previously, Lisa Ann believes that today's AJA carry over both Meiji Japanese, and plantation traditions and values that were used to keep families and individuals alive in the plantation environment.

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<sup>2</sup> Hawaiian for 'food'.

<sup>3</sup> Certain birthdays are considered to be particularly auspicious or calamitous during a person's life. For men, it is 42, for women, 33. To keep misfortune at bay, a celebration is held on these birthdays (Hazama and Komeiji 1987:266-267).

<sup>4</sup> The *Koi* or carp is believed to represent valued male traits such as courage, strength and perseverance, as the carp must swim upstream to spawn. *Koinobori* is the flying of large paper carp in the hope that sons will grow up with these traits (Aihara 1999:57).

### *Tales of Success*

From plantation roots the exhibition progresses onto the historical establishment of AJA in Hawai'i. The Buddhist and Christian churches, trade, education, the Kuakini Medical Center, Japanese language schools, and news language papers and sports are included through photographs and artefacts. Children's toys are also on display.

Surrounded by 'success stories' is a table where children and adults are encouraged to engage in activities that will help make the visit more memorable. One activity involves collecting stamps on a paper plate at 'stations' around the exhibition, creating a visual mixed plate. There are six stamps to collect from different eras of AJA history. These include the FBMP logo, a *kaukau* tin from plantation days, a plantation style home and a Local 'eat out wagon'. There is a stamp of the *Go for Broke* symbol and slogan of the mainly AJA combat regiment, the 442<sup>nd</sup>, who fought in WWII. The ILWU (International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union) slogan *Brothers under the skin*, uniting ethnic groups in protest against discriminatory plantation pay in 1946 is the final stamp to be collected.

There is also a sheet of paper that needs to be folded into an opening pyramid to play a selection game. The lifted flaps and the answers hidden beneath them reflect Local identity in terms of food, values and language.

### *Nisei and World War Two*

Moving on from pre-war Hawai'i, visitors now encounter an area dedicated to the impact of WWII and the contribution that AJA men made in the 100th Battalion and the 442nd regiment. AJA loyalty was under question after the bombing of Pearl Harbour by the

Japanese, and 110,000 AJA were interned on the West Coast of mainland America. Fighting not only for their country, but also for the recognition of their rights as American citizens, Nisei served their country in the VVV (Varsity Victory Volunteers), 100th Battalion, 442nd Regiment, 1339th Engineer Construction Battalion and the MIS (Military Intelligence Service). Mention is also made of those who stayed on the home front as members of organisations including the Civil Defence and Red Cross.

WWII represented a significant turning point for AJA in Hawai'i. Under the G.I Bill of Rights<sup>5</sup>, AJA who had served in the military were able to go onto college, subsidised by the USA Government. With their degrees, the Nisei returned home to fight for equal opportunity. FBMP portrays the establishment of AJA owned businesses, the influence of the ILWU and the rise of AJA into politics through the Democratic Party through photographs and the From Bullets to Ballots video. Important figures such as John Burns and Patsy Mink are showcased on wall displays.

#### *Return to Local Today: Sansei and Yonsei*

The final section of the exhibition addresses the Sansei and Yonsei generation. Here there is a strong focus on Local identity and the continuance of AJA heritage. The *Kid's Point of View* video projects the 'mixtures' of ethnicities that exist in Hawai'i today. Young people from different ancestries explore what it means to be Local. An interactive computer programme is also available at this station. The photographs in this section reflect inter-ethnicity, such as AJA and other ethnic groups participating in cultural events together; hapa-haole faces, and

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<sup>5</sup> The common name for The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 which paid for tuition, books and monthly living expenses for retired veterans (Hazama and Komeiji 1986:186).

local successes such as JoAnn Yukimura's rise as Mayor on Kaua'i. The opening ceremony of the exhibition on Saturday also aimed to reflect inter-ethnicity and Local-ness, with several different ethnic groups performing including Japanese, Hawaiian, Portuguese and Filipino.

This final area lacked the richness of artefacts and content of the previous sections of the exhibition. It was as if it had been added on without the depth of thought and research given to the more historical aspects of the exhibit. I commented on this to Stephan (the exhibit designer) and his response was that it was very difficult for his generation to come up with things that were Sansei. They wanted to forget the 'ghastly days of disco', things that caused them embarrassment today, and sort out what made them unique now.

The devisers of AJA public history have focussed on legitimising AJA in the Local community, there are elements that are excluded from the history it chooses to represent. This issue was compounded by Stephan's comment that many images of Sansei life were considered to be an 'embarrassment'. To what extent had 'embarrassing events' that shaped and contextualised Sansei and Yonsei experience been excluded in both the FBMP exhibition and collective memory in general? What 'embarrassing' aspects of Issei and Nisei life were absent in this exhibition, and perhaps the history of AJA? Contemplating these absences, the need to view historical representations in terms of the politics of knowledge and its representations of and within the AJA community, particularly in relation to gender became increasingly obvious. The *From Bento to Mixed Plate* exhibition is an excellent starting point for the issue and reinforces the need to focus on women's experiences and narratives within a Local Sansei context.

## Public and Private Knowledge

In analysing FBMP, it became apparent that there existed an invisible division between what was considered by curators as acceptable to represent AJA culture and history in Hawai'i, and what was not. There was an apparent division between what could be considered public and private knowledge. Most published articles relating to issues of public versus private in museums set the public sphere in binary opposition with domestic labour (Jones 1991; Campbell 1990; Porter 1988, 1991a, 1991b). Their discussions explain the absence of women in museums and the public sphere as a result of the exclusion of domestic labour in museums, which dates back to nineteenth century perceptions of and actual division of labour (Ames 1992:16 – 24). However, the private sphere is not synonymous with domestic labour and women only. It can also include death, illness, children, dysfunctional families and disability.

What emerges is that the museum is both a public and a patriarchal institution (Porter 1991b:107), and that patriarchal rules and beliefs primarily govern the power relations of public and private knowledge. Because of the patriarchal control of both spheres, private is subordinated in favour of public, patriarchal representations. In FBMP, elements of domestic or private culture are subordinate to elements of public culture that are considered appropriate representations of cultural history and identity. Boyd (1997:13) in her discussion of the division of these spheres and influence on cultural representation writes:

The way in which the public sphere is organised – arguably along the lines of a presumed married man's lifestyle – rely on a particular way of organising the private sphere. The ability of the unencumbered individual (man) to participate in the public sphere

of work and politics assumes that someone, usually a woman, is preparing his food, cleaning his house, and raising the next generation of labourers through her reproductive labour. The 'sexual contract' under which women purportedly voluntarily agree to do these things supports men's ability to succeed in public sphere and to have greater power than women both there and in the private sphere.

Boyd believes that it is men who have power within, and control over what is shared and known about both spheres. However, because women were extensively involved in the collection and presentation of research for FBMP, it is not necessarily men who have the power, but *patriarchal institutions and attitudes and rules within a community* that govern the knowledge of both the spheres. Public and private are not necessarily synonymous with male/female<sup>6</sup>, but with power/oppression. The power relationship that is revealed in the FMBP exhibition is that of *knowledge* of what is considered appropriate, that is determined by public institutions.

MacDonald (1998:3-4) explores this relationship of power and knowledge:

Power and knowledge are thoroughly mutually implicated: power is involved in the construction of truths, and knowledge has implications for power (see Foucault 1977, 1979)...Knowledge here does not only mean that which is displayed in an exhibition as formal knowledge of course. It also includes the knowledges (including unreflected-upon assumptions) of different parties involved in exhibition-making... Politics is, therefore, a matter of (often implicit) negotiation: a dynamic power-play of competing knowledges, intentions and interests. Moreover, if we view knowledge and power as intertwined, politics is not restricted to particular events or institutions; rather, it has ramifications throughout social life and cultural practice...the task is also to explore the consequences of particular forms of representation in

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<sup>6</sup> As Ortner (1998) does in her article 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?'

terms of the distribution of power: who is empowered or disempowered by certain modes of display?

Macdonald is quoted here at length because she highlights issues that are very relevant in terms of the power and knowledge reflected in the FBMP exhibition. She addresses the issue of construction of knowledge and the assumptions of those involved in the production of the exhibition. While there were many women involved in the FBMP exhibition, they have constructed the knowledge about AJA to focus on that of AJA men. The women do not question this representation, accepting that it is a reflection of AJA society. They themselves subscribe to the politics of knowledge of the AJA community, highlighting the public, ignoring the private. The construction of this historical and cultural identity remains unquestioned by those who collected and constructed the exhibition.<sup>7</sup>

While AJA are a minority ethnic group in the United States of America, the AJA of Hawai'i constitute one of the major and dominant ethnic groups of the island. It is commendable that an ethnic group that has otherwise been marginalized in American history has taken an opportunity to present its heritage to a wider audience. However, FBMP is governed by similar expectations and assumptions as non-marginalized (Western) museums<sup>8</sup>, with regards to what is considered appropriate to include in historical representations of a community. Museums and their exhibitions have recently been critiqued for the

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<sup>7</sup> This was obvious in the 1996 exhibition *Strength and Diversity: the Story of Japanese American Women in Hawai'i*, which focused on AJA women, but continued to subscribe to the 'norms' of current historical narrative and did not take the opportunity to represent the variety of women that live and have lived in Hawai'i.

<sup>8</sup> Although FBMP is an exhibition, it has been displayed in Museums and is funded by the Japanese American National Museum. Because of this my critique of its contents and approach refers to literature on museums and their exhibitions.

absences of “less advantaged, affluent and articulate groups such as unskilled and casual workers, unemployed people, migrants and travellers” (Porter 1988:104), as well as “most working-class men; and almost all women” (Anderson and Winkworth 1991:147)<sup>9</sup>. Those that the FBMP exhibition marginalizes include those that constitute the private sphere such as: AJA with disabilities; AJA who are working class or unemployed and AJA who are divorced. While there are numerous private groups marginalized in this exhibition, it is the absence of women and representations, as highlighted by Sansei narratives in this dissertation, that is most apparent and disturbing. It is the marginalization and disempowerment of women in the public sphere that I am most concerned with.

### **Inclusion of AJA Women – Constructing a Male Identity**

AJA women are not completely excluded from the exhibition. However, the way in which they have been included and the reasons for their inclusion need to be interrogated. There are images of AJA women as picture brides, fulfilling their roles as mothers, wives, plantation workers and later, grandmothers. There were also photographs of women attending Japanese School, involved in sports activities and protests. High achieving women such as Congresswoman Patsy Mink and the former Mayor of Kaua'i, Jo Ann Yukimura, also had their images included in the exhibition.

Porter (1991b:111) argues that “women are represented in displays not because their history is held to have intrinsic interest, but for another purpose: that of confirming the main/male story”. The

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<sup>9</sup> Anderson and Winkworth (1991) do not, however, consider the types of audiences that exhibits are designed for and aim to attract. This may also influence what is reflected in exhibitions.

inclusion of AJA women appears to do exactly that. As picture brides, Issei women confirm the desire of the Issei men to make Hawai'i their home. Women's reproductive capabilities and hard labouring in plantation fields contributed to the establishment of the AJA society their husbands wanted.

Some Issei women were given the opportunity to appear on video, talking story about their memories of arriving and surviving in Hawai'i. The video *Plantation Roots* is one of the first that a visitor to FBMP sees. It contains interviews with Issei men and women, and their recollections of life on the plantations. It then traces a few families and the growth of their family business as a result of the hard work put in by the Issei and Nisei generations. Issei women recall their arrival as picture brides and their initial reactions to their husbands. Now in their late eighties or nineties, they are filmed with their grandchildren, singing songs and talking story. Most women interviewed spoke Japanese (English subtitles are used) or spoke in pidgin English. Similarly their husbands, the Issei pioneers, also recall their memories. Once their version of the story has ended, those from the following generations take over. Curiously, no women are given the opportunity to talk about the family business or their memories of their hardworking grandparents as the Nisei and Sansei generation speak. Men and *only men* share their experiences and thoughts.

The inclusion of Issei women as picture brides, and minimal reference to other generations of women demonstrates patriarchal beliefs and desires, sending a clear message to and about AJA women today. The Issei picture bride acts as a reinforcement of how women should, and are expected to behave in AJA society. These women bore children, went into the fields to labour, brought in additional income by

cooking and cleaning for other men or Haoles, and were responsible for domestic chores under the hardships of plantation conditions. They are represented as hardworking, self-sacrificing and uncomplaining women. Women who complain about their lifestyle, who do not obey their husbands are not considered worthy of inclusion in the history of AJA society. Images and information that contradict the portrayal of Issei picture brides (such as women wishing to escape from Japan or those that became prostitutes) are not included. Public control of knowledge shapes and influences how, and what is represented from private knowledge.

Other videos included throughout the exhibition also raise questions about the way women are included or excluded. *While Kids Point of View* (based on young Yonsei and Gosei AJA of mainly mixed heritage) combines an equal male and female views and representation, the other videos do not. The video playing in the 'living room' space, appears to have included women for the sake of political correctness. This video entitled *Politics of the Mixed Plate*, begins with men giving their perceptions of AJA and the community of Hawai'i. Only two women are given an opportunity to speak, while four men speak. The women appear two to three times each during this twenty-minute film, speaking for only a short duration. The men offer their comments for the remainder of the time.

From *Bullets to Ballots*, which outlines AJA (men's) involvement in the Second World War through to the election of the Democrats, is a collection of interviews of veterans, and notable men in AJA society (such as Senator Inouye). These men witnessed and were involved in varying areas of WWII and the rise of AJA in Local and national politics. In this video women are completely absent. It appears their

role was of little or no value or importance during this time in history. This absence that echoes throughout the exhibition is of concern.

### **Lives Not Displayed**

Private culture, and women's experiences are given no opportunity to become public because of the monopoly that public culture has in FBMP. For example, the 'rooms' that are on display are primarily public. While women do appear in the 'garage' and the 'living room', the objects associated with these rooms tended to relate to the male experience. Rooms such as the kitchen or bedroom were not displayed, omitting domestic work and private culture. Throughout the historical timeline of the exhibition, the events are defined in relation to men's and the recorded experience of history: the arrival of the Japanese on the plantations; the need to marry and produce children; establishing a business, playing sports; and entering politics. The 'reality' of this history may not be the historical reality that AJA women or other pockets of Local AJA society experienced.

The absence of relevant depiction of AJA women in this exhibition, and in museums in general, leaves a large space that "conveys a very clear meaning: there were no women in the past, and even if there were they were not very important" (Jones 1991:24). Not only are women *not* represented in the diverse areas of AJA history but their experiences, and the way in which they differ from men, and other (non-AJA) women has also been excluded (aside from the picture bride stereotype).

Many experiences and events that Sansei AJA women shared, and what they considered important in their self-identity, were overlooked in this exhibition. For example there were no artefacts or

displayed photographs of wedding ceremonies or celebrations; no objects associated with childbirth or motherhood; no representation of the occupational roles that AJA women engage in today and have occupied in the past.

Karp (1991:15) argues that 'exhibitions represent identity, either directly or indirectly, through assertion, or by direct implication. When cultural 'others' are implicated, exhibitions tell us who we are and perhaps most significantly who we are not'. Applying this argument from a feminist perspective highlights the way in which AJA women have been constructed as 'other' in FBMP. Their absence and silence implies that their experiences both historically and in contemporary situations are probably no different to AJA men.<sup>10</sup> It further implies that their experiences are no different from other women and suggests, particularly in relation to the Issei generation, that "women in the past (are) as unchanged from the present" (Jones 1991:24).

Further implicated by the absence of women's voices and experiences is the representation of the family. Jones (1991:24) notes that "(D)espite the fact that the nuclear family is not a reality for most people, this model is presented as eternal and unchanging". Photographs included in the exhibition focus on the 'All American Dream Family' consisting of mother, father and two children, reinforcing the ideology of America as a Nation of Immigrants. This social unit is not questioned throughout the exhibition – no mention is made of divorce, nor are individuals who choose to remain single referred to. Married couples that decide not to have children are also not represented in this exhibition.

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<sup>10</sup> Karp contends that in exhibits 'similarity can be used to assert that people of other cultures are no different in principle to the producer of the image' (1991:375).

The focus on a male interpretation of AJA history implies that AJA women's experiences are no different from any other women's, as if the universality of 'womanhood' could explain their worldview and experiences. While there are similarities with some groups of women, AJA women's lives, both contemporary and historical, differ from other ethnic groups. AJA women could be disheartened by this celebration of AJA identity and its silences. This exhibition suggests that AJA women, unless they are successful achievers, are considered invisible by the AJA community.

This raises the issue of empowerment and disempowerment. AJA women are not empowered by this focus on public knowledge. The private sphere that constitutes their worldview and experience is not acknowledged. Extending this situation beyond the scope of this exhibition opens the door to exploration of power relations within the public and private spheres of AJA society. Exhibitions "may seem obviously appropriate to some viewers precisely because those viewers share the same attitudes as the exhibition makers" (Karp 1990:1). To what extent is FBMP reflective of the politics between public and private knowledge and the attitudes of both men and women in the AJA community?

The rationale behind the exclusion of feminist scholarship in museums and exhibitions is argued by Mayo (1990:49). to include the fact that "women often are not perceived as a legitimate constituency in their own right – by museum administrators, by funders, and often by women themselves...(and that)...women's history is still viewed as trivial and 'not real history'". FBMP illustrates that not only does the role of curator need to be questioned, but the type of audience that the exhibition was intended for, also needs consideration. Because private

'woman-associated' topics such as relationships, marriage, dances and children were not included, this exhibition appeared to be aimed at a nostalgic AJA male audience whose interest may not have been captured by private topics. Perhaps AJA women are believed not to analyse exhibitions or other cultural representations from a feminist perspective, after all a 'typical' Issei woman would *gaman* and not say anything to question the male point of view.

The issue of the invisibility of women and the private sphere in historical and to some extent, contemporary representations is of great importance. Women were not inactive or absent from events that made history, but have been systematically left out of the official record, as Scott (1996:5) asserts

In the evaluation of what is important, women as individuals or as a definable group, rarely receive mention. The story has been told largely through male agency; and the identification of men with 'humanity' has resulted in the disappearance of women from the record of the past.

The consequences of failing to include AJA women of Hawai'i, their world experience and elements of the private sphere in historical exhibitions and accounts will result in continued biased representation of AJA society. This 'story' of success and achievement, focusing primarily on men, is not limited to this exhibition, but extends itself into many texts and other collective displays about AJA and Local history.

In critiquing constructions of AJA identity in Hawai'i, what is *included* in exhibitions and in history needs to be addressed as much as what is *excluded*. It is necessary to address representations of women within constructions of collective history, in order to provide a basis for understanding Sansei women's interpretation of their past, and their present identity. The recurring symbol that manifests itself in narratives

and constructs of a Japanese immigrant past is the picture bride. While mainly associated with Japanese immigrants, it is important to note that Korean and Okinawan immigrants also practised the picture bride tradition.

### **Picture Brides – Homogenising AJA Women’s Experience**

As outlined in Chapter Five, during the *Yobi Yosei*<sup>11</sup> period, some Japanese women immigrated to Hawai’i and the mainland as picture brides. The Hawai’i picture bride practise started when immigrant Japanese bachelors realised that they were not able to raise enough funds to return to Japan, and instead sent for brides from their home villages. By custom, families and matchmakers (*nakahodo*), found a suitable wife, and pictures, letters and gifts were exchanged. This was known as *shashin kekkon*<sup>12</sup> literally ‘photo wedding’. It is uncertain who was responsible for the development of the term ‘picture bride’. The Japanese referred to the marriages that were arranged long distance with the use of photographs *sashin kekkon* (Spickard 1996: 32), literally translated as photograph (*sashin*) wedding (*kekkon*). *Sashin kekkon* does not highlight any particular gender as being more significant in the arranged marriage.

Arranged marriages were a part of Japanese tradition, and the request of Japanese men labouring in Hawai’i for their parents’ assistance in arranging a marriage partner was also an extension of this practice. Requesting marriage partners in this manner was by no means unusual for Japanese. What was different about this particular arrangement was the absence of meetings in person, relying instead on letters and photographs. Perhaps because a large number of Japanese immigrant

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Calling for the family’ in Japanese. This took place between 1908 until 1924.

<sup>12</sup> Spickard 1998:34.

women came to Hawai'i as 'brides' during certain periods in history, officials (most likely Haole) coined this phrase. They imposed on Issei immigrant women assumptions of gender behaviour, the term 'bride' associating her with the 'virginal' and innocent concept of demure girl entering womanhood that existed at the turn of the century. Rather than consider the women as equal participants in 'picture marriages', history has continued to focus on Issei women through a mode of representation that erases the presence of men in the photographic transaction, despite evidence to the contrary<sup>13</sup>. Men who married 'picture brides' were not, and are not, referred to as 'picture grooms' despite the fact that they were identified by their wives through photographs. AJA history has defined women by their roles in relation to men. Their identity in history then becomes relevant only within this context.

Issei women's experience beyond that of a picture bride is generally overlooked, with the exception of a focus on prostitutes (Nakano 1990, Saiki, (1985)). Mengel (1997:20) views this representation in terms of picture brides as ""good" Issei woman (subservient and dutiful mother)" in bipolar opposition with prostitutes as ""bad" Issei women (tragic manipulated whore)". Why has there been so much focus placed on Issei women as picture brides, and their experiences before this period, and those that are different been overlooked and forgotten?

Nakano (1990: xiv) suggests that the story of Issei women as sacrificial and labouring for the sake of the children is "appealing, rife with privation and unremitting pioneer struggle. Because of this a great deal has been written about them". However literary appeal is not the primary reason for the focus on Issei picture brides. Because history "is always a product of the present, constructed in relation to prevalent

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter Five as women talk about their grandmothers.

contemporary discourses" (Read 1996:119), the reason for Issei women being primarily represented as picture brides reflects contemporary ideas and values, leading to questions such as why has the Issei woman been limited to a representation of a saintly picture bride? Does the picture bride imagery of obedience, subservience and hard work reflect values and expectations of women today? What is the impact of this representation in contemporary AJA society and what does it reveal about gender relationships? Furthermore, why is it that until recently, these representations have not been challenged?

Mengel (1997:19) is particularly critical of the representation of Issei women as "a uniform group coming from a homogenous culture with identical values and ideas". Her criticism of the representation of Issei women's experience focuses on the fact that their choices and experiences have been historically defined in relation to men (sexual servitude and marriage), and their reproductive capabilities. "Neither the picture bride nor the whore are, in these representations, able to control her destiny, but allow themselves, either physically or through dictum of filial piety, into migration for sexual servitude (in marriage or prostitution)" (ibid:20).

Von Hassel (1993: 553) also criticises historical representation and discussion of women solely within the constraints of marriage and reproduction. She believes that to limit women's experiences, both historically and contemporarily, within these categories "is to reduce their lives to a specific role, which reflects a failure to perceive women's lives as significant outside or beyond" them.

## **Relevance and Impact of the Picture Bride Image**

The stereotypical attributes of the suffering Issei picture bride, who is worker, wife and sacrificial mother, are also perceived in

representations of Nisei women by their Sansei daughters. She has become symbolic of immigrant Japanese struggles and the values of the community, and specifically of AJA women.

The “Western Gaze’ and perception of AJA women, may have contributed to the picture bride myth through the historical photographs members of the Haole community took at the turn of the century. These images are repeatedly used on literature and displays of the Plantation era. DeSoto Brown, of the Bishop Museum in Hawai’i believes that while many of the photographs bear no identification and it is difficult to determine who shot them, some photographs were “amateur snapshots taken by other plantation workers or family members”<sup>14</sup>, especially in the 1920s. However, the majority of photographs were taken in the following situations:

1)...photos were taken by professional photographers who found the women to be interesting subjects. I think especially true of men from the mainland, either who were visiting or who had moved here, because the women’s clothing and the fact that they were field workers) was unusual. You might say that they were picturesque or intriguing as photo subjects.

2) In a few cases, photos might have been taken strictly for promotional or commercial purposes. Such pictures were reprinted in “Paradise of the Pacific” magazine, published in Honolulu or occasionally in Hawai’i Tourist Bureau material. Usually pictures like these were just procured from photographers who has them in stock already (as in #1), but possibly a few might have been shot for a client.

(e-mail correspondence 5/1/00)

Analysing the political implications of the photographs in terms of gender, it is important to consider the impact these visual records have on the construction of Issei women’s identity, and that of subsequent generations. Displayed without contextualising who shot the photographs and why, these pictures have become part of Local and AJA identity,

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<sup>14</sup> E-mail correspondence January 5 2000.

reflecting the sacrifice, values and roots of hard work, symbolic of both local and AJA culture. As Kosasa (2000:69) suggests, photo documentation utilised in collective memory commemorations have often come from private collections and are presented “in a public forum. Transferred from a personal context to a social and political context, family portraits of people once identified as one’s own parents or grandparents become significant representatives of an entire group.” This has occurred with AJA collective history and the narrative of the picture bride.

The photographs of plantation workers, the majority of which are of women, add to the imagery of hard working, uncomplaining Issei women. These photographs are indiscriminately displayed with photographs illustrating the picture bride experience in exhibitions such as *Okage sama de*<sup>15</sup> and *From Bento to Mixed Plate*. No attempt is made to indicate whether or not the pictured women are in fact picture brides, or whether or not they came prior to the *Yobei yosei* period. This implies that all Issei women are picture brides, all worked on the plantations, and all suffered.

One can only speculate when and why this representation of Issei women and their values occurred. Issei women may have contributed to the creation of their identity as suggested by Von Hassell (1993:553), who argues that while AJA women in literature have in the past “been assigned an auxiliary and second place as housewives and mothers” ...the distance between the ideal image and reality has been hidden in processes of self-presentation and perception” (1993:556) of Issei women themselves. Von Hassell (1993:559) believes that the “strategies of mediating between public image and private reality helped to form the image that dominates many descriptions of” Issei

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<sup>15</sup> A permanent exhibition of AJA history on display in the Japanese American Cultural Center of Hawai'i.

women. She argues that Issei women presented themselves to their children and the wider AJA community in a manner that would cause the least amount of conflict with their own and other Issei views. This image was also constructed within the context of increasing hostility towards Japanese prior to World War II (1993:560). She concludes that “(t)hese strategies contributed to the construction of a stereotype and were part of the process of eradicating their individuality and their history” (1993:556).

Acknowledging the impact of self-presentation of Issei women and the interpretation of this by their Nisei daughters is important in understanding how Issei women contributed to the images of themselves as submissive, sacrificial picture brides. However, the continued persistence of this figure (now shaped and constructed by non-Issei women, and based on collective historical memory), and its implications in contemporary AJA society must also be considered and explored.

### *Culture Bearers*

Issei women, according to Von Hassell (1993) were under pressure to act as “culture bearers”. Picture brides are in many ways symbolic of the ‘old Japan’: the respected homeland of AJA that immigrants left behind. The picture bride acts as a medium for understanding the values of the culture and also offers an explanation as to why they left Japan. As previously highlighted, the majority of literature about picture brides, argue that filial piety to their family, in particular their fathers, and submissiveness to patriarchal social rules are the reason for Issei women immigrating to the U.S and Hawai’i. The hard work within the plantations, suffering unhappy marriages and sacrificing all for the sake of the children embody Japanese values such as *enryo*, *gaman*, *shigata ga nai*

and *kodomo no tame ni*. However these difficult values imposed on women also provide a reason to want to leave Japan, escape the patriarchal control and 'start over' in a new country. The representation of Issei as picture bride, in part, 'makes sense' of the reason for departure and their subsequent behaviour.

### *Claiming a Presence*

There is the potential for emphasis of Issei women as picture brides to be seen as an attempt by feminist historians to claim a presence within the male dominated realm of documented history. The 'backlash' against the way women are and have been represented in history first began in the 1970s. However, the maintenance of the sacrificial and suffering wife and mother embodied by the picture bride, while highlighting the existence of women as immigrants, "reduces their lives to a specific role, which reflects a failure to perceive women's lives as significant outside of or beyond marriage" (Von Hassell 1993: 554). Why is it, that *if* the picture bride is a feminist response to women's silences and absences, a subservient image is epitomised, rather than a strong 'pioneering' and rebellious representation? Why are those who came before the *Yobi Yosei* period not recognised?

The picture bride myth may also have been created in reaction to the symbolic Nisei soldier that has highlighted the roles Nisei men played in World War II. The Nisei soldier is heralded as a 'good' American, sacrificing his life for a dual cause: to have the AJA right to recognition as American citizens; and to be recognised as an American who joined his country in the fight against Nazism and the Japanese. The portrayal of Issei women as picture bride may have been produced in response to equate women's roles with men's in the securing of AJA as citizens in the

United States. Like their Nisei sons, picture brides also sacrificed the lives that they knew in Japan to marry an unknown man and live in harsh conditions, to ensure the future of the AJA community in the United States. The picture bride could be an attempt to include women's voices and perspectives in a male-biased record of history, resisting the image of passive victim, ensuring women's contributions as wives and mothers were not neglected.

### **Implications of the Picture Bride Myth**

Historical representations act as tinted mirrors, reflecting the agendas of contemporary society in which historical images are negotiated. Historical representations and stereotypes of women also reflect society's perception of women, and impact on the way in which women in those societies perceive themselves. Peach (1998:93) suggests that:

(B)y defining what the universe of available options is, culture shapes what is thinkable and achievable. Images and stereotypes of women thereby confine real women within certain boundaries by defining them as having certain characteristics. In addition, representations provide women with images and stereotypes of how to be feminine and thus succeed at being "real women". Women internalise the images and stereotypes that culture expects them to conform to.

The picture bride myth has become part of AJA and Local culture in Hawai'i. It maintains the importance of immigrant women to Hawai'i, however may also act as a means of mediating and impacting on AJA women's identity and general perceptions of appropriate behaviour as women. The myth epitomises a set of values that are presented as 'admirable' and sought-after qualities by women (and men) in AJA society

today. The picture bride is portrayed as sacrificing, hardworking, tolerant and uncomplaining, diligent, gentle and submissive, who finds self-fulfilment through her sacrifices as both mother and wife, and is strong, both physically and mentally. This image establishes a role model for AJA women that suggests that, like their grandmothers, and mothers, they too must work hard to ensure the best for their children. It also suggests to be fulfilled, a woman should marry, and she should reproduce. Yet the implications of this portrayal are not limited to subsequent generations of Local AJA women. The picture bride narrative and its associated assumptions and expectations also impact on the trade of 'contemporary picture brides'.

Continued representation of the picture bride myth also has consequences for a growing industry of modern picture brides. While it is beyond the scope of this work to provide a detailed investigation into the impacts of AJA or AA (Asian American) representation of women on non-AA views and attitudes towards mail-order organizations, the following discussion highlights some of the more obvious concerns with the picture bride image raised in relation to other Asian women and the wider American and Western society. It suggests a need for rethinking AJA portrayals of women and for research into the relationship between 'Asian imagery' and experiences of women (Asian, Asian American and non-Asian American alike).

For the purposes of this discussion I draw a distinction between organizations where the possibility for friendships and romances between men and women from different countries is provided, and

mail-order bride organizations<sup>16</sup>. A recent report to Congress by the INS in America made the distinction as follows:

Unlike dating services or personal ads, the mail-order bride transaction is "one where the consumer-husband holds all the cards." In using these services, the male customer has access to and chooses from a pool of women about whom personal details and information are provided, while the women are told virtually nothing about the male customer--or only what he chooses to reveal about himself. Each woman is aware that the male customer is seeking that one special woman and is eager to satisfy his expectations.<sup>17</sup>

The concept of mail-order brides reflects an inequality in the marriage 'transaction'. Similarly the term 'picture bride' implies a 'one-way' need of women by men, which perpetuates the notion of an unbalanced power relationship that may in fact not have existed. As mentioned previously, in the past *sashin kekkon*, (picture marriages) occurred when an immigrant male from Japan or Korea, had a marriage arranged for him with another woman from the same country of origin. This was also in keeping with practices for marriage of the era in these countries. Women in Japan were seeking 'picture husbands' just as

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Scholes (1999) defines the differences between mail order organizations and pen-friend clubs as follows: " There are two types of ... services. In one type, the so-called "mail-order bride" industry (representatives of the industry prefer the term "international correspondence service"), women's names, photos, biographical sketches, and addresses are presented in hard copy brochures or on the Internet. In these services, the agency provides the photos and descriptions of the women, who are not charged for this listing. Men who wish to obtain the mailing address of any of the women they would like to contact are charged a fee of from \$2 to \$5 for each of the mailing addresses.

The other way to contact potential spouses is through e-mail "pen-pal" clubs. These services are generally free of charge. In them, men and women provide biographical data, an e-mail address, and an indication of what type of relationship they seek. Some of the larger, more established of these pen-pal clubs are One-And-Only.com, Friendfinder.com, Match.com, Kiss.com, and Date.com. In these clubs, one can find nearly 10,000 foreign women seeking marriage or long-term relationships. Since these services require access to computers, the women tend to be older and better educated than those listed in the "mail-order bride" catalogs and to reside in more developed countries such as Japan and Russia."

<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/repstudies/Mobappa.htm>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/repstudies/Mobrept.htm>

International Matchmaking Organizations: A report to Congress (Last updated December 21<sup>st</sup> 1999).

Japanese men in Hawai'i sought picture brides. Yet this aspect is rarely highlighted in accounts of *sashin kekkons*.

The perpetuation of the picture bride, as opposed to *picture marriages*, diminishes the Japanese women's role and emphasises a patriarchal and possibly Western interpretation of the marriage arrangement. In doing so, it creates the illusion that men are the active seekers of a marital partner, subordinating the woman as a 'commodity', and reinforcing the power of mail-order bride seekers, over their potential spouses. In part "as a citizen... the male customer holds both real and imagined power to allow a bride to enter the United States lawfully and to threaten deportation once she is in the United States."<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, there is the threat of being returned to an environment of hardship and poverty from which some of these women are trying to escape.

This leads to another question about the terminology of the 'picture bride' myth. Why has the term 'picture groom' not been incorporated in AJA history? Portraying Issei picture brides as passive pawns in this arrangement overlooks the historical and economic context that in many cases contributed to their decision to leave Japan. At a time when financial hardship was rife in the country, the promise of a better life in America appeared more attractive than staying in Meiji Japan. For the contemporary picture bride, economic and political circumstances of their home country may act as push factors in their decision to make themselves available to American and other Western men. This aspect is not incorporated in current terminology or perceptions of mail-order *brides*.

Asian women, in some circumstances, continue to be treated as a commodity for men who seek them. Rarely is it acknowledged that some

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<sup>18</sup> The mail-order bride trade is not limited to American customers.

of these women are seeking men as a ticket to an alternative life. Scholes (1999) reported that "(M)any sources suggest that these women are searching for a "better life" in terms of socio-economic factors--they do, for the most part, come from places in which jobs and educational opportunities for women are scarce and wages are low".<sup>19</sup> He also noted that discontentment with available men in their home country, and a fascination with American men was sometimes cited as a reason for availing themselves to mail-order organizations. So called 'mail-order brides' are seeking 'mail-order grooms' yet this terminology and concept is never employed<sup>20</sup>.

### **Implications for Women**

The picture bride myth typically suggests that although Issei women were thrown into unexpected and often difficult circumstances, their 'conditioning' to be submissive, subservient and to *gamman*, bound them by obligation and duty to stay with their husbands. Laurie Mengel's research suggests that this was not always the case, with many Issei marriages ending in divorce or desertion. To perpetuate the idea that Japanese women were somehow 'duped' by their spouses, but decided to put up with the situation because of their nature, adds to the fantasy that Asian women in general will behave in this manner.

Undoubtedly the picture bride is not the only concept that contributes to the fantasies and stereotyping of Asian women and challenges of this image are being presented, particularly those by Asian American women. AA and AJA need to consider what sort of messages

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/rcpsstudies/Mobappa.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Research conducted on the search engine Google for 'mail order husbands' resulted in no hits leading to any site providing an actual service within the first three pages. Any site pertaining to this subject was humour based or critiquing the mail order bride industry.

are being portrayed to those within their ethnic group and beyond it, when they continue to present their women in the historical mould of the picture bride, heralding her self-sacrificing attributes. Not only do AA and AJA need to reconsider the representations of women in their past and present, but non-Asians also need to support and encourage alternate views of Asians, Asian women and women in general.

## Conclusion

Motivated by a personal interest in Nikkei identity and by an early recognition of an absence of Sansei participation, narratives and experiences on-line and in historical literature, the primary goal of my research was to provide an avenue for Sansei women in Hawai'i to share and have documented their experiences and voices. In seeking to provide this avenue, I needed to develop an understanding of why documentation of their experiences was scarce, and at the same time comprehend the importance and emphasis on history and connections with Issei ancestry that was manifest in Sansei interviews. This was couched within the context of Local, a concept which was used by island residents to explain and define behaviours and attitudes that differentiate them from 'outsiders'. As history is a significant indicator of 'belonging' to Local society, an overview of how AJA represented themselves<sup>1</sup> and were represented was necessary. Glaring absences existed in AJA records of their Local history, particularly of women's achievements, experiences and contributions and the variations within these. This research encourages a revisiting of the accepted representation of AJA women in public texts and exhibitions, and complements them with the variations and experiences of real AJA women of all generations.

### Contributions of the Research

Through a rich tapestry of women's voices, this dissertation makes an ethnographic contribution to studies of Sansei (women), AJA and Nikkei. It provides a detailed understanding of AJA women's generational identity in Hawai'i through their articulations of the past, Local identity

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of texts about Local AJA are written by Local AJA scholars.

and relational history, and explores the diversity and complexity of what it means to be a Sansei woman in Hawai'i.

The representation of Local (and mainland) AJA history has rarely been critiqued by academics of AJA. The standardized stories of Issei picture brides, plantation workers and Nisei soldiers have become accepted and variations to these stories have slipped away from public memory. Scholars such as Mengel (1997), who seek out 'forgotten' experiences, help to ensure women who made different choices have their voices heard, and other women can be empowered by them. It is anticipated that this work will contribute to a growing body of literature about AJA and Local women that demonstrates different experiences and voices in the past have relevance, and that they need to be recorded so they are not forgotten.

In the field of ethnicity this research offers an alternative to traditional theoretical approaches employed in anthropology. While considering 'a sense of belonging' may not be suitable for all studies of ethnicity, it may be relevant in situations which are Pacific Island-based, or like Hawai'i, communities in which different ethnic groups co-exist while subscribing to an 'umbrella', pan-ethnic ethnicity. As cultures, people and ethnicities become more fluid, the parameters and markers of 'belonging' and inclusion will be as significant as the borders of 'exclusion' on which understandings of ethnicity have been based to date.

This research also contributes to the debate about the concept of Local. Critiques of Local, its emergence and its existence have tended to come from functionalist perspectives and have not considered what Local means from the perspective of those who experience and live it on a daily basis. The lived experience of Local ethnicity (and in fact the concept that it is an ethnicity), within the social, political and economic environment of

the islands needs to be considered. By approaching Local as an ethnicity offers a means to understand and interpret events and activities, both past and present, at an individual and group level that contributes to and shapes Local.

Discussions about Local have mainly been conducted by Locals, Americans and those that reside in Hawai'i. Few outsiders have entered into this debate. My perspective also provides a different perception to the argument of Local that has tended to remain the domain of a few prominent academics (such as Jonathan Okamura and Dennis Ogawa).

## Research Possibilities

### *More on Japanese American and Women's History*

Japanese American history has been a topic of interest for scholars since the 1970s when Asian American studies programs throughout the US took root, resulting in publications such as the *Amerasia Journal* and works by AJA historians such as Dennis (1978 a and 1978b), Yuji Ichioka (1980) and Akemi Kikumura (1992). Institutions such as the Japanese American National Museum and Japanese American societies throughout America act as gatekeepers of the historical past in the mainland, and in Hawai'i the Bishop Museum, Japanese American Cultural Center and the Oral History Center at the University of Hawai'i (Spickard 1996:183) also focus attention on generations of the past. While there has been an increased calling to address new and varied topics within Asian American and Japanese American studies, such as family, community and women's issues, little has been done to critique, question and provide alternatives to accepted constructs of AJA history<sup>2</sup>. The significance of redressing history is not only important from an AJA perspective, but for women around the globe.

### *Developing Outlined Subject Areas*

The areas that have been discussed in this dissertation have been done so in relation to some aspects of Sansei women's 'sense of belonging' to Local. The subjects of values, long-term relationships, motherhood and role models are complex enough to become research topics of their own merit. Topics that were raised in the interviews, but not included in this study include issues of work and employed labour, the negotiation of motherhood with employment and personal interest and hobbies. Further

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<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed account of Japanese American history and its development as a field of academic interest see Spickard 1996:177 – 285.

research needs to be conducted into this area to reflect the experiences of AJA women as workers in Local society. As mentioned, there were groups of Sansei women who did not participate in this study, including women between the ages of fifty-five to sixty-five, and lesbians. Only one Sansei woman with a disability was involved in this research. These too are opportunities for further investigations into Local AJA and AJA society in general. Focus groups of Sansei women in other generations may provide in-depth, cross-generational information on perceptions and experiences relating to the past.

The relationship between Local AJA and other ethnic groups, particularly indigenous Hawaiians, mentioned briefly in Chapter Six, is also an area where detailed research is needed to develop an understanding of inter-ethnic conflicts and compromises within the context of Local ethnicity.

#### *AJA and Asian American (AA) Feminism*

One of the consequences of emphasising the picture bride myth and ignoring other AJA women's experiences is that it continues to render AJA women invisible in both history and the community. Mitsue Yamamoto (1983:36), writing on the issue of 'invisibility' and Asian American (AA) women, suggests that challenges to the roles and representation of AA women have been slow in coming from AA women themselves, because they did not consider themselves as oppressed and invisible. For Local Sansei, the narratives from the past reinforce this notion by creating a sense that they are not as oppressed, nor do they suffer as much as the Issei and Nisei generations before them. Local AJA history, as it stands, maintains the status quo where women do not complain and accept what is suggested by patriarchal leaders and institutions.

As revealed in this study, many Sansei women believe that they are not your 'typical Sansei'. In the Local environment AA women are not as subject to perceived stereotypes of the "submissive, subservient, ready-to-please, easy-to-get-along-with Asian woman" (Yamamoto 1983:37) imposed by a dominant (white) ethnic group, as on the mainland. Sansei can become comfortably content with the state of things (ibid). Yet Local AJA women constantly encounter the Asian stereotype of women through historic representations of Issei women. They weave these images into their own narratives and identities. For some it is a constant battle between 'tradition' and contemporary ideals of women's behaviour.

The passive acceptance of the picture bride myth raises many questions: Why had there been so little action to represent alternatives to the picture bride stereotype? Was resistance a result of the embedded values of *haji* and conforming to the norms of society? If so, why had thirty Sansei women come forward with stories that in some areas strongly challenged this stereotype? Alder (1998:153), writing on the civil rights and women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s argues that the dominant message to AJA a woman at the time and which possibly continues today was: "One should not call attention to oneself and must be careful not to become too political." She concluded from her study with three generations of AJA women that few "Sansei and Yonsei participants... actively participated in the Feminist movement" (ibid:153), yet she does not explore the reasons behind this behaviour.

On the mainland there are Asian American movements which have raised awareness of issues affecting this pan-minority group, including feminist concerns. However, this movement does not transport across the ocean to Hawai'i. In the islands there is little need to form a pan-Asian American movement. Local ethnicity in part assures the recognition of

ethnic variations and experiences. Unlike their Asian-American counterparts on the mainland, Local AAs occupy a dominant place in society and are not as subject to discrimination and misunderstanding as mainland AA. Yet this does not explain why there has been limited concern among AA women relating to feminist issues. Future studies in the area of AJA, particularly AJA women need, to address feminism and 'Asian American identity' within Local, AJA and American society.

#### *More on Local*

Sansei AJA and historic documents relating to AJA and other ethnic groups in Hawai'i make reference to the importance of Local. While this research has demonstrated that Local is a fundamental aspect of Sansei women's identity in Hawai'i, further research needs to be conducted into the significance of Local. Additionally, history, historical representations, and the representation of women in other Local ethnic groups also require further development.

#### *More on Ethnicity*

It is evident that AJA ethnicity in Hawai'i is shaped by Local culture and identity. AJA ethnic symbolism, which includes myths and history, has been constructed in terms of inclusiveness (to legitimise the sense of belonging to and having Local identity), and exclusion (to differentiate Local AJA from other ethnic groups in the islands). Opportunities exist to research whether the different ethnic groups that reside in the island have created similar histories that interact with Local culture and how different groups perceive each other's ethnic identities. Camaroff (1996: 166), writing on ethnicity, notes that "the conditions that give rise to a social identity are not necessarily the same as those that

sustain it". While this thesis considers issues that may have contributed to the strong emphasis on the uniqueness of AJA ethnicity in Hawai'i and its strong relationship with Local, more detailed research could be conducted to understand why ethnicity for AJA, and other groups in Hawai'i, continues to be sustained as significant.

Another area of interest is the significance of 'hapa-ness' in the islands, and whether hapa individuals may create unique and distinct groups, identify (more) with one ethnicity or, act as 'ethnic anomalies' (Eriksen 1993: 62), where individuals can be "considered as 'neither-nor' or 'both -and', depending on the situation and/or the wider-context" (ibid). Because of the complex numbers of ethnic groups that exist in Hawai'i, there are many opportunities to explore existing approaches to ethnicity and to consider alternative theories to conceptualise the way in which ethnic groups and individuals interact with one another in this setting.

## **The Future**

AJA, AJA women, Sansei, Local ethnicity and a 'sense of belonging' have been explored in the body of this thesis. More needs to be developed in anthropological and sociological theory to address and understand how in a globalizing world, different 'types' of ethnicity are being formed and constructed. The situation in Hawai'i, with a keen emphasis on the pan-ethnic label of Local, does not fall into the categories of ethnicity, multiculturalism or nationalism as currently formulated by theorists. While Local has components of these constructs, its existence is something new altogether, resulting from a conglomeration of ethnic groups meeting in a

single physical location and developing strategies, including a pan-ethnic identity, to survive together.

As distances and distinctions between groups in the world decrease through rising migration, how people 'belong to' different groups and distinguish themselves from others will become an increasingly significant topic. Add to this the way in which physical space can now be traversed by electronic communications and the development of e- or web- based communities, the role that history may play in the connections between individuals, groups, collective memories and narratives looks to emerge as a new field of anthropological discourse: virtual history and ethnicity. The opportunity now exists for ethnic groups and women world-wide, to rewrite not only history, but the future, by logging their experiences onto this international database of historical and contemporary information.

## Glossary

AA	Asian Americans
AJA	Americans of Japanese Ancestry
<i>aloha</i>	'Hello' or 'Thank you' or 'love' in Hawaiian. Also a spirit or feeling of kindness, generosity and sharing
<i>bento</i>	Japanese word for 'packed lunch', now used by Locals to mean take out lunch not specific to only Japanese foods
FBMP	<i>From Bento To Mixed Plate</i> . A museum exhibition
FOB	Fresh of the Boat. Used by Locals in reference to recent immigrants.
<i>gamman</i>	Japanese for 'to put up with'
<i>giri</i>	Japanese for 'returning of obligation' or reciprocal obligation
<i>Gosei</i>	Fifth generation
<i>hai</i>	Japanese for 'Yes'
<i>haji</i>	Japanese for 'shame'
<i>haole</i>	Caucasian (Hawaiian origin)
<i>hapa</i>	Half (Hawaiian origin)
<i>hapa-haole</i>	Half Caucasian (literally) but also used by Locals to refer to children of mixed ethnic heritage.
<i>Issei</i>	First generation
JA	Japanese American
JANM	Japanese American National Museum
JCCH	Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i
<i>kama'aina</i>	Literally child of the land. Refers to outsiders who have become 'Local' by long term residence, social relationships and history. (Hawaiian origin)

<i>Kanyaku imin</i>	Contract Laborers (first group of Japanese to arrive in Hawai'i)
<i>Keibi</i>	Children of Japanese Ancestry who are sent to Japan for their schooling. Many Nisei were Keibi before and during WWII
<i>kodo mo no tame ni</i>	Japanese meaning 'for the sake of the children'
<i>koreiru</i>	Japanese meaning 'self denial'
<i>lanai</i>	Veranda or porch at the front of a home (Hawaiian origin)
Local	Term used by long-term residents of Hawai'i in reference to aspects of their culture, history, behaviour and identity that is unique to the islands and its residents
<i>loco moco</i>	A Local dish consisting of hamburger patties sitting on a bed of rice and smothered in gravy
<i>lunas</i>	Overseers of plantations and plantation workers
Mainland	The United States of America (excluding Hawai'i)
<i>manapua</i>	Steamed buns made from bread or soft dough and stuffed with any variety of fillings (the word is Hawaiian in origin)
<i>mochi</i>	Pounded sticky rice (Japanese origin)
<i>musubi</i>	Moulded rice cake usually covered in dried seaweed (Japanese origin)
<i>nakahodo</i>	'Go between' in arranging Japanese marriages
<i>Nikkei</i>	All generations of people with Japanese Ancestry
<i>Nisei</i>	Second generation Japanese
<i>obaachan</i>	Grandmother or old woman (Japanese origin)
<i>Obon</i>	Period during which departed souls return to earth. The festival held in association with this event usually falls in the ninth lunar month of the year

<i>ohana</i>	Family, extended family (Hawaiian origin)
<i>ojiichan</i>	Old man or grandfather (Japanese origin)
<i>ojosama</i>	Japanese meaning 'princess'
<i>okage sama de</i>	Japanese for 'the significance of'
<i>on</i>	Japanese for 'sense of obligation'
<i>ono</i>	Delicious (Hawaiian origin)
<i>oyako ko</i>	Japanese for 'care of parents'
Pidgin (English)	The blend of languages which have merged to form a Local language.
<i>poi</i>	Pounded taro
<i>poi mochi</i>	Sticky Japanese rice cakes blended with poi
<i>poke</i>	Raw fish cut in chunks served with rock salt and seaweed (Hawaiian origin)
<i>Sansei</i>	Third generation Japanese
<i>sashimi</i>	Raw fish Japanese style
<i>Shigata-ga-nai</i>	Japanese for 'it can not be helped'
<i>spam musubi</i>	Japanese style rice cake with a fried slab of <i>Spam</i> and wrapped with dried seaweed
<i>Uchinanchu</i>	Okinawa Islanders
<i>yakudoshi</i>	The 'unlucky years' where special celebrations are held to chase away bad luck on birthdays (Japanese origin)
<i>yobei yose</i>	Period of summoning families from Japan, also known as the <i>Yobeiyose Jidai</i>
<i>Yonsei</i>	Fourth generation Japanese

## Appendices

### Appendix I:

#### Introducing the Sansei Story Talkers

The women are introduced in the order in which they were interviewed.

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### *Joyce*

Joyce was the first woman I interviewed face to face while in the field. I was introduced to Joyce by my host mother, who knew her through the church. Joyce was a teacher of Japanese at the local Christian school in Hilo on the Big Island. She was married with three daughters and was forty years old. Our interview took place on a warm, typically muggy morning outdoors at the school. She had invited me to speak to her Japanese class that morning, which provided Joyce with some background about myself and the experiences I had while living in Japan. My journal entry of the interview captures my initial thoughts on Joyce:

*Joyce is a lovely woman, a little taller than me dressed in a denim dress, a long bobbed hair cut and a warm 'Japanese face'. I felt that we actually 'connected' very well. Prior to our interview, I had spoken about Japan to both classes that she taught Japanese to – and she found many similarities in things that I mentioned with Japanese culture that she tries to maintain.<sup>1</sup>*

Joyce's personal inventory, discussed in Chapter Two, reveals more about this first participant.

### *Verna*

My Hilo host mother then introduced me to Terrie and Verna, two other Sansei women who attended the same church. Verna was forty-eight years of age, married to a Local Korean, with three children. She graduated from Bob Jones University with a teaching degree and was home-schooling her daughters. I was invited to her home for a meal and stayed overnight. Our interview was short, but interesting, addressing the blend of cultures in her family, and the importance of the extended family, that resides throughout the islands, for both herself and her husband.

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<sup>1</sup> January 20<sup>th</sup> 1999.

***Terrie***

Our interview was conducted on a stormy afternoon at Verna's kitchen table. As I sat down with forty-eight year old Terrie, their children (Terrie has four children, Verna has three girls), whom they took turns home-schooling, played in the background. Terrie was half-Korean, half-Japanese and had married an American of Japanese ancestry. Terrie's personal inventory outlined in Chapter Two reflects a thoughtful and creative woman.

***Laura***

On the island of O'ahu, I began to meet women from outside the church community. Laura was the first Sansei woman that I interviewed on O'ahu. I had been introduced to her through an online contact I had made prior to arriving in the islands. At the time of the interview she was thirty-five, not involved in a long-term relationship, and was seeking employment. Despite the pressures she was facing she remained constantly optimistic in her outlook and attitude. She became a constant support and friend during my time in Hawai'i.

***Lisa Anne***

Shortly after I arrived in Honolulu, I contacted Rene from the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) with whom I had been corresponding via postal mail while in New Zealand. She had offered to assist me with my research and we set up a meeting time and place in early February. We decided to meet outside the *Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i* (JCCH), one of the few structures in the area of Moili'ili that I was familiar, then proceeded to L'n'L Drive Inn (a plate lunch diner) for lunch. Accompanying Rene was Lisa Anne, a Sansei who was also involved with JANM. After lunch we went to the *Moili'ili Blind Fish Tank* (MBFT) where

their offices were based and I met other Locals who worked there, including the editor of the Hawai'i Herald, Arnold Hiura. Lisa Anne was very interested in my research and offered to be a participant. We arranged to conduct the interview that weekend at the MBFT. Age forty-five, she had grown up on the Big Island. Her mother was a hard-working hair-dresser whom Lisa Anne spoke of with deep affection. Lisa Anne had married in her mid thirties and, did not wish to have children. She gained a lot of personal satisfaction from her work with the JANM and expressed that she was not 'your typical Sansei woman'.

### *Hilma*

I had just completed an interview with Lisa-Anne at their place of work, the MBFT, which housed a collective of artists and writers, when Hilma arrived. Lisa Ann hurriedly introduced us, briefed her on my research and we sat down for the interview. Of Okinawan ancestry, forty-five year old Hilma was petite, with short black hair, almost elf-like in appearance. She sported a denim jacket with an assortment of colourful pins and buttons and oozed warmth and vitality. At the time of the interview she was working as a graphic artist for a Local department store.

### *Joanne*

When Joanne, who was fifty-five, contacted me about being interviewed, she was up front about the possibility that I might have difficulty understanding her as she has cerebral palsy. However, there were only two difficulties with the interview. Firstly, I missed the bus and was almost an hour late. Thankfully, Joanne waited for me to arrive at *Starbucks Café* where we had arranged to meet. My second problem came with transcribing the interview. We had seated ourselves outside the café

on the street, and the rumble of buses and traffic occasionally blared over our conversation. Aside from this, her interview was a delightful commentary of a single woman, without children, determined to succeed in life.

### *Elo*

Hilma has a twin sister Elo, who also worked in the same building, running the bric-a-brac/bookstore on the street level. Like her sister, Elo was petite and energetic. Her hair flowed to her waist and she was dressed more conservatively than Hilma. Their life experiences contrast greatly. Elo married young, has two children, divorced and had recently become engaged. Hilma on the other hand, married her husband in her mid thirties and like Lisa Anne has no desire to have children. Their personal inventories as discussed in Chapter Two reveal that these biologically identical twins have very different life experiences.

### *Andrea*

Forty-year-old Andrea was a participant suggested by my host father. She was studying at the University of Hawai'i, which is where our interview took place. Holding a MA in Social work, Andrea was candid in her discussion about her experiences as a Sansei outside of Hawai'i and in Japan. She was dating, resided at home with her mother and did not intend to have children in the future. Her narrative explored social expectations of JA women in Hawai'i, and highlighted some of the ethnic tensions that exist in the islands.

### *Dr Francis Sano*

Dr Sano's name and information had been passed onto me by a gentleman who had read the article published in the Hawai'i Herald, who then called me at my host father's home. Dr Sano resided in the same

retirement home as the gentleman, who believed that she was one of the oldest Sansei women in the islands. At eighty-two, Dr Sano became the eldest of the Sansei involved in the research, and as a doctor, provided an opportunity to meet someone who had entered an occupation outside the historically accepted 'norm'. Dr Sano provided a frank narrative of her life, but declined to have the interview recorded. Unfortunately Dr Sano had difficulty recalling aspects of her life and inclusion of her dialogue in this dissertation is limited.

### *Jennie and JoAnne Yukimura*

The Hawai'i Herald article generated many respondents offering their assistance from O'ahu and neighbour islands. Jennie Yukimura, a seventy-four-year-old Nisei/Sansei in Kaua'i, had read the article and phoned my host father's home. She suggested that if I visited the island, she would be more than willing to be interviewed, as would her daughter JoAnne, the former mayor of Kaua'i. I had been invited by Rene and Lisa Anne to attend the opening of the JANM exhibit *From Bento to Mixed Plate: Japanese Americans in Multicultural Hawai'i* (FBMP), on Kaua'i during the second weekend of March. Jennie was involved with this project and informed me she would be in touch when I arrived in Kaua'i. During the preparations of the grand opening of the exhibition on the Friday, Jennie introduced herself to me in person and asked how long I was staying on the island. Originally I had planned to return to O'ahu on the Saturday evening, but was able to extend my stay to Sunday evening, allowing me to spend the day with Jennie and her daughter.

Jennie and her husband picked me up from the condo I was sharing with Rene, early on Sunday morning to attend church. Following the service we drove partway around the island to share lunch with JoAnne, her husband and daughter. Once lunch was over, JoAnne, Sansei/Yonsei,

was the first to be interviewed. At forty-nine, she had a reflective attitude on her experiences as Mayor of the island. The majority of her narrative focused on this episode of her life and the challenges Hurricane Iniki had on her role. The last twenty minutes of her interview were emotional and sincere as she described the importance of her family and her future hopes and aspirations.

Jennie, who graduated from the University of Hawai'i with a Bachelor of Sociology during the forties, then sat down across the table from me. As we sipped tea she narrated her life, describing the hardships that both she and her mother faced and the pride she has in her five children.

### *Dorothy*

In March 1999, I was given a list of Sansei women who were interested in my research by Jane Komeiji of the JCCH. Dorothy was one who was willing to be interviewed. I contacted her and arranged to meet at her home the following week. At seventy five years of age, she joined the small number of 'older Sansei' involved in my research. From my home in Palisades, the bus journey to Dorothy's home near Manaloa Gardens was long. I was grateful to be greeted at the door of Dorothy's cool home and offered an ice-cold drink as we sat down for the interview. Dorothy attended university during World War II, noting that being of Japanese descent there was little opportunity to do anything else. Businesses were simply not hiring Japanese. There she earned a BA in Home Economics and became a teacher. While working on the mainland she met her husband and had one child. Dorothy intended to retire from teaching twenty years ago. However, she continues to be involved with school at least once a week in an administration capacity. She has been

asked to be a substitute teacher, but feels that she cannot cope with 'the kids' of today.

### *Terresa*

Shortly after my interview with Dr Sano, I received a phone call from Roy, a Nisei gentleman of Okinawan descent who was to become my Local Grandpa. He had read the article in the Hawai'i Herald and called to inform me that he knew of a few Sansei women who were willing to be interviewed. Roy was invaluable in his kindness, generosity and assistance both during my research and after I had left the field. At our first meeting at the *Like Like* (pronounced leekay-leekay) *Drive Inn*, Roy introduced me to Terresa. At first glance I could not understand why Roy had thought she would be helpful in my research. Physically she did not look like any of the women I had interviewed previously. She had pale skin, red hair and dark green eyes. "This is not a Sansei," I thought to myself, "Roy has made a mistake about what I am doing". Roy grinned at me. "She no look Japaneese, but she like you. She hapa." Terry's mother was Japanese and had met and married a Haole serviceman in Japan. After their divorce, she met a Nisei from Hawai'i, and they soon married. Terry identified herself as Sansei, not by birth (as by birth she was a Nisei), but through her mother's second marriage to a Nisei American of Japanese Ancestry. We conducted our interview at Roy's home after dinner. At forty-eight years of age Terresa was working as a nurse. She had become pregnant two years into her university studies and was married to the father of her son for five years. Her second marriage to an older man lasted eight months. Terresa, now single, identifies more with her Japanese ancestry more than with her American.

### *Hannah*

The second woman that Roy introduced me to was Hannah. One morning we headed down to her work place, a florist shop in Kaimuki for the interview. Hannah declined the interview being recorded on tape, but was happy to talk story with me as she bustled about her store. Perched on a stool, surrounded by flowers, stems, newspaper, ribbons, her two sons and her large number of cats (over twenty at the time), Hannah shared her interesting, and at times tragic, life story. Hannah was hapa. A product of her mother's romance with a mainland GI who visited Hawai'i during the war, Hannah's experience as a hapa was not always pleasant. According to Hannah, her mother rejected her as a child (she was up for adoption until the age of six), often ignoring Hannah and lavishing attention on her other children who were full Japanese. Their relationship continues to be strained. Hannah married twice and has a son from each marriage. At fifty, Hannah enjoys her work, family and the stray cats she has kind-heartedly adopted.

### *June*

Fifty-five year old June was married and worked as a nurse. At the time of the interview, one of her three children, was involved with the Japanese American National Museum, which motivated June to participate in my research. I interviewed June in her family home in Manoa Valley. June's Nisei mother had grown up on the mainland which was a point of differentiation for June while growing up in Hilo. She describes her life and her experiences in great detail through her personal inventory.

*Jan*

My interview with June at her Manoa home, was followed by an interview with her sister-in-law, Jan. Fifty-seven-year-old Jan was born in Hawai'i, but had grown up on an airbase in Japan. As the eldest child and only daughter of a civilian working in the US Air Force, she was expected to forgo her own education to support her two younger brothers. Jan studied for one year at a college in Sacramento, before returning to Japan where she worked on a military golf course. She came to Hawai'i in 1962. Married, with one adopted daughter (from Japan), Jan's warmth and love of people is quickly apparent, and reflected in her profession as a secretary for the prestigious school that her daughter attends.

*Christine*

At twenty-six, Christine was the youngest of my research participants. She contacted me after reading the article in the Hawai'i Herald and was eager to participate in the research. Of Okinawan ancestry, she was employed at a Local clothing store and was 'secretly' dating someone. Her personal inventory reflected a young woman concerned with her identity and future.

*Pauline*

Pauline, forty-seven, was introduced to me by her husband, who had been a helpful assistant in my online search for participants and accommodation. I had met with Pauline and her husband, Tom, in February, and we arranged to meet towards the end of March at the *Gazebo Restaurant* in what was then known as *Liberty House Department Store* (now *Macy's*), *Pearl Ridge Shopping Center*<sup>2</sup>. Pauline was different

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<sup>2</sup> This was to become a regular meeting place for many of my interviews, as it was conveniently located between Honolulu and Pacific Palisades, directly on the bus route, and known by everyone!

from other Sansei I interviewed. She had grown up in California, coming to Hawai'i fifteen years ago when Tom found employment in the islands. She feels she is *kama ai'ina* (child of the land, a term used for people who 'become Local'). She graduated with a degree in Art History from Santa Barbara University and is a counsellor in an employment training center. An enthusiastic woman who spoke with great eloquence, Pauline's observations and comparisons between Hawai'i AJA and those on the mainland was extremely interesting and has been included in discussions of 'Local' later in this dissertation.

### ***Keilani***

Keilani was one of the women who responded to an article placed in the Hawai'i Herald about my research and need for Sansei women to interview. I made the bus journey to Wahiwa where Keilani worked as an Extension Home Economist. Born in Maui, of Chinese and Japanese descent, Keilani is married with two children. One of the first items she presented during our discussion was a collection of shell leis that both she and her father had made, indicating her affection for her father and love of nature.

### ***Lori***

I met Lori at the MBFT one afternoon as I was browsing through the store's bric-a-brac collection. Elo introduced us and I was interested to learn that Lori was a teacher of a dance style called Butoh. Initially, Lori, hiding behind a mane of long, straight, black hair, appeared reserved, however agreed to be interviewed as she was interested in my research. I contacted her by letter in early March, and our interview was scheduled for March 29th 1999 at Pearl Ridge Liberty House Gazebo. Over coffee, Lori, forty, spoke of her experiences growing up as a daughter of a dentist,

her Catholic education and her enjoyment of attending the University of Hawai'i where she graduated with a Bachelors in Fine Arts. While on the mainland she learned the trade of hairdressing which she continues to do between teaching and dancing. She married 'early' which resulted in divorce. Soon after the marriage ended, Lori discovered different dance forms and joined various dance companies. Lori has re-married a man who shares her passion in dance.

### *Joan*

While attending a Parents Without Partners (PWP) barbecue dinner with my host father, I was introduced to a charming young man with a zest for life and a flirtatious grin. Paul's cerebral palsy was no deterrent to his enthusiasm for life. His mother, Joan, forty-six, was an exceptional woman. She was interested in my research and arranged to be interviewed at the children's hospital where she was employed as a food service worker. Joan's narrative echoes a life that has been about resistance to cultural and traditional norms: from attending a Junior College (considered by her family as academically unchallenging for her, and decision to marry early, to adopting a child with special needs (which horrified the family she married into), and her choice of work. Joan's marriage was particularly difficult due to her husband, his family and their expectations. Adopting Paul was her 'salvation', and she appears as a strong and courageous person.

### *Gail*

I met Gail through Elo one wet afternoon while at the MBFT. My first impression of Gail was that she was slightly unapproachable and maybe a little 'gruff'. First impressions can be very wrong, as I was to discover during our interview. Like Joan, Gail arranged for our interview to be

conducted at her place of work, the 442nd Regiment Office, where she worked as the secretary. Seated at her desk, surrounded by pictures of war heroes, and interrupted occasionally by veterans, she gave a friendly, warm and very candid interview about her life. Born in Honolulu, Gail is Okinawan by ancestry. Growing up, she felt less Okinawan and 'more patriotic to the red, white and blue'. Gail fell in love with her high school sweetheart and worked while waiting for him to complete college, when they married before he joined the Navy. Together they raised three children, during which time Gail chose to juggle full-time work with motherhood, with the help of her in-laws. Only fifty-two-years-old, Gail is a young and feisty grandmother, proud of her first grandchild, aged six.

### *Beatrice*

I contacted Beatrice after she indicated to Jane Komeiji at the JCCH, that she would be willing to be interviewed for my research. At seventy one, Beatrice was an 'older Sansei', married with four children. She welcomed me into her home on a hot and humid morning to share aspects of her life with me. While she considers herself to be of Japanese ancestry, she feels she was raised more American. Her father, for reasons unknown to Beatrice, rejected things Japanese. From the age of three, her father was raised in a boarding school and did not really live with his parents. Her father worked in the bank at Schofield Barracks on O'ahu. This is where Beatrice was schooled, with predominantly Haole classmates. When in 7th grade, she found herself in a class with children from different backgrounds. Because of her mainly Haole experience, she found it difficult to relate to AJA children as she had no 'Local Japanese' background. At the conclusion of the interview Beatrice remarked: "I regret that I didn't have more of a background in my own culture. I realise that's part of who I am and I don't know that part. That's something I've

always regretted and still do. I never felt that I was a part of it. I think I missed something.”

### ***Kay***

Kay contacted me in April of 1999. She had seen the article in the *Hawai'i Herald* and wished to participate. As with Lori and Pauline, we arranged to meet at the *Gazebo*, Pearl Ridge. Born in Honolulu, Kay considered herself to be ethnically Japanese 'but actually Okinawan'. The eldest of four children, she was painfully shy until she went to college and studied nursing. She leaned more towards the 'psycho-social' side of nursing, however did not really enjoy this occupation. For the past thirteen years, she has been assisting in the family business, and now also has time to develop her love of writing. While Kay has dated a lot, she is yet to find 'Mr Right'. She says that even at her age (fifty-five), if she found the right guy, she would get married. Following our discussion, Kay shared additional thoughts through a letter.

### ***Sharon***

One sunny weekend, my host father and I were attending a Japanese Heritage Festival. There, we met a work acquaintance of Don's who happened to be Sansei. Sharon agreed to meet with me for lunch at the *Gazebo*. She arrived with her young son who was remarkably well behaved during the entire interview which lasted almost an hour. Sharon is one of those bubbly, friendly, 'feel like you've known them your whole life' people. She was born and raised in Hawai'i and considers herself to be ethnically Japanese (her mother's side) and Okinawan (her father's side). The youngest of three children, Sharon attended Japanese school from 1st to 8th grade and continued to learn the language in high school. She attended the University of Hawai'i with a major in Sociology. Within a

month of graduating, she landed a job with the Federal Government, and currently works at Pearl Harbor. She met her husband at work, and they married in 1995, visited Germany in 1996, and a year later their son was born. Now thirty-five, one of Sharon's pastimes is being involved with Bon dance. She plays the drums and was preparing for the Bon<sup>3</sup> festivals which runs from June through to August. In my last few weeks in Hawai'i, I had the pleasure of seeing Sharon play with her Bon group.

### *Sandra*

In mid April, a woman with a rich smooth voice like hot chocolate called me. She had seen a flyer I had left at Rick's hairdressing studio and wanted to participate in the study. We decided to meet a few days later at *Javarama*, a coffee shop near the MBFT. On a cool afternoon, I sipped a coffee and nibbled corn bread as Sandra tucked into a hot bowl of pumpkin soup. Sandra's narrative was a blend of detailed descriptions and animated dialogue as she impersonated different characters in her life. Sandra grew up in the islands and went onto University of Hawai'i where she majored in ethno-musicology. Using her knowledge of Spanish, she worked at the State Department of Transportation at the airport for four years. During that time she began to play Brazilian style music professionally, eventually receiving a scholarship to study music in Brazil in 1980. Although it was a one year scholarship, Sandra stayed for three years, teaching English and singing in restaurants. This is how she met her husband, a percussionist, famous in the style of samba. Their marriage produced three children. However, as her husband tried to focus on his career, Sandra realised that they were drifting apart. They divorced in 1993 which, Sandra says, has had a terrible impact on their children, one of

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<sup>3</sup> Bon or O'Bon is the Japanese festival of the dead, celebrated on the ninth lunar month of the year.

who has been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and dabbles in drugs. At forty-five, this strong, charismatic, but matter-of-fact woman manages motherhood, employment (she has been teaching for the past twelve years) and music (she sings in a Salsa band).

### *Margaret*

Margaret was a fifty-three year old Sansei whom I met through my host father's 'Parent's Without Partners' Group. She had recently divorced from her husband and was 'rediscovering' who she was. Our interview was held over dinner at the *Brew Moon* restaurant and she brought with her a scrapbook collection of high school memories such as prom dance cards, banners, concerts she attended and photographs. For Margaret, high school had poignant memories as she felt that this was when she was last 'her true self' before she married.

### *Dianne*

Dianne had been told about my research by an acquaintance. After she called me, we had initially arranged to meet at her apartment one afternoon, but with Honolulu streets being as confusing as they are, and apartment entrances not always obvious, I was unable to locate where she lived! We reconnected and decided to meet in a known locale (the Gazebo) the following week, and were joined by several of her friends. Both Dianne and I were suffering from head colds, but despite this, the short interview provided detailed information from a younger Sansei whose lifestyle was different to many of the other women interviewed. Dianne, who grew up in Hilo, was twenty-eight and the youngest of three sisters. She has degree in Business Marketing from the University of Hawai'i, following which she applied for sixty jobs, eventually finding work with computers where she remained for two years. After a car accident she was

unable to remain in her position. She worked in a bar for a short time, and currently works at a bath house/massage parlour. For Dianne, this is not work, it is just money. The job has opened her eyes to the type of men she hopes to avoid when considering marriage and motherhood in the future.

### *Doreen*

A few weeks before I was to leave Hawai'i, Roy introduced me to his niece, Doreen. The eldest of four girls, and the daughter of a minister, Doreen was born and raised in California. Her experiences as a Sansei varied from other women who had 'grown up Local'. Just before high school Doreen's family moved to Hawai'i. The experience was a culture shock for Doreen who did not enjoy her high school days. She studied Business and Office education at the University of Hawai'i, completing a Masters in this field. Now forty-two, married, with two children, she assists her husband with his dental practise.

## Appendix II

### Flyer

#### **Voices of today are the history tomorrow learns from**

**I am collecting the daily lives and stories of Sansei women in Hawaii. I want to learn about what it means to be a third generation American of Japanese descent - your daily activities, your stories, hopes, dreams and concerns.**

My name is Yumiko Olliver, I am a New Zealand born half Japanese working towards my Doctorate in Social Anthropology through Massey University of New Zealand. I am seeking Sansei women of any age to interview for my research.

I would appreciate any help you can provide me with. If you would like to know more, have any questions, or would like to participate in my research, please feel free to contact me on 456-8060 or leave a message at the Resource Center of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii

## Appendix III

### Interview Guidelines

#### Areas of Inquiry

Please note that the interview may not follow this outline, but will flow in natural discussion, hopefully covering some of the following topics. If you feel uncomfortable discussing any of these areas please let me know and they will be avoided.

#### 1. Biographical Details

- generation
- ethnic group
- age
- birthplace
- parents background

#### 2. Childhood

- where grew up
- siblings
- people in the household
- household chores
- family
- parents
- grandparents
- schooling
- values and lessons
- events memories
- television programmes

#### 3. College years

- where
- what studied
- important events

#### 4. Work

- past
- issues faced
- feelings/enjoyment
- reasons for employment choice/change

current employment

### **5. Courtship, dating, marriage, divorce**

when started dating

what is dating

Reasons for marriage/single/divorce

when how met partner

reasons for attraction

wedding - the event

expectations of family

expectations held by self for marriage and role as wife.

pressures

feelings if separated

### **6. Married life**

changes in roles

relation to expectations

### **7. Children and motherhood**

if have children

reasons for having/not having

roles and adjustments, memories

values

things passed on

### **8. Culture and Community life**

activities

interests

daily life

importance of ethnicity

life in comparison to mothers/next generation

### **9. Who am I?**

using objects, photos, notes, artefacts

prospects for the future

## Appendix IV

### Introductory Letter

98-1710D Kaahumanu Street  
Pearl City HI 96782

7 March 1999

Hi there,

Thank you for your interest and consideration of being an interview participant for my Doctoral research.

Firstly let me tell you a little about myself. My name is Yumiko Olliver. I am 25 years old and am currently pursuing my Doctoral degree in Social Anthropology. My interest in Sansei women of Hawaii stems from my own ethnic background. My mother is Japanese, my father a New Zealander. My mother worked very hard to maintain aspects of her culture in a society where there are few Japanese people. I was curious to learn about people who had a combination of cultures and the 'mixed plate' aspect of Hawaii fascinated me. There has been little written about the Sansei generation from a contemporary perspective, yet their stories and experiences are equally as important as those that lived before them. In the future, they will be the historical voices that others research, so I decided to explore narratives, memory and identity of Sansei women of 1999!

Each interview takes between 45 and 90 minutes (though some women have spoken longer!). All that is required is discussion about you, your life, experiences, thoughts and feelings. For the final section of the interview "Who am I?" I generally suggest that the women bring up to ten items that help reflect their identity - these can be photographs, recipes, items of clothing, books...anything you chose that will help you answer this. It is a very interesting aspect of the interview!

Please find enclosed with this letter an interview outline and a consent form for you to look over at your convenience.

I will call you later next week to confirm our interview time. If you have any questions or comments, or wish not to be interviewed for whatever reason, please don't hesitate to contact me on: 456-8060. Thank you for your assistance once again

Yours sincerely,  
Yumiko Olliver

# Appendix V

## Consent Form

Programme of Social Anthropology  
School of Global Studies  
Massey University of New Zealand

**Consent Form to Act as a Participant**  
**In the study of identity, narratives and life histories of third**  
**generation women Americans of Japanese Ancestry in Hawaii**

Participants name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. I hereby authorize Yumiko Olliver of the Program of Social Anthropology School of Global Studies Massey University of New Zealand, to gather information from me on the topic of identity, narratives and life histories of third generation women Americans of Japanese Ancestry in Hawaii. I freely and voluntarily consent to participate in this research with no coercion, psychological or otherwise, used to elicit my cooperation.

My participation will involve giving background information and participating in an interview where questions will address my life experience from childhood to the present. I will be asked to share my experiences, feelings, perceptions and attitudes to these experiences. The total time involved will be between half an hour and one and a half hours.

2. I understand that this interview will be conducted in accordance with the New Zealand Social Anthropologist Association's Code of Ethics, and that I have the right to refuse to discuss matters that cause me discomfort or that I experience as an unwanted invasion of my privacy. I am also aware that I may choose not to answer any questions that I find embarrassing or offensive.

3. I am aware that I may terminate my participation in this study at any time.

4. I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and that confidentiality will be maintained. I have the right to request that taping be stopped, or to have something removed or deleted during or after the interview.

5. I understand that photographs may be taken of myself and my artifacts brought to the interview to assist in the research. I am aware that I may decline to have my photograph taken. If photographs are taken:

\_\_\_\_ I give permission for photographs to be used in the dissertation after viewing and selecting these.

\_\_\_\_ I prefer not to have any photographs used in the dissertation.

6. I understand that I have the choice to remain anonymous, select an alias or chose to use my own name if I so desire to in the manuscript of the dissertation.  
State here which option you would like \_\_\_\_\_

7. I understand that once the interview is completed and indexed, I will have the option to receive and review the index summary. I may edit the summary and indicate areas I do not wish to be discussed at this stage, and any other prior to the completion of the dissertation.

\_\_\_\_ Yes I wish to receive a copy of the index summary of my interview.  
My address is: \_\_\_\_\_

.....  
 No I do not want to receive a copy of the index summary of my interview

8. I understand that I have the right to decide what happens to the original audio taped interview. Please select from the following options (one or more may be selected):

- I would like the tape returned to me  
 I would like the tape destroyed  
 I would like to have the tape deposited at a research institution  
 I would like a copy of the tape  
 the tape becomes the property of Yumiko Olliver for the purpose of her current and future research.

9. I am aware that I may receive a written summary of the project results on request. I have indicated my preference below:

Yes I would like to receive a copy of the written summary of the project results. My address is:

.....  
 .....

No, I do not wish to receive a copy of the written summary of the project results.

10. The procedures and investigation listed above has been explained to me by Yumiko Olliver.

.....  
 Participant's Signature

## Appendix VI

### Thank you letter

2271 Ailolo Place  
Pearl City HI 96782

Dear

Finally I have managed to complete the index summary of your interview to send to you as requested. I apologize for the delay in sending this to you, with so many exciting things to see, people to meet and events to experience, I did not realize how fast my time in Hawaii has gone. I will be leaving on the 2nd July 1999 and wanted to get this to you prior to my departure so that you may look over it and contact me if there is anything you wish to change, discuss or add to your interview.

The index summaries are not word for word transcripts of the interviews, but do follow the general outline of the discussion at each point in the interview. I have not used aliases in the index summaries for all those who requested, as these indexes will be viewed only by me. Aliases will however be used in the thesis as requested. these indexes serve the purpose of notes for organizing my research, hence also the use of my 'shorthand'.

A small guide to my shorthand

@ - at	M - mother	F - father
H - Hawaii	J - Japanese	x - participant's name
- change	JA- Japanese American	- between
G.M - grandmother	G.F- grandfather	

As you read through these indexes you may find there are names I have spelt incorrectly, or identities you may wish to give aliases for, or prefer for me not to mention. Please do not hesitate to contact me about any aspect of your contribution to this research. You can contact me at the above address and phone number (ph: (808) 456-8060) until my date of departure. My e-mail address is: travel\_bunny@chickmail.com. My address New Zealand address is:

Yumiko Olliver, Graduate Assistant, C/-Social Anthropology Programme, School of Global Studies, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

I cannot thank you enough for taking the time to share your life history with me. I look forward to any feedback or questions you may have after reading your index summary.

Thank you again for your time and assistance

Mahalo

Yumiko Olliver

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