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INTRODUCTION

Broadly defined, the term “Kibei” has been an informal demographic marker for “Nisei,” second generation of Japanese who were born in the United States, were raised and educated in Japan when they were young, and later returned to the United States as adults. The literal meaning of “Kibei” is “returning to America.” Literally, therefore, the term could be taken to include any individuals who have gone to Japan, and then returned to the United States. However, the most standard reference is to the World War II generation who were born in the United States before World War II, and returned to the United States either before or after the war. Today, most Kibei Nisei are in their seventies, eighties, and nineties. This study focuses on the Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii and examines the socio-historical processes involved in their identity formation.

The first 150 or so immigrants from Japan arrived in Hawaii in 1868 and worked on the sugar plantations (Kimura, 1988); however, it was not until 1885 that the Japanese government approved contract labor immigration to Hawaii from Japan. The immigration convention was formally signed between Japan and Hawaii; and the period of this contract continued until 1900, when Hawaii was annexed to U.S. as an incorporated territory. Then a period of unrestricted immigration, in which immigration was arranged through companies, ensued (Ethnic Studies Oral History Project, 1981:561). Most Japanese immigrants saw themselves as sojourners and came with the intention of staying temporarily, making their fortunes in "Golden Hawaii" and returning to Japan with a secure financial base. During the first decade of the 1900s, the immigrant population from Japan grew to more than 60,000, 40 percent of the total population of Hawaii (Suzuki, 2004:201). The children of the first immigrants from Japan were called either
“Dai Nisei” or “Nisei.” And since they were born in the United States, they automatically received American citizenship. By the early 1900s, there were 4,877 Nisei in Hawaii (Okahata, 1964:231).

Among Issei (first generation of Japanese) in the United States, a decision to send a child to Japan was not uncommon. By 1930, 13 percent of Nisei youth in California were sent to Japan, where they received all or part of their schooling (Strong, 1934). Issei sent their children to Japan for educational and economic reasons (Yamashita, 1935). While some parents sent their children in their mid-teens to pursue higher education in Japan, other parents send their children at a very early age to be raised by their grandparents because they could not afford to raise them in the United States.

It was not until about 1930 that the Kibei Nisei began to return to the United States in numbers sufficient to make themselves noticed. Some returned to the United States simply to join their families from whom they had been separated for years, other returned to avoid conscription into the Japanese military (Masuda, 1993:40). Once Nisei were drafted into the Japanese armed forces in Japan, it was harder for them to retain their American citizenship, so many Issei parents encouraged their children to return to the United States. Some Kibei Nisei also returned because they preferred the freedom of America to the rigidity of Japan. Other returned to earn some money, planing to return to Japan later.

Upon returning to the United States, Kibei Nisei often found themselves split between two cultures and “suffered all the agonies of a schizoid personality” (Smith, 1948:254). Unlike many Nisei who remained in America, the Kibei Nisei were strongly influenced by their experiences in Japan. Many Kibei Nisei, especially those who lived in
Japan for a longer period of time, found it difficult to adjust to life in America because most of them did not speak English very well, had few emotional ties to parents and siblings in America, and knew very little of American culture (Tamura, 1994:175). Maykovich (1972:84) explains that the Kibei Nisei have not been as successful as Nisei in securing good occupations because of their maladjustment to American society. They have also had difficulty getting along with American-raised Nisei, as well as their own American-raised brothers and sisters (Tamura, 1994:253).

In previous literature on Kibei Nisei, the general consensus is that they were sent to Japan for educational, not economic reasons. The common images of Kibei Nisei also implies that Kibei Nisei had a fixed identity; they were unable to assimilate, pro-Japanese, and disloyal to the United States. Most references to the Kibei Nisei experience are found in studies on evacuation and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II when the assumption is usually made that Kibei Nisei, because of their presumed indoctrination in militaristic Japan in the later 1920s and 1930s, were more likely to be pro-Japanese than other Nisei. My thesis provides two new perspectives on Kibei Nisei experiences. First, I argue that the economic differences account for a range of Kibei Nisei experiences. Second, I provide a new perception of their identity formation, not as a result of a one-time event that they had while living in Japan but over time according to socio-historical circumstances that they faced upon returning to the United States.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii

The first group of immigrants from Okinawa arrived in Hawaii in 1900 following the Japanese initiation of government-sponsored contract labor immigration in 1885.
Early immigrants from Okinawa, like many Issei mainland Japanese, sent their Hawaii-born children to their homeland for several reasons. Since the Okinawan immigration to Hawaii took place almost two decades later than the Japanese immigration, Okinawan standards of living were much lower than those of other Japanese immigrants. While the practice of sending at least one child to Japan to be educated there was prevalent within the Japanese community between 1920s and 1940s, Okinawan Issei were more likely to send their children to Okinawa for economic reasons. By sending their children to Okinawa, where the children could live with grandparents less expensively, the parents could remain in Hawaii to save up money for their own return to Okinawa. Members of the extended families’ raising their family members’ children was a common practice in Okinawan society.

During the 1920s and 1930s, approximately 3,000 Okinawan Nisei who had grown up in Okinawa returned to Hawaii (Hawaii Pacific Press, January 1, 1992). The first post-war Okinawan Kibei Nisei – a group of twenty seven – returned to Hawaii in 1947, setting a precedent for future returning Kibei Nisei (Hawaii Houchi, June 28, 1947).

The only work focusing on Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii available in Japanese is Hiroyuki Kinjyo’s article (2004). His work focuses on Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s cultural and linguistic experiences in Okinawa during the period of their youth and offers an important insight that Okinawan Kibei Nisei have played an important role in strengthening the Okinawan ethnic community in Hawaii. Kinjyo’s attempt to recognize the Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s contribution to their ethnic community in Hawaii should not
be overlooked. However, it is clear that evidence and discussion are needed in order to make his points convincing.

My thesis examines how Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii developed a distinct identity separate from the larger collective identity they might share with other Okinawans in Hawaii, Japanese Kibei Nisei, or Okinawans in Okinawa. I do this by focusing on the historical formation of Okinawan Kibei Nisei collective identity in Hawaii. My thesis relies on their life stories to capture significant historical moments in their lives. I use those stories to examine the negotiation of identity under conditions of the cultural and political stresses of living in and Okinawa and Hawaii and to examine how their identities changed over time according to socio-historical circumstances.

**Theoretical framework**

In order to understand how the Okinawan Kibei Nisei have developed their distinctive identity, the following theoretical concepts of “marginality” is useful for an analytical tool.

This study concerns itself primarily with the sociology of marginality of immigrants, a concept that Robert E. Park (1928) first addresses in his essay “Human Migration and Marginal Man.” Everett V. Stonequist (1937) also expanded on this concept in his book *The Marginal Man*. His notion was that an individual suspended between two cultural realities is marginal and experiences difficulties establishing an identity and avoiding cognitive dissonance.

In their study of the Anglo-Indian community in India, Gist and Wright (1973:21) explain that a group may be marginal to one or more other collectivities, when its
members. 1) do not ordinarily qualify for admission into another group with which, over varying lengths of time, it is more or less closely associated; 2) differ significantly in the nature of their cultural or racial heritage; and 3) there is limited cultural interchange or social interaction.

In this study, Okinawan Kibei Nisei may be viewed as marginal. Upon returning to the United States, Okinawan Kibei Nisei experienced culturally and socially marginalized status to the both larger Japanese and Okinawan communities in Hawaii. They were not accorded full social acceptance in many aspects of social life both as Kibei Nisei and as Okinawans. These circumstances made it difficult for Okinawan Kibei Nisei to develop a clear conception of their own identity.

First, Okinawan Kibei Nisei were marginal to the Okinawan community and even to their own families because of their limited English language abilities, maladjustment to American and Hawaii's culture, and lower standards of living influenced by these disadvantages. Kibei Nisei's acceptance in Nisei social groups was hindered because of their perceived "foreignness," which was strongly influenced by their language handicap. Given the social context of World War II era when Japanese Americans were easily subjected to stereotypes of being unable to assimilate and being un-American by virtue of their ethnicity, many Nisei felt compelled to show their "American-ness" by denying foreigners from their own homeland.

Second, Okinawan Kibei Nisei were also marginalized from the larger Japanese community in Hawaii because they were Okinawans. The early immigrants from Okinawa in Hawaii were subject to prejudice and discrimination from the mainland Japanese because of the Okinawans' distinct culture and status as a more recent
immigrant group. Moreover, since little more than two decades had passed since Japan’s annexation of Okinawa, Okinawan immigrants were often seen as “the other Japanese” (Ueunten, 1989; Kaneshiro, 2002).

In her article “Outsiders Inside: Positive Marginality and Social Change,” Unger (2000) develops the Clara Mayo’s (1982) concept of “positive marginality.” By examining the leaders’ characteristics of Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, Unger (2000) explores whether it is possible for marginalized people to reframe a seemingly negative characteristic and use it as an agent for personal and social change. She argues that “although demographics may predict marginality, consciousness determines whether marginality becomes activism” (2000:163). Positive marginality allows the group to gain the “wisdom to understand social injustices and the energy to challenge them” (2000:177). In this study, I treat Okinawan Kibei Nisei as active agents and explore not only how they have been able to develop their marginal identity over time, but also discuss what consequences their realization of positive marginality brought in terms of social change.

A social constructionist view toward ethnic identity formation is useful in understanding the complex process of how this marginal group constructed their distinct identity. Social constructionists emphasize that identity is constructed through social interaction; it is not an individual attribute, but rather an interactive result of social conditions and social change. In other words, identity is not something that can be manipulated at will. Instead, identity is created, embedded in and influenced by the larger socio-historical context.
Identity is also a matter of how others view the social group. G.H. Mead (1934) states that self-identity depends on external judgments and is frequently mediated by some symbolic relationship between oneself and others. Parents and other groups influence the formation of attitudes, values, and self-conceptions (Maykovich, 1972:9). I examine how Okinawan Kibei Nisei perceive themselves, how they were perceived by others, and how the perceptions have changed over time. It is important to see how their distinct-identity emerged from their interaction with other groups, and how their perception of Kibei Nisei by others has influenced the status and marginality of Okinawan Kibei Nisei within the community.

In 1903, W. E. B. DuBois writes a groundbreaking book *The Souls of Black Folk*. In the chapter entitled “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” he introduces the concept of “double consciousness”: the sense of having to look at oneself through the eyes of others. According to this concept, many people of color are denied what DuBois calls a “true self-consciousness” because the dominant group looks at them and their cultures with contempt. Therefore, members of the group have a divided sense of self; they are allegiant to their family’s and culture’s traditions and look at themselves and their world through the eyes of the dominant culture. To understand a society, we cannot have only one perspective that is central to inform us about that society. To understand its complexities, we need to account for the range of different ways of thinking as well as the ways individuals learn about and relate to the groups to which they belong.

In “Black Feminist Epistemology,” Particia Hill Collins (2002) also emphasizes that it is important to look into the life experiences of marginalized groups as a legitimate basis for understanding the social world. She explains “[b]ecause U.S. Black women
have access to the experiences that accrue to being both Black and female, an alternative epistemonoly used to rearticulate a Black women’s standpoint should reflect the convergence of both sets of experiences” (2002:329). Their experiences have often been obscured by mainstream experiences. However, their marginality allowed us to “enrich our understanding of how subordinate groups create knowledge that fosters both their empowerment and social justice” (2002:330). Sociologists need to capture the voices of subordinate groups so that members of those groups can share their “own partial, situated knowledge” (2002:330) from their own standpoint. Examining Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s experiences of being Kibei Nisei and Okinawans provide an alternative ways of producing and validating knowledge about specific power relations and social inequality that they have experienced both in their ethnic community and in the larger society of Hawaii.

Research questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a distinct Okinawan Kibei Nisei identity separate from the larger collective identity they might share with other Okinawans in Hawaii, Japanese Kibei Nisei, or Okinawans in Okinawa?

2. How has this distinct identity developed over time?

3. What is the nature of their identity today?

In order to have adequate data to answer my research questions, I interviewed eighteen Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii between July 2004 and February 2005. Their life stories are based on their own memories, perceptions, and evaluations of their lives.
prior, during, and after World War II in Okinawa and Hawaii. These three periods encompass their early experiences in Okinawa, their experiences they had upon returning to Hawaii prior to the World War II, their wartime experiences when Japan was the enemy, post-war adjustment when Okinawa itself remained under direct American authority and finally their experiences since the revitalization of the Okinawan ethnic community in Hawaii in the 1980s.

Significance of this study

My hope is that this study addresses the dearth of research on Japanese Americans of Okinawan descent in Hawaii. Today, approximately 20 percent of Japanese descendants in Hawaii are immigrants from Okinawa and descendants of those immigrants (Shiramize, 1998:90). The experience of Okinawan immigrants in Hawaii is significantly different from that of Okinawans anywhere else in the continental United States. Okinawans in Hawaii identify themselves as a distinct ethnic group, Uchinanchu (Okinawans) in the Okinawan dialect, and have maintained an institutionally well-established ethnic community. The literature on the Japanese American experience has included Japanese Americans of Okinawan descent under the term “Japanese” (Arakaki, 2004:246). For many years, differences between the experiences of Uchinanchu and Naichi (mainland Japanese) have not been taken into consideration. Recently, however, many scholars have become aware that Okinawans and other overseas Japanese may be considered as two separate ethnic groups. The most comprehensive study on the history of Okinawan immigrants to Hawaii is a set of oral
histories and a collection of essays that were published in 1981 by the United Okinawa Association and the University of Hawaii Ethnic Studies Oral History Project.

Although data on Issei and Nisei experiences are documented in the historical accounts of Okinawans in Hawaii, little has been written about the sub-group known as Kibei Nisei. Even with the increase in research on the Okinawan community in Hawaii, researchers have rarely studied the Kibei Nisei experiences. The scholars interested in the Kibei Nisei experiences do not necessarily agree on what it is that constitutes a Kibei Nisei, who have generally been described as those who were educated in Japan during their youth. Aside from this broad demographic definition, there has been no clear consensus on what it means to be a Kibei Nisei as a group or Okinawan Kibei Nisei. Documenting the life stories of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii and exploring the historical formation of their distinct identity are valuable because it is the first time that they have been recorded. My thesis will contribute to providing a deeper understanding of an unexamined identity that exists within an identity in the Okinawan ethnic community in Hawaii. While I can fairly represent a group’s through generalizations, my goal is to provide a basic overview of Okinawan Kibei Nisei identity through both common threads and unique aspects of their life experiences.

Although this study’s focus is Okinawan Kibei Nisei, the process by which they constructed their distinct identity according to socio-historical circumstances can be generalized and has relevance to the experiences of other marginalized group. The notion of being a minority within a minority do not constitute an exclusively Okinawan Kibei Nisei phenomenon. Koreans, Filipinos, Chinese, and Vietnamese who came to Hawaii one or two decades after the first wave from their ethnic group were also culturally and
socially marginalized from their communities as ethnic minority sub-groups; they all experienced similar process of identity negotiation. Furthermore, I hope this examination of ethnic identity construction of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii will contribute to studies of other ethnic identity minority groups, not only in the United States but also in Japan as well. Like the study (Yamanaka, 2000) of labor migration of Japanese Brazilians in Japan and their experiences between two homelands, my study may also shed light on long-term trends of immigration and ethnic minority relations in Japan.

Organization of the thesis

Chapter 1 of this thesis begins with historical backgrounds of both Okinawa and the Okinawan community in Hawaii. The socio-historical circumstances in both places greatly influenced Okinawan Kibei Nisei experiences and were quite distinct from other Kibei Nisei and Nisei experiences. I also include the previous literature reviews on Kibei Nisei general. In Chapter 2, I provide a description of the life story approach and the process of my data collection. In Chapter 3, 4, 5, and 6, I address my research findings, which focus on the various facets of Okinawan Kibei Nisei marginality both in Japan and Hawaii. In Chapter 3 specifically, I explore Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s childhood memories of their education, family lives, and poor living circumstances in Okinawa. In Chapter 4, I focus on Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s experiences after they returned to Hawaii. I explore how they adjusted to the new life in Hawaii, what difficulties they faced, and how they overcame the difficulties. In the Chapter 5, I examine their World War II wartime experiences. This chapter includes accounts of the Kibei Nisei’s wartime experiences in Hawaii and in Japan. Stories from both setting reveal that they experienced the additional
polarizing pressures of identity choice when the two homelands they had known to varying degrees became enemies. In particular, I explore their reaction to the advent of war, their lives in the Battle of Okinawa, their participation in the Japanese or American armed services, their participation in the war relief effort in Hawaii, and the ways in which their lives were influenced by the U.S. military occupation after the war. In Chapter 6, I examine how the revitalization of the Okinawan ethnic community in the 1980s affected Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s lives, roles and identities. In Chapter 7, I summarize their experiences and address my research questions.
CHAPTER 1
LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii, one must look at the historical backgrounds of Okinawans in the homeland and in Hawaii. A review of literature on the experiences of Kibei Nisei will help determine how the experiences of Okinawan Kibei Nisei are similar to and different from those of Kibei Nisei.

Historical background of Okinawa

Okinawa is a southern group of islands located between mainland Japan and Taiwan. Okinawa was once an independent nation called the Ryukyu Kingdom. From 1372 to 1879, it was a tributary state of China. The Ryukyu Kingdom also had a transit trade with neighboring countries in East Asia; the trade “brought unprecedented prosperity to the islands and enriched its cultural heritages” (Arakaki, 1996:13).

However, the Ryukyu Kingdom had to face subordination to both China and Japan after the Satsuma feudal domain from southern Japan invaded and took control of the islands in 1609. The Tokugawa rulers did not completely integrate Ryukyu Kingdom into Satsuma, since Satsuma and Tokugawa feudal domains needed access to Okinawa’s trade with China. Satsuma controlled Okinawa’s foreign policy but “left the king in office to create a façade of normalcy for China” (Kaneshiro, 2002:78). To access Chinese goods, Okinawans were made to portray themselves as Chinese during the periodic daimyo (great lord) visit to Edo to demonstrate Satsuma’s domination over “Chinese”
subjects. By paying regular tribute to both China and Japan, the Ryukyu Kingdom kept their status as an independent nation (Higa, 2003:185).

Okinawa’s subordination to China came to an end in 1871, when 54 shipwrecked Okinawans were killed by Taiwan “aborigines.” When China denied responsibility for the accident, Japan sent out an expedition to conquer Taiwan in 1879. Not only did China agree to indemnify Japan for the murdered Ryukyuans, it also recognized Japan’s right to protect its own citizens. Following this incident, Tokyo ordered Ryukyu to cut its tribute relations with China. Okinawan sovereignty came to an end in 1872, when the newly formed Meiji government ordered the Ryukyu dynasty to be replaced by Okinawa prefecture in 1879 (Higa, 2003:185).

After Japan’s annexation of Okinawa in 1879, Okinawa’s people were subject to policies of forced assimilation, which resulted in various forms of discrimination. The most devastating effect of the Japanese control of Okinawa was the imposition of cultural assimilation upon the Okinawan people. From 1879 to 1895, a “Japanization” process was imposed almost entirely by mainland administrators and educators, in order to “modernize” Okinawa (Roberson, 1999:139). This policy included the discouragement of Okinawan cultural practices, for example, suppression of traditional tattooing of women’s hands, yuta (spiritual healers), local nuru (priestesses) as well as censorship of kumi-odori (traditional dance dramas) (Raberson, 1999:139).

From the late 1910s until the war, in the Okinawan public school system, the usage of “standard” Japanese language was enforced as part of the assimilation campaign. The Okinawan language was banned in the schools and stigmatized in the larger society. School children who even said one word of the Okinawan language were
punished by being forced to hang a wooden board around their necks with *Hougen Fuda* (dialect board). In addition to this linguistic assimilation program, the policy of *kominka*, or “emperor worship” was adopted after 1937 to ensure school children’s loyalty to the Emperor and their sacrifice for the Japanese war efforts (Ching, 2001:95). Education became an essential basis for assimilation of the Okinawan people as “Japanese”; and the program lasted until Japan’s defeat in 1945. Okinawan people themselves had been trying hard to become Japanese since the annexation (Ishihara, 2004:237). Okinawa’s socio-economic status was considered very low compared to other parts of Japan. In order to have a better life and to avoid discrimination and hardship, Okinawan people also encouraged themselves to learn the national language and culture.

During the Pacific War, Okinawa became the bloodiest battleground. On March 23rd 1945, U.S. Forces landed on the Kerama Islands, marking the beginning of the Battle of Okinawa. The Japanese military considered Okinawa as the last line of defense before the anticipated American invasion of the main Japanese islands (Ishihara, 1992:263-265). The Battle of Okinawa, often referred to as the “Typhoon of Steel” by local survivors forced Okinawan civilians to become involved. Many local residents were recruited and mobilized by the Japanese Army. As a result, casualties among civilians exceeded the combined number of casualties of both Japanese and U.S. troops. One of the tragic characteristics of the Battle of Okinawa was many local inhabitants were murdered by the Japanese forces. The Japanese military had considered Okinawans as suspicious and unreliable, believing that they were unable to speak Japanese, and were inadequately loyal to the emperor (Ishihara, 1992:253-255).
On June 23rd 1945, Okinawa fell into the hands of the U.S. Armed Forces, marking the end of Battle of Okinawa. On August 15th 1945 Japan surrendered to the United States, leading to the end of conflict in the Pacific. As part of the Treaty of Peace in San Francisco signed with the United States, Japan agreed to hand over the islands of Okinawa to the United States to be used for the U.S. military occupation. In return the United States helped Japan to rebuild its economy. This was the beginning of the U.S. occupation of Okinawa. Okinawa remained under United States control for twenty-seven years until reversion to Japan in 1972. U.S. occupation generated considerable anti-America sentiments, (Arasaki 1995:225-229), which also contributed to pro-Japanese sentiments. Many Okinawan activists raised their voice to end U.S. rule, by strengthening Okinawans’ loyalty to Japan. Even after the reversion in 1972, Okinawa is still dominated by the continuing presence of the U.S. military bases.

The many shifts in power and the restrictions and requirements that accompanied them gave Okinawans a meta-awareness that is called “dual identity.” The 2002 survey conducted by the Asahi News paper demonstrated that 41.8 percent of people in Okinawa express their identity as both Okinawan and Japanese, while 27.5 percent express an exclusive Okinawan identity and 28.8 percent express an exclusive Japanese one (Asahi Newspaper). Even though psychological distance between Okinawa and the mainland has been considerably shortened since the reversion, a sense of difference still exists even among the young generation.

Okinawan immigrant experiences in Hawaii
After the downfall of the Ryukyu dynasty, Okinawa fell into poverty. Leaders, including Kyouzo Toyama, were seriously concerned about the future of the even increasing population, and felt that there was no other way to save the Okinawan people from misery. He went to the governor of Okinawa to persuade him to issue passports for immigration. The governor did not approve because he believed that Okinawans could not speak Japanese and that their customs and life styles were different from those of other Japanese. The governor felt that Okinawans abroad would disgrace Japan (Takayesu, 1981:73). However, Toyama’s persistent requests finally caused the governor to agree to issue passports. The first 26 Okinawan immigrants arrived in Honolulu in 1900. Following this, many Okinawans left their homeland and went overseas to places such as Peru, Philippine and Brazil, with the intention of staying temporarily and returning to Okinawa with a secure financial base. Hawaii was one of the most desirable destinations. The ratio of Okinawan immigrants to Hawaii was the highest being with thirty-five percent of the total number of Japanese immigrated to Hawaii in 1912 (Ishikawa, 1981:82). The Okinawans represented the last large prefecture based wave of Japanese immigrants to come to Hawaii and were the fourth largest prefectual group in Hawaii (Kimura, 1988:53).

The first generation of immigrants from Okinawa faced a two problems of adjusting to American culture and to mainland Japanese or Naichi (mainland Japanese) culture (Toyama and Ikeda 1981; Kimura 1981). Okinawans in Hawaii faced prejudice and discrimination as “[a] minority group within the Japanese community” because the mainland Japanese considered Okinawans as “non-pure” Japanese (Toyama and Ikeda, 1981). Exposed to racism in their new home, Okinawans denied their identities as
Okinawan and felt that “becoming Japanese” was the only way to move ahead (Kaneshiro, 2002:81). Many suppressed their native language and cultural practices; sometimes they even “Japanized” their last names in Hawaii (Kaneshiro, 2002:81).

At the same time, the Naichi’s discriminatory treatment helped the Okinawans created a strong sense of unity among themselves. They formed “locality clubs” in order to facilitate mutual aid among people from the same areas in Okinawa (Kimura, 1981:285). Although the first locality club was organized in 1908, most of them were formed in the 1920s and 1930s when Okinawan immigrants began to seek urban jobs (Kimura, 1981:285; Arakaki, 2002:135). Locality club activities included helping out at funerals of club members, holding New Year’s parties in honor of the elder members as well as sponsoring summer picnics and sports games. However, it was 1951 when a pan-Okinawan organization called the Hawaii Okinawajin Rengokai (United Okinawan Association of Hawaii) was established (UUNet, 1989:50).

The relationship between Okinawans and mainland Japanese began to shift when World War II broke out in 1941. Even though very few Japanese in Hawaii were sent to internment camps, Japanese institutions such as locality clubs were closed and leaders in the Japanese community were interned. This wartime emergency situation affected the power dynamics of the Japanese community in the larger society. It also worked to destroy many of the old social barriers and discrimination which Okinawans had confronted (Sakihara, 1981:114). During the war, mainland Japanese and Okinawans were both seen as “targets” and both experienced discrimination by other races. This harsh racial discrimination toward Japanese and their descendents led many Issei and Nisei to abandon their Japanese pride and prove their loyalty to the United States. In May
of 1942, “Be loyal to America” movements was began among the Japanese on Oahu (Ethnic Studies Oral History Project, 1981:567). Many second-generation Okinawans in Hawaii also served in the American Armed Forces. As Ueunen (1989:45) pointed out, their “shared experience” of being discriminated and working together during the war helped to build a bridge between Okinawans and mainland Japanese.

The Naichi’s discriminatory practices against Okinawans in Hawaii became less in the years following World War II. William Lebra (1980:124) points to the war as the main impetus for the rise of Okinawan pride and affluence. Their military service gave Okinawans the opportunity to receive higher educations. They began to emerge as prominent figures in economic, political, educational, and professional fields. The rise of their economic status was a significant factor in their gaining a new sense of pride.

Another factor that helped to bring pride among Okinawans in Hawaii included relief efforts to rehabilitate war-torn Okinawa. Soon after World War II, the first to extend their help to defeated Japan were Okinawans in Hawaii (Wakukaka: 1981:241). The United Okinawan Association of Hawaii (UOA) was formed in 1951 with 14 clubs as charter members to coordinate relief efforts to Okinawa after its devastation during the Battle of Okinawa. With donations from Okinawans in Hawaii, the members sent relief goods to Okinawa, such as pigs, goats, clothing, books, school supplies, sewing machines, mimeograph supplies, lanterns, eye glasses, shoes, and candies. The establishment of a university in Okinawa, the sponsoring of students to study in the U.S., and Okinawa’s economic self-rehabilitation were also among the relief programs (Wakukaka:1981:241). The war relief effort created a strong sense of Okinawan identity among Okinawans who participated.
Even after independence was restored to Japan in 1952, Okinawa continued to be occupied by the U.S. for twenty-seven years. Many Okinawans in Hawaii saw no need for reversion and believed that it would be in their best interest to become a U.S. territory (Sakihara, 1981:117) because of the economic opportunities and the higher status that would accompany with such an arrangement. Other Okinawans in Hawaii believed that their homeland should become an independent nation. Since Okinawans in Hawaii were placed in a difficult situation as second class Japanese, they did not understand why Okinawans in Okinawa wanted Okinawa to revert to Japan.

During the U.S. occupation of Okinawa, many leaders in the Okinawan community in Hawaii found themselves in limelight as a result of the continued U.S. occupation of Okinawa. Under the U.S. and Ryukyus Goodwill Mission Program, more than 45 leaders in UOA were invited by the U.S. Army to Okinawa each year from 1951 to the year of Okinawa’s reversion in 1972. During the paid trip to Okinawa, they were given V.I.P. treatment and their words and actions were reported by the press (Sakihara, 1981:120). In addition, more than 1,000 young students from Okinawa were given financial support to study in Hawaii (Okano, 2003:145).

On May 14, 1972, the United Japanese Society of Hawaii and the United Okinawan Association held a celeberation commemorating Okinawa’s reversion to Japan in a grand banquet hall of the Hilton Hotel. (May 15 by Japan time on the day of the reversion). More than 1,200 people participated (Higa, 1981:37).

After this dramatic step, the UOA, which was formed in 1951, began to emphasize their cultural heritage even more. In 1971, one year before the reversion, the UOA began to hold its first annual Okinawan Festival on Oahfu in Hawaii. Following the
80th anniversary of Okinawan immigration to Hawaii in 1980, Okinawans begun to reclaim their ethnic identity as Uchinanchu or Okinawans. More actively engaged in their community, Okinawans in Hawaii have experienced “a resurgence of pride in their identity” (Kaneshiro, 2002:75), indicated in part by the increased participation in locality clubs (Kaneshiro, 2002:75, Shiramizu, 1998). Coinciding with the 90th anniversary of Okinawan immigration to Hawaii in 1990, they established their own cultural center in Waipahu on the island of Oahu. UOA changed its name to Hawaii United Okinawa Association in 1995. Today it functions as a subunit of the Hawaii Nikkei (Japanese), on the same level as the Hiroshima Prefectural Association. Kinjo Hiroyuki’s comparison of the 1973 and 2002 surveys on Okinawan identity in Hawaii shows that in 1973, fifty-eight percent of those surveyed were proud of being Okinawan in contrast to seventy-eight in 2002 (Kinjo, 2004:192).

Shiramizu (1998) pointed out four main reasons for this revitalization since the 1980s. He refers to the Okinawan ethnic community in Hawaii in 1980s as kakusei, or awakening since they began to celebrating their ethnic identity. First, Shiramizu argues that as the second generation of Okinawans decreased in number in the 1980s, they tried to remember the first Okinawan immigrants' legacy of suffering and handed down the spirit of humility and pride to the next generation. Second, the social context of the 1960s and 1970s, in which “identity politics” were played out in the name of multiculturalism helped to construct their subjectivity among the third and fourth generations of Okinawan (Shiramizu, 1998, Arakaki, 2002:133). Third, Okinawans achieved a high economic status through their success in business as well as through the higher education they received. Fourth, Okinawans in Hawaii had a relationship to their homeland through
cultural and educational exchanges, most of which have been sponsored by the HUOA. It also organized a tour of giving young people of the third and fourth generations the opportunity to see their ancestors’ homeland. Makoto Arakaki (2002) refers to the first tour in 1980 to Okinawa as “a turning point in the history of the Okinawan community in Hawaii” (2002:136). As part of that organization’s celebration of Okinawan immigration to Hawaii, the Sonjinkai (Town and Village Association) of the Okinawa Prefecture and the Okinawa Prefecture City Mayors’ Association invited thirty-five Nisei and Sansei (third generation) to Okinawa (Arakaki, 2002:134). The twelve-day tour included sightseeing, guided visits to the participants’ ancestral villages or town as well as lectures on history, culture, art, economics, and politics (Arakaki, 2002:134). Arakaki (2002:136) writes that upon returning, the participants expressed their appreciation for their experiences. He also writes that “the experience awakened the Sansei to their heritage and instilled a pride in being Uchinanchu” (2002:135). Today, the practice of sending Sansei and Yonsei (fourth generation) on tours is common in the Okinawan community in Hawaii. Relative to the larger Japanese community in Hawaii, Okinawans are known for maintaining stronger ties to their ancestral homeland.

The Kibei Nisei

While there is considerable research on Japanese American experiences, few studies have been done on Kibei Nisei. The only comprehensive work is William T. Masuda’s dissertation (1993), which captures Kibei Nisei experiences on the mainland U.S. with particular attention to Kibei Nisei men. The ways in which socio-economic, geographical, and gender factors have shaped Kibei Nisei have not yet to be addressed.
Yamashita's (1935) study on Nisei in Japan analyzes the trend of Nisei in Hawaii being sent to Japan in the 1920s and 1930s, a movement that was initiated by the Issei parents (Yamashita, 1935:3). He explains that the parents were motivated by educational and economic reasons. While some parents, about 1,000, sent their children to Japan for educational purposes, other, about 40,000 sent their children to reduce the number of mouths they had to feed (kuchiberashi). In the former case, the children were sent in their mid-teens or older and often sent larger cities such as Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoyo.

In the latter case, the children were sent at young age, sometimes before they reached their first birthday to be raised by their extended families in their home region. After building up sufficient financial assets in Hawaii, some families chose to return to Japan. There was also the occasional case of Nisei returning to Japan after the death of one or both parents. It was impossible for an orphan to survive and difficult for a single parent to manage financially (Masuda, 1993:79).

Yamashita (1935:3) shows that a little over 70 percent of the parents who sent their children for educational reasons did so because they wanted their children to maintain their Japanese identity. While Issei parents had become satisfied with their economic status, they felt that their children were losing their Japanese cultural identity. Especially after the Manchurian incident in 1931, Nihon Ryugaku (studying abroad in Japan) became a trend that reached its peak in 1938 and 1939 (Okahata, 1964:250). During this period, Japan was extending its imperial power to its Asian neighbors, which fostered loyalty to Japan among Issei and Nisei both on the continental U.S. and in Hawaii. With economic security in mind, some parents thought that if opportunities were scarce in the United States, the combination of an American and Japanese education
prepare their children for work in Japan, Manchuria, or some Japanese colonies. By the years 1938 and 1939, approximately 2,000 Japanese American students from Hawaii were studying in Japan (Kikuchi, 1995:45).

Interestingly, sending girls to study abroad in Japan was also encouraged. According to Soen Yamashita (1935:19), Issei felt that their daughters were losing Japanese values such as the importance of family. Because Issei parents expected their daughters to fulfill into the Japanese woman model of "ryosai kenbo" (good wife and wise wife). The daughters were sent to schools where they would develop skills in flower arranging, conducting tea ceremonies, sewing, practicing proper etiquette and homemaking. Their educations were also encouraged because women with a Japanese education had higher chances of marrying well in Hawaii (Yamashita, 1935:25). In the 1930s, the value of the yen was weak; it was three times cheaper to send children to Japan than to the mainland U.S., which was another factor that contributed to the high number of children returning home (Suzuki, 2004:203).

In "1930 nendai no Kibei Undou (the 1930s Kibei encouragement movement)," Teruko Kumei (1993) illustrates how the Asian-Exclusion Act in 1924 has affected the Kibei Nisei experiences in Mainland U.S. This race-based discriminatory policies limited Issei' opportunity to own and lease land, to obtain citizenship, and to exercise political power.

Issei wanted Kibei Nisei in Japan to come back from Japan since they were U.S. citizens so they could buy or keep their own land. America-raised Nisei were turning away from farming that Issei wanted to pass on. Since Kibei Nisei were supposed to embody many qualities that the Issei had hoped the Nisei would retain, their return was
encouraged. Several Japanese associations gave passage money to Kibei Nisei in Japan who needed it for returning to the U.S. They also sent a delegation to encourage their return. Associations also made an effort to find jobs for those who returned. On the other hand, there were also negative views toward the trend of Kibei Nisei’s return to the United States because bringing Japan-raised Nisei back to the United States might hinder the Americanization of the second generation of Japanese. In her article, Kumei (1993) writes about how Kibei Nisei on the west coast had to cooperate with Issei and Nisei in order to fight against discrimination. When the Kibei Nisei tried to form the separate social club, Japanese American Citizen League (JACL) criticized the club members for segregating themselves from the larger Japanese American community. JACL thought that a stronger solidarity among Japanese Americans was needed to fight against the anti-Japanese movement on west coast.

Most scholars who have written about Kibei Nisei have agreed that upon returning, Kibei Nisei experienced a marginalized status in their larger society. The term “Kibei Nisei” was sometimes a discriminatory expression, especially when the term was used by other Nisei (Yamashiro, 1994:3). Bradford Smith (1948) explains that

They [the Kibei] came back with manners that were Japanese— with the rather strained and tense sensitivity toward life, the earnestness, the quietness. The girls came back submissive and shy, the boys somewhat arrogant and expecting their superiority as males to be acknowledged. (253: 29)

The Kibei Nisei found themselves with “a dual form of rejection (Takahashi: 1997:74)”; being in a racially subordinate position in the larger society as Japanese Americans, they were also rejected by their Nisei peers. Kibei Nisei formed social groups where they could enjoy their own idiosyncrasies (Smith, 1948:255).
During World War II, the Kibei Nisei were the most mistrusted by American authorities and were subject to suspicions of espionage and sabotage because of their nationalistic Japanese educational background. Because they had “missed” some or all of the Americanizing experience of the United States public school system, Kibei Nisei were presumed to be less acculturated than Nisei who stayed in the U.S. During the period of evacuation and incarceration of Japanese Americans, the majority of the camp residents were Kibei Nisei. The recent arrivals were caught at the very beginning of their readjustment to life in the United States. Fifteen hundred Japanese alien Hawaii residents and American citizens including many Kibei Nisei in Hawaii were placed in internment camps. Some Kibei Nisei in Hawaii interned on Sand Island on Oahu were then sent to the mainland.

On the other hand, Kibei Nisei were also among the first to volunteer for service when the Army opened its ranks to the Nisei. Some Kibei Nisei felt that they needed to show their loyalty to the United States by serving the United States. Naturally those who had lived in Japan were fluent in the Japanese language, and many of the Kibei Nisei provided valuable services to the United States as language instructors, radio monitors, propaganda and psychological warfare specialists as well as military intelligence service interpreters and translators (Hosokawa, 1969:296).

The subtle differences between the pre and post-war Kibei Nisei experiences have not been written about. Those who came before the war are often called Senzen Kibei Nisei (pre-war Kibei Nisei), and those who returned to the United States after the war from 1947 are often called Sengo Kibei Nisei (post-war Kibei Nisei). Pre-war Kibei Nisei have received more attention in previous literature, leaving post-war Kibei virtually
ignored. The two groups are often referred to as "Kibei Nisei" with no acknowledgement of their different life experiences. By looking at the pre and post-war Kibei as two different groups, this study also illustrates the diversity of the Kibei Nisei experiences.

The biggest difference between these two groups is their experiences of World War II. In Japan, post-war Kibei Nisei, especially those who had stayed in the United States for a long period before leaving for Japan, were regarded as foreigners. Those who went to Japan during or after adolescence spoke Japanese with an American accents. Furthermore, their American upbringing made them different in minor, but noticeable ways. When anti-American feeling was particularly high it was not always comfortable for them to remain in Japan. Many thousands of Kibei Nisei including those who came to Japan for educational purposes were caught in Japan when the war broke out in 1941. Many Kibei Nisei in Japan were not allowed to contact their parents in the United States. In such a situation, some used their knowledge of English to aid Japan as radio announcers and translators. Some were drafted into the Japanese Armed Forces. But Japan never really trusted them, for their American ways made them look suspect. Many returned to America after careful screening (Smith, 1948:254). It should be noted that whether Kibei Nisei were in the United States or Japan, they were still treated by both sides with suspicion during the war.
CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Life story method

The primary research technique used in this study is a qualitative approach based on the life story method. Interest in a person’s life experiences achieved prominence in sociology in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s. An early example is the illuminating work by William Isaac Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, titled *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918). However, the dominant trend later favored a quantitative methodology that was supported by positivists such as Talcott Parsons in the 1930s. In 1959, C. Wright Mills criticizes the positivist approach in his work *Sociological Imagination*. He holds that sociologists were largely preoccupied with the notion of social structure and that the structure of society involves both micro-interactions and macro social structures. To understand the range of social realities, he believes that sociologists should examine “private trouble” in the context of the larger social issues. He also emphasizes that sociologists should explore the process of societal change and how individual actions impact a whole society. Introducing the term “sociological imagination,” Mills explains that it is important to “understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals” (1959:5). He argues that the sociological imagination “enables us to grasp history and biography and the relationships between the two within society” (1959:6).
He believes that the most important value of sociology is its potential to enrich and encourage the lives of all human beings.

The life story method examines a life, or a segment of a life, as reported by the individual in question (Bertaux, 1981:7-9). As Titon J. (1980:276) suggests that life story is “a person’s story of his or her life, or of what he or she thinks is a significant part of that life.” Denzin points out that “the life story turns the subject into an author, an author or authoress being one who brings a story into existence” (1989:42). The author has an authority in the text that is given by the conventions that structure the writing or telling of the story. Denzin goes on to say that the authors are only “inscriptions on and of the self or life that is being told about” (1989:42). In other words, the author is present only through his or her words and the conventions he or she uses.

Today, increasing number of social researchers are interested in personal narratives and employed life stories method in order to understand the relationship between individuals and society. In his study of life story research, Cole (2001) explains the importance of looking at the personal narratives.

"Life history inquiry is about gaining insights into the broader human condition by coming to know and understand the experiences of other humans. It is about understanding a situation, profession, condition, or institution through coming to know how individuals walk, talk, live and interact, between life and context (Cole, 2001:11)."

Isabelle Beraux-Wiame points out that examining the ways by which their life stories are told allow us to understand how the storyteller experesses his/her identity.

"To tell one’s life story is not only to talk or to remember; it is an act, an encounter with reality. If this encounter seems to limit itself to an account of the past, it is oriented in fact by the present, in two ways: first it reconstructs the meaning of the past from the present point of
view; second, and more deeply, it gives meaning to the past in order to
give meaning to the present, to the present life of the person. And this
last meaning cannot be the same for all social groups (1981:258).

Kinoshita (2002:19) states that “telling stories is, therefore, a process of
constructing collective identities, revealing both internally-oriented emotional
manifestations and externally-based shared understand of who they are.” The life
story method is important since it allows us to understand how a particular group,
in this case Okinawan Kibei Nisei, expresses their sense of identity and their
perceptions of the world.

I asked each interviewees factual questions such as their dates of birth, when they
were first sent to Okinawa or mainland Japan, where they lived and went to school,
whether they worked there, or conscripted into the Japanese military, when they returned
to Hawaii, whether they participated in Okinawan relief activities after the war, and
whether they belonged to any Okinawan Kibei Nisei club and if so when they joined.
Then I asked more open-ended questions about their Japanese education and their
experiences with their families, Okinawans and mainland Japanese in Japan, and World
War II experiences. I also inquired about their relationships with their parents, siblings
and other Okinawan Nisei and non-Okinawans in Hawaii. I concluded each interview
with questions such as I asked broader reflection questions such as, “Thinking back over
the many different experiences you had in your life, which stand out as ones that altered
you or gave you a sense of belonging?”

In my study, I tried not to lead the respondents, but instead elicit stories through
asking a range of questions that touched upon their Okinawan Kibei Nisei identity.
Asking direct questions such as “Would you say you have a distinctive identity as
Okinawan Kibei Nisei?" might make them feel uncomfortable about explaining the complexities of who they are. They might not be able to respond that they see themselves as having a different identity or even affirming that they consider themselves Okinawan Kibei Nisei. There is also the potential for confusion over terminology in interpretation of "identity." Thus, in this study, I allowed the interviewees to talk freely about their experiences based on their memories and perceptions. This approach was used to insure that interviewees would select the events in their lives that they thought were the most significant parts of their life as discourse. Material about their sense of identity emerged in the course of the interviews.

Since the Okinawan community is relatively small in Hawaii, and since bonds among Uchinanchu are very strong, Okinawan Kibei Nisei not usually willing to talk about difficult relationships or experiences within the community in the past. It seems that they preferred not to describe discrimination they experienced from other Nisei or Okinawans, although it was implied in many conversations. I allowed them to have time to recall long-stored memories; I did not interrupt as they recounted their experiences. This built familiarity and trust between the interviewees and myself.

I was able to locate potential interviewees through the Deigo Club or Gajymaru-kai club, which count many Okinawan Kibei Nisei among their members in Hawaii. There were eighteen Okinawan Kibei Nisei participants in this study, five female and thirteen male, ranging from seventy to ninety-three years old. To ensure confidentiality, participants’ names have been changed.
To better understand the experiences specific to Okinawan Kibei Nisei that contributed to the development of their distinctive identity, I also interviewed Okinawan Nisei and Kibei Nisei who are not Okinawans, using questions appropriate to each group’s history. To explore various views of the Kibei experiences, I asked both Okinawan Nisei and non-Okinawan Kibei Nisei how they perceived of Okinawan Kibei Nisei.

I was able to locate non-Okinawan Kibei Nisei interviewees through the Japanese Cultural Center, where a member of the staff kindly introduced me to one Japanese Kibei Nisei. Through this initial introduction, I was later able to interview four Japanese Kibei Nisei, one female and the other three male. They were born between 1925 and 1929, ranging in age from eighty to eighty-four. I was able to locate four Okinawan Nisei interviewees at various places, such as Okinawan Cultural Center and Gajymaru-kai, as well as at functions organized by the Hawaii United Okinawan Association.

The length of the initial interview session with each interviewee was generally about an hour and a half. The interviews were recorded on mini discs. I allowed a period of at least fifteen minutes to introduce myself and for the interviewees to talk about themselves before discussing any research questions. This warm-up period gave us the opportunity to get to know each other. In the process of conducting this initial dialogic interaction, I often learned more than in a more formal context. The interviews were conducted in a very flexible, open-ended, and conversational style. I allowed the interviewees to stop whenever they wanted to, since long interviews can be tiring for
the elderly. I took notes to preserve the nuances of the information provided and also recorded them on mini discs for accuracy.

My research methods also included participant observation. Through this method, I added more questions as I was conducting field research. Participant observation let me interact closely with Okinawan Kibei Nisei, giving me an opportunity to see the ways in which Okinawan Kibei Nisei negotiated identity according to their environment. Since definitions and usage of the term are flexible and ambiguous, participant observation is useful of the term of Okinawan Kibei Nisei are flexible to see both assertions, and non-assertions of Okinawan Kibei Nisei identity and how interviewees responded to the language environment, cultural environment and social context in which they were situated. It verified the differences between information directly provided through the interviews, and the implied information observed in fieldwork.

I also used both secondary and primary material in my thesis. Included among the secondary sources are theses and dissertations, and previously published books and articles on Okinawan Kibei Nisei and Japanese Kibei Nisei. Primary materials include archives, newspaper articles, newsletters, and Okinawan Kibei Nisei Club memographic magazines, autobiographies written by Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii. I also included letters that Okinawan Kibei Nisei received from the Headquarters of the Ryukyu Command Military Government as well as interviewees' personal photographs.

Process of data collection

I initiated my research at Hawaii Okinawa Center (HOC), a logical place to begin my work because of its prominence in the community and because I began volunteering at
their library in January 2004. The HOC first opened in 1990, coinciding with the 90th anniversary of the first wave of Okinawan migration to Hawaii. Its facilities include offices, banquet and meeting rooms, a library, an exhibit room. My job consisted of organizing exhibits as well as cataloguing books and videos. While volunteering, I met Yoko Asato, who is recognized as "the best information source" on the Okinawa community in Hawaii. Yoko Asato is an Okinawan Kibei Nisei. Due to her bilingual and bicultural skills, she has been actively involved in numerous activities in the Okinawan community in Hawaii. She has also compiled a roster of all the first generation immigrants from Okinawa who came to Hawaii. She served as the volunteer private ambassador of as well as an organizer for the Okinawa festival. In 1990, she also took on the responsibility of Hawaii chairperson for the Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival, which was held in Okinawa. She has gathered all the newspaper articles about Okinawan experiences in Hawaii, and is currently working on organizing those data at the library. Because she has lived in Okinawa and mainland Japan, she has a good knowledge of current affairs in both places.

Yoko is a member of the Deigo and Gajyumaru Clubs, both of which are composed of mostly Okinawan Kibei Nisei. She also belongs to the Kibei Nisei Kouyukai, social club where Japanese Kibei Nisei gather. She introduced me to several other people to interview. I located Okinawan Kibei Nisei at the Deigo Club, the Gajyumaru Club, and the Kibei Nisei Kouyukai in Hawaii as well as at private gatherings, such as birthdays, funerals, and social meetings. These events provided opportunities to engage in participant observation. In order to include a range of voices, I
included among my interviewees not only the most prominent community members but also those who were less publicly assertive.

The identity of the interviewer, his/her race, gender, class, nationality, religion, and status influences interviews (Berger, 2003:38). One’s position in relation to the participants can be an obstacle to accessing information, especially for those studying abroad. Because I was a student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I was able to spend many days interacting with members of the Okinawan community.

Working through “Amae” (dependency) allowed me to gain access to advance my research. Yano explains that “by occupying and asserting a lower status in a hierarchy, one may amaeru (depend upon, act, or be dependent) without compunction” (Yano, 2003:291). Through her fieldwork in Japan, as Nikkeijin (Japanese American) Yano could be seen not as an aggressor, but as a victim of his/her historical circumstances, who sought assistance to ameliorate her situation through amae (dependency) (Yano, 2003:291). In my research, I could amaeru from my position as a younger Okinawan assimilated to mainstream Japanese culture, as well as an female international student from Okinawa far from home.

My first three interviews were with Okinawan Kibei Nisei who work at the Hawaii Okinawa Center. After I told them about the nature and purpose of my study, they were willing to be interviewed. As I interviewed one, I was quickly introduced to others.

I conducted the other fifteen participants through the introduction of Okinawan Kibei Nisei volunteers at the center. I first spoke with each of these potential participants on the telephone. In the initial conversation with each participant, I explained the characteristics of the life story method used for this study. I emphasized that I would like
to listen to their life experiences both in Okinawa and Hawaii. I explained that they would take on the active role of storytelling as I listened; in other words, they would be co-investigators and collaborators with me rather than objects being studied and analyzed.

To provide for a full range of communication, the interviewees were invited to speak in whatever languages they preferred – Japanese, English, Okinawan dialect, or a mixture of all three. All of the interviewees’ quotations provided in this thesis are my translation. Most Okinawan Kibei Nisei are bilingual, but preferred to speak in Japanese. For interviewees not fluent in Japanese, interviews were conducted in English. The meeting was scheduled at the convenience of the interviewees and took place in a mutually agreed upon place, more often a place suggested by the interviewees, so that they would feel relaxed.

I met my interviewees at the YMCA, the East-West Center, bookstores, and at community functions. I met others at coffee shops, home parties, and organized parties. Interviewees frequently called me to set up informal meetings and invited me to social and family gatherings.

Each of the interviews was transcribed from the mini discs. As I read over the interviews, I looked for topics that might need further clarification or explanation as well as for inconsistencies or contradictions. I interviewed most participants more than once. To examine the identity development process, I examined the effect of family’s economical status, the influence of Japanese education in Japan, and the interactions with other Okinawan Kibei Nisei.
CHAPTER 3

PRE-WORLD WAR II: EARLY EXPERIENCES

In this chapter, I explore Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s childhood memories of their family lives, education, and poor living circumstances in Okinawa. For my study, I differentiate between two different groups: one, those who were sent to Okinawa when they were very young because of their families’ economic hardships, and the other, those who were sent to Japan for educational reasons or Nihon Ryugaku (studying abroad in Japan). Some parents sent their younger children back home to Okinawa because they were not able to afford to raise their children in Hawaii due to the high cost of living in Hawaii. Other families could afford to send their children to Japan to pursue their higher education; in most cases, these children left Hawaii in their mid-teens. In this chapter, I treat these two groups as separate and show how their different family economic conditions shaped their experiences. In addition to examining the Okinawan Kibei Nisei experiences, I also compare these experiences to the experiences of both Japanese Kibei Nisei and Hawaii-raised Nisei to get a larger picture of the distinctive Okinawan Kibei Nisei experiences.
Kibei Nisei who were sent in their early age

Fourteen out of eighteen of my interviewees stated that they were sent to Okinawa for economic reasons. Ranging between sixty-nine and ninety-two years old, they were born between 1912 and 1935. Two are female and twelve of them were male. Twelve of these interviewees were born on the island of Oahu, and two were born on the island of Maui. They were sent to Okinawa between the years of 1914 and 1935 as young as six months and as old as ten years old. The period of time that they spent in Okinawa ranged from seven to eighteen years. They returned to Hawaii between the years of 1928 and 1947.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei who were sent to Okinawa because of economic hardship were open about their family’s poverty and low economic status, both of which created an awareness that they were different from those who were sent to Japan specifically to be educated. Akio Maeshiro, who was sent to Okinawa in 1916 at the age of two and lived there for eighteen years, points out that “sending children to Japan for educational reasons is a post-war thing. In our case, it was because our family had many kids. It was common to send them to Japan in those days.” His wording “post-war (II) thing” signifies their distinctive consciousness as a pre-war Kibei Nisei with lower economic status.

The death or illness of one or both parents was a crisis that brought with it economic hardship. Without a spouse, it was hard for the surviving parent to financially support a growing family alone. And with no parents, children had no chance of surviving unless they returned to Okinawa. In some cases, all of the remaining family members went back to Okinawa; in others, only the children were sent back to Okinawa.
and to live with grandparents or other relatives. Yasuko Arakaki was sent to Okinawa in 1921 when she was six years old. After her mother’s death, she, along with her two younger sisters, left Hawaii to live at her uncle’s house in Okinawa. Yasuko was scheduled to enter 1st grade in Hawaii, but after her mother died, she did not enroll and were sent back to Okinawa. She recalls when she left Hawaii to return to Okinawa,

I was accompanied by my uncle on the way to Okinawa. When my mother passed away, I had two sisters, and my youngest sister was only two years old. On the way to Okinawa, we had to stop via Osaka and Nagasaki, and I remember that I had to walk around the cities while carrying very heavy milk for my youngest sister. It took us around ten days to get to Okinawa. As a chojo, an eldest daughter, I had to take care of my sisters.

She explains that she was still too young to remember how sad she felt about her mother’s death. However, since her father decided to stay in Hawaii in order to earn money, she had to take over her mother’s role and take care of her sisters. As she states that this time was “ichiban kurou shita hibi (the most suffering time in her life)” for her.

The poverty that Okinawan Kibei Nisei faced made their experience so different from that of other Kibei Nisei. At the time, Okinawa’s scarcity of food and ever growing population made it one of the poorest areas in Japan. Given the historical context of a mere few decades since Okinawa’s annexation to Japan, their homeland condition contrasted sharply with those of mainland Japanese. A huge number of immigrants left Okinawa and not many could have return to since they could not earn enough. Even if they returned from 1900s to 1920s, they chose not to stay in Okinawa because of the harsh economic environment there. In fact, fewer Okinawan immigrants overseas returned home than Japanese immigrants returned (Yamashita, 1935).
In *Hawaii no Okinawakenjin* [Okinawans in Hawaii], Yuzen Yamazato (1919:308-9) criticizes the practice of sending Hawaii-born children to Okinawa. He states that such a practice would have a negative impact on their ethnic heritage; going back to Okinawa for them meant coming to terms with the difficult social, political and economic situation in Okinawa. If Nisei were sent to Okinawa, they would be disappointed in their Okinawan ethnic roots. Instead, it would be better for the Nisei to spend their energy learning to accommodate their personalities and habits to life in the United States. The author's recommendations also shows that as early at the 1920s there was a trend of sending children back home because of economic hardship. Yamamoto's observation illustrates Okinawa's dire economic situation, and also encouraged first generation of Okinawan immigrants to foster pride in being Okinawan in Hawaii by not sending their children to Okinawa but providing them better circumstances in Hawaii.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei sent to Okinawa were usually accompanied by either a trusted adult or their mothers. In many cases, they were raised by their mothers, grandparents, or relatives in Okinawa. Being separated from their parents was a harsh experience for the younger children to go through. Akio Maeshiro had to live separated from his father for eighteen years.

My parents took us to Okinawa. Only my mother stayed in Okinawa with us and my father decided to go back to Hawaii to earn more. I wanted to go back to Hawaii with my father and I cried and cried. I cried loudly on the bridge to go to the port. But you know, my parents left me on the bridge. I was left alone, crying. I was only two years old. I felt sorry for myself.

When they recall the relationship that they had with their relatives and grandparents in Okinawa, the Okinawan Kibei Nisei often emphasize that even though they were united by blood, they were not immediately made welcome in the beginning.
because of the economic hardships their extended families suffered. Tomie Kaneshiro was sent to Okinawa in 1921 at the age of two accompanied by her mother, who was too sick to remain in Hawaii to work on the plantation. Tomie’s mother took Tomie and her siblings back to Okinawa to live with her father’s brother. Tomie recalls:

My family was very poor. My mother got sick in Hawaii. While I and other two sisters were sent to Okinawa with my mother, my father decided to stay in Hawaii hoping that he would be able to go back to Okinawa to live with us eventually. My father could not come back to Okinawa, moreover he did not send any money to us in Okinawa. I was the grandchild, so I was treated okay by my grandparents in Okinawa, however, my mother was always scolded by my grandparents because she brought her children without any money to support them. When my grandfather got drunk, he shouted at my mother saying “get out of the house.” Once my mother took us and tried to leave the grandparents’ house taking us to look for another place to stay, but all the relatives rejected us.

Families who returned to Okinawa from Hawaii after gaining financial security as plantation laborers were given a very positive status. *Hawaii-gaeri* (returning from Hawaii) families began to build tile-roofed houses, which were rare in the rural villages or bought farmland. These visible signs of success helped create a very positive image of Okinawan immigrants from Hawaii. They were considered rich people and sometimes Hawaii-born Nisei were referred to as “playboys.” However, this was not always the case for the Kibei Nisei who were sent back to Okinawa because of the economic hardship that their parents had in Hawaii.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei were aware of being outsiders in their own families, motivating them to work hard to be integrate themselves. Mamoru Takamine’s life is a tragic example of this. Mamoru’s father worked as a fisherman in Hawaii, and his mother worked on plantations. When his mother got sick and could not work anymore, his father decided to send Mamoru, his older brother and mother to Okinawa. Sooner after he
arrived in Okinawa, his mother passed away. In Okinawa, Mamoru’s brother, the first son, was treated well by their relatives, while Mamoru was “treated like a servant.”

The first thing I had to do when I woke up in the early morning was to carry water, then cook potatoes. After that, I had to deliver newspapers before I went to school. I worked a lot, and I got so hungry. Once I was asked to cook potatoes for my aunts’ daughter. I put extra potato in the oven so that I could eat without being noticed. But lots of smoke came out of the oven and it took longer for them to be done. So my uncle noticed my misbehavior. My uncle got so mad at me. He put a heated stick into my mouth. My mouth was burnt and I could not eat anything for days.

Mamoru explained that, “even though my aunt was a barber, my hair was never taken care of and I was a very ragged boy.” One day, his aunt kindly cut his hair, but his uncle was not happy about it and scolded her. Aware of the uncle’s cruel treatment, Mamoru’s other relatives often suggested that Mamoru return to Hawaii. Even though he did not have any memories of living there, it became the only place that he could dream of, a place where he can escape from his harsh reality. Mamoru asked his father in Hawaii to take him back to Hawaii. However, according to Mamoru, his father did not listen to his child’s desire. He described his father as “not Oyafukou (no appreciation of parents) but “Kodomo fukou” (no appreciation of children).” He just had to bear the situation and had to work hard to survive. In 1939, he finally returned to Hawaii with the help of his extended family in Hawaii.

Generally, these young children had an easy time adjusting to Okinawan culture partly because they were not conscious of having been born in Hawaii. In fact, they soon perceived Hawaii as a far-off, alien place. The Issei generation used to tell stories about plantation life in Hawaii, but their children had trouble imagining such a place. Toru Adaniya, who was sent to Okinawa in 1935 when he was still six months old, recalls,
My mother always used to say, when she got something that kinda good, she said "oh, Hawaii-mitai (like Hawaii)" But for us, I could not say that because I don’t remember Hawaii. Once in a while, my uncles also used to talk about Hawaii but since I was small I did not know about it.

Even though the Okinawan Kibei Nisei did not feel emotionally attached to it, they knew Hawaii as being economically more developed.

The interviewees’ stories of their life in Okinawa are often told in contrast to their more developed life in Hawaii. Yasuko Arakaki was sent to Okinawa in 1921 after spending her first six years in Hawaii. She recalls that she told her friends in Okinawa about how good it was to live in Hawaii. Since she was in Hawaii until she was six, she understood the huge economic gap between Okinawa and Hawaii. She recalls,

I remember when I was in Hawaii before I went to Okinawa, our family had a dog. Because our dog house was located far away from our house, we had to bring food for our dog. I remember we rode a horse to go there to feed our dog. When I went to Okinawa, I explained to people in Okinawa that in Hawaii there is even food for dog, and they were so envious about living in Hawaii.

Yasuko also explains that when she came back to Hawaii in 1928 at the age of thirteen, everyone was so worried about her because she was much smaller than the average girl of the same age, and they believed that it was because she grew up in Okinawa without enough food to eat. She recalls,

In Okinawa, I had to work very hard after school. I had to sell goza mats and it was very heavy and my shoulders got hurt every time when I went to sell them. Since I was so short, it was hard for me to go up to the hill. But I was in pretty good shape. I think that eating potatoes was good for my health. But when I came back to Hawaii, my relatives in Hawaii got so worried. They looked at me with sympathy saying “akisamiyo (oh, my god).” When I first saw my relatives in Hawaii upon returning, it was not like a welcoming things, it was more like a funeral. Everybody was looking at me so hard and saying Akisamiyo Akisaomyo. I ate only potatoes and miso soup in Okinawa. That’s all we
had in Okinawa. We could eat rice only special occasions. People in Hawaii thought I was short because I grew up in Okinawa.

Her comment demonstrates that Okinawans in Hawaii understood the economic hardships of Okinawa. She also explains that,

There are some Kibei who refused to eat butter since they were not familiar with it in Japan. But in my case, I could eat everything. The life in Hawaii was much better than in Okinawa, so I could not refuse anything. I appreciate all the food here.

Her words indicate the harsh life she led in Okinawa as well as her appreciation for life in Hawaii. Her comments about other Kibei Nisei's responses show an example of different experiences based on their economic status.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei frequently highlighted Okinawans' hard work and wisdom in dealing with poverty. Toru Adaniya talked about how he felt when he returned to Hawaii in 1947 after spending twelve years in Okinawa.

Economic differences, even at my age, I recognized that. You want to know what the first thing that I enjoyed when I came here was when they gave me ice cream. That was the first time I tasted it. We did not have icecream in Okinawa. No such thing. Another thing is that we did not even have a refrigerator those days in Okinawa. Do you know how we preserved the meat?...They used to use salt. We put meat in kame (vase), what they called...we put meat in Kame with lots of salt...That's how they used to preserved it. Us guys were poor family. For special occasions like New Year, my mother picked up the meat and cooked them for us but not that often. Even the rice, when we don’t have enough to go around for everyday, they used to chop potato mixed with rice and cook so that everyone got chance to eat. Eating pure rice was luxury. When I came to America, you get everything you want to, rice, meat, and all the meat were found in fridges. But the first thing that I enjoyed was ice cream because I had never tasted it. I recall that now.

Despite the comfort and plenty they experienced in Hawaii, almost all of the Okinawan Kibei Nisei I interviewed talked about missing Okinawan culture. One person said, "I kinda missed Okinawan things. Like New Year time, we go from relatives to
relatives. We did Sumo with all the kids in my village.” They looked back on the
difficulties that they had in Okinawa and contrasted it with the life in Hawaii. For the
elderly Okinawan Kibei Nisei, the representation of “those days in Okinawa” are not just
a description of what they experienced back then, but also of what they lost. Stories of
their memories of their childhood in Okinawa often brought out “emotional spurts of
nostalgia and sentimentalism” (Kinoshita, 2002:18).

In their references to the dire poverty and their relationships with extended family
in Okinawa, they often evaluated their unique experience of living there as something
that continues to give them strength to manage and overcome difficulties in life. Yasuko
Arakaki believes that the hardship of adjusting to a new life in Hawaii and building
relationships with family from whom she had been separated from a long time, was not as
hard as what she experienced in Okinawa. She says that “because I had the most difficult
time in my life in Okinawa,” she felt that she could do everything afterward. The
following words from Toru Adaniya also send the same message.

See, in a way, I feel I am very fortunate to have lived in both countries
in different situations. Because in Okinawa, when I really think about it
today, you know, as a child who grew up over there. Compared to over
here life, it is really “third-world-country” life. You know, sanitation
was so bad... You guys still young, you never understand it. All the
third world life styles that I lived in, compared to life in Hawaii. I feel
that we all have taken it for granted so much. I tend to tell my kids,
“hey, you guys, in those days, we did not have this and that.” You know
my kids’ comments, huh? They say, “those are your days, dad.” In
certain way, I feel that I am really conservative because of the
experiences I had in Okinawa.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s Japanese education in Okinawa distinguished them from
Hawaii-raised Nisei peers. Okinawan Kibei Nisei were educated in Okinawa in the 1920s
and 1930s, when the goal of cultural assimilation policies was to transform Okinawans
into Japanese subjects. Cultural assimilation programs imposed at school increased their consciousness of being different from Hawaii-raised Okinawans and Japanese. The experience of linguistic assimilation policies greatly influenced their speech, which became an important trait distinguish themselves from Hawaii-raised Nisei.

When the Okinawan Kibei Nisei I interviewed recall school life in Okinawa, most mention the *Hougen-fuda* (dialect disgrace tag) policy to describe their experiences at school in Okinawa, where *hogen-fuda* were made for every classroom. Students who spoke in Okinawan dialect had to wear it around their necks. Teacher handed over the tag to other students who spoke in Okinawan dialect. This method of language enforcement suppressed Okinawan culture and dialects and made Okinawans ashamed of their roots. The notorious *hogen-fuda* continued to be used in Okinawan schools even after the war until the mid 1960s (Arasaki, 2000:71).

Okinawan Kibei Nisei explain that they had to follow the policy as one of the strict school rules without question. They were too young to be aware of *hougen-fuda* as representative of the government assimilation policies. However, during the interviews, when reflecting on their educational experiences, they emphasize the institutional discrimination against Okinawans. In telling stories of the linguistic assimilation policy, they emphasize the importance of maintaining the Okinawan dialect. Toru Adaniya, who were sent to Okinawa when he was at six months old, states,

> They (teachers) asked us to speak “Japanese.” No *Hougen* [dialect]. They must have come from Japanese government. They made sure that Okinawans were more Japanese-oriented. That’s why when I visited Okinawa a couple years ago, I found out that younger generation does not speak *Hougen*. I was kinda sad because you are losing Okinawan culture. So I encouraged the government to revive it. You just cannot lose Okinawan culture. It’s just like Hawaiian. It is something that you should not just forget about.
Even though the Okinawan dialect was prohibited in schools, Okinawan Kibei Nisei were able to learn it from families and friends at home. Tomie Kaneshiro explained that institutional assimilation did not control the full use of Okinawan dialect on the island.

As I recall now, we spoke Okinawan dialect all the time. Only at school, we could not. I had a very difficult time speaking only standard Japanese at school. Sometime I could not express hundred percent what I wanted to say. Our school textbooks were written in the standard Japanese, so we had to learn and spoke the standard Japanese. But when I came back to my house, I spoke Okinawan dialect with my family. At school, if I spoke a single word of Okinawan dialect, and if somebody caught me, I had to do all the clean up the class-room...I always wondered why the people of Okinawa could not speak their own language.

For the Okinawan Kibei Nisei who spent their youth in Okinawa, Uchinaguchi, or the Okinawan dialect, was their first language. When they returned to Hawaii, they had very few peers with whom to speak their first language. As Ishihara (2004:152) points out in “Language Transformation of Okinawan Americans,” that because Okinawans faced discrimination from other Japanese in Hawaii, they wanted their children to speak Japanese in order to live successfully in the large Japanese community. The first generation of Okinawa, therefore, did not talk to their children in the Okinawan dialect. They did not feel obligated to teach the Okinawan dialect. As a result, many Nisei lost their native tongue.

Whenever Okinawan Kibei Nisei met someone who spoke Uchinaguchi, they became fast friends. Akio Maeshiro, who was sent to Okinawa in 1916 for eighteen years, states that “speaking Uchinaguchi is still the language that I feel comfortable the most speaking with, and Japanese second, and English last. I still go to adult school to
learn English." He also recalls the first feeling that he had toward Okinawans in Hawaii when he returned to Hawaii in 1934. He states, "[W]hen I returned to Hawaii, I often wondered why Okinawans in Hawaii did not speak the Okinawan dialect. They spoke like the Naichi people in Hawaii." Clearly, being able to speak the Okinawan dialect is one of the distinctive traits of the Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii's Okinawan community.

On the other hand, some Okinawan Kibei Nisei interpret their experiences of linguistic assimilation as something that later influenced their status in positive way. Tomie Kaneshiro, who spent fifteen years in Okinawa, also believes that enforcement of the standard Japanese language made her very sensitive about language. She explains,

In a way, I was lucky to receive this strict Japanese language enforcement. At that time, I always wondered why Okinawan people cannot use their own dialects but now I think it was a good way of learning the proper Japanese. But it was very hard. When I went to Osaka to work, I was very annoyed with the fact that I did not understand what other workers were saying. One lady came up to me, "Chourou-san ha shirahanka? [did you see Chourou around?]" I could not understand what she was saying. Then she told me "konoko ha akan kotoba wo shirahanaga. Gakkou ikihattaka? [this little girl doesn’t understand my language. I wonder if she went to school or not?]" I was almost about to cry. Then another lady said, "Now Okinawan kids also go to school. To be honest with you, your Japanese is not proper, either." I thought what the lady was speaking was the standard Japanese but it was not. Workers in Osaka were from everywhere. And their Japanese had very strong regional accents. This event made me realize that not only Okinawans but also other Japanese do not speak the standard Japanese.

After this incident, she understood the importance of speaking standard Japanese. Even though she knew that the language enforcement policy was discriminatory, she knows that her education gave her the opportunity to learn Japanese more proficiently.
than some mainland Japanese in Japan and Hawaii-raised Nisei. Other Okinawan Kibei
Nisei feel the same way. Tomie further explains,

I think Okinawan people are more aware of the importance of speaking
the standard Japanese than Naichi people. I think people from
Hiroshima, Kumamoto and Kagoshima speak rough Japanese. Since I
came to Hawaii, I was more aware of their rough Japanese. At the tuna
company in Hawaii where I used to work, there were many people from
Hiroshima and Kagoshima. These Issei looked down on workers from
Okinawa looking at the tattoos on their hands. They purposely teased
Okinawans by giving extra work. And they often said to the Okinawan
workers, “Why don’t they understand Japanese?” Then, I could come
up to them and said to them that “You know because you are not
speaking the standard Japanese. Even though you are younger than
them, why can’t you speak the standard Japanese?” And I continued to
explain that Okinawan can read better than Naichi do. For example,
while Naichi can only read it as Miyashiro, Okinawans can read it as
Miyashiro, Miyagusuku and Miyagi. After I told them, they looked at
me with their eyes wide open. Then they asked me, “You do not sound
like Okinawan. You are not Okinawan, where are you from?” Then I
said proudly to them, I am Okinawan! That’s how I interact with Naichi
people after I came back to Hawaii.

Issei saw that Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s Japanese education in Okinawa was
valuable. In Hawaii, having their children receive Japanese education was the desire of
many Issei parents. Okinawan immigrant parents were especially active in their
children’s education; in fact, they sent their children to Japanese schools in Hawaii,
which were available even on plantations. Attending Japanese school for a few hours
after regular public school was not enough for Nisei to become fluent with the standard
Japanese that school taught. Thus, they became more familiar with pidgin style Japanese
and English. The large majority of older Japanese immigrants spoke the dialects from
their villages and towns, while the Hawaii-born children used pidgin Japanese (Kimura,
1988:191). Ironically, Okinawan Kibei Nisei were more fluent in Japanese than most
other Hawaii Nisei. With the ability to speak standard Japanese, they were more immune
to discrimination perpetuated against other Okinawans in Hawaii, because not many Okinawans in Hawaii could speak standard Japanese.

Kibei Nisei who went to Japan for their education

Among my interviewees, only four of the post-war Okinawan Kibei Nisei were sent to Okinawa to be educated there. They were born between the years of 1924 and 1926. They were sent to Japan between the ages of ten and seventeen, between the years of 1935 and 1941. The one male, Ryuji Nakamura, went to Okinawa, the three females went to mainland Japan. Ryuji was sent to Okinawa for his education in 1935 at age ten. He stayed with his relatives for twelve years. Hideko Yabiku left for Okinawa in 1937 at the age of twelve and went to high school in Okinawa before going to Kyoto for higher education. She stayed in Japan for ten years. Michiko Komine lived in Okinawa for a year and then in 1938 at age twelve, she went to Tokyo. She also stayed in Japan for ten years. Yoko Asato went to Tokyo for her education in 1941 when she was seventeen. She stayed there for six years. All of them planned to study in Japan for a few years; however, the outbreak of World War II extended their stay. U.S. post-war policy did not allow them to return to the United States until 1947.

These young people studied in Japan because a Japanese education brought status in Japanese community in Hawaii (Kikuchi, 1995:44). Those who studied in the then-popular Waseda, Doshisha, and Meiji Universities did get better jobs than the graduates of the University of Hawaii (Kikuchi, 1995:44). Okinawan Kibei Nisei were also encouraged by their parents and teachers to receive an education in Japan, and they were also fascinated by the experiences and attitudes of other Nisei who had been to Japan.
Ryuji Nakamura, who was sent to Okinawa when he was ten, recalls that “[i]n those days, smart kids in Japanese schools in Hawaii were often encouraged to study in Japan.” Ryuji explains his reason for going to Japan,

Every year, the Japanese Navy came to Hawaii and I often heard stories about Japan from my parents. The biggest reason why I wanted to go to Japan was that I wanted to be like my cousins. My cousins went to school in Japan. You know, Keio University and Waseda University, good schools, you know. When they came back to Hawaii for vacation, you know they came to my house in beautiful school uniforms. I wanted to be like them.

Japanese school uniforms symbolized the achievement of a Japanese education in Japan. When Okinawan Kibei Nisei talk about their reasons for receiving an education in Japan, they often point out their akogare (longing) and interest in “Japanese” language and culture rather than in Okinawan language and culture.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei who went to Japan specifically to obtain Japanese education explain that their families were strongly oriented towards Japanese cultural practices, an interest influenced their own affinity for Japanese culture and language over Okinawan culture and language. Hideko Yabiku, who went to Japan when she was twelve years old, explains that her family was strongly oriented toward Japanese cultural practices. At home, her parents used to talk to her in Japanese, not Uchinaguchi, and since her mother did not understand English, she spoke in Japanese. Hideko Yabiku explains her reason for going to mainland Japan.

Basically, it was for educational reasons. My parents sent all their kids to Okinawa to have a Japanese education. To let his kids graduate from school in Japan was my father’s dream. My father suggested that if I wanted to learn Japanese, it would be better to go to school on the mainland.
The Nisei chose to go to mainland Japan because there were no colleges and universities in Okinawa prior to World War II.

Kaneshiro (2002:81) explains that before the war, many Okinawans in Hawaii saw that denying their Okinawan identity and becoming Japanese Americans was really the only way of getting ahead in Hawaii. Okinawans in Hawaii felt that same way. Receiving a Japanese education in Japan also became a source of prestige in the Okinawan community.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei who were sent to Okinawa specifically to be educated had different experiences from those who were sent to Okinawa for economic reasons. Those who went to Okinawa in their mid-teens had to expend more effort to adjust to life in Japan and were more conscious of being Hawaii-born Nisei. Since they had spent several years in Hawaii before they left for Okinawa, they experienced the huge difference in standards of living between Okinawa and Hawaii. As Ryuji Nakamura recalls,

The one thing that I could not stand was toilet in Okinawa. You know in those days, people in Okinawa kept pigs at home and they used the bathroom next to the room in which the pigs were kept so that pigs can eat our excrement. I could not use the bathroom in Okinawa. I just couldn’t. So I had to go to the public restroom in the newly built train station. That was the only flush toilet restroom that I could find. So every morning I wake up early in order to use the flush toilet.

Ryuji was disappointed upon his arrival in Okinawa because what he dreamed of Japan while he was in Hawaii was very different from what I saw in Okinawa. He recalls,

Before I came to Japan, I had very high expectation about Japan. In Okinawa, I thought I could see many Japanese Navy personnel’s in uptight uniform. I used to see them in Hawaii and I remembered the Japanese Navy coming to Hawaii was from Sasebo. You know, when I arrived in Okinawa, the first thing I asked my uncle, where is Sasebo. Then, I found out Sasebo is not in Okinawa but mainland Japan.
When Okinawan Kibei Nisei talked about the adjustment to life in Okinawa, they spoke about being perceived as different. Their Hawaii-born Nisei characteristic was more prominent than those who were sent to Okinawa at earlier ages. The biggest difference was language. When the teenaged Okinawan Kibei Nisei first arrived in Okinawa, they could not speak Japanese or Uchinaguchi very well. Their clothes and hairstyles distinguished them from the native Okinawans. While Okinawan Kibei Nisei boys tended to have longer hair, Okinawan boys had their heads shaved. While Okinawan Kibei Nisei wore the western clothes that they brought from Hawaii, local Okinawans still wore kimonos. The schools where they interacted with others were the main influences that created the perception of themselves as being different from others. Ryuji Nakamura recalls,

I was ten years old when I went to Okinawa. It was right before I became a 5th grader, but I was put in the third grade. I was not happy about this. I cried. My classmates teased me about my long hair. And they would pull it all the time. You know, in those days, Japan kids had bouze atama (butch haircut). Once they teased me and I was so pissed off that I hit them, and cursed them in English, stuff like, “son of a bitch!” Next morning, their parents came to my house and scolded me. When I saw them later, I threw stones at them. I was scolded by their parents again. And, you know, during the school break, I played marbles with my classmates. I taught them to play the game that I used to play on the plantation. I was good and I won the matches and I gained all the marbles from my friends. Then, again my friends’ parents came to my house and scolded me and accused me of stealing the marbles. I flung all the marbles at them. I was very gaki-daisho (bully).

Michiko Komine, who went to Tokyo for her higher education, recalls that she was often called gaijin (foreigner) because everybody knew that she was a Nisei who had moved to Japan from Hawaii. However, she was not so disturbed by the treatment since she was a child and could easily adjust to a new way of life. In Tokyo, she was more
likely to be treated as Nisei than Okinawan. She was also perceived as somebody who knew English better. She recalls,

Even though I went to a Japanese school in Hawaii and knew some Japanese, I had difficulty communicating when I got to Japan. I interacted with other Nisei who also came to our school from the United States and also from Hawaii. I also interacted with Japanese students. I was never treated badly because of being a Nisei. Rather, many friends wanted to be my friends because I could speak English. I remember every time when we had English test, my classmates looked at my answers.

They were able to cross over into Japanese Kibei Nisei circles without experiencing major difficulties, but they were few in number. Those who went to schools on mainland Japan tended to take part in Japanese Kibei Nisei organizations.

Generally, those who went to Japan for economic educational reasons were often cherished by their relatives and cousins in Okinawa. Ryuji Nakamura was treated with respect among relatives in Okinawa because of his status of being a Hawaii-born chonan, a first son. Interacting with other family members in Okinawa taught them that as Hawaii-born Nisei, they had a degree of economic security. Being a chonan also earned and still does earn important status in mainland Japan and in Okinawa. He recalls,

Since I was a Chonan, the first son, I was treated well in Okinawa. While my younger brothers had to sit on the floor, I could sit on the zabuton (mat). My grandmother always gave anpan (sweet bread) to only me. I guess I was kawaii (adorable) to her since I was a Hawaii-born Chonan. Other cousins envied me so much. And they gave me a hard time and we always fought.

This chapter reveals Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s experiences varied depending on a family’s economic status. Among the two of the Japanese Kibei Nisei I interviewed were sent to Japan for educational reasons, and two other returned to Japan with their family after their parents gained enough economic security. Among my Japanese Kibei Nisei interviewees, no one was sent to Japan for economic reasons, like many other Okinawan
Kibei Nisei were. However, even the Issei parents who sent their children to Okinawa because of economic hardship strongly believe in providing their children with a Japanese education in Okinawa. For instance, Toru Adaniya was not sure why he was sent to Okinawa. He was six months old in 1935 when he and his mother went to Okinawa. His father remained in Hawaii to improve their financial situation. Toru explains that he was sent to Okinawa for “an educational purpose” however, later he also mentions his family’s poverty and explained that his father had to remain in Hawaii to raise financial assets. Toru also related that his father sent him and his siblings to Okinawa for economic reasons.

Toru’s situation raises the question of whether the Okinawan Kibei Nisei were sure themselves about why they were sent to Japan. Replies from interviewees may have varied depending on their degree of comfort with the interviewer or according to the way they wished to be perceived, particularly in relation to their current social status. Others may have felt that there was no shame in revealing their distant past, or may have been too young to recall the exact reasons. Or perhaps they were never given clear reasons.
CHAPTER 4
PRE-WORLD WAR II: LIFE IN HAWAII AFTER RETURNING

This chapter focuses on Okinawan Kibei Nisei's experiences after they returned to Hawaii. In particular, I examine the prewar experiences of those Okinawan Kibei Nisei who were sent to Okinawa at an early age for economic reasons. Among the eighteen interviewees, there are twelve who returned to Hawaii before World War II. All of them are the Kibei Nisei who were sent to Okinawa at an early age for economic reasons. This chapter explores how they adjusted to life in Hawaii, what difficulties they faced, and how they overcame the difficulties. In this chapter, I analyze how their unique experiences upon returning helped them to discover a sense of collective ethnic identity as Okinawan Kibei Nisei. I also discuss the consequences of this discovery.
The interviewees who were sent to Okinawa at an early age returned to Hawaii between the years of 1928 and 1939 between the ages of thirteen and twenty. They returned to Hawaii because of social and political conditions in Okinawa at the time. The men explain that they returned to avoid being conscripted into the Japanese military and to return to their families. The two female Kibei whom I interviewed explain that they returned to Hawaii to seek a better life.

In 1939, volunteers were being sought for the Young for the Development of Manchuria and Mongolia movement in Japan. Officially, enlistment was voluntary. Each village was given a quota in case enough volunteers could not be recruited, a practice that actually made it a draft. All of the male Okinawan Kibei Nisei who were interviewed wanted to escape service in the Japanese military. The interviewees were often reminded by their parents that once they were drafted into the Japanese Armed Forces, it would be harder for them to get back their American citizenship. Issei parents encouraged their Hawaii-born children to return to Hawaii. The interviewees were able to return to Hawaii because either their family or relatives in Hawaii helped them by being their guarantors.

Shinsuke Teruya's return was supported by his Hawaii-raised siblings. Shinsuke was taken to Okinawa at the age of two, accompanied by his mother, elder sister and brother. His father had remained in Hawaii but returned three years later to take the rest of his family back to Hawaii. Unfortunately, Shinsuke's mother was ill with pleurisy and in no condition to make the trip back to Hawaii. At that time, Shinsuke was five and still needed his mother's care. His father decided to return to Hawaii with his two older children, leaving both Shinsuke and his mother in Okinawa. His father passed away in Hawaii when Shinsuke was twelve. That same year, his mother died in Okinawa. Soon
after, his grandparents also died. Having lost his parents and grandparents all within two years, Shinsuke went to live with his uncle and aunt in Okinawa. Even though his sister and brother lived in Hawaii, he did not want to go back to Hawaii. He said that the main reason he left Okinawa was to avoid being drafted into the Japanese army.

When I turned sixteen, I wrote a letter to my sister, who had lived in Hawaii. I said in the letter, “Please take me back to Hawaii.” I wanted to leave Japan because I did not want to be drafted for the Manchuria. I did not also want to be conscripted by Japanese military. I knew from my cousin that Japanese military is very strict and cruel. All of my relatives suggested me to go back to Hawaii if I had a choice.

With the help of his sister, Shinsuke returned to Hawaii in 1939 after having spent fourteen years in Okinawa.

Akio Maeshiro returned to Hawaii in 1938 at the age of twenty after spending eighteen years in Okinawa. He also says that the main reason he left Okinawa was to avoid being drafted into the Japanese army.

I returned to Hawaii because I did not want to serve in the Japanese Army. Issen Gorin no Hagaki [notification of the draft] arrived in each house in the new year period. As soon as it arrived to my house, I run away with it to Hawaii. In those days, we could not say “no” to the government. There was no such a word. You know, today you have to appreciate that you can easily say “no.” But I feel now young people use “no” way too much though.

For Okinawan Kibei Nisei, returning to Hawaii was one way to escape the ever growing militarism and nationalism in Japan. Kibei Nisei who wished to escape Japanese military service may have been those who had not absorbed or accepted the political propaganda taught in schools in Okinawa. If they had, they would not have regarded army services as a honor and a privilege.

The two females stated that they returned to Hawaii to work. Their family members in Hawaii also supported their return. Tomie Kaneshiro’s return was
encouraged by her mother in Okinawa, who asked her brother in Hawaii to take Tomie back to Hawaii to work there. Tomie actually wanted to go to mainland Japan to work since in those days it was common for Okinawan women to go to Osaka to work as a mill-girl. However, her mother encouraged her to work in Hawaii. Tomie recalls,

Many Okinawan girls wanted to go *dekasegi* [to work] in mainland Japan. I wanted to go so much because I knew my cousins went there and came back with their lighter skins. I thought I could be beautiful like them if I go to mainland Japan. I knew my mother would not allow me to go, so I just went to Osaka without telling the real reasons. My mother did not want me to work there because there was very bad rumor and reputation about the ways of Okinawan workers were treated and about the bad working condition. So my mother wrote a letter to my brother in Hawaii and asked him to call me back to Hawaii to work.

Okinawans in mainland Japan faced countless cases of discrimination in their daily lives such as not receiving fair wages and miserable conditions in over crowded workplaces, all of which were in violation of employment contracts. These conditions encouraged Okinawan Kibei Nisei to choose to work in Hawaii because they had their American citizenship.

Upon returning, most of the interviewees were excited, especially to see their family from whom they had been separated from for a long time. Toru Adaniya recalls,

The first thing that I did when I arrived at the port, I looked for my father thinking about which one is my father. I really cannot explain how excited I actually felt at that time. The only things I knew about my father were the picture.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei were also initially happy to return to Hawaii and being in a more economically developed place. Mamoru Takamine, who returned to Hawaii in 1939, says that, “nothing was worse than the life in Okinawa. In Okinawa, we could not even eat any sugarcane even though they were from our own field.” He explains that he also had to work hard in Hawaii but that “In Hawaii, we could eat ice cream and biscuit,
which made me happy enough to survive all the hard work in Hawaii.” Akio Maeshiro, who spent eighteen years in Okinawa and came back to Hawaii in 1934 when he was twenty states that “[u]pon returning, I did not miss Okinawa at all because I could eat rice everyday in Hawaii. You know in Okinawa, I had to eat potatoes everyday.”

However, the reality of living in America set in when their inability to understand English and to adjust to the new ways of life in Hawaii became evident. Akio Maeshiro, who spent eighteen years in Okinawa and came back to Hawaii in 1934 when he was twenty, recalls,

When I returned to Hawaii, I told my relatives that I came here to work on the plantation. I started working on sugarcane field where I picked up the insects from the sugarcane. One day, Luna came, riding on horse. I had never seen a horse before so I was staring at him, stopping what I was doing. Normally, that put me in the trouble. But the Luna said, “The boy just got here, I guess it is interesting for him to see my horse.” I did not get in trouble. I came to Hawaii without knowing any English words, so I had to learn English from my cousin who was ten years younger than me. The first English word that I learned from him was “shut up.” So, my first English teacher was ten years old.

When the Okinawan Kibei Nisei recall the language hardship that they had upon returning to Hawaii, they often emphasize their endurance. Their English was not good; even children ridiculed them. They, as virtual adults, could not beat up on a child.

Tomie returned to Hawaii in 1936 at the age of seventeen after spending fifteen years in Okinawa. She describes her experience of working as a housekeeper at a Caucasian house upon returning to Hawaii. The story of Tomie Kaneshiro highlights how gender helped determine what experiences Kibei Nisei had in Hawaii. Working as a housekeeper at Caucasian house led her to adapt to the ways of a new life in Hawaii more quickly than other Kibei Nisei.
When I returned to Hawaii, I did not know English, and I did not know anything about life in Hawaii. I did not know how to cook and use washing machine. You know, in Okinawa we only had miso soup and potatoes for our food. But here in Hawaii, they had okazu, fish, bread, soup and coffee. I have never eaten them before or never seen them. I could not cook anything. But my aunt who had lived in Hawaii for a quite long taught me everything. She gave me the job as housekeeper for her Caucasian friend. I began to work there but at first I was so nervous. I could not even pick up the phone because I do not know how to say English beside Hello. So whenever the phone rings, I ran into the sink and flush the water so that I could pretend for myself that I could not hear the ring. When the okusan [the owner of the house] came back to the house and asked me if there was any phone calls for her. I said to her “I do not think so, I was doing laundry.” But you know, I think I was lucky enough to have my aunt who taught me about life in Hawaii and also gave me the job as housekeeper. I think because of my experience of working at the Caucasian’s house, I could learn English much faster than other Kibei. I could not speak Japanese while working at the house, you know. I married a Hawaii-raised Nisei but people tell me that my English is now much better than his English.

What Okinawan Kibei Nisei shared was their marginalization from Nisei peers and even from their own families. Most of the interviewees returned and reunited with their family in Hawaii. However, not everybody got along with family members and Nisei peers who they had not seen for up to two decades. Shinsuke Teruya recalls that “We did not have any common interests and hobbies as Nisei had. My social life was mainly in a small circle of other Kibei men or other new immigrants from Okinawa.”

Kibei Nisei in Hawaii were often called “Japan Bobora.” According to the Encyclopedia of Japanese American History (Niiya, 2001:133), this expression was taken from the Portuguese word for pumpkin and supposedly came into use after Japanese contract laborers sprinkled pumpkin seeds onto their thatched roofs, causing pumpkins to grow. The term was supposed to have been brought by immigrants from Kumamoto prefecture, where Portugese arrived in Japan as early as 1567. One interviewee explains that since the color of the Hawaiian pumpkin is yellowish, people called Kibei Nisei
“bobora” as a pejorative term used for someone who is “yellow on the outside and yellow on the inside as well.” Nisei, on the other hand, were often described as “yellow on the outside, white on the inside.” Kibei Nisei were stereotyped as unassimilable, pro-Japanese, and disloyal while Nisei were called “banana,” pejorative term that implied they were “white inside and yellow outsider” having assimilated to mainstream American (white) culture.

By asking the range of questions, I have them speak out and start bringing back their memories of discrimination. Tomiko Tengan, who was sent to Okinawa at the age of two in 1921 and returned when she was twelve, recalls,

I wanted to be able to speak English. I also told my aunt that if I could not learn English, there are no purposes of staying in Hawaii so I would go back to Okinawa. So my father finally agreed with me and sent me to English school. But when I went to school, I was put in the different room from other students. I was put in the kitchen with other female Nisei who had a similar background. Because we just came back from Japan with little English, the teacher put us in the kitchen. Everyday I had to peel the potatoes' skins and I was not able to hold a pencil at all to study. When I went back home, I told my father that I did not study anything at school, but he did not believe what I said and accused me of lying to him.

When the Okinawan Kibei Nisei returned to Hawaii before the war, they also received discriminatory treatment from Naichi. Okinawan Kibei Nisei were in the dual category of “a minority within a minority” in Hawaii because they were Okinawa, or “the other Japanese” as well as Kibei Nisei or “other Niseis.”

Compared to Nisei raised in Hawaii, however, Okinawan Kibei Nisei, who spent their early youth period in Okinawa, did not experience the harsh discrimination from Naichi as the Nisei did, who were raised on pre-war plantations. However, most of the stories about discrimination that Okinawan Kibei Nisei emphasize Naichi discriminating
against Okinawans in Hawaii. Mamoru Takamine, who was sent to Okinawa at the age of two, recalls that “my cousin used to sing and call me a name like Japan bobora, Japan bobora. But I felt better than being teased because of being an Okinawan.” Even though Okinawan Kibei Nisei found were treated like “foreigners” because of their Kibei characteristics, they express that they were more hurt when they faced discrimination because of their Okinawan identity.

In the beginning of their interviews, Okinawan Kibei Nisei did not say that they had been discriminated against because of their Kibei Nisei status. Since the Okinawan community is small in Hawaii, and since its bonds as *Uchinanchu* are very strong, Okinawan Kibei Nisei are probably not willing to talk about their past difficulties with their community. They avoid saying that they felt being discriminated by other Nisei or that they did not feel comfortable with other Okinawans, even though it was true in most cases.

While their life stories reveal their experience of being treated by other Okinawans as “foreigners,” they demonstrated a preference for defining themselves collectively as Okinawan, “the other Japanese,” more so than as Kibei, “the other Nisei.” Okinawan Kibei Nisei were willingly to speak in generalities about experiences of discriminations as Okinawan but were uncomfortable talking about on the basis of being Kibei Nisei, perhaps to maintain an appearance of group solidarity.

When the Okinawan Kibei Nisei talk about the adjustment to a new life in Hawaii, several interviewees emphasize their appreciation for the help they received from Okinawa peers and relatives. Okinawans usually took care of one another, teaching each other their trades. They joined business started by family members and other Okinawans.
Hiroshi Yabiku, who was sent to Okinawa at age five for eleven years and returned to Hawaii in 1937, explains that,

[upon returning to Hawaii, I suffered a lot but I kinda enjoyed it. At first, I worked as a dishwasher at the restaurant, earning $10 a day. Then one Okinawan friend from Oroku village introduced me to the other restaurant where I can get paid $20 a day. You know Oroku people are good at restaurant business, yeah? Then I was again introduced to the other restaurant where I can get paid $90 a day. I was just lucky to have support from other Okinawans.

Even though Okinawan Kibei Nisei experienced marginalization as Okinawans and as Kibei Nisei, they tended to define themselves collective group when telling their life experiences.

However, the formation of Uruma Seinenkai (Uruma Junior Club) shows that pre-war Okinawan Kibei Nisei did express their distinctive identity separate from the larger collective as Okinawans in Hawaii. Uruma Seinenkai started in 1933 with approximately thirty members and was composed of pre-war Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii. Upon returning, they became conscious of being displaced. Their marginality became the impetus for the rise of their distinct identity.

A history about the origin of this club, published in 1935, includes an introduction of the club and members and members’ essays on topics ranging from the perception of Okinawans in Hawaii to analyses of Hawaii’s colonial history.

In a study about Korean American in Hawaii identity formation of 1.5 generation, Marry Yu Danico (2004) explains that meeting other 1.5 generation of Korean American in Hawaii who shared the similar experiences helped them to form their distinct identity. Likewise, Okinawan Kibei Nisei, who met and discovered they had similar experiences of being sent to Okinawa at an early age,
growing up in Okinawa, and then returning to Hawaii, saw themselves as belonging to a group.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei have various places to meet others like themselves. English language school was one such place. The Hawaii Mission School provided a special English class for non-native English speakers. For Kibei Nisei who attended such classes, school became a place to share their experiences of hardship in adjusting to a new way of life in Hawaii. They began to understand that they were not alone. Another area to interact with others was the workplace. Due to the language handicap, practically the only job Kibei Nisei could get was as dishwasher. Of all my male interviewees who returned to Hawaii prior to the war, six had worked at restaurants as dishwashers when they first returned to Hawaii. They went to school in the morning and in the afternoon washed dishes at cafeterias or restaurants where other Kibei Nisei were. I will not analyze these two topics, but instead will explore the influence of the Uruma Seinenkai Club.

The Uruma Seinenkai, a pre-war Okinawan Kibei Nisei social organization, was initiated primarily through the efforts of five Okinawan Kibei Nisei: Shigeru Higa, Shiei Higa, Chokichi Tsukayama, Masuyei Kamiya, and Shinichi Nagamine in 1933 (Nagamine, 2002:16). Shiei Higa sought the others’ help to get the Uruma Seinenkai started. He wrote a petition and spread it around to see whether people would be interested in starting such a club. While recruiting members, he found that many Nisei with similar backgrounds expressed their need for the club. In July of 1933, when the annual Ryukyu Bon Dance festival was held, Shiei announced the idea of establishment of the club. He thought that this was very good time and place to recruit because there
were many Okinawan youth gathered at the festival. He called for them to gather at Smith Park after the festival. Fifteen or sixteen youth showed up at the park and were introduced to one another and discussed the club. One of the club members recalls in his memoir about the night in the club mimeograph magazine by writing “Tears of joy ran down the face of these Nisei with similar backgrounds who agreed with the establishing of the club” (Uruma, 1935:87), and “the moon lighted up us from sky and it seemed to celebrate the establishment of our club. What an unforgettable night it was” (Uruma, 1935:87).

When the Okinawan Kibei Nisei returned to Hawaii, they often felt isolated from their family, siblings and other Nisei peers from whom they had been separated for a long time. In addition, they returned to Hawaii during the Depression. Their limited English made it difficult to find jobs. Okinawan Kibei Nisei who were in similar situations decided to form a club with the intention of providing “both financial and emotional support for Okinawan Nisei of similar background” (Nakamine 2002:16). Yoshikane Tomihira explains the characteristics of the club members as follows:

Even though we were Japanese Americans on our family register, we were Japanese at heart. Since we were raised in Japanese life style and also many of them did not understand English, it is not easy for us to amalgamate into the Japanese Americans. We also received a new type of Japanese education, it is also hard to get along well with the old-fashioned first generation. Even though we returned to the place of our birth, we are displaced in our society (Uruma, 1935:13).

Because of their shared experience of being “displaced,” club members became emotionally attached to each other. In his autobiography, Shinichi Nagamine writes, “we were drawn together like magnets and enjoyed singing, reciting poems, and sharing our dreams and future goals (2002:16).” Yamashiro writes in “The Then Memory” that
“making friends with similar background of me made me forget about being homesick”
(Hawaii Pacific Press, June 1, 1988). Shared experiences united the club members and
provided financial and emotional support for one another. When one of the club
members, Shiei Higa had to undergo surgery on his lung, other club members provided
blood transfusions for him. Higa’s wife shares her memory of him.

Shiei-san did many things for the Uruma Seinenkai. He had surgery
before I met him. But I often heard him saying that “he is here because
of the club members.” He suffered a lot for a long time because of his
health condition. But he did what he could do for the club. (Personal
interviews, 8/5/2004)

Some of the members actually lived together because they did not get along with their
parents from whom they had separated for so long.

The mimeograph magazine also had a section that explained how the community
perceived Kibei Nisei at that time. Yoshikawa Tomihira explains that there were two
main perceptions of Nisei returnees. The positive perception was that Nisei who spent
their youth in Japan might be able to become intermediaties between the first and the
second generations. Since the returnees had been exposed to Japanese ways of thinking,
they could contribute to the community. The negative perception was that the returnees
might hinder the Americanization of the second generation. Jobs were already tight, and
they thought that the Nisei returnees from Japan made the situation worse.

Yoshikane Tomihira (Uruma, 1935:14-15) emphasizes that the returnees had
problems such as getting along with Nisei peers. They often found it to difficult to get
along with family members after so many years of separation. It was also challenging to
make a living given their limited English skills. Yoshikane expresses his frustration about
having a lower social status in Hawaii.
The Kibei Nisei were not born to be dislocated. If I had to say whose fault it was, I would say it was their parents’ fault. The parents sent them back to Japan because they thought that their children would represent obstacle for their desire to make money quickly and go back to their homeland. The Kibei Nisei were just a sacrifice of their parents’ desire for dekasegi konjyo (the firm intention of succeeding migration). I am not saying that not everybody had the same idea. However, we cannot deny that many Japanese Americans were sent to Japan because of that reason. If their parents really know how to judge the situation correctly, the Kibei Nisei would live in their homeland as Hawaii-gaeri bochan (a child returned from Hawaii) without any inconvenience (Uruma, 1935:16).

Reverend Houun Yamayose, the most influential figure of the first generation of Okinawans, helped the members by letting them use his temple for their club activities. He expressed his expectations about the Kibei Nisei and believed in their potential to build a bridge between the first and second generations as well as to change the prevailing status of Okinawans in Hawaii. He writes,

As I have explained earlier, the term, Uruma means “sunashima” (sand island). As you know, sand is made of many pieces scattered around and is also very ordinary. It does not taste. That is why when something is valueless, we say that it tastes like sand. However, if we add cement to sand and knead with water, it becomes a hard stone. As you know, nowadays cement and sand are often used in architecture with various purposes. I hope that the members of the Uruma Seinenkai unite together and be strong enough to be like cement and be an essential element in construction of the big building that is, society (Uruma, 1935:3).

In his writings, he acknowledges the importance of following Issei’s steps as well as learning English in this English-dominant society.

Despite the club’s positive influences, it received criticism from other Okinawan groups in Hawaii. Some Okinawans in Hawaii believed that Okinawans should not mingle exclusively with Okinawans but instead should integrate into the larger society. They believed that the club might hinder the Americanization of the second generation of
Okinawans. Shigeru Higa, then president of the club, explained the nature and purpose of the club to persuade Issei parents who did not agree with the establishment of the club. He writes that,

The Uruma Seinenkai is not a club established by the younger generation to create their specific group, but a club where the youth Nisei could learn from the first generation and try to follow their steps. They were ready for that (Uruma, 1935:90).

Uruma Seinenkai held meetings with the first generation of Okinawans to learn about their success in business and to listen to their expectations for subsequent generations. The club attempted to have a mutual understanding between the first generation and second generation. The Okinawan Kibei Nisei, with their command of Japanese language skills, could follow the Issei’s steps and pass them on to their Nisei peers.

When the club was organized, Okinawans were discriminated against by descendants of mainland Japan. Okinawan Kibei Nisei club members understood the feelings of shame and embarrassment but acknowledged their need to change their own and their larger society’s impressions of Okinawans in Hawaii. Interacting with the first generation, especially, created new images of Okinawan Kibei Nisei as well educated people who had potential to change the lower status of Okinawans in Hawaii. Shigeru Higa refers to Uruma Seinenkai as “a junior club based on the appreciation of one’s ethnic roots (Uruma, 1935:91)”

In an attempt to present a new image of Okinawans, the Uruma Seinenkai club members participated in various community activities to devote themselves to introducing Okinawan culture to the people of Hawaii. The club activities helped “to keep up the cultural aspect of the club (Nakamine, 2002:17). With their knowledge of
both languages and a distinctively Okinawan ethnic cultural awareness, the club members introduced and celebrated Okinawan culture with a deliberate intent to foster appreciation of it. One of the events that the Uruma Seinenkai sponsored was an annual Ryukyu sumo tournament, which drew participants from Oahu as well as the other islands. The sumo tournament was significant because the process of the Okinawan community working as a whole strengthened the unity among Okinawans beyond their own locality clubs. Uruma Seinenkai laid the groundwork for the future founding of the United Okinawan Association of Hawaii (UOA), which was formed twenty years later in 1951.

The club also sponsored a speech contest in both English and Japanese twice a year. Speakers spoke on topics about the United States – Japan relations, the current status of Hawaii, and the development of Okinawa. The speech contest also became significant for the Okinawan community because it showcased the higher education achievements of the second generation Okinawans. For the first time, the Okinawan Kibei Nisei members took a major role in establishing pride among Okinawans in Hawaii.

They also had lectures on current affairs and cultural topics and invited well-known Okinawan celebrities who visited Honolulu to speak. One of my interviewees, an Okinawan Nisei, who participated in the Uruma Seinenkai, recalls that,

We were happy about the Uruma Seinenkai. In those days, Okinawans were still looked down on by other Japanese. I was so proud of their activities. In those days, few Okinawans were well-educated like them.

The Uruma Orchestra was formed in 1934 through the initiative of club members Gaichi Zaha and Eichi Tamashiro. They were the first orchestra among not only the Okinawan community but also the larger Japanese community. Their activities included
fundraising for the club. The orchestra demonstrated a propensity for taking on leadership positions and resulted in the improved status of Okinawans in the larger Japanese American community in Hawaii.

Members of Uruma Seinenkai felt responsible for changing society's impressions of Okinawans in Hawaii. They were able to develop a “positive marginality,” contributing to change public impressions of Okinawans in Hawaii and to a distinct but equal identity in the Japanese community. Their education in Okinawa provided them with a better perception of themselves. Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s marginality and distinct identity shifted and developed as their Japanese education in Japan were valued by the Issei. My fundings also support Uger’s argument that “positive marginality also requires the acknowledgement that previously neglected aspects of one’s life story are both personally and professionally legitimated.” (177:2000).
CHAPTER 5

WARTIME EXPERIENCES

This chapter examines wartime experiences in Hawaii and in Japan. Stories from both settings reveals that Okinawan Kibei Nisei experienced the additional polarizing pressures of identity choice when the two homelands they had known to varying degrees became enemies. Okinawa was the site of the only major land battle and was later to remain under direct U.S. occupation for twenty-seven years after World War II. Fourteen interviewees were in Hawaii during World War II; the remaining four were in Japan. The first part of this chapter explores the Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s wartime experiences in Hawaii: their reactions to the advent of war, their lives in the concentration camps, their participation in the American armed services, and their participation in the war relief effort. The second part of this chapter explores the Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s wartime experiences in Japan: their reaction to the advent of war, their lives in the Battle of Okinawa, their participation in the Japanese armed services, their participation in the war
relief effort, the ways in which their lives were influenced by the U.S. military occupation after the war.

Wartime experience of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii

Fourteen of the interviewees were in Hawaii at the outbreak of the war, not long after they had returned to Hawaii from Okinawa. Hiroshi Uezu was two years old when he was sent to Okinawa and spent fourteen years there. He returned to Hawaii in 1937. At the outbreak of the war, Hiroshi was working as a pig farmer in Kalihi, Hawaii. On the morning of December 7, 1941, Hiroshi witnessed what initiated the war with Japan.

As usual, I went to the Navy base to pick up the feed. It was a quiet Sunday morning. Japan's attack unfolded right before my eyes. It was war and I was scared to the death. I had just loaded the feed onto the truck. I thought everybody was going to be killed.

The outbreak of the war brought drastic changes to the Japanese community in Hawaii. Kikuchi's study of Nisei's Pacific War experiences in Hawaii (1995:53) tells the stories of interned Japanese leaders who had been in control of the Japanese community. Generally, Japanese Americans in Hawaii who were not leaders were not interned but did experience harsh racial discrimination. As a result, many Issei and Nisei abandoned their Japanese pride and worked hard to show their loyalty to the United States. In May of 1942, "Be loyal to America" movements began among the Japanese on Oahu (Ethnic Studies Oral History Project, 1981:567). After the outbreak of the war, the Americanization of the Japanese community progressed rapidly.

Two types of stories emerge from Okinawan Kibei Nisei's wartime narratives: the Kibei Nisei who were interned because of their militant pro-Japanese attitudes and those who supported the U.S. contributed to the war effort as interpreters. What factors
influenced their decisions? How do they narrate and evaluate their experiences decades later?

The case of Mamoru Takamine

Mamoru Takamine was sixteen years when he returned to Hawaii in 1939. When Japan entered the war in 1941, he was taken to the FBI to be investigated. He recalls,

Soon after the war started, I got picked up by the FBI. I had to go into the office where I had to go through many questions. They asked me so many questions like, how much savings I have, when I returned to Hawaii, what I did in Okinawa, what I learned at school, whether I received the militaristic education in Japan or not. I could not tell a lie to them because they have already done my background investigation before they met me. There was also an Okinawan interpreter who also lived in Okinawa. So I could not even try to tell a lie about the situation of Okinawa. But I grew up in Okinawa so no matter how much I tried not to, my loyalty to Japan came out. On the other hand, my brother did not receive any militaristic training in Okinawa, and he could make himself clear that he was going to show his loyalty to the United States before he went to the police. He managed to show his loyalty to the states. But not me. I tried but they somehow figured out that I was lying.

Mamoru was interned for six years until 1947. First, he was sent to Sand Island and then to the mainland. He believes that he was interned for such a long time because of his unsuitable answers to the loyalty questions. In 1943, all internees over the age of seventeen were given a loyalty test. He answered "no" to two questions: (1) Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered and (2) Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power or organization?
When asked why he answered the way he did, Mamoru expressed his *Shikataganai* (cannot be helped) feeling. After all, during his schooling in Okinawa he had been exposed to and had accepted nationalist propaganda. His loyalty was to the Japanese emperor. In addition, he believed that Japan would win this war because of its strong spirit. On the other hand, his brother was able to show his loyalty and support of the United States because as Mamoru said, his brother “did not receive any militaristic training in Okinawa.” Mamoru explains that he devoted himself to school, but his brother, who was often sick, did not like the school and was often absent. Receiving militaristic education in Okinawa was the reason for Mamoru’s loyalty to Japan.

He explains that his experience of living in Okinawa gave him strength to survive the internment camps.

I guess I was young and did not really know how to make my life easier. Because of education in Okinawa, I believed what I believed without questioning. Six years in the camp was a very cruel experience for me, but nothing can be compared to the harsh life that I had to go through in Okinawa living in poverty.

Being with Kibei Nisei and Nisei from Hawaii in the camps was not a comfortable experience.

Kibei and Nisei did not get along in the camp because there were more Kibei congregated together and they became powerful. There was the tension that exist between Kibei and Nisei and the tension sometimes turned out to be a big fight. I realized that there were differences between Nisei in mainland U.S. and Nisei from Hawaii. Nisei on mainland spoke like whites. The term *Buddhahead* for Nisei from Hawaii and *Kotonk* for Nisei from mainland were made during the wartime. There were many Okinawans in camp and they tended to hung out together. However, in the camp Okinawans did not receive the discrimination compared to Burakumin (the discriminated community). I guess on the camp, the more you showed the loyalty to the emperor, the more you got respect from other Japanese on the camp. But to be honest with you, I felt that there was also pressure upon my shoulders to show my loyalty toward Japan from my Kibei peers who were
extremely pro-Japanese militants. We screamed over and over, saying “we are Japanese even though we are in the cage.” I also went through the hunger strike, too.

His story demonstrates how the experiences on the internment camp helped to obscure their identity as distinctively Okinawans. Experiences with Nisei and Naichi in the camp allowed him to realize a sense of a larger ethnic and geographically based identity as Japanese Kibei Nisei and Nisei from Hawaii.

The case of Shinsuke Teruya

Shinsuke Teruya chose to accommodate the U.S. and contribute to the war effort as an interpreter. He was born in 1925. When he was two years old, his mother took him to Okinawa, where he lived with his grandparents for fourteen years. Both his father and mother passed away when he was twelve. He returned to Hawaii in 1939 in order to avoid conscription into the Japanese military. I asked Shinsuke what made him not want to be drafted into Japanese Armed Force.

Those days Japanese government could easily control their people in what ways they want. Especially, my village where I grew up was very small and people were working hard to make their living. There were very few people who had newspaper and, of course there was no radio. So people really did not know what was going on in the world. They just listened and do whatever their government told them to do. We were so ignorant. Only what we knew was what the government told us. We were really like frogs in the well, and we knew nothing about the world.

However, he also said that even if he was “one of [the] frogs in the well,” he felt a strong opposition against the government and did not want to go to Manchuria to serve in the Japanese Armed Forces. If he had to leave Okinawa, he preferred to return to Hawaii,
where his brother and his sister lived. In 1939, he was finally reunited with his siblings in Hawaii.

Four years later, he applied to serve in the American Armed Forces. He felt pressure to serve in the American Armed Forces from his Nisei peers and from his Hawaii-raised Nisei brother, who had decided to join. Shinsuke thought he should also show his loyalty to the U.S. because it was his birthplace. In addition, he was scared that if he did not join the armed forces, he would be taken to a concentration camp. He applied to enroll but failed the test. Later, he received a letter from the Army asking him to work for the Military Intelligence Service as an interpreter. He was chosen because the Army knew about his outstanding Japanese skills. He joined in 1943 and soon was confronted with the complexity of the situation.

He was part of the group that attacked Okinawa. In *Aru Okinawa Hawai Imin no Pearl Habor* (Horie:1991), his reaction to the planned U.S.’s attack to Okinawa reads as follows:

In late November 1944, I was ordered to report to the 24th Army Corps HO, G–2 Photo Interpreters Section. The minute I entered the tent, my heart nearly stopped beating as I saw hung before me a large blown-up map of the southern half of Okinawa. Chills ran up my spine as I realized the next target would be that part of Okinawa where I had lived for fourteen years and left merely six years before.

At this critical time, American military leaders asked Shinsuke about many questions on his hometown. During the Battle of Okinawa, as an interpreter, he was responsible for persuading many Okinawan civilians to hide in caves to surrender. As Kibei Nisei who grew up in Okinawa he helped people in his homeland without failing to show his loyalty to the United States.
I fought in Leyte and Okinawa but did not shoot at a single person. What makes me happiest is that with my language skills I was able to carry out my duty as an American citizen for the United States, the country of my birth, and to help Japan, the country where I grew up. I was especially grateful for having been able to help the people of Okinawa.

He stresses third and fourth generation Okinawans: “are first and foremost an American, then a Japanese-American. In addition, your ancestors came from Okinawa: you are Okinawan as well. Etch this in your heart and never forget it.” He defines himself as a Kibei Nisei who helped the people of his homeland without failing to show his loyalty to the United States.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei, who did not serve in the American Armed Forces also helped the government getting information about Okinawa as the final target. Akio Maeshiro, who was sent to Okinawa at his age of two and returned to Hawaii in 1934, recalls that


[before the U.S. attacked Okinawa, the FBI often came to my house and asked me so many questions about Okinawa. Every single detail, things such as about the roads, houses, and they even asked me about the questions like, what would happen if the birds sing? At the time I did not know that they would attack Okinawa. Even though I knew, I had to obey what they wanted me to do. I could not lie about anything, because they already know a lot of stuff about Okinawa.

Stories tell much about the tension that they experienced during the wartime because of the prevailing anti-Japanese sentiment and suspicions of espionage and sabotage among Americans toward those Nisei who grew up in Japan. Akio Maeshiro believes that he was one of the first people interviewing because he had just come from Okinawa and was able to provide firsthand information about Okinawa and Japan. Akio knew the United States wanted to know more about; however, he never imagined that the information he gave would be used to plan attacks on his homeland.
Interaction with peers greatly influenced their decisions. Mamoru Takamine often interacted with Kibei Nisei who also worked at restaurants where there were many Okinawan Kibei Nisei. Shinsuke Teruya, on the other hand, interacted with Nisei after he returned to Hawaii because his siblings grew up in Hawaii. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Mamoru Takamine showed his loyalty to Japan and Shunsuke Teruya served the United States.

Wartime experiences of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Japan

The stories concerning the wartime experience of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Japan also illustrate Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s polarizing feelings between two countries. For Kibei Nisei in general, it was especially difficult to live in a foreign country, away from their families during wartime. As soon as the war started, almost everything was rationed and contact to the United States was prohibited. Thousands of Nisei were caught in Japan and could not return to Hawaii until 1947. While in Japan, the Kibei Nisei were suspected by the Japanese authorities, evidence that whether Kibei Nisei were in the United States or in Japan, they were treated with suspicion. They were also treated as “enemies of Japan” and often felt emotionally isolated from their Japanese peers in Japan. Relative to all the Japanese in the United States, the Kibei Nisei were the most mistrusted by American authorities because of their nationalistic Japanese educational background. In the same way, Kibei Nisei in Japan were also mistrusted by Japanese authorities because of their American citizenship. The two first stories illustrate the case studies of Okinawan
Kibei Nisei experience during the wartime in Japan, and the second story illustrates the Okinawa Kibei Nisei experiences during the war time in Okinawa.

The case of Yoko Asato

Yoko Asato was taken to Okinawa when she was five and lived there for three years. She returned to Hawaii for a short time and then returned to Japan, where she attended high school in Tokyo. She writes about the war in a personal essay,

Six months before the attack, I was finally able to go to Japan to finish my schooling which had been my ambition. So I was in Japan when the war broke out. It really changed the course of my life. The war began on December 7 Hawaiian time, but in Japan it was December 8, Monday. Our radio was broken so I did not hear the news until I went to school that morning. My classmates told me that war had erupted in the South Pacific. From the loudspeaker, we were told to assemble in the auditorium. The principal informed us that war had started and read the proclamation by the Emperor, which told us of the war with Britain and America. When I heard that Pearl Harbor was attacked, I thought the whole of Oahu was devastated. I started to worry about my family who lived in Honolulu not too far away from Pearl Harbor. I could not help the tears that rolled down my cheeks. All my classmates were happy to hear that the bombing of the Pearl Harbor was a tremendous victory and joyful shouts prevailed among them, while I was the only one crying. I think it was difficult for the classmates around me to understand my mixed feelings at that time. We had to endure hardship to win the war.

The case of Hideko Yabiku

Hideko Yabiku was born in 1925. Her parents worked on the plantation in Pihonua. At age twelve, she was taken to Okinawa by her father’s friend to join her grandmother in Nago. She was chosen to go to Okinawa because of her interest in the Japanese language. Her parents wanted her to receive Japanese education. She said that her parents had planned on her staying abroad for one year but because of the outbreak of the war, she ended up staying in Okinawa and Tokyo for ten years. She started with the
fifth grade and graduated from a junior high school in Okinawa. When she found out that she could not go back to Hawaii, she decided to go to Tokyo to enroll in the Tokyo Women’s College to study child and health care.

She learned the Okinawan dialect within three months and quickly adjusted to the different customs. She recalls the militaristic education in Okinawa:

As the war intensified, in my fourth year of school we had to undergo training. We practiced with bamboo spears at the beach but I was not apprehensive about fighting a war with bamboo.

At the outbreak of war, Hideko was a second-year student at the Kenritsu No. 3 Girl’s High School. Her personal experience was published in *Hawaii Pacific Press* on June 1, 1991.

It was in Tokyo that I first saw young college men being sent off to war. I was saddened by the sight of young men who had never carried weapons in their life, march off bearing arms. Even to this day I occasionally recall that scene.

Hideko had attended school for six years in Hawaii; not surprisingly, she did not understand Japan’s pro-militaristic way of thinking. She was also treated as an “enemy of Japan” and often felt isolated; however, her teacher encouraged her and taught Japanese literature such as *manyoushu*, that helped her see that the common people of Japan are peace loving.

Her correspondence with her parents during this time helped her during this difficult time. In one letter, her father wrote that “the war may not last very long, so do not lose hope and do not cooperate with the Japanese government lest you lose your American citizenship.” In 1947, after her college graduation, she caught the second ship back to Hawaii.
Wartime experience of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Okinawa

The case of Toru Adaniya

Toru Adaniya and his several siblings were taken to Okinawa by his mother in 1935 when he was only six month old. His parents decided to take all of their children to Okinawa since his father also believed strongly in educating his children in Japan. Toru spent twelve years in Okinawa and then returned to Hawaii in 1947. He witnessed the Battle of Okinawa.

You know, when we were in the cave, Americans Nisei shouted into the cave, the war is over, war is over. They said it in Japanese and Okinawan dialect, too. But some of them did not believe so they did fight and got killed. But we had a few people like my mother those who came from Hawaii knew exactly what Americans were thinking about. When Nisei came to the caves, some people wanted to fight against Americans but those people discouraged them not to fight by telling them there was no chance to fight. My mother was telling me that Americans were not like that. That part, life experience that they had in foreign country really saved their lives.

During World War II, the universal word for the Allied soldiers was *kichiku beihei* which translates literally as barbarian American soldiers but bears the connotation of dirty American devil. For Toru, observing his family’s trust in American Nisei soldiers made him think that his family was different from other Okinawans. Even he was sent to Okinawa at his early age and did not have any memories about Hawaii, the Battle of Okinawa became a factor in becoming aware of their identity as Nisei in Okinawa.

The case of Ryuji Nakamura

Ryuji Nakamura, an eighty-year-old Kibei Nisei, was sent to Okinawa at the age of ten because of his interest in Japan in general and its Navy specifically. When he was sixteen years old, he applied to the Japanese Navy School. However, he failed the
examination and was told, “You are an American. You do not have a yamato spirit (devotion to the Emperor of Japan).”

In 1944, he took another examination and passed. He attended the Navy Special Forces Training School in Kanagawa prefecture. He was asked whether he wanted to apply to be a pilot for Ningen Gyorai (human torpedo). The underwater torpedo was considered to be one of the most powerful weapons in the world at the time. It was an offensive weapon that was built to one person: its pilot. As soon as the person in the mini-submarine torpedo found an enemy ship, he exploded the bomb by crashing it into the enemy. The Japanese government designated twenty-year-old men as pilots of the torpedo. About two hundred young soldiers joined this military operation during World War II of which 145 young soldiers died.

His yamato spirit was tested on paper with the question of whether he wanted to steer the Ningen Gyorai. He recalls,

They asked us, “If you want to be a pilot for Ningen Gyorai, draw two circles. If you have a true yamato spirit, draw three circles.” You know, I drew three circles. Later, I was called by two commanders. I went to their office. One commander told me, “You were born in Hawaii, weren’t you? I know Hawaii is a great place. I went there twice.” Then he softly said to me, “Your parents are in Hawaii, aren’t they? Please do not waste your life, just go back to Hawaii safely.” It was hard to understand why the commander told me stuff like that. I felt that I was Japanese and I could not understand why they told me to go back to Hawaii. But when I think about it now, I think they had already known that Japan would lose the war. But I applied again. The next time, the commander did not say anything about it. My grandfather did not understand why I wanted to apply. When my mother found out about this, she cried and tried to stop me from applying.

During the interview, Ryuji was hesitant to tell me about his experience in the Japanese Armed Forces. He explains,
When I came back to Hawaii, I was scared of the FBI. My friends told me not to talk about my experience in the Japanese Armed Forces because those who sided with Japan during the war might lose their American citizenship. But now I think it is okay.

Even though Ryuji spent the first ten years of his life in Hawaii before he went to Okinawa, his loyalty to Japan was very strong. This shows that the time spent in Okinawa and the age when Okinawan Kibei Nisei went to Okinawa was not necessarily the most influential factor in the way they identified themselves. Teruya already had a strong sense of attraction toward Japan before living there. He explains that he did not question his loyalty to Japan "because he went to Japanese school in Hawaii, where he developed a strong sense of attraction to Japan."

The war circumstance forced the Okinawan Kibei Nisei to choose identity as being subsumed by hegemony, either Japanese or American. Okinawan identity was not even a choice for consideration.

**War Relief Movement**

The Battle of Okinawa completely devastated Okinawa. One of the local newspapers reported that "as the result of the war, almost all schools were destroyed, and fields were left in a hopeless condition." The news article was headlined: "The War has Set the Okinawa Back 100 Years" (The Honolulu Star Bulletin, January 14, 1949) Okinawans in Hawaii, feeling a need to organize relief efforts in the aftermath of World War II, began to collect every piece of news from the newspaper, radio, and newsreels concerning the fate of their homeland. The foundation of United Okinawan Association Hawaii (UOA) was formed in 1951 to coordinate relief efforts to Okinawa.
The Okinawan Kibei Nisei of Hawaii, especially those who experienced living in either Okinawa or mainland Japan during the war, had a major role in the relief efforts following the war. They gave firsthand testimony regarding Japan’s defeat and Okinawa’s devastation in order to help rebuild Okinawa.

The best example of such a testimony is Taro Higa’s *Memoirs of a Certain Kibei* (1988). Taro Higa was born in Honolulu in 1916, but as a child he was taken to Okinawa, where he was raised by his grandparents. He passed his early teen years in mainland Japan and then returned to Hawaii to be a farmer. A professor from Japan found out about Taro’s inventions and invited him to study electricity at Waseda University in Japan. After studying there, Taro returned to Hawaii in 1941 in order to escape the increasing militaristic environment of Japan. Back in Hawaii, he joined the 100th Infantry Battalion of the U.S. Army at Schofield Barracks. As the American forces were contemplating an invasion of Okinawa, Higa volunteered and went to Okinawa as an interpreter who could speak the Okinawan dialect, Japanese and English. He participated in multiple rescue missions of the native Okinawans hiding in caves. Upon witnessing the devastating effects of war on the Okinawan economy and countryside, he reported the Okinawan disaster to people in Hawaii. He wrote letters to a newspaper in Hawaii about the post-war situation in Okinawa and subsequently gave lectures on Oahu as well as the neighbor islands. His articles and lectures produced a shock wave in Hawaii’s Okinawan community.

Another Okinawan Kibei Nisei who was a central figure in the war effort was Yoko Asato, one of my interviewees. Yoko Asato was taken to Tokyo to live with her grandparents when she was five. Yoko’s parents were too poor to bring back any *miyage*
(gift), so they decided to send Yoko instead. She came back to Hawaii in 1932 after spending two years in Tokyo. When she was seventeen years old, she again went to Tokyo, this time to study. While she lived in Tokyo, she learned to speak the standard Japanese well. She was hired by Hokama Tatsumi, who first organized a pig augmentation program. Since there were few pigs left in Okinawa because of the war, Hokama encouraged the Okinawan community in Hawaii to send pigs to Okinawa. He announced his plan and played Okinawan traditional songs every day on his fifteen minutes radio show. Many people heard the songs. But his strong Okinawan accent was not well-received by non-Okinawan Japanese. He decided to hire a girl with good standard Japanese, Yoko Asato.

Participating in the war relief influenced the development of Yoko’s ethnic identity as Okinawan.

I was very disappointed by the fact that even after the war, some Japanese American were complaining that Mr. Hokama was not speaking Japanese. But the important thing is to raise the money to send the pigs. He hired me because of my good English. I tried to do my best.

Interacting with other Okinawans trying help her homeland made her think about her ethnic roots.

Before I helped the war relief efforts, I did not know anything about Okinawa. Even though my parents are from Okinawa, I did not have a chance to learn any culture of Okinawa because I lived in Tokyo when I was child and I also spent a total of eighteen years in Japan. But when I participated in the war relief activities, I had many opportunities to listen to Okinawan traditional music. I was very happy to have that opportunity not only because I brush up my Japanese speaking skill, but also I could learn my cultural roots. I gained a newfound of appreciation of Okinawan cultural roots.

On the other hand, Katta Gumi, a pro-Japan nationalist organization based in Hawaii that included a substantial number of Kibei Nisei and Okinawans in Hawaii tried
to prevent post-war relief-fundraising efforts for Japan. They did not understand why the
Okinawan Kibei Nisei tried to spearhead efforts to send relief money or food to Japan.
The members of Katta Gumi felt that sending war relief money to Japan insulted Japan.
In fact, they believed that Japan had never lost the war. In this difficult post war situation
in the Japanese American community in Hawaii, Okinawan Kibei Nisei returnees had to
step forward to convince these people that they had personally witnessed Japan’s defeat.
They put on a play featuring “Memories”, a production that was sponsored by the
General Headquaters of the Allied Powers and depicted a family picking up the pieces of
their life after the defeat of Japan.

The war relief efforts brought many Okinawans in Hawaii together to help their
homeland. With the sole purpose of making money to send pigs to Okinawa, these
members of the war relief committee held concerts and plays sumo tournaments. As a
result, a stronger sense of Okinawan identity developed among the people who
participated. Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s experiences in war relief efforts illuminate that the
single purpose of War Relief Movement, that is sending aid to Okinawa after the war,
served to narrow the distance between Okinawan Kibei Nisei and other Okinawans in
Hawaii. Okinawan Kibei Nisei provided firsthand information on the situation and their
strong attachment to their homeland. Tomiko Kaneshiro explains that “if you were
Okinawans who have come from Okinawa, you would make your best efforts to save
your homeland.” Okinawan Kibei Nisei found occasion for their strong attachment to
their other homeland overseas to be of benefit to the cause.

Okinawa’s Occupation by the United States

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Okinawa's occupation by the United States also influenced Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii. From the end of the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, Okinawa remained under United States control for twenty-seven years until reversion to Japan in 1972.

The United States Army in Okinawa, responsible for administering the Ryukyus after World War II, wished to develop better relations between Americans and the people of Okinawa and hoped to minimize the tension between the two groups. However, the U.S. occupation generated considerable anti-America sentiments (Arasaki, 1995:225-229). The Civil Affairs Section (G-5) of the U.S. Army Pacific, Fort Shafter, Hawaii, which serviced the administration in Okinawa, realized the suitability of Okinawans in Hawaii as “goodwill intermediaries: they were American citizens who knew the language of Okinawan people and shared with them the same ethnic background. Many had relatives in Okinawa” (Adaniya, 1981:330).

The Friendship Mission Program between America and Okinawa began in 1959 as the Brotherhood Program (Adaniya, 1981:330). In 1962, a program was developed in which leaders of Okinawa and of the Okinawan community in Hawaii would be sent on exchange visits at the expense of the United States Army. Approximately forty-five United Okinawan Association delegates and two hundred and fifty other citizens, educators and government leaders from Hawaii went to Okinawa on Friendship Mission trips (Adaniya, 1981:330). The tours included sightseeing, meetings with representatives of various segments of Okinawa's society, and visits to factories and institutions of social welfare (Adaniya, 1981:330). In 1961, the United Okinawan Association received a citation from the secretary of the Army, Wilbur M. Brucker, for its “exceptional contribution in developing an understanding by the Ryukyuan people of the mission of

These forty-five United Okinawan Association delegates were chosen to “minimize the tension between the two groups” (Adaniya, 1981:330). A substantial number of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii were considered as “goodwill intermediaries: who spoke English, Japanese, and the Okinawan. Through participation in the program, Okinawan Kibei Nisei felt they were needed as part of the community in Hawaii.

CHAPTER 6

THE 1980s REVITALIZATION OF THE OKINAWAN ETHNIC COMMUNITY

As described in Chapter 1, Okinawans in Hawaii became more actively engaged in their own community from the 1980s onwards. How has this increase activity affected Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s lives and their roles in the community? By taking on participant observation in the community, I examine the roles the Okinawan Kibei Nisei play in the community and how these roles influenced their marginality and revolved around their distinctive identity as Okinawan Kibei Nisei. My interviews include questions about their attitudes toward other Okinawan groups in Hawaii today. The data for this section are based on my fieldwork at the Okinawan Cultural Center, Okinawa Geneology Association, and the locality clubs where I was able to observe the Okinawan Kibei Nisei and their interactions with other Okinawan groups in Hawaii.
The reactions to the revitalization of the Okinawan ethnic community

The rise in the economic and social status of the Okinawan community in Hawaii was begun to take place in the late 1950s. On February 27th, 1959, *The Hawaii Hochi* reported that, among Japanese in Hawaii, Okinawans had become notable for achieving a higher economic status. Restaurants, supermarkets, and pig and chicken farming operations were run mostly by Okinawans. As *Hawaii Hochi* explains that the main reason for this success was "a strong unity among Okinawans" (Higa: 1994:202).

Okinawans often argue and fight each other, but when one of them unfortunately fails in his business, Okinawans support the person by collecting money. They help the person with a hope that he will be able to restart his business (Higa, 1994:202). (translation from Japanese)

A mainland Japanese student also comments on the success of Okinawans in Hawaii in a collection of essays, "The Okinawan-Naichi Relationship" (Toyama and Ikeda, 1989). In one essay written by the second generation of Okinawan implies that Okinawan success created a feeling of resentment among the Naichi. However, some Naichi admired the Okinawan's strong sense of unity, recognizing it as something they once had had.

Okinawan people smart in business, boy. They *shinbo* (pinch their pennies) and *seiko suru* (attain success)...When talking to a Naichi lady, I found out a few things about how Okinawans did things in the restaurant business. [She writes,] 'The Okinawans have driven the Naichi out of the restaurant business because they have all the food from the Okinawan farmers.' A Naichi friend said, 'Naichi people no more group feeling like Okinawans. Naichi only care for themselves.' Yeah, Okinawans smart boy (Toyama and Ikeda, 1989:135).

Overall, the Okinawan Nisei I interviewed have positive reactions concerning the revitalization of the Okinawan ethnic community in Hawaii. They were satisfied to see
positive changes happening for Okinawans of Hawaii because their children no longer felt the need to hide their identities as Okinawans and could be proud of who they are.

Arakachi Yananmi provides a second generation reflection on the change in the social status of Okinawans in Hawaii in a personal essay entitled “Us, Okinawans” in a compilation of short pieces by members of the Okinawa Genealogical Society of Hawaii (2004).

One day on my way to work, I happened to walk behind two little barefoot boys armed with their school books and their brown paper sack lunch. They looked about seven or eight years old.

“Us not Japanese, you know”
“What you?”
“Us, Okinawans!”

I stared at the dust-covered toes and gritted my teeth to keep the tears from falling. How different he is from me. When I was his age, I denied that I was an Okinawan, I despised being one, I tried very hard to cultivate other friends so as not to be identified with the Okinawan children. I was filled with anxiety whenever mother spoke the Okinawan language to her elders, what if my classmate heard? How could that boy stand being called “Big Rope” (The teasers thought “Oki” meant big, “nawa”, rope)—he would merely grin... Why did father’s friends always bring along their shamisens (Okinawan traditional instrument) to our house whenever they were invited to dinner? Must they sing so loud? When are they going to go home?

“Little boy, how I envy you. You are wiser, much wiser than I hope to be. How fortunate you are: to know who you are and what you are, and to have the courage to tell it to the world.”

Yukiko Oshiro, an Okinawan Nisei interviewee, related the revitalization of the Okinawan community to the revitalization of Hawaiian culture in Hawaii.

I did not know anything about Okinawan culture. There was no Okinawan culture in Hawaii before the war. It was after the war, especially in these few years, when people started to care about the Okinawan culture. Just like Hawaiian culture, I think. Hawaiian dance and language were suppressed for a long time, but now many people want to study them. Hawaiian people used to assimilate into the white mainstream culture, so did the Okinawans.
Her statement supports the idea that the impact of the ethnic revival was important in encouraging Hawaiians, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Okinawans, and other ethnic groups to search for their own “roots” (Ueunten, 1989:93).

The distinct culture and history of Okinawa received more attention from academia in Hawaii starting in the late 1970s. In 1976, the first Okinawan language courses offered at the East Honolulu YMCA (Ethnic Studies Oral History Project, 1981:575). In 1980, Ruth Adaniya presented a non-credit evening course, “The Okinawans in Hawaii’s History and Culture” at Kapiolani Community Colleges.

While some Okinawan Kibei Nisei supported the revitalization of the Okinawan ethnic community, others were critical. Ryuji Nakamura emphasizes,

[e]verything was turned upside down after the war. There was no discrimination by Nai-chi. People are more interested in Okinawan stuff than they used to be. Same thing is happening in Okinawa, right? We experienced the Hougen fuda (linguistic assimilation policy) in Okinawa, and now mainland Japanese became more interested in Okinawan dialects. Even now a Haole guy who can play sanshin very well, you know. When I went to mainland Japan last year, I was very surprised that there are so many Okinawan restaurant foods. You know Goya (bitter melon), tofu and chanpuru. They use Okinawan words, you know.

On the other hand, Akio Maeshiro, another Okinawan Kibei Nisei provides a critical view toward the Okinawan way of doing business and their relationship with other Japanese in Hawaii:

After the war, all Yamatonchu (mainland Japanese) drew back. They used to have businesses in Waikiki. But after the war, Uchinanchu took over all the businesses in Waikiki and became financially affluent. But sometimes, I feel that Uchinanchu are doing way too much. I do not know why they never keep Japanese in countenance.

He believes that this sort of behavior came from Okinawans’ inferiority complex. He explains that now “Uchinanchu make fun of Yamatonchu because Uchinanchu are doing
better now. After the war, Okinawans were treated with favor because they were under the U.S. occupation. That was for sure.” Akio’s experiences working at a Japanese newspaper after he came back to Hawaii as a Kibei Nisei may have affected his view toward other Okinawans in Hawaii. After he came back from Okinawa, he interacted almost exclusively with Japanese from mainland Japan. He experienced being personally excluded by local Okinawans in Hawaii because “he was a news reporter and had many connections with the Naichi and Okinawans do not want that kind of Okinawan.” He faced exclusion to a certain extent from the Okinawan community. Nonetheless, he claimed to be an Okinawan and he expressed pride in being such.

Kaneshiro (2002:84) also emphasizes that the main component of the Uchinanchu identity has always been the deeply rooted need to separate and distinguish itself from the Japanese identity. Oppression by the Naichi has served to unite Okinawans. Kaneshiro explains that the legacy of suffering was a basis for their identity and their distinct culture source of pride, which is now celebrated, especially through the perpetuation of cultural performing arts (Kaneshiro, 2002:84). Interviewees with Okinawan Kibei Nisei reveals that they are aware of the fact that the Okinawans in Hawaii as a group are somewhat unwilling to face the dark aspects of the culture and instead have the tendency to celebrate positive aspects after the prolonged experience of discrimination.

Most Okinawan Kibei Nisei maintain active contact with their relatives in Okinawa and are aware of the current situation of Okinawa. With the ability to understand Japanese, they understand social and political struggles that people in Okinawa are facing. Thus, Okinawan Kibei Nisei have taken on an important role in the community by updating the situation of Okinawa to the Okinawans in Hawaii.
Ryuji Nakamura states that

[upon returning to Hawaii, one of the differences between Okinawans in Okinawa and Okinawans in Hawaii that I noticed were that Okinawans here still stick to the old name of that Okinawans in Okinawa used to use. So it is very hard for newcomers from Okinawa to decide which club to belong to.

He is aware that Okinawans in Hawaii stick to the old town names because the name that their Issei parents came from. However, he does not understand why Okinawans in Hawaii are not aware of the current situation of Okinawa.

The study tours to Okinawa are now popular among Okinawans in Hawaii. The tours are often organized by Hawaii United Okinawan Association. The Okinawan Kibei Nisei also helped to organize the tour as advisors for it since they are well acquainted with Okinawa. Going to Okinawa means different things for Okinawan Kibei Nisei from the Nisei who grew up in Hawaii. The following is from a conversation that I took down at a function.

The president from […] club came and spoke to an Okinawan Kibei Nisei and told him to participate in the tour to Okinawa which was organize by […] club. The president said, “It is very significant for the club members to visit our homeland. We will visit peace memorial park, many places. You will join the tour, right?” the Okinawan Kibei Nisei replied, “Well, when are you guys planning to go to Okinawa?” He answered, “Oh we are thinking about around the end of July.” He answered, “Well, I do not know yet whether if I will join yet or not. You know Okinawa may be hit by typhoon at the time of the year.” The president answered laughing, “Okay. But you think about it, okay?”

After he left, the Okinawan Kibei Nisei told the researcher, “You know I do not really have to do all the sightseeing in Okinawa. I have relatives to visit and places that I want to go to on my own. I think while everybody else is visiting the memorial park, I would rather visit my relatives since they live near the park.”

For Okinawan Kibei Nisei, going back to Okinawa is to return to their homeland to which they are emotionally attached. They look forward to seeing relatives or
classmates that they spent time with during their youth. On the other hand, for Nisei, going back to Okinawa is to visit their parents’ homeland without any accompanying memories. They enjoy sightseeing, discovering their ethnic roots, and strengthening their attachment to Okinawa.

The roles of the Okinawan Kibei Nisei in their community

The Revitalization of the Okinawan ethnic community in Hawaii raised Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s status within their ethnic community as cultural resource. Since the 1980s, due to the gradual increase of interest in Okinawan cultural and linguistic practices in Hawaii, the Okinawan Kibei Nisei became recognized as a rich cultural resource. Hawaii-born Okinawan third and fourth generation have become increasingly assimilated into mainstream culture in Hawaii and retain limited knowledge of Okinawan culture and language.

The Okinawan Cultural Center, built in 1990, is dedicated “to the preservation, promotion, and perpetuation of the Okinawan culture, thus insuring a cultural legacy for the present and future generations of Okinawans” (Hawaii Okinawa Center homepage). It was also founded with the intent of maintaining ties between two islands groups, Hawaii and Okinawa. At this center, Okinawan Kibei Nisei often act as Okinawan cultural informants and interpreters for those visiting the center from Japan.

There are approximately fifteen volunteers at the Okinawan Cultural Center, all of whom are retired and three of them are Okinawan Kibei Nisei. While male volunteers usually take care of the flowers, trees and lawn in the Takakura Okinawa Garden, the
female volunteers work inside the building to organize the library and exhibit room, and do administrative works.

Interacting with other Nisei makes Okinawan Kibei Nisei volunteers aware of their unique background as Nisei who grew up in Okinawa. Ryuji Nakamura explains one of his discoveries while volunteering at the center.

One day, I found an article in a newspaper about an Okinawan garden at the Okinawan Center. So I donated some Okinawan plants from my gardens. Some weeks later, I came to the center to check how my plants were. Then, I found that the people at the center did not take care of my plants properly. So I began to come to the center often to take care of my plants as well as the other plants at the center. Before I came to the center, I had never known the term Kibei Nisei. It was the first time to hear the term when I came to the center. Everybody asked me so many questions about Okinawa and recognized me as Kibei Nisei.

The Okinawan Genealogy Association, while meets on the third Saturday of each month at the Hawaii Okinawa Center, is another place where Okinawan Kibei Nisei could make use of their distinctive experiences of living in Okinawa. Since many Okinawan Nisei and Sansei were interested in their own family genealogies but could not read Japanese characters, they needed translators who could read Okinawan family names, which are unique and difficult to read. In Hawaii, only Okinawan Kibei Nisei were capable of this. There were also the Nisei who could speak Japanese because of their experience of working for the U.S federal government on Okinawa after World War II. Bob Asato, who had lived in Okinawa for ten years, states that “[t]here were some Kibei Nisei who always helped us with tracing back our family roots.” Because Bob did not go to school in Japan, he cannot read and write Japanese.

The interviews with the Okinawan Kibei Nisei reveals that the term “Kibei Nisei” is ambiguous even among themselves. One this is clear through: the ability to read and
write Japanese, skills leaned while attending Japanese school in Okinawa, has become an important criteria to be Kibei Nisei. Toru Adaniya explains,

I questioned myself whether I should be considered Kibei because I cannot speak or write Japanese. My question is, to be considered Kibei, do you have to be culturally educated and able to read and write? I ask the question because people often asked me if I am a Kibei. I always said I do not know. Yes, I was born here and grew up with fifteen years in Okinawa and came back, so it seems that I fit the definition of Kibei. And yet, on the other hand, people think Kibei can read and write, in a way that they were educated there. I wasn’t educated there, so I don’t know if I am Kibei. I really do not know. In certain way, I guess I am, but in other ways, I am not. But I understand Japanese better than Nisei here. But I am ashamed to say I cannot read and write. I was more of a jock, and I liked the sports. If I had spare time, I would rather do sports, than reading or studying.

Toru Adaniya, who was sent to Okinawa when he was six months old, spent twelve years in Okinawa; however, he attended school only two of those years because schools were used for military purposes after the war broke out. When he returned to Hawaii in 1947 he was not fluent in Japanese and spoke no English. Even though there were special facilities that taught English, his father put him in a class together with second graders at a local school. He studied hard and was eventually placed in his appropriate grade with students his age. Once in Hawaii, he spent much of his time with people who spoke mostly English. Most of his friends were locals, not Kibei Nisei. He attended a high school where his friends were local Nisei and other races. He graduated from Iolani High School and decided to forego his college education and enlisted in the military and served in the Korean War. Interacting with mostly Nisei he was identified as Nisei as well.

Expressing an Okinawan Kibei Nisei identity

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Today, due to the recognition of their roles and recognition of their life experiences that have been neglected, Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s marginality has decreased. Because of their acceptance in the Okinawan community, their identity as Okinawan Kibei Nisei has been recognized and normalized in Okinawan Nisei and Japanese Kibei Nisei community. Okinawan Kibei Nisei have found themselves comfortably identifying as Okinawans, a change that illustrates how the conception of Okinawan identity in Hawaii has become large enough to embrace Okinawan Kibei Nisei identity today. One Okinawan Kibei Nisei interviewee explains,

> During the war, we were forced to identify ourselves either as Japanese or American. There was no option of being Okinawan. Those who came back from Japan fell in-between these two categories. But I could not feel comfortable calling myself simply Kibei. But now, after the war, I have found myself comfortable understanding myself as Okinawan.

As their marginality has decreased, their ability to sustain their distinctive identity in various ways has increased and become less assertive. Despite their acceptance in the Okinawan community, their distinct identity still remains with their own recognition of their life experiences in a positive light. By introducing themselves as Okinawan Kibei Nisei, they also distinguish themselves from other Okinawans, Japanese, and other Kibei Nisei. Since the term “Kibei” is not well-known in Japan, they have to explain the meaning of the term and also explain their unique experiences. Telling their own life experiences as well writing their autobiography have also become very important factor to sustain their distinctive identity.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS

This study of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii was conducted to examine the socio-historical processes of their identity formation. Okinawan Kibei Nisei were born in Hawaii but raised and educated in either Okinawa or mainland Japan; they returned to Hawaii either prior to or following World War II.

The results of this study supports a social constructionist view of ethnic identity that sees ethnic identity as constructed through social interaction and as changed over time according to the social changes a group encounters. Okinawan Kibei Nisei identity is an interactive result of socio-historical circumstances that they encountered both in Okinawa and Hawaii.

This study was designed to seek answers to the following research questions:
1. Is there a distinct Okinawan Kibei Nisei identity separate from the larger collective identity that they might share with other Okinawans in Hawaii, Japanese Kibei Nisei, or Okinawans in Okinawa?

2. How has this distinct identity developed over time?

3. What is the nature of their identity today?

An examination of Okinawan Kibei Nisei life stories reveals that there is a distinct Okinawan Kibei Nisei identity separate from the larger collective identity they might share with other Okinawans in Hawaii, Japanese Kibei Nisei, or Okinawans in Okinawa. Their distinct identity developed based on the following factors: a sense of dissonance from their Nisei peers and family, class-consciousness, and a sense of responsibility to change public impressions in Hawaii.

Their sense of dissonance was rooted in their awareness of being different from Okinawans in Hawaii, Japanese Kibei Nisei, and Okinawans in Okinawa.

Normally, returnees from Hawaii and their children had prestige in Okinawa; however, such was not the case for those who were sent for economic reasons. Even though they were united by blood, initially they were not made welcome because their arrivals caused economic hardships for the extended families. They were aware of their status as outsiders in their own family. However, due to their young age, their adjustment to life in Okinawa was generally easy and they were able to feel accepted in other Okinawan children in Okinawa. Upon returning to Hawaii, however, they experienced a marginalized status in the larger society of Hawaii. They faced difficulties in English. They had a hard time getting along with their family and Nisei peers from who they have been separated for a long time. Their economic status and social status among Nisei
groups were lower because they had lived in different country. They were also marginalized because of the lower status of Okinawans in Hawaii who were considered as “minority group within Japanese.” The double marginality greatly influenced their consciousness of being different from Japanese Kibei Nisei and Okinawans in Hawaii. Because of their shared experiences of hardship in adjusting to their new way of life in Hawaii and of being “displaced,” Okinawan Kibei Nisei became emotionally attached to each other.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei were also aware of being different from Kibei Nisei who were sent to Japan for educational reasons with a degree of economic security. In the 1920s and 1930s, when they were in Okinawa, Okinawa was a very poor area in Japan. To their credit, when they talk about their dire poverty and their relationships with family members in Okinawa, they often evaluated these experiences as being a source of strength that helped them overcome difficulties later in life. For example, those who returned to Hawaii during the Depression were able to find only minimum wage jobs that required no language skills.

Upon returning to Hawaii, Okinawan Kibei Nisei felt a need to change public impressions of Okinawans. Aware of the ways in which Naichi (mainland Japanese) discriminated against Okinawans was more obvious to these newcomers than to Hawaii-raised Nisei, who had learned to downplay their Okinawan identity. For example, Issei parents wanted their children to speak Japanese and did not talk to their children in the Okinawan dialect. As a result, Okinawan Kibei Nisei had few peers with whom to speak in their native tongue, Uchinaguchi.
Even though Okinawan Kibei Nisei were sent home for economic reasons, they were educated while there. They learned to read, write and speak standard Japanese better than most of their Nisei counterparts in Hawaii. Upon returning to Hawaii, they found that few Okinawans in Hawaii could speak standard Japanese. Okinawans Kibei Nisei were able to show both the Okinawan ethnic community and the larger Japanese community that Okinawans were equally, if not better educated than the Naichi in Hawaii.

The case study of Uruma Seinenkai, the pre-war Okinawan Kibei Nisei social organization, was one of the most prominent examples of Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s ability to develop a positive marginality and manifest an identity distinct from and equal to the Japanese. The club members shared feelings of shame and embarrassment and acknowledge their need to change their own and their larger society’s impressions of Okinawans in Hawaii. With their knowledge of languages of Japanese, English and Okinawan dialect, and a distinctively Okinawan ethnic cultural awareness, the club members participated in various community activities to introduce and celebrate Okinawan culture with a deliberate intent to foster appreciation of it. One such event was an annual Ryukyu sumo tournament, which drew participants from Oahu as well as the other islands. The Uruma Seinenkai, formed in 1933, contributed to bringing the Okinawans in Hawaii together for the first time. The club sponsored a speech contest in English and Japanese twice a year. Speakers spoke on topics such as Japan’s relations with the United States, the current status of Hawaii, and the development of Okinawa. The contest demonstrated the higher education of second generation of Okinawans, a group that played a major role in establishing pride among Okinawans in Hawaii.
The success of the club shows that the members' marginality gave rise to a distinct and positive identity. Conscious of being “displaced,” they bonded with each other. Their Japanese education brought them higher status among the Issei, who valued Japanese education. This fundings supports Uger’s argument that “positive marginality requires the acknowledgement that previously neglected aspects of one’s life story are both personally and professionally legitimate.” (177:2000).

The sense of a distinct Okinawan Kibei Nisei identity, however, changed as they experienced socio-historical changes in the Okinawan ethnic community in Hawaii and in their homeland. Their distinct and fluid identity was shaped by four significant socio-historical experiences: World War II, War Relief Efforts, the U.S. Occupation and the Revitalization of the Okinawan Community in Hawaii.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s wartime experiences illuminate their range of emotions concerning the two countries that demanded their loyalty: Japan and the United States. They experienced the additional polarizing pressures of identity choice. The war forced them to choose an identity subsumed by hegemony either Japanese or America. There was no option for an Okinawan identity.

Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s experiences in war relief efforts illuminate that the single purpose of War Relief Movement, which involved sending aid to Okinawa after the war, decreased the gap between Okinawan Kibei Nisei and other Okinawans in Hawaii. Those who lived in either Okinawa or mainland Japan during the war took a major role in these relief efforts. They gave firsthand testimonies of Japan’s defeat and of Okinawa’s devastation to the Japanese community.
U.S. Occupation in Okinawa also influenced Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s lives in Hawaii. After World War II, Okinawa remained under direct U.S. occupation for twenty-seven year. The United States Army wished to develop better relations between American forces and the people of Okinawa. A substantial number of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii were considered “goodwill intermediaries”: American citizens with a command of English, Japanese and Okinawan dialect as well as knowledge of Okinawa and its people. Their participation in the program made them feel part of the community in Hawaii.

The revitalization of the Okinawan ethnic community in Hawaii from the 1980s significantly raised Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s status within their ethnic community as cultural resource. In fact, though third and fourth generation Hawaii-born Okinawans became more and more assimilated into mainstream culture in Hawaii, the Okinawan Kibei Nisei helped the younger members of the Okinawan community retain some knowledge of Okinawan culture and language. Their superior command of the Okinawan dialect as well as their knowledge of Okinawan culture, caused them to be held in high esteem within the community and to see their unique experiences and skills in positive ways.

Today, Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s sense of marginalization is far less potent. In fact, they identify themselves as Okinawans, an indication that current Okinawan identity is far more open and fluid.

Their decreased marginality helps them sustain their distinctive identity in various ways that are less aggressive than earlier. They are active in the Okinawan Cultural Center, interpreting for Japanese visitors and serving as Okinawan cultural guides. By
introducing themselves as Okinawan Kibei Nisei, they also distinguish themselves from other Okinawans, Japanese, and Kibei Nisei. Since the term “Kibei” is not well known in Japan, they have to explain the meaning of the term and their unique experiences. Speaking and writing their life experiences has helped them sustain their distinct identity.

This study explored the process by which Okinawan Kibei Nisei formed their distinct identity, a process that involved their parents’ economic status during their childhood, as well as their Japanese education in Japan, immigration experiences, interaction with other groups, and roles in their multiple communities. However, there are other social factors influenced that also can be examined in more detail, such as their own economic status that they had after returning to Hawaii, education in Hawaii, and differences between genders. This study has also been limited to the Okinawan Kibei Nisei experience in Hawaii. A regional comparative study of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii, mainland U.S. and other places to which Okinawans emigrated such as Brazil or Peru may shed further light on the dynamics within the Japanese American or overseas Japanese communities, making it possible to discuss what elements uniquely characterize the Hawaii Okinawan Kibei Nisei experiences.

As a student from Okinawa, I shared an understanding of the experience of living in Okinawa with the Okinawan Kibei Nisei, a narrative that narrowed the distance between us during the interviews. My age helped as well. As a young female student from Okinawa who had assimilated mainstream Japanese culture, I represented a person to whom the Okinawan Kibei Nisei could teach their experiences. Their social obligation to pass down knowledge to the next generation also led them to be very comfortable and frank in speaking about their experience to me.
During the interviews, it was easy for interviewees to place me in the social context of a granddaughter. My impression was that I may have been one of the first “young” female Okinawans to be interviewing them, possibly one reason they granted me such open access to their life stories and to very sensitive issues including discrimination, national loyalties, and personal identity. I was often treated like a visiting family member to be fed, fussed over and groomed for marriage. One interviewee commented that “so many researchers come and go, and they only care about finding the answers they want for their research questions but you listen carefully to details.” Interviewees like this one sometimes downplayed the importance of their life stories, pointing out their lack of academic value. Sometimes, the relationship was placed more in an American cultural context of adult intergenerational equality and I was just introduced as a “friend” to an acquaintance of my interviewees.

However, I was also aware of being an outsider studying the Okinawan community in Hawaii. Okinawan Kibei Nisei were distinctly uncomfortable with the question of discrimination on the basis of being Kibei Nisei, perhaps, for the social necessity of maintaining an appearance of the Okinawan community solidarity. They might have been less comfortable discussing aspects of differences within the collective community with a researcher from Okinawa, as opposed to being a fellow Okinawan Kibei Nisei.

In concluding each of my interviews, although separate from my research, I asked the interviewees what they would like to pass down in terms of knowledge and experiences to the next generation. The answers I received were both wide-ranging and revealing about the cultural and social values they held as important like the “Okinawa no
"kokoro (Okinawan heart)." However, I was also cautioned not to place Okinawan culture or history on a pedestal. The implication may have been that Okinawans in Hawaii as a group are somewhat unwillingly to face the dark aspects of the culture but have the tendency to celebrate positive aspects after the prolonged experience of discrimination. The Okinawan Kibei Nisei perspective in particular might emphasize this given their life experiences in Okinawa and Hawaii of having faced exclusion to a certain extent in both communities.

Life stories of Okinawan Kibei Nisei tell us their own distinct sociological knowledge about their world that was given because of their marginality. Their life stories also encourage others to tell their own stories and teach us how to live as subjects in the society.

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