

The Japanese Immigrant Media and Women in the early 20th century

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1. Introduction

This paper demonstrates the impact of researching the representation of ‘the voices of Japanese women’ living in the United States in the early 20th century. The phrase the ‘voices of women’ in this presentation means discourses by women, which denoted varied and dynamic social practices and the meanings of utterances and cognitions (including the production and interpretation of various texts) in a socio-political, economic and cultural context¹. The ‘voices of women’ or discourses by women were represented and constructed in and through texts in the media which were written or composed by Japanese women living in the U.S. The texts can be essays, literary works and examples of the visual arts which women produced and sent to the Japanese immigrant media, together with advertisements for their businesses and themselves which they asked the media to carry. They include also narrative texts spoken by women which the media collected. On the one hand, these texts represent the ‘voices of women’ in that women sought to publish their opinions and expressions. On the other, these texts represent the voices as socio-cultural and political products. This is because they were produced by particular groups of Japanese women in the U.S. who were influenced by their socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. It is also because these texts were selected and edited by editors and reporters under the socio-political, economic or cultural principles of the presses. Therefore, the ‘voices of women’ or discourses by women were linked to representing and producing varied and dynamic social practices and the meanings of utterances and cognitions in a socio-political, economic and cultural context. I am going to show why I research the ways these voices were constructed in the developing Japanese immigrant newspapers between 1914 and 1924, especially in relation to ideas of “home”.

¹ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (Harlow (England) and New York: Longman, 1989), 22-23, David Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham (England) and Philadelphia (PA): Open University Press, 2000), 1, Yutaka Oishi, *Journalism to Media Gensetsu (Journalism and Media Discourse)* (Tokyo: Keisou Shobo, 2005), 153, Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek* (Oxford (UK) and Malden (Massachusetts): Blackwell, 1999), 89.

2. Background

The idea of “home” appeared in the developing immigrant media in the growing Japanese communities in the U.S. The major Japanese female migration to the U.S. occurred in the period 1908 to 1924. It ended when the 1924 immigration law was introduced, which virtually banned further Japanese immigration to the U.S.²

The U.S. census shows that in the year 1900 there were only 985 Japanese women over the age of 15 in the U.S. but by 1910 the number had increased to 9,087³. In 1920, there were 38,303 women in a total population of 111,010 Japanese⁴. Glenn indicates that 45,706 Japanese females landed on the U.S. mainland between 1909 and 1923, some 33,628 recorded as wives⁵. Thus, most of these women came to the U.S. to join their husbands⁶.

For those in the U.S. with anti-Japanese attitudes, Japanese immigrant women were used to exemplify the particular negative characteristics of Japanese immigrants. In particular, picture brides and picture marriage were taken as evidence of the uncivilized nature of the Japanese. This marriage practice was similar to the practice of Japanese proxy marriage arranged by a *baishakunin* (go-between), which was a popular approach to marriage in Japan between the late 19th century and the early 20th century. Exclusionists from the U.S. insisted that “women were wed without regard to morality or love” in such marriages, “disguised as brides” but became “female labourers” and “produced children”, causing an increase in the Japanese population who “could not be assimilated into American society”⁷. Hanawa points out that the common image of these picture brides in the U.S. press between 1910 and 1924 was one of “mindless, immoral, fecund laborers”⁸. Critics cited these undesirable characteristics in their discourse and concluded that the Japanese would not be able to

² Yukiko Hanawa, "The Several World of Issei Women" (MA thesis, California States University, Long Beach, 1982), 55, Malve von Hassell, "Issei Women between Two Worlds: 1875-1985" (PhD, University of California, San Diego, 1987), 86.

³ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride-Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 31, Yamato Ichihashi, *Japanese in the United States: A Critical Study of the Problems of the Japanese Immigrants and Their Children* (Stanford CA), London, Humphrey Milford: Stanford University Press, Oxford University Press, 1932), 72.

⁴ Hanawa, "The Several World of Issei Women", 51.

⁵ Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride-Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service*, 31.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷ Yuji Ichioka, "Amerika Nadeshiko: Japanese Immigrant Women in the United States, 1900-1924," *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (1980): 355.

⁸ Hanawa, "The Several World of Issei Women", 57.

assimilate into white American society nor to gain civil rights and economic advantages⁹.

In order to oppose U.S. anti-Japanese discourses and in order to support Japanese female immigration and the formation of families among Japanese immigrants, leading discourses among Japanese immigrant communities tried to create images and roles for Japanese female immigrants, which would demonstrate how civilized Japanese people were and their power to assimilate into U.S. society. Furthermore, Japanese immigrant women were expected to take important social and economic roles such as wage-earners for their families.

These opinions often used ideas of “home” (or “*katei*”) to promote the image of the ideal immigrant family¹⁰, and outlined the roles and position of women in such “good homes”. In the early 20th century the main period of Japanese female emigration to the U.S., ideas of “home” or “*katei*” (home) spread as a new domestic model in the Japanese media in Japan. They were related to ideas of moral and social reform; the morals of a family and a marriage were reformed in a healthy home based on a monogamous family, and it was believed that society would improve through the increase of healthy homes.

Japanese immigrant media used and reproduced these trans-national gender discourses of “home” to define femininity and women’s enlightenment and encouraged female immigrants to play an important role in promoting Americanization, to establish a Japanese national/ethnic identity among Japanese immigrants and indeed to contribute to their families and communities economically and socially. The main advocates of the formation of families among Japanese immigrants were male immigrants, many of them from a middle-class background. The message aimed at eradicating the image of a body of corrupt Japanese immigrants and all uncivilized racial images of Japanese immigrants through encouraging the growth of families and settlement in the U.S. It reflected a changing socio-political, economic and cultural context for Japanese immigrants in the U.S. but also it was formed as a reaction to U.S. anti-Japanese discourses and Japanese political discourses under various forms of nationalism, racism and capitalism¹¹.

⁹ Kei Tanaka, "Japanese Picture Marriage in 1900-1924 California: Construction of Japanese Race and Gender" (A PhD thesis, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2002), 5-6.

¹⁰ See, for example, *Nichibei Shuho* (*Japanese American Commercial Weekly*), 27 Jun. 1908.

¹¹ Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), Paul R. Spickard, *Japanese Americans: The Formation*

Japanese women in the U.S. were accessing the media space dedicated to Japanese people, not only those in Japanese communities within the U.S. but also throughout the world. Many Japanese immigrant women continued to read Japanese (women's) journals, magazines and books which they brought, or sent for, from Japan. During an interview one first-generation Japanese American woman told her interviewers about sending for and reading Japanese women's magazines:

Q: Then what did you do every day?

A: Well, I wrote letters and read magazines. (...)

Q: OK. Were those magazines sent from Japan?

A: Yes, I got them from Japan.¹²

Furthermore, immigrant newspapers of the late 19th to early 20th century carried many advertisements for Japanese women's magazines¹³. Moreover, Japanese women's magazines carried many letters from Japanese women living in the U.S. For example, in 30 issues¹⁴ of *Fujokai (The Women's World)*, between January 1912 and June 1914 I identified 8 letters and 1 article from Japanese women readers and correspondents in the U.S.¹⁵ One woman reader in the U.S. wrote to the magazine;

I am an ordinary woman who does not have a good education. However I love reading magazines. I have been reading many women's magazines such as *Jogakuzasshi (the*

and Transformations of an Ethnic Group (New York, London, Mexico City, New Delhi, Singapore, Sydney and Tronto: Twayne Publisher, Prentice Hall International, 1996), 1-6, Tanaka, "Japanese Picture Marriage in 1900-1924 California: Construction of Japanese Race and Gender", Rumi Yasutake, *Transnational Women's Activism: The United States, Japan, and Japanese Immigrant Communities in California, 1859-1920* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2004).

¹² O.H. 1752: Issei Experience in Orange County, California, Yukiko Furuta (interviewed by Arthur A. Hansen and Yasuko Gamo on June 17 and July 6, 1982). K. Tamura Orange County Japanese American Oral History Project. Historical and Cultural Foundation of Orange County Japanese American Council and California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program Japanese American Project, 1985: 24.

¹³ See, for example, advertisements for women's magazines in *The Nichibei* Newsapepr: *Shufuno-tomo (Friends for housewives)* (*The Nichibei*, 19 Apr. 1923, 8 Feb. 1924, 4 May 1924), *Fujokai (The Women's world)* (*The Nichibei*, 10 Apr. 1922, 21 Apr. 1923, 4 Dec. 1923, 12 Feb. 1924) and *Fujin-Club (Women's Club)* (*The Nichibei*, 22 Apr. 1923, 6 Aug. 1923, 9 Feb. 1924, 16 Mar. 1924, 17 May 1924). The advertisements indicated five bookshops which sold the magazines in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Sacramento. Also, one of the popular magazines for girls, *Shoujo Club (Girls' Club)* was available by mail from Japan or in these these book shops (see the advertisement in *The Nichibei*, 30 Apr. 1923, 7 Apr. 1924).

¹⁴ I checked the original copies of the magazine which are stored in the Meiji library in the University of Tokyo. The issues which I read were as follows; *Fujokai (The Women's World)* 1, no. 1; 5, no. 1; 12, no. 3; 14, no. 5- 6; 16, no. 1; 17, no. 3; 18, no. 1, 3; 20, no. 6; 21, no. 3-5; 22, no. 2; 23 no. 5; 24, no. 1, 5; 27, no. 1, 3; 29, no. 4-6 (1912-1924).

¹⁵ See also, for example, *Shufunotomo (Friends of housewives)* 8, no.2 (Feb. 1924): 304-308.

World of Women's Education) and *Fujinn-Sekai (The World of Women)* for ten years...I am recommending female friends and acquaintances here in the U.S. to read *Fujokai (The Women's World)*¹⁶.

The magazines also carried many letters from Japanese women readers from all over the world, from countries/areas such as Britain¹⁷, Canada¹⁸, South America¹⁹, Indonesia²⁰, China²¹ and also from Japanese colonies in Taiwan and Korea²². These magazines were an important medium by which to spread the idea of “home”. Thus, they continued to learn the popular ideas of “home” which were spread all over the world in the Japanese language media in the early 20th century. Under the influence of this discursive network, the ‘voices of women’ started to be articulated in the media; the media set a space for, called for, received and carried essays, reports and literary works written by women and the opinions of women.

3. Other studies

However, studies of the Japanese immigrant media published in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries have focused mainly on the ways the male intellectuals, journalists, writers and community leaders of Japanese immigrants emerged and were involved in media activity²³. Moreover, although ideas of “home” were the most significant theme in the Japanese immigrant media and society, closely related to the formation of the ‘voices of women’ in the immigrant media, the significant impact of ideas of “home” has not been examined in studies of Japanese immigrant women in the early 20th century. Nor, Despite playing an important role in shaping and disseminating these ideas of “home”, discourses by Japanese immigrant women in the U.S., printed

¹⁶ Takako (U.S.), *Fujokai (The Women's World)* 15, no.1 (Jan. 1917): 172-173.

¹⁷ For example, see *Fujokai (The Women's World)* 24, no.3 (Sep. 1921): 156.

¹⁸ For example, see *Fujokai (The Women's World)* 29, no.4 (Apr. 1924): 318.

¹⁹ For example, see *Fujokai (The Women's World)* 22, no.2 (Aug. 1920): 157.

²⁰ For example, see *Fujokai (The Women's World)* 24, no.5 (Nov. 1921): 157-158.

²¹ For example, see *Fujokai (The Women's World)* 21, no.5 (May 1920): 158; 24, no.3 (Sep. 1921): 158.

²² For example, see *Fujokai (The Women's World)* 21, no.4 (Apr.1920): 197-198; 22, no.2 (Aug. 1920): 157; 24, no.3 (Sep. 1921), 158-159, *Fujinn-Sekai (The World of Women)* 10, no.7 (Jun. 1915): 128; 12, no.1 (Jan. 1917): 132.

²³ Hachiro Ebihara, *Kaigai Houjishimbun Zasshishi (History of Japanese Newspapers and Magazines Outside Japan)* (Tokyo: Meicyo Fukyukai, 1936 (reprinted 1980)), Shinnichi Kato, *Beikoku Nikkeijin Hyakunenshi: Zaibei Nikkeijin Hatten Jinshiroku (One Hundred Years History of Japanese American in the U.S.: Record of the Development of Japanese American in the U.S.)* (Los Angeles (Calif., U.S.A), Tokyo (Japan): New Japanese American News, 1961), Norio and Shiramizu Tamura, Shigehiko, ed., *Beikoku Shokino Nihongo Shimbun (Japanese Newspaper in the Early Period in the USA)*. (Tokyo: Keisou-shobou, 1986), 383.

in Japanese immigrant newspapers in the early 20th century, have not, to date, been sufficiently investigated.

Of course, the main reason for this lack of study is the difficulty of finding primary sources published or written by Japanese immigrants before WWII. Many sources were lost before the internment of Japanese immigrants/Americans during the war. However, another reason is that, until recently in many academic fields, studies of Asian immigrant women were marginalized. Historic or sociological concern has either ignored or oversimplified the history of Asian immigrant women, thus contributing to, and reinforcing, the stereotypical images of “Oriental” women. Moreover, studies by white middle-class feminists have tended to describe Asian immigrant women as “victims or passive actors caught up in history and societal change” and “ignored their perspectives and resistance”²⁴.

Nowadays, however, the study of Asian immigrant/American women is shifting. From the perspectives of race, nation, ethnicity, class and gender, more researchers “have embedded their analyses in structures of power and linked historical inquiry to social change”²⁵. They try to scrutinize the active involvement of Asian immigrant/American women in social change as subjects and objects. Moreover, recent studies try to reveal how “transnational ideas, practices, and politics” were produced, including gender discourses among Japanese immigrants, and how they influenced the international political, socio-economic and cultural power relationship around immigrants²⁶.

4. *The present study*

My research critically evaluates the complicated roles and characteristics of the emerging ‘voices of women’ as well as taking into account the authoritarian manner in which the trans-national Japanese media and Japanese immigrant media provided opportunities for ‘the voices of women’. I analyzed a range of published material written and spoken by Japanese women living in the U.S. as well as various primary sources such as Japanese women’s magazines, personal letters, official statistics and documents. In particular, quantitative and qualitative analyses are deployed to

²⁴ Shirley Hune, "Introduction: Through 'Our' Eyes: Asian/Pacific Islander American Women's History," in *Asian/Pacific Islander American Women: A Historical Anthology*, ed. Shirley Hune, Gail M. Nomura (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003), 5-6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶ Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America*, 4, 7.

examine the largest Japanese immigrant newspaper, *Nichibei Shimbun* (*The Nichibei*, *Japanese American Daily*) between 1914 and 1924. This newspaper was the largest Japanese immigrant newspaper in the U.S. mainland.

5. Findings

My research reveals that the formation of the ‘voices of women’ in the immigrant media was closely related to the formation of the racial, trans-national and ethnic identity of the ‘Japanese in the U.S.’ as a group. The voices were produced in close relation to the idea of “home”.

Space for the voices

For example, space in *The Nichibei* for the ‘voices of women’ resulted from the regard paid in the newspaper to the idea of “home.” They set aside columns in the newspaper to show this regard. They also called for essays and literary works written by female contributors and readers which were closely related to the policy of producing discourses of “home”, especially by airing the opinions of women. Moreover, the newspaper carried articles about discussions between and instructions from male editorial members, articles and contributions by male and female. These opinions which were published were closely related to the ideas of “home” and settlement in the U.S. *The Nichibei* defined the subject matter. The first subject for essays in new established “Women and Home pages” which announced by the newspaper was “The hidden contributions of women”²⁷:

Calling for contributions among our fellow women in the U.S.: ... the development of our fellow Japanese in the U.S. does not depend solely on men’s power. In this foreign land where we are isolated, women help and encourage their husbands to develop their businesses, educate children and build a healthy society. Such efforts and contributions from ordinary women have not been recognized in society... ‘Headquarters’ sends out a call for essays about the hidden contributions of these women to make the public aware of their contributions...²⁸

Women’s writings and opinions were expected to advance the roles and position of women in establishing “homes” and a healthy immigrant society. They were

²⁷ *The Nichibei*, 1 Mar. 1919.

²⁸ Ibid.

expected to contribute to establishing and developing their immigrant society. They were also expected to help form the identity and memory of ‘Japanese in the U.S.’

Selection of the voices

Interestingly, a particular group of women joined, emerged or were represented as readers and contributors, to establish representative voices as “their own” and “women’s” voices in the media. For example, through checking all the issues of *The Nichibei* between 1st January 1914 and 1st July 1924 on micro-film, I have identified 299 essays contributed by 156 Japanese women who lived in the U.S. in the relevant period. Of the 156 women contributors of essays, 17 women mentioned having children as well as husbands, 20 women said that they had husbands, 5 women referred to themselves as housewives, 18 women stated that they had young children, one woman let it be known that she had children but had lost her husband and 3 women indicated that they were single. In total, 61 women can be identified as married and all of them, except for one, were living with their husbands (and sometimes children). Among them, 5 women wrote that they had travelled from Japan to the U.S. as picture brides; one had left Japan with her husband soon after her arranged marriage in Japan. Two of the three single women mentioned above had parents in the U.S. who had sent for them their mothers had died before they arrived. These women introduced themselves as being responsible for looking after the house and taking care of their brothers and sisters. Other women who contributed articles did not make it clear whether or not they had husbands and children. However, many of them wrote essays about issues related to wives and mothers, thereby implying that they also were married women. Therefore, it can be assumed that many female contributors were wives, mothers or elder sisters who were wholly engaged in domestic duties.

Some female contributors of essays mentioned their educational level:

| Educational background | Number of women |
|--|-----------------|
| Secondary education in Japan | 7 |
| Higher Education in Japan (women’s college) | 1 |
| Elementary School in the U.S. | 1 |
| Secondary education in the U.S. | 2 |
| Higher education in the U.S. (university and postdoctoral) | 3 |

Table 1: Educational background of the female contributors of essays

The relatively high number of women in this group who had secondary education in Japan implies that the female contributors were generally well-educated. As some women mentioned, they had graduated from, or had studied in, girls' high schools in Japan. One contributor mentioned her middle-class background in Japan²⁹ and one had worked as an elementary school teacher in Japan³⁰. Thus we can be sure that some at least of the female contributors had been well educated and came from the middle class.

Some women's contributions show that some of the women readers of *The Nichibei* had also had a good education in Japan. Hanaoka in Santa Barbara, an avid reader of the newspaper, introduced her six Japanese female neighbours to the newspaper; "Many of them had studied in high schools in Japan but because they could not read the newspapers of white people (because they were written in English), they read *The Nichibei* newspaper"³¹. Yasuko Takahashi, who was the most frequent contributor of *Tanka* poems (short poems) to the newspaper, also mentioned that her Japanese female friends/neighbours "had more understanding about occupations of their husbands" and "recognized the issues to do with the education of the second generation". These women "always tried to improve their minds by books about childcare and women's issues whilst busy working in rural areas" and "were raising their children with great hopes for their future"³².

Nevertheless, although many female contributors showed their well-educated or middle-class background in Japan, many mentioned that they or their husband worked in farming or lived in a rural area in the U.S. Fifteen women contributors of essays stated clearly that they or their husbands were engaged in agriculture. The geographical disposition of the female contributors of essays to *The Nichibei* newspaper is shown in the following table:

| State | City, Town or area | The number of contributors |
|------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| California | San Francisco | 17 |
| | Los Angeles | 7 |
| | Oakland | 5 |
| | Sacramento | 5 |
| | Eastern Area of San Francisco Bay | 3 |
| | Pajaro | 3 |
| | Santa Barbara | 3 |

²⁹ Tuneyo (in Oakdale, CA.), *The Nichibei*, 10 Apr. 1919.

³⁰ Fudeko (in Denair, CA.), *The Nichibei*, 4 Apr. 1920.

³¹ Toyoko Hanaoka, "Kateinainobanjihauchiakeshugika Matahahimitsushugika (Can We Tell Everything or Keep Secret at Home?)," *The Nichibei*, 5 Mar. 1920.

³² *The Nichibei*, 1 Jan. 1924.

| | | |
|------------|---|----------|
| | Stockton | 3 |
| | Vacaville | 3 |
| | Ballart | 2 |
| | Pacific Beach | 2 |
| | Berkley | 1 |
| | Delano | 1 |
| | Denair | 1 |
| | Dinuba | 1 |
| | Fillmore | 1 |
| | Florin | 1 |
| | Fowler | 1 |
| | Fresno | 1 |
| | Gorman | 1 |
| | Livingstone | 1 |
| | Lompoc | 1 |
| | Long Beach | 1 |
| | Oakdale | 1 |
| | Pennington | 1 |
| | Redwood | 1 |
| | San Mateo | 1 |
| | Walnut Grove (Ca.) | 1 |
| | Imperial Valley | 1 |
| | Central California | 1 |
| | Southern California | 2 |
| | Town or area name were not given | 3 |
| | California, Total | -----77 |
| Arizona | Lupton | 2 |
| | Arizona, Total | -----2 |
| Colorado | Denver | 3 |
| | Brighton | 1 |
| | New Castle | 1 |
| | Town name was not given | 1 |
| | Colorado, Total | -----6 |
| Idaho | Town name was not given | 1 |
| | Idaho, Total | -----1 |
| New Mexico | Gallup | 1 |
| | New Mexico, Total | -----1 |
| Texas | Town name was not given | 1 |
| | Texas, Total | -----1 |
| Other | Near Delaware Bay | 1 |
| | “countryside” | 9 |
| | Information about areas where contributors lived was not given at all | 50 |
| | Other, Total | -----60 |
| | Under investigation | 8 |
| | Total | -----156 |

Table 2: Geographical distribution of the female contributors of essays to *The Nichibei*

The number of contributors according to each state shows that the major group of contributors were living in the State of California. Moreover, many women who sent essays to *The Nichibei* newspaper came from rural areas of California.

Tanka poems were also sent by people as far away as Lodi, Sacramento, Los Angeles, Florin, Pajaro, Barkley, Broadmoor, San Francisco, Selma, Stockton, Beaumont, Lincoln, Aromas, East Bay, Watsonville³³, New York, the state of Idaho,

³³ All the above places being in the state of California.

Portland in Oregon and the state of Nebraska, according to the newspaper³⁴. Some of these places also indicate their background in rural areas or farms. For instance, the most frequent *Tanka* contributor, Yasuko Takahashi, lived in Lodi (California). According to her, she lived in a “rural area” and her family probably engaged in agriculture³⁵. However, according to *Zaibei Nihonnjin Jinnmei Jiten*, her husband had graduated from Columbia University in New York and was one of the administrators of the Japanese Association of America in Lodi³⁶. Therefore, the socio-economic conditions of the Takahashi family in Lodi may have been better than those of other immigrant women and Yasuko Takahashi may have a middle-class background in the Japanese community.

The fact that many women contributors were members of farmers’ families in the U.S. reflected the changing social and economic conditions in the Japanese immigrant communities in the 1910s and 1920s. The development of agriculture in California relied on a contracting system for organizing “an alien labor force” of such single men. At the end of the 19th century, with the development of the transportation system such as the railways, the market agriculture of fruits and vegetables in this area demanded a large unskilled cheap labour force³⁷. From the end of the 19th century, Japanese immigrants contributed to the development of agriculture as useful and hard-working labourers and later farmers, especially in intensive forms of agriculture and in cultivating lands which had been seen as “not suitable” for agriculture³⁸. By the early 20th century, many Japanese male sojourners recognized that they could not make enough money or gain enough status in the U.S. to return to Japan within the time that they had originally estimated. They started to make plans for longer or permanent settlement in the U.S. Moreover, because “the Japanese were generally excluded from participation in any sort of board-based working-class movement because of the discriminatory policies of American labour unions”, they moved to agriculture from “the urban labor market” which had attracted “many white workers

³⁴ The newspaper did not disclose the addresses of many contributors.

³⁵ *The Nichibei*, 1 Jan. 1924.

³⁶ *Nichibei Shimibun* ed., *Zaibei Nihonnjin Jinnmei Jiten*, 1922: 606.

³⁷ Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 80, David J. and Fugita O'Brien, Stephen S., *The Japanese American Experience* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 19, Ayako Okamoto, *Amerikawo Ikinuita Nihonjin: Kutsujokuto Eikono Hyakunen (Japanese People Living in America: A One Hundred Years History of Their Humiliation and Fame)* (Tokyo: Nihonkeizaishimbun., 1980), 31.

³⁸ Kato, *Beikoku Nikkeijin Hyakunenshi: Zaibei Nikkeijin Hatten Jinshiroku (One Hundred Years History of Japanese American in the U.S.: Record of the Development of Japanese American in the U.S.)*, 30, O'Brien, *The Japanese American Experience*, 21-22.

from the fields”³⁹. Thus, between 1905 and 1920, many male labourers could “[leave] the ranks of common labourers to become small farmers and small businessmen”⁴⁰.

Immigrant leaders recommended immigrants to start farming, establish their own families and settle in the U.S. Thus, it can be understood that many of female contributors and readers of *The Nichibei* were in a good position to help form and advance the voices of, roles of, and positions of Japanese women in establishing homes and communities.

Three topics

Indeed, the voices were closely related to the idea of “home” and they covered three important fields – the marital relationship, the socio-economic role of women and motherhood.

First, discourse of the unity of a loving couple was one of the most important ideas put forward by women as a means by which they could make and maintain a “good home”. This idea linked with the idea of the modernization of families and marriage in the U.S. and Japan, and with nationalism and middle-class Protestant values. In the ‘voices of women,’ a particular gender role was put forward for women as the saviours of men. However, their sexuality was controlled within and confined to the framework of romantic love and monogamy. Their roles and positions were within the framework of a monogamous family in relation to the idea of social reform.

The ‘voices of women’ claimed to be improving the position of women as wives and mothers in marriages and loving families on the basis of this framework. The ‘voices of women’ also represented and constructed a context, or an image and role, for Japanese women in the U.S., of establishing and reforming families and communities through women’s love, patience and an ethnic sisterhood. At the same time, they constructed the image of a unified identity of ‘Japanese women in the U.S.’ through discussing the value of love, patience and ethnic sisterhood in monogamy and building a “good home”.

Second, the voices constructed images of women as ‘the Other’ by describing the positions and roles of women in establishing ‘good homes’. The formation of

³⁹ Masakazu Iwata, "The Japanese Immigrants in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History* 36 (1962), David and Fugita O'Brien, Stephen S., "Middleman Minority Concept: Its Explanatory Value in the Case of the Japanese in California Agriculture," *Pacific Sociological Review* 25, no. 2 (Apr., 1982): 190.

⁴⁰ Ichioka, "Amerika Nadeshiko: Japanese Immigrant Women in the United States, 1900-1924," 340.

discourses of women's roles and positions interacted with the articulation of their gender, racial, national, ethnic or class images as 'the Other' in the family and society. It was closely related to forming and representing the racial, national, ethnic and class identity of 'Japanese women in the U.S.'

'A unified voice' was articulated in *The Nichibei* as that of the "Japanese women in the U.S." This voice was given the position of a representative voice; it instructed women of various backgrounds to promote the idea of permanent settlement and family formation among Japanese immigrants. At the same time, this discourse in the media defined the women's position and roles as the 'Other' and as supporters.

Third, the 'voices of women' about motherhood' were linked to representing and establishing 'essential' womanhood and racial, trans-national and ethnic group identity. The 'voices of women' concerning motherhood were associated with, and related to, discourses of motherhood then popular in Japan which had been influenced by Western thinking, coupled with Japanese nationalism. It included the eugenic belief that "excellent mothers" would produce "excellent children", the future members of the nation. Thus, the discourses of motherhood and discourses of establishing and developing the nation state in Japan intertwined with each other.

The 'voices of women' in *The Nichibei* formed positive images of a woman's reproductive nature, just as the discourses of motherhood did in Japan. However, the 'voices of women' in *The Nichibei* newspaper presented and constructed discourses of motherhood in connection with the idea of "home" in the interests of permanent settlement. They defined home as a place to produce the second generation which would establish a healthy and civilized Japanese immigrant community acceptable to U.S. society. Their discourses were linked to the formation and reform of Japanese immigrant society through Americanization and the articulation of Japanese identity. Women were given the role of establishing good homes and an acceptable Japanese immigrant society as a result of Americanizing themselves and their children. Furthermore, they had the mission of passing on and establishing a racial, national and ethnic identity as Japanese in the U.S.

Again, the voices were represented as those which would improve women's positions as mothers and would enlighten them. However, the voices were linked with the idea of social reform aimed at modernizing immigrants and at the same time re-organizing them with trans-national, racial and ethnic identity. Women's roles, positions and identity as mothers were defined in this framework.

The formation of these discourses revealed the socio-economic, political cultural context of Japanese immigrants in the U.S. Moreover, discourses about each topic functioned to define the identity, role and position of Japanese women in the U.S. and to integrate them as members into the developing Japanese immigrant society. They were formed under the influence of the growing nationalisms and imperialisms of Japan and the U.S., the global capitalist system which formed and practised a racial hierarchy, and the views of race.

6. Conclusion

Throughout this presentation, I have tried to suggest and uncover the complicated power relations which, I argue, came to define the apparently unified image of “Japanese women in the U.S.” By examining the authoritarian manner of the newspaper and the process of the voices being socially produced in the media, I have argued that some particular voices contributed to produce and reproduce hegemonic discourses of womanhood.

Nevertheless, women were not simply a voiceless unity, neither were they a unity with voices. Some voices contributed to reproduce hegemonic discourses of “womanhood” which others opposed. Some challenge the dominant male discourses and the traditional gender ideology, and tried to improve the position or standing of women. They were connected with ‘modern’ discourses in the media, public policies and even women’s movements in the U.S. and Japan. Moreover, there were different women with various backgrounds who could not access to the media and whose voices were hidden. Nevertheless, there was a process that these various voices were used and hidden to construct a unified image of Japanese women in the U.S. as groups, in the sense of an ethnic group, a working class group and as groups of wives or mothers. Among the various women and men involved, there were complicated power relations defining the unified image of ‘Japanese women in the U.S.’ Thus, their speaking was complex, as were the causes and conditions of their speech, and I would argue, our contemporary listening should be equally complex.

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