

**Sabbatical Report AY 2014-2015**  
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**Exploring Japanese Ethnic Roots through a Developmental Lens**

***Summary of Purpose and Goals***

In the late 1800's/early 1900's many Japanese immigrated to the Northwest to provide farm labor in hopes of eventually owning their own land. Taking advantage of the land of opportunity, Japanese saw independent farming as a means of moving up the economic ladder. In the late 1920's my maternal grandfather and his brother went to help their uncle on his farm in Central California, raising crops of bell pepper, cabbage, corn and strawberries. As they struggled to survive and make a living, they also maintained their ties to Japan preserving their cultural traditions, values and language. Some second-generation children of immigrants, like my grandmother, were sent back to Japan (*Kibei*) to learn Japanese language, flower arrangement (*ikebana*), cooking, calligraphy, and tea ceremony. Japanese Americans strived to reduce discrimination by developing close ties and friendships with their neighbors, maintaining their Japanese heritage, and promoting trade and bartering with diverse ethnic groups.

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 ordering 120,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast to relocate to one of ten concentration camps across seven states. My maternal grandparents were relocated to camps in Arizona and Colorado, and my paternal grandparents were relocated to Tule Lake concentration camp in California. Although they were living in poor substandard conditions, they developed a sense of community attempting to maintain a sense of normalcy by raising children, working, attending school, farming, and participating in cultural activities.

The purpose of my sabbatical project was to (1) expand my research specialization by enhancing my knowledge in Japanese American history and family narratives; (2) improve my curriculum and teaching by sharing my expertise with students, colleagues and the community; and (3) focus on civic engagement by forging relationships with Japanese American communities in California and Hawaii. The primary goal for this project was to interview first-, second-, and third-generation Japanese Americans about their experiences of immigration, concentration camps, relocation, reintegration after WWII, and generational change of identity, relationships and family structure. My overarching goal was to write a draft of three book chapters, utilizing the narrative stories from the interviews. I also planned to create a historical archive of old Japanese family photos.

***Summary of Outcomes***

***Interviews of First-, Second-, and Third-Generation Japanese Americans***

During my sabbatical leave I traveled throughout California to Los Angeles, Gilroy, Orinda, Stockton, and Lodi as well as to Honolulu, Hawaii to interview family members on my maternal grandparents' side. I also traveled to Benicia, California and Seattle, Washington to interview my father and his sister to better understand my paternal grandparents' experiences pre- and post-WWII. While in Washington, I visited Bainbridge Island to see the Japanese American Exclusion Memorial to commemorate the first Japanese American immigrants sent to the internment camps.

I interviewed 12 first-, second- and third-generation Japanese Americans about their experiences, memories, and reflections on immigration, internment, relocation, and relationships. Through these interviews, I learned about the hardships, stress, and coping strategies that led to alcoholism and intimate partner violence. I also learned about the optimism, strength, and resilience that prevailed through the subsequent generations.

Sadly, many first- and second-generation Japanese Americans have passed away, so many of their stories and family secrets died with them. Some of the third- and fourth-generation children observed me interviewing their parents, and told me that their parents would not tell them anything about their family history or stories growing up. They said their parents were very stoic and quiet, sheltering them from the hardships, tragedies, and challenges they had experienced growing up. They said they did not want to talk about the past---perhaps to protect their sense of hope and optimism for the future.

### *Book Chapters*

During my sabbatical I completed three book chapters, and began developing a prospectus to submit to a potential publisher. The book I am writing is a culmination of undergraduate and graduate research, examining developmental, historical and sociocultural perspectives of three generations of Japanese Americans. This book examines identity, relationships and opportunities of Japanese American immigrant families as they struggle to overcome the impact of racial prejudice, discrimination, and the violation of their civil rights during WWII. This book depicts a prevalent problem of immigration and is of significant interest to individuals interested in the impact of illegal immigration on individuals and families. This book aims to enhance people's awareness of the impact of discrimination, racism, and oppression that ultimately contribute to problems of adaptation and assimilation, and loss of family unity and values, contributing to the breakdown in the stability and strength of our cultural communities. The book will discuss the challenges that immigrants face as they struggle to assimilate while retaining traditional cultural values.

### *Historical Archive of Photos*

I started the daunting task of creating a historical archive of my grandmother's photos. However, it was difficult to identify some of the people in the pictures, and where and when they were taken. My grandmother had labeled the year on her albums, so I began organizing the photos by particular themes, such as farming, family, travel, and holidays. The photos portray Japanese Americans working on their farms, traditional Japanese customs, values and traditions (such as *ikebana*, Japanese flower arrangement). They also depict their hard work and success, climbing the economic ladder from being farm laborers to valuing higher education and professional careers.

I developed a contact with one of the directors of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles to see whether they may be able to utilize some of the photos in their archives. My grandmother's brother had some artifacts and pictures that were displayed in a Smithsonian exhibit in Washington, D.C. so I am exploring ways they have used archival data and photos to preserve Japanese history and cultural memorabilia.

## *Significance and Impact*

Due to the historical, sociocultural and psychological significance of the Japanese American experience, it is important to capture Japanese American immigrants' stories through in-depth interviews due to the fact that many of them are in their 80s and 90s. Through this project, participants shared narrative stories and experiences of their relatives growing up and living in the United States pre- and post-WWII. I learned about the changes that occurred across several generations of Japanese Americans as well as their intercultural relations with diverse ethnic American groups. This project helped me expand my research focus, enhancing my knowledge of how Japanese American history has had an impact on identity and family values. It has practical significance because it enabled me to become civically engaged by developing relationships with Japanese American communities in California and Hawaii.

The photo archive project has academic significance because the pictures depict both Japanese and Western influence on Japanese immigrants and their families as they became acculturated and assimilated into the American culture. Creating a historical archive of these photos will enhance my research and understanding of Japanese families and cultural traditions, which I will be able to utilize to illustrate my book.

This project helps promote the teacher-scholar model, enabling me to conduct research and enhance my curriculum for teaching UNIV392 Cross-Cultural Psychology and Diversity in Japan. I will continue to develop my research and teaching specialization in Japanese American history, sociocultural development, and cross-cultural psychology of Japanese Americans, and share my expertise with students, colleagues, and the broader community.

This sabbatical project supports the four of CI mission pillars benefiting both the university and our students. My interviews had an interdisciplinary focus bridging the areas of history, psychology, sociology and ethnic studies. Interviewing first-, second-, and third-generation Japanese Americans enhanced community engagement connecting the university to Japanese Americans and the farm working community across the Central Valley and Los Angeles to Hawaii. My work also promotes multiculturalism and internationalism, reflecting on narrative stories of immigrants and their children and grandchildren as they undergo acculturation and assimilation into the American culture, fighting against discrimination and racism while trying to maintain hope and harmony within their families and community.