

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: "THEY'RE BRINGING HOME JAPANESE WIVES": JAPANESE WAR BRIDES IN THE POSTWAR ERA

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"They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives': Japanese War Brides in the Postwar Era" explores the immigration of Japanese war brides to the U.S. following World War II and why the United States so swiftly and dramatically reversed its views toward immigration from Japan following the war; the degree to which Americans, both those of Japanese descent and those of other heritages, accepted this influx of newcomers; and the lived experiences of these immigrant women during their first decade in America. Drawing on sources that range from government documents to interviews with war brides conducted in the 1950s, I argue that postwar constructions of racialized gender eased the acceptance of these women into American society. However, sometimes the degree of acceptance was contingent on the race of the war bride's husband to such a degree that one might speak of racial or ethnic coopture in the mid-20th Century U.S.

“THEY’RE BRINGING HOME JAPANESE WIVES”: JAPANESE WAR BRIDES
IN THE POSTWAR ERA

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2009

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Acknowledgements

When writer's block would set in (quite frequently!), I would often stare off and imagine how I would compose one of the final pieces of my dissertation, the acknowledgements. The task struck me as daunting—there are so many people I have to thank and without whom this project would not have happened—so I would dismiss the thought and get back to the business of writing. But the time has come to finish this thing off, so here it goes.

I would like to thank the Department of History at the University of Maryland, College Park for funding the completion of this project. Their support funded a critical semester of research, as well as a travel to present an excerpt of this project at a conference in Illinois. I would also like to thank the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Maryland for a crucial year-long fellowship that allowed me to complete the final year of writing without financial worry.

It is not an exaggeration to say this project would never have been possible without the hard work and unflagging enthusiasm of my advisor, Professor Robyn Muncy. Professor Muncy's insights, questions, and ideas have kept me on my toes and made this project immeasurably better than if I had been left to my own devices. She has been endlessly generous with her time, support, patience, and willingness to work with me on this endeavor. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the rest of the dissertation committee: Professors Elsa Barkley Brown, David Freund, Clare Lyons, and Charles Rutherford. I am thankful for how generous they have been with the time they have given this project, as well as their interest in and support of it.

I have been very lucky to receive the assistance of talented and resourceful archivists and librarians over the course of my research for this project. Jim Cartwright and DeeDee Acosta of the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, though located in Hawaii, could not have been more helpful if they were down the street. Zack Wilske at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services History Office and Library provided valuable information on source materials available for this project and served as an ongoing resource in my efforts to track down those sources. I would also like to thank George Brisko, Suzanne Harris, and Jessica Kratz at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC for their patience and assistance over the course of my research at their institution. Finally, Susan Robbins Watson at the Hazel Braugh Records Center and Archives offered me considerable help both in person and via email.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family and friends for all of their humor, love, and support over the many years it has taken me to complete this project. It is possible, though highly unlikely, that I may have been able to complete this project without them. What is certain is that I would not have been able to finish with my sanity intact. Thanks to Seema Singh for inviting me up to New York whenever I needed a break, as well as for reading chapter excerpts. I passed many a necessary happy hour at Mr. Henry's with Jessica Kratz, Kelly Ryan, Adam Perez, and Zack Wilske. Kate Keane and I have worked on our dissertations nearly simultaneously, and I am very grateful for her willingness to work through the problems of dissertating with me. Her advice and feedback on excerpts of this project have proved invaluable. I have also particularly harassed Kelly Ryan for much

advice and answers to so many questions, that it is a wonder she bothers to read my emails at all anymore. Over the years she has been a fantastic friend, colleague, and office-mate. Her sense of humor, haikus, and own dissertation have helped me in countless ways. Finally, my parents, Louis and Emma Tudico, and my brother, Christopher Tudico, have supported me in whatever I have chosen to do for as long as I can remember. Their love, patience, generosity, and unfailing belief in me have sometimes gone without thanks, as I suppose is often the case with family. With that in mind, I would like to say how especially grateful I am to them. This project is as much theirs, as it is mine.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: What’s Love Got to Do With It?: War Brides Force Changes in Immigration Law	28
Chapter 2: “We had to go through such red tape”: Race, Gender, and the Process of War Bride Immigration.....	73
Chapter 3: The Public Perception of War Bride Immigration	115
Chapter 4: War Brides in America: The Meeting of Cultures and Fluidity of Race	167
Chapter 5: War Bride Communities	215
Conclusion	260
Bibliography.....	271

Introduction

This dissertation analyzes the immigration of Japanese war brides to the U.S. following World War II. Roughly 45,853 Japanese war brides entered the United States between the years 1947 and 1964. Along with Filipino (14,435), Chinese (6,000), and Korean (6,423) war brides, these women constituted the largest ever wave of female immigration from Asia. More than aggregate numbers though, these women constituted a dramatic demographic shift in the United States—a 20% increase in the Asian American population in less than fifteen years.¹ This new immigration becomes even more significant in light of the legal ban on Japanese immigration to the United States in the prewar era and the federal government's internment of nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. This dissertation explores why the United States so swiftly and dramatically reversed its views toward immigration from Japan; the degree to which Americans, both those of Japanese descent and those of other heritages, accepted this influx of newcomers; and the lived experiences of these immigrant women during their first decade in America.

Although the United States has long been the destination of emigrants from around the world, it has not always welcomed its new arrivals with open arms. And in the case of some peoples, the U.S. did not welcome them at all. From the mid-1920s until the years immediately following World War II, the United States government placed a ban on, for instance, Japanese immigration. In 1947, however, the federal government amended the 1924 law, allowing for the immigration of

¹ Caroline Chung Simpson, "Out of an obscure place": Japanese War Brides and Cultural Pluralism in the 1950s," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10 (1998): 47-81, 51.

Japanese war brides.² Thus, the policy contrived particularly for these women represented a dramatic shift in United States policy towards immigration from Japan. The most shocking part of this story is that the reversal of policy occurred in the aftermath of America's total war effort against a virulently racialized Japanese nation.³ The racist sentiment against Japanese people ran so high that the U.S. government even relocated many of its own Japanese American citizens to internment camps. Yet almost immediately after the war, the U.S. policy regulating Japanese immigration began to shift until it was reversed in 1952 with the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act. This act amended the 1924 Immigration Act that excluded Japanese immigration in favor of a quota system that did allow limited Japanese immigration and "...placed Japan on the same quota system as European countries."⁴ The full 1924 Act was not reversed until the Immigration Act of 1965, which abolished the use of quotas based on nation of origin in immigration decisions.⁵

What caused this revision in United States immigration policy toward the Japanese? Was it the pressure exerted by American GIs who wanted to bring their foreign sweethearts home? Such an explanation, though certainly an important factor, represented only one piece of the puzzle. Another piece was the belief that a soldier deserved the wife and family of his choice in return for honorable services overseas. This idea was associated with the passage of war bride legislation, as it was invoked time and again in attempts to pass bills facilitating immigration of war brides

² Ibid.

³ For a comprehensive discussion of American racist sentiment toward the Japanese during World War II see John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

⁴ Izumi Hirobe, *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice: Modifying the Exclusion Clause of the 1924 Immigration Act* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 241.

⁵ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 419.

and fiancées, thereby suggesting a connection between the idea and the passage of legislation. The significance of this legislation lay in its opening new avenues for immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe as well as Japan. Yet by appealing to Congress on this basis, government officials discursively turned war brides and fiancées into the spoils of war—a type of prized awarded for honorable services rendered. This construction of war brides somewhat recalled the thinking of some British colonists in the colonial era who saw sexual relations between British men and American Indian women as an effective way to colonize North America peacefully.⁶ There, too, conquering men taking conquered women as wives embodied the triumph of one people over another as it solidified an alliance between them.

If, however, the legislation recalled a history that subordinated women to men in its international relations, it broke new ground in fully equalizing the positions of women and men in the American military. Female members of the U.S. Armed Forces benefited from the law the same way that men did, and these women made use of the law by bringing their war husbands and fiancés back to the United States. The history of war spouses after World War II thus represented both continuities and changes in the relationship between gender and conquest.

In addition to explaining changes in immigration policy, this dissertation seeks to understand the way war brides experienced the immigration process. Race proved an important factor in shaping that experience for war brides and fiancées, a

⁶ See, for example, Richard Goodbeer, “Eroticizing the Middle Ground: Anglo-Indian Sexual Relations Along the Eighteenth Century Frontier,” in Martha Hodes, ed., *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 94. Proponents of this method of conquest included William Byrd. Others disagreed with Byrd’s ideology on this matter. They were concerned about the cultural impact American Indians could have on colonial society through intermarriage.

factor discernible only by comparing the experiences of Japanese war brides with those of other nationalities. Such comparisons reveal that Japanese war brides experienced the most problems with immigrating to the United States, but at times Southern and Eastern war brides' experiences bore a striking resemblance to those of war brides from Japan. Just as the war bride and fiancée acts opened new doors for immigration, they simultaneously exposed these women to a more rigorous immigration process than women from Northern and Western Europe. This revelation calls into question the notion of World War II as a turning point in the whitening of second wave immigrants into question. Some U.S. historians argue that American ideas about race and ethnicity shifted during the World War II era in a way that largely muted distinctions between Northern and Southern Europeans.⁷ The experiences of war brides and fiancées with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in the postwar era do not corroborate that claim.

Just as older American ideas about race structured the immigration experience for war brides in general, so did racialized gender influence the acceptance of war brides into American society. I elucidate how constructions of gender in the United States in the 1950s, particularly the ideal of women as wives and mothers, affected war bride immigration. I argue that popular constructions of both American and Japanese women facilitated acceptance of Japanese war brides in the United States. Japanese war brides were viewed as ideal immigrants for 1950s America, and definitely the least problematic version of a Japanese immigrant for the United States

⁷ For example, see Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005); and Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

to accept. This was due to the fact that Japanese war bride immigration was almost the opposite of an earlier wave of immigration.⁸ Rather than coming to America in groups (family or otherwise) and settling in cohesive immigrant communities, as Japanese immigrants had in the early twentieth century, war brides came as individuals whose settlement pattern dispersed them across the entire United States.⁹ And rather than appearing resistant to assimilation, these women were construed as passive and willing to assimilate rapidly into American society, an eagerness demonstrated by their marriages to American men. Finally, white Americans perceived Japanese women as good housewives.¹⁰ That perception fit Japanese women very neatly into American postwar commitments to domesticity.¹¹ Thus, I argue, the Japanese war bride's apparent embodiment of a white middle-class ideal of womanhood promoted her remarkably smooth entry into the United States.

⁸ For in depth discussions of the turn of the twentieth century wave of immigration see Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986) and Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Both works do an excellent job of discussing immigrant women and the immigrant communities in which they lived.

⁹ Japanese immigrants did not settle only in immigrant ghettos in major American cities as the majorities of other immigrant groups, such as Jews and Italians, did at the time. A significant percentage became farmers and thus lived in agricultural communities, mostly in California. The slightly more dispersed nature of this settlement pattern did not hinder the development of a strong ethnic community entrenched in its own ethnic economy and based on solidarity against racism from those outside their own community. For a discussion of early Japanese American immigrant settlement patterns and their community, see Ronald Takaki, *Stranger from a Different Shore*, 179-230. See Paul R. Spickard, *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth Century America* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989) for a discussion on the settlement patterns of Japanese war bride couples.

¹⁰ I base this assertion on my research at the American Red Cross Archives, as well as magazine articles from the 1950s, which portray Japanese war brides as good housewives eager to learn American ways.

¹¹ For an in depth discussion of the importance of the nuclear family and clearly defined gender roles, in which the woman is most valued for her role as a wife and stay at home mother, in 1950s America see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (United States: Basic Books, 1988). May discusses both the cultural and political significance of this ideal, as well as its predominance in nearly every facet of American popular culture. May also discusses how many Americans viewed this ideology as a type of domestic (literally) containment and believed its chief benefit to be the enforcement of conformity in American society. Thus, the threat of Communism within the United States itself would be contained, according to such an ideology.

By exploring not only the lives of Japanese war brides, but also those of war brides from European nations, I am able to show how race and gender intersected to shape the lives of these women in America—both in their daily lives and in the American public’s perception of them. Although my central interest is in Japanese war brides, my desire to understand when race was figuring into explanations for their experience drew me to comparisons with war brides of other races and nationalities.¹² Additionally, examining experiences of war brides with husbands of differing races and ethnicities proved critical to understanding the importance of the intersection of race and gender during the postwar era. Although rigid prewar ideas about race shaped the immigration process for war brides, racial identity was very fluid for war brides once they arrived in the United States. In fact, once in the U.S., war brides sometimes seem to have experienced a type of racial coverture in which their race disappeared into that of their husband’s. I am using “racial coverture” in this study not to refer to a codified legal status like *femme covert*, however. In this work, racial coverture will refer to a *de facto* status ascribed to some Japanese war brides by white Americans in interpersonal relationships, especially in the public sphere. At times, some mainland Americans ascribed the racial identity of a Japanese war bride’s husband to the war bride herself.

The number of Japanese war brides that reported experiences that I am calling “racial coverture” did not constitute a large portion of this study. Only four of fifty-six Japanese war brides that lived on the mainland, or 7.1%, reported such a

¹² Largely because of available source materials, I have selected to compare Japanese war bride immigration to European war bride immigration. Although there were small numbers of war brides from North Africa, the Middle East, and India, they did not appear in the historical record as prominently.

phenomenon. While this number is not a large one and racial coverture did not definitely characterize the experiences of all the Japanese war brides in this study, these examples nevertheless remain striking and significant in the possibilities they suggest about race and gender in the postwar United States. Furthermore, even though only a small number of RASRL war brides that lived on the mainland reported racial coverture, I do not believe the small number is necessarily telling (or not telling). Since some of the interviewees were more talkative than others, some of the mainland stories were very brief or nonexistent because the war brides did not go into details about anything, mainland life or otherwise. In other words, the stories reported by some RASRL war brides about life on the mainland may only represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of racial coverture. I have reason to suspect this because of the works of other scholars. Regina Lark, for example, reported that Japanese war brides married to African American soldiers were discriminated against by Japanese war brides married to white soldiers.¹³ In these instances Japanese war brides had appropriated the discriminatory behavior they learned from white Americans. Taken together, these findings about Japanese war brides' ascribed racial identity on the mainland are suggestive, rather than conclusive. I look forward to delving into this issue more deeply in future research, and hopefully other scholars will as well.

For most war brides in this study, however, this absorption of her GI husband's identity in the public sphere did not mean the war bride completely surrendered her cultural identity. Assimilation was far from the rule for these

¹³ Regina Lark, "They Challenged Two Nations: Marriages between Japanese Women and American GIs, 1945-Present" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1999), 326.

women, despite the American public's perception of them. War brides did acculturate rapidly, thanks in part to assistance from in-laws and the Red Cross. But the end result was not so simple as assimilation. Though other scholars have argued for the quick assimilation of war brides, my evidence suggests a subtler process. In reality, war brides engaged their new families and communities in more of a cultural exchange than the assimilation model would suggest.

Japanese war brides' maintenance of their cultural identity did not necessarily ingratiate these women to the existing Japanese American community, however. In fact, the two groups often found they had little in common. Differences in education levels and class explained much of the difference, but equally important were changes in Japanese culture and society since the early twentieth century. As it turned out, what Japanese war brides considered "Japanese" was often not what their Japanese American in laws considered "Japanese." I argue that the alleged commonality of race/ethnicity between these two groups was tenuous at best. In fact, the assumption of shared culture often exacerbated hostilities between Japanese war brides and Japanese Americans more often than genuine commonalities united them.

Sources

At the heart of this project are oral interviews conducted with war brides themselves. In the mid-1950s, the Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory (RASRL) of the University of Hawaii at Manoa implemented their *War Brides Interview Project* (WBIP), which consisted of 335 confidential oral interviews with war brides of World War II. A sociologist, Dr. Yukiko Kimura, conducted most of

the interviews for the WBIP.¹⁴ Because the Dr. Kimura and the other interviewers hoped for the most candid responses, the project was completely confidential, and each war bride was assigned a number. A name was never used.

This oral history project fell within the primary focus of the RASRL, which was the study of race relations.¹⁵ Slightly more than half of the interviews (182) were with Japanese war brides. Of those 182 interviews with Japanese war brides, 23 of them were married to Caucasian men. The vast majority of the remaining interviews (139) were with European war brides married to Asian American husbands. The small remainder of the interviews (14) were conducted with war brides from other Asian nations. The husbands' race and ethnicities differed as well, though most of the soldiers were either Caucasian or Japanese American. The racial and ethnic differences among the interviewed war brides and their husbands proved critical to my understanding the importance of race in the lives of these couples.

The women interviewed in the RASRL study arrived in the United States over the course of the decade following World War II. Of the Japanese war brides, 43.5% arrived before 1952 and the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act that allowed for quota immigration from Japan. Slightly more than half, or 56.5%, arrived in the United States in 1952 or after. A larger percentage of European war brides, 65%, interviewed for the study immigrated to American before 1952.

Although the interviews took place in Hawaii, the women were wives of soldiers who had been stationed all over the United States upon their return from their

¹⁴ It is unknown whether or not Dr. Yukiko Kimura was a Japanese national or Japanese American at the time the interviews were conducted.

¹⁵ This limited information is all that I currently have on the broader purpose of this project. And I have no information on how the project was more specifically conceived and executed. So, I do not know, for example, how war brides were selected.

tour of duty abroad.¹⁶ By the time these women were interviewed in the mid-1950s then, some had spent considerable time in other locations in the U.S.¹⁷ In addition, the families of the soldiers lived in various states on the mainland. Thus, the relationships that these war brides had with their in-laws, along with their own experiences on military bases throughout the United States, allow for regional comparisons among their experiences. At the same time, Hawaii offers an important site for local study. The location of Hawaii is of particular importance in Chapter Five, for example, when the relationship of Japanese war brides to the Japanese American community is examined.

War brides' relationships with their in-laws was one among several major themes that the interviewers focused on during the WBIP. Courtships in Japan and Europe, the immigration process, husbands, children, work, school, community, and assimilation were among other key topics discussed in the interviews, thereby allowing access to the war brides' experiences. Significantly, the transcripts of the interviews did not include the questions asked by the interviewer, only the answers provided by the interviewee. The interviewer did give a brief description of the war bride (including how well she spoke English), her home, and the circumstances of the interview at the beginning of the transcript. Basic facts about the wife's husband—

¹⁶ War brides in the RASRL study had lived in 24 states across the mainland and in the District of Columbia. War brides had lived in the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

¹⁷ At the time of the interviews, 56 out of 335 (16.7%) war brides in the RASRL study had lived on the mainland. That number, although relatively small, is comparable to the number of war brides who were current or former members of war brides clubs, a topic discussed in chapter 5. This sample allows conclusions to be drawn about war brides' experiences on the mainland, particularly given the range of states in which the war brides in the RASRL study lived. My argument about racial coverture presented in chapter four, for example, benefits from the inclusion mainland experiences discussed during the RASRL interviews. The experiences of the war brides in this study may not necessarily be representative of all war brides, however, given the relatively small sample that lived on the mainland.

ethnicity, age, education, and occupation—were also listed at the top of the transcript. This information allowed for a comparison of the education levels of this group of immigrant women with earlier waves of Japanese immigrants.

Aside from the biographical information listed at the top of the interview transcript, the interviews varied quite a bit.¹⁸ Some women were open and willing to discuss extremely private issues, while others gave terse responses. Interviews, then, ran anywhere from one to seven pages in length.

United States government archival collections also proved helpful in understanding the meaning of Japanese war bride immigration in postwar America. A small collection of films at the National Archives at College Park recorded classes at Japanese war bride schools in Tokyo, Japan. The schools began in Tokyo in 1951, initiated by a group of voluntary church women. The United States Army took them over and passed control to the American Red Cross within a year. The Department of Defense documented the activities of some of these schools in four brief (fifteen to thirty minutes long) motion pictures and followed the students to the United States in two others. Army personnel stationed in Japan shot and produced these films. The films remain unedited and present a choppy sequence of scenes from various war brides schools. Though the actual intent and final purpose (beyond documentary ones) cannot be determined, these films offer an interesting peek at the war brides schools. And ultimately their final intent may not be so important as the attitudes toward Japanese war brides that the films reveal. By capturing the curriculum of

¹⁸ The city or town of origin of the war bride was not included in the biographical information about the war brides in this study. It was not included in the narrative responses of war brides in any systematic way either so no definitive conclusions about the geographic origins of the RASRL war brides can be drawn. See chapter five for more information about the geographic origins of Japanese war brides.

these schools and the opinions of some of the white American women involved with them, they demonstrate how those involved with the schools imagined Japanese war brides fitting into American society.

Archival materials at the American National Red Cross Hazel Braugh Records Center (HBRC) contained additional records pertaining to war brides schools that supplemented what was documented in the films. These records included Red Cross correspondence and memos regarding the schools, detailed lesson plans, and handouts given to the brides. These records offered invaluable insights into the schools that the films simply could not provide. My findings buttressed the conclusions I reached from the Department of Defense films. The lesson plans, for example, were heavily geared toward household concerns, such as food preparation, cleaning methods, and childcare. And as in the films, the war brides were described as willing and eager participants in this initial process of Americanization.

There were additional resources at HBRC that assisted in the understanding of the relationship between the Red Cross and war brides. Articles in the American Red Cross' own monthly magazine, *The Red Cross Courier*, as well as official Red Cross correspondence, revealed the commitment these volunteers made to aiding war brides in the World War II era. *The Red Cross Courier* contained articles that described the activities of Red Cross volunteers in the late 1940s through 1951, and one such article described how the Red Cross helped war brides reach the United States before the deadline outlined in the War Brides Act. Other articles similarly discussed Red Cross activities in occupied Japan, as well as those related specifically to war brides.

Archival collections at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) History Office and Library were also crucial to this project.¹⁹ A monthly internal newsletter, *Immigration and Naturalization Service Monthly Review*, illuminated the official governmental point of view on the immigration of Japanese war brides. Articles in the newsletter discussed topics that ranged from changes in immigration policy to race prejudice and discrimination. By considering these documents, I was able to reveal how this crucial agency in the United States government understood the immigration of Japanese war brides and their own change in immigration policy. Additionally, the INS maintained case files at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) pertaining to various aspects of war bride immigration. These files dealt with an array of issues associated with both the legalities and logistics of war bride immigration. The range of concerns revealed through these records include how to pay for the cost of transporting war brides, legal admittance into the U.S., and what to do with war brides abandoned by their new GI husbands. These files thus elucidated both the U.S. government's stance toward war bride immigration and also the experiences of war bride couples going through the at times quite complicated U.S. immigration process.

Finally, I looked at American popular culture, namely Hollywood films, newspaper articles, and magazines, as a way to gauge the American public's perception of Japanese war bride immigration. I looked at items that dealt specifically with Japanese war brides as their subject matter, such as *Sayonara*, a

¹⁹ In 2003 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) ceased to exist and was replaced by the USCIS. USCIS continues to house records of the INS, as well as guides to INS records housed at the National Archives. Because the change to the agency is recent and well past the time period covered in this project, I will refer to INS archival collections and case files even though they are housed at library named for the new agency.

1957 movie starring Marlon Brando. While such representations were rare in popular culture, the portrayal of Japanese war brides and their experiences in these pieces constituted some of the public discourse surrounding this new wave of immigration in the United States.

Historiography

War brides remained an unstudied aspect of World War II until relatively recently when scholars from various fields began to include war brides in their work. An exception to that was the publication of a number of sociological studies of war brides, which began in the 1950s.²⁰ Dr. Yukiko Kimura, who conducted many of the interviews in the RASRL study, published her own sociological study interpreting the findings of the WBIP. Kimura's article, "War Brides in Hawaii and Their In-Laws," analyzed the relationships of Japanese and European war brides with their in-laws.²¹ She compared the quality of the relationships Japanese war brides had with Japanese and non-Japanese in-laws, as well as those of European war brides with Japanese in-laws. Kimura found that Japanese war brides with Japanese in-laws had the lowest percentage of good relationships with in-laws when compared to the other groups of war brides. This led Kimura to conclude, "Sharing the same cultural background tends to restrict relationships with in-laws to the forms prescribed and to hamper spontaneous interaction. In contrast, where there is no common cultural definition of role, relations are defined by the necessity of adjustment to each other in the situation

²⁰ For an example see Anselm L. Strauss, "Strain and Harmony in American-Japanese War-Bride Marriages," *Marriage and Family Living* 16, no.2 (May 1954): 99-106.

²¹ Yukiko Kimura, "War Brides in Hawaii and Their In-Laws," *The American Journal of Sociology* 63, no.1 (July 1957): 70-76.

at hand.”²² Kimura also drew a direct correlation between congenial relationships with in-laws and the happiness of the war bride with her marriage. This study corroborates some of the analysis of Kimura. It agrees that relationships with in-laws had an important impact on a war bride’s happiness, not only with her marriage, but with her life in the United States. Other aspects of this study, however, modify Kimura’s analysis. Like Kimura, I found that Japanese war brides with Japanese in-laws had more difficult or strained relationships when compared to other war brides, but not because of a shared cultural background as Kimura suggested. I argued tensions arose between the two groups due to a cultural background they allegedly shared but that in reality did not exist. Japanese war brides and their Japanese in-laws were culturally dissimilar because of differences in class and education, for example. The time that had elapsed between these two waves of immigration also served to heighten differences between Japanese in-laws and Japanese war brides. Japanese war brides grew up in a more modern and westernized Japan than their in-laws had. The two groups, therefore, did not necessarily share a cultural background.

In 1989, Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta presented the first comprehensive study of war brides in *War Brides of World War II*. This work presented a number of oral interviews that documented the history of war brides from both Europe and Asia.²³ In their introduction, the authors noted the lack of attention historians had paid war brides prior to their study. “Little attention has been

²² Ibid, 76.

²³ Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta, *War Brides of World War II* (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 1989). Other early works documenting the experiences of war brides include a piece on the 60,000 British war brides that came to America during the World War II era. See Pamela Winfield, *Sentimental Journey: The Story of GI Brides* (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1984).

paid to the unprecedented immigration of nearly one million foreign brides of U.S. servicemen, who came to the United States during and after World War II.”²⁴ They attributed this scarcity of scholarship to the delayed long-term impact of these immigrants. Shukert and Scibetta stated, “Historians generally place a higher importance on strategic and political events, and since this immigration was spread over a period of years, its impact was more cumulative than immediate.”²⁵ Shukert and Scibetta insisted on the importance of this cumulative impact by comparing it to other periods of immigration. They believed that, “Not since the last great wave of immigration in the 1920s had so many people, so many women in particular, come to America.”²⁶

Though *War Brides of World War II* documented the experiences of the many immigrant women, it did not attempt to conceptualize or analyze these experiences. As Shukert and Scibetta noted early on in their piece, “We have not set out to write an academic history or a sociological study, but to document the history of the war brides...”²⁷ Other scholars, however, agreeing with the assertion that war brides represented an important aspect of the history of U.S. immigration, took up the work begun by Shukert and Scibetta and began to write about specific groups of war brides in incisive analytical works. Caroline Chung Simpson’s “‘Out of an obscure place’: Japanese War Brides and Cultural Pluralism in the 1950s” represents on such work.²⁸

²⁴ Shukert and Scibetta, *War Brides of World War II*, 1.

²⁵ Ibid. I would argue that war brides did have an immediate impact on the United States, not only a long-term one. The immediate changes war bride couples forced on immigration legislation, occurred in the immediate postwar years, for example.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 3.

²⁸ Caroline Chung Simpson, “‘Out of an obscure place’: Japanese War Brides and Cultural Pluralism in the 1950s,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10 (1998): 47-81. This article later became a chapter in Simpson’s book about Japanese Americans in American culture in the post-World

Chung Simpson believed that Japanese war brides were especially important in the history of Japanese Americans. She argued that the impact of these Japanese immigrants on the existing Japanese American population must have been great because of the precarious position that the community occupied during World War II. As Chung Simpson explained, these new female immigrants were critical to the reformulation of Japanese American citizenship following the war.²⁹ Chung Simpson then demonstrated the acceptance of these women into American society by studying the shifting portrayal of Japanese war brides in novels and films.

While I agree with Chung Simpson's general argument about the acceptance of Japanese war brides, there are two significant points at which our arguments differ. Chung Simpson did not believe that the image of Japanese war brides as good housewives facilitated the acceptance of Japanese war brides, as I argue, but rather the opposite. Chung Simpson interpreted the image of the Japanese war bride as American housewife as threatening and wrote, "...the implied risk to the nation is their invasion and disruption of the imagined space of white middle-class domesticity."³⁰ But by looking at other sources, such as the American Red Cross records, in addition to popular culture, I will show that white Americans generally valued Japanese war bride immigrants as housewives and mothers.

Moreover, Chung Simpson linked the eventual acceptance of Japanese war brides to race but not gender. She argued that amidst the turbulence of the Modern

War II era. See Caroline Chung Simpson, *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2001). Another example of an analytical work on war brides examined the British war brides of the World War II era. See Janel Virden, *Good-bye, Picadilly: British War Brides in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996). Virden supplied a conceptual framework for understanding both the unique immigration experiences of war brides and their patterns of assimilation once in the United States.

²⁹ Caroline Chung Simpson, "'Out of an obscure place,'" 49.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 54.

Civil Rights Movement, Japanese war brides represented an example of successful American race relations and achievement of the American Dream. She asserted, “The polite, beseeching Japanese war bride had arrived as perhaps the postwar prototype of the Asian American model minority.”³¹ I agree with Chung Simpson’s assertion here and believe that white Americans came to view Japanese war brides not only as a type of “model minority,” but also a type of model immigrant.³² I will go further, however, in arguing that the dynamic of black and white race relations in the United States factored into the acceptance of Japanese war bride immigration in other ways. More specifically, the race of the brides’ husband affected white America’s acceptance of Japanese war brides. For example, if a Japanese war bride married an African American soldier, she was no longer a “model minority,” but a woman racially alienated from the white majority. My analysis suggests that race was implicated in the acceptance of war brides in even more complex ways than Chung Simpson noticed.

Although war brides have not always been the main focus of scholarly research, some scholars have included them in their studies of other issues. One example is Paul Spickard’s *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth-Century America*. His work, which was organized by ethnicity, contained a section dealing with Japanese war brides married to American GIs. Spickard discussed the problems that war bride couples faced both internally, within their own marriages, and externally. He particularly noted that Japanese Americans could make life difficult for these couples. Despite these troubles however, Spickard found a

³¹ Ibid, 68.

³² This model immigrant status was due to postwar constructions of gender as well, not only race.

significant percentage of these marriages to be successful.³³ Although I am not specifically interested in whether or not Japanese war bride marriages were successful (in terms of divorce rate, as Spickard framed it), Spickard's chapter on war bride couples did briefly touch on several topics I will pursue in this project, such as Japanese war brides' relationship to the Japanese American community. My findings verify those of Spickard, as we both argue a problematic relationship existed between the two.

My project is also relevant to historiographical debates that have not previously included war brides in their discussions. Nineteen fifties gender history is one such area of historiographical contention. Some historians, most notably Elaine Tyler May, have argued the importance of domesticity in shaping gender roles for women in 1950s America. In *Homeward Bound*, May argued that middle-class America was literally homeward bound in the postwar era as marriage and birth rates rose and Americans moved to the rapidly-expanding suburbs. The government and popular culture encouraged this domestic "containment," which prized women's role in the home, according to May.³⁴ Other historians, while not entirely discounting the importance of the domestic ideal for women in postwar America, have offered different interpretations of the era. For example, in "Women's Employment and the Domestic Ideal in the Early Cold War Years," Susan Hartman revealed not only that the percent of married women in the labor force actually grew in the 1950s, but that women's labor force participation was encouraged by the federal government.

Joanne Meyerowitz also showed that multiple discourses on women and gender roles

³³ Paul R. Spickard, *Mixed Blood*, 123-158. Spickard's conclusions are primarily based on pre-existing sociological studies of Japanese war bride marriages.

³⁴ May, *Homeward Bound*.

existed in postwar America in “Beyond the Feminine Mystique.” In her look at popular magazines, Meyerowitz found that the domestic ideal was present in such literature, but often alongside alternative messages encouraging women’s achievements outside of the home.³⁵

In the last decade, historians have overturned the view of 1950s women as isolated housewives limited by an oppressive gender ideology. They have shown the variety of ideas circulating about women and that women were active participants in the labor force, politics, and social movements.³⁶ My project contributes to this historical revision by affirming both the power of the domestic ideal as it aided in the acceptance of Japanese war brides into American society and its inadequacy in actually describing the lives of these women.

The literature on racial formation in the postwar era is also relevant to this project. Numerous studies have historicized racial categories by showing how race is socially constructed.³⁷ In recent years, historians have shown how racial categories were being reformed in the postwar United States. David Freund, for example, explained how white identity and white racism evolved in postwar America by

³⁵ Susan Hartman, “Women’s Employment and the Domestic Ideal in the Early Cold War Years,” Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994) and Joanne Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958,” Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver*.

³⁶ See, for example, Robyn Muncy, “Cooperative Motherhood and Democratic Civic Culture in Postwar Suburbia,” *Journal of Social History* 2004 38 (2): 285-310.

³⁷ For examples, see Barbara J. Fields, “Ideology and Race in American History,” in Kousser, J. Morgan and James M. McPherson, eds., *Region, Race and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, Oxford, 1982: 143-177; Jacqueline Jones, “Race and Gender in Modern America,” *Reviews in American History* 26 (1998): 220-238; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17 (1992): 251-274; Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, & Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); and David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991).

examining home ownership and the idea of “white property” in Detroit after World War II.³⁸ Freund argued that white homeowners defended excluding African Americans from their neighborhoods in non racial economic terms in the postwar era, as opposed to the explicit racially discriminatory language of the prewar era. Significantly, “The politics of exclusion created considerable solidarity among a wide range of people who were now considered to be white,” including Southern and Eastern European immigrants and their children.³⁹ Other historians have also conceptualized whiteness to show the privilege associated with being white. For instance, David Roediger explained how whiteness was reformulated during the postwar era to include Southern and Eastern European immigrants, whom he argued had held an “inbetween” status in the earlier part of the twentieth century.⁴⁰ Ira Katznelson also expounded on the importance of World War II and racial formation. He explained that military service hastened the whitening of second wave immigrants, while excluding African Americans: “If, for Jews and Catholics, the war marked the first moment of full inclusion via the pathway of military service and benefits, for blacks, the war was the last moment of formal exclusion from equal citizenship by the federal government.”⁴¹ This study acknowledges these important contributions to the understanding of racial formation in the postwar United States, but it also seeks to complicate this scholarship. Examining the process by which the INS admitted war brides into the United States demonstrates how Southern and

³⁸ David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁰ David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

⁴¹ Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White*, 103. This argument was a piece of Katznelson's larger argument about racialized government policy from the 1930s-1960s, such as New Deal programs, that favored whites and excluded African Americans, thereby increasing inequality.

Eastern Europeans still occupied an “inbetween” status in some realms of postwar America. Additionally, the racial identity ascribed to Japanese war brides by some white Americans reveals that the experiences of these war brides did not necessarily fit with postwar conceptualizations of racial formation espoused by historians. At times, the race of the husband trumped the race of the Japanese war bride herself, as she experienced a type of racial coverture in the public sphere.

Asian American history is another field that has not yet fully considered the immigration of Japanese war brides. Izumi Hirobe’s fascinating study of the impact of the 1924 Immigration Act is a case in point. Hirobe’s work analyzes the United States’ and Japan’s diplomatic relationship during the interwar years and the movements within the United States to amend the law in order to ameliorate relations between the United States and Japan.⁴² While the inclusion of Japanese war brides would have been unnecessary in the majority of this work that focuses on the decades preceding World War II, there is no mention of the Japanese War Brides Act (1947) at the end of Hirobe’s work, which discusses the legislation that did alter the 1924 laws in favor of Japanese immigration (the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act).

Since the Japanese War Brides Act allowed for not only the first immigration of Japanese citizens since 1924, but also the only non-quota admittance until 1965, it represents an important part of this history. Additionally, the inclusion of the War Brides Act would bolster Hirobe’s interpretive framework. If the 1924 Immigration Act disturbed U.S.-Japan relations in the interwar years, as Hirobe convincingly argued, then the War Brides Act, admitting Japanese women alongside war brides from European and other Asian nations, was the first step in repairing this

⁴² Izumi Hirobe, *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice*.

relationship, by this time embittered by a devastating war as well as restrictive immigration policy.

Other works, such as Ronald Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, acknowledge the importance of the War Brides Act.⁴³ In Takaki's broad history of Asian immigration from the Far East and India, he did include the War Brides Act as one way that Asians were admitted into the United States before restrictive quota and exclusionary laws were amended. He did not, however, include war brides in his discussion of Japanese Americans after World War II. This may be because Japanese war brides did not become part of the existing Japanese American community for the most part. At times, the relationship between the two was even antagonistic. Yet Japanese war brides remain part of Japanese American history in the post World War II era, and my project will complicate that historiography.

Chapter Outline

The chapters of this dissertation are in roughly chronological order in an attempt to follow the war brides through their own history as they would have experienced it. However, since this project does not focus on one war bride but Japanese and European war brides in general (and 335 war brides through the RASRL study), the chronology is not the only organizing principle. The chapters themselves are thematic, as each covers either a different stage in the Japanese and European war bride's story or a particular aspect of the immigration process.

⁴³ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*.

Chapter one examines the changes to United States immigration law that allowed war bride and fiancée immigration during the postwar era. INS case files provide the most important source material on which the chapter is based. By analyzing these records, chapter one constructs a narrative of the intra-governmental debate surrounding war bride and fiancée legislation as it seeks to understand what brought about the revisions to American immigration law. Two factors proved to be the tipping points in getting this legislation passed. American soldiers and their foreign wives and fiancées pushing for change on the ground impelled legislative modifications. Rhetoric about the returning soldier, whether male or female, deserving the chance to bring her/his love interest home to the United States constituted another key piece of this puzzle. Many of the names that will appear in this chapter are not those of famous men or women, but rather government cogs performing their designated tasks within the federal machinery. Nevertheless, these government officials and their views on war bride and fiancée immigration, along with the pressure American GIs and war brides placed on the system themselves, propelled significant change in U.S. immigration policy following World War II.

Chapter two tackles one of the biggest obstacles that war bride couples had to face—the U.S. immigration process. By late 1945 the United States allowed for the immigration of foreign spouses of U.S. military personnel abroad, and then fiancées in 1946. Still, the U.S. military and INS often generated enough red tape to make the immigration process long, tedious, and anxiety-ridden. Some couples waited months for their immigration papers to be approved. This held true especially in the

immediate postwar years before the McCarran-Walter Act lifted the ban on Japanese immigration in 1952.

This chapter will draw on several sources in order to explore not just the obstacles that war bride couples faced in this at times tedious process, but also the assistance they received from organizations like the Red Cross. I draw on the RASRL interviews to gain a sense of the immigration process from the war brides themselves. It proved particularly useful to have testimony from war brides and GI husbands of various races and ethnicities to assess how race and ethnicity affected the process of immigration. In addition, INS case files once again proved a valuable source to understand how the government dealt with war bride immigration and particularly to see how this agency helped or hindered war bride couples. Finally, records from the HBRC illuminated the role the Red Cross played in assisting war bride couples in various steps of the immigration process.

In a slight break from the chronological flow of this narrative, chapter three shifts to the United States to focus on America's perception of the immigration of Japanese and European war brides following World War II. How did mainstream America view the Japanese war bride? How did Americans envision this new population of women fitting into society?

It is in this chapter that I will consider American popular culture, particularly movies and newspaper articles, to analyze the American public's reaction to Japanese war bride immigration. I will also discuss the war brides schools in this chapter, not only because the schools were featured in American popular culture (magazines and newspapers), but also because they represent one aspect of American perception of

Japanese war brides—that of the American Red Cross and of the U.S. Military. This depiction of Japanese war brides as potentially good housewives and therefore good U.S. citizens, is critical to understanding the acceptance of this new immigrant population on the part of the United States. Thus, this chapter speaks to my overarching question about the extent to which mainstream America accepted Japanese war bride immigration and will introduce one of my main arguments—that particular constructions of race and gender affected that acceptance.

Chapter four picks up where chapter two left off in the progression of the Japanese war bride experience and follows war brides to the United States. This chapter focuses on the war bride's adjustment to life in her new country and will rely heavily on the RASRL interviews. Whereas the previous chapter dealt with the issue of acceptance on a macro level, this chapter interrogates the ways in which Japanese war brides were accepted on a micro level, in their daily lives with their new in-law families and communities. In other words, this chapter assesses the degree to which their new in-laws, neighbors, and communities, accepted Japanese and European war brides in the United States. In-law families were an invaluable source in assisting the war brides with their transition into American society. Surprisingly few Japanese war brides married to Caucasian GIs experienced problems with their new families, while both Japanese and European war brides married to Asian American GIs felt the strain of heightened expectations from Asian American in-law families.

Japanese war brides experienced the most difficulty transitioning into life in America when they deviated from the mores of the dominant white middle-class society. The Japanese wives of African American servicemen, for example, risked

being shunned by the white middle class. Although Japanese/Caucasian marriages were sometimes viewed as problematic, it seems as though white America almost always deemed Japanese/African American marriages as such. Thus, I argue that Americans generally accepted Japanese war brides not only under very gender-specific terms, but under very strict racially-specific terms as well. Race was an important factor in determining how a war bride was accepted in a given American community. And often the race of the husband was just as important in dictating the level of acceptance as the race of the war bride.

The final chapter deals primarily with the relationship between Japanese war brides and the existing Japanese American community. Were Japanese war brides part of the larger Japanese American community? War brides, in fact, most often did not have a close relationship with this community, as the interviewed brides indicated through their stories. Some of the women had Japanese female friends or knew Japanese couples, especially once they lived in Hawaii. But these relationships were individual: they did not seem to bind the war brides to existing communities in any way, even when the Japanese war bride was married to a Japanese American GI. What's more, most of the war brides looked down upon the Japanese Americans they came into contact with and their community. This distance from the existing Japanese American community only contributed to the acceptance of the war brides by mainstream white America, as revealed through the attitudes of some of the women's white in-laws.

Chapter 1: What's Love Got to Do With It?: War Brides Force Changes in Immigration Law

...this is the least we can do for the men who fought our wars overseas, who have married aliens, and who now wish to have their wives join them in this country.⁴⁴

The romantic relationships between American GIs and foreign citizens abroad were one of the unintended consequences of the United States' involvement in World War II. A long war and an even longer occupation provided opportunities for American men and women to fall in love with a range of foreigners while stationed abroad. When these military personnel began returning to the U.S., their romances with foreigners put pressure on the American system of immigration, which forbade or severely restricted immigration from many of the areas where U.S. GIs served. Ultimately, the pressure produced several significant cracks in that system, especially cracks that facilitated war bride immigration and the immigration of fiancées of military personnel.

This chapter explores why policymakers in the mid-1940s were willing to open U.S. doors to immigration from Japan for the first time in over twenty years. It reveals that this reversal was part of a broader set of changes to immigration policy made in response to pressure from soldiers and their supporters, who believed that citizen soldiers deserved the freedom to establish families of their choice. In many ways, the sentiments that moved lawmakers to open the doors to this particular wave

⁴⁴ Senate Report No. 860, Calendar No. 867, 79th Congress, 1st Session, *Congressional Record*, December 19, 1945 from Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA.

of immigrants, Japanese as well as European, depended on a construction of foreign-born spouses of GIs as the spoils of war, a special sort of bounty that soldiers had legitimately won through their military service.

Moreover, the debate among policymakers over war bride immigration and the ultimate structure of the laws throws into relief postwar views of race and gender. Some policymakers were eager automatically and immediately to admit the spouses of U.S. soldiers to full American citizenship. This attitude particularly characterized the Administration, as the Attorney General and Secretary of State worked with the INS to craft legislation on behalf of war brides. Yet others remained anxious to maintain barriers, especially to immigrants they viewed as non-white. These anxieties shaped war bride legislation. Even though Japanese war brides were ultimately admitted to the United States, they were not admitted on equal footing with war brides from Europe. Furthermore, fiancées from Southern and Eastern Europe were treated differently from those in Western and Northern Europe. A complicated racial hierarchy structured the admission of women and men beloved of American military personnel, as the crafting of war bride and fiancée legislation reveals.

The context for war bride legislation was the racially structured immigration system set in place by Congress in the 1920s. Since 1924, U.S. law completely excluded immigration from Japan and placed other nations on a quota system.⁴⁵ The

⁴⁵ The Immigration Act of 1924 was not the first time the United States restricted immigration from Japan. The Gentleman's Agreement between the United States and Japan in 1907 halted the immigration of additional laborers from Japan. The Gentleman's Agreement did permit wives of Japanese men already in the United States to immigrate, however. See Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 17.

number of immigrants annually admitted to the U.S. from any national group depended on the group's percentage of the U.S. population in the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ This system favored countries from Northern and Western Europe, such as Great Britain, and curtailed immigration from Southern and Eastern European countries like Italy and Greece. Countries such as the former rarely exhausted their quotas, while the latter's remained continually oversubscribed.

When the INS evaluated the quota system near the end of World War II, they explained how effective the 1924 law had been in changing the make up of immigrants coming to the United States. The INS acknowledged that with the quotas introduced in 1924 the goal of Congress was to, "...shift the trend in European immigration from a predominance of Southern and Eastern European immigration back to a predominance of Northern and Western European immigration, so as to admit immigrants who were considered more easily assimilable."⁴⁷ Nations in Northern and Western Europe received 81.9 percent of the total annual quota allotment, while Southern and Eastern European countries received 16 percent.⁴⁸ This meant that a country such as Great Britain received an annual quota of 65,721 immigrants, while Italy only received only 5,802. Other Southern and Eastern

⁴⁶ For an excellent in-depth discussion of this quota system and how it came to be see Mae M. Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *The Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 67-92. See also Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). Notably, Ngai argued that while all European immigrants were categorized as white by this system, there was a hierarchy of preferences within the categorization based on nationality. Northern and Western Europeans were given preference over Southern and Eastern Europeans.

⁴⁷ Gertrude Krichesky, "Quota Immigration, 1925-1944," *INS Monthly Review*, June 1945, 156-159, 156. *Monthly Review* was an in-house publication written by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* The outstanding 2.1 percent of quota space was dispersed among Africa and Asia.

European nations like Greece received an even lower annual quota of 307.⁴⁹ Because Northern and Western countries enjoyed such a large percentage of the quota slots, they never used up their availability. In regards to Great Britain, the INS reported, "...with the exception of the fiscal years 1930 and 1931, at no time did the number admitted exceed 7 percent of the total number admissible."⁵⁰ As a whole, Northern and Western European countries never used more than 32 percent of their quotas between 1931 and 1944. The INS noted this level of fulfillment was relatively low, especially compared to Southern and Eastern European nations. The quota fulfillment for these nations "rose sharply" and were "practically exhausted" each year.⁵¹

Preceding the changes in immigration law brought about by war bride and fiancée immigration, Congress began to revise restrictive immigration policy during the war years. In 1943 Congress reversed its policy excluding all Chinese immigrants, which had been in place since 1882, and allowed a very small quota (105 people per year) for Chinese immigration to the United States. Immediately following the war, two separate but similar acts allowed for the immigration and naturalization of immigrants from India and the Philippines.⁵² Although this series of legislation strictly adhered to the quota system, its significance lies in the fact that it began to break down the barrier that had barred immigration from East and South Asia. These acts combined with the war bride and fiancée acts that Congress passed

⁴⁹ Ibid, 158.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 159. Germany used as little as 5.1 percent of their annual allotment of quota immigration in 1933, for example

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), 328.

in the postwar era represented a dramatic shift in U.S. immigration policy during the World War II era.

Still, Congress did not pass the war bride and fiancée acts until American GIs and their new wives and fiancées exerted pressure on an immigration system ill-equipped to handle such a large influx of women from countries around the globe. Foreign wives of U.S. citizens applied for non-quota visas to immigrate to the United States in such numbers before World War II even ended that the INS reported the strain this new wave of immigrants placed on their office. The agency noted, "...visa petitions filed by the servicemen to enable their wives to obtain non-quota visas are an indication of the numerical importance of that group. In the early part of the fiscal year 1944, seven-eighths of all visa petitions received at the Central Office were of this type."⁵³ In 1944, GIs filed most of these petitions on behalf of women in Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, where these men had been stationed. The INS indicated a simultaneous rise in petitions on behalf of Italian nationals, however, and correctly predicted a further increase from such nations as the placement of the U.S. Armed Forces shifted during the war. The INS also portended the tenuous status of fiancées compared to wives of servicemen, who were already accorded non-quota status under immigration law.⁵⁴ Fiancées had, "...no special rights or privileges under the immigration law."⁵⁵ It was with the preceding in mind that the INS began to discuss the need for new legislation facilitating the immigration of war brides and later fiancées. They communicated with government officials within the

⁵³ "Wives and Fiancées of Members of Our Overseas Forces," *INS Monthly Review*, December 1944, 78-79, 78.

⁵⁴ Wives of American citizens were granted nonquota status under immigration law.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

administration as they worked to craft the legislation, various versions of which they would take to Congress throughout 1945. This topic will be covered in detail in the next section of this chapter.

Making War Brides Citizens vs. Allowing Admittance: The Evolution of War Bride Legislation

An early version of legislation that would evolve into the War Brides Act of 1945 proposed making war brides citizens immediately upon their marriage to American GIs. The proposed legislation would have applied only to those racially eligible for citizenship, thereby excluding Japanese war brides entirely. Nevertheless, the intra-governmental debate surrounding this proposal revealed a range of attitudes toward this group of potential immigrants.⁵⁶ The debate was among various government officials, including the Secretary of State, Attorney General and Secretary of War, in addition to INS officials who worked particularly hard to draft the legislation. Surprisingly, most of the government officials favored automatic citizenship for these women. The Secretary of War did not, however, because he did not favor any legislation he felt would encourage marriage between GIs and foreign women. Although no war brides act passed with such an allowance in place, the debate surrounding the issue reveals not only what was at stake for American GIs and their foreign wives, but what was at stake for a postwar United States grappling with

⁵⁶ This debate was contained in an INS file that contained correspondence between various government officials. The file, number 56215/261, was titled, "Making Citizens of US citizen spouses of US citizens serving honorably in armed forces during WWII." See Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261, NARA.

old immigration restrictions and ideas about gender, race, and citizenship in the wake of a flood of potential new female immigrants.

Though largely in favor of immediate citizenship for war brides, INS officials carefully considered objections to the proposal from outside the agency as they worked to craft the legislation. Representatives from various organizations expressed their concerns (read: objections to) the potential war brides acts. Although these objections were not initially official statements or positions, they are as revealing now as they were to the INS officials in March 1945. One strain within these objections revealed that for some Americans, opposition to immigration outweighed even their heartfelt commitment to U.S. soldiers. Frank Sullivan of the American Legion strongly objected to the proposed act because he was staunchly anti-immigration. He felt it was "...the broad general view of the Legion that certain elements are constantly trying to tear down the immigration and naturalization laws," though he did not cite any specifics, and he was against further loosening of restrictions.⁵⁷ Edward Shaughnessy, an INS official, found this view particularly interesting because he thought the American Legion would be in favor of the proposal because the organization was "always advocating legislation for the benefit of soldiers."⁵⁸ Sullivan was careful to note that he in no way spoke for the entire organization, but he was equally careful in outlining his disapproval of the potential legal shift, which raised a red flag for this INS official because in this instance the American Legion, or at least Frank Sullivan, was more interested in keeping immigration restrictions in place than helping GIs. The view of Frank Sullivan was perhaps not as surprising as

⁵⁷ Edward Shaughnessy, letter to T.B. Shoemaker, March 6, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261, NARA.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Shaughnessy believed it to be. The American Legion had a history of nativism and favoring immigration restrictions.⁵⁹

Lieutenant Colonel Longfellow of the War Department, who handled naturalization cases for soldiers, similarly made his own viewpoint known. According to Shaughnessy, Colonel Longfellow “vigorously stated” his definite opposition to the proposal, and although he was careful to note that his sentiments did not represent an official statement by the War Department, his viewpoints foreshadowed the Department’s eventual position.⁶⁰ Colonel Longfellow’s opposition reflected the War Department’s general policy of discouraging marriages between GIs and foreign women on the grounds that they were “not conducive to good soldiering.”⁶¹

Other scholars have analyzed the War Department’s policy discouraging marriage (and even extensive fraternization) between soldiers and foreign women during World War II. The War Department’s policy in Great Britain during the World War II, for example, exemplified the U.S. military’s problems with its soldiers’ marriages, especially marriages to foreign women. The military found marriage a distraction to soldiers that diverted attention away from their military obligations. The military believed issues associated with marriage to foreign women, such as housing and immigration laws, served as disruptions to military service. Accordingly, the U.S. military discouraged marriage as much as possible. They did

⁵⁹ Mai Ngai, for example, discussed the organization’s support of the restrictive Immigration Act of 1924. See Mai M. Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924,” *The Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 67-92, 68.

⁶⁰ Edward Shaughnessy, letter to L. Paul Winings, March 6, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85 File 56215/261, NARA.

⁶¹ Janel Virden, *Good-bye, Picadilly: British War Brides in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 33-34.

not, however, discourage sex.⁶² Scholar Janel Virden has found that the U.S. military encouraged sex with women in Britain, for example, and in Hawaii, the U.S. military encouraged sex with local American women, as illustrated by the regimented system for sex with prostitutes on Hotel Street in Honolulu, where members of the Armed Forces waited in line to pay three dollars for three minutes of sex.⁶³ The U.S. military set up free prophylactic stations on Hotel Street that all men, military and civilian, could use.⁶⁴ The U.S. military, however, was not only trying to prevent venereal disease, which had been a problem during World War I, officials believed sex with prostitutes kept morale high and troops in order. Additionally, “Many high-ranking military officers believed that ‘any man that won’t fuck, won’t fight’; they saw the women of Hotel Street as useful in maintaining morale and a manly spirit among the boys.”⁶⁵ Significantly, both the example of Great Britain and Hawaii show that the military was not against all interaction with women stationed near military bases and that sex with prostitutes, for example, was not frowned upon and was even encouraged in some cases. The military viewed marriage as the problem.

Shaughnessy noted the obvious: the War Department’s policy (encouraging sex but) discouraging marriage between American GIs and foreign women had not been successful as evidenced by the large numbers of marriages that had already occurred abroad. Nevertheless, Colonel Longfellow, concerned that this problem of GIs marrying abroad would only increase during the period of occupation after the

⁶² Ibid. Scholar Janel Virden summed up her view of the U.S. military’s policy, “The army, in other words, condoned sex but not marriage.”

⁶³ Beth Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place: The Alchemy of Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 95. Bailey and Farber reported that as many as 30,000 military men would pass through the vice district on Hotel Street on any given day.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 106-07. These prophylactic stations could handle up to 1,500 men per hour and became busy with their own lines, according to Bailey and Farber.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 121.

war, insisted that everything should be done to discourage marriage between GIs and foreign women rather than encourage it, as he clearly believed the new proposal would. Colonel Longfellow expressed another concern to Shaughnessy, however, and that was the moral character of these potential immigrant women. He claimed, "...undoubtedly there will be a large number of aliens, principally women of loose morals, who will marry our boys for the sole purpose of gaining a foothold in the United States."⁶⁶ Shaughnessy did not validate this concern of Longfellow's, and he believed the number of such cases would be so small as to be "inconsequential." But Shaughnessy felt it was important to pass along these unofficial viewpoints, particularly those of Colonel Longfellow, because he correctly believed they portended official opposition to the bill from the War Department.

Other members of the War Department couched additional objections to war brides legislation in terms of morality and race, as INS officials received further warning of the War Department's opposition to the bill. Colonel McConnell, another member of the War Department, echoed Longfellow's view that the War Department needed to discourage marriages abroad as much as possible, and he also echoed his concern about the morality of the women GIs were marrying. McConnell believed that in addition to gaining access to the U.S., "...many of the alien girls are marrying our boys for ulterior purposes...under the belief that they have all the money in the world..."⁶⁷ After citing one of the most common stereotypes about war brides, that of the money-hungry GI-chaser, Colonel McConnell voiced one of the first

⁶⁶ Edward Shaughnessy, letter to L. Paul Winings, March 6, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85 File 56215/261, NARA. Longfellow, like Sullivan was more interested in controlling immigration than meeting the needs of GIs. While concerns for waging war seem to be legitimate, protecting immigration restrictions seems to have been at least of some importance to these people.

⁶⁷ Edward Shaughnessy, letter to Ugo Carusi, March 19, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85 File 56215/261, NARA.

documented racialized objections to the proposal.⁶⁸ Even though the bill under discussion would not include East and South Asians at all, McConnell still expressed racial concerns.⁶⁹ He feared that East Indian women could somehow circumvent the exclusionary system. According to McConnell there was "...a problem in India in that many East Indian half-breeds there, who claim they are predominately *white*, wish to marry a large number of our soldiers."⁷⁰ McConnell was not the only person thinking about Indian women. At the time that the war brides bill was being debated, legislation was pending (and would pass in 1946) to allow East Indian immigration on a quota basis, making East Indian war brides racially eligible.⁷¹ Odd as they were, McConnell's assertions about East Indian women revealed concerns about GI marriages abroad and war bride immigration beyond their impact on waging war.

INS official Shaughnessy favored the bill. He explained his support in pragmatic terms: "the best reason for looking in favor upon the bill is that fact that in declining to grant citizenship we merely put these wives to a great deal of trouble in accomplishing what can be accomplished under existing law in approximately two years."⁷² In addition to explaining the ways this bill would amend the law in order to expedite the immigration and naturalization process for spouses of citizens, Shaughnessy believed such revisions to existing laws were sound because they benefited men and women serving their country during war. Shaughnessy succinctly

⁶⁸ See Chapter Three for an in-depth discussion of common public perception and stereotypes about war brides. Yet it remains worth noting that statements such as McConnell's propagated war bride stereotypes from early on.

⁶⁹ All of the early proposals for war bride legislation only allowed for those racially eligible for citizenship, thereby excluding nearly all those from East and South Asia.

⁷⁰ Shaughnessy, letter to Carusi, March 19, 1945.

⁷¹ Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), 328.

⁷² Shaughnessy, letter to Carusi, March 19, 1945. Janel Virden also discussed that fact that INS officials supported war bride immigration. See Virden, *Good-bye, Picadilly*, 53-55.

stated, "...it is my judgment we would be justified in going the whole distance as a war measure and in behalf of our citizen service people."⁷³ Both of these justifications offered by Shaughnessy would be employed later that year to defend the legislation that would pass on behalf of citizen soldiers and war brides, Public Law 271, or the War Brides Act. The latter argument would also be employed in various ways in the following years to justify the passage of the Fiancée Acts, suggesting a connection between this idea and the passage of legislation on behalf of war brides and fiancées. Despite this reasoning, Colonel McConnell remained staunchly opposed because of "...the reasons already stated and for the additional reason that during the days of Allied occupation a still greater number of boys will marry alien girls if they are encouraged to do so by way of liberal laws."⁷⁴ McConnell also indicated that the War Department would indeed be issuing a negative report on the bill, thereby giving power to his and Longfellow's opinions.

On March 20, 1945, Secretary of War Henry Stimson issued the War Department's official position on the proposed war bride legislation to Richard B. Russell, the chairman of the Committee on Immigration in the U.S. Senate. Although neither Lieutenant Colonel Longfellow nor Colonel McConnell had claimed to represent the official position of the War Department, their views were directly in sync with the report Stimson issued. The themes discussed above, such as waging war efficiently and the moral character of these immigrant women, were also present in Stimson's position. Stimson additionally raised the issue of war brides possibly hailing from enemy nations. Stimson's first objection was the immorality of the

⁷³ Shaughnessy, letter to Carusi, March 19, 1945.

⁷⁴ Shaughnessy, letter to Carusi, March 19, 1945.

potential immigrants. Like Longfellow and McConnell, Stimson expressed concern about the “good moral character” of these women. He suspected they were prostituting themselves to gain entry to the United States. He was also worried that this “large but unknown number of aliens” would not meet the language and education requirements other immigrants had to as they underwent the naturalization process.⁷⁵ Stimson even lacked confidence in the military’s own screening process. GIs had to obtain permission from their commanding officers to marry, but Stimson did not believe this process sufficient to weed out unworthy immigrants. He explained, “The War Department attempts to control the marrying of military personnel to foreign nationals through the exercise of certain measures...However, such measures do not prevent in every instance marriages to persons who would be undesirable as citizens...”⁷⁶

Stimson also elaborated on what he meant by “undesirable citizens,” just as McConnell had in his discussion of allegedly predatory East Indian women. He said that the military’s screening process, “...should not be considered as a valid substitute for naturalization requirements which have been established through long experience.”⁷⁷ He furthermore believed that new immigrants must be, “...attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States...well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States.”⁷⁸ Without the naturalization process, Stimson feared citizenship would automatically be granted, “...even on some persons who had willfully waged war against the United States and had undergone no change

⁷⁵ Henry Stimson, letter to Richard B. Russell, March 20, 1945, RG 85, Entry 9, File 56215/261, NARA.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

in attitude toward the United States.” Under the future War Brides and Fiancée Acts women from former enemy nations would come to the United States, but they would not gain automatic citizenship.⁷⁹

Only after expressing anxieties about potential war brides’ morality and attachment to the Constitution did Stimson relay his fear that the war brides bill would undermine the power of military personnel overseas, thereby obstructing the chief objective of the military: waging war effectively. Joining Longfellow and McConnell, Stimson believed the passage of this law would encourage rather than discourage GI marriages to foreign women. More importantly, he believed it would undermine the power of the commanding officer over his own troops, as it was the commanding officer who granted permission for such marriages per War Department policy. Stimson noted the measure was in place, “...not to question that marriages between members of our armed forces and foreign nationals will be successful, but it is to empower overseas commanders with authority to regulate and counsel the personnel of their commands as local conditions require.”⁸⁰ Stimson outlined the various aspects of counseling. “Generally, applicants for permission to marry are reminded that they are overseas to wage war against the enemy;...”⁸¹ He also noted that other counseling ranged from raising concerns about language differences to transporting the new bride back to the U.S. to her admissibility under American law. It was perhaps the latter that Stimson felt the proposed war brides legislation would

⁷⁹ Former enemy nation status did not have an impact on the way the INS processed war brides. Chapter Two will explore this concept in further detail. Second only to British war brides, German war brides experienced the fewest problems with the INS while immigrating as war brides or fiancées. Italian and Japanese women dealt with heightened scrutiny from the INS completely unrelated to their former enemy nation status.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

have the most impact upon. If war brides were made citizens upon marriage, a commanding officer's power could be undermined. He would not be able to use restrictive U.S. immigration and naturalization law as a way to dissuade their soldiers from marrying foreign women. Otherwise, nothing in the law itself undermined the commanding officer's power to refuse these marriages. The military's power and ability to wage war would have remained in tact, rendering Stimson's summation, "The immediate concern of the War Department in the bill is that it is feared its enactment would have the effect of weakening the control now exercised by overseas commanders over the marriages of military personnel," of questionable concern.⁸²

Since the INS both supported and worked on drafting this initial version of war brides legislation, agency officials questioned Stimson's logic. In April 1945, T.B. Shoemaker, Acting Commissioner for the INS, discounted most of the arguments presented by Stimson and offered an argument in favor of automatic citizenship for war brides. Shoemaker did not believe that the bill would affect the military's control over its soldiers and their ability to marry foreign women because of the counseling measures that Stimson described. He stated, "No reason appears why the War Department might not continue its control over marriages of members of the armed forces through the requirement of application for approval of commanders and the counseling of the applicant on all the other disclosed grounds, even if the bill were to become a law."⁸³ Shoemaker did not believe the proposed bill

⁸² Ibid. Stimson mentioned one final concern: for the postwar occupation period. He believed the "problem" would only grow and stated, "It is believed the effective maintenance of such control will become more difficult with the cessation of hostilities and this difficulty will continue so long as our forces are stationed overseas." Perhaps correctly portending a prolonged postwar occupation in some countries, Stimson preferred to nip the issue of war bride marriages in the bud.

⁸³ T.B. Shoemaker, Letter to Hugh B. Cox, April 14, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261, NARA.

would influence military control because it did not modify their current policy on GI marriages, which as he noted were allowed by the military, and, “would have effect only where marriages have taken place.”⁸⁴ The main goal of the proposed legislation was to expedite the naturalization process for foreign spouses of GIs by granting automatic citizenship upon marriage, something the INS officials found worthwhile as it would have assisted not only these women but the GIs as well.

Shoemaker invoked the idea that the citizen soldier merited such treatment for services rendered to his [or her] country, a theme that would become prevalent in arguments for war bride and fiancée acts passed in the immediate postwar era, which suggests a connection between the idea and the passage of the bill. He closed his argument by noting just that, “The bill...by reason of the service rendered by the citizen, in his interests and not primarily that of the one he marries, would extend automatic citizenship to the one he marries.”⁸⁵ Shoemaker thus attempted to refocus the attention of the bill away from the unknown (and possibly dangerous/unwanted) war bride population to the citizen GI who served his country honorably and deserved to be compensated by his government—in this case in the form of eliminating red tape from the long and involved naturalization process for his bride (or her bridegroom). In effect, the INS shifted the focus to the GI and made him/her the prime beneficiary of the legislation, rather than the war bride. This rhetorical re-visioning of the bill would not be enough to convince the War Department to support

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

this first version of proposed war brides legislation or for Congress to pass it in this form, but it proved useful in debates on later legislation.⁸⁶

The (perhaps unintended) implication of this rhetorical re-visioning of the bill as something soldiers deserved for fighting for their country, relegated war brides to a type of booty of war. In *Tea*, a play written about Japanese war brides living in Fort Reilly Kansas, one of the characters, a GI husband of a Japanese war bride, exclaimed, “What can I say. There’s nobody like her. Never has been....She’s the only fuckin’ prize I ever won.”⁸⁷ Though written years later by the child of a Japanese war bride and an American GI, this fictional quote painfully captured the way some American GIs felt about their war brides, or at the very least how some war brides and their children came to feel. War brides in the RASRL study confirmed this feeling in a roundabout way. Several European war brides noted their preference for Asian American GIs to Caucasian GIs because the latter acted like conquerors.

German war bride Mrs. D-46 explained the distinction:

The people in Germany liked [Asian American] boys from Hawaii very much, because they were thoughtful and treated German girls with respect and kindness. Haole boys from the mainland who came to Germany were rude and fresh, especially the young ones. They behaved like conquerors and arrogant. That’s why German people liked Hawaiian boys but not haole boys from the mainland.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Historian Martha Gardner also noted the war brides and fiancée acts, “...rewarded the sacrifices of soldiers by reuniting them with their foreign-born wives.” See Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 225.

⁸⁷ Velina Hasu Houston, *Tea*, ed. Roberta Uno, *Unbroken Thread: An Anthology of Plays by Asian American Women* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 191.

⁸⁸ D-46, September 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1. The term “haole” is Hawaiian slang for Caucasian, most often referring to a person from the mainland.

Whether or not all war brides agreed with Mrs. D-46, or whether or not all American GIs shared the sentiments of the fictional GI in *Tea*, the ultimately persuasive argument of the dutiful soldier deserving the right to bring his foreign bride or fiancée back to the United States lent credence this idea of the war bride as war prize.⁸⁹

Acting Commissioner Shoemaker did not always subscribe to the reasoning about the deserving citizen soldier, however. Over the course of early spring 1945, however, he had waffled—in part because the legislation would grant automatic citizenship to foreign men who married U.S. servicewomen. Shoemaker at one point questioned whether or not soldiers and their foreign wives deserved expedited treatment from the INS. He explained, “I do not regard it as a hardship for a soldier to go through the process of bringing his wife in by petition under existing law the same as other marriages.”⁹⁰ There is no indication as to why Shoemaker later reverted back to his original position on the first version of the war brides bill. Although he mentioned the objections raised by Colonel Longfellow via Shaughnessy, perhaps he was not persuaded by the War Department’s official position once he viewed it in print and found his original position and that of his peers at the INS (as well that of the Attorney General) more tenable. Shoemaker was also concerned about the influx of female, and significantly male immigrants, as he said, “I do not believe that spouses of American soldiers married abroad should be brought in indiscriminately. This would be particularly true in the cases of male spouses, but perhaps the female spouse in many instances should not be brought in any more than

⁸⁹ The way Japanese war brides represented defeat to some Japanese Americans in Hawaii was part and parcel with this ideological justification for the war brides and fiancée legislation that framed these people as war booty. See Chapter Five.

⁹⁰ T.B. Shoemaker, Letter to Ugo Carusi, March 28, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261.

the male spouse...”⁹¹ This stance is noteworthy for two reasons. The first is that it was so decidedly different from his later position on the proposed war brides legislation (and his earlier one for that matter) and was more similar to the War Department’s opinion of the bill. Even more interesting, however, was the differentiation Shoemaker made between war brides and war grooms.⁹²

Shoemaker had addressed the gendered implications of the proposed war brides bill in his first discussion of the legislation in March 1945. He explained that the bill would be applied equally to male and female citizens who had served honorably in the armed forces. He noted that this bill represented no groundbreaking legislation as far as foreign women were concerned because, “prior to September 22, 1922, alien women acquired citizenship immediately upon their marriage to male United States citizens.”⁹³ Shoemaker was right. Only in 1922 had the Cable Act revised immigration law in such a way that a wife’s citizenship remained independent of her husband’s. If war brides were granted automatic citizenship, it would simply restore earlier treatment of women’s citizenship.⁹⁴ Where foreign husbands were concerned, however, this legislation offered the possibility for something entirely new

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² It is worth noting that this was the only time such a concern was raised in all of the files viewed for this project. Yet Shoemaker’s concerns can be easily contextualized. The next paragraph explains how a woman’s legal citizenship status was tied to that of her husband only a little over twenty years prior to this debate about war bride legislation. Furthermore, some aspects of *femme covert* were still legal in various states in the 1940s. Finally, Chapter Four will discuss the notion of racial *coverture*, in which the husband’s racial identity took precedence over that of the war bride wife’s. For these reasons, a foreign husband subsuming the legal (and maybe even racial identity) of an American wife could be viewed as more problematic than an American husband subsuming the identity of a foreign woman.

⁹³ T.B. Shoemaker, letter to Hugh B. Cox, March 6, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261, NARA.

⁹⁴ The Cable Act, otherwise known as the Married Women’s Independent Nationality Act of 1922, separated a woman’s citizenship status from her husband’s nationality. An American woman would remain an American citizen when she married a foreign man if she stayed in the United States. Furthermore, a male American citizen’s foreign wife would no longer gain automatic U.S. citizenship upon marriage. She would have to be naturalized. See Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 165.

in U.S. immigration law. As Shoemaker explained, “This is the first time that alien men will have acquired citizenship by virtue of marriage to female citizens (provided the bill is enacted into law). However, it is not seen where there would be any justification in drawing any distinction between the sexes.”⁹⁵ Even though this version of the war brides bill did not pass, the proposal remains significant for several reasons: the bill treated men and women in the armed forces equally, and the fact that the bill would have made foreign husbands automatic citizens upon marriage was never used publicly as an argument against the bill. The eventual War Brides and Fiancée Acts followed this early bill, granting equal benefits to male and female citizen soldiers and their foreign spouses and fiancées.⁹⁶

In this initial discussion, Shoemaker also explained why he (and then by extension the INS) supported the war brides bill. Perhaps as a way to stave off anti-immigration critics, Shoemaker was careful to point out that voting against the bill would not prevent these foreign spouses from becoming U.S. citizens. He clarified, “If this bill is not enacted it does not mean that the alien spouses will not be permitted to acquire United States citizenship. It merely means that they will be put to considerable trouble and expense in the acquisition of citizenship after being admitted to the United States...”⁹⁷ He further noted that spouses of citizens already had special rights under current immigration law, such as a shortened naturalization period (two versus five years), and that the war brides bill would only serve to expedite the

⁹⁵ T.B. Shoemaker, letter to Hugh B. Cox, March 6, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261, NARA.

⁹⁶ Being an official member of the U.S. Armed Forces netted tangible benefits for the men and women who served during World War II. This underscores the importance of Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers and her fight to establish the Women’s Army Corps as part of the U.S. military as World War II broke out. See Sara Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 219-242.

⁹⁷ Shoemaker, letter to Cox, March 6, 1945.

process further. In his support of the bill, Shoemaker also tried to quell other immigration fears the proposed legislation would raise. He specifically acknowledged anxieties about the dubiously-motivated woman eager to gain a foothold in the United States. Shoemaker stated, “I know there is the argument that certain designing persons, some of them persons of not too good character, will inveigle some of our service people into marriage solely for the purpose of acquiring admission to the United States.”⁹⁸ Like Shaughnessy, Shoemaker granted little credence to this concern because, “...while I recognize that this situation will undoubtedly exist in a certain limited number of cases, I doubt if the ration of such marriages will be very great.”⁹⁹ Although others found this idea of the predatory war bride veritable, INS officials never validated such concerns.¹⁰⁰

Outside the INS, Attorney General Francis Biddle staunchly supported the passage of this first version of the war brides bill. In late March 1945, Biddle notified the Secretary of War of his support for the proposed war brides legislation and noted that he would be providing the Senate and House committees on Immigration and Naturalization with “favorable recommendations.” The Attorney General explained that he came to support the bill, “After an examination of the purposes of these bills and considering their limited application and the legal history of provisions conferring citizenship upon aliens through marriage to American citizens...”¹⁰¹ The

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ It is important to note that the quotes from this letter are quoted from the first draft that was never mailed. The ideas were the same as the second (and mailed) draft, but they were elaborated on much more fully. The second draft was succinct and did not go into the same detail in regards to immigration law. For clarity and explication, I have quoted from the first draft.

¹⁰¹ Attorney General Francis Biddle, Letter to Secretary of War, March 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261, NARA. INS officials assisted Attorney General Biddle with the drafting of this letter. See L. Paul Winings, Memo to Edward Shaughnessy, March 30, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261,

Attorney General was no doubt referring to the Cable Act and also emphasized the limited number of beneficiaries of the proposed legislation once again to subdue concerns about a possibly large influx of new immigrants. He also attempted to counter the logic the War Department would employ against the bill, which he knew via informal communication with the INS. The close of Biddle's position on the proposed war brides legislation cited the War Department's policy of discouraging marriages among GIs and foreign women, and the Attorney General was deferential to the War Department's authority over its soldiers. Still, he was also careful to note the reality of the situation when he said, "I do not, of course, wish to comment upon the policy of the armed forces in this connection, but such marriages do take place."¹⁰² He noted that the proposed war brides legislation would facilitate a process that would need to take place in some form. He closed his argument by stating his view, which diametrically opposed the War Department's, "I cannot believe that such laws would serve to encourage marriages of this kind. I cannot doubt that such marriages after the enactment of these bills would continue to result from no different motives of impulses than bring them about at present."¹⁰³ Attorney General Biddle hoped the Secretary of War would be persuaded by his argument and gave the bill a favorable recommendation to the House and Senate as well, but as Stimson's previously stated position made clear, he was not moved by the arguments provided by the Attorney General or INS officials. As Biddle stated in his official report to the House and Senate in May 1945, "Since the present bill attempts to solve in a realistic

NARA. Additionally, the INS and Biddle had been in contact with each other about war bride legislation prior to the drafting of the letter. See, for example, Edward Shaughnessy, letter to L. Paul Winings, March 6, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85 File 56215/261, NARA.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

manner a problem growing out of the wide distribution of our armed forces, I find no objection to its enactment.”¹⁰⁴

The Attorney General’s report was sent to Congress May 4, 1945, but by May 16th changes were already underway. This initial version of the war brides act would not pass because the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization was not in favor of granting automatic citizenship to war brides. A new bill was proposed that month, H.R.2650 entitled, “Providing for the naturalization of certain spouses of United States citizens serving honorably in the armed forces during the Second World War.” Shaughnessy and Democratic Congressman George G. Sadowski of Michigan presented this version of the war brides legislation to the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, just as they had done with previous incarnation of the bill.¹⁰⁵ Shaughnessy in particular explained the bill to the committee. He was the most familiar with both versions of the proposed war brides legislation, as he had worked with other INS officials and members of the Administration to craft it. The obvious but significant evolution of the legislation pertaining to war brides was that the new proposal no longer allowed for automatic citizenship, but for an expedited naturalization process, and thus would not represent as radical a revision to existing immigration law. Within the agency, INS officials had discussed the opposition of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization to the first version of the war brides legislation, and they did not seem hopeful for the newly proposed version of the bill either. Some INS officials even suggested saving the work the agency had

¹⁰⁴ Attorney General, Letters to Senator Russell and Congressman Dickstein, May 4, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261, NARA.

¹⁰⁵ “Committee Report,” Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, 79th Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record—House, May 16, 1945.

done on first bill for future reports to the House and Senate, should the issue come before the committees again because, "...[of] the very evident [view] of the House Committee in opposition to the previous bills on this subject and the very evident opposition that would arise as to this one."¹⁰⁶ INS officials did not explain the House committee's response to the Attorney General's report or the specific nature of their objection, only that they opposed the bill. The committee itself did not expound on their objection to the first version of the bill either, only stating that they were not in favor of granting automatic citizenship to war brides.¹⁰⁷ The nature of the second proposal for war brides legislation hinted at the problems committee members had with the previously proposed legislation, however. The new bill allowed for a naturalization process that involved taking an oath of allegiance to the United States. The oath of allegiance in this bill would have addressed earlier concerns articulated by the Secretary of War—that the first version of the war brides legislation would have granted automatic citizenship to foreign spouses who may have waged war against the US and/or did not feel allegiance toward the country—and allowed for a naturalization process expedited compared to the existing process for spouses of citizens. This new version of the bill, then, represented an attempt to quell the fears of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization (and others) that war brides would be brought in indiscriminately and perhaps without loyalty to a United States still at war.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Shaugnessy, Memo to Paul Winnings, May 16, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261, NARA.

¹⁰⁷ See "Committee Report," Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, 79th Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record—House, May 16, 1945.

INS officials indicated that they supported the second version of the bill, just as they had supported the previous version of war bride legislation, and Commissioner Ugo Carusi stated as much in May 16, 1945. Carusi explained the similarities of this bill to first one and that the differences lay in the oath taking process, which could be done abroad. The Bill also included a provision that revoked citizenship if the marriage was annulled. Carusi was concerned, however, that the language outlining the time limits for GIs/war brides was not clear enough and open to the same type of criticism the first version of the war brides legislation received. The legislation was not meant to be open-ended, but only valid for, “marriages in effect at the time of enactment of the bill and marriages from that date through a period terminating one year following the end of hostilities.”¹⁰⁸ The previous was stated in the new proposal, but in a manner that Carusi felt was unclear and thus problematic because it meant this bill might reach the same fate as the previous one. Time limits, expirations, and renewals would become a hallmark of war brides and fiancée legislation and a huge headache for couples scrambling to meet deadlines. Carusi stated the bottom line, however, “I recommend that if the bill be amended as suggested by the attached draft a favorable report be made.”¹⁰⁹ Even though, as he noted earlier, this bill represented more work for his agency because of the additions of the oath-taking and cancellation upon annulment processes, Carusi still believed in the bill.

The INS officials’ initial suspicion that this new version of proposed war brides legislation would not be much more palatable to the House Committee was

¹⁰⁸ Ugo Carusi, letter to Hugh B. Cox, May 16, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56215/261, NARA.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

correct, and the bill remained nothing more than a proposal. Congress eventually passed a bill in late 1945, after the cessation of hostilities. Democratic Congressman Samuel Dickstein from New York, the chairman of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, introduced the bill to Congress in November. Congressman John Lesinski, a Democrat from Michigan and also a member of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, asked Congress for unanimous consent when Congress moved to vote on the bill. The War Brides Act was entitled, “A bill to expedite the admission to the United States of alien spouses and alien minor children of citizen members of the United States armed forces,” and it passed without opposition.¹¹⁰ The War Brides Act allowed war brides entry to the United States as nonquota immigrants and offered them a moderately expedited immigration and naturalization process. The bill represented a watered down version of previous incarnations of war bride legislation, and only a moderately expedited process, thereby allowing it to pass without opposition. The House report on the War Brides Act explained that the proposed bill expedited the immigration and naturalization process by eliminating medical exams in the war bride’s country of origin and cut red tape by allowing war brides to begin paperwork in their country of origin rather than the United States. Notably, when the House Report explained these modifications, it included the same type of rhetoric previously used by the Attorney General and some INS officials in support of these bills, suggesting a connection between the rhetoric

¹¹⁰ “Admission to the United States of Alien Spouses,” 79th Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record—House, December 10, 1945. The Immigration Committee in the Senate also presented the bill for unanimous consent, and it passed there without objection as well. “Admission to the United States of Alien Wives and Children of Veterans,” 79th Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record—Senate, December 19, 1945. See also Virden, *Good-bye, Picadilly*, 53-4. Virden recounted a similar narrative when describing how the War Brides Act made it through Congress.

and passage of legislation. The report read, “One of the reasons for the introduction of this measure is due to the fact that it is believed such strong equities run in favor of these service men and women in the right of having their families with them...”¹¹¹

The War Brides Act was at once radical in the revisions it made to immigration law and the allowances it made for the special circumstances of war brides, yet a much less radical change than the two earlier-proposed versions of the legislation. It at once represented an opportunity for war bride immigration and miles of red tape for war brides and their husbands. In the report to the Senate accompanying the final bill, Democratic Senator Richard B. Russell of Georgia, chairman of the Immigration Committee, contended, “Mr. President, I think this is the least we can do for the men who fought our wars overseas, who have married aliens, and who now wish to have their wives join them in this country.”¹¹² Like the Attorney General and INS officials, Russell employed the logic of the deserving GI to push the bill through Senate.¹¹³ Yet when he said that it was the least Congress could do for GIs, he was more than employing persuasive and pressure-filled rhetoric (how unpatriotic would one be to not do something for the soldiers who had served so honorably and helped win the war?) he offered a succinct summation of the nearly year-long effort to get some type of legislation passed for GIs and their spouses. The proposed legislation had devolved from offering automatic citizenship to spouses of

¹¹¹ House Report No. 1320, 79th Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record, December 10, 1945 from Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA. In tandem with the idea of the honorable service provided by soldiers, the House report indicated that the idea of the family and reunion was a powerful concept in terms of supporting this bill. For a more detailed discussion of this idea see Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹¹² Senate Report No. 860, Calendar No. 867, 79th Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record, December 19, 1945 from Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA.

¹¹³ It is interesting to note that Russell only refers to men in this rhetoric, however, rather than the men and women who would benefit from the bill, as the House Report did.

servicemen to allowing for a highly expedited process for naturalization to a moderately expedited process. In that light, the version of the War Brides Act that passed Congress in late 1945 did indeed represent the very least the U.S. government could have done on behalf of citizen soldiers and their foreign spouses.

One of the most significant aspects of the war brides legislation that did pass, as well as one of the ways that it was most radical in revising immigration law, was the way the act circumvented the quota system in place since the 1920s. Section two of the bill read, “Regardless of section 9 of the Immigration Act of 1924, any alien admitted under section 1 of this Act shall be deemed to be a nonquota immigrant as defined in section 4(a) of the Immigration Act of 1924.”¹¹⁴ As previously mentioned, the 1924 law completely halted immigration from Japan and placed other nations on a quota system based on national origin and proportionate to the percentage of racial and ethnic categories determined to have existed in the United States in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁵ This system sought to favor immigration from Northern and Western Europe as opposed to that from Southern and Eastern Europe. Countries such as Germany, then, rarely exhausted their quotas, while Greece’s, for example, remained oversubscribed. With the passage of the War Brides Act then a new window of opportunity opened for immigration from countries whose quotas were overburdened. Perhaps more importantly, Congress questioned the logic and usefulness of the quotas themselves by passing the War Brides Act, and the groundwork was laid for overturning them entirely.

¹¹⁴ Act of December 28, 1945, *Admission of Alien Spouses and Alien Minor Children of Citizen Members of the United States Armed Forces*, United States Congress, INS archives.

¹¹⁵ For an excellent in-depth discussion of this quota system and how it came to be see Mae M. Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law.”

Even though it represented a significant shift in immigration law, the War Brides Act stopped short of circumventing all of the restrictions of the 1920s, particularly laws that completely excluded specific racial groups, such as people from Japan. All of the legislation proposed in 1945 only allowed for, “Any alien racially eligible to naturalization...”¹¹⁶ Thus the first War Brides Act did not allow Japanese war brides to immigrate. By 1947, however, Congress passed the first in a series of laws that would grant Japanese war bride couples the opportunity to take advantage of legal loopholes provided by the War Brides Act. Congress passed the Japanese War Brides Act but only after feeling the pressure war bride couples exerted on the inadequate system in place.

Japanese War Bride Couples Pressure the System and Force Legislative Change

Activity on the ground forced the hand of Congress. Even though the original War Brides Act forbade Japanese immigration, American GIs in Japan married Japanese women and wanted to bring them back to the United States. Japanese war brides and American GIs exerted pressure on the U.S. immigration system in order to get the Japanese War Brides Acts, passed.¹¹⁷

As explained earlier in this chapter, commanding officers retained power over whether or not GIs could marry foreign women, and Japanese war bride couples often had a difficult time gaining permission to marry. Officers used the logic of restrictive

¹¹⁶ See H.R.2650 proposal, for example, and the passed H.R. 4857.

¹¹⁷ Regina Lark, “They Challenged Two Nations.” In her dissertation Lark provided an in depth discussion and analysis of how Japanese war brides and American GIs maneuvered within the restrictive system set up by the U.S. military and American immigration law to marry and find a way to bring Japanese war brides to the United States. Lark looked at the records of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) to see how the process worked for Japanese war brides couples.

U.S. immigration law to justify denying these couples the right to marry.¹¹⁸ Historian Regina Lark confirmed, “The official word held that since U.S. immigration law forbade ‘admission to aliens not eligible for naturalization’, marriage applications for American/Japanese unions were automatically denied.”¹¹⁹ Rather than wait for laws to change, however, GI/war bride couples, in combination with various groups on the U.S. homefront such as the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), pressured the system and worked to change the law and get Japanese war bride couples included in the benefits of the War Brides Act.

One of the primary ways Japanese war bride couples exerted pressure on the system was to marry without the Supreme Commander of the Allied Power’s (SCAP’s) approval, which an undetermined number did. Japanese civil law allowed for the unions, even if the U.S. military did not. Whether they had married or not, GIs also pushed towards a change in policy by asking their Congressmen for advice, as well as about the possibility of changing U.S. immigration and anti-miscegenation laws.¹²⁰ Servicemen wrote letters to Congressmen in states such as Hawaii, Arizona, and Minnesota. In response, congressman like Wayne Morris from Oregon questioned SCAP’s policy. Patterson defended the protocol against Japanese war bride marriages by insisting they protected GIs from poor marriage decisions.¹²¹

In addition to the efforts of GIs, the JACL, a group that became the voice of the Japanese American community by the 1940s and that lobbied on their behalf,

¹¹⁸ Based on the discussion above in which the War Department, INS officials, and the Attorney General debated the merits of passing war bride legislation, it comes as no surprise that the military used US immigration policy as a reason to deny permission to marry to soldiers stationed abroad.

¹¹⁹ Lark, “They Challenged Two Nations,” 157-58.

¹²⁰ Lark, “They Challenged Two Nations,” 193-196.

¹²¹ Ibid, 196. Lark also noted that at other times, Secretary of War Patterson claimed SCAP’s policies protected Japanese women who would be subject to intense scrutiny in Japan because of her choice to marry and American GI.

worked to assist the passage of the Japanese War Brides Act and had the support of other groups like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the American Jewish Congress in this effort. Lark described how this group, led by its National Legislative director Mike Masaoka, investigated marriage policies for Japanese war bride couples on behalf of Nisei soldiers stationed in the Pacific. The JACL and the ACLU first argued that the law should be amended so Nisei soldiers could marry Japanese war brides because they were ethnically similar and because it would erase the immoral nature of their current (extramarital) relationships.¹²² When Secretary of War Robert Patterson countered that the current law was in place to protect the soldier and the morality of Japanese women, the JACL and ACLU employed the same logic/rhetoric that had been used by the Attorney General and others to get the initial war bride act passed—the (Nisei) soldier deserved better treatment, and the law would really be for his/her benefit. As Lark explained, “In Congressional hearings Masaoka argued that the restrictive 1924 Immigration Act which barred the immigration of racially ineligible aliens was ““discriminatory not only toward Asian but also the millions of Americans who served in various parts of the Pacific Theater.””¹²³ Like the Attorney General and INS officials, Masaoka refocused the law to show how it would benefit (or conversely discriminate against) American soldiers.

¹²² Both the House and Senate reports on the Japanese War Brides Act mentioned how the Act would benefit Japanese American soldiers. Each report stated, “...a number of United States citizen soldiers of the Japanese and Korean race have married girls of their own race while serving in the Pacific. These girls, under present law, are ineligible for admission and the only relief in such cases is through private legislation.” House Report No. 478, 80th Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record, May 28, 1947 and Senate Report No. 501, Calendar No. 518, 80th Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record, July 11, 1947.

¹²³ Ibid, 199-200.

Masaoka and the efforts of the JACL reached a degree of success when the Japanese War Brides Act was passed on July 22, 1947 as an amendment to the original War Brides Act.¹²⁴ The Japanese War Brides Act said, “The alien spouse of an American citizen by a marriage occurring before thirty days after the enactment of this Act, shall not be considered as inadmissible because of race, if otherwise admissible under this Act.”¹²⁵ Based on this revision to the War Brides Act, Japanese war brides were able to enter the United States. The bill represented only a partial victory, however, because it was a temporary measure: war brides and their GI husbands could only take advantage of the Japanese War Brides Act if they were married prior to July 22, 1947 or within one month of the passage of the bill. Masaoka was disappointed with the Japanese War Brides Act because “Masaoka saw this compromise as ‘ridiculously racist.’”¹²⁶ Although temporary in nature, the Japanese War Brides Act represented an important shift in U.S. immigration policy because for the first time in over twenty years, some people from Japan would be able to immigrate to the United States. What’s more, Japanese spouses of American soldiers would have the same access to the war brides act as spouses from Europe, allowing for a period (albeit brief) of equal treatment under American law.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ The Japanese War Brides Act passed the House and Senate without objection, just as the War Brides Act had. “Admission to the United States of Alien Spouses,” 80th Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record—House, June 16, 1947 and “Admission to the United States of Alien Spouses,” 80th Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record—Senate, July 16, 1947.

¹²⁵ Act of July 22, 1947, *Admissibility of Alien Spouses of Citizen Members of the United States Armed Forces*, United States Congress, INS Archives.

¹²⁶ Lark, “They Challenged Two Nations,” 200.

¹²⁷ Martha Gardner completely ignored this aspect of the war bride/fiancée acts in her work. She claimed that Japanese women were never allowed under either set of laws, but she is wrong. See Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 224-231. Gardner’s narrative focused on the fiancée acts and admission of only racially eligible immigrant women. She did not discuss laws like P.L. 213 that allowed for the admission of Japanese war brides. For other discussions of P.L. 213 and P.L. 717 see for example Lark, “They Challenged Two Nations” and Simpson, “‘Out of an obscure place.’”

Japanese war brides had another chance to come to the United States when Congress passed a second Japanese War Brides Act on August 19, 1950. The second version of this act was similar to the first, but it did not expire until February 1951, allowing couples a six month window to marry and thus be eligible under of the law. Congress extended the second Japanese War Brides Act when it too expired, giving Japanese war bride couples until March 1952 to marry.¹²⁸ Timetables became a hallmark of war bride legislation, and they were particularly crucial for Japanese war bride couples faced with a limited window of opportunity to take advantage of changes in U.S. immigration law.

When war bride couples missed the windows of opportunity afforded by laws like the Japanese War Brides Acts, they relied on help from their Congressmen and the passage of private bills that, as Lark explained, "...would allow prospective brides to enter the U.S. without sweeping change to immigration statutes."¹²⁹ This was the only course of action for war bride couples who did not meet the deadlines and awaited new legislation.

The passage of the McCarran-Walter Act on June 27, 1952 reversed the 1924 ban on Japanese immigration to the United States, eliminating the need for private bills and temporary laws like the Japanese War Bride Act. This act amended the earlier 1924 Immigration Act that excluded Japanese immigration in favor of a quota system that allowed limited Japanese immigration and "...placed Japan on the same

¹²⁸ Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta, *War Brides of World War II* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988).

¹²⁹ Lark, "They Challenged Two Nations," 201.

quota system as European countries.”¹³⁰ The 1924 act was not completely reversed until the Immigration Act of 1965, which abolished the use of quotas based on nation of origin.¹³¹ Until 1965, then, Japanese war brides represented the only nonquota admittance of Japanese immigrants because they retained special privilege as spouses of U.S. citizens.

The Sweethearts Bill: Fiancée Does Not Equal Wife

By the end of 1945, Congress and the INS had worked on legislation to set up a more feasible system to handle war bride immigration. But GIs wanted more. Many military personnel wanted their fiancées to immigrate as well. Perhaps it was seen as a more pressing necessity to deal with the legal spouses of servicemen, who already would have had special privilege under the law. Furthermore, as Nancy Cott argued in her book, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*, “In a hybrid nation such as the United States, formed of immigrant groups, marriage becomes all the more important politically.”¹³² Marriage granted these wartime couples a type of legitimacy engaged couples simply could not claim, and it translated into real legal benefits and a much easier immigration process for those war bride couples. Congress viewed fiancées as far too risky to be allowed into the U.S. indiscriminately (read: under the careful guidance of more lenient laws like the War Brides Act). So as the INS and Congress worked on a way to handle this side of war time romance in

¹³⁰ Izumi Hirobe, *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice: Modifying the Exclusion Clause of the 1924 Immigration Act* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 241.

¹³¹ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1989), 419.

¹³² Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 5.

1946, they incorporated additional restrictions and safeguards, including a monetary guarantee in the form of a five hundred dollar bond. The differences between the spouse and fiancée laws underscore the importance of the institution of marriage and how critical it was in allowing these women entry to the United States. Regardless of the differences, however, parallel themes linked the laws and debates surrounding their passage. One commonality was the racial exclusion written into the War Brides Act would also be written in to the Fiancée Act. No persons ineligible for citizenship would be granted access to the law.

Although the US government initially tried to avoid dealing with the fiancées of servicemen, by 1946 they too were exerting pressure on the system, forcing the INS and Congress to come up with a protocol to handle them. As with the legislation on behalf of the spouses of citizen soldiers, the INS favored legislation that would smooth the admission of fiancées (or fiancés). On April 15, 1946, Commissioner Ugo Carusi contacted James P. McGrannery, the assistant to the Attorney General, outlining the problems fiancées of servicemen faced and suggested protocol for facilitating their admission to the United States. Carusi first cited the success of the war brides act in admitting alien spouses and children of citizen members of the Armed Forces. He then noted the existence of fiancées, in juxtaposition to these women, who had not been taken care of by the initial legislation:

There are, however, a considerable number of members of our Armed Forces, citizens of the United States, who are engaged to marry aliens they have met abroad, who, because the marriage has not taken place for various reasons, not always of choice, are not entitled to come to the United States except upon meeting with all the provisions of the immigration laws.¹³³

¹³³ Ugo Carusi, Letter to James P. McGrannery, April 25, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853, NARA.

According to Carusi, it was difficult to meet the provisions of existing U.S. immigration laws and particularly, “The most difficult obstacle met by these fiancés and fiancées was the Quota Act. Almost all of them are of the quota class.”¹³⁴ Because the quotas were so small for some countries, Carusi specifically cited Australia and New Zealand, they were reserved for years in advance.

The INS wanted to facilitate fiancées and GIs by providing a means for them to gain admission to the United States in a timely fashion. The interim solution had been the issuance of temporary visitor visas from American Consuls abroad to fiancées who could then come to the U.S. to marry (and then adjust their status accordingly). This had proved an unsatisfactory solution, however, because the consul offices were inundated with fiancée requests and could not handle the workload created by the fiancée situation. Apparently certain members of Congress did not care for this temporary solution either. As Carusi recounted, “The Department of State learned that there was criticism of this policy on the part of influential members of Congress.”¹³⁵ But after speaking with the Senate and House committees on immigration and naturalization, Carusi found them amenable to the type of legislation his agency hoped to propose: “special legislation authorizing the issuance of temporary visitors visas in such cases...”¹³⁶ These visas would be provided to alien fiancés or fiancées (because like the war brides act, the proposed bill applied to men and women in the same way) and allowed them admittance to the United States, “as a nonimmigrant temporary visitor for a period of three months...”¹³⁷ The fiancée

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

would have three months to marry or be forced to depart the United States. As with the war brides act, the fiancée (turned spouse) would not become a citizen upon marriage, but could then go through the expedited naturalization process.

In May, both the Attorney General, a staunch supporter of all of the previously proposed war bride legislation, and the Secretary of State drafted letters to Congress in support of the proposed fiancée bill, commonly referred to as the sweethearts bill. Attorney General Tom C. Clark wrote most passionately on behalf of members of the armed forces, whom he believed deserved to have this legislation passed on their behalf. Once again the theme that servicemen and servicewomen deserved legislation to expedite the immigration of their foreign sweethearts surfaced. Clark first cited the way in which these soldiers' diligent military service prevented them from marrying their fiancées, unlike the men and women already benefiting from the War Brides Act. He wrote, "...many citizen members of our armed forces, due to circumstances over which they had no control, were unable to marry their alien fiancées. Some were sent to the fighting front and were never reassigned to the areas in which their fiancées resided. Others were transferred to different localities."¹³⁸ In other words, the business of war kept these soldiers from marrying. Clark also cited the inability of soldiers to obtain permission to marry their fiancées from their commanding officers, per military regulation, a point easily verified by the War Department's articulation of its policy in earlier correspondence regarding the war brides act. Clark highlighted the military services rendered by the GIs in question, as well as their willingness to follow military protocol as a way to sway opinion toward the bill. Clark then explained the problems that fiancées faced when dealing with

¹³⁸ Tom C. Clark, letter to Richard B. Russell, May 8, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853, NARA.

current immigration law and tight quotas, just as Carusi had done and he too emphasized the nations of Australia and New Zealand.¹³⁹ He closed his argument by again emphasizing the honorable service made by citizen soldiers: “The bill under consideration would alleviate this situation in so far as the fiancées of persons who served honorably in the armed forces of the United States during the Second World War are concerned.”¹⁴⁰ Clark additionally mentioned the sacrifice of the men and women of the armed forces: “These citizens left their homes to defend their country and should not now, because of the prohibitions of the immigration laws, be denied the opportunity of marrying their intended spouses.”¹⁴¹ Clark linked the ideas of service and sacrifice for country during war to deserving postwar personal happiness via marriage to foreign fiancées. Furthermore, he found the immigration law an unfair obstacle and almost a penalty to these citizens who had followed military protocol. Once again, marriage became the potential reward for services rendered, if only Congress could be swayed.

Two days after Attorney General Clark sent his letter to the House and Senate committees on Immigration and Naturalization, Secretary of State Dean Acheson drafted his own letter to Congress in support of the bill. His reasoning echoed that of Ugo Carusi and Tom Clark. He additionally noted that this would save citizen soldiers the “considerable expense” of traveling abroad to marry their fiancées in order to bring them home as spouses via the War Brides Act. He also argued this new

¹³⁹ It remains notable that Clark too emphasized these nations because while it was true their quotas were very small, Southern and Eastern European nations had the same problem because their quotas did not meet the need. Italian and Greek women would greatly benefit from such legislation, but they were not mentioned in the letter, maybe on purpose.

¹⁴⁰ Clark, letter to Russell, May 8, 1946.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

bill would eliminate the false pretenses under which fiancées currently entered the United States: “Aliens covered by the bill may not properly be granted nonimmigrant temporary visitors’ visas under the present law because they would have to swear falsely that they are coming to the United States for a temporary period.”¹⁴² Acheson argued for a streamlined and honest system that fiancées could use to come to the United States. He did not include the rhetoric that advocated for the legislation because of honorable service rendered by citizen soldiers. Acheson closed by stating, “The bill is regarded by the Department as having considerable merit...” and recommending passage.

The Senate was persuaded by the arguments put forth by the Attorney General and Secretary of State. The Committee on Immigration concluded:

The Committee on Immigration, to whom was referred the bill (S.2122) to facilitate the admission to the United States of alien fiancées or fiancés of members of the armed forces of the United States, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend the bill do pass.

While the Senate looked favorably upon the measure, the House debated the issue further. On June 21, 1946, Congressmen echoed the positions of earlier intra-governmental debates. When the debate began, the bill had already passed the Senate and had been agreed upon by the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization nearly unanimously.

The first concern voiced on that day came from Congressman John E. Rankin from Mississippi. After New York Congressman Arthur G. Klein, chairman of the Immigration and Naturalization Committee, presented the bill for consideration, Rankin suspiciously questioned, “what they [the Immigration Committee] are trying

¹⁴² Dean Acheson, letter to Senator Russell, May 10, 1945, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853, NARA.

to put over.”¹⁴³ Congressman Mason objected to the accusation and said, “...I am not a party and never will be a party to putting over anything on this House that is not open and aboveboard.”¹⁴⁴ This odd exchange forced Rankin to voice his concerns about the bill more explicitly. While he withdrew his objection to the bill, he did make his feelings about it bill clear:

There has been too much of this opening up of the floodgates of immigration during this war and in these unsettled times. So far as I am concerned, from this day forward every bill that comes in here that tends to break down our immigration laws, or open the floodgates, is going to be carefully scrutinized, whether it suits the gentleman from Illinois or not.¹⁴⁵

Although Rankin did not find the bill problematic enough to continue with his objection, he clearly had a problem with the way the fiancée bill chipped away at the immigration restrictions in place since the 1920s. Rankin was right—the series of immigration legislation passed in the 1940s, including the War Brides and Fiancée Acts, did strip away the 1920s restrictions and represented the first steps in overturning them. The War Brides and Fiancée Acts in particular circumvented these restrictive policies because although they were not open to everyone (only those affiliated with the armed services via marriage or engagement), the language and protocol were a direct blow to quota immigration, as the women and men eligible were allowed to come to the United States as nonquota immigrants. For someone opposed to immigration and worried about keeping restrictions in place, World War II provided an opportunity for the floodgates to open.

Congressman Klein took the opportunity to explain the provisions of the bill to the rest of his peers. He focused on several aspects of the bill. The first was its

¹⁴³ *Congressional Record*, House of Representatives, June 21, 1946, Vol.92, No.121, 7443-7444.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

temporary nature—the bill was set to expire in approximately one year, and furthermore the fiancé or fiancée had a limited time to marry once in the U.S. As mentioned above, the couple had three months to marry or the potential spouse would face deportation. He noted the Senate passed the bill in this form, but that the House Committee had suggested two important revisions, which he called “safeguards.” The first was that the consul of the fiancée’s nation of origin would have to sign off on the engagement as official and issue a visa. The second provision added by the House was the addition of a 500 dollar bond that had to be posted by the soldier to cover the cost of deportation should the couple not marry within the three month limit.

Congressman Klein’s explanation of the logistics of the bill led to a series of questions and answers about protocol. One Congressman was concerned about the number of people this bill would allow admittance to the United States. Congressman Klein estimated about 14,000 people would benefit from the bill, and he emphasized that most of these immigrants would be from Australia (i.e. white immigrants), just as the Secretary of State and Attorney General had. He also echoed the Attorney General’s sentiments that these soldiers had followed military protocol and had not married their fiancées as instructed by their commanding officers, and that he did not think it was fair to punish them for that. “Those who did get married are now bringing their brides to this country at the expense of the Government. If we do not pass this bill, we will penalize those boys who obeyed their order and who were forbidden to get married.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Other Congressmen were concerned with the ways gender and race would factor into this bill. One asked, “Does this affect the fiancé of a Wac [member of the Women’s Army Corps] the same as it does the fiancée of a soldier?”¹⁴⁷ Klein answered that it did, but significantly, this fact did not draw further questions or any objection from any of the members of Congress. Instead, questions moved to the racial anxieties the bill engendered in some members of the House. Congressman Johnson of California first posed his concern about Japanese immigration under the guise of a question about how the bill would apply to foreign fiancées from former enemy nations. He asked, “Does this bill permit the marriage of our soldiers with aliens of countries with which we were at war?”¹⁴⁸ Klein answered the question in a roundabout way by saying that the bill did not permit marriage at all, only the possibility to come the United States and get married. Johnson had to ask a question that more clearly revealed his true concern: “In my state, for instance, white and Japanese cannot marry. Does this bill recognize such laws of the States?”¹⁴⁹ This second pointed question from Johnson exposed that he was not so concerned with immigrant fiancées from former enemy nations as he was with immigrants from one particular enemy nation—Japan. Klein answered that the bill did not change the laws in terms of racial in/eligibility (as the Japanese War Brides Act would one year later), as discussed above only racially eligible women and men would be able to benefit from the fiancée acts so Congressman Johnson’s concerns were moot. What’s more, the question of immigrants from former enemy nations rarely surfaced. With the exception of the War Department articulating such concerns during the war when war

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

bride legislation was first on the table, government officials would not bring them up again. Congressman Johnson only mentioned the issue in this forum as a way to address concerns about racial exclusion and immigration.

The fiancée bill also had the backing of the White House. On June 26, 1946, INS officials noted, “It is believed that this legislation has the backing of the Administration and certain influential powers with the result that, in all probability, it will be enacted into law.”¹⁵⁰ On June 29, 1946, six months after the passage of the war brides act, the Fiancée Act passed with the title, “Admission of the Alien Fiancées or Fiancés of Members of the Armed Forces of the United States,” and with the safeguards described above in place.¹⁵¹ The law allowed for nonquota immigration to racially eligible women and men, again granting the same rights to servicewomen and servicemen. The nonquota status afforded these fiancées opened the door for additional immigration between Southern and Eastern Europe and the United States.

The extra provisions or “safeguards” imbedded in the fiancée act highlights the significance of the institution of marriage and the citizenship rights it afforded. Marriage offered these wartime romances legitimacy that the U.S. government did not deny, unlike engagements that were deemed at the very least as ambiguous and at worst suspicious. The bond that engagement afforded these couples was far too tenuous to allow racially ineligible aliens (and their citizen soldiers) access to the law.

¹⁵⁰ Henry Colarelli, memo to Perry M. Oliver, June 26, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853, NARA. The Fiancée Act passed without objection. *Congressional Record*, House of Representatives, June 21, 1946, Vol.92, No.121, 7443-7444.

¹⁵¹ Act of June 29, 1946, *Admission of Alien Fiancées or Fiancés of Members Armed Forces of the United States*, United States Congress, INS archives.

Even for those racially eligible, a five hundred dollar bond was required as insurance to the government that marriage would legitimize these couples or the fiancée would be forced to leave the U.S. at the couple's own expense. At the same time that the government questioned the degree to which these couples needed or deserved special protocol (even if it was only in response to the demand these men and women were putting on the system), the law that did pass represented a significant shift in immigration law. As Congressman Rankin feared, it did serve to open the floodgates in a manner of speaking: quotas were obviated and thousands of women and men (more than 14,000) would come to the US under the Fiancée Act. More importantly, they came from countries besides Australia, despite the emphasis those in power placed on that nation as a country of origin. Women from Southern and Eastern Europe, such as Greece and Italy, whose quotas were heavily oversubscribed, would come to be some of the chief beneficiaries of the new legislation. This fact did not go unnoticed by INS officials and would come to be an issue for them later.

The final months of World War II and the early postwar period found the United States government dealing with an unintended consequence of waging war: the formation of families consisting of U.S. citizen soldiers and alien spouses or fiancées. The pressure these couples exerted on the existing system for immigration and naturalization could not be handled by the mechanisms, legal and logistical, then in place. The mere fact of their existence did not require a change in policy. In the case of Japanese war bride couples, for example, only persistent efforts pushing for change forced a new policy. Many agents of the United States government supported

and pushed for revisions to immigration law to assist these couples, including the INS, Attorney General, Secretary of State, and various members of Congress. In the case of Japanese war bride couples, the support and efforts of groups outside the government, such as the JACL and ACLU, were critical in the achievement of new legislation. And although other members of the U.S. government fought equally hard to block changes in restrictive immigration policy, particularly the War Department, a dramatic shift in U.S. immigration policy occurred in a short period of time. Quotas and exclusion clauses that had been in place for over twenty years were thrown out the window, even if only temporarily, to make way for this new wave of immigration. What's more, the new provisions applied to men and women equally, as the government regarded the military service rendered by the men and women of the Armed Forces as equally deserving of the families of their choice. The victories represented by the new legislation meant varying degrees of success for some however. Prewar ideas about race and ethnicity remained remarkably intact, a fact which will become more evident in the next chapter, which will discuss the implementation of these laws and the process of immigration for war brides and fiancées.

Chapter 2: “We had to go through such red tape”: Race, Gender, and the Process of War Bride Immigration

Once Congress passed the legislation on behalf of war brides in late 1945 (and then fiancées in 1946), war bride couples began to take advantage of this new opportunity by initiating the immigration process. Miles of red tape awaited the women and men hoping to benefit from the new legislation. Yet the process would not be the same for everyone. The race and ethnicity of the GI and especially that of the war bride governed the ways that they experienced coming to the United States.

Though the central interest of this study is in Japanese war brides, this chapter will focus considerable of attention on European war brides as a way to understand when race was figuring into explanations for the experiences of war brides.

Comparing war brides of multiple races/nationalities revealed surprising patterns, one of which was that prewar ideas about race and ethnicity emerged from World War II remarkably in tact and brokered the categorization and treatment of women moving through the immigration process. In fact, INS officials particularly adhered to prewar racial and ethnic categories and subjected Southern and Eastern European war bride couples to greater scrutiny than war brides from Northern and Western Europe.

Some Historians have shown how World War II was a turning point in the whitening of second wave immigrants in the United States. In *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*, for example, Gary Gerstle demonstrated that the experience of military service rendered racial and ethnic differences less important than the bonds forged by men fighting together in the same unit. Gerstle explained, “The military became, in effect, an enormously important site for melting

the many streams of Euro-Americans into one white race.”¹⁵² Gerstle argued that WWI did not have the same impact on the whitening of Southern and Eastern European immigrants because, “The American soldiers were together for too short a time and involved in too little combat for the army-as-melting-pot to erase ethnic and regional differences.”¹⁵³ Second wave immigrants had to wait for the Second World War to be embraced by the racialized American nation that Gerstle described in his work, a nation that excluded African Americans—a point made clear by the segregated U.S. Armed Forces during the war and until 1948.¹⁵⁴

Though the military certainly offered one site in which second wave immigrants were able to become white, as historians such as James R. Barrett and David Roediger have shown, the transition to whiteness was an uneven process for second wave immigrants who often occupied an “inbetween” status in the American racial hierarchy. In their article, “Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the ‘New Immigrant’ Working Class,” Barrett and Roediger showed that second wave immigrants occupied a status between white and nonwhite in the early part of the twentieth century. More importantly, this inbetween status was not consistent. As Barrett and Roediger explained, “The courts consistently allowed ‘new immigrants,’ whose racial status was ambiguous in the larger culture, to be naturalized as ‘white’ citizens and almost as consistently turned down non-European applicants as

¹⁵² Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 188. See also chapter 5, “Good War, Race War, 1941-1945.”

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 88.

¹⁵⁴ Similarly, Ira Katznelson argued that military service and particularly the GI Bill following the war favored white men more than African American men. Local implementation of benefits, for example, allowed white Veterans greater access to home loans than African American veterans. See Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White*.

‘nonwhite.’”¹⁵⁵ It is precisely the status of Southern and Eastern Europeans in the national state, specifically in terms of immigration policy, that this work seeks to address. Although all European war bride immigrants were nominally white and Congress made no racial or ethnic distinctions in the war brides or fiancée acts in regards to Europeans, in practice the INS maintained racial and ethnic differences. This arm of the U.S. state retained, then, the “inbetween” status of Southern and Eastern Europeans.

Before war bride couples attempted immigration to the United States, however, and even before they married, many had already experienced problems due to race and ethnicity. The Army Chaplains and Commanding Officers from whom war bride couples needed permission to marry were hesitant to approve interracial marriages and often served as obstacles to these unions. The American Red Cross, however, sought to provide all war brides with invaluable assistance before, during, and after the immigration process, often acting as advocates of war brides. These other two aspects of the immigration process for war brides will comprise the other topics of this chapter.

In Their Own Words: War Brides Discuss Gaining Permission to Marry

Before war brides encountered immigration officials, however, they and their GI fiancées had to deal with military officials in order to gain permission to marry. For the war brides of the Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory (RASRL)

¹⁵⁵ James R. Barrett and David Roediger, “Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the ‘New Immigrant’ Working Class,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16 (1997): 3-44, 5.

study, the process of marrying a GI and immigrating to the United States could be a long and complicated one. The RASRL conducted oral interviews with over three hundred war brides in the mid-1950s in Hawaii as part of their larger mission to study race and ethnicity. Many of the women, both European and Japanese, experienced problems because the process tended to be complicated and confusing under the best circumstances. In addition to the logistical headaches that paperwork and transport posed to all war brides, the women of the RASRL study faced the escalated scrutiny associated with interracial marriage. That meant even white European war brides, when marrying Asian American men, encountered roadblocks along their path to marriage and immigration to the United States. As German war bride, Mrs. D-46, indicated, many of those problems occurred before the couple was even married. She stated:

Do you know why so many German girls gave birth to children before they were married? That's because the American government made it so hard for them to marry G.I.s. We had to go through such red tape.¹⁵⁶

Gaining permission to marry, in fact, could prove to be one of the most difficult obstacles that such couples faced.

Before war brides could hope to benefit from the laws Congress had passed on their behalf, they had to become war brides first, but getting married to a GI was easier said than done.¹⁵⁷ Potential war bride couples had to win permission from the

¹⁵⁶ D-45, September 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1. Mrs. D-46 was present at Mrs. D-45's interview and contributed to the discussion on the paperwork associated with war bride immigration.

¹⁵⁷ Even after the Fiancée Act was passed in 1946, it would have been preferable to immigrate as a war bride due to the additional financial burden immigrating as a fiancée posed, which may explain (in part) why couples went through the trouble to get married before coming to the United States.

Army Chaplains, and a GI's commanding officer had to grant him permission to marry. Mrs. D-46's quote alluded to the red tape, or paperwork, that needed to be filled out by war bride couples. Her friend and fellow war bride, Mrs. D-45, brought out a stack of papers one inch thick to show the RASRL interviewer the length of this red tape. Mrs. D-45's marriage process was more complicated than even the one inch stack of papers might have indicated: the total process took seven years. Mrs. D-45 did not indicate why the process took so long, only that her husband was transferred between Germany and Hawaii for military duty during the time of application.¹⁵⁸ Another German war bride, Mrs. D-54, knew exactly what held up her application for marriage: "...we couldn't get married right away, because his commanding officer destroyed our marriage application. And all our papers. So, finally it was decided that I came to Hawaii as his fiancé."¹⁵⁹ Neither Mrs. D-46 nor Mrs. D-54 was part of an interracial couple, but they still experienced problems with red tape and commanding officers and additional bureaucracy. The problem of the destroyed application forced Mrs. D-54 to immigrate as a fiancée rather than war bride, a distinction that cost her husband a great deal of money. Being a European war bride, however, Mrs. D-54 possessed that option, which would have been unavailable to Japanese war brides. Similarly, Mrs. D-16, a German war bride married to a Japanese American GI, was forced to immigrate as a quota immigrant when she could not complete the paperwork to immigrate as a war bride in time.¹⁶⁰ Although not ideal in terms of time or cost, the option to immigrate as a quota immigrant was preferable to

¹⁵⁸ D-45, War Brides Interview Project, 1.

¹⁵⁹ D-54, October 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

¹⁶⁰ D-16, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, April 1954, 2.

not immigrating at all, and again, was an option that would not have been available to war brides from many other countries.

The aforementioned problems certainly inconvenienced war bride couples and could make the process of marriage and immigration an exercise in determination and patience. Yet interracial couples often faced additional problems in the form of heightened scrutiny from Army Chaplains, commanding officers, and immigration officials, which made the process even more difficult. As German war bride Mrs. D-83 explained, “A haole Protestant chaplain whom I consulted tried to discourage me to marry my husband, saying that interracial marriage wouldn’t be accepted in Hawaii and that the Orientals in Hawaii wouldn’t accept me, etc. He tried to discourage my husband too.”¹⁶¹ Mrs. D-83’s solution was to see another chaplain who approved her marriage to her Japanese American fiancé. The commanding officer that Czechoslovakian war bride Mrs. D-6 had to see prior to her marriage to a Japanese American GI was no more subtle when he questioned Mrs. D-6 about her potential interracial marriage. According to Mrs. D-6, she was reduced to tears when, “He [the commanding officer] asked me if I was realizing what I was doing and that I was a white woman and my husband was a Japanese.”¹⁶² Mrs. D-6 responded to the commanding officer’s inquiry with more than tears, however, when she explained that she thought, “...Americans were all equal regardless of race or color.”¹⁶³ Mrs. D-6’s response must have pleased the commanding officer—or shamed him—because he acquiesced and granted the couple permission to marry.

¹⁶¹ Mrs. D-83, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

¹⁶² Mrs. D-6, March 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 6.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Still other war brides faced more subtle scrutiny from officials about their potential interracial marriages. German war bride Mrs. D-22 discussed one Army Chaplain's disapproval of her marriage to a Korean American GI: "The Chaplain of the U.S. Army turned us down. He didn't approve of our marriage. He said that there was no chance for success in our marriage."¹⁶⁴ Although the chaplain did not articulate the reasoning behind his objection, Mrs. D-22 strongly felt the objection was based solely on race prejudice. Since she and her fiancé both were Catholic, she saw no other possible reason to not approve the marriage. Mrs. D-22 explained, "...I suspect that it was his personal race prejudice against marriage of a white person to an Oriental. If my husband were a Caucasian American, he wouldn't have objected to our marriage."¹⁶⁵ Much like Mrs. D-83, Mrs. D-22 ignored the chaplain's objection and continued with her plans to marry.

Japanese war bride couples, regardless of the race or ethnicity of the husband, experienced the most frequent problems when attempting to marry. Until 1947, Army Chaplains and commanding officers had the backing of restrictive American immigration policy that forbade Japanese immigration, and they easily turned down GI requests for marriage in Japan because the couples could not hope to settle in the United States.¹⁶⁶ When Congress passed temporary laws, such as the Japanese War Brides Act, that granted American GIs married to Japanese women access to the War Brides Acts, the Army Chaplains approved the marriages of Japanese war brides and

¹⁶⁴ Mrs. D-22, May 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Lark, "They Challenged Two Nations: Marriages between Japanese Women and American GIs, 1945-Present," 217-218. Lark described how Army Chaplains included cultural differences in their reports even during the time periods when restrictive U.S. immigration policy was in place. This indicated, Lark believed, further objections to unions between American GIs and Japanese women (beyond enforcing immigration law).

American GIs. Those women marrying Asian American GIs experienced the fewest problems, while those marrying Caucasian GIs faced a heightened scrutiny similar to that of European war brides hoping to marry Asian American GIs.¹⁶⁷ As Mrs. O-55 explained, “The Army Chaplain asked me a few stiff questions but finally gave us his consent.”¹⁶⁸ The Japanese women seeking permission to marry Caucasian GIs in historian Regina Lark’s study relayed similar problems with Army Chaplains. In one example, the chaplain told one woman, “...that her husband’s home state of Minnesota was comprised of virtually all Scandinavian stock and that Japanese would never really be accepted.”¹⁶⁹ In all theaters of war, then, seeking permission for an interracial marriage subjected a couple to a stricter line of questioning, and often critique, from military officials.

The RASRL study contained no cases involving African American GIs married to war brides, but historian Renee Romano studied such cases.¹⁷⁰ Just as the military more closely guarded African American GI interaction with women abroad so too did they subject their potential marriages to stricter regulations. Romano explained that though the military did not have a blanket policy regulating marriages for African American GIs, commanding officers could exercise their power to prevent such marriages, “...and many black GIs found that they were prohibited from marrying white women despite official rhetoric.”¹⁷¹ Romano recounted a case in which even the commanding officer’s approval of a marriage between an African

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 219.

¹⁶⁸ Mrs. O-55, August 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

¹⁶⁹ Lark, “They Challenged Two Nations,” 219.

¹⁷⁰ Renee C. Romano, *Race Mixing: Black-White Marriage in Postwar America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 23.

American GI and his pregnant British fiancée was overturned by a higher ranking official in the Air Force. In other branches of the military, such as the Army, African American GIs sometimes found themselves transferred to different units when they requested permission to marry.¹⁷²

Although all war bride couples potentially experienced problems with the paperwork and permission required for marriage, the race and ethnicity of the war bride and/or GI husband had a significant impact on the nature of those problems, especially if the marriage was an interracial one. The experiences of war bride couples in the RASRL study revealed the various problems couples encountered in the immigration process from their own perspective. Upon marriage the problems war bride couples faced did not disappear, as they then had to deal with the process of immigration and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Once again, race and ethnicity would prove decisive factors that would determine the nature of the immigration experience for war brides and fiancées.

White on Departure? War Bride Immigration Challenges the Whiteness Thesis

Race continued to shape the experiences of war brides hoping to come to the United States when they encountered INS officials and the process of immigration. Despite the special legislation opening immigration to the foreign spouses and some fiancées of servicemen discussed in Chapter One, all war brides encountered difficulties in the immigration process, and these difficulties were racially and ethnically specific. In fact, immigration officials' insistence on maintaining ethnic specificity among European war brides undermines the current understanding of

¹⁷² Ibid.

World War II as a turning point in the whitening of second wave immigrants.¹⁷³ Case files at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the United States Archives elucidate both the U.S. government's stance toward war bride immigration and also the experiences of couples going through the at-times complicated U.S. immigration process. These files suggest that prewar ideas about race and ethnicity, especially dramatic distinctions between Northern and Southern Europeans, remained powerful after the war. The experiences of Italian war brides, for example, more closely resembled those of Japanese war brides as demonstrated by, among other things, immigration officials routinely challenging the legal legitimacy of both Italian and Japanese marriages but not those of Northern European war brides. Significantly, the former enemy status of women from Japan and Italy did not account for the heightened scrutiny these women received from the INS. German war brides did not experience such problems. The same racial and ethnic distinctions appeared among fiancées of servicemen, who were subject to a set of Congressional acts and protocols separate from those governing war brides. Japanese women were entirely excluded from the Fiancée Acts—that is, only Japanese women who could demonstrate that they were already married to American men could even attempt to immigrate under these special laws—and Southern and Eastern European fiancées were more closely regulated by INS officials than Northern and Western European women because only the former were suspected of “abusing” the laws set up to mitigate the upheaval of wartime circumstance.

¹⁷³ The title of this section of Chapter Two specifically references *White On Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945*, in which Thomas Guglielmo argues that Italian immigrants were, “largely accepted as white by the widest variety of people and institutions.” See Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

Italian war brides experienced heightened scrutiny from INS officials during the implementation of the War Brides Act, even though they legally benefited from the new law the same way other European war brides did. One basic difference in the way that INS officials processed Italian war brides concerned pre-examinations before embarkation for the United States. On March 4, 1946, E.E. Salisbury, an INS official stationed in Tidworth, England, wrote a series of letters to the INS officials stationed in Europe—specifically Italy, France, and Ireland—on how to process war brides. The letter to Eugene Cole, the INS official primarily responsible for processing Italian war brides and stationed in Naples, differed from the other two letters. The series of letters revealed that pre-examination would stop in Tidworth, Le Havre, France, and Belfast, Ireland but would continue in Naples. Salisbury explained to Cole that, “The Central Office has approved a change in our plan of operation so that there will be no pre-examination as to admissibility of war brides. The examinations as to admissibility will be made at port of entry in the United States.”¹⁷⁴ Salisbury continued by saying that fingerprinting would be done in the United States as well, unless time permitted as it did in Tidworth. The second half of Salisbury’s instructions completely contradicted the above, however, as he instructed Cole to continue with pre-examinations in Naples: “As long as you remain at Naples it is suggested that you follow the same procedure as you have done in the past, i.e., pre-examination as to admissibility *and finger print if possible*.”¹⁷⁵ The last part of Salisbury’s statement was handwritten in after the typed instructions, indicating that he only made this request of Cole in Naples and not the other INS officials stationed

¹⁷⁴ E.E. Salisbury, letter to Eugene Cole, March 4, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

elsewhere, namely France and Ireland. In fact the other two letters contained no contradictory instructions at all, only indicating that pre-examinations would cease.¹⁷⁶ Salisbury did not explain the need for continuing pre-examinations in Italy. He did, however, enclose copies of the revised procedures to be carried out in England and France for Cole's edification. The special directive issued by Salisbury had an impact on war brides from other nations as well. According to a report written by Cole in April, war brides from other Mediterranean theater nations would ship through Naples. He specifically cited Greece, Egypt, Algiers, and Tunis.¹⁷⁷ Continental war brides from nations such as Holland, Belgium, and Germany shipped through Le Havre. In other words, Italian and Greek women were grouped with and treated the same as women from Northern Africa rather than with women from Northern and Western Europe, again suggesting in practice their nonwhite status.

In addition to differences in the ways that Southern and Eastern European war brides were processed, the INS, and specifically Eugene Cole, questioned the legitimacy of some Italian war bride marriages. Proxy marriages, in which a man could marry via letter or messenger, were legitimate civil marriages under the Italian law and not unusual during periods of war.¹⁷⁸ In several reports to his superiors, however, Cole cited proxy marriages as a problem. Cole first brought up the issue of proxy marriages in April 1946, when he cited one case in which an Italian war bride was ineligible for the War Brides Act because of her proxy marriage to a GI from

¹⁷⁶ E.E. Salisbury, letters to INS officials in France (Thurman) and Ireland (Suter), March 4, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA.

¹⁷⁷ Eugene Cole, letter to E.E. Salisbury, April 4, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA.

¹⁷⁸ For an in depth discussion of the history of proxy marriages see Ernest G. Lorenzen, "Marriage by Proxy and the Conflict of Laws," *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 32 (March 1919): 473-488. Lorenzen traces proxy marriage as a legal form of marriage back to the Roman Empire. Though not legal in modern Italy, during World War I, several nations, including Italy, Belgium, and France, legalized proxy marriages again for members of the military.

Ohio. Cole noted the proxy marriage was legitimate under Italian law, even mentioning the similarity to other civil marriage certificates. Cole requested instructions from Salisbury because he believed the case potentially presented a problem due to the existence of a child. This case occurred before the passage of the fiancée act or any special dispensation had been created for fiancées, something that Cole believed would have solved the problem.¹⁷⁹ A little over one month later, however, proxy marriages still represented a significant issue for processing war brides in Naples, and an even bigger one for the war bride couples themselves. Cole reported: “The facts concerning a proxy marriage, both parties in Italy at the time, have been brought to my attention. I refused to consider the case until an ‘in person’ marriage was performed.”¹⁸⁰ War bride couples sometimes attempted to marry via proxy if the soldier’s military unit had been re-assigned to a different location before the couple had the chance to marry. Cole, however, did not recognize the proxy marriage because the 1924 immigration laws did not recognize proxy marriages as legitimate for the purposes of granting spousal privilege (and nonquota status) to potential immigrants. He did not think the special circumstances of the postwar military justified a change of policy on such marriages. This continuing hold of the 1924 law exacerbated the tedium of the marriage/immigration process for Italian war bride couples because as Cole stated, “The Italian authorities hesitated to allow the second marriage because they recognized the proxy marriage and had regularly recorded it in the records of the commune.”¹⁸¹ Cultural differences in acceptable marriage practices between the United States and Southern European countries

¹⁷⁹ Eugene Cole, report to E.E. Salisbury, April 4, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA.

¹⁸⁰ Eugene Cole, report to E.E. Salisbury, May 9, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

caused a problem for war bride couples trying to take advantage of the special legislation passed on their behalf. Japanese war bride couples would experience similar problems with the War Brides Act, but unlike these couples, would never be able to make use of the Fiancée Acts once those passed because they were excluded entirely from those.

The case of Greek fiancées also demonstrated that women from Southern Europe received closer scrutiny from INS officials than women from Northern and Western Europe. This greater scrutiny verified that distinctions among Southern and Northern Europeans remained very much alive among INS officials and kept those distinctions meaningful after the war. Prewar racial and ethnic categories were not dead or even blurred in this particular area of policy and experience: Greeks had not become fully white.

Evidence that the INS strove to maintain prewar ethnic and racial categorization among fiancée immigrants was revealed through the red flags raised by INS officials. In the summer of 1947, some INS officials expressed concerns that Greek nationals were taking unfair advantage of the Fiancée Act. The Chicago office initially raised the issue in June, about one year after the fiancée law passed. F.M. Symmes, chief in the Adjudications Division in Chicago, called his superiors' attention to the large number of the cases he had handled for Greek American soldiers hoping to bring Greek fiancées to the U.S. He described the pattern of these potential unions to the district director:

In practically all of the cases the soldier has never seen, nor talked with the girl. The pattern in these cases is the same. Some relative of the girl in this country shows her picture to a discharged soldier and he is asked to bring that girl over and marry her. They correspond some but that is the extent of the

acquaintanceship. In a number of the cases the relative puts up the bond for the soldier.¹⁸²

The protocol these Greek American GIs and Greek women followed fell perfectly in line with the rules specifically outlined by the fiancée act. Symmes did not note a lack of the required five hundred dollar bond or a failure to marry, for example, except in one case.¹⁸³ In this case, a GI was promised a house and property by a Greek woman's American uncle if the two would marry. When he did not receive the house and property after the woman arrived, the GI refused to marry her. As the case occurred in Ohio, Symmes turned it over to the Investigation Section of the Cincinnati office. Based on the rules of the Fiancée Act, however, this situation presented a problem only for the immigrant woman who was forced to leave the U.S. after three months when no marriage had occurred. The "safeguards" put in place by the House of Representatives for the Fiancée Act, ensured that such problems would not burden the United States but only the war bride couple, or in this case, one half of the couple.

What Symmes most likely did not care for was the style of courtship and engagement among this group of American GIs and foreign women making use of the Fiancée Act because he felt it violated the spirit of the Fiancée Act. Although the Greek/Greek American couples followed the rules of the Fiancée Act to the letter, Symmes questioned how these unions fit with what he believed the intent of the law to be. He explained, "I am certain that the law was not intended to cover the cases mentioned above. I have read it over carefully, but am at a loss as to how to stop

¹⁸² F.M. Symmes, letter to Acting District Director, June 5, 1947, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853a, NARA.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

such a clear misuse of the law. The American Consuls are the only ones who can stop it.”¹⁸⁴ The reason Symmes could not find a way to stop such unions was because they were perfectly legal under the Fiancée Act. The law itself did not specify the types of engagements.

Nevertheless, immigration officials construed these marriage customs as “abuses” of the U.S. law. Symmes’ fears that Greek Americans were trying to abuse the Fiancée Act seemed (to him) verified by the actions of Mrs. Askounes of the Immigrants’ Protective League. He explained that she “...gave a radio speech in Greek and told her listeners that a G.I. could bring over any Greek girl and marry her, even though he had never seen her before. This may account for the number of bonds being made for Greek girls lately.”¹⁸⁵ Mrs. Askounes’s radio address may have indeed accounted for an increase of petitions among Greek fiancées since she was informing the community about laws of which they may not have been aware. But in reality neither the actions of Mrs. Askounes nor the Greek community were a technical misuse of the Fiancée Act. In any case, the relationship between the two, the Greek American community and Greek war brides, remains evident, as does the Greek American community’s desire for more immigrants from Greece than existing quotas allowed.

Various INS officials responded to Symmes’ report on the immigration of Greek fiancées. The first response came the day after Symmes sent his report from

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. It is noteworthy that Mrs. Askounes addressed her audience in Greek rather than English, evidence that the Greek American community retained their Greek (rather than simply white American) culture, even in the public sphere. This reveals the ways in which the Greek American community was not completely assimilated by the immediate postwar era but rather maintained their unique Greek-ness.

Marcus T. Neelly, the acting district director in Chicago. He passed Symmes' report to Joseph Savoretti, the assistant commissioner in Philadelphia, as the two had discussed the "the importation of Greek women pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 471" the previous day.¹⁸⁶ Neelly explained that Symmes' report represented all the Chicago office knew of the situation regarding Greek fiancées and that, "We shall make further inquiry as appears to be appropriate and let you know if anything further develops."¹⁸⁷ Neelly's measured response indicated that he was not as distressed as Symmes by the immigration of Greek fiancées and that the situation necessitated no further action at the time, but did require monitoring and possible action later. And while the tone of Neelly's memo was not as alarmist as Symmes', Neelly felt the situation was grave enough to contact the central office and make them aware of the situation.

A few days later Savoretti passed the information from the Chicago office to the chief in the visa division of the INS, G.J. Haering. He explained, "I am enclosing for your information, and for such action as you may deem advisable, a report received from our Chicago office indicating that there may be some abuse of the provision of Public Law 471 by Greek nationals."¹⁸⁸ Savoretti's response to the situation reported from the Chicago office regarding Greek fiancées was more marked and restrained than Neelly's. He passed on the information contained in the report but categorized it as potential abuse of the Fiancée Act, rather than a definite

¹⁸⁶ Marcus T. Neelly, memo to Joseph Savoretti, June 6, 1947, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853a, NARA.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Joseph Savoretti, memo to Mr. Haering, June 10, 1947, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853a, NARA.

problem. He also indicated that he would keep the visa division abreast of the issue and pass on any further information that he received from Chicago.

Haering and the visa division responded with a delayed reaction to the news from Savoretti and Chicago two months later. Haering acknowledged receiving the report from Savoretti and indicated his division's reaction to the situation: "The Department is cautioning consular offices to be especially careful in reaching decisions in the cases of applicants for visas under Public Law 471, and it is hoped that the abuses, such as those reported by your Chicago office, may be obviated so far as it may be possible."¹⁸⁹ Haering's response reveals the same restraint offered by Savoretti, rather than the alarm of Symmes, as does the delay in his response to the letter itself. The result, however, was the heightened scrutiny that Symmes had hoped for from consular offices. Whether or not these Greek American GI/Greek fiancée couples were abusing the spirit of the law, then, their immigration process became a more rigorous one. Furthermore, it seemed that all consular offices would be practicing heightened scrutiny, not just the office in Greece, so all couples hoping to benefit from the Fiancée Act would experience the repercussions of the situation Symmes believed to be a problem in Chicago. The heightened scrutiny from consular offices then would extend to other Southern and Eastern European nations with over-subscribed quotas, such as Italy and Poland. Yet Haering's response also revealed that even this action would only be able to deal with the alleged problem to a certain degree—eliminating it as much as possible but not entirely. No further correspondence existed between the Chicago and Philadelphia offices or the visa division on the matter of possible abuse of the Fiancée Act by Greek women, or

¹⁸⁹ G.J. Haering, letter to Joseph Savoretti, August 12, 1947, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853a, NARA.

women from any other nation for that matter, indicating that either the problem did not escalate further or that the increased scrutiny from the consular offices solved the problem to the satisfaction of the visa division and central office.

War brides from Northern and Western Europe, specifically England and Germany, never experienced problems similar to those of war brides and fiancées from Italy and Greece. German war brides in particular experienced few problems, even though they hailed from a former enemy nation. The INS clearly stated, in fact, that this status would have no impact on the German war bride immigration experience, and thus does not explain why women from Italy and Japan faced heightened scrutiny from INS officials. In November of 1948, a woman from Long Island, New York requested the regulations regarding “enemy aliens entering this country,” on behalf of a GI stationed in Germany and hoping to bring his German fiancée to the United States.¹⁹⁰ The INS responded by saying, “The fact that she is German does not in itself affect her admissibility to the United States under immigration laws.”¹⁹¹ The INS official went on to explain the provisions of the war bride and fiancée laws for the woman, who seemed to have requested the information on behalf of her GI son.

German women did not even need the special provisions set up by the Fiancée Act. The immigration quota for Germany was not oversubscribed, and it was much easier to immigrate to the United States under the 1924 law than under the fiancée law because of the strict regulations set up under the fiancée act and the five hundred dollar bond. INS officials specifically clarified this issue when some German war

¹⁹⁰ Mrs. Margaret Cook, letter to United States Public Health Department, November 17, 1948, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853a, NARA.

¹⁹¹ INS, letter to Mrs. Margaret Cook, November 24, 1948, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853a, NARA.

bride couples posted bonds and used the Fiancée Act even though it was unnecessary. Furthermore, airlines transporting German fiancées often misunderstood the rules governing U.S. immigration and would not allow the women transport without evidence of the bond. Joseph Savoretti wrote various airlines in July 1947 on behalf of the German women to clarify the issue. Savoretti explained that the Fiancée Act (and thus the \$500 bond) were unnecessary for German fiancées and that the Fiancée Act, "...applies only in cases where the quota of the country to which the fiancée would be chargeable is presently oversubscribed. Since the German quota is not oversubscribed, fiancées who are natives of Germany are required to be in possession of quota immigration visas."¹⁹² Airlines were not the only ones confused by the ins and outs of U.S. immigration policy, however, and the INS routinely attempted to clarify the rules to various parties, even within the agency.¹⁹³ INS officials frequently explained that women from nations such as Great Britain and Germany did not need the Fiancée Act, unlike women from Italy and Greece. Heightened scrutiny aside, the various degrees of need necessitated by prewar U.S. immigration law, highlighted the distinctions drawn among European nations by American immigration law and practice. The war had created a new opportunity for migration for all European women (as well as men to a lesser extent), but the experience of that opportunity remained highly dependent upon prewar American ideas about race and ethnicity.

Further evidence of the privileged racial status of Northern and Western Europeans subsisted in the treatment of desertion cases. British war brides received

¹⁹² Joseph Savoretti, letters to Pan American Airlines and American Overseas Airlines, July 30, 1947, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853a, NARA.

¹⁹³ For example see Chief, District Adjudications Division, Atlanta, GA, letter to Joseph Savoretti, July 16, 1947, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853a, NARA.

greater assistance rather than scrutiny from INS officials. The most obvious example of contrasting treatment can be seen in the way that the INS handled cases of desertion for British and Italian war brides. Desertion by GI husbands was a problem common to all war brides, and Eugene Cole mentioned the existence of such cases in one of his reports from Naples, noting cases in which, "...the serviceman refuses to request the wife's transportation or threatens divorce."¹⁹⁴ Although some women from both Italy and Britain suffered desertion, the INS only investigated the cases for women from England, thereby offering these abandoned war brides a form of assistance they did not offer Italian war brides. INS officials actually interviewed husbands who had abandoned their British war brides, but did not contact husbands who had abandoned war brides from other nations. In most of the cases, the husbands flatly refused to accept their British spouses, often because they had found new wives once back in the United States. The outcome of these cases remains unknown. The significance lies, however, in the INS's pursuit of such cases—British war bride cases only. Rather than trying to prevent excess immigration from Great Britain, INS officials did the opposite: they actually encouraged this immigration. They attempted to resolve desertion cases for British women.¹⁹⁵ In these cases, it was the American husbands, not the immigrant war brides that received the escalated inspection from the INS.

¹⁹⁴ Eugene Cole, report to E.E. Salisbury, May 9, 1946. For an in depth discussion of desertion among British war brides see Janel Virden, *Good-bye, Picadilly: British War Brides in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 89-94.

¹⁹⁵ Most likely the husband divorced the war bride, and the war bride never immigrated to the United States. As Virden explained, British women had little legal recourse in desertion cases under U.S. law, especially once the husbands were back in the United States. Virden argued that the U.S. did little to help these women. Based on the evidence above, however, the INS followed up with British war bride desertion cases more than those for war brides from any other country.

Compared to their European counterparts, Japanese war brides experienced more serious problems with immigration. Japanese women were never able to take advantage of the Fiancée Acts because the Fiancée Acts applied only to women and men racially eligible for citizenship—at various points in the postwar era, however, Congress amended the law to allow Japanese war brides temporary access to the War Brides Act. Experiences of Japanese war brides sometimes mirrored those of Italian war brides, as the legitimacy of Japanese war bride marriages were also routinely called into question. In the case of Japanese war bride marriages, however, it was first the Japanese government that called their legitimacy into question. Many GIs and Japanese women had ceremonial marriages performed, “saki marriages” as INS officials came to call them, that the Japanese government did not recognize as legal until they were registered with the Japanese government.¹⁹⁶ Unlike the proxy marriages involving Italian war women, both the husband and wife were present at these ceremonies, but since the Japanese government did not recognize the marriage as legal, neither did the United States for the purposes of the war brides act.¹⁹⁷ In this case, unlike the Italian war bride cases—Italy found proxy marriages perfectly legal—the United States followed the rule of law of the war bride’s country. The similarity in the handling of these cases lay in the fact that the INS challenged the legitimacy of both types of marriages. The results in each instance were similar as well. The United States government declared marriages invalid for both groups of

¹⁹⁶ “Saki marriages” were purely ceremonial and thus a marriage had to be registered with the Japanese government in order to be legal. They usually occurred in private within the home of the bride’s family. The bride and groom drank saki together as part of the ceremony, thereby explaining U.S. officials commonly referring to the unions as “saki marriages.”

¹⁹⁷ Operations Instructions, “Validity of marriages between United States servicemen and Japanese nationals,” May 26, 1952, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56323/921, NARA.

war bride couples, thereby limiting the women in these two countries access to the War Brides Acts and curbing immigration from Italy and Japan.

Although the War Bride and Fiancée Acts created new opportunities for immigration to the United States, especially for women from Southern and Eastern Europe and Japan, prewar ideas about race and ethnicity remained remarkably in tact with the execution of these new postwar laws. The INS implemented these laws in a way that maintained ethnic and racial distinction in accordance with prewar categorization. As in the prewar period, immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were not white in the same way immigrants from Northern and Western Europe were, even if their status did grant them more privilege than immigrants from Japan.

War Grooms

One of the most significant aspects of the war bride and fiancée legislation passed following the war was that Congress granted female members of the military and their war grooms equal access to the war bride and fiancée acts because Congress felt women's honorable service in the Armed Forces during WWII earned them equality under the law (in this regard at least). Although some government officials expressed concern over allowing war grooms admittance on the same footing as war brides, government officials saw no reason to deny military women access to the law.

Women did make use of the opportunity. One member of the Women's Army Corps (WAC), for instance, married an Italian prisoner-of-war. Because WACs were strictly prohibited from marrying while serving actively in the military, the marriage

took place after the woman's honorable discharge.¹⁹⁸ When questions arose about the couple's attempt to return to the United States, they had nothing to do with the WAC making use of the law, but rather with her husband's status as a prisoner of war. Eugene Cole requested information from his superiors, "as to whether there is any prohibition as to this alien's entry on the ground that he was an enemy alien and a prisoner-of-war."¹⁹⁹ It is interesting to note that the only time the issue of Italian spouses as enemy aliens surfaced was in this instance of the war groom. As argued above, former enemy status cannot be used to explain the heightened scrutiny Italian war brides received from the INS. It is possible the issue surfaced in this case because the spouse in question was a prisoner-of-war. It is also possible that the INS did indeed have more concerns about war grooms than war brides. If the institution of marriage was the package that made this wave of immigrants more palatable, that was most true in the ideal case of a Caucasian man marrying a foreign woman (whether Japanese or European). When this equation was altered to include an Asian American or African American man, or as in this case, a female member of the military marrying a foreign man, the situation became more problematic. The outcome of this case is unknown, but based on the rules of the War Brides Acts and other INS protocol, it seems that the Italian spouse would have gained entry to the United States.

A former Army nurse, Naomi Elaine Fluck, attempted to use the Fiancée Act in order to facilitate the immigration of her Austrian fiancé, Eric Stern. Fluck encountered problems with the immigration process because her fiancé was ill and

¹⁹⁸ Although the War Brides and Fiancée Acts treated men and women equally under the law, this was an example of the inequality between men and women in the services.

¹⁹⁹ Eugene Cole, letter to E.E. Salisbury, May 9, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA.

being held up in Shanghai, China by the American consul. According to the rules of the Fiancé Acts, medical examinations were to occur on the U.S. side of the immigration process—part of the expedited process included no pre-examinations so it is unusual that the couple’s reunion was being held up by this factor. As Fluck explained, this was precisely the problem, “Dr. Stern was unable to pass the physical examination. In his chest, he has calcified lung spots. He had chest trouble, but it is no longer in the acute stage. However, the doctor at the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai wants Dr. Stern to go to a Sanatorium, for six months rest.”²⁰⁰ Since Austria’s quota was not oversubscribed, there may have been some confusion on the part of the American consul as to how Stern was immigrating to the U.S.—as a quota immigrant versus a fiancé—and he was thus being held up for medical reasons. In this instance, it would have been in the couple’s favor to use the Fiancé Act over the quota procedure because of Stern’s health. Fluck petitioned the INS then to clear up the issue with the American consul and allow Stern entry as a fiancé, as she had already cleared up all the other red tape associated with the law.

Fluck obviously wanted to reunite with her fiancé and felt he would receive better medical care in the United States, and she emphasized what she believed Sterns’ positive (read: appealing as an immigrant) attributes to be in order to bolster his case for coming to the United States. She explained that Dr. Stern had, as she, served honorably during the war by working in the medical hospitals, and, “. . . that he deserves this chance to come to the United States.”²⁰¹ Besides contributing to the war effort, Fluck noted that Stern was “Protestant, his political opinions are above

²⁰⁰ Naomi Elaine Fluck, letter to Attorney General, May 1947, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853a, NARA.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

reproach.”²⁰² In other words, Stern was not Catholic or Jewish, nor a Communist or Fascist, making him a more ideal immigrant. Finally, Fluck assured the INS that her fiancé would not become a public charge by including the following, “I am working in a Los Angeles hospital, and I make ample money to care for Dr. Stern until he is able to set himself up in practice.”²⁰³ Whether or not immigrants would become public charges was a typical concern to INS officials for general immigration.²⁰⁴ Since war brides and fiancées came as such, it was assumed they would not become public charges because of their American husbands. Notably, Fluck reinforced this idea in regards to her case, lest INS officials concern themselves with her fiancé’s potential dependence on the state.

These two cases, while not significant in number, remain significant. They reveal that female members of the armed forces made use of the laws passed (in part) on their behalf. One of the most interesting aspects of war bride and fiancée legislation passed was that it applied equally to men and women. Furthermore, these cases experienced red tape issues but not because they were women trying to bring their husbands to the United States, rather, they were simply peculiar cases. Perhaps no real generalization can be made here about the war groom experience. Yet these cases remain notable because they demonstrated the gender equality written into this wave of legislation. The passage of the war brides and fiancée acts in gender neutral

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Concerns about immigrants becoming public charges dated back to the late nineteenth century and became part of an early wave of federal immigration restrictions. The Immigration Act of 1882 sanctioned the exclusion and deportation of immigrants deemed likely to become a public charge. As historian Deirdre Moloney showed, this restriction was applied disproportionately to female immigrants. See Deirdre M. Moloney, “Women, Sexual Morality, and Economic Dependency in Early U.S. Deportation Policy,” *Journal of Women’s History* 18 (2006): 95-122.

terms would not have been as significant if the women of the armed forces did not know about them or use them.

The Role of the American Red Cross During War Bride Immigration

This analysis of the experiences of war brides early in their immigration process revealed that not only were INS officials and army officers involved but also the American Red Cross (ARC). The ARC played an integral role in facilitating the immigration process for Japanese and European war brides. The sheer number of potential newcomers taxed the limits of what the U.S. military and immigration officials could do to ensure a speedy and efficient system for moving war brides and fiancées through embarkation points abroad and to the U.S. The Red Cross, already overseas to assist the war and postwar effort, and specifically to meet soldier's needs, stepped up to assist with various aspects of the war bride and fiancée's journey to the U.S., often serving as a liaison or advocate for war brides trying to work their way through the complicated immigration process. From paperwork to actual transportation, the Red Cross proved vital to making war bride and fiancée immigration a reality.

The American Red Cross worked with the U.S. military and INS to assist war brides and soldiers with the immigration process from the beginning, even before the foreign women were war brides. In Australia, for example, the Red Cross worked with the military to investigate applications for marriage submitted by GIs, beginning a trend in which the ARC served as advocates for war brides that would continue well after the women arrived in the United States. As discussed earlier in this chapter,

before a war bride couple could marry, the GI needed the permission of his commanding officer. The Red Cross attempted to assist the military with this decision-making process by conducting background investigations on potential war bride couples. During the war, the military took its strongest stance against unions between GIs and foreign women. Nevertheless, such matches occurred, and, “In 1943 the Red Cross decided these women and children could be helped, first, by assisting the Army in conducting investigations, and, secondly, by collecting information on the legal position of these dependents.”²⁰⁵ The Red Cross drafted these reports for the military (specifically the commanding officer) that contained such information as parental consent and the economic stability of the couple. The Red Cross hoped to show that “...by marrying an American, the bride and her parents relieved the Army, the government, and the American and Australian charitable organizations of all responsibility.”²⁰⁶ Red Cross field directors and their assistants worked overtime to complete this task, which they believed would assist war bride couples and help the military make informed decisions regarding these potential unions.²⁰⁷ In May 1943, for example, the Melbourne office had completed 86 investigations.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Charles Hurd, *The Compact History of the American Red Cross* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), 257.

²⁰⁶ Raymond Jameson, *The History of the American Red Cross, Volume XIV: The Pacific* (Washington DC: American National Red Cross, 1950), 258.

²⁰⁷ Janel Virden described how the Red Cross field offices in Great Britain performed similar investigations into potential British war bride couples in 1943 before being ordered to stop. Virden interpreted these investigations as paternalistic and another voice discouraging marriage. While the nature of the investigations were certainly paternalistic and even problematic (and tantamount to a background check), I would argue the Red Cross field staffers were simply working within the obstacle-filled apparatus set up by the U.S. military. Furthermore, Red Cross workers believed they were working on behalf of war bride couples and expediting the process to gain permission to marry. See Virden, *Good-bye, Picadilly*, 38-39.

²⁰⁸ Jameson, *The History of the American Red Cross*, 258.

This investigatory service provided by the Red Cross soon ceased, however, because of internal disagreement within the organization about the appropriate role of field offices. In addition to the time it consumed, National Red Cross headquarters felt the Red Cross was over-stepping its bounds by effectively signing off on war bride unions, even if the commanding officer made the final decision. Headquarters saw potential for “unpleasant complications” should a war bride marriage fail: “What would happen when the young bride failed to get along with her mother-in-law and quoted a Red Cross employee as having ‘approved the marriage’?”²⁰⁹ Field office staffers disagreed with headquarters’ assessment of their role, which they saw as informative rather than authoritative, not only for the military but also for potential war brides and their parents. One field director felt these investigations were not only within the realm of Red Cross duties but that they were, “one of our finest opportunities for performing a much needed welfare service.”²¹⁰ Headquarters maintained their stance and ordered investigations to halt on October 19, 1943.

By December of that same year, the Red Cross further diminished services for war brides until after the war. The Red Cross did not allow Australian war bride clubs and associations to hold their meetings at Red Cross service clubs. Many within the Red Cross felt the war brides needed assistance, but they, “...could do nothing except by direction from the Army.”²¹¹ One worker disagreed with the policy and expressed a concern that, “from the standpoint of American-Australian relationships as well as because of the crying need for some welfare work with these

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 259. There were no examples of the ARC opposing GI/war bride marriages, most likely because they envisioned their role as advocates for GIs and by extension war brides. The internal disagreements, such as the above, centered on how best to fulfill that role.

²¹¹ Ibid, 260.

young wives, someone or somebody should intervene to give them guidance and help them plan whatever program they have in mind.”²¹² For the most part war brides were left to their own devices until 1945, but Red Cross staffers worked on their behalf until ordered not to, attempting to assist the process of marriage (and later immigration) in any way possible.²¹³ Efforts such as these, in which the Red Cross went above and beyond what was required, would continue to characterize the work of the Red Cross on behalf of all war brides, regardless of race, in the postwar years.

During WWII the American Red Cross provided limited services to war brides overseas, but over the course of 1945, the ARC worked to devise a program to deal with war brides, “in an effort to affect as nearly as possible uniform services in the various theaters,” just as war bride immigration was about to increase massively.²¹⁴ The ARC defined the objective of their program as, “To assist the dependents of United States servicemen and veterans who want to come to the United States to the end that they be enabled to do so.”²¹⁵ To fulfill this objective the Red Cross planned to offer a variety of services to war brides, which included assisting with communication between war brides and husbands (as well as in-law families in the United States), providing information about regulations governing war bride immigration, assisting with applications for family benefits, and financial assistance. In addition to these services, the Red Cross made plans to work in the trenches and assist the military with the transportation of war brides from embarkation points once

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Red Cross staffers did assist war brides with filling out paperwork from 1943-1945. See Red Cross History, 487.

²¹⁴ Sterling Johnson, letter to Mrs. Mumm, Mrs. Ellis, Ms. Kattox, Ms. Neel, and Ms. Watland, November 9, 1945, War Brides Subject File, Hazel Braugh Research Center, American Red Cross.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

the mass transport of war brides began. In September of 1945, ARC National Headquarters instructed its field offices, “Unless you know that each port chapter in your area is adequately organized...to give ship-meeting and reception services, members of your staff should visit each port chapter to discuss this matter and assist the chapter with its organization.”²¹⁶ With this directive issued, the Red Cross helped organize baggage, canteen, nursing, motor corps, and home services at piers of departure and reception centers in the United States.

The planning the ARC put into its services for war brides paid off, as the organization proved vital in assisting not only the war brides themselves but also military and INS officials overwhelmed with the task of transporting such a large number of women and children. As planned, the Red Cross first helped war brides with all of the paperwork necessary to immigrate and then assisted with the logistics of the journey: “The Australian and the American Red Cross cooperated, both in guiding them through the maze of red tape and in attempting to make their journeys as comfortable as possible.”²¹⁷ Field directors offered war brides and fiancées advice and information. In Paris, for example, a home service worker, stationed at the American embassy, answered questions on how to get to the United States or contact their husbands.²¹⁸ As reported by the Red Cross, “A large part of the Red Cross home or family service workers’ time was devoted to helping the brides prepare the necessary papers, securing information from absent husbands as to the status of

²¹⁶ F.A. Winfrey, letter to Mr. Harriman, Mr. Eaton, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Keisker, and Mr. Simmons, September 5, 1945, War Brides Subject File, Hazel Braugh Research Center, American Red Cross.

²¹⁷ Jameson, *The History of the American Red Cross*, 333.

²¹⁸ Robert H. Bremner, *The History of the American Red Cross, Volume XIII: ARC Services in the War Against the European Axis, Pearl Harbor to 1947* (Washington DC: American National Red Cross, 1950), 515.

applications for visas and transportation,...”²¹⁹ Some Red Cross workers went beyond offering required services and worked to make war bride weddings “festive occasions” by renting wedding dresses and arranging brief honeymoons.²²⁰

In addition to paperwork, the Red Cross ensured that war bride immigration would be a reality rather than a theoretical possibility. Once the military began its operation of transporting war brides and fiancées, the Red Cross provided on-the-ground services to facilitate this process. In Australia, for example, Red Cross volunteers helped women board trains heading for coastal points of departure, handled baggage, and took care of wives and children in staging areas by providing canteen service and shelter.²²¹ The average stay at a staging area ranged from three to five days but delays could extend stays to as long as ten days.²²² The Red Cross offered social programs, such as movies and games, at the staging areas as well. Once transport was available, Red Cross workers helped the women board ships and sometimes even accompanied them on their trans-Atlantic or trans-Pacific voyages.

A notable characteristic of the Red Cross’s assistance programs for war brides was an attempt to maintain uniformity throughout the different theaters of war: “The Home Service department in the European Theater and the corresponding family welfare section in the Mediterranean attempted to carry on the same information, communication, and financial assistance for foreign war brides as the Red Cross made available to wives and dependents of servicemen.”²²³ The Red Cross modeled

²¹⁹ Ibid, 516.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Jameson, *The History of the American Red Cross*, 333-334.

²²² Bremner, *The History of the American Red Cross*, 518. For one group in Tidworth, England, the stay at the staging area stretched to seven weeks.

²²³ Ibid, 514-515. This was the intention of the Red Cross all along.

its services on all parts of the European continent (and Australia) after those provided in Great Britain and maintained the services described above for all European war brides to ensure that war brides could make full use of the laws passed on their behalf and to ensure the journey to the United States was a successful one.²²⁴ Differences in treatment did not arise according to race or ethnicity, as with the INS. Marital status, however, consistently dictated a different immigration experience for these women. The Red Cross could not offer fiancées assistance, for example, because, “Fiancées, not being dependents, were not eligible for financial assistance although Red Cross communications and information services were open to them.”²²⁵ Yet the Red Cross still strove to do everything it could to help these women as well.

Uniformity, however, was not always possible and the most significant difference in the implementation of Red Cross programs existed between the European and Pacific Theaters. The Red Cross did not operate transport programs in the Pacific Theater. This stark disparity in assistance was one dictated by the policy of the U.S. military rather than the Red Cross, however. Historian Regina Lark hypothesized the reasoning behind the incongruity of programs in the European and Pacific theaters in her own work on Japanese war bride immigration. As Lark explained, “For reasons that are not clear, the American military or the U.S. government never asked the ARC to oversee the transportation of Japanese International brides to America. One possible explanation could be that there were fewer Japanese wives immigrating to America than European ones.”²²⁶ Lark also offered the Korean War as another possible explanation for the non-existence of a

²²⁴ Ibid, 518.

²²⁵ Ibid, 515.

²²⁶ Regina Lark, “They Challenged Two Nations,” 229 (FN).

transportation program for Japanese war brides, as the war would have rendered troop ships unavailable for war brides and their children. Regardless of the reason, the Red Cross never had the opportunity to assist Japanese war bride transport the way they did for European and Australian war brides, however, there is no reason to believe they would have varied their programs for these women. The Red Cross assisted Japanese war brides in the United States with the same dedication they showed towards all other war brides. And one significant program—war brides schools—were available to all war brides prior their arrival to the United States. This program will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

Where available, the INS found the assistance of the Red Cross and other volunteer organizations essential. Eugene Cole, the INS official in charge of processing war brides in Naples, noted, “The American Red Cross is instrumental in contacting the dependents and arranging for schedules and transportation to the staging area in Naples.”²²⁷ A group of volunteer women in Ireland proved essential to the efficient processing of war brides in that country, garnering them an official note of thanks from the INS, which read, “The help which you so kindly volunteered enabled our officer to handle the many details of his assignment efficiently and expeditiously.”²²⁸ Obviously the task of managing and transporting such a large group of immigrants was more than any one group or organization could handle, and the INS relied on Red Cross (and other similar) volunteers to make the program a reality and success.

²²⁷ Eugene Cole, letter to E.E. Salisbury, February 12, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA.

²²⁸ Shoemaker, letter to Mrs. N.V. Cooke, June 14, 1946, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56226/527, NARA.

The ARC did not stop assisting war brides once they arrived to the United States, and the organization continued to offer assistance with basic needs such as transportation, as well as more complex issues, such as divorce. Since the settlement pattern of war brides dispersed them all over the United States, many had to continue their journey once their trans-Atlantic or trans-Pacific voyage was complete. The ARC assisted war brides with the final leg of the trip by running a “War Brides Train,” for example. The “War Brides Train” operated from March 5, 1946 through July 26 of that year. It transported 4,700 war brides from Australia, New Zealand, and the Far East from Camp Knight in Oakland, California to points East throughout the United States.²²⁹ The journey to the United States could be a long and difficult one for a war bride, and the help the Red Cross provided through services such as the “War Brides Train” proved vital.

Even when the Red Cross did not operate programs like the “War Brides Train,” they provided valuable assistance in a number of ways to war brides during their journeys across the United States.²³⁰ When war brides arrived to the United States, the Red Cross, working at docks and airports where war brides disembarked, checked their destination addresses and ensured the women boarded the correct trains for their final destination if they were not met by family members upon arrival. If necessary, they also contacted family members to notify them of the war bride’s

²²⁹ Martha Delaney, “Camp and Hospital Highlights,” *The Red Cross Courier*, October 1946, 29. The “War Brides Train” most likely helped few if any Japanese war brides because the first Japanese War Brides Act did not pass until 1947.

²³⁰ Many of the examples referenced here, particularly those drawn from the RASRL study, will be from European war brides. Because those war brides disembarked in New York and then traveled cross-country to Hawaii via California, they had the more elaborate travel stories. While the Japanese war brides in the study encountered the difficulty of the cross-Pacific journey to Hawaii, many did not have to deal with the cross-country journey, at least not without their husbands.

arrival.²³¹ The Red Cross provided this seemingly simple yet essential assistance to war brides to make their journey as smooth as possible. Because war brides often rushed to meet the deadlines of the war brides acts, last minute paperwork and transportation arrangements were common, and therefore the war bride's husband and/or family would often remain unaware of a war bride's arrival. When necessary then, the Red Cross filled in for family members to quell the confusion and ease the journey to the final U.S. destination.

At times the cross-country journey for a war bride became more complex than finding the correct train, and once again the Red Cross stepped in to aid war brides that encountered problems. Many war brides from the RASRL study, for example, mentioned the assistance they received from the Red Cross throughout their journeys to and through the United States. Hungarian war bride Mrs. D-4's husband paid for her to fly from Germany to Hawaii, but Mrs. D-4 still had to stop in New York to be cleared through Fort Hamilton. A Red Cross worker met Mrs. D-4 at the airport in New York to assist with her arrival to the United States. And when Mrs. D-4 had to make a stopover in San Francisco on her way to Hawaii from New York, another Red Cross worker met her and her baby and offered her a place to stay and helped her contact her husband as well.²³² Other war brides from the RASRL study recounted similar events and assistance provided by the Red Cross during their journeys to Hawaii. When Mrs. A-29 had to remain in New York for forty days due to a strike

²³¹ Paul B. Zucker, "War Brides Project Ends: Red Cross workers assist alien dependents of GI's to reach American shores before deadline," *The Red Cross Courier*, February 1949, 28.

²³² D-4, March 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

that disrupted train service, for example, the Red Cross helped her find a place to stay and again contacted her husband to notify him of her arrival to Hawaii.²³³

Not only did Red Cross workers ensure the completion of a war bride's journey, they often went out of their way to make war brides feel welcome upon their arrival to the United States, acclimating them to their new environment even before their husbands and in-laws could or would. In addition to providing practical assistance to European war brides while in New York, for example, Italian war bride Mrs. D-80 explained how a Red Cross worker took her and other Italian war brides sightseeing.²³⁴ Mrs. D-80 appreciated her tour of New York as much as the other assistance offered by the Red Cross. In San Francisco, a Red Cross worker went out of her way to make sure French war bride Mrs. D-81 felt welcome during her short stay in the city by introducing her to other French people.²³⁵ The Red Cross particularly went out of their way to assist a Chinese war bride traveling on her own by train from California to New York.²³⁶ Maylai Wong spoke only Chinese and carried a paper from her husband with her name and destination. When the train staff could not communicate with her or get her to eat anything, a conductor contacted the Red Cross's Salt Lake City chapter so they could assist the woman and the train staff during the stop in that city. The Red Cross located two Chinese Americans fluent in

²³³ A-29, February 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1. Other war brides from the RASRL study, such as Mrs. B-17, mentioned similar instances of the Red Cross finding them temporary housing during stops along their cross-country travels. See B-17, March 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

²³⁴ D-80, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

²³⁵ D-81, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

²³⁶ Alexander c. Boase, "Red Cross Emblem Dispels Chinese War Bride's Fear of New Country," *The Red Cross Courier*, December 1948, 7 and 30.

Wong's Mandarin dialect who also prepared and brought Chinese food for the war bride, per the train conductor's request. During the brief stop the Red Cross worker and translators quickly "briefed Maylai on the customs and routine incident to long distance Pullman travel in her new country."²³⁷ Like many war brides, Wong made her trip to the United States without her husband but perhaps encountered more difficulty because she was not traveling with other war brides. Her difficulties, rather than travel logistics (she was on the correct train and would have reached her destination), were those of custom. The train conductor and Red Cross eased her journey by offering her familiar foods and giving her a quick tutorial on American train travel. In all three of these instances, the Red Cross went beyond assisting with travel and facilitating the war bride immigration process, they welcomed these new immigrant women to the United States and began acclimating them to their new country.

Such assistance did not go unnoticed by war brides and their families who greatly appreciated the work of the ARC. One mother of an Australian war bride wrote the Red Cross to thank them and said, "I have had many letters from my daughter...and in each one she has mentioned some kindness she received from Red Cross personnel...May I say thank you on behalf of the mothers of Australian brides."²³⁸ The war bride had traveled from Australia to Oneida, New York, receiving help from Red Cross workers while aboard ship, from the San Francisco chapter, and at points during her during her cross-country travels. All of the RASRL

²³⁷ Ibid, 30.

²³⁸ Donald A. Goldthorpe, "Services To Veterans" *The Red Cross Courier*, October 1946, 20.

war brides who spoke of the assistance they received from the organization in grateful terms as well.

The Red Cross did not stop assisting war brides once they reached their destinations in the United States, however. When war brides had nowhere else to turn, they often looked to the Red Cross for help with family issues such as childcare and marital problems. Soon after arriving to the United States, some war brides were left on their own when their husbands, who were still in the military, had to leave for Korea. When Mrs. D-120b's husband was in Korea, the Red Cross helped her find new housing after an illness left her unable to work her live-in job as a baby sitter. Her in-laws lived in Hawaii, but they did not offer her any help.²³⁹ Mrs. B-4's husband reported for duty in Korea while she was pregnant with their third child. Like Mrs. D-120b, Mrs. B-4's in-laws lived in Hawaii but did not help her so she too turned to the Red Cross. Mrs. B-4 relayed how the Red Cross assisted her during her pregnancy and were also able to arrange for her husband to come to Hawaii on leave once the baby was born.²⁴⁰

In addition to helping war brides with basic needs such as housing and childcare, the Red Cross also offered war brides assistance with some of the more complex problems they faced such as divorce and desertion. German war bride Mrs. D-60 lived with her husband in Hawaii for two and half years when he was transferred to a base on the mainland for military duty. Mrs. D-60 indicated her wish to go with her husband to his new assignment, but he told her the Army did not

²³⁹ Mrs. D-120b, September 1956, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

²⁴⁰ Mrs. B-4, February 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

approve his request to have his family join him. At the time of the interview, Mrs. D-60 had not heard from her husband for nine months, and the last time he had written her, it was to ask for a divorce. Mrs. D-60 turned to the Red Cross and asked them to assist her with contacting her husband and obtaining monetary support for herself and their three children. Mrs. D-60 was still waiting for word from the Red Cross at the time of the interview, however.²⁴¹ The Red Cross was able to help Japanese war bride Mrs. O-11 when she faced the same problem of desertion. Mrs. O-11's husband went to Okinawa for a military contracting position in 1950, three years after they arrived in Hawaii together. For the first few months, Mrs. O-11 heard from her husband regularly and received money from him for her and their child but then contact abruptly stopped. Mrs. O-11 contacted the Red Cross because "I was worried because he might be sick and unable to work. I remembered that my husband told me that if I failed to receive money from him I should go to the Red Cross."²⁴² The Red Cross contacted Mrs. O-11's husband and investigated the situation via their Okinawa office and reported that Mr. O-11 was in good health and working. They further pursued the situation by contacting Mr. O-11's boss, who along with the Army, made sure Mrs. O-11 received a monthly sum from her husband. Despite the Red Cross's vital assistance, Mr. and Mrs. O-11 were unable to resolve their problems because Mr. O-11 did in fact desert his wife. He decided to stay in Okinawa with another woman and their new child so the couple divorced. The Red Cross tried to secure

²⁴¹ Mrs. D-60, October 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

²⁴² Mrs. O-11, August 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 6.

child support for Mrs. O-11 and her daughter but were unsuccessful.²⁴³ Although the Red Cross could not always resolve these desertion cases fully for war brides, they worked as advocates on behalf of war brides, even when their problems were with their military husbands. The Red Cross remained a reliable place for war brides to turn when faced with serious problems and when they had few other alternatives.

With the new laws passed by Congress, first in late 1945 for war brides and then in the spring of 1946 for fiancées, the translation from law to practice proved uneven at best. New possibilities for immigration to the United States opened up to the women and men of Europe and Asia who were involved in wartime romances with American military personnel. In each step of the process, however, war bride couples potentially encountered problems of various magnitudes, and more often than not the specifics of those problems were governed by the race or ethnicity of the war bride or her GI husband.

Race and ethnicity particularly shaped the way the INS handled war brides and fiancées. The immigration agency adhered to prewar ideas about race and ethnicity. Although World War II can be viewed as a turning point in the whitening of second wave immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, as the experiences of the European war brides and fiancées revealed, that process was not complete in all aspects of American life and practice. In one very important realm, the realm that regulated admittance to the United States, Southern and Eastern Europeans continued

²⁴³ Ibid, 7. For a similar example see Japanese war bride Mrs. F-18 who consulted the Red Cross during her divorce process, which she did not fully understand as a new immigrant. The divorce was still in progress at the time of the interview. F-18, September 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 4-6.

to occupy the “inbetween” status described by Barrett and Roediger. While they were certainly not subjected to the strictest regulations that governed the nonwhite war brides from Japan, neither did Southern and Eastern European war brides and fiancées experience the preferential status Northern and Western European women did. World War II, then, created an opportunity for the distinctions among different racial and ethnic groups to be blurred but not entirely erased. This resulted in a somewhat limited and more closely monitored opportunity for postwar migration for women from countries like Italy and Greece, while women from Great Britain and Germany could fully benefit from new U.S. immigration law.

For the American Red Cross, which provided war brides and fiancées with vital assistance throughout the process of marriage and immigration, the race or ethnicity of the war bride did not matter so much as the status of these female immigrants as dependents of military personnel. The ARC believed it was their duty to assist these women to the best of their abilities, or in some cases, as much as the military would allow their assistance. The assistance offered by the ARC helped to ensure the successful completion of the war bride and fiancée journey. The Red Cross was also successful in another aspect of war bride immigration: running war brides schools abroad that simultaneously prepared these new immigrant women for various aspects of American life and also heavily influenced the way in which the American public perceived its newest citizens. This subject will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: The Public Perception of War Bride Immigration

A sea of public discourse and media images surrounded war bride immigration stateside during their first decade in the United States. Newspapers, magazines, and Hollywood films in particular dealt with this new wave of female immigrants in a way that both played on earlier stereotypes propagated by the military and also disseminated new information and ideas about war brides. Previously circulated images of war brides, such as women scheming to take advantage of unsuspecting GIs, lingered but also became especially associated with particular women. German would-be war brides in Hollywood films, for instance, were linked with this image, one that was incongruous with the INS's treatment of German war brides. Simultaneously, a new conception of the war bride as an eager student of American ways particularly interested in learning how to become an American housewife began to circulate. This new image owed its existence in no small part to the war brides schools operated by the American Red Cross (ARC) abroad, as this was yet another way the ARC sought to assist war brides with the process of immigrating to the United States. The image of the eager-to-learn and assimilable war bride became particularly tied to Japanese war brides, transitioning them from unassimilable and ineligible for citizenship (the prewar status of all Japanese people) to an ideal immigrant for the postwar United States. This image of Japanese war brides remained consistent through the immediate postwar era and into the late 1950s even as the U.S. occupation of Japan ended in 1952 and the McCarran-Walter Act passed that same year.

Learning to be an American: Tokyo War Brides Schools

By the early 1950s, and especially after the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act, barriers to Japanese immigration decreased, and the Red Cross increased help for war brides before they arrived in America. For Japanese war brides, this assistance came in the form of war brides schools, which began in Tokyo in 1951 when a group of voluntary church women initiated the project.²⁴⁴ One of the founders of the school described its mission this way: “At [the] request of American servicemen, we started [a] school for the indoctrination of their wives, their Japanese wives, into the ways of American life.”²⁴⁵ And the schools did just that, but in a strictly gendered sense. The schools taught these women how to be good American citizens—good female citizens. The message was quite clear: a good female citizen was a good housewife in 1950s America. The American Red Cross described the schools this way: “...[I]t is the American housewife who has initiated, led, and brought about the emergence of our fine schools for Japanese brides. People of different races, languages, and social position, have all been working side by side to teach the American way of life.”²⁴⁶ The United States Army then took hold of the idea and passed it along to the American Red Cross, which not only continued but broadened the endeavor. By examining the course content of the schools, it becomes clear that the volunteers fashioned the schools in a way to teach their pupils to become the idealized all-American domestic goddesses that 1950s America so admired.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ The Red Cross operated similar courses and schools in European countries, but the Department of Defense films, as well as most popular press coverage, focused on the Japanese war brides schools so I will discuss those in the most detail here.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ “American Red Cross Far Eastern Area Brides’ Schools,” October 18, 1955, HBRC.

²⁴⁷ For an in depth discussion of the importance of the nuclear family and clearly defined gender roles, in which the woman was most valued for her role as a wife and stay at home mother, in 1950s

In 1952, *The Saturday Evening Post* described these war brides schools to the American public and offered an early perspective on the new immigrants as well.²⁴⁸ In conclusion, the article noted how hard Japanese women worked in the schools to learn everything in the curriculum. It announced approvingly that the intent of the brides was most certainly to become “American.”²⁴⁹

In addition to appearing in American magazines, the war bride schools were captured on film by the Department of Defense. This window into the activities of the schools sheds light on how instructors implemented the curriculum. Furthermore, the opinions of some of the white American women involved with the schools reveal what they believed a Japanese war bride’s proper role should be, as well as how to best prepare her to fulfill that role.

The films defined good citizenship for women as being good wives. In one of the films, Mrs. Eldon F. Hammond of Virginia, wife of a U.S. general and chairwoman of the Tokyo Brides School, was asked if she believed her students would make good American citizens. She responded, “Yes, they’re very cooperative, and with the aid of the American people at home, they’ll make excellent wives.”²⁵⁰

Mrs. Hammond’s belief, which equated good American citizenship with being a good

America see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (United States: Basic Books), 1988. May discussed both the cultural and political significance of this ideal, as well as its predominance in nearly every facet of American popular culture. As discussed in the introduction, this interpretation of American women in the 1950s has been revised, but the importance of it as one ideal remains critical to understanding the governing concept the brides schools.

²⁴⁸ Janet Wentworth Smith and William L. Worden, “They’re Bringing Home Japanese Wives,” *The Saturday Evening Post* (January 19, 1952), 24+.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁵⁰ *Japanese War Brides School, Tokyo, Japan*. Created by Department of Defense, United States Army, Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Army Pictorial Center, Army Motion Picture Depository, 1952. Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Branch, NARA.

wife, was indicative of the ideology central to the Tokyo Brides School and was no doubt congruent with the views of the United States Army and the Department of Defense. Therefore, these films offer evidence for the ways that Americans perceived these particular Japanese women and how they envisioned the women's transition to American society.

The films depicted Japanese women as cooperative, docile, and eager for assimilation. Mrs. Hammond, for example, seemed very pleased when she spoke of the Japanese brides. This was due to the apparent cooperation and receptivity on the part of the brides, which Mrs. Hammond highlighted in both takes of her interview with a Lieutenant Jenkins.²⁵¹ She mentioned how receptive the women were to the courses the school had to offer. The receptive attitude of the Japanese women was a significant explanation for the positive attitude toward the Japanese war brides as well. Because they were seen as being willing and eager to learn American ways, the war brides were held up as exemplary immigrants, a fact bolstered by the volunteers' testifying to their liking their students. The volunteers at the Tokyo Brides School apparently enjoyed working with their Japanese students. For example, when Lieutenant Jenkins, the principle interviewer in the film *Japanese War Brides School, Tokyo, Japan*, asked Miss Maggie McGuire, a volunteer who instructed the young brides in the ways of American make-up and beauty culture, if she enjoyed her work, she said she liked teaching the girls very much. Miss McGuire added, "they're coming along very nicely."²⁵²

²⁵¹ Ibid. This film was unedited and showed multiple takes of interviews, etc. In the case of the interview between Mrs. Hammond and Lt. Jenkins, there are two takes.

²⁵² Ibid.

Because of their alleged pliancy, the war brides were thought to be easily adaptable to the American way of life. McGuire stated, “I think they will be able to adapt themselves very nicely within two or three months.”²⁵³ Miss McGuire believed that the Brides School had helped these women a great deal and would aid in their positive reception of American customs and womanhood.

Red Cross Schools equated the “American way of life” with domesticity for women. Examples of presentations and classes conducted for Japanese brides appeared in two of the films, each titled, *American Red Cross Brides’ School, Tokyo, Japan*. As Mrs. Hammond’s school had done three years earlier, the Red Cross in 1955 conducted the courses under the rubric of teaching them the ways of American life. However, their scope and content indicated a much narrower focus. The first film captured a demonstration of how to wash a baby and dress it, as a Red Cross nurse demonstrated this activity on a Caucasian doll to an audience of smiling Japanese women. In the second film, a volunteer named Mrs. Stewart showed a small group of women how to make up a bed in the American style. The American Red Cross apparently found such typical housewife duties vital to the success of these women as good American citizens.²⁵⁴

Although the films did not devote significant time to covering it, cooking instruction was central to the schools’ curriculum for war brides, as the Red Cross viewed preparing healthy and delicious meals for husbands and children integral to

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ *American Red Cross Brides’ School, Tokyo, Japan*. Created by Department of Defense, United States Army, Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Army Pictorial Center, Army Motion Picture Depository, 1955. Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Branch, NARA. There are two of these films...I need to figure out a way to distinguish them in the notes...and I need to figure out the proper way to cite these anyway.

housewifely duties. Cooking instruction involved demonstrations, lectures, and practice for pupils. In order to introduce Japanese women to Western foods, elaborate lesson plans enumerated food groups, cooking methods, sample menus, and tips for entertaining. The schools introduced Japanese war brides to foods the Red Cross imagined their students were unfamiliar with, such as casseroles, yeast rolls, meat loaf, and omelets. Perhaps sensing the cultural divide between East and West that food embodied, the Red Cross also offered tips like, “Serve something hot with something cold,” and, “Never serve a starch food such as rice or macaroni in the same meal with potatoes.”²⁵⁵

As they taught the Japanese brides how to be good housewives (and thus good American citizens), the brides schools aided the women with cultural assimilation.²⁵⁶ The version of housewifery being disseminated at the schools was a distinctly American version of it, but the brides schools additionally gave the women a jump start on cultural assimilation by teaching them how to look like American women. Maggie McGuire the volunteer who so enjoyed working with her young pupils, instructed the brides in, “charm and make up,” for example.²⁵⁷ At the opening of one of these films, Ms. McGuire applied make up to one woman, as two others eagerly looked on. And when Lieutenant Jenkins asked her what was the most difficult thing to teach these women, she responded that they had the most trouble walking in high

²⁵⁵ “Brides School – Cooking Classes, Rules to Follow in Meal Preparation,” War Brides Subject File, Hazel Braugh Research Center, American Red Cross.

²⁵⁶ Jenel Virden, *Good-bye, Picadilly: British War Brides in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 131. In her study of British war brides during the World War II era, Jenel Virden wrote that cultural assimilation, “denotes outward signs of conforming to the dominant society such as adopting methods of dress, manners, and customs, and even changing to American religious or work patterns.” With this definition of cultural assimilation in mind, I would argue that nearly all the classes at the war brides schools instructed the Japanese women on how to culturally assimilate.

²⁵⁷ *Japanese War Brides School, Tokyo, Japan.*

heeled shoes.²⁵⁸ In yet another presentation, the Japanese brides listened to a talk on beauty aids and watched as the instructor, Mrs. Miller, put eyeliner on one of the women.²⁵⁹ The Tokyo Brides School believed, perhaps quite correctly, that looking like an American woman was an important aspect of cultural assimilation.

Other lessons taught by the school not only demonstrated the importance of being domestic and motherly in order to be a good American citizen, they also underscored the significance of American consumer culture. One presentation exemplified how one lesson could accomplish both of these goals. In this course, Mrs. Miller showed a group of Japanese women how to use the latest models of American household appliances: a vacuum cleaner, a toaster, an electrical coffee maker, and a sandwich grill.²⁶⁰

Though the War Brides Schools stressed American women's domestic role, the instructors did sanction one public realm for women to enter—the church. In fact, an Army chaplain addressing a group of wives strongly suggested that these women join their local church group. He felt this would ease their way into American society and help war brides cope with the pressures of adjusting to the American way of life. Additionally, the chaplain believed that, "...In the church, you will find our heritage at its best..."²⁶¹ He further instructed,

As you go to your new homes in America, I would like to encourage you to find your place in a local chapel program...you will find the opportunity to make your contribution to the present and to the future in the richest and fullest way possible. You'll miss a great deal if you do not identify yourselves with that chapel or church program that best meets your needs.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, June 2, 1952.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

The chaplain thus offered the war brides another avenue to cultural assimilation. By offering the Christian church as an avenue through which Japanese war brides could slip into their new American communities, the Army Chaplain took for granted that these women were already practicing Christianity, which was not always the case. Some Japanese war brides practiced Christianity, but certainly not all did. The Chaplain may have assumed that those who were not already practicing Christians would convert to the religion of their husbands.

In addition to these films, which documented the war brides schools in Tokyo, two films followed the Japanese war brides to America. Though the intent and final use of these films remains as unclear as that of the first set, it appears as though the films were meant to provide instruction to war brides still in Japan. In one of these films, a war bride, living with her husband in Forest Park, Georgia, gave a tour of her middle-class home. As she moved into the kitchen, she highlighted her toaster and coffee-maker, demonstrated how to use the sink, and explained *Tide* laundry detergent and various other household products. Thus, this film illustrated the same kind of domestic instruction as some of the classes at the War Brides School, but it also showed the Japanese bride living with her husband in America in domestic bliss surrounded by American conveniences and consumer goods.²⁶²

In an even more overt attempt to portray the abundance of goods in postwar America, the film followed another Forest Park war bride to the grocery store accompanied by her husband and son. The film not only showed the family shopping

²⁶² *Visit of Robert T. Stevens, Secretary of Army to 3D Infantry Division, Lawson Air Force, Georgia; Japanese War Brides, Forest Park, Georgia.* Created by Department of Defense, United States Army, Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Army Pictorial Center, Army Motion Picture Depository, 1954. Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Branch, NARA.

together, it also spent a significant amount of time filming all the items the store had to offer. It panned the produce department and zoomed in on the canned goods of other aisles.²⁶³ The mountains of produce and aisles of canned goods not so subtly clarified the message: American was the land of plenty. Presumably, any war bride would be able to walk into a grocery store in her new hometown and be bombarded with a surplus of items to peruse and purchase.

These films also documented the American landscape. For example, as the camera followed the young family to the local grocery store, it surveyed the small town of Forest Park, Georgia. It carefully shot the local chapel, zooming in and out and panning up and down, perhaps as a reminder to those watching that it was to be a place of primary importance in their new lives in America, as the Army chaplain suggested it would be. The camera also captured the local roads, busy with American cars, perhaps the ultimate symbol of American abundance in the postwar era.²⁶⁴ A final exterior shot in one of the films showed a version of an iconic image of 1950s America—that of the husband arriving home from a day’s work, while his son ran out to greet him in the driveway, and his Japanese bride waited for him on the porch.²⁶⁵

The American Red Cross war brides schools abroad were not only a way to Americanize foreign women, however, as the Red Cross operated similar schools stateside for new wives in the United States. Whereas the inception of the war brides’ schools in Japan made it seem as though these schools were simply an Americanization project, when viewed alongside these other schools, it becomes clear

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ *Japanese War Brides, San Antonio, Texas*. Created by Department of Defense, United States Army, Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Army Pictorial Center, Army Motion Picture Depository, 1954. Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Branch, NARA.

that was not entirely the case. The Red Cross (among others, as will be discussed in the following section of this chapter) took it upon themselves to train *American* housewives for their new gender roles following World War II as well. A *Red Cross Courier* article, “What’s Cooking for GI Bridegroom,” described the schools the Red Cross ran for American women, which bore a striking resemblance to the schools operated in Japan.²⁶⁶ The article explained, “Through the American Red Cross, thousands of women are aware of a need for competent instructions in cooking, budgeting, and marketing.”²⁶⁷ The schools obviously differed from war brides schools abroad because they did not need to orient American women to the cultural customs of the United States or give them a jump start on learning English. The crux of the international schools curriculum, cooking and household management, became the sole focus of stateside schools.

The schools began during the war to help American women adjust to wartime shortages and rationing as well the shifting budgets required by a soldier’s income. They refocused a bit after the war, emphasizing the special postwar need for training American women for their new role as housewife. Melva B. Bakkie, the Red Cross’s national director for nutrition service, explained, “they have been out of the kitchen—in factories...doing their best to keep up the homefront while the men were away. There is a generation of women who have had little or no experience in their own or their mother’s kitchen. And now they are suddenly called upon to become homemakers.”²⁶⁸ Thus the Red Cross took for granted that women would be leaving their wartime jobs and the workforce to “return” to their domestic role and desired to

²⁶⁶ Frances Stark, “What’s Cooking for GI Bridegroom,” *Red Cross Courier*, May 1946, 12-13, 28.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

assist them with this transition. The article was careful to note that, contrary to much of the evidence, the American woman was more than happy to make this transition but just needed help in order to please her husband to the best of her ability.

“Although probably delighted to lay down the blowtorch in favor of the ladle,” the Red Cross writer explained, “many a young wife is experiencing doubt as to her ability.”²⁶⁹ Just as with the war brides enrolled in schools abroad, American women were portrayed as eager for instruction in their domestic role. And also like their international counterparts, the focus of these schools was to teach cooking in order to please husbands and cater to their tastes. Ironically, that meant American women learning to cook international foods, as well as basic American cuisine in an effort to please her returning GI’s new food tastes! So while the international war bride was learning to cook American foods, the American wife was learning to cook international foods. “It seems that the ex serviceman not only wants a well-balanced meal, but, having become cosmopolitan in his food habits, he demands variety as well,” one Red Cross worker insisted. “He wants some of the foreign foods he grew to like.”²⁷⁰ The article even cited an example in which one American wife received instruction on how to prepare sukiyaki because her husband grew to like the Japanese dish while stationed in Hawaii. Finally, the article linked the training it was giving these American women to the service it provided for war brides abroad: “The Red Cross program has long given attention to the homemaking problems confronting the foreign bride of the American serviceman. In Great Britain, France, and Italy, special

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 12.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 13.

classes aim at giving her an insight into the ways of her adopted country.”²⁷¹ These two types of schools run by the Red Cross, although different in origin, were thus linked in their mission to promote among brides of all American GIs, whether those wives were U.S. citizens or foreign-born, the postwar housewife ideal.

The imperative driving the brides schools was a commitment to establish a new gender ideal in the postwar era. While Americanization was undoubtedly a goal of the war brides schools abroad, a larger dynamic was at work. The birth and expansion of the schools reflected a need perceived by the Red Cross to be common to both war brides and American women. The Red Cross thus participated in the postwar movement to make domesticity the center of American women’s identity. And according to the Red Cross, all women, foreign and native born, could fill this new postwar gender role if given the proper instruction.²⁷²

Americanization and the assimilability of Japanese war brides were the other guiding principles of the brides schools. Notions of racialized gender certainly played a role in the instructors’ characterization of Japanese war brides as dutiful pupils so willing to learn American ways. What is so striking here is the contrast between representations of the Japanese in general as unassimilable in the 1924 immigration law, which was still operating, and the assumption of easy assimilability for these particular Japanese women. Such representations of Japanese women are almost unfathomable when one considers the Japanese were characterized as

²⁷¹ Ibid, 28.

²⁷² This also reinforces the idea that what it meant to be an American woman was constantly changing. While many might assume that housewifery was continuously central to American womanhood, in the post World War II era, it was actually understood by some as a new role to which American women needed to assimilate. In other words, this role was as new to American women as it was to the newly-arrived Japanese war brides.

unassimilable and thereby ineligible for citizenship by the 1924 immigration law.²⁷³

While the propagation of this ideal in regards to American women at home may have eased fears about inverted gender roles necessitated by mass mobilization for World War II returning to “normal,” for the new war bride, they provided the opportunity to ease a different fear. The question of how the United States would absorb these thousands of new female immigrants was seemingly (and simply) answered by these war brides schools—the home and housewifely role would incorporate them into American society. War brides would become ideal female citizens by becoming housewives, thus making them an ideal immigrant for the postwar era. Learning a new gender role, then, allowed this group of Japanese women to traverse the sizable gap from unassimilable to easily assimilable. The American press certainly played up this angle of war bride immigration, as next section of this chapter demonstrates.

War Brides in the Press

War brides, both Japanese and European, received a great deal of coverage from the American press. Coverage in white mainstream newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times*, and in African American newspapers, such as the *Philadelphia Tribune* and *The Chicago Defender*, ranged from brief announcements that war brides were arriving in the United States to detailed personal profiles. The topic of war brides schools was also frequently covered in the press, especially in popular magazines. These stories reveal attitudes

²⁷³ See Mai Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law,” 67-92. Furthermore, the internment of Japanese American citizens only a few years earlier during the war underscores just how unassimilable America believed the Japanese to be. One of the principles used to justify internment was that these American citizens had not yet assimilated to the point of loyalty to the United States.

towards war bride immigration and at times what the press hoped attitudes towards war brides to be, as some articles were thinly veiled attempts to sway public opinion towards support for this new wave of immigrants. Although it is impossible to gauge the exact impact of press coverage, one can assess the different messages the media propagated in regards to these new immigrant women and the ways they tried to shape the public discourse.

The majority of articles on war bride immigration in the first decade following the war were very brief (typically one paragraph long) and simply imparted information about war bride immigration with little evaluation of the situation. These articles relayed news on the passage of war brides and fiancée acts, the arrival of ships carrying war brides, and the expiration dates of the temporary war brides laws. Most of the articles, then, contained little more than the numbers of war brides arriving to the United States, but a few of these stories were slightly longer and communicated more elaborate information. A *New York Times* piece from September 1946 noted the arrival of husbands of WACs, for example.²⁷⁴ The article noted that sixty one husbands of WACs arrived in New York alongside 44,775 wives of GIs and 721 children. The number of war brides dwarfed the number of war husbands (as did the number of children), but the existence of these war husbands and their inclusion in this report remains significant. As discussed previously, the stipulation of the war brides and fiancée acts that allowed spouses of male and female members of the Armed Forces equal access to the law was one of its landmark characteristics.

²⁷⁴ “44,775 GI Wives Admitted to the U.S. in Year; 721 Children, 61 Wac Husbands Also Here,” *New York Times*, September 1, 1946, 21.

Another of these arrival reports revealed some of the hostility towards war bride immigration, yet also sought to assure readers this hostility was unfounded. A *Washington Post* article, also from 1946, reported that, "...Lieut. Gen. J. Lawton Collins emphasized that return of wives and dependents will not interfere with shipment home of any soldiers."²⁷⁵ The article, which discussed the large number of (mostly British) war brides the military would begin transporting to the United States, emphasized it was able to do so because of available ship space. This inclusion, along with the assurances of Lt. Collins that, "No bride will be allowed passage if that means any eligible soldier loses his place on a ship,"²⁷⁶ was most likely in response to sometimes overt hostilities towards war brides and concerns that these women would prevent soldiers from a speedy return home. One letter to the *New York Times* editors in 1944, for example, revealed such attitudes. A reader questioned, "Why is this precious [shipping] space being used for Australian war brides when our men are waiting to be reunited with their families?"²⁷⁶ Finally, in addition to noting that war brides would not steal ship space from GIs, the picture that accompanied the article, emphasized how the shipment of war brides meant family reunions for GIs. The photo was of a Navy man and his war bride wife and two daughters, and the caption read, "Navy Family Reunited." Through this photograph and caption the newspaper

²⁷⁵ "'War Brides,' 56,000 Strong, Here by July," *The Washington Post*, January 5, 1946, 2.

²⁷⁶ Stella Gordon, "Letters to the Editor," *New York Times*, August 2, 1944, 14. Stella Gordon wrote this letter to the editor in response to an article that appeared earlier about 302 Australian war brides being shipped to the United States. Before posing the above question, she stated, "I would like to know the why of this, since there are so many service men awaiting furloughs, unable to be sent home for lack of shipping space."

insisted that the shipment of war brides and their children also reunited GIs with their families.²⁷⁷

Other articles seemed more specifically geared towards garnering acceptance for war brides. Early in 1946, for instance, reporter Elizabeth Valentine set out specifically to dispel myths or common stereotypes about British war brides that would eventually extend to all war brides. Having spent six weeks with war brides in England, Valentine considered herself to be “an expert on the matter and is prepared to demolish lock, stock, and barrel all unfavorable ideas on either side of the Atlantic.”²⁷⁸ Valentine outlined the common myths regarding war brides, in order of their prominence, and then attempted to demonstrate that each was not true. The first myth painted war brides as a money hungry woman, or as Valentine explained, “...the girls come from the poorest sort of homes in England...who have somehow cornered the less discriminating GI’s and married them before the boys knew what was happening.”²⁷⁹ Valentine countered this myth with the assertion that British war brides hailed from the respectable British working class and farmers. The second common stereotype imagined a war bride marrying a GI solely to gain entry to the United States. Valentine disregarded the assumption as, “purely a product of our American conceit.”²⁸⁰ She added that the British war bride was interested in the U.S. only because of her husband and otherwise would have no interest in immigrating. The final two misconceptions had to do with the nature of the marriages themselves:

²⁷⁷ This echoes the family reunion aspect of the legislation that historians such as Martha Gardner have discussed. See Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). See specifically pages 223-239.

²⁷⁸ Elizabeth Valentine, “The Girls They Didn’t Leave Behind,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1946, pages 16 and 48.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 16.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

that they were quick wartime and/or shotgun weddings and that they would end in divorce or desertion. To counter these misconceptions, Valentine noted that 90% of the British war brides knew their husbands for a greater period of time than many American girls who married during the war, reporting an average courtship of ten months. And although she did not cite any specific figures, Valentine believed the number of unwed mothers in Britain indicated, "...that very few men of any army were forced to marry at gun point."²⁸¹ As for the issue of divorce or desertion, Valentine quelled the fears of Americans by saying that the paperwork the military required GIs to complete ensured they requested shipment for their wives prior to departure from Great Britain, thereby ensuring the war bride would not be deserted in the U.S. She did not address the reality of many war brides being deserted in Great Britain because that was not the concern of Americans wary of war bride immigration, rather, they were concerned about unwanted war brides in the United States.²⁸² Valentine ended her piece with what drew war bride couples together, including the shared experience of war in the European theater.²⁸³

Valentine wrote her article explicitly to address the concerns that (at least some) Americans had about war bride immigration by outlining widely held stereotypes about these women and then offering her interpretation of the reality. Although written with the intention to gain war brides positive publicity, Valentine lost sight of these women and their concerns at times. In her attempts to ameliorate

²⁸¹ Ibid. Chapter Two verifies that GIs were not forced into shotgun weddings, in fact, quite the opposite was true. The military strongly discouraged marriage among GIs and foreign women. The reader, however, has no idea how Valentine arrived at the 90% number.

²⁸² Valentine, "The Girls They Didn't Leave Behind Them," 16 and 48. Cite Virden and Chapter 2 about the prevalence of desertion. Also note that Valentine did not provide much on the specifically on the issue of divorce except to say it would not happen.

²⁸³ Valentine, "The Girls They Didn't Leave Behind Them," 48.

American fears about the influx of new immigrant women, for example, Valentine disregarded the issue of unwed mothers and the problem desertion posed to British women. On the other hand, her article did address the two most common misconceptions about all war brides that had been (and would continue to be) attached to these women, regardless of whether they originated from Europe or Japan. One need look no further than the War Department and wartime military officials for one origin of the stereotype of the predatory and opportunistic war bride willing to use American GIs for their money and/or passage to the United States.²⁸⁴ And despite articles such as this one by Valentine, these popular misconceptions would often prevail in Hollywood films and American communities.

Other articles intended to enhance the public image of war brides may not have tackled the issue as methodically or as explicitly as Valentine, but they nonetheless publicized the positive attributes of these female immigrants, in turn also offering what they believed to be the most desirable qualities of native-born American women. Praising the motherly qualities of war brides, for example, columnist Malvina Lindsay insisted, “Your babies are bright faced and sturdy, and we know it has not been easy to keep them that way on your meager food rations. Hence, we realize that you are above all, good mothers.”²⁸⁵ In addition to prizing these women for their mothering skills, Lindsay alluded to their good-wifely nature by noting that these women followed their husbands to the U.S. despite the homesickness and loneliness involved with leaving their homeland. These two characteristics, which went hand in hand in the postwar promulgation of the domestic

²⁸⁴ See Chapter 1 for examples of how the military played up these stereotypes as legitimate concerns, although the INS never lent much credence to such misconceptions.

²⁸⁵ Malvina Lindsay, “The Gentler Sex,” February 6, 1946, 14.

ideal for women, painted war brides as an ideal female member of society, just as the films on war brides schools did.

Press coverage sometimes explicitly recognized the difficulties posed by interracial marriages among war brides and GIs. Another Lindsay piece revealed a much more complicated attitude towards war bride immigration because it addressed Japanese war bride immigration in particular. “Marriage Melting Pot” simultaneously problematized interracial marriage while praising Japanese war brides for reasons similar to those mentioned above. Lindsay characterized Japanese war brides and their assimilation as one of the “New melting pot problems” arriving in the postwar United States. She wrote, “Moreover, international marriages may be expected to keep on disturbing the American social scene as American soldiers and civilians increasingly roam the world.”²⁸⁶ Lindsay wrote this piece reflecting her concern with the dual trend of immigration and interracial marriage represented by Japanese war bride couples. Lindsay further noted the surprise these marriages were to Americans who had believed American GIs were, “merely having flirtations with the doll-like Japanese.”²⁸⁷ While clearly troubled by this trend, characterizing it as a problem to be solved (unlike her last piece on predominately British war brides), Lindsay also offered some positive attributes she believed these women to possess. She mentioned, for example, the willingness of Japanese war brides to take on the challenge of Americanization by attending war brides schools in Japan. Lindsay did not name the schools as such—she simply referred to classes Japanese war brides attended—but the message was clear. At these classes American women instructed

²⁸⁶ Malvina Lindsay, “Marriage Melting Pot,” *The Washington Post*, August 14, 1948, 4.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Japanese war brides how to be American women, a great deal of which involved how to be an American wife and mother. Lindsay noted these classes instructed Japanese war brides on American cooking and childcare, again emphasizing their roles as wives and mothers. As mentioned earlier, the belief in war brides' assimilability, as well as their willingness to assimilate, revealed in part through their attending schools, was important to the public image of war brides as desirable immigrants.

Some articles on war brides in the national press devoted their attention solely to the war brides schools. As discussed above, part of the significance of these schools lay not just in the schools themselves, which may have prepared war brides for various aspects of American life, but the attention these schools received. The articles that covered war brides schools intended to show the assimilability of war brides to their American roles as wives and mothers. In turn, their desirability as immigrants was reinforced. An article from *The Washington Post* in 1951 reported, "More than 300 Japanese war brides are being taught the famed 'American way of life'—from icebox to in-laws under a special schooling program recently inaugurated by the Red Cross in Japan."²⁸⁸ The war brides schools covered a number of topics, but this article emphasized the domestic arts and beauty culture being transmitted to Japanese war brides, as evidenced by the title, "Japanese War Brides Learn American Cooking." Furthermore, the article relayed the goal of the course as, "...to teach the oriental women how to dress, cook, and live the American way."²⁸⁹

An article that appeared in the *New York Times* three years later, "G.I. Brides Go to School In Japan," also emphasized the domestic lessons taught to Japanese war

²⁸⁸ Dorothea Cruger, "Japanese War Brides Learn American Cooking," *The Washington Post*, July 10, 1951, B3.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

brides at these schools.²⁹⁰ The subtitle read, “Red Cross teachers prepare them for home-making in U.S.”²⁹¹ As with the previous article, then, the reader did not have to read the text of the article to discern what Japanese war brides were being taught at these schools. If the reader continued, however, the message of Japanese war brides as eager to learn how to be good American housewives would have been further emphasized. This article explained the purpose of the schools was, “...to teach young Japanese girls how to make happy homes for their American husbands upon the couples’ return to the United States.”²⁹² To drive this point home, the article described Japanese war brides learning to make western foods to expand their repertoire of recipes in order to keep their husbands happy and included a picture of one woman learning to make one of the most quintessential American dishes—pie. Another picture featured a Japanese war bride being instructed on childcare. And just as shown in the films documenting war brides schools, the article revealed how consumer goods went hand in hand with American homemaking: “To many it was their introduction to toasters, stoves, iceboxes and Mixmasters.”²⁹³ At the same time, the course also wanted to impart a realistic and budget-minded version of domestic life in America, or what the article characterized as “...a Sears, Roebuck norm of existence rather than the Vogue pattern.”²⁹⁴ Finally, the article emphasized the eagerness of Japanese war brides to learn how to be an American housewife by using quotes from the war brides themselves. Kazueko Campbell, for example, explained

²⁹⁰ Ray Falk, “G.I. Brides Go to School in Japan,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1954, SM 54.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, SM 57.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, SM 56. It appears the schools made assumptions about the class of GI/war bride couples and proceeded to instruct the women accordingly. It is also possible the article emphasized this point to situate the war brides in the lower middle and working class to make them seem less threatening.

how she, like other Japanese war brides, was attending the school for the second time because the previous courses had helped her learn to cook American foods for her husband. These articles, then, portrayed Japanese war brides as so willing to assimilate that they eagerly sought a jump start on learning American ways before ever stepping foot on U.S. soil.

This trend of Japanese war brides attending schools to learn white American culture certainly received positive press in the United States and earned Japanese war brides praise from white Americans. Japanese officials also had positive things to say about the war brides schools in their country. The article explained, “The lessons give the girls the confidence and training they need to make their marriage successful. Japanese officials have credited the course with contributing to the viability of these interracial marriages.”²⁹⁵ The article did not cite a specific official or source so the import of this inclusion in the article remains difficult to evaluate. However, it does seem that Japanese officials rested the responsibility of the success of GI/war bride marriage squarely on the war bride’s shoulders.

American private enterprises proved eager to assimilate war brides as well. In October of 1946, for example, the *New York Times* ran an article announcing a series of lectures to be run by Macy’s [Department Store] home center for “ex-GI war brides from foreign lands who are stumped when their husbands call for Waldorf salad or Parker House rolls...”²⁹⁶ The ‘school’ would consist of a series of two hour demonstrations and lectures given by cookbook authors and home economists every Saturday morning for about two months. According to the article, topics to be

²⁹⁵ Ibid, SM54.

²⁹⁶ “News of Food: some Items on the Bountiful Potato Crop, and News About a ‘School’ for GI Brides,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1946, 31.

covered included baking, cooking, and table setting. Notably, although this course was intended for war brides, others were invited to attend, providing there was space available in the class. Just like the Red Cross brides schools that translated themselves to brides schools for American women in the United States, Macys was just as willing to assist native American women with the domestic arts. These articles did not extol the virtues of Americanization and the willingness of war brides to convert to American ways as overtly as the previous articles covering war brides schools: they simply announced the existence of such schools. Yet the prevalence of such articles reveals the demand among war brides for these schools and publicity emphasizing this demand for them underscored the war bride's willingness to assimilate.

A new type of article covering war bride immigration began to appear in the early to mid-1950s. *The Washington Post* pioneered the personal profile article, which chronicled the experience of one specific war bride and her husband at a time.²⁹⁷ These articles stood as a marked departure from earlier brief articles and also in the way they humanized war bride marriages and immigration. These articles touched on many aspects of the war bride experience, typically relaying the history of the war bride couple—from how they met in Japan through their early life in the United States. One personal profile, “I Dared to Take a Japanese Bride,” was particularly revealing, as it was written by the white GI husband, Don Tennyson.²⁹⁸ Tennyson first described his concerns about marrying his wife, Masa Soto, because

²⁹⁷ The personal profile article was the least frequent type of article in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. It is unclear why such articles began to surface at this time. Their presence may be linked to the increased presence of war brides in the United States by the early to mid-1950s.

²⁹⁸ Don Tennyson (as told to Lloyd Shearer), “I Dared to Take a Japanese Bride,” *The Washington Post*, August 8, 1954, TA6).

he knew they would potentially face hardships from his family, friends, the military, and his home state of California. He continued by explaining that the love the two had for each other, "...conquered all my doubts." The two married, even despite a warning from Masa's sister, a Japanese war bride living with her Japanese American husband in California. Tennyson recounted the multiple ceremonies and red tape necessary to make their marriage legal and to make it possible for Masa to immigrate to the United States.²⁹⁹ Tennyson's emotion-filled description of these events drew the reader in, making war bride marriage personal in a way that earlier coverage of war bride marriage and immigration did not. Tennyson wrote, for example, "Whenever someone asks me how it feels being married to a Japanese girl, I tell them, it's like being married to any other girl you love."³⁰⁰ Tennyson's seemingly simplistic statement, along with the earlier details of his war-time romance, attempted to make the important point to the reader—he and his wife were just like everybody else in love, and their marriage was just like anyone else's.

Another personal profile focused on a Japanese war bride, Sayoko Kawamoto, married to a Japanese American man. It highlighted the war bride's professional skills rather than the personal history of the couple, although the details of the marriage were also included. It explained how Kawamoto, a housewife and mother of four, was contracted by the State Department to transcribe documents into Japanese since they possessed no Japanese character machine.³⁰¹ Although the article differed in style from Tennyson's very personal piece, it still provided details of the

²⁹⁹ Their story is not unlike the one captured on film in *I Was a Male War Bride*, which will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Katharine Elson, "She's Successful Substitute for Typewriter," *The Washington Post*, February 10, 1956, 61.

war bride couple's life, such as how they met and particulars about their jobs and children. This couple, just as the previous one, became humanized and familiar for the reader then. Additionally, Mrs. Kawamoto's ability to Americanize was also emphasized in this piece. In explaining why the Japanese war bride liked Washington, the article said, "Mrs. K likes Washington better than the West because she has learned more American customs here—they had too many Japanese friends in California."³⁰² Less the reader think that Kawamoto's marriage to a Japanese American man failed to assimilate her in the same way a marriage to a Caucasian GI might have, Kawamoto was portrayed as another Japanese war bride willing and eager to assimilate and adopt American ways. To reinforce the point, the writer stated, "Although she serves rice with every meal in place of potatoes, she finds the family food style is becoming more and more Americanized."³⁰³ As the next chapter will discuss, Japanese war brides married to Japanese American and Caucasian GIs did not assimilate so quickly and completely as their coverage in the press would have Americans believe. Yet such coverage remains important in understanding how these new immigrant women were perceived by the American public and contributed to their acceptability.³⁰⁴

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Notably, even the Asian American press emphasized the assimilability of Japanese war brides. Shirley Jennifer Lim discussed how such articles appeared in *Scene*, a popular Asian American magazine in order to quell fears that Asian war brides would be unable to assimilate. See Shirley Jennifer Lim, *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women's Public Culture, 1930-1960* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

Most of the West coast newspaper coverage of war brides echoed that of the East coast newspapers.³⁰⁵ For instance, the *Los Angeles Times* emphasized the war bride's role as housewife and mother, as well as her willingness to Americanize. One unique story alluded to the possibility that new Japanese war brides may not be entirely welcome in California. The newspaper reported that one Japanese war bride, Nobuko Coronel, became nervous about moving to the United States when she read a letter from her new uncle-in-law that disapproved of the marriage. Mr. Coronel responded by writing a letter to his local community of Alhambra, northeast of Los Angeles, via the *Alhambra Post-Advocate*. He stated, "I love my wife and baby more than anything in the world and I'd give up my American citizenship before I'd give up my wife and baby."³⁰⁶ The people of Alhambra responded back with overwhelming support by sending the war bride welcome letters while she was still in Japan. The *Los Angeles Times* also reported Mrs. Coronel received a warm welcome from her new in-law family, as well as Alhambrans, when she arrived in the town in May of 1952.³⁰⁷ The potential difficulty of a Japanese war bride settling in California hinted at a contentious past and present between white Californians and recently interned Japanese Americans. Newspaper reporting quickly squashed any uneasiness a reader may have felt, however, when the *Los Angeles Times* assured its readers that this Japanese war bride received a warm welcome from this local California community. Yet even by reporting on the story, the *Los Angeles Times* indicated a

³⁰⁵ For example, see "Jap Brides of Americans Keen to Learn U.S. Habits," *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1947, B4. See also the six part series on war brides in the United States in the *Los Angeles Times* from June 1955 mentioned below.

³⁰⁶ "'Madame Butterfly' Fear Dispelled By Oriental War Bride's Welcome," *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 1952, 23.

³⁰⁷ Ibid. See also "Alhambrans Turn Out For War Bride," *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 1952, 2.

local dynamic that differed from that on the East coast and acknowledged problems the other newspapers did not.

Popular magazine treatment of the subject of Japanese and European war brides bore a striking similarity to newspaper coverage.³⁰⁸ It also revealed how consistent the reporting on war brides was into the mid-1950s. In the Summer of 1955, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Ladies Home Journal* comparably covered the war bride experience in the United States by looking at the lives of war brides from Japan and several European countries. The pictures accompanying each of the articles in the six-part *Los Angeles Times* series showed each war bride happy at home with their respective children.³⁰⁹ The pictures encapsulated the message reported in each article: war brides were happy to be in the United States, and they were reportedly satisfied fulfilling the role of housewife and mother the media and war brides schools had predetermined for them. The *Ladies Home Journal* article emphasized the same themes of Americanization and housewifery.³¹⁰ The only difference between this ten-year look back article and earlier war bride coverage in the popular press was that the war brides of these stories seemed to have adapted to life in the United States, just as earlier newspaper and magazine articles predicted they would. Notably, both the *Los*

³⁰⁸ Popular magazines from the *Saturday Evening Post* to *The Christian Century* emphasized war brides schools and the assimilability of war brides into American society via their roles as wives and mothers. For example, see "Hold Classes for Japanese Brides: Protestant Women's Association Seeks to Prepare the Wives of U.S. Service Men for New Life," *The Christian Century*, May 19, 1948, 488-490 and William L. Worden, "Where Are Those Japanese Brides?" *The Saturday Evening Post*, November 20, 1954, 38-9 and 133-34.

³⁰⁹ Bob Will, "Australians, Yank Alike, Bride Finds," *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1955, 22; Bob Will, "Dancer War Bride Was In Hitler Labor Battalion," *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 1955, 32; Bob Will, "French War Bride Finds Language Isn't Barrier," *Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 1955, 27; Bob Will, "Homesick for Mississippi, Says Japanese War Bride," *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1955, 12; Bob Will, "Southland Living Is Tops, British War Bride Finds," *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1955, 13; and Bob Will, "War Brides Writing New Chapter in U.S. History," *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1955, 3.

³¹⁰ Vanna Phillips, "War Brides Ten Years Later: Five Overseas War Brides Speak Their Minds After Ten Years of Marriage to American Husbands," *Ladies Home Journal*, July 1955, 103-08.

Angeles Times and *Ladies Home Journal* reported no difference in the war bride experience, whether the women were from Western Europe, Australia, or Japan. The *Ladies Home Journal* piece surmised, “all New World homemakers...have readily adopted a new way of life...”³¹¹ As the 1950s progressed, some media outlets remained committed to purporting the role of housewife and mother for American women, just as they had in the immediate postwar years. War brides seemed to perfectly exemplify this ideal and became inextricably linked to it in popular magazines and newspapers.³¹²

The African American press did not deviate entirely from the narrative offered in the mainstream white press. Newspapers such as the *Philadelphia Tribune* and *The Chicago Defender* also emphasized the notion of the war bride as a devoted housewife and mother happy to be in the United States. The *Philadelphia Tribune*, for example, reported on Japanese war bride Shige Dunmore who was enjoying her new life in America and adapting to it well. “I am very happy to come here because people are so wonderful. It has not been hard to get used to the customs.”³¹³ Other articles in both newspapers highlighted the characterization of Japanese war brides as good wives and mothers.³¹⁴ Such positive coverage alluded to an openness to war brides and interracial marriage by the African American press.³¹⁵

³¹¹ Ibid, 103.

³¹² The escalation of the Cold War over the course of the decade may have only heightened the commitment of some Americans to the gender ideal of women in the home. As Elaine Tyler May explained, suburban homes filled with consumer goods and a “full-time female homemaker” and headed by a breadwinning husband came to represent American superiority over Soviet communism that made its de-sexualized women work outside the home, just as a man. The “kitchen debate” between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev famously captured this comparison in 1959. See May, *Homeward Bound*, 16-20.

³¹³ “Honor Ex-Serviceman and Japanese Bride,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 29, 1953, 29.

³¹⁴ For more examples of how the African American press also emphasized the notion of a war bride as a devoted housewife and mother, see “Ex-Tar Brings Wife From Far-Off Japan,” *Philadelphia*

In addition to reporting that mirrored the predominant narrative surrounding war brides presented in the white press, African American newspapers also presented a slightly more nuanced message about Japanese war brides in the United States when compared to the mainstream white newspapers. For instance, the *Philadelphia Tribune* did not extol the virtues of war brides schools, as other newspapers and national magazines did. One contributor to the newspaper problematized the notion that war brides schools prepared these women for American life. “They are being prepared by schools in Japan to participate in American life. But, aside from learning how to wear American clothes and to cook food to satisfy the appetites of their husbands, they will be faced with American prejudice.”³¹⁶ In the same vein, *The Chicago Defender* reported the problems a number of Japanese war bride couples experienced in some southern states due to miscegenation laws.³¹⁷ One article concluded that the miscegenation laws negatively affected white GIs married to Japanese war brides, just as they did African American GIs: “The situation is regarded as a ‘boomerang’ wherein laws created to ‘keep Negroes in their place’ are indirectly shackling unfortunate veterans whose ancestors perhaps had a hand in

Tribune, September 26, 1953, 1-2 and L. Alex Wilson, “400 To Wed Tokyo Girls,” *The Chicago Defender*, November 4, 1950, 1.

³¹⁵ For a more detailed analysis of why some African American press was receptive to the idea of interracial marriage in the postwar era see Romano, *Race Mixing*, 91-2. Romano argued that some African Americans saw interracial marriage as a step towards racial equality, and the topic was covered accordingly by the press.

³¹⁶ “Japanese Invasion,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 19, 1952, 4.

³¹⁷ “Miss. Segregation Laws Hit Oriental War Brides,” *The Chicago Defender*, May 31, 1952, 1 and “White-Asian Marriages Giving South Headaches,” *The Chicago Defender*, April 30, 1955, 4. The issue discussed in these articles, Japanese war bride couples dealing with miscegenation laws in some southern states, reveals the type of legalized racism Japanese war brides encountered in the United States. This is in contrast to the concept of racial coopture that will be discussed in the next chapter. That concept will be used to characterize the interpersonal relationships between some Japanese war brides and white Americans.

making them.”³¹⁸ In this instance, *The Chicago Defender* was reporting that miscegenation laws were discriminatory to the war brides and their husbands (regardless of his race), but they did not report on war brides’ experiences with any specificity or their thoughts on the laws. The inclusion of such opinions and reports were indicative of the African American community’s consistent critique of the American racial hierarchy in the postwar era, as well as skepticism about how Japanese war brides married to GIs would fit into that hierarchy.

War Brides on the Silver Screen

In the late 1940s and 1950s Hollywood produced a small number of movies about war brides. Though few in number (perhaps especially in comparison to the large number of movies about World War II), the movies dealing with various aspects of war bride marriage and immigration remain significant. Movies such as *I Was a Male War Bride* and *Sayonara* featured some of the biggest stars of the era, as Cary Grant starred in the former and Marlon Brando in the latter.³¹⁹ These two movies in particular were also highly successful: *I Was a Male War Bride* was the third highest grossing film of 1949 and *Sayonara* was an Academy Award winner. The film netted four Academy Awards and was nominated for six more. The mere existence of *Sayonara* and a lesser known movie titled *Japanese War Bride* are particularly significant when one considers the general dearth of representation of Japanese

³¹⁸ “Miss. Segregation Laws Hit Oriental War Brides,” 1.

³¹⁹ Sol C. Siegel, producer, *I Was a Male War Bride*, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corp., 1949 and William Goetz, producer, *Sayonara*, Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc., 1957.

Americans in American Film.³²⁰ Taken together, these movies, along with *The Big Lift*, highlight various aspects of the war bride experience, and in some cases, they contributed to the popular acceptance of war brides.³²¹ Not all war brides received a sympathetic treatment on film, however. Hollywood painted Japanese war brides in a far more favorable light than German war brides, for example.

On the surface *I Was a Male War Bride* seems like any other Cary Grant movie from the period. As in earlier films, he was in this one the debonair romantic male lead imbued with charm and a sharp sense of humor. He was matched quip for quip with his equally adept female lead, Ann Sheridan, as the two imparted the same type of witty, contentious, and ultimately irresistible on-screen relationship that Grant had shared with his other female leads. The fact the film took place in postwar Germany and that Grant and Sheridan's characters were members of the French and American military, respectively, may have made little difference to movie fans in the late 1940s. The postwar location and wartime romance in the film, which ultimately rendered Grant the male war bride referred to in the title, can be viewed as more than plot devices or occasions for hilarity, however. Upon close inspection, *I Was a Male War Bride* offered an interesting look at a significant aspect of the war bride legislation passed in the postwar era—the fact that the legislation applied equally to male and female members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Although not nearly as

³²⁰ Elena Tajima Creef, *Imaging Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and the Body* (New York: New York University Press, 2004). See Chapter 3 for Creef's discussion of Japanese Americans and the representation of their experiences during World War II in mainstream American film from World War II to the present. Creef explained that although there are numerous Hollywood films about World War II, only five deal with Japanese American internment. Given this context, two films about Japanese war brides in the 1950s is a fairly significant number. Joseph Bernhard, producer, *Japanese War Bride*, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corp., 1952.

³²¹ *Sayonara* was probably the most successful in this regard of all the war bride films, as scholars such as Caroline Simpson Chung have argued. See Chung Simpson, "'Out of an obscure place.'" Darryl F. Zanuck, producer, *The Big Lift*, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corp., 1950.

significant in numbers as war bride immigration, war husband immigration was made possible by the gender equality written into the laws Congress passed on behalf of war bride couples. The film exposed this reality and was in fact based on the real life story of Belgian Henri Rochard and his wife. In addition to relaying the story of a male war bride through a comedic vehicle, the film offered a surprisingly accurate portrayal of the often difficult and frustrating process of migrating to the United States as a war spouse in the postwar era.

When the audience first met the characters of Captain Henri Rochard, played by Grant, and WAC Catherine Gates, played by Sheridan, it was clear the two had the type of witty rapport and surface dislike of each other that could only turn into romance in the movies. Stationed in postwar Heidelberg, the two had worked successfully on military missions together and, much to their chagrin, were slated to do so again. From the outset, conventional gender roles were inverted. When there were no cars available, Rochard and Gates must travel to their mission destination via motorcycle and sidecar. Only Gates was cleared to drive such a vehicle so future male war bride Rochard grudgingly sat in the sidecar as Gates “manned” the vehicle. It was also clear that Gates was very good at her job and quick on her feet, all the while looking as glamorous and beautiful as any other Hollywood actress from the era. When the pair encountered a closed road on their journey, it was Gates who came up with the idea to travel via river until they could get around the roadblock. And when their boat went nearly over a waterfall, Gates and Rochard were equally responsible for saving their vessel and their lives. Gates was certainly no damsel in distress. Yet, at the same time, the character retained the femininity and glamour

consistent with the look of a 1940s starlet. Finally, although Rochard attempted to complete the mission without Gates' assistance, she was the one who came up with the big save in the end. Rochard managed to get himself arrested while Gates found the man they were looking for. On the trip back, the two finally admitted their feelings for each other and shared a kiss.

When the couple returned to base, they immediately went to Gates' boss to tell her of their plans to marry, and at this point the audience was introduced to the red tape that war bride couples encountered in the marriage and immigration process. The movie offered a fairly accurate portrayal of those difficulties. When Gates told her boss the news, she congratulated the couple but informed them that all marriages between foreign aliens and American military personnel must be approved by the Commanding General. She gave them a pile of forms to complete in quadruplicate. When Henri was unsure about the procedure and paperwork, Catherine assured him that it was only red tape and that everything would be fine. The next scene found the couple burning the midnight oil to fill out all the paperwork and a frustrated Henri wondering why the process was so grueling. Catherine responded that it was the Army's way of determining whether or not a couple really wanted to marry.

All their hard work appeared to pay off as the paperwork got a stamp of approval—literally—the film showed a sequence of scenes in which their hefty pack of papers bounced from office to office getting stamped and signed. After a week, Catherine and Henri had not received word about the approval of their marriage, however, and Catherine asked her boss where the papers were. She said they were most likely bogged down somewhere and that she would look into it. Meanwhile,

Catherine and Henri were both nervous that the paperwork would not go through, leading to a fight in the cafeteria that Catherine's friends witness. Prior to the fight and Catherine's arrival in the cafeteria, her friends posed a question that many Americans may have asked about war bride couples: "I can't understand an American marrying a foreigner she hardly knows." Though the male acquaintance of Catherine poses the question mostly out of jealousy, it was a common question or critique of war bride couples. It ultimately turned out that this man was the one holding up Catherine and Henri's paperwork. Catherine was furious, but this also led to the speedy resolution of the couple's first problem with the marriage/immigration process. After only a week, their paperwork cleared and the couple was free to marry. Many war bride couples experienced problems with paperwork and delays that lasted far longer than a week.³²²

The next step in the marriage process involved a meeting with the Army Chaplain, and the audience found the couple trying to figure out where to marry. The Army Chaplain explained that the couple would need multiple marriages according to German law, which required a civil service before a church marriage. Once again, Henri was flustered by all the rules while Catherine maintained a level head. Significantly, the Army Chaplain was very helpful and supportive, not always the case in real life.³²³ Ultimately the couple had three marriage ceremonies: a civil service in their German town, a religious ceremony with the Army Chaplain, and a final service in Henri's church in France. Multiple marriage ceremonies were not

³²² See Chapter 2 for examples of RASRL war brides' problems with getting paperwork processed for permission to marry.

³²³ See Chapter 2 for examples of war bride couples that experienced difficulties with Army Chaplains on the road to marriage.

uncommon for war bride couples who were often required to perform civil and religious ceremonies to make the marriage legal.³²⁴ Although included for comedic effect, the film achieved verisimilitude in addition to laughs with the three marriage ceremonies.

Despite the three ceremonies and the successful completion of the marriage process, the couple did not get a romantic wedding night because it was interrupted by Gates being ordered immediately back to Heidelberg and then the United States. Beyond not having a honeymoon, the real problem was getting Henri's paperwork completed in order so he could accompany Catherine to the United States. They visited the U.S. consulate to find Henri was not eligible for a business or permanent visa and that the French quota was filled for the current and next year. With no other options, the consulate suggested using the War Brides Act, or as he explained, "that's the one regulating the immigration of war brides." A confused Henri replied that Catherine was not the one who needed the law, but the consulate worker accurately explained the reality of the law and that Henri could use it because, "It says spouses, doesn't mention sex." Catherine and the consulate worker believed the law would work for Henri, who remained skeptical, especially as he looked at the new round of paperwork obviously intended for an American military husband to fill out for his foreign war bride. The consulate worker suggested Henri make adjustments and fill out the paperwork and give it to the immigration officer. Catherine insisted it would be simple as well, but Henri countered, "On the contrary, the process of turning a man to a woman is enormously complicated."

³²⁴ As revealed in Chapter 2, the rules surrounding marriage ceremonies were often confusing to war bride couples and varied according to country and American directives surrounding marriage between military personnel and civilians.

Despite the jokes, Henri's experience highlighted that although Congress passed the war brides and fiancée acts to include war grooms, the occurrence was so rare that the paperwork and process were constructed entirely for war brides. As Henri moved through the immigration process, this fact was reinforced with each step as the couple faced problems that escalated in seriousness, while the film simultaneously amped the comedy in tandem with the problems. On the night Catherine was set to leave for the U.S., the couple were waiting for Henri's paperwork to clear. While Catherine remained optimistic that Henri's paperwork would be approved, Henri remained skeptical and said, "You'll go and I'll sit here wondering which sex I am." Of course Henri's paperwork arrived in time, and he was approved to accompany Catherine to the U.S. as a war bride. The letter was addressed "Dear Madam," however, which foreshadowed problems to come, and there was yet another form for Henri to fill out. This form pertained to health and again was clearly intended for a female, as it asked questions about pregnancy. When Henri attempted to find an alternate form for males there was none, and he sarcastically answered the questions without missing a beat: "Women's trouble? Nothing but. Children before? Oh my aching back!" For Henri the situation ceased to be funny when he had no place to sleep the night before departure because he was not a female dependent or a male member of the U.S. Army and was forced to wander from building to building looking for a bed.

Besides not being able to find a place to sleep, Henri's legal but unusual status as a war groom caused many misunderstandings en route to the United States. At the first staging area where (mostly) war brides were waiting to travel from Heidelberg to

Bremerhaven, an official was confused when he encountered Henri and his paperwork because he could not believe that Henri was “Mrs.” Rochard. Henri calmly explained the situation by using the official wording: he was the alien spouse of a female member of the military, rather than a war bride. The man admitted he was “slightly confused” and cleared Henri for transport. The real confusion ensued the next day when Catherine and Henri attempted to board the ship bound for the United States. The couple cleared the first checkpoint after Henri was able to calm down and explain his war groom status, but he lost his temper at the second checkpoint on board the ship and was kicked off. This led to the comedic caper of the movie when Catherine came up with the clever solution to give the checkpoint officials what they wanted—a war bride—and she dressed Henri as a woman in a friend’s clothes and a horse-hair wig. Catherine then convinced the same checkpoint officials that Henri was indeed a war bride of a fictitious military official, and Henri was allowed on board. The lengths that Henri and Catherine had to go to get Henri on board the ship—literally turning him into a war bride—offered the audience cross-dressing hilarity, but also underscored how unusual the status of war groom was. Despite explanation, the checkpoint officials could not comprehend the reality of the situation. Rather, a man masquerading as a war bride was the more believable scenario. Later, once on board, Henri’s true identity was discovered and he was briefly detained. A quick resolution followed, however, as Catherine explained the situation to the Commander and chaplain off screen. The men offered Henri an apology about the whole situation, which they characterized as, “a little unusual.” The couple then sailed off into the sunset—literally.

Although the ending was pure Hollywood, *I Was a Male War Bride* nonetheless offered a rather accurate portrayal of the types of problems war bride couples experienced in addition to drawing attention to a significant aspect of war bride legislation. The comedic hijinx were no more over the top than the melodrama in *Sayonara*. The realism of staging areas, paperwork, and details such as war brides (or husbands) being separated from their military spouses during the journey, all contributed to the realistic portrayal the film lent the war bride marriage and immigration process. The film also may have won war brides and grooms sympathy from the audience who would have had a better understanding of the laborious process involved in immigrating to the United States as a spouse of a member of the Armed Forces.

The most critically successful and popular of all the films portraying war time romances and war bride couples was 1957's Oscar-winning *Sayonara* based on the novel of the same name by James Michener. The film centered around two war bride couples: the first was Marlon Brando's Air Force hot shot, Ace Gruber, and Hani-Ogi, played by American-born Miiko Taka, as Japan's most famous performer. The less flashy but ultimately more dramatic and tragic couple, Airman Joe Kelly and Katsumi, was played by Oscar-winning duo, Red Buttons and Miyoshi Umeki respectively. This lavish Technicolor piece garnered both audience sympathies and critical acclaim. Historian Shirley Jennifer Lim described *Sayonara* as one of the best attended films of the year, as well as Marlon Brando's biggest box office hit until *The Godfather* in 1971.³²⁵ Among the four Oscars the movie won, Umeki's Oscar for

³²⁵ Ibid, 166.

best actress in a supporting role was the first Oscar to go to a woman of Asian descent.³²⁶

In subsequent years, *Sayonara* has also been the subject of much scholarly discussion. Caroline Chung Simpson argued the transition from novel to film for *Sayonara* represented a shift in American attitudes towards Japanese War bride couples.³²⁷ The main couple, Ace and Hani-Ogi, did not end up together in the novel version of *Sayonara*, thus, the title referred to the two having to part ways and Ace sadly saying goodbye to Japan. As Chung Simpson assessed, “The novel varies little from the typical depiction of war marriages as tragic encounters, which could not be sustained if the national domestic order was to be reproduced.”³²⁸ A few years later in the cinematic version, however, the couple met a happy ending, lending the title a completely different meaning. Ace bids American critics “Sayonara” when announcing his engagement to Hani-Ogi. Chung Simpson believed this different ending signaled, “Interracial marriages between white American men and Japanese women seem not only nobler in 1957, but they also seem destined to succeed.”³²⁹ Chung Simpson argued the change in the end of the Ace/Hani-Ogi romance represented a shift in American attitudes towards Japanese war bride couples.

Other scholars, such as Shirley Jennifer Lim, showed that *Sayonara* was part of a larger wave of America’s fascination with Asian culture in the 1950s, as well as

³²⁶ Lim, *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women’s Public Culture, 1930-1960*, 164.

³²⁷ Caroline Chung Simpson, “‘Out of an obscure place’: Japanese War Brides and Cultural Pluralism in the 1950s,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10.3 (1998), 47-81. A version of this article later appeared as a chapter in Simpson’s book. See also Caroline Chung Simpson, *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2001).

³²⁸ *Ibid*, 67.

³²⁹ *Ibid*, 68.

the prominence of international female Asian stars.³³⁰ Similar to Chung Simpson, Lim argued that, “Anxieties around racial integration within the United States and American imperialism in Asia were alleviated through mainstream media’s integration of these foreign born women of Asian descent.”³³¹ Lim believed that while this may have helped “normalize” Japanese war bride immigration, it may have had the opposite effect on the existing Asian American community in the United States by obfuscating their existence. As Lim wrote, “Asians became racialized as newly arrived female foreigners.”³³² Despite the ways *Sayonara* may have contributed to this problematic image of what constituted an Asian American, the film did depict a successful interracial marriage through the couple of Kelly and Katsumi, which as Lim pointed out, was the first time an Oscar winning film did so.³³³

In addition to the larger message and themes of *Sayonara*, the significance of the film lay in its portrayal of Japanese war bride relationships and potential immigration. Kelly and Katsumi loved each other and married despite opposition from the U.S. military. Even Kelly’s friend and military superior Ace did not understand why he would want to marry a Japanese woman at the opening of the film. Later, when Ace took a romantic interest in Hani-ogi, he was able to understand Kelly. The film achieved verisimilitude when the couple was then forced to live off-base because the military would not allow them to live together in Army housing.³³⁴

³³⁰ Shirley Jennifer Lim, *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women’s Public Culture, 1930-1960* (2006).

³³¹ Ibid, 155.

³³² Ibid, 156.

³³³ Ibid, 165.

³³⁴ In the personal profile piece written by Japanese war bride husband Don Tennyson for *The Washington Post* (and described in the previous section of this chapter), Tennyson described how he

And as in *I Was a Male War Bride*, the complex rules surrounding war bride marriage and immigration were captured on film, albeit in a much more serious way. Unlike the hilarious and happy ending for Catherine and Henri, Kelly and Katsumi were not so lucky. The couple committed suicide in order to be together when the military ordered Kelly back to the United States and he could not bring a pregnant Katsumi with him. Japanese war brides were not covered under early war bride legislation. They only benefited from the opportunity war bride immigration provided when temporary public laws were passed on their behalf. The melodramatic yet realistic twist came next: Ace and the audience found out such a law was being passed in a couple months to allow Japanese war brides to accompany their husbands back to the United States shortly after Kelly and Katsumi committed suicide. The film relayed the complexity Japanese war bride couples faced in terms of military opposition to their unions and the even more strict laws governing their immigration to the United States before the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952.

The tragic ending for Kelly and Katsumi was tempered by the happy one for Ace and Hani-ogi and *Sayonara* thus ended on an optimistic note. This optimistic ending reflected the changes in U.S. immigration law. With the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952, broader Japanese immigration was legal (on a quota basis) for the first time since 1924, which meant war brides would not be the only immigrants from Japan. These legal revisions made it much easier for the movie version of *Sayonara* to have a happy ending for the glamorous couple, while simultaneously upping the tragedy of the other couple who fell victim to cruel U.S.

lived off base with his Japanese wife, just as Kelly did in the film. See Tennyson, "I Dared to Take a Japanese Bride," 19.

immigration policy. After all, the policy had been amended and thus the tragic ending that met Kelly and Katsumi would not befall other couples. The dramatic storyline of the secondary couple contained an implicit critique of *former* US immigration policy. Since the policy had changed, *Sayonara* was able to maintain the drama of the Kelly/Katsumi coupling and the happy end for the other couple, while at the same time relaying the triumph of American's progression in attitudes and laws towards race and immigration.

The far less known Hollywood film, *Japanese War Bride*, which premiered in 1952—the same year the McCarran-Walter Act passed, tackled a side of the war bride experience that none of the other films were willing to: the war bride experience once in America. The movie, though dramatic and not un-soap opera like, took a fairly nuanced approach to difficult issues such as in-law relationships and community-wide acceptance of war bride couples. While it would have been easy to dilute or oversimplify these issues to a black and white case of right versus wrong, the film did not do so.

The main characters of the film, Tae Shimizu, played by Japanese actress Shirley Yamaguchi, and Jim Sterling, played by Don Taylor, fell in love in Japan under the classic paradigm of the nurse caring for an injured soldier. Yet the audience almost as quickly got an inkling of the bumpy road that lay ahead for the hopelessly in love couple when Jim went to Tae's home to ask her grandfather's permission to marry. The audience was practically hit over the head with the differences when the tall Lt. Sterling bumped his head on the low doors of the home and could not get up from dining on the floor. The cultural divide between the lovers

was obvious, as was their commitment to building a life together in the United States. The grandfather reluctantly granted the couple his blessing when he saw their love and determination.

When Jim and Tae arrived at his family farm and home town in northern California, the real problems began. Tae received a warm welcome from some of her new family members, such as her brothers-in-law, but other members treated Tae with aloofness (the mother) and disdain (the sister-in-law, Fran). Even when Tae won over her mother-in-law with a back healing massage, the woman remained unsure of Tae and her motives because of the negative reaction from her neighbors and friends. It was this range of reception that lent the movie credibility and also earned it kudos from the *New York Times* at the time of release: “The coolness and, later, open resentment of some of the family is however, not presented flamboyantly. Credit the producers with indicating that hostility is not a hard and fast rule.”³³⁵

The Japanese American community was also represented in this film via the Hasagawa family, neighbors of the Sterling family. The Hasagawas welcomed Tae, and she got along well with Shiro and Emma, who were Nisei generation brother and sister, as well as their Issei father, Mr. Hasagawa.³³⁶ The Hasagawas took a liking to Tae and brought her and Jim a wedding present one evening after the Sterling family had just enjoyed a dinner prepared by Tae.³³⁷ This scene revealed the awkward neighborly relationship between the Sterlings and Hasagawas (Jim had earlier

³³⁵ A.W., “Story of a ‘Japanese War Bride,’” *New York Times*, January 30, 1952, 22. The overall review of the film was mixed. Although it felt the movie dealt with timely issues and praised the actors’ performances, it felt the plot was too predictable and easily resolved.

³³⁶ The film takes for granted the fact that Tae would automatically get along with member of the Japanese American community. For Japanese war brides in the RASRL study, their relationship with the Japanese American community was often nonexistent or quite contentious. See Chapter 5.

³³⁷ This scene is interesting in that it relates to the dinner table as cultural borderland discussion in Chapter 4.

explained to Tae they were not friends exactly) and also reinforced how hard it was for Tae to fit into her new family. Mr. Hasagawa refused to leave the truck so Shiro and Emma left with their father rather than joining the Sterlings for tea. The Sterlings, especially Jim's mother and sister-in-law, were offended by this behavior. Fran believed Mr. Hasagawa had no reason to be bitter, despite how Japanese Americans were treated during the war, and insisted they are the ones who were righteously bitter. An uncomfortable Tae departed for a walk, leaving Mrs. Sterling exasperated and confused. She did not understand why Tae would be offended and extended that frustration to Mr. Hasagawa and all Japanese Americans. While Mr. Sterling and Jim's brother continued to sympathize with Tae and defend her, Mrs. Sterling believed Tae made things more difficult. The scene highlighted the range of attitudes that American in-law families could potentially have when adjusting to life with their new Japanese war bride family members. As the *New York Times* noted, the film favored nuance over a sharply dichotomized portrayal of acceptance versus resentment.

Japanese War Bride lost a bit of this credibility with its dramatic climax and the character of Fran. Fran never welcomed Tae into the family and treated her with hostility, and it was clear she was jealous and wanted Jim for herself. In a contrived plot twist, she penned an anonymous letter insinuating Jim and Tae's baby was really Tae and Shiro Hasagawas. Melodrama ensued when Tae took the baby and ran away to Monterey with the help of Emma Hasagawa. As quickly as trouble developed, however, it was resolved when Jim realized Fran wrote the letter. He followed Tae to

Monterey, and all was quickly resolved, as the two embraced and reaffirmed their love for each other.

Despite its obvious plot and easy resolutions, *Japanese War Bride* remains an interesting portrayal of the war bride experience. Unlike the other war bride films, it dared to follow the war bride to the United States to show the potentially uneasy transition to American life. It tackled that difficult task by offering some realistic portrayals of the war bride experience once in the United States, particularly the complex relationship Tae had with her in-law family. Aside from the devious Fran, it did not vilify Tae's in-law family (or other members of the Northern California community) for having a complex range of reactions to Tae. The film did not vilify Tae, nor did it place her on a pedestal. That is not to say that the characterization of Tae avoided common stereotypes associated with war brides. Much like the newspaper articles and Department of Defense films that dealt with Japanese war brides who attended the war brides schools, Tae was painted as very willing to assimilate to white middle-class American ways. Although this was an oversimplified view, it reinforced the positive image of Japanese war brides as desirable immigrants willing to adapt to life in America.³³⁸

In contrast to the sympathetic portrayal Japanese war brides received in Hollywood films, German women were not treated so kindly. In a series of films containing storylines depicting would-be war brides, German women were characterized as scheming, villainous, and looking to take advantage of unwitting

³³⁸ Although the film definitely emphasized Tae's eagerness to assimilate, she also maintained certain aspects of her Japanese culture. She brought a collection of Japanese dolls with her, for example. It is also worth noting that Jim was supportive of her Japanese culture. When he discussed building their new house, he said he would make it like a Japanese house and would build a shelf for her dolls, for example.

American GIs. Films such as *A Foreign Affair*, *Fraulein*, and *The Big Lift* all contained variations on this theme.³³⁹

The Big Lift, released in 1950, contained two diametrically opposed wartime romances involving German women and American GIs set against the backdrop of postwar Berlin during the time of the Soviet blockade of the city. The movie was shot on location in Berlin and aside from leads Montgomery Clift and Paul Douglas, employed real-life military personnel. This realistic background was a sharp contrast to the two romances and four main characters in the film that were grounded not so much in realism but represented extreme caricatures. As Schmundt-Thomas discussed in his article, the movie and its romantic relationships can be read as an interpretation of U.S. involvement in Germany. Nevertheless, it is useful to dissect the images of German women and war bride relationships in the film.

Montgomery Clift played Sargent Danny MacCullough, a member of the Air Force participating in the U.S. military's effort to aid Berlin during the Soviet blockade. Danny met a pretty German widow during a ceremony in which representatives of the people of Berlin thanked Danny and his crew members, as they were part of the 100,000th flight to Berlin. Frederica Burkhardt, played by German actress Cornell Borchers, thanked Danny on behalf of the women of Berlin. He was immediately smitten with the beautiful Frederica and the two eventually met up for a date. The two quickly fell in love, or so the audience was led to believe. While naive Danny's feelings for Frederica were real, so real that he proposed to her and planned

³³⁹ Other scholars have discussed the portrayal of romances between American GIs and German women in postwar films, including Georg Schmundt-Thomas. See Georg Schmundt-Thomas, "Hollywood's Romance of Foreign Policy: America's GI's and the Conquest of the German Fraulein," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 19 (1992): 187-197.

to bring her back to the United States under the war brides act, Frederica's less than honorable intentions were revealed near the end of the film. Frederica had been using Danny all along merely to gain entry to the United States in order to rendezvous with her German lover who was already living there. Danny's eyes were only opened to the truth behind Frederica's intentions by one of Frederica's German neighbors, whom Danny befriended early in the film. This Soviet spy ultimately proved (perhaps somewhat ironically) to be more honest than the scheming Frederica! Despite warnings from his skeptical friend Kowalski, Danny could not help himself—he fell for Frederica and got his heart broken. The lesson to be taken from this wartime romance was not subtle—German women could not be trusted, and American men abroad should avoid contact with them.³⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Sgt. Hank Kowalski, a former prisoner of war held by the Nazis, also found wartime romance with a German girl, despite his intense dislike for all German people and despite his warnings to Danny about getting involved with German women. His romantic partner was the sweet and innocent Gerda, played by Bruni Lobel. Kowalski treated her harshly and verbally abused her, though he also showered her with items from the PX that were in short supply in Berlin, such as chocolate and cigarettes. This pairing, though the secondary storyline of the film, ultimately proved interesting for several reasons. Gerda put up with Kowalski for the majority of the film, but she eventually stood up to him, in no small part due to the

³⁴⁰ Historian Astrad Hastak noted the character of Frederica marked a departure from the Marlene Dietrich's "temptress" in *A Foreign Affair*, but that she was dangerous nonetheless. See Astrad Hastak, "I Was Never One of Those Frauleins": The Impact of Cultural Image on German War Brides in America" (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 2005), 301-302.

lessons Kowalski gave her throughout the film about American democracy.³⁴¹

Kowalski and Gerda's relationship also served as a warning for GIs abroad, just as Danny and Frederica's did. Gerda proved to be the good German girl, and in the end she did not want to leave Germany for the United States. The ultimate message was further reinforced then because only scheming and deceitful German girls wanted to be war brides. Good girls wanted to stay and rebuild postwar Germany.³⁴²

Furthermore, like the other relationship, the man and woman represented the postwar attitudes and ideas of their respective countries, and their relationship was meant to represent another option for postwar U.S. relations with Germany.

The close of this film reinforced how *The Big Lift* was not meant to portray the war bride experience at all, but rather used wartime romance and the potential of war bride immigration as a metaphor for U.S. foreign policy. Danny and Kowalski realized they were both wrong in their black and white approach to dealing with the German people. Danny, of course, was too innocent and not cautious enough in his relationship with Frederica (and really all the German people he encountered), while Kowalski punished all Germans for his wartime experience of being held captive. They decided that a combination of their behaviors was probably best, or as Kowalski stated, "No—we were both wrong. You were too easy, and like Gerda says, I was acting like a storm trooper. I suppose the answer lies somewhere between us."

³⁴¹ These "lessons" imparted by Kowalski are worthy of an entire study in their own right and again serve to reinforce how these pairings do not necessarily represent realistic wartime romance. Rather, they are a way to warn the audience about German women, as well as metaphor for U.S. foreign policy, as Schmundt-Thomas argued.

³⁴² Hastak agreed with this assessment of the characterization of German women in the film. She wrote, "In conclusion: the 'good German girl' wants to stay, she does not want to become a war bride." See Hastak, "I Was Never One of Those Frauleins," 303.

Schmundt-Thomas explained how this meant the U.S. must stay involved in postwar Germany and Europe but cautiously so:

Thus *The Big Lift* departs from *A Foreign Affair's* unquestioning support of an isolationist position. Instead *The Big Lift* argues that American ideals will only be corrupted if the foreign nation is approached without any reservations. If approached realistically, *The Big Lift* seems to say that interventionism can succeed and is a viable alternative to isolationism and that an American withdrawal from Europe would leave the continent at the mercy of Russia.³⁴³

Although *The Big Lift* offers a progression towards advocating a more nuanced U.S. foreign policy, it only marked a slight progression in its view of the scheming German woman/would-be war bride. Hastak, who also assessed *A Foreign Affair* noted that Frederica was not quite as deceitful as Lorelei, the analogous character in that film, but neither women possessed ulterior motives and could not be trusted.

In the end, then, *The Big Lift* offered the stark contrast of the very realistic backdrop of postwar Berlin versus the artificial and contrived nature of the characters' relationships. As Schmundt-Thomas argued, the relationships were grounded in the reality of U.S. foreign policy. That reality, more than the reality of war time romances between GIs and German (or other European) women, was what the film metaphorically captures. The extreme characteristics of the four main characters each contained elements of truth, as caricatures often do. Yet the character of the scheming Frederica played on the worst stereotypes about war brides, thereby lending credence to American skepticism (or even fears) about war brides using innocent GIs to gain access to the United States. As Hastak stated, *The Big Lift*, "...still gives its American audience at least one negative image of the German

³⁴³ Schmundt-Thomas, "Hollywood's Romance of Foreign Policy," 193.

woman and her motives for seducing GIs to take them to America.”³⁴⁴ What is worse was that the audience is duped along with Danny. There were no indications of Frederica’s devious plan until mid way through the movie. More so than any of the other movies discussed in this chapter, *The Big Lift* served as a cautionary tale for GIs stationed abroad: do not get involved with German women. Japanese war bride couples were given a much more sympathetic portrayal on film in *Sayonara* and *Japanese War Bride*.

Only in Hollywood could the film in which a man cross dressed to masquerade as a female war bride in order to secure passage to the United States offer the most accurate portrayal of the tedious red tape involved in the war bride marriage and immigration process, while conversely the film shot against the stark realism of postwar ravaged Berlin gave the audience the least accurate of all the war bride stories. Scattered within all the screwball comedy, *I Was a Male War Bride* managed to capture many aspects of the war bride experience in a way that remained grounded in reality. While *The Big Lift* offered a remarkable window into the world of postwar Berlin and its people, the characters were reduced to stereotypes, and the story served as a cautionary tale for GIs stationed abroad. Ultimately the films concerning themselves with Japanese war brides were the most dramatic, and in the case of *Sayonara* perhaps the most powerful. Somewhat surprisingly, Japanese war brides also received the most sympathetic treatment on film. They were not the schemers the potential German war brides of *The Big Lift* (and other similar films) were. Ultimately it is impossible to gage the exact reaction American audiences had to any of these films. Yet when combined, despite their flaws, they managed to highlight

³⁴⁴ Hastak, “I Was Never One of Those Frauleins,” 303-04.

many of the aspects of the war bride marriage and immigration experience with a surprising degree of realism for fictionalized stories and Hollywood films, creating good will towards Japanese war brides in particular.

In reality, war brides did not completely fit the public image of the easily assimilable housewife so completely. While many transitioned to American life as the housewives they were trained to be at the Red Cross schools, others did not. Like other women of the postwar era, the war brides of the RASRL study worked outside the home in full and part-time jobs, cared for their children, and cooked and cleaned in their homes. Whether or not war brides fully embodied the image propagated by the press and the war brides schools ultimately may be of little importance. The significance lay firmly with the public perception itself. In the postwar era a multitude of images, ideas, and stereotypes were associated with Japanese and European war brides. Yet the image that dominated the others was that of the war bride as an eager pupil willingly absorbing American ways by learning to be an American housewife. This was a particularly powerful image with which to imbue Japanese war brides. Only two decades earlier, Americans viewed all Japanese citizens, male and female, as unassimilable and used that claim to bolster legislation barring any further immigration from Japan. And only a few short years after interning most Japanese Americans and fighting a war against a virulently racialized enemy, Americans began to see these Japanese women—war brides married to American GIs—as an easily assimilable and desirable immigrant.

The images of Japanese war brides in Hollywood films also bolstered this image of these women. Perhaps quite surprisingly, given the great difficulty Japanese war brides had with the U.S. immigration process, Hollywood presented these war brides in the most positive and sympathetic light. Conversely, German women, who had experienced the least trouble with the INS, were portrayed in the harshest Hollywood light. So negative was the characterization of German women in Hollywood films, in fact, that they were not even war brides! Rather, these predatory film characters served as cautionary tales for purportedly unsuspecting American GIs.

The other problematic point with the image of the war bride as an easily assimilable housewife lay with the issue of assimilability. Whether or not war brides became housewives once in the United States, the degree to which they assimilated to white American culture and life, varied greatly. It is this transition to life in the United States and the accompanying process of assimilation versus cultural exchange that will occupy the next chapter.

Chapter 4: War Brides in America: The Meeting of Cultures and Fluidity of Race

After struggling through an at times grueling American immigration process, war bride couples might have expected to experience a hostile American reception and a difficult transition into American society. This was not necessarily the case. The experiences of the war brides, especially the Japanese war brides married to Caucasian GIs examined for this study reveal a generally warm welcome from their new families and a surprisingly smooth transition into American society, largely due to the help of these in-law families. Japanese and European war brides married to Asian American GIs often had more problematic relationships with their in-laws, however, and thus experienced a rougher transition to American life.³⁴⁵

This chapter explores three aspects of the war bride's transition to American life. Relationships with in-laws constitute one aspect. Another is the family dinner table, which functioned as a sort of cultural frontier or borderland within the family homes of war brides. The dinner table revealed the ways war brides negotiated their transition to American culture and life and strove to maintain their cultural identity. Finally, the chapter moves away from the private sphere to the public one, where war brides faced racial categorization in the United States. Far from constant, war brides experienced shifting racial categorization ascribed to them by other white Americans. The bride's ascribed race was sometimes based on the race or ethnicity of her

³⁴⁵ Sociologist Yukiko Kimura discussed this trend among the war brides of the RASRL study and their in-laws in her own work published in the 1950s. See Kimura, "War Brides in Hawaii and Their In-Laws." See also the Introduction of this work for a more in-depth discussion of this article.

husband. War brides, in those instances, experienced a type of racial coverture in postwar America.

Perhaps due in large part to the favorable public perception of Japanese war brides discussed in the previous chapter, these women seem to have experienced little overt hostility from the public at large. Acceptance by the dominant society, however, varied dramatically depending on the race of the war bride's husband. The final section of this chapter will analyze the impact of racial identity on war brides' transition to life in the United States.

First Encounters: Relationships with In-Laws

When one considers the openly hostile and virulently racist anti-Japanese attitude of Americans during World War II, the internment of Japanese American citizens, and the restrictive U.S. immigration policy towards the Japanese since 1924; it may seem surprising that the war brides who reported the fewest problems with their in-laws were Japanese war brides married to Caucasian GIs. But for the war brides in this study, that is exactly the case. Although some of the Japanese war brides married to white servicemen reported problems with their in-laws, typical of the kind other interracial couples dealt with, the majority of them did not. Rather, the in-laws of these Japanese war brides proved to be a crucial and positive element to their transition into American life.

Other scholars have addressed the role in-laws played in a war bride's new life in the United States. Janel Virden discussed the role in-laws played in the

adjustment of British war brides to American life.³⁴⁶ She found the majority of the war brides received a warm welcome from their in-law families and many relied on them for a place to live during the postwar housing shortage.³⁴⁷ But in-laws also commonly caused conflict for Virden's war brides, "...due to the simple fact that the son had married a foreign woman."³⁴⁸ Meanwhile, other historians such as Regina Lark, who looked at Japanese war brides, and Ji-Yeoh Yuh, who studied Korean war brides, have emphasized the contentious relationship between war brides and their in-law families due to racial and cultural differences.³⁴⁹ The following section of this chapter demonstrates how both of the preceding interpretations of in-law relationships were true for the various groups of war brides in this study, but that, significantly, racial similarity (or difference) did not dictate the nature of the relationship.

A few of the war brides had a good relationship with their in-laws before they even set foot on American soil. Several of the women corresponded with their mothers-in-laws while still in Japan. As one bride said, "I had corresponded with his [her husband's] mother while I was in Japan. So we felt toward each other as if we knew each other for a long time."³⁵⁰ And once they did arrive, the vast majority (twenty-two out twenty-three) of Caucasian families welcomed their new daughters-in-law with open arms. For example, Mrs. O-57 told her interviewer, "His [her

³⁴⁶ Jenel Virden, *Good-bye, Picadilly: British War Brides in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 114 –116.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, 118. The coming section of this chapter will demonstrate that war brides of all ethnicities potentially faced this problem with their respective in-laws as well.

³⁴⁹ Regina Lark, "They Challenged Two Nations" and Ji-Yeoh Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America* (New York & London: New York University Press, 2002).

³⁵⁰ O-24, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2. It is not clear how Japanese war brides corresponded with their in-laws, given the language barrier between the two. An explanation was not provided by any of the war brides. Jenel Virden reported that some of the British war brides in her study had also corresponded with their in-laws prior to their arrival in the U.S and that, "...helped ease the initial tension." See Jenel Virdin, *Good-bye Picadilly*, 114.

husband's] father and mother treated me just like their daughter. His sisters were like my real sisters. I never felt homesick. I was completely at home with his people."³⁵¹ And in fact, these women's experiences reveal the husband's family to be the one of the most crucial aspects not only in transitioning the immigrant women to life in the United States, but in assuring survival.³⁵² Helpful in-laws affected the couple's marriage, integration into the community, and a war bride's understanding of American society.

As in Japan, the young married couples often needed the assistance of their families to survive, at least during the immediate transition period into U.S. society.³⁵³ The in-laws often provided housing for the couples, as many of them lived with a member of the husband's family anywhere from two months to two years.³⁵⁴ In some cases the husbands left their Japanese brides alone with relatives if their jobs or remaining service to the military took them elsewhere for brief periods of time.

For the war brides in this study, the experience of living with welcoming in-laws proved to be one of the most valuable to the women, especially in terms of easing their transition into American society and introducing them to local

³⁵¹ O-57, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

³⁵² As discussed elsewhere, the Red Cross and fellow war brides played key roles in this process. The transition to American life is referenced here, although that process often involved acculturation as well, that was not always the case. This section of the chapter involving in-law assistance will refer to the transition to America—and possibly early acculturation—without problematizing the concept in order to focus on the in-law relationship. The extent to which a war bride wanted to acculturate, however, could lead to problems with in-law relationships. If the war bride was not as interested in learning American ways, food culture for example, difficulties erupted. The next two sections of this chapter will unpack the concept of acculturation further.

³⁵³ The war bride's family often offered similar support while the couple still lived in Japan. Several couples lived with the war bride's parents while they saved money to buy their own home, or if they had difficulty renting an apartment. For examples see Mrs. A-18 and Mrs. O-12.

³⁵⁴ As described above, Janel Virden discussed the impact of the postwar housing shortage in her work and how this necessitated many of the war bride couples in her study to live with in-laws as well. See Virden, *Good-bye Picadilly*, 115-117.

communities. Rather than being isolated, these women had the assistance of their husband's families, who acculturated them to American life. Mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law were often the most helpful. They taught their new family members how to cook non-Japanese foods, sharpened their English-speaking skills, and introduced them to American society through their own social networks. One of Mrs. O-58's statements exemplifies this trend. She said, "My mother-in-law taught me about many things, including cooking."³⁵⁵ And Mrs. O-34 had a mother-in-law who exposed her to many aspects of white American culture by taking her nearly everywhere with her. She explained, "She [her mother-in-law] was very anxious to have me meet everybody that almost every day she took me out...to teas, dinners, parties, concerts, and church groups."³⁵⁶ Other war brides formed similarly close relationships with their mother and sisters-in-law and spent a great deal of time with them. Some of these women became so close that the war brides, living in Hawaii at the time of the interview, wished one day to move back to the mainland to live near their in-laws. Mrs. O-57 stated, "I want to be near his parents and relatives. If anything happens, they can help me. I don't want to be far away from his folks."³⁵⁷ Mrs. O-57's desire to live near her in-laws in Pennsylvania reveals how close these women became with their new families, and how dependent they had become on their support.

However, some war brides married to Caucasian servicemen experienced varying degrees of problems with their in-laws, or at least certain members of their

³⁵⁵ O-58, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

³⁵⁶ O-34, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

³⁵⁷ O-57, War Brides Interview Project, 2.

new in-law families. Mrs. O-38 lived with her husband at his parents' house in a small town in upstate New York for two months. According to Mrs. O-38, her mother-in-law told her she, "...didn't like the Japanese." In addition to her prejudice, her husband's broken engagement to a daughter of close family friends compounded the mother-in-law's dislike of Mrs. O-38 and served to strain the relationship to the point that she and her husband decided to move out. Significantly, they moved in with another member of Mrs. O-38's in-law family, her husband's grandmother, with whom she had a very good relationship. The couple lived with the grandmother for nearly a year until April 1953 when the husband was transferred to an Army post in New Jersey, at which time Mrs. O-38 remained with her grandmother-in-law for five additional months until she joined her husband after the birth of their daughter. Although Mrs. O-38 experienced racial prejudice from her mother-and father-in law typical of that reported by many interracial couples, she experienced a positive relationship with her grandmother-in-law with whom she felt so comfortable that she lived with her while her husband lived elsewhere.³⁵⁸ And in addition to the tangible benefits of housing, Mrs. O-38's grandmother-in-law assisted her with integration into the local community as well as exposure to American religious practices by taking her to church services.

Beyond strained relationships with in-laws, some war brides had no relationship at all with their husband's parents. Mrs. O-48, for example, did not know her in-laws because her husband did not tell them about his marriage. She explained, "They don't seem to like the Japanese people; and didn't approve of his desires to

³⁵⁸ It is also possible that Mrs. O-38 had no other housing options and thus remained with her grandmother-in-law out of necessity. Mrs. O-38 did speak of the woman warmly, however, indicating a close relationship regardless.

marry a Japanese girl...Even now they don't know about our marriage; they may be suspecting that their son had married me; but I am not sure."³⁵⁹ Mrs. O-48's in-laws lived in California, which may explain their predisposition to anti-Japanese sentiment, given the history of Japanese American/Caucasian-American relations in that state. That background also most likely accounts for Mr. O-48's desire to avoid the mainland as a place for him and his wife to settle. According to Mrs. O-48, "My husband and I talked about coming to Hawaii. He didn't want to go back to the mainland. He knew that I wouldn't be welcome. His friend (haole) and his Japanese wife were in Hawaii. Through them we became interested in Hawaii, because we learned that for an intermarried couple like us, Hawaii would be the best place."³⁶⁰ This view expressed by the O-48s was not atypical of other war bride couples from the RASRL study, as will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

European War Brides/Asian American Husbands: The Other Side of Interracial Marriage

European war brides married to Asian American servicemen represent another example of interracial marriages in this study. For the European war brides interviewed by the RASRL, in-law relationships were not as overwhelmingly positive as those of Japanese war brides married to Caucasian GIs. The challenges of interracial marriage and acceptance by in-law families proved more of a challenge for these women because of the different expectations of Asian American families.

Asian American in-law families expected their daughters-in-law, regardless of race or

³⁵⁹ O-48, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

ethnicity, to serve the family in any capacity requested.³⁶¹ The relationships revealed by the experiences of the women in this study varied from extremely strained (even partly responsible for a couple's divorce in one case) to very good, supportive, and beneficial. And just as with the Japanese war brides, when an in-law family was accepting and supportive, they offered the war bride a crucial link in the transition to American life and the acculturation process.

For some European war brides, problems existed from the beginning, simply due to the fact that these women were European, rather than Japanese. Danish war bride Mrs. D-109 explained that, "My mother-in-law didn't like me at all at first. She resented me; she felt that my husband should have married a Japanese girl he used to know. Anyway, she didn't like her son bringing a European wife with him."³⁶² Mrs. D-101, an Italian war bride, reported similar problems with her own mother-in-law, although she seemed to get along with her father-in-law. She described, "But my mother-in-law didn't like me and she said to me, 'Why did my son marry you? I could have arranged a marriage for him to a Japanese girl, etc.' My mother-in-law blamed me for his marrying me. She didn't like me, because I was a foreigner."³⁶³ The initial strained relationship between Mrs. D-109 and Mrs. D-101 and their respective mothers-in-law echo the problems Japanese war bride Mrs. O-38 experienced with her own Caucasian mother-in-law. In all three cases, the mothers

³⁶¹ This meant, for example, assisting with the completion of household work such as cooking and cleaning. It could also mean helping with the family business, if one existed, and taking care of sick family members. Monetary contributions were also a common expectation.

³⁶² D-109, July 11, 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1. As discussed above, however, this was a common predicament for all war brides, regardless of race. See Virden, *Good-bye Picadilly*, 118-119. Additionally, the issue may not only have been the ethnicity of the new daughter-in-law, but also the fact that the woman was outside the family's social network.

³⁶³ D-101, February 15, 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

were disturbed by their sons' decisions to marry women outside their own ethnic group and community. One Japanese American family opposed their son's marriage to a German war bride so strongly that they contacted Army Headquarters in Washington DC and requested a transfer for their son. According to the war bride, Mrs. D-25, her husband's Company Commander spoke with him and conveyed his parents' objection to the marriage. However, Mr. D-25, determined to marry Mrs. D-25, ignored their opposition. And facing no other obstacles, the couple married.³⁶⁴

Mrs. D-101's problems with her mother-in-law escalated in a way that none of the other war brides' relationships with their own in-laws did. The two women clashed over cultural differences, such as food and language. That in itself was not unusual for war brides, but Mrs. D-101 felt increasingly alienated. Her mother-in-law and husband constantly spoke in Japanese, rather than opting for a common ground in English.³⁶⁵ This in combination with her mother-in-law's hatred for her caused Mrs. D-101 to feel like, "an intruder by my mother-in-law all the time." She explained further that, "My husband never defended me. He said his first responsibility was his parents."³⁶⁶ Mrs. D-101 eventually convinced her husband that they needed to move out of his parents' house, and they moved into their own home. Unfortunately, the move was not the solution Mrs. D-101 thought it would be. Conflicts over in-laws persisted, and the couple divorced. Even after the divorce, Mrs. D-101 was not freed

³⁶⁴ See D-25, May 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1-2.

³⁶⁵ It is possible a common ground was impossible because it is unclear whether or not Mrs. D-101's mother-in-law spoke English. Her husband, however, did not provide any type of link or ease communication between the two either, thereby leaving Mrs. D-101 to feel excluded.

³⁶⁶ Ibid. This example hints at the cultural disparity between war brides, both European and Japanese, with Japanese American families. These families carried a different set of cultural expectations and customs than war brides were used to. This theme will be elaborated on more fully in Chapter Five.

from her mother-in-law's interference, as the woman started rumors that Mrs. D-101's promiscuity caused the divorce.

Mrs. D-101's situation with her mother-in-law and subsequent divorce represent a more extreme example of how bad in-law relationships could be and their negative ramifications for the war bride. Other relationships between in-laws and war brides, such as Mrs. D-109's, did not end as badly and often evolved into positive and supportive relationships. As described above, Mrs. D-109's mother-in-law did not like her at first because she was not Japanese. In fact, Mrs. D-109's mother-in-law did not speak to her the whole month that they lived together when the couple first arrived in Hawaii. As Mrs. D-109 described, "She just stared at me, never saying a word."³⁶⁷ When Mrs. D-109 and her husband developed marital problems due to her husband's involvement with another woman (a Japanese woman), however, Mrs. D-109's mother and sister-in-law intervened on her behalf, offering critical emotional support during a difficult time for the new immigrant. Once their marital problems were resolved, Mrs. D-109 and her mother-in-law maintained a good relationship. According to Mrs. D-109, "My mother-in-law likes me now, because she realized that I never go out for my own pleasure. She thought European girls would like to go out to have a good time. But she know[s] now that I stay with my children and never go out. So, she began to respect me."³⁶⁸ In addition to their new congenial relationship, Mrs. D-109's mother-in-law began to visit regularly and brought dresses for her daughter-in-law and candy for her grandchildren. And although the women never did end up talking much due to language barriers, they got along quite well, but Mrs. D-

³⁶⁷ D-109, War Brides Interview Project, 2.

³⁶⁸ Ibid, 3. This reveals the types of assumptions American in-laws had of war brides. As discussed in Chapter Three, war brides often became unfairly saddled with stereotypes.

109 first had to quell her mother-in-law's fears and dispel the common stereotype of the promiscuous and morally ambiguous war bride and earn her mother-in-law's respect.

Mrs. A-29, an Italian war bride divorced from a Japanese American GI, also had the support of her in-laws during her marital problems. Upon arrival in Hawaii, the A-29s lived with Mr. A-29's sister, and Mrs. A-29 had a good relationship with all of her in-laws. A year after living in Hawaii the couple began to have problems, and Mr. A-29 reenlisted in the Army without telling his wife, which precipitated the decline of their marriage. Mr. A-29 remained mostly out of contact with his wife for the following three years, and she decided to get a divorce. She was bolstered by the advice of her in-laws who told her, "His parents and sister told me too that it would be better for me to get divorced; that their son wouldn't be any good as a husband."³⁶⁹ Thus at times relationships with in-laws were so good as to offer a support network in lieu of a husband's support, or in this case, in spite the problems the husband was causing the war bride. This supplemented other support war brides received from official organizations like the Red Cross and stood in for a family/neighborhood network that an earlier wave immigrant would have had.³⁷⁰

Besides these examples of in-law support during severe marital problems and divorce, some European war brides experienced good relationships with their new in-law families that offered assistance during their transition into American life. Italian war bride Mrs. D-80 arrived in Hawaii on June 9, 1946, two weeks before her

³⁶⁹ A-29, February 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1-2.

³⁷⁰ For an example of an excellent discussion of the support second wave immigrant women received from family and neighborhood networks in the U.S. see Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 50-89.

Japanese American husband (who followed behind with troops transport). Upon arrival, her new in-laws greeted Mrs. D-80 with a welcome party in the traditional Japanese style. And in the weeks before her husband arrived, Mrs. D-80's sister-in-law showed her around her new city and took her shopping to acclimate her to the area.³⁷¹ At the time of the interview, nearly ten years later, the two remained close, and each offered support for the other. As Mrs. D-80 explained, "When I was pregnant with my first child, my sister-in-law was pregnant too. So, we kind of understood each other. When my baby was born she helped me. When her baby was born I helped her. We do help each other."³⁷² Mrs. D-80's mother-in-law also helped with her transition into American life. The D-80s lived with his parents for eight months, and during that time Mrs. D-80 said, "My mother-in-law couldn't speak English but she and I got along very well. She was really nice; She OKed everything I did."³⁷³ In addition, Mrs. D-80 explained that, "My mother-in-law taught me about housekeeping and Japanese cooking."³⁷⁴ Significantly, although Mrs. D-80 received help from her mother-in-law similar to the kind of help Japanese war brides in this study received from their Caucasian in-laws, the results were different. Both sets of women were part of an indispensable support system that assisted with acculturation to America. While some Japanese war brides were adapting to white American culture, however, Mrs. D-80 and other European war brides married to Asian American servicemen were learning to operate in both white American and Japanese American culture.

³⁷¹ D-80, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

³⁷² Ibid, 3.

³⁷³ Ibid, 2.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

Mrs. D-8, a German war bride, also acculturated to Japanese American culture with the help of her in-laws. Mrs. D-8 was initially skittish about meeting her in-laws because she knew they disapproved of her marriage to their son. But when she arrived in Hawaii, they greeted her with a Japanese style party, just as Mrs. D-80's parents had, and their relationship developed into a positive one. And also like Mrs. D-80, Mrs. D-8 lived with her in-laws and learned to cook Japanese food from her mother-in-law.³⁷⁵ Mrs. D-8's mother-in-law also took her daughter-in-law to cultural functions in the Japanese American community in Hawaii. As Mrs. D-8 described, "My in-laws take me to many functions of Japanese art such as tea ceremony or flower arrangement. Last week, I went with my mother-in-law to the Academy of Arts where the famous master of tea ceremony from Japan demonstrated the art of tea ceremony."³⁷⁶ Just as the Caucasian in-law families introduced and integrated their Japanese war bride daughter-in-laws into white American society, some Japanese American in-laws introduced their European daughters-in-law to Japanese American society.

Finally, the European war brides that experienced the least amount of trouble with their new in-law families were those that married into families who were already familiar with interracial marriage, as some of the war brides had brothers or sisters-in-law who had married outside of their racial or ethnic group. Italian war bride Mrs. D-82 (married to a Japanese American GI) explained how such families made the war bride's transition easier when she said, "One of my sisters-in-law is married to a haole man and lives on the mainland. She has four children. Before I was married, I

³⁷⁵ D-8, March 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3-4.

³⁷⁶ Ibid, 5.

used to write to her. She tried to help me, because she married a different race too.”³⁷⁷ Thus before Mrs. D-82 even arrived in the United States, she already had a built-in support. In addition she explained, “My husband’s brother, one of them, was married to a Chinese-Hawaiian girl. Another sister-in-law was married [to] a Filipino. So, my in-laws are used to having different races in their family.”³⁷⁸ This meant that Mrs. D-82 faced no initial hostility, as other European war brides did.³⁷⁹ After her arrival, Mrs. D-82 continued to build a good relationship with her in-laws. She and her husband lived with his parents for the first seven months after they arrived in Hawaii. In addition to treating her well, Mrs. D-82’s in-laws assisted her with childcare when she worked at the Navy Laundry and Hawaiian Pineapple. Even after the couple moved into their own house, Mrs. D-82 explained how her mother-in-law helped when her new baby was born, “She came in the morning and stayed all day every day, washing, cooking, ironing, etc.”³⁸⁰ In turn, she helped her in-laws whenever she could. Again, this reinforces how vital the in-law relationship was for war brides. In the absence of their own families or extended neighborhood networks that earlier waves of immigrants benefited from, war brides relied heavily on their new in-law families for assistance with acculturation and support for their day to day lives.

³⁷⁷ D-82, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Other European war brides, such as German war bride Mrs. D-72, had similar experiences. Her husband’s family itself was multi-ethnic—Japanese and Hawaiian, and his siblings had married Caucasian spouses. See D-72, November 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

³⁸⁰ Ibid, 2.

Japanese War Brides/Japanese American Husbands

Although Japanese war brides married to Japanese American GIs did not face the seemingly more difficult transition of adjusting to American life via an interracial marriage and in-law family, these women still relied on their Japanese American in-laws for assisting their transition to American life, but some also experienced problems with their new families when they arrived in the United States. A cultural divide existed between these women and their new families based largely on generational differences that had the potential to sever any bond formed on apparently shared cultural or racial heritage.³⁸¹ Just as the women described above, in-law relationships had a significant impact on a war bride's first months in the U.S.

In ways that mirrored the assistance the other war brides in this study received, Japanese war brides married to Japanese American GIs received assistance from their in-law families that proved essential in transitioning to American life. Mrs. A-19, for example, toured Honolulu with her mother-in-law when she moved there with her husband in March 1953. Mrs. A-19's mother-in-law helped her adjust to the new city and the two maintained a friendly relationship.³⁸² In another example, Mrs. A-2 received invaluable assistance from her mother and sister-in-laws while her husband was stationed on the mainland for a year. She lived with her husband's parents while he was away, and her mother and sisters-in-law helped her with childcare and encouraged her to take English and citizenship classes. They also

³⁸¹ In many cases, the Japanese American in-laws were from Japan themselves, just as the Japanese war brides. They were part of an older (pre-1924) wave of Japanese immigration, however, and therefore part of a different Japanese culture. The specific nature of these cultural and generational differences receive more attention in Chapter Five.

³⁸² A-19, January 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

spoke Japanese with her, however, perhaps making it easier for Mrs. A-2 to find a common ground with her own in-laws compared to war brides who did not speak the same language as their in-laws. The women also accepted her into their social circles, taking Mrs. A-2 on visits to friends and relatives, as well as taking her to movies. Once again, in-laws proved vital to introducing war brides to American culture and American communities. At the time of the interview (four years later), Mrs. A-2 remained close with her in-laws and visited them often. Mrs. A-2 concluded, “The custom of my parents and my husband’s people is the same. So I have never had any difficulty with my husband’s people.”³⁸³ Mrs. A-2’s statement is revealing: not all Japanese war brides felt the same way about their own in-laws because despite sharing an alleged common racial identity, their customs could be very different.

The strained relationships that some Japanese war brides experienced with their Japanese American in-laws echoed the problems that the other Japanese and European war brides had with their own in-laws. Even though these women were racially Japanese, just as their in-laws, they faced open and immediate hostility for their immigrant and/or war bride status. Mrs. F-39 and her husband worried about going to Hawaii in the months leading up to their arrival because, “My husband’s father and mother also firmly opposed their son’s marriage to me, because they had heard of a bad reputation of Japanese war brides so much.”³⁸⁴ Mrs. F-39’s in-laws’ hostility continued when the couple moved to Hawaii and lived with them. The in-laws scolded and berated their daughter-in-law, frequently to the point of tears. And

³⁸³ A-2, December 1953, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

³⁸⁴ F-39, November 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

when the interviewer asked Mrs. F-39 if she had any regrets about her marriage, the only thing she mentioned was living with her in-laws.³⁸⁵ Mrs. F-50 faced a similar problem with her in-laws, particularly her mother-in-law. She explained to the interviewer that she had a difficult relationship with the woman because she was from Japan and not Hawaiian born, like the other daughters-in-law in the family. Mrs. F-50's mother-in-law criticized her and questioned her motives for coming to Hawaii.³⁸⁶ In both of these cases, the alleged common race of the women and in-law families neither predisposed the in-law family to welcoming their new daughter-in-law nor laid the foundation for an easy transition into American life. The experiences of women like Mrs. F-39 and Mrs. F-50, rather, closely resembled the experiences of war brides in interracial marriages who encountered problems.

Just as for other war brides, problems between Japanese war brides and Japanese American in-laws sometimes escalated into more serious ones beyond initial dislike and tension based on the immigrant status of these women. Mrs. F-41 and her husband had difficulties when they lived with the in-laws and Mrs. F-41's mother-in-law interfered with child-rearing and invaded the privacy of the couple by going through their mail. The couple agreed that they could not live with the mother's behavior and decided to move out. Problems escalated far beyond personality conflicts for another war bride, Mrs. F-19, who suffered from violent abuse at the hands of her mother-in-law. Mrs. F-19's mother-in-law never cared for her, but her dislike soon turned to physical violence, as Mrs. F-19 explained to the interviewer, "My mother-in-law used to beat me until I fainted. My husband always sided with

³⁸⁵ Ibid, 3.

³⁸⁶ F-50, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

his parents and beat me too....My body and face was bruised all the time.”³⁸⁷ Mrs. F-19 went on to outline a number of violent instances perpetrated against her by her mother-in-law that resulted in permanent damage to her nose and severe weight loss from the anxiety she experienced living in such conditions. Although Mrs. F-19’s relationship with her in-laws easily remains the most negative of all the war brides in the RASRL study, the relationship did not result in the end of her marriage (even though her husband also beat her) or have a negative impact on her desire to stay in the U.S. At the time of the interview, Mrs. F-19’s mother-in-law had since died and her father-in-law had moved back to Japan, prompting Mrs. F-19 to remark, “...my life is like one in heaven.”³⁸⁸

Many of the problems that Japanese war brides experienced with their Japanese American in-laws stemmed from [and reflected] the tensions that these war brides had with the Japanese American community. As Mrs. F-49 explained, “The Japanese (Issei) in Hawaii expect their daughters-in-law from Japan to be like the girls in Japan of their time when they were young and left Japan. They don’t realize that girls in Japan nowadays are different.”³⁸⁹ The cultural and generational differences within the racial group will be discussed in further detail in the next section of this chapter, as well as Chapter Five.

The Dinner Table as a Cultural Borderland

³⁸⁷ F-19, September 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

³⁸⁸ Ibid, 6.

³⁸⁹ F-49, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

Much more than simple sustenance, food and its preparation became a way for war brides to retain an important piece of their ethnic identity, or conversely, to assimilate into their new American culture. But beyond pure retention or assimilation (or more often than not a combination of both), food, and the dinner table specifically, became a site for collision and often compromise for many war bride families. The dinner table was the place where the two cultures of the war bride and her husband (and often his in-law family) came into contact on a daily basis. And because war brides held a certain amount of control over food preparation, as it occurred in the private sphere and usually fell into the realm of their gendered household duties (even when living with in-laws), they were able to exert more control over this aspect of their identity. However, far from being only a place of contention, the dinner table was also a place of exchange, a mid-twentieth century frontier, where two cultures came together to share, learn, and in the best circumstances appreciate the other.

Historians have discussed the centrality of food to immigrant groups and its importance in both consolidating ethnic identity and Americanization. Studies of second wave immigrant groups, such as Italian Americans, are especially ubiquitous. Hasia R. Diner, for instance, has studied the ways Italians, Irish, and Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century “fashioned ethnic identities around food.”³⁹⁰ She argued that Italian American immigrants created a new Italian (American) food culture in America based on the elite foods of their homeland and the availability of certain foods in the U.S. that they could not get on a regular basis in Italy. The new

³⁹⁰ Hasia R. Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001), 9.

food culture was thus distinctly American, but built around Italian traditions. It simultaneously codified the immigrant group's identity as Italian, while also creating something new that did not exist in Italy. Just as for these second-wave immigrants, food took on an enhanced significance in the United States for war brides, as it became a way they maintained a connection with their former country and a piece of their ethnic identity.

Unlike second-wave immigrants who possessed the ability to maintain a private home sphere and thus eating habits, largely free from the forces of Americanization, war brides, by the very nature of their marriages to American men, did not always have the same luxury.³⁹¹ It follows then that historians who have examined the importance of food to war bride immigrants in the United States, Ji-Yeoh Yuh's study of Korean war brides, for example, have emphasized the assimilating power of food, rather than the ways it worked to maintain ethnic identity. For the Korean women in Yuh's study, the dearth of Korean foods and intractable husband and in-law families unwilling to try new foods often prevented Korean women from retaining their own food practices.³⁹² The Japanese war brides living in Hawaii at the time of the RASRL interviews, however, did have access to Japanese foods. And unlike the husbands and in-law families of Yuh's war brides, the Japanese and European women in the RASRL study experienced various degrees of willingness on the part of their new families to try new foods. For many of these

³⁹¹ As Simone Cinotto argued, however, second wave immigrants, Italian Americans in East Harlem in this case, had to fight generational conflicts and the forces of Americanization (school meals for example) in order to keep their Italian American food culture in tact, even in the private sphere. This negotiation resulted in, "...an ideological separation between an ethnic private domain and an American public scene." See Simone Cinotto, "Leonard Covello, the Covello Papers, and the History of Eating Habits among Italian Immigrants in New York," *The Journal of American History* September 2004: 497-521, 500.

³⁹² Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown*, 126-153.

women, the dinner table was a borderland, rather than a space for inevitable Americanization.

For some war brides, the borderland of the dinner table was a contentious place. And for women like Italian war bride Mrs. D-101, who had existing problems with her Japanese American mother-in-law, the dinner table only exacerbated their differences. Mrs. D-101 recalled, “She cooked Japanese food and from the beginning I had to eat it with chopsticks. The first night when I ate, I dropped food, because I had never used chopsticks before. My mother-in-law stared at me. She would never let me use a knife and fork.”³⁹³ In addition, while she lived with her mother-in-law, the dinner table was not a place for exchange for Mrs. D-101 because her mother-in-law would not let her prepare the foods she wanted, rather, she made her eat Japanese food until she liked it. But other war brides did not give in so easily. Japanese war bride Mrs. O-38 (also discussed above) insisted on cooking Japanese food while pregnant and living with her white in-laws, even though it meant increasing hostilities between them. In another example, Mrs. D-106, a German war bride who lived with her Japanese American husband and his parents, cooked for the family. As she explained, “I started cooking for the family. But my mother-in-law couldn’t eat what I cooked. So, she cooked Japanese food for herself.”³⁹⁴ Based on the information in the interview, it seems that Mrs. D-106 did not know how to cook Japanese food (and nobody taught her), so she cooked German food for the family, which everyone except the mother-in-law ate. In this case, the dinner table represented a cultural

³⁹³ D-101, February 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

³⁹⁴ D-106, March 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

divide, not a place of exchange, that highlighted the differences between the two women. Mrs. D-106 relayed that differences such as these caused her mother-in-law to constantly ask her son when he and his wife were going to move out.

For other war brides the dinner table was a borderland where an exchange of cultures occurred without apparent hostility. Italian war bride Mrs. D-80 described the rituals of food preparation while she lived with her Japanese American in-laws in Hawaii. Her mother-in-law taught her how to prepare Japanese foods, and she, “...helped my mother-in-law and sister-in-law. I also cooked Italian spaghetti sometimes. They all liked it very much. I like Japanese food, in fact everything but raw fish. That’s the only thing I can’t eat.”³⁹⁵ For this family, the dinner table offered a venue for a successful exchange of cultures, where each could appreciate the other. Mrs. D-84’s, a German war bride married to a Japanese American GI, experiences around the dinner table mirrored Mrs. D-80’s. The dinner table was a place of where both cultures met and where exchange took place. Mrs. D-80 described the cultural negotiation that took place at her in-laws dinner table for the year and a half that she and her husband lived with them:

At the beginning I couldn’t eat Japanese food. So, I cooked my own food. My husband ate what his mother cooked. He was hungry for it; he had been away from it for such a long time. I got used to the Japanese food and after a month I ate everything. Now I rather eat Japanese food than German food. I eat even raw fish. My mother-in-law tried to help me to get used to the Japanese food; she would say ‘Just try a little bit.’ I watched my mother-in-law cook and learned how to cook Japanese food. I cook Japanese food most of the time now. Once in a while I cooked German food for my in-laws. They liked it.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ D-80, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

³⁹⁶ D-84, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

For Mrs. D-80 then, the dinner table was a place where she learned to enjoy her husband's culture and eventually assimilated into his culture, at least to a degree. But she was also able to bring her own culture to the table and thus preserve a part of her own ethnic identity without encountering hostility or foregoing the acceptance of her new family.

Parents of war brides also participated in the cultural borderland of the dinner table at times. French war bride Mrs. D-81's father, for example, moved to Hawaii in 1949 to join his only child. Mrs. D-81 and her husband resided with her in-laws at the time of her father's arrival, so he too moved in with the family. Mrs. D-81 described to the interviewer how her father participated in the food rituals of her in-law family. He attended all Okinawan parties and he ate and liked, "...all the Japanese food, even raw fish."³⁹⁷ It took Mrs. D-81 a couple months to get used to raw fish, but her father did not need the adjustment period. Mrs. D-81's father's easy acceptance at the dinner table reflects the solid relationship of Mrs. D-81 and her in-laws. Not only did they invite her father to their dinner table, they invited him to live in their home until the D-81s moved into their own home.³⁹⁸

The dinner table was a cultural frontier for Japanese war brides married to Japanese American GIs as well. Even though the families shared a common racial background, cultural and generational differences made the dinner table a borderland for these families, just as it was for those discussed above. These war brides and their

³⁹⁷ D-81, January 10, 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

³⁹⁸ Ibid. This example was not typical, but is included it because the inclusion of another set of in-laws made the dinner table as borderland more interesting. War Bride parents also participated in the dinner table as a borderland in their own countries when the war bride's future husband would be invited over for dinner. These cases are interesting in the sense that the [future] husband is in the position the war bride will be in once she's in the U.S. However, it is not exactly the same because the GI is not bringing his own customs to that dinner table.

new in-law families primarily encountered differences at the dinner table based on custom, rather than specific food preferences. Many Japanese war brides discussed the differences in dining rituals between the Japanese in Japan and those in Hawaii. The paramount difference in dinner table customs between the two centered around the use of individual versus communal bowls. Many Japanese war brides cited this variation in custom during their interviews, and Mrs. F-18 outlined the main distinction in the following description:

When my husband's folks ate their meals, they used a common dishes of food to which they reached with their own chopsticks. It was so repulsive. In Japan, as you know each individual has his own dishes, one small dish for his shoyu, one larger dish for fish, another for vegetable, a small bowl for his rice, and so on and so on.³⁹⁹

Beyond being repulsed, Mrs. F-18 refused to participate in this ritual. Rather than eat from the common dishes with everyone else, she put food on her own personal plate before the meal began. Based on the interview, it does not seem as though Mrs. F-18's in-laws minded what must have been perceived by them as unusual behavior. And Mrs. F-18 reported that she had a good relationship with her new family. This congenial relationship, however, did not stop Mrs. F-18 from judging her in-laws. She characterized the lifestyle of her in-laws, who lived on a plantation on the island of Hawaii, as "primitive," an adjective she used several times throughout the interview when describing the living conditions there. The customs of her in-laws at the dinner table reinforced this view on a daily basis and caused Mrs. F-18 to conclude, "But actually I can't stand the custom in Hawaii."⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ F-18, September 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

Another Japanese war bride, Mrs. A-5, experienced problems similar to those of Mrs. F-18 at the dinner table when she described the dining customs at a party she attended at her in-law's home in the following, "...they all ate from the same dishes. They picked up with their own chopsticks by stretching their arms to reach food and used the sauce in the common dishes. My friend (who is also a Japanese war bride) said that she would touch the first food and after that she wouldn't eat."⁴⁰¹ These customs rendered the dinner table a foreign place, almost unrecognizable, even though the foods were the same. Mrs. A-5 complained to her husband about these unfamiliar customs, which she found "disagreeable," but he told her, "You are too fussy. As long as they are happy, it's all right. This is the way the Issei want it to be; they are used to it and like it."⁴⁰² Although Mrs. A-5 shared her dislike for Issei eating customs with her husband, she did not discuss these concerns with her in-laws so like Mrs. F-18, her relationship with her new in-law family remained undisturbed by the cultural gaps at the dinner table.

Another cultural difference that some Japanese war brides experienced at their Japanese American in-law's dinner table were the more sexist customs of an older Japanese culture still in tact in the immigrant community in Hawaii, but unfamiliar to modern Japanese women.⁴⁰³ Mrs. A-15 described the sexism present in her in-law's

⁴⁰¹ A-5, December 1953, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3. Mrs. F-18 described a similar party scene in her own interview and called it, "...outrageous and repulsive." See F-18, War Brides Interview Project, 2.

⁴⁰² A-5, War Brides Interview Project, 3.

⁴⁰³ For a thorough discussion of the cultural differences between the different generations of Japanese immigrants and Japanese war brides see Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986). The main discussion on this topic will appear in Chapter 5, where the differences between the existing Japanese American community and Japanese war brides will be outlined. There was a very tenuous/antagonistic relationship between the two (sometimes at the family level, and quite

home and used dinner table rituals as a prime example of how her mother-in-law enforced gender subordination. She explained, "...here in Hawaii, my mother-in-law treated my husband as if he were superior and I were inferior. She expects him to eat more than the wife and eat first, because he is a man while I am a woman. She makes me to serve him first."⁴⁰⁴ This gendered hierarchy within the household was different from her own home in Japan. As Mrs. A-15 said, "At my own home my parents never treated boys and girls or men and women differently. We were treated all equally."⁴⁰⁵ This heightened sexism extended beyond the cultural borderland of the dinner table and into the rest of the kitchen as well. Mrs. A-15 explained that she often helped her mother-in-law in the kitchen and that, "Sometimes my husband helped me dish washing or other things in the kitchen."⁴⁰⁶ But Mrs. A-15's mother-in-law did not appreciate her son doing what she considered to be female tasks. Mrs. A-15 continued, "She was furious that I let my husband do such a thing in the kitchen. She said to me that the kitchen work was below men's dignity and that women should never let them come to the kitchen."⁴⁰⁷

Some Japanese war brides married to Japanese American GIs experienced trouble not only with dinner table customs, but with the food itself, just as Japanese

often at the larger community level). This and other sections of Chapter Four certainly hint at those differences, but the majority of this conversation will appear in Chapter Five. Finally, a passage from the interview reveals that generational differences were indeed at work here. Mrs. A-15 explained, "My father-in-law often told me, 'R. Your mother-in-law is a woman of Meiji [1868-1912] Era. She doesn't know young women of Modern Japan. So, just ignore what she says to you.'" See A-15, January 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁴⁰⁴ A-15, War Brides Interview Project, 1.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, 2.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

and European war brides in interracial marriages had.⁴⁰⁸ Mrs. A-15 described her problems at her in-law's dinner table: "Since the food my husband's parents serve is so different from that my family eat in Japan, I can't get used to their food. I had no appetite at my parents-in-law's. So, I didn't eat much. Often, I said, 'No, I don't want to eat.' to my mother-in-law when she told me to eat."⁴⁰⁹ The Japanese foods that Mrs. A-15's in-laws prepared were so different from the Japanese foods she ate in Japan that Mrs. A-15's situation at the dinner table mirrored that of the war brides discussed above. Not surprisingly, Mrs. A-15's mother-in-law did not care for her daughter-in-law's pickiness at the dinner table. Mrs. A-15 described her mother-in-law's reaction, "...she [her mother-in-law] said, 'You are too fussy about the food.' She went around the neighborhood and told the neighbors, 'R came from a good family. So, she is very particular about food. She is very choosy and expensive for us.'"⁴¹⁰ This revealed class differences that existed between some war brides and their in-law families. Mrs. A-15 seems to have come from a middle-class Tokyo family, while her in-laws seem to be of rural and working-class origins.

Even though Mrs. A-15 was "fussy" about food, she did attempt to adopt some of the new foods of her in-laws. For example, Mrs. A-15 ate the Japanese breakfast served by her in-laws, even though she was accustomed to eating a western-style breakfast in Japan. In this case differences in custom and food overlapped, as Mrs. A-15 explained, "In Japan, at my home, we have western breakfast, eating bread. We never eat rice, especially 'Chazuke' (rice with hot tea poured in the bowl;

⁴⁰⁸ Japanese war brides' preference for Japanese food from Japan (versus Hawaii) is also discussed in the next section of this chapter in which I argue food is an important aspect of ethnic identity, and significantly, an aspect that war brides were able to maintain. See below.

⁴⁰⁹ A-15, War Brides Interview Project, 3.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

this is supposed to be improper.) My family never permits us to eat Chazuke. But my mother-in-law insists that I must eat Chazuke.”⁴¹¹ For this family, then, the dinner table as borderland was not a place where foods were exchanged, but a place where cultural and class differences were highlighted. Perhaps because most of the food in question was Japanese, a real exchange was more difficult than for war brides in interracial marriages. So rather than bring her own foods to the table, Mrs. A-15 would not eat, upsetting her mother-in-law, or in the case of breakfast, would try to adopt a new custom. In the end, however, the dinner table revealed the cultural divide between Mrs. A-15 and her new family, exacerbated these differences, and ultimately led to Mrs. A-15 and her husband moving out and into their own home.⁴¹²

Even though Mrs. A-15 and her mother-in-law did not get along, the mother-in-law was angry when the couple decided to move out because she felt they were abandoning her. This woman believed it was the duty of the son and daughter-in-law to live with and serve the parents, once again revealing significant cultural differences between Japanese war brides and Japanese American families. The expectations of Mrs. A-15’s mother-in-law encapsulated the idea of “filial piety.” Dr. Yukiko Kimura explained the prevalence of a commitment to “filial piety” among Japanese Americans in Hawaii and the absence of that commitment among the Japanese families of the war brides in her study. “In Hawaii, the words ‘filial piety’ are much more used than in Japan, and the parents strongly emphasize the children’s obligation and look forward to a daughter-in-law who will fulfill this expectation.” Kimura went on to report that, “All the Japanese war brides said that their parents almost

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid, 2.

never used the words ‘filial piety...’⁴¹³ Furthermore, the war brides themselves did not subscribe to the idea of filial piety, and like Mrs. A-15, wanted a life (and certainly a home) separate from their in-laws. Not surprisingly, then, these divergent views over filial piety created a significant divide between the two groups of Japanese immigrants.

Mrs. A-1 experienced problems similar to those of Mrs. A-15 in that the difficulties stemmed from the specific type of Japanese food prepared, not just the custom in which the in-law family served the food. Mrs. A-1 recalled, “I had a hard time to get used to the food my mother-in-law cooked.”⁴¹⁴ This may seem surprising due to the fact that Mrs. A-1’s mother-in-law cooked Japanese food, but as Mrs. A-1 described in the rest of her conversation, the foods she and her mother-in-law cooked were different enough that neither woman liked the other’s food. She said, “She never let me cook and she wouldn’t like the food if I cooked, because, the local Japanese are used to hard working and they have to eat a lot. So, they put a lot of shoyu-sauce and make the food salty. We in Japan like our food less salty.” Beyond the similarities to the experiences of other Japanese and European war brides who had difficulties adjusting to the new food of their in-laws, Mrs. A-1’s experience with her in-laws is another example of how the dinner table was a cultural borderland, but not a place for exchange or appreciation of cultural difference. Mrs. A-1’s in-laws did not allow her to prepare her own foods (either for herself or the family), just as Italian war bride D-101 mentioned above.

⁴¹³ See Kimura, “War Brides in Hawaii and Their In-Laws,” 73. Further discussion of the cultural differences between Japanese war brides and Japanese Americans will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

⁴¹⁴ A-1, December 1953, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

Yet however strained the situations were for Mrs. A-15 or Mrs. A-1, theirs did not compare to the complete breakdown of the cultural borderland of the dinner table some war brides faced. Such a breakdown occurred when there was a lack of meal/dinner table time together and thus no opportunity for exchange. This was the case for Mrs. A-34 whose mother-in-law was not interested in eating together. Mrs. A-34, who had been ill and spent time in the hospital, explained, “Whenever I went home [to her in-law’s house], my mother-in-law never cooked for me. She always said, ‘Go and buy whatever food you like and cook it yourself.’”⁴¹⁵ Although this could be interpreted as positive because Mrs. A-34’s mother-in-law gave her the freedom to prepare the foods she wanted (especially compared to those war brides above who did not have such opportunities), the entire absence of a borderland via the dinner table was symbolic. It revealed how distant and cold the mother-in-law was with Mrs. A-34 and the lack of relationship between the two women.

As will be discussed in the section following this one, food preparation was a way for war brides to maintain a strong sense of their ethnic identity at home. Even those war brides that had learned to cook the foods of their new husbands’ culture usually persisted in cooking the foods of their homeland. But it was exactly this type of mix of food preparations that made the dinner table a cultural borderland, or place where a war bride’s new and old cultures met. This collision sometimes exacerbated existing problems with in-laws, created new problems, or became the site of a harmonious exchange of cultures.

⁴¹⁵ A-34, February 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

Although Japanese war brides' own racial identity was porous and unstable in the public sphere, especially on the mainland, war brides maintained a clear racial and ethnic identity in the privacy of their home lives through food preparation and language practices.⁴¹⁶ All of the Japanese war brides married to Caucasian men learned how to cook American food, but many continued to prepare Japanese foods as well. Mrs. O-15 said, "I cook Japanese food most of the time. He [her husband] likes it. He even eats sashimi. Our children want nothing but the Japanese food.I learned how to cook good haole [American] food while we were living with my aunt. So, I can cook haole food for my husband also."⁴¹⁷ Not all husbands were like Mrs. O-15's and many did not care for Japanese food. The war brides continued to prepare Japanese food, however, even if only for themselves or their children. For example, Mrs. O-13 cooked, "...American food for my husband. My children and I eat Japanese food."⁴¹⁸ Some women persisted in eating Japanese food to the detriment of their personal relationships with in-laws. Mrs. O-38 recalled that when she lived with her in-laws that she, "...didn't like the American food. So I cooked my food. That didn't please my in-laws."⁴¹⁹ Other women avoided such confrontations by eating

⁴¹⁶ Simone Cinotto discusses the notion of public and private ethnic identities for Italian immigrants in New York during the second wave of immigration. I'm going to incorporate her ideas into this section of my chapter. Simone Cinotto, "Leonard Covello, the Covello Papers, and the History of Eating Habits among Italian Immigrants in New York," *The Journal of American History* September 2004: 497-521.

⁴¹⁷ O-15, September 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁴¹⁸ O-13, August 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁴¹⁹ O-38, February 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

American food with their husbands and eating Japanese food when they were alone.⁴²⁰

The cultural practice of food preparation was so specific that it was not enough for the war brides of this study to purchase Japanese foods, readily available in Hawaii, rather, they had to prepare these foods themselves. Mrs. O-13 complained, “I don’t like the ‘miso’ in Hawaii. It is too sweet and not like the ‘miso’ in Japan.”⁴²¹ In another example, Mrs. O-12 said, “I don’t like the Sushi the local Japanese make.”⁴²² So instead of eating Hawaiian Sushi, Mrs. O-12 made “‘Sushi’ in the Tokyo style.”⁴²³ The specificity of food preparation for these war brides indicates its prominence as part of their racial identity. Significantly, this retention of self was easily maintained in the private sphere of the home where it typically did not have an impact on the acceptance of Japanese war brides in society (with the obvious exception of Mrs. O-38 who experienced problems with her in-laws due to her persistence in eating Japanese rather than American foods).

European war brides also maintained a strong ethnic identity at home through food practices. Their food preparation most commonly consisted of a mix of foods based on the ethnicity of the war bride and husband, just as with Japanese war brides. Mrs. D-121a, an Austrian war bride, learned how to cook Japanese food from her mother-in-law.⁴²⁴ Similarly, German war bride Mrs. D-113 cooked Hawaiian food

⁴²⁰ O-58, War Brides Interview Project, 4.

⁴²¹ O-13, War Brides Interview Project, 2.

⁴²² O-12, August 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ D-121a, War Brides Interview Project, 2.

with her in-laws for special occasions.⁴²⁵ Mrs. D-89, an Austrian war bride married to a Chinese American food shop owner (specializing in Chinese foods), best explained the way war brides maintained ethnic identity through food preparation while still adopting new American, in this case Chinese-American, food practices. She said, “On Christmas or Thanksgiving Day we have family get together and have a Chinese food. But when I invite my friends, I cook German food. When we have a family get together, my 3 sisters-in-law come here and cook Chinese food.”⁴²⁶

The Japanese war brides in this study also retained their racial identity through the cultural practice of speaking Japanese. All of the war brides had learned to speak English at the time of the interview, and some spoke it quite well according to the notes of the interviewer.⁴²⁷ But as with food preparation, some war brides chose to maintain their Japanese culture and spoke Japanese. Mrs. O-13, for example, spoke both English and Japanese with her children.⁴²⁸ Other women, such as Mrs. O-12, only attended church services if they were in Japanese.⁴²⁹

Japanese war brides married to Japanese American men again offer an interesting counterpoint to the experiences of the war brides in interracial marriages. Although these women shared a common language with their husbands and new in-law families, they too had to negotiate cultural differences. And for some war brides,

⁴²⁵ D-113, July 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

⁴²⁶ D-89, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2. Other war brides, such as French war bride D-120b, alternated cooking French and Filipino foods on a day to day basis. D-120b, September 1956, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁴²⁷ All of the interviews were conducted in English. There were no translators present. So all of the interviewees spoke English well enough to understand the interviewer’s questions and provide answers in English.

⁴²⁸ O-13, War Brides Interview Project, 1.

⁴²⁹ O-12, War Brides Interview Project, 4.

such as Mrs. F-4, that meant adapting her own language practices to that of her in-laws. Mrs. F-4 was a college-educated woman from Tokyo and was surprised by the “vulgar” Japanese spoken by her in-laws and further explained, “The Nisei learn such vulgar Japanese from their parents and use them without knowing that their language is vulgar. Nisei think that the vulgar [sic] language their parents speak is the Japanese language.”⁴³⁰ Just as with food, language sometimes revealed class differences between war brides and their in-laws. Mrs. F-4 did not mention this language difference to the interviewer simply to critique her in-laws, however. She outlined these differences as a way to show the cultural divide between herself and her new family, as well as to reveal how she had to adapt her own practices in order to ingratiate herself. She said, “In order to get along with my in-laws I had to learn to speak Bad Japanese, otherwise they would criticize me as being unadaptable or high-hatted or arrogant. The Issei in Hawaii don’t like us talk good Japanese; they feel that we are trying to show off our better background in order to humiliate them.” Even though all of the people spoke the same language in this instance, Mrs. F-4 still had class barriers to overcome. Education levels, years spent in Hawaii away from Japan, and class differences account for these barriers. Mrs. F-4’s relatives in Japan even warned her before she left that the origins of the Japanese American people in Hawaii could be traced to “low class laborers,” versus her own middle-class roots.⁴³¹

Although many people at the time assumed war brides were all from the lower classes

⁴³⁰ F-4, March 1954, 3. It is also important to note that Mrs. F-4’s husband completed two years of high school, as compared to her college education.

⁴³¹ Ibid, 2. Notably, this stereotype went in tandem with the even more common assumption about the sexually amoral nature of war brides. They were assumed to be exotic dancers or even prostitutes. See Chapter 5 for examples of how Japanese Americans ridiculed Japanese war brides for being “pan pan girls.”

(and perhaps even coming to the US for money or to raise their own status), that is not true for the RASRL war brides. They were from various classes, including middle to upper in this case, and possessed various degrees of education. This example of Mrs. F-4 and her language barrier with her in-law also alludes to the dissimilarity between Japanese war brides and the Japanese American community and how these differences led to at times antagonistic relations between the two, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Mrs. F-4 also had to adapt her behavior in order to adjust to her new life in America, just as Japanese war brides married to Caucasian men and European war brides married to Asian American men had. As she explained to the interviewer, “If we Japanese girls are willing to learn the bad Japanese of the Issei and get along with the latter, I think we get adjusted sooner or later.”⁴³² Though Mrs. F-4’s adjustment to life with her in-laws only required learning a new dialect of her own language, which may not have been as dramatic or difficult as learning an entirely new language as other war brides had to, her experiences offer a striking parallel to those women. What’s more, Mrs. F-4’s predicament did not offer the same opportunity to combine language practices as those examples mentioned above, which left her wondering, “Why did I have college education, if I was to settle down this way?”⁴³³

Although Japanese war brides maintained their racial identity through the cultural practice of food preparation and language, in some instances, they had to give up other cultural practices. The most significant example of this can be seen in the adoption of Christianity. Some of the war brides had to convert to Christianity in

⁴³² Ibid, 3.

⁴³³ Ibid.

order to marry their husbands. As Mrs. O-27 recalled, “I also had to see a Catholic Chaplain of the U.S. Army. He opposed our marriage, because I was not a Catholic. Finally, he said, ‘If I was willing to become a Catholic, I will approve of your marriage.’”⁴³⁴ Left with no other choice, Mrs. O-27 then converted to Catholicism in order to marry her husband. And when the interviewer arrived at her home, she noted, “There is no Japanese ornament such as Japanese dolls which are always found in the home of Japanese war brides. On the wall a crucifix and a few other things which suggested the faith of her and her husband, Catholic faith.”⁴³⁵ Thus, Mrs. O-27’s conversion to Catholicism was so complete that there was no visible sign of her Japanese culture present, even in the privacy of her own home. In this case, cultural assimilation seemed complete.⁴³⁶

Not surprisingly, the European war brides in this study, who usually already practiced some form of Christianity, did not face the same dilemma as Japanese war brides. Mrs. B-7, a German war bride, found herself in the opposite situation to that of Mrs. O-27. She was Catholic, while her Japanese American husband was Buddhist. However, these two did not face any obstacles to their marriage due to their religious differences. The local priest in Mrs. B-7’s German hometown married the couple, and Mrs. B-7 did not report experiencing any problems with the immigration process due to her religion being different from that of her husband.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ O-27, War Brides Interview Project, 1. Mrs. O-27 did not mention her previous religion to the interviewer. She also did not indicate the extent to which her husband may have pressured her to convert, only the objection of the Army Chaplain.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Mrs. O-27 indicated, however, that her husband liked Japanese food, and based on what she told the interviewer it seemed as though she prepared both Japanese and “western-style food.” See Ibid, 2.

⁴³⁷ B-7, War Brides Interview Project, 2.

For other Japanese war brides, discarding their Japanese religion (usually Shinto or Buddhism) in favor of Christianity was a way to integrate themselves into social situations with family and friends. Mrs. O-57 and Mrs. O-58 attended Christian masses with their Caucasian friends on a regular basis.⁴³⁸ Mrs. A-18 even helped her husband's grandmother teach Sunday school when she lived with her husband's family in Kentucky.⁴³⁹

Women Without Race: Japanese War Brides, Racial Categorization, and Acceptance

As seen in the previous chapter, postwar constructions of racialized gender allowed Japanese war brides' entrance and acceptance into American society. These women were seen as passive and willing to assimilate rapidly into American society, the latter evidenced especially by their marriage to American men. In short, Japanese war bride's apparent embodiment of a postwar ideal of domestic womanhood, that of the good housewife, eased her entry into the United States. The following section of this chapter examines the ways racial identity, specifically, brokered the acceptance of Japanese war brides in America following World War II. I argue that the perceived race of Japanese wives sometimes depended on the racial classification of their husbands. In such cases, these women's racial identity was not fixed but relational to such an extent that one might speak of racial or ethnic coverture in the mid-20th century U.S. Although only a small percentage (7.1%) of the RASRL Japanese war brides that lived on the mainland reported racial coverture, these

⁴³⁸ O-57 and O-58, War Brides Interview Project.

⁴³⁹ A-18, War Brides Interview Project, 2. Mrs. A-18 did not express any anger or resentment in regards to her religious conversion.

findings remain significant and potentially suggestive of a wider trend among these women. Numerous other women may have experienced similar incidents but just not mentioned them to the interviewer due to the nature of the interviews and the variant personalities of the interviewees. The scholarship of Regina Lark further confirms this trend of racial coopture, giving one reason to believe this small number of reports was merely the tip of the iceberg.⁴⁴⁰

Japanese war brides often expressed bewilderment over their place in the postwar American racial hierarchy, especially in the Jim Crow South. Mrs. F-45 was a Japanese war bride married to a Japanese American soldier, and she spent time in the South, first in North Carolina in the fall of 1952 and Georgia immediately after. Although Mrs. F-45 never reported experiencing racial prejudice because of her own racial background, she discussed her confusion about racial order in the South. During her interview, she described riding a segregated bus in Georgia and asking her husband why African Americans stood at the rear of the bus when there were available seats in the front. Even more interesting, Mrs. F-45 was not sure of the protocol she herself should follow, but her husband assured her that it was, “OK for us Japanese to be sitting in the front seats.”⁴⁴¹

Mrs. A-16, a Japanese war bride married to an Okinawan American GI, was similarly confused by the South’s legalized segregation. When her husband was transferred to Virginia in February 1952, Mrs. A-16 followed, but did not stay through the year, in part because of race relations in the small (unnamed) town in

⁴⁴⁰ Regina Lark, “They Challenged Two Nations,” 326.

⁴⁴¹ F-45, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, p.1-2.

which she lived. She explained that separate waiting rooms existed for whites and African Americans. “At first I didn’t know to which I belonged,” she continued, “Someone said that I must wait in the white waiting room. So, I did so. I wasn’t discriminated against. In fact, white people treated me nicely too.”⁴⁴² Being categorized as white did not stop Mrs. A-16 from feeling uncomfortable, however, and she went back to Hawaii in October to live with her in-laws while her husband completed his tour in Virginia. Unlike Mrs. F-45 who was only confused by the racism of the Jim Crow South, Mrs. A-16 disapproved of it and felt awkward about her own place in the hierarchy, even though she claimed she did not experience direct discrimination herself.

Despite these war brides’ confusion over the racial order and their place in American society, most of the families and many of the communities around the U.S. accepted these Japanese women immigrants seemingly without much hostility. However, this was not always the case. For example, Mrs. O-58, who lived with her white in-laws in Cincinnati, Ohio, reported being stared at quite often whenever she ventured out into the public. She said, “They didn’t see many Orientals. So, they were curious and just stared at me.”⁴⁴³ And though this did make her feel uncomfortable, she described it as the only negative experience she had. Mrs. A-18 experienced a similar reaction when she moved with her white husband to Army housing near his base in Kentucky. When Mrs. A-18 first moved in she was the only Japanese war bride, and she described how the other Army wives watched her closely

⁴⁴² A-16, January 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁴⁴³ O-58, August 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

at first. She said, “At first these white women looked down upon me, because I was an Oriental. But when I got to know them, they became very nice to me.”⁴⁴⁴ It also helped that twenty five other Japanese war brides moved to the base housing, thereby releasing Mrs. A-18 from her novelty status.

Japanese war brides experienced the most difficulty when they deviated from the mores of the dominant white middle class. For example, the Japanese wives of African American servicemen risked being shunned by the white middle class. Although Japanese/Caucasian marriages were only rarely viewed as problematic, it seems that white America routinely deemed Japanese/African American marriages as such. Among Mrs. A-18’s war bride friends at the Kentucky base, some were married to African American men. Mrs. A-18 explained the racist sentiment towards such marriages:

There were two Japanese girls who were married to Negro men. When they came [to my home] they never talked about their husbands. My husband has no prejudice against Negroes, but some of the white husbands of the Japanese war brides forebad[e] their wives to associate with the Japanese war brides of Negro men.⁴⁴⁵

So although these men had no problem marrying Asian women, they found the idea of other Asian women marrying black men so troublesome that they would not allow their wives even to speak to such a person.

Mrs. O-24 offered similar evidence of racial discrimination towards the Japanese wives of African American men in the South, while reporting that she herself did not feel discriminated against. When Mrs. O-24 first came to the United

⁴⁴⁴ A-18, January 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid, 3.

States she lived with her white husband and in-laws in Alabama, whose anti-miscegenation laws required that Mrs. O-24 and her husband get married in another state. They chose Missouri. Despite that, Mrs. O-24 reported that she had a wonderful relationship with her in-laws, who accepted her, and she, “never had any kind of race discrimination from the white people while I was in the South.”⁴⁴⁶ It is possible that Mrs. O-24 did not wish to discuss her frustration with the racial discrimination she faced in the South, such as the miscegenation law. Yet given that Mrs. O-24 was a candid interviewee—she spent more time outlining the difficulties with the immigration process, for example—and only mentioned getting married in another state in passing, it seems reasonable to conclude that Mrs. O-24 honestly did not feel discriminated against, as she reported. In this instance, acceptance in interpersonal relationships seems to have trumped discriminatory laws.⁴⁴⁷ Mrs. O-24 did not report experiencing any racial discrimination in her daily life, such as the enforcement of Jim Crow laws against her.

Mrs. O-24 explained to the interviewer how the war brides of black GIs were not as lucky as she. She said:

The Southern people were very nice to me. But I know they don't accept Negroes and girls who married Negroes are having a hard time. They may be accepted by their Negro in-laws and relatives but when they go outside, they are treated as Negroes by the white people even though they are Japanese, because they married Negroes.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ O-24, October 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2-3. Regina Lark described the Japanese war brides in her study as having experienced more difficult relationships with southern in-laws, but that was not the case with the war brides in the RASRL study. See Lark, “They Challenged Two Nations,” 287-352.

⁴⁴⁷ This does not negate the findings in *The Chicago Defender*, which were discussed in Chapter Three. That newspaper provided an incisive critique of legalized racism in the South that had an impact on war brides.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

Mrs. O-24 went on to explain how when one of these brides came to visit her, her father-in-law forbade her to associate with the wives of black men. Thus, the same family that celebrated their son's marriage to a Japanese woman deplored the idea of a Japanese woman marrying a black man. The stories relayed by Mrs. A-18 and Mrs. O-24 suggest that white America may have accepted Japanese war brides only under very strict racially-specific terms. Japanese war brides were sometimes relegated to the separate and unequal status suffered by African Americans in 1950s America. Just as marrying a Caucasian man could sometimes elevate a Japanese woman to near white status, marrying a black man could have the opposite effect.

Although none of the interviewees in the RASRL study were married to African American soldiers, other evidence verified the second class status ascribed to Japanese war brides married to African American GIs. Regina Lark interviewed such women in the 1990s, and they reported that Japanese war brides married to Caucasian GIs "acted white." These women described the prejudice they experienced from other Japanese war brides, who acted superior to those married to African American GIs. Lark attributed this treatment to behavior learned and encouraged from a segregated U.S. military while in still in Japan.⁴⁴⁹ Yet based on the details provided by Japanese war brides from the RASRL interviews, it seems that such behavior must also have been grounded in their experiences in the United States. Since Japanese war brides who married Caucasian GIs were elevated to the white status of their husbands, some of these war brides chose to use that status to discriminate against other war brides they perceived as beneath them in the racial hierarchy. This only reinforces the impact of the stories relayed by Mrs. A-18 and Mrs. O-24. Beyond

⁴⁴⁹ Regina Lark, "They Challenged Two Nations," 326.

being perceived as white or benefiting from the white status of their husbands, some of these Japanese war brides appropriated white behaviors as well: in this case the behavior of racial discrimination.

One German war bride married to a Korean American soldier, Mrs. D-22, clearly articulated the predicament that war brides who married African American GIs faced when she described the difficulties of German women who married African American men. She explained that, “It must be awfully hard for those who married Negroes after they came to this country. They have to be willing to become Negroes.”⁴⁵⁰ Although Mrs. D-22 did not amplify this statement, the experiences described by Mrs. A-18 and Mrs. O-24 verified her sentiments.

Such treatment and racial categorization were not limited to the South. One of the most telling examples of the type of racial coverture that war brides experienced in the postwar United States can be seen through Mrs. O-31’s interaction with other servicemen’s wives on a base near Pittsburg, California. When Mrs. O-31 joined her white husband on base around 1953 she discovered few other Japanese war brides, but quickly made friends with the white wives of servicemen on base. According to her testimony, these women welcomed her into their social circle so completely that Mrs. O-31 told the interviewer, “On the mainland I forgot that I was a Japanese, because no one treated me differently. I was accepted as a wife of a serviceman by the Caucasian wives. I belonged to the Women’s Club at the Army post and participated in the same activities with other women.”⁴⁵¹ But beyond

⁴⁵⁰ D-22, May 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁴⁵¹ O-31, November 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 4.

accepting Mrs. O-31 as one of their own, these women officially categorized her as white when they allowed her into their white Women's Club. Mrs. O-31 had been puzzled by the racial order when she wanted to join a Women's Club on the California base: she was unsure if she should become a member of the Negro Women's Club or the White Women's Club. She was ultimately instructed to join the white group because her husband was Caucasian. Mrs. O-31 explained that the members of the white Women's Club, "...said that Japanese girls who were wives of Negro servicemen should belong to the Negro Women's Club."⁴⁵² Thus Mrs. O-31's (and any other Japanese war bride's) own race was irrelevant. At this California base, just as in the South, it was the race of the war bride's husband that determined the race of the war bride.⁴⁵³

Mrs. O-31 preferred her white status on the mainland, both on the base in California and in Maryville, Ohio where she lived with her in-laws prior to her move to the West coast, to her status on Hawaii. Once in Hawaii she was treated as a Japanese war bride by the Japanese Americans living there, and in her words they, "made her aware that I am a Japanese war bride."⁴⁵⁴ Mrs. O-31's white status did not accompany her to Hawaii, and she did not experience the same level of acceptance as

⁴⁵² Ibid, 5.

⁴⁵³ It is difficult to say how the members of the white Women's Club would have categorized the wife of a Japanese American GI or whether or not they would have invited her to join their club. In the RASRL study there are examples of other Japanese war brides joining Japanese war brides clubs when they existed on base. These clubs, which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Five, had nothing to do with the race of the husband, however. This case of club membership and Mrs. O-31 represents an unusual but specific case of the war bride's own identity being rendered completely irrelevant to some white Americans because of the nature of the clubs on the base.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 4.

she had on the mainland.⁴⁵⁵ This resulted in Mrs. O-31 hoping for a move back to California or Ohio for permanent residence.⁴⁵⁶

European war brides married to Asian American servicemen found their own race similarly muted at times. For example, in Hawaii, the race of the husband rather than the bride herself could have the most significant impact on whether or not the war bride would be able to obtain a job. Mrs. D-113, a German war bride married to a man of Hawaiian, Chinese, and Caucasian background, lived in Honolulu and worked as a goldsmith. In 1950 she tried to obtain a job at what she characterized as exclusive department stores, but said, “they didn’t trust me and wouldn’t employ me.”⁴⁵⁷ She and her husband were both surprised by what they felt was race prejudice. Mrs. D-113’s husband was particularly surprised because he thought she would be hired quickly because she was white. Mrs. D-113 was eventually hired at a Chinese store, where she still worked at the time of the interview five years later. However, her own whiteness was not enough to obtain the job she really wanted. She had taken on her husband’s race.

More commonly, however, European war brides in Hawaii experienced discrimination based on their own race. Mrs. D-121a, an Austrian war bride married

⁴⁵⁵ Unfortunately Mrs. O-31 did not mention how she was treated by whites in Hawaii so the reader does not know how that impacted her view of life on the island.

⁴⁵⁶ My argument for the variable racial status of Mrs. O-31 parallels the one made by Linda Gordon regarding Irish American orphans at the turn of the 20th Century. In *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, Gordon showed that when Irish orphans left New York City in 1904 to be adopted by Catholic families in Arizona, they left the East with non-white status. When they arrived in Arizona to be adopted by Mexican American Catholic families, however, the Anglo residents of Clifton-Morenci viewed the Irish children as white based on the racial categories of their own town. Furthermore, they abducted the children from their new families because they did not want these [now white] orphans living with Mexican Americans. Thus, as with the orphans, Japanese war brides’ racial status was unstable and varied based on geographic location and local racial categories and hierarchies. See Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁴⁵⁷ D-113, July 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

to a Japanese American GI, was the only white waitress at the City Grill in Honolulu, where all the waitresses were Japanese American. The situation became so unbearable that Mrs. D-121a quit her job.⁴⁵⁸ In another example, Mrs. D-29, a German war bride, looked for a job in Honolulu after helping out in her Filipino father-in-law's store in Lanai as a cashier and tailor. She applied for jobs at various stores but was told, "...they preferred to employ Oriental girls."⁴⁵⁹ Mrs. D-29 was so disappointed that she had given up on finding a job. Mrs. B-7's experience on the Hawaiian job market mirrored Mrs. D-29's. Mrs. B-7 explained that, "I wanted to get a job but I couldn't get one, because I was a German and couldn't speak Japanese."⁴⁶⁰ Although Mrs. B-7's lack of preferred language skills illuminates a reasonable explanation for the discrimination German (and other European) war brides faced in Hawaii, the result remained the same. According to Mrs. B-7, "In Hawaii the Japanese don't give jobs to Germans. They stick together and give jobs to the Japanese first....Here in Hawaii, the people think Oriental[s] should get the first chance. So there is no chance for us from Germany."⁴⁶¹ The three incidents described by Mrs. D-121a, Mrs. D-29, and Mrs. B-7 reveal the typical experience for European war brides married to Asian American men. In Hawaii, where the Asian American majority often owned many of the local businesses and resented Caucasians as representative of the political elite, being a European war bride was detrimental in terms of employment, regardless of the ethnicity or race of the

⁴⁵⁸ D-121a, September 1956, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2-3.

⁴⁵⁹ D-29, August 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁴⁶⁰ B-7, War Brides Interview Project, 1.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

husband. Thus although European war brides at times experienced the discrimination or stigma attached to interracial marriage, they usually did not experience the same type of racial coverture that Japanese war brides sometimes did.

Japanese war brides occupied an unusual place in the American racial hierarchy in the mid-twentieth century. Their own racial identity was so flexible and contingent on place, and even more importantly the race of their husband, that their own racial identity was potentially rendered irrelevant to some white Americans. Particularly on the mainland, where war brides had to be inserted into the existing postwar racial categories of black or white, their own Japanese identity had the least significance in the public sphere. Scholars such as Caroline Chung Simpson have argued that Japanese war brides' cultural acceptance hinged on their Japanese American identity as a, "...postwar prototype of the Asian American model minority."⁴⁶² As the war brides in this study have shown, it was the race of their husband that sometimes brokered their acceptance by white America. But in Hawaii, where both racial categories and the racial hierarchy were much more variegated than on the mainland, the race of the war bride, whether she be Japanese or European, more often remained independent of her husband's. Racial coverture was not the rule there.

German war bride Mrs. D-8 told her interviewer, "For us German girls, our marriage to Hawaiian boys is completely leaving behind all of what we used to have

⁴⁶² Caroline Chung Simpson, *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2001), 54.

and used to know and get into a completely strange custom and people.”⁴⁶³ However, that assessment was only partly correct. For most war brides, marrying GIs and coming to the United States certainly meant interacting with new people and new cultures, and in many instances, learning and adopting new ways. For these earliest stages of acculturation, the in-law families proved to be essential tools in the transition to America, greatly assisting or undermining a war bride’s success depending on the type of relationship that developed. Coming to the United States with their husbands to join and start a new family life, however, also meant introducing their own cultural practices to their husbands and in-laws. Other historians who have considered Japanese war bride immigration have emphasized their speedy assimilation into American life.⁴⁶⁴ However, as the Japanese and European war brides in this study have demonstrated, assimilation was not always the rule. War brides retained certain aspects of their racial identity, in part due to their control in the private sphere of the household, and also due to the cultural exchange that occurred within families. The cultural borderland of the dinner table provided one medium for this exchange, as well as the maintenance of multiple and distinct cultural practices within one household. This ability to control certain aspects of their racial identity balanced, in a certain sense, some of the assimilating war brides were forced into in the public sphere.

⁴⁶³ D-8, 5.

⁴⁶⁴ Regina Lark, “They Challenged Two Nations.”

Chapter 5: War Bride Communities

Japanese and European war brides differed from earlier waves of immigrants in many ways. One difference was that they were not able to slide into a single immigrant community in the United States. They had to fit into a variety of communities scattered across the United States. Their relationship to existing immigrant communities was not a natural fit, as assumed bonds of common race or ethnicity were not always enough to provide these different groups of people with a common ground. This was especially true for Japanese war brides. As discussed in Chapter Four, in-law families often served as an important part of a war bride's social network and provided a link to a larger community. Yet war brides also worked to form their own friendships and communal networks. Based on the shared and unique experience of immigrating to the United States as a war bride, they formed clubs often based on racial/ethnic identities.

Background: A Comparison of Japanese War Bride and Earlier Japanese Immigration

For being immigrants from the same country, Japanese war brides did not share many common characteristics with the earlier waves of Japanese immigration. Historian Evelyn Nakano Glenn outlined differences between the two groups of immigrants such as regional origins, marriage patterns, and education levels.⁴⁶⁵ Nakano Glenn reported that most of the Issei women arrived in the United States between 1915 and 1924 from southern Japan—the very same region critiqued by so many war brides from the RASRL study as rural and backwards. Just as their male

⁴⁶⁵ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

counterparts, earlier female immigrants from Japan had been members of families involved in farming or small businesses.

Issei women also had received a modicum of education due to reforms during the Meiji era that implemented universal education in 1872. This education involved four to six years of elementary education, followed by a possible two years of middle school to learn sewing and cooking. According to Nakano Glenn, "...the average educational level of Issei women equaled that of men—about eight years."⁴⁶⁶ This educational experience differed from that of war brides in two important ways. Most war brides had managed, despite war time difficulties, to complete high school.⁴⁶⁷ Furthermore, a significant number of Japanese war brides in the RASRL study, 21 of 126 or 16.7%, had even completed post secondary education work.⁴⁶⁸ These educational levels represented a marked difference from earlier waves of female Japanese immigrants and helps explain the cultural divide between the two groups of women, and it additionally represented a difference in educational parity within marriages. While most Japanese war brides married to Japanese American men shared a comparable level of education with their husbands, 31 of 126 (24.6%) possessed more education than their husbands.

Though one can make generalizations about the origins of Issei women, it is much more difficult to do so for Japanese war brides. Nakano Glenn explained, "It is

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid, 43.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid, 59. Most of the war brides in Nakano-Glenn's study had completed high school. The vast majority of Japanese war brides in the RASRL study had also received a high school education: 127 out of 148 had at least some high school education, and most of those women had completed high school.

⁴⁶⁸ Those statistics are for Japanese war brides married to Japanese American GIs. For Japanese war brides married to Caucasian GIs, the percentage whom had completed post secondary work was 13.6%. Most Japanese war brides married to Caucasian GIs also had a comparable level of education with their husbands, but 18.2% had a higher level of education.

more difficult to generalize about the social and economic circumstances of the war brides...they were raised in well-to-do, middle-class, and poor working-class families; they came from all parts of Japan, from provincial towns and large cities.”⁴⁶⁹ Historian Paul Spickard noted, however, that many Japanese war brides came from large urban areas such as Tokyo and Osaka, rendering their origins different from those of earlier waves of Japanese immigrants.⁴⁷⁰ Furthermore, Dr. Yukiko Kimura reported that the majority of Japanese war brides of the RASRL study, “...consider themselves as of a better social class than their in-laws and more highly educated than they...”⁴⁷¹ Although these differences ranged from subtle to significant, they factored into the relationship between Japanese war brides and the Japanese American community because the Japanese war brides of the RASRL study in particular believed themselves superior to the Japanese American community, thereby increasing friction between the two groups.

Relationship to the Japanese American Community

The settlement patterns of Japanese war brides married to Caucasian GIs did not predispose them to a close connection with any Japanese American community. Since Japanese war brides came to the United States with their GI husbands, they most often settled in the husband’s hometown or at his next military post if he was still enlisted. This pattern of settlement dispersed war brides across the entire country, rather than near preexisting Japanese American immigrant communities.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid, 58-59.

⁴⁷⁰ Paul R. Spickard, *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth-Century America* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 126.

⁴⁷¹ Kimura, “War Brides in Hawaii and Their In-Laws,” 74.

Although it is difficult for scholars to gage exactly where all war brides settled, as Paul Spickard noted, "...it is reasonable to assume that the Japanese brides were spread rather thinly over the country initially."⁴⁷² This pattern of settlement was crucial to the acceptance of these immigrant women because it made them seem (to native-born Americans) much more innocuous than other waves of immigrants that immigrated and settled in groups (family or otherwise). This settlement pattern did not, however, help foster a relationship between Japanese war brides and the Japanese American community, even when they lived in close proximity, as did the RASRL war brides in Hawaii. This fact only further differentiated Japanese war brides from other Japanese Americans, thereby rendering them more acceptable to white Americans.

Japanese war brides married to Caucasian men did come into contact with the Japanese American population living in the United States. These war brides usually did not have a close relationship with this community, however, as the interviewed brides indicated in their life stories. Some of the women had female friends who were Japanese American or knew Japanese American couples, especially once they lived in Hawaii. But these relationships were strictly individual. They did not seem to bind the war brides to existing communities in any way.⁴⁷³ In fact, most of the war brides looked down upon the Japanese Americans they came into contact with once in the United States.

⁴⁷² Spickard, *Mixed Blood*, 138.

⁴⁷³ See, for example, O-12, August 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI and O-24, October 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI.

These dynamics ruled in Hawaii. The brides deemed the existing Japanese American community “old fashioned” and criticized them for their poor English.⁴⁷⁴ Mrs. O-24 explained, “The Japanese people in Hawaii are really country people in Japan. If you go to a remote country of Hiroshima or Yamaguchi in Japan you might find such people.”⁴⁷⁵ According to Mrs. O-24, she was originally from a small town in between Nagoya and Gifu, but significantly also described growing up in a wealthy family with maids and servants. The geographical and class differences accounted not only for the lack of kinship Mrs. O-24 felt with the Japanese American community in Hawaii, but also for her biting critique of them. She went on to say, “Their language is awful. Their Japanese is country language (rough) of Hiroshima or Yamaguchi dialect.”⁴⁷⁶ Dr. Yukiko Kimura explained how the Japanese spoken by Japanese Americans in Hawaii differed from the “standard Japanese” spoken by the Japanese war brides when she said, “In contrast, their in-laws, being from agricultural areas, had very little opportunity for the daily use of standard Japanese either in Japan or in Hawaii. Moreover, their original dialects have further deteriorated by being mixed with various languages in Hawaii.”⁴⁷⁷ Kimura further explained how the Japanese spoken by the two groups were not only different but that Japanese war brides would have in fact been insulted by what they perceived as Japanese Americans’ misuse of some Japanese words because spoken Japanese differentiated between social classes. Since war brides considered themselves of a higher class than

⁴⁷⁴ See, for example, A-18, January 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI; O-12, War Brides Interview Project; and O-24, War Brides Interview Project.

⁴⁷⁵ O-24, War Brides Interview Project, 3.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Kimura, “War Brides in Hawaii and Their In-Laws,” 74.

their in-laws, they were offended by their in-laws' failure to use the differentiation in their spoken Japanese, as well as by "some of the commonly used expressions," which they considered "vulgar."⁴⁷⁸ Finally, Mrs. O-24 concluded that part of the interview by critiquing the English spoken by Nisei in Hawaii as well.

Mrs. O-24 also spoke of her dislike for the Japanese Americans in San Francisco. She reported, "I don't like the Japanese Americans in San Francisco. They are cold."⁴⁷⁹ Mrs. O-24 spent two weeks in San Francisco with her husband on her way back to Hawaii from a trip on the mainland to see her in-laws. She critiqued the attitude of the Japanese American population there as "cold" and only interested in monetary gain, but she also critiqued their culture, just as she did the Japanese in Hawaii. She explained to the interviewer, "The Nisei girls (waitresses) spoke such rude Japanese at the Japanese restaurant...The food they served didn't taste like the real Japanese food."⁴⁸⁰ As stated in the previous chapter, many war brides noted the differences in Japanese food in Japan and Japanese food in the United States, preferring the Japanese food of their own country. This was a way for immigrant women to maintain a connection with their homeland. The sharp critique of language, however, indicated a deep divide between some of the war brides and Japanese American communities. Although from the same country, these were two very different types of immigrant groups with surprisingly not much binding them together.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ O-24, War Brides Interview Project, 2. On her first stay in San Francisco, Mrs. O-24 disliked the Japanese American hotel she was staying at so much that she moved to a Haole hotel.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

Even when war brides did not register a dislike for the Japanese American community, as Mrs. O-24 and others did, they often spoke in tones of indifference. They wanted all types of friends and felt no need to be connected specifically to the Japanese American community. Mrs. O-50 explained the sentiment when she told the interviewer the following about her social circle: “I don’t have Japanese friends. I don’t miss them particularly. I think my association is mostly with Portuguese relatives, because of my mother-in-law and her relatives.”⁴⁸¹ Perhaps because it was most convenient, Mrs. O-50 associated with people she met through her in-law family. Significantly, however, she specifically mentioned not needing a connection to the Japanese in Hawaii. Mrs. O-50 did have one Japanese war bride (married to a Nisei) friend that she met on the plane to Hawaii, however, and she mentioned that another such friend would be coming over from Japan soon. These war bride friendships, which will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, were significant. They were part of the war bride’s community building, and in some cases a way to stay bonded to their homeland, as women’s clubs often formed along ethnic lines. Yet having Japanese war bride friends was different from having a relationship with the existing Japanese American community. It did not ease the relationship between the two, but rather, if anything, it served to maintain their separation.

Mrs. O-53 took Mrs. O-50’s isolation from the Japanese American community a step further when she said, “I used to have 1 Japanese war bride [friend]. She went back to Japan; her husband was a Nisei and transferred there again. I don’t know Japanese people or war brides. I am not interested in knowing them particularly. I

⁴⁸¹ O-50, June 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

want to mix with all kinds of people.”⁴⁸² Beyond these feelings of indifference towards the Japanese American community, most of the Japanese war brides married to Caucasian men did not mention the community at all. This lack of interest in bonding with the Japanese American community could also be attributed to the fact these women were involved in an interracial marriage. If they were willing to marry outside their racial group, they probably had more open attitudes to socializing with people from racially diverse backgrounds.

There were exceptions. Unlike the above war brides, Mrs. O-29 appreciated the presence of a Japanese American community in Hawaii. After living in San Francisco during her first year away from Japan, Mrs. O-29 moved to Hawaii. She told the interviewer that she had not been homesick since her arrival there two years earlier, “Especially while at Kapiolani, the whole neighborhood was Japanese and the people talked to me in Japanese.”⁴⁸³ Mrs. O-29’s husband had attended Japanese school for four months and spoke a modicum of Japanese, but Mrs. O-29 enjoyed speaking her native language freely with her neighbors in Kapiolani. Although Mrs. O-29 lived in a racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood at the time of the interview, she cited the presence of Japanese Americans as positive and a reason why she would like Hawaii to be her place of permanent residence after her husband retired from the military. Mrs. O-29’s in-laws lived in Argentina at the time of the interview, so the O-29’s had no connection to the mainland, as some of the other war bride couples did, nor an interest in going to Argentina. Finally, Mrs. O-29 felt

⁴⁸² O-53, June 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁴⁸³ O-29, November 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

homesick during the year she spent in San Francisco until she found a Japanese war bride club to join. The interview transcripts do not reveal why she did not have a relationship with the Japanese American community there, only that she was homesick during that year and less lonesome in Hawaii.⁴⁸⁴

Perhaps the most telling is that most of the Japanese war brides married to Caucasian men did not mention the Japanese American community at all, even though they were stationed in Hawaii at the time of the interview.⁴⁸⁵ Mrs. O-29 liked the community, and they made her feel less homesick. More typically, the above mentioned women registered their dislike and at times sharp critique of the community and its culture, but the rest did not have feelings one way or the other. These women relied more on friends of various backgrounds, which will be discussed later in this chapter, and in-law connections.⁴⁸⁶ It is also important to note that Japanese war brides in Hawaii did appreciate the availability of Japanese material culture, especially food. It gave them an opportunity to maintain a tangible connection with their culture, even if they did not associate with the community. As explained above, these war brides did not have a lot in common with any Japanese American community, even though they shared an assumed commonality based on race. Thus the war brides seemed quite distanced from the Japanese American community in many ways, even if they did have some close Nisei (second generation Japanese American) friends. And just as often, these women maintained close

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, 1.

⁴⁸⁵ We do not know the questions asked by the interviewer, only the answers of the war bride, so it is possible that some war brides were asked different questions than others. In general, however, they all seemed to be asked about friendships and social networks, as well as how they liked Hawaii. It seems to me that either question would yield a discussion about the Japanese American community in Hawaii if it was relevant to the war bride's life.

⁴⁸⁶ See Chapter Four for an extensive discussion regarding the relationships between war brides and in-laws.

friendships with Caucasian women. In addition, neither of these types of relationships ever seemed to supersede the close relationships these women had with their in-laws.

This distance from the existing Japanese American community contributed to the acceptance of the war brides in mainstream America, as revealed through the attitudes of some of the women's in-laws. For example, Mrs. A-21 explained that her mother-in-law did not like Nisei, though she remained quite fond of her new daughter-in-law. The mother-in-law strongly disliked most Japanese Americans, and discouraged Mrs. A-21 from having any contact with them, including the Japanese neighbors who brought her Japanese newspapers.⁴⁸⁷ But despite this dislike for Nisei, most Caucasian in-laws did like their daughter-in-laws, as discussed in the previous chapter, and even showed interest in Japanese culture. Some of the American families liked the war brides to cook them Japanese food, and some showed an interest in Japanese art. Mrs. O-34 said, "My husband's three elder brothers are interested in classical Japanese art such as No dance masks, etc. While I was in Japan, I sent them some. They do appreciate things Japanese."⁴⁸⁸ Thus it seems as though white Americans distinguished between the existing Japanese American population, whom they did not always like, and the Japanese war brides toward whom they were favorably disposed.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁷ A-21, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁴⁸⁸ O-34, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁴⁸⁹ This argument represents an important distinction from that made by scholar Caroline Chung Simpson. She argued that Japanese war brides embodied an early version of Asian Americans as a "model minority." Furthermore, she argued this acceptance had a positive impact on the existing Japanese American community. See Caroline Chung Simpson, "'Out of an obscure place,'" 68.

It would be easy to assume that Japanese war brides married to Japanese American husbands experienced a better relationship with the Japanese American community than war brides married to Caucasian servicemen. Yet their marriages to members of the community did not give these women an automatic pass.⁴⁹⁰ Their marriage into the community did not guarantee a close relationship, as the discussion in the previous chapter about in-law relationships suggested. These Japanese war brides experienced problems with the Japanese American community for many of the same reasons they experienced problems with their Japanese American in-laws. Education levels, class, and culture (among other things) divided these two immigrant groups with a supposedly shared race. The way this dynamic played out in Hawaii will be examined here.

Japanese war brides frequently critiqued the Japanese American community in Hawaii as “primitive.” As Mrs. O-11 told the interviewer, “I can’t understand why the Japanese in Hawaii are so backward and primitive.”⁴⁹¹ But Mrs. O-11 was not simply expressing a general complaint: her chief complaint was language and she, as other war brides, went into very specific detail about what she felt was “primitive” about Japanese Americans in Hawaii. As seen in Chapter Four’s discussion of the dinner table, Japanese war brides critiqued their Japanese American in-laws’ dining

⁴⁹⁰ Some Japanese war brides married to Japanese American GIs appreciated their proximity to the Japanese American community and experienced good relationships with their Japanese neighbors. The majority, however, did not. See A-2, December 1953, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI; F-45, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI; and B-11, February 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI.

⁴⁹¹ O-11, August 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

habits as primitive.⁴⁹² Mrs. O-11 went into similar detail in her discussion of the Japanese spoken by those in Hawaii, “They are so vulgar in their Japanese language...Some of the words they use I can’t understand.”⁴⁹³ Mrs. O-11 went on to list the different words used in Hawaii versus Japan to describe the same thing, although she did not explain why the Hawaiian usage was more “primitive.” It also became clear from what she told the interviewer that the animosity was not one-sided, and that the Japanese Americans in Hawaii resented her use of language just as much as she resented theirs. When she described a breakdown in communication over the different words for button, Mrs. O-11 told the interviewer, “They said that was a Japanese word and if I who came from Japan didn’t know it, I was stupid, etc.”⁴⁹⁴ While Mrs. O-11 found that, “every little thing they said was unintelligible...” the Japanese Americans in Hawaii did not appreciate her alternate word usage either. What might have seemed a connection for Japanese war brides and Japanese Americans, a common language, only served to accentuate the differences between these two groups of immigrants because they did not necessarily share a common language at all. Each spoke such a different Japanese that language served as a point of irritation and alienation, rather than a point of unity.

Japanese Americans found Mrs. O-11’s misuse of English more egregious than differences in the Japanese language, however. She recounted:

If I speak English, the Japanese say that I am high-hatted. They told me that I who came from Japan had no business to speak English while they who had been in Hawaii for a long time still speak Japanese. They criticized me and accused for being un-Japanese and pro-American every day. I cried very

⁴⁹² See Chapter Four for a discussion of the way Japanese war brides critiqued their in-laws’ language practices and how this created tension within the home.

⁴⁹³ O-11, War Brides Interview Project, 3.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

often. I doubt if the Japanese of Japan of 30 or 40 years ago were as backward as the Japanese in Hawaii I know.⁴⁹⁵

Japanese war brides found themselves in a difficult position at times. The use of Japanese did not allow for easy communication between war brides and Japanese Americans because it was a Japanese language sometimes unrecognizable to these new immigrants. Yet when war brides tried to circumvent this problem by speaking in English, that was problematic as well.

Mrs. O-11 was not alone in her critique of the Japanese spoken by Japanese Americans in Hawaii. Next to criticisms of Japanese American foodway traditions, critiques of the way the Nisei in Hawaii spoke Japanese was the most ubiquitous observation among Japanese war brides in the RASRL study. And Mrs. F-15 took her dislike of Nisei Japanese culture to a new level when she attempted to avoid it altogether. She listened to radio programs in English rather than Japanese language programs because, “The announcers don’t speak correct Japanese language. They speak so sloppily and no one among the Japanese audience seems to mind that. I can’t stand Japanese language spoken so sloppily and incorrectly.”⁴⁹⁶ Rather than seek out or enjoy the culture of her country of origin, as many other war brides (Japanese and European) did, Mrs. F-15 shunned Japanese American culture in Hawaii because she found them it distasteful and unlike her own.⁴⁹⁷ In addition to disliking the language spoken in the Japanese radio programs in Hawaii, Mrs. F-15

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ F-15, August 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 4.

⁴⁹⁷ As will be revealed in the following sections of this chapter, for example, war brides formed clubs based on ethnic identity so they could share the culture of their homeland. They also cited missing specific cultural aspects of their homeland like newspapers, music, etc. The fact that Mrs. F-15 had something like this available to her and avoided it shows how different the culture of the Japanese war brides and Nissei were, even though they shared a common ethnic identity. This may have to go in the main text of the paper.

did not care for the content either. She preferred English language programs. As she outlined to the interviewer, “The Japanese radio programs in Hawaii are just terrible. For instance, when I listen to an English program such as ‘Double or Nothing,’ it is very interesting. But, if I listen to a Japanese program similar to that, it is just awful.”⁴⁹⁸ The fact that Mrs. F-15 preferred the language and what she deemed as the quality of the English language radio programs to the Japanese ones revealed the wide cultural gap that could separate some Japanese war brides from the Japanese American community in Hawaii.

Other war brides focused on the practicality of learning English as new immigrants, and they were confused by the Japanese American community’s predilection toward the opposite in Hawaii. As Mrs. F-17 explained, “One thing I don’t like about Hawaii is that nobody among the Issei and Nisei encourage us to learn English and urge us to attend school to learn it. They all talk about how important it is to learn Japanese language and they all say to me, ‘Teach us Japanese.’”⁴⁹⁹ Mrs. F-17’s statement is very revealing on two counts. First, she felt so strongly about her own preference for English that she disliked the Issei’s and Nisei’s use of Japanese.⁵⁰⁰ The second illuminating point is what it says about how willing some Japanese war brides were to assimilate, at least in terms of language

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ F-17, September 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁵⁰⁰ Before she issued her critique of Hawaii, Mrs. F-17 framed her dislike in terms of surprise by saying that, “I was surprised to find when I came to Hawaii that nobody (Japanese) spoke English. I had thought that everybody in Hawaii spoke English. Also, the Japanese speak queer Japanese...mixture of dialects in Japan and other languages. I can’t understand why the people (Japanese) here don’t speak English.” See F-17, War Brides Interview Project, 3. It is interesting to note that Mrs. F-17’s surprise quickly turned to dislike. The latter half of her statement closely resembles those of other Japanese war brides whom complained of not being able to understand the Japanese spoken by Japanese Americans in Hawaii, rendering it a language different from the one they were used to.

practice. Mrs. F-17 was not married to a Caucasian and/or mainland GI who only spoke English, yet she still insisted on learning and speaking English once she was in the United States. This seems to indicate that there was more than race at work here. The willingness to marry an American GI, regardless of race, communicated a predisposition to assimilation, especially when compared to previous generations of immigrants. The Japanese American community in Hawaii prized the aspects of Japanese culture they kept (even if they were out of sync with modern Japan). For them, it was more important to maintain language practices, albeit Japanese-American language practices, which, based on what the war brides had to say, clearly differed from the Japanese spoken in Japan.⁵⁰¹

Some war brides, such as Mrs. F-19, criticized the Japanese Americans in Hawaii for more than their use of Japanese over English and generally condemned them for not being more American. She was in favor of Americanization, and like Mrs. F-17 thought Japanese Americans were backwards for not Americanizing more fully. She explained, “One big trouble with the Japanese in Hawaii is that they are not willing to give up their Japanese backgrounds. They stick to their old country and live like the Japanese....They have no willingness to become Americanized.”⁵⁰² Mrs. F-19 condemned this type of thinking and practice by the Japanese Americans in Hawaii as backwards because it was different from her own and perhaps because it was not what she had expected of Hawaii. She went on to explain, “I had expected Hawaii to be an American community. I had expected everybody living like an

⁵⁰¹ The extent to which class and regional variation also accounted for the differences in the Japanese language spoken by Japanese war brides and Japanese Americans has been discussed by other scholars, such as Dr. Yukiko Kimura. See Kimura, “War Brides in Hawaii and Their In-Law,” 74.

⁵⁰² F-19, September 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 7.

American. But now I know the Japanese do not want to give up their background.”⁵⁰³ Mrs. F-19, on the other hand, was very willing to give up her Japanese background in favor of Americanizing, again much like Mrs. F-17, even though both women were married to Japanese American GIs rather than Haoles. As Mrs. F-19 succinctly stated, “I am married to an American and I want to become Americanized. When I was married to my husband, I made up my mind that I was going to be an American. I am willing to give up my Japanese background.” This speaks to differences again in immigration type: second wave versus war bride, but also to differences among war brides. The reasons for immigrating mattered—one group came to the United States to join their American husbands—and, in these cases, starkly differentiated the two groups.

Other cultural differences, such as hair-style, make-up, and dress, may seem trivial, but for Japanese war brides and Japanese Americans, they signified great disparities in culture and generational gaps between groups of Japanese immigrants. Mrs. F-19, who experienced serious problems (physical abuse) with her mother-in-law, outlined how differences in beauty culture accentuated the divide between these women and thereby the larger community. When Mrs. F-19 arrived in Hawaii in 1946, she used make-up such as powder and lipstick and had her hair permanent-waved. Her mother-in-law objected to these beauty practices and told her, “Don’t act like a Nisei. You are from Japan. Japan-born don’t use such things as powder and lipsticks.”⁵⁰⁴ Mrs. F-19’s mother-in-law found these practices “shocking” and ridiculed her daughter-in-law for not adhering to what she imagined were the beauty

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid, 4.

standards of her home country, and she voiced what must have been her frustration with the Nisei generation for Americanizing. But Mrs. F-19 explained to her mother-in-law that things had changed in Japan, as she retold the interviewer, “In Japan even farmers don’t act like farmers in Hawaii. They are more progressive than you people. Girls in Japan use powder and lipsticks and wear better-looking American dresses than you people.”⁵⁰⁵ Perhaps Mrs. F-19’s mother-in-law’s concerns were not completely unfounded, despite Mrs. F-19’s assessment. Beauty culture and instruction in western-style hair and make-up constituted a significant part of the Red Cross bride schools’ curriculum and their Americanization effort.⁵⁰⁶ Furthermore, these types of generational differences between immigrants and children over adopting American culture were not atypical. The twist here was that the mother-in-law was critiquing the beauty habits of a newly-arrived immigrant, rather than those of a child that had appropriated aspects of American culture. The styles in Japan had also changed. In other words, the mother-in-law’s homeland was not static, and the place she was thinking of, did not exist.

Dr. Yukiko Kimura further explained that Japanese American mothers-in-law contrasted the beauty and clothing practices of their Japanese war bride daughters-in-law with their own in the following way:

To the mother-in-law who recalls her drab working clothes, plain appearance, her role of submission to a dominating husband..., her daughter-in-law’s American clothes and makeup, her independence in thinking and acting, are not only unexpected and puzzling but offensive and ‘American’ and completely unbecoming a Japanese daughter-in-law.”⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ F-19, War Brides Interview Project, 4.

⁵⁰⁶ See Chapter Three.

⁵⁰⁷ See Kimura, “War Brides in Hawaii and Their In-Laws,” 74.

Just as with language, then, beauty culture highlighted the differences between Japanese war brides and their in-laws, heightening tension and widening the cultural divide between the two groups.

Mrs. A-8 mentioned other aspects of western culture that she enjoyed in Japan but found of little interest to people in Hawaii. She specifically cited literary culture, including European literature, and which she and her fellow war brides first read in Japan and continued to read and discuss in the U.S. By contrast, she said that, “The only literature people in Hawaii are interested in are popular literature as that in the popular magazines—such as love stories or mystery stories in magazines.”⁵⁰⁸

According to Mrs. A-8, this opened a divide and “That’s why the [Japanese American] people in Hawaii and we from Japan have no common interests.”⁵⁰⁹ Mrs. A-8 viewed Japanese Americans as only interested in economic advancement, rather than intellectual culture. She said, “...intellectually, the people in Hawaii have no interest....Intellectually we [Japanese war brides] stimulate each other. The American people in general seem to be interested only in improving in material comfort and convenience and not improving themselves intellectually or spiritually.”⁵¹⁰

Mrs. F-17 echoed Mrs. A-8’s statements about literature and noted that European literature was not to be found in Hawaii. She told the interviewer that, “In Japan there are many good and worthwhile books in the book stores. Those books include the translations of European books. The bookstores in Hawaii don’t seem to

⁵⁰⁸ A-8, January 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 4.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

have such books.”⁵¹¹ Mrs. F-17 couched this lack of western culture as criticism, that being an entire lack of intellectual culture, not just western culture when she said that as a consequence, “I have been in Hawaii for six years now. My brain has been inactive and retarded. That’s the way I feel....Nobody seems to be interested in reading good books and discussing the content of such books.”⁵¹² It is clear that at least a number of this cohort of female immigrants came to the United States with a commitment to what they imagined to be Western culture. Since the early twentieth century, the West had infiltrated Japan, changing its culture and heightening the differences between the earlier wave of Japanese immigrants and Japanese war brides.⁵¹³ Some of these complaints of a lack of Western culture closely resembled those made by European war brides in the RASRL study and formed the basis of some of their club formation, as we shall see in the last section of this chapter.

Mrs. F-5 explained the differences between Japanese war brides and Japanese Americans in Hawaii to her interviewer in general but revealing terms when she said, “...we [war brides] say among ourselves, ‘After all, these Issei came to Hawaii as ‘Imin’ (the word ‘Imin’ is ‘Immigrants’ but the connotation is ‘low class, ignorant people). They know nothing better.’”⁵¹⁴ Other war brides spoke in more innocuous language, citing the differences between the two groups only, rather than evaluating one group as better than the other, when explaining the gap that divided Japanese war

⁵¹¹ F-17, War Brides Interview Project, 3.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Historian Evelyn Nakano Glenn discussed the ways the West began to influence Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. See Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride*, 24-26. Based on what some of the war brides said here, the West seems to have invaded their culture, perhaps especially in the urban areas where many war brides are from, thereby exacerbating the preexisting rural versus urban divide. Perhaps these war brides resented this lack of change, particularly with language, for example, because they went through the trouble of learning it in Japan.

⁵¹⁴ F-5, March 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 4-5.

brides from Japanese Americans in Hawaii. Mrs. F-14 spoke in terms of the chronological divide between the two, for example, when she said, “The Japanese (Issei) in Hawaii don’t know present day Japan. So, it is hard for war brides to get along with them easily.”⁵¹⁵

Japanese war brides exhibited a tendency to criticize the Japanese Americans in Hawaii and often looked down upon their culture as primitive or backwards because it was unlike their own. The Japanese American population in Hawaii, however, did not always think well of Japanese war brides either. They sometimes drew upon the stereotype of money-hungry or sexually promiscuous war bride, and other times they found the mere presence of these war brides distasteful.

The mere existence of the Japanese war bride in Hawaii, made possible by an American victory over Japan in World War II and the ensuing occupation of the country, predisposed these women to dislike by some members of the Japanese American community in Hawaii. Mrs. O-11 explained how she constantly experienced an antagonistic relationship with her Japanese American neighbors while she lived with her in-laws in the Palama district of Honolulu. The problem was the American victory over Japan. Mrs. O-11 reported that the neighbors asked her on a daily basis if Japan won the war. When she replied that Japan lost the war, the neighbors berated her: “Well, the whole neighborhood was mad at me and said, ‘MacArthur sent you to Hawaii to say what he wants to say. You are an agent of MacArthur. That’s why you are not telling the truth. You are pro-American.... You

⁵¹⁵ F-14, 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

are a traitor.”⁵¹⁶ Mrs. O-11, who found this line of thought as backwards as the community’s language, offered herself up as proof of an American victory by explaining to her neighbors, “My being here as a war bride from Japan is the proof that Japan lost the war. If Japan should have won the war, there wouldn’t be occupation of Japan by the U.S. Army. Then I wouldn’t have a chance to marry a G.I. My being here is proof that Japan lost the war,…”⁵¹⁷ Mrs. O-11’s straightforward explanation of how her status as a war bride embodied an American victory is very telling and illuminates why some Japanese Americans may have been predisposed to dislike war brides without knowing anything about them more than they represented a Japanese loss in World War II. For a population heavily steeped in Japanese tradition, that may have been enough.⁵¹⁸

Similarly, some war brides reported experiencing prejudice from Japanese Americans simply because they were immigrants from Japan. Mrs. F-14 described such an occurrence at her place of work, “But the Nisei look down upon those of us from Japan. When I was working at the slipper factory, there were many Nisei working. They criticized me for things I do or say by saying, ‘That’s Japan style’ or ‘You Japan style, etc.’ The Nisei in Hawaii are in general antagonistic toward us from Japan.”⁵¹⁹ Although the Nisei’s parents were immigrants from Japan, they did not feel a sense of kinship with these new immigrants from Japan. The sentiments of

⁵¹⁶ O-11, War Brides Interview Project, 2.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

⁵¹⁸ Other war brides in addition to Mrs. O-11 mentioned this phenomenon of the Hawaiian Issei’s disbelief in a Japanese defeat during World War II and ensuing questioning of war brides about it. See, for example, F-17, War Brides Interview Project, 2-3. Mrs. F-17 reported that the rural Nisei on the island of Hawaii constantly asked her if Japan lost the war. Their questioning and disbelief led Mrs. F-17 to remark, “Japanese in Hawaii are terribly backward.”

⁵¹⁹ F-14, 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

Mrs. F-50's mother-in-law may offer at least one explanation of why that was so. Mrs. F-50 told the interviewer that her mother-in-law drew a distinction between the hardships each generation of female immigrants experienced, as she said, "When I came to Hawaii as a young bride (picture bride), I worked very hard. You should be working hard.' or 'Why did you want to come to Hawaii?' She would say that I came to Hawaii to have an easy life. I wouldn't dare to answer back. I just cried."⁵²⁰ Mrs. F-50's mother-in-law remained skeptical, even though Mrs. F-50 took care of the household (along with her sister-in-law) while she lived with her mother-in-law. Mrs. F-50 additionally took care of her mother-in-law while she was sick, but that did not soften her attitude toward Mrs. F-50 whom she always treated differently from her Hawaiian born daughters-in-law.⁵²¹ Mrs. F-50's relationship with her mother-in-law reveals that although these women could have potentially shared a common ground, both coming to the United States as brides from Japan even, they did not. This strained relationship serves as a microcosm of the tenuous relationship between Japanese war brides and the Japanese American community in Hawaii and explains the tensions between the two.

The Japanese American population in Hawaii also stereotyped Japanese war brides as sexually promiscuous. As Mrs. O-3 explained to her interviewer, "Issei in Hawaii have prejudice toward war brides from Japan. They all seem to take for granted that we were all immoral girls and swapped ourselves with package of

⁵²⁰ F-50, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

⁵²¹ Ibid, 1-2.

chewing gums, etc.”⁵²² This example reveals that Japanese Americans criticized Japanese war brides on two counts, both common stereotypes that surrounded war brides: they were with American GIs for material gain, and they were sexually immoral.

The animosity these two immigrant groups felt was not one-sided, as each readily critiqued the other. What was skewed was the ability of the Hawaiian Nisei to voice their displeasure publicly through the Japanese American press, such as *The Hawaii Times*.

Japanese War Brides in the Japanese American Press

Several Japanese war brides interviewed in the RASRL study mentioned the portrayal of Japanese war brides in the local Hawaiian Japanese American press, such as *The Hawaii Times*, a Japanese American daily newspaper published in Honolulu that was published in both Japanese and English from 1942 to 1982.⁵²³ Some war brides discussed the positive portrayals of Japanese war brides in the press. Mrs. F-1, for example, told her interviewer that she and three other war brides in her neighborhood were interviewed by a reporter for *The Hawaii Times* for an article, “Wakayoshi War Brides,” or “Neighborly War Brides.” She seemed happy with the press and told the interviewer that the article was quite good.⁵²⁴ Mrs. F-8 seemed similarly pleased with *The Hawaii Times* and their coverage of Japanese war brides.

⁵²² O-3, April 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 5.

⁵²³ From June 1982 until the newspaper ceased publication in 1985, the newspaper transitioned to a weekly newspaper published in Japanese only. When *The Hawaii Times* was a daily newspaper it was not published on Sundays or holidays. Also see Chapter Three for a discussion of Japanese war brides in the mainstream press, such as *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

⁵²⁴ F-1, January 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 5.

They published stories specific to her and her husband's immigration case, which was complicated by her husband's dual citizenship; he was drafted into the Japanese army during World War II while attending university in Japan and thus lost his U.S. citizenship. Because he was drafted against his will, he was able to regain his American citizenship, and the couple was able to come to Hawaii. The newspaper reported on the case, as well as the arrival of the couple in 1953. Mrs. F-8 must have been pleased with the way the newspaper covered the story as she told the interviewer she had saved clippings from the paper.⁵²⁵

Other war brides were much less enamored of the press coverage Japanese war brides received in *The Hawaii Times*. One article in particular, "Gungin Hanayome ni Tsugu," or "A Letter to War Brides," drew the ridicule of war brides. Matsumoto Tsuyoshi, a faculty member at the University of Hawaii, wrote the article that criticized war brides and accused them of marrying American GIs for material gain.⁵²⁶ Mrs. F-6 told the interviewer that, "Since Mr. Matsumoto...wrote a vicious article about Japanese war brides in Hawaii for *Hawaii Times*, the local Issei have an idea that all war brides from Japan married the local boys, because of their ambition for material gain."⁵²⁷ Mrs. F-6 was so outraged by this portrayal that she wrote a letter directly to Mr. Matsumoto, "...because I thought it would be much more effective."⁵²⁸ She explained that other Japanese war brides had written the newspaper about what they thought was an unfair depiction of her fellow war brides. Mrs. F-6

⁵²⁵ F-8, April 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁵²⁶ This was a common stereotype about war brides. See Chapter Three.

⁵²⁷ F-6, April 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

discussed her displeasure with this article in conjunction with discussing the general tensions between the Japanese American community and Japanese war brides, not just those written about in the newspapers, which itself seemed to exacerbate the problem. She explained that the Issei, "...always look at us from Japan differently from the way they look at the local born girls. They are critical of us from Japan while they are lenient toward the local born including their own daughters."⁵²⁹ She went on to explain that while her own in-laws treated her well, they never treated her like their own daughters.

Mrs. F-12 was equally disturbed with Mr. Matsumoto's article. Interviewed six months after Mrs. F-6, Mrs. F-12 corroborated the details of the article and echoed Mrs. F-6's sentiments about it, although she did not mention writing either *The Hawaii Times* or Mr. Matsumoto himself in response.⁵³⁰ She did say, "His criticism was terribly unjust," and she also mentioned that many other war brides had written in response to the article. Beyond this article, Mrs. F-12 thought that, "...Japanese war brides are very sensitive about newspaper publicity about themselves." She herself was so worried about negative press that she ended the interview by saying, "I hope that nothing I have told you will go out to be published in the newspapers. I wouldn't tell anybody the things you have asked me to tell you."⁵³¹ The interviewer noted that s/he reassured Mrs. F-12 about the confidentiality of the RASRL

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ F-12 thought that the article was from 1952 so she was recalling it two years later based on the time of the interview. See Mrs. F-12, October 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

interviews.⁵³² Japanese war brides were clearly affected by their portrayal in the Japanese American press, which exacerbated the tension between Japanese war brides and the Japanese American community. Each critiqued and misunderstood the other: it was not one-sided.

Some war brides disliked other more subtle, or what they read and perceived as more subtle, insults to Japanese war brides that appeared in local newspapers. Mrs. F-22 pointed to the want ads that requested Japanese war brides only as waitresses as particularly insulting because, as she explained, “The Issei in Hawaii don’t treat war brides from Japan kindly. Even in the newspapers I often see advertisement saying ‘Waitress Wanted.’ Then in parentheses ‘War Bride.’”⁵³³ Mrs. F-22 interpreted such want ads as demeaning and insulting to war brides, and they made her “furious.” She felt the ads reflected the Nisei population’s opinion on where war brides belonged on the economic ladder: “It seems as if they think Gunjin hanayome are fitted only to such menial jobs.”⁵³⁴ It is unclear why the Nisei would place a want ad requesting Japanese war brides specifically, but many war brides were in need of jobs upon arrival to the U.S. and some had few options. But based on the education levels of Japanese war brides coming to the United States, it is easy to see why women like Mrs. F-22 would be insulted.

⁵³² This exchange, in addition to revealing much about the Japanese American press in Hawaii, also reveals that the war brides in this study felt comfortable discussing their experiences with the RASRL interviewers in a candid and honest manner.

⁵³³ F-22, September 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

Many of the European war brides in the RASRL study had not had the same opportunity to interact with their respective ethnic communities the way Japanese war brides did in Hawaii. An example of a connection subsisted between the Greek American community in Detroit and Greek fiancées, however. The Greek American community involved itself in the issue of fiancée immigration in December 1948 when the Greek community in Detroit petitioned to have the temporary fiancée act extended, as it was due to expire early the next year. Members of the Saint Nicholas Hellenic Orthodox Church of the North Side Community wrote the immigration board to ask for an extension of the fiancée act so that more American GIs could bring back their fiancées from Greece. “The Greek Community of Detroit would appreciate it very much,” their entreaty began, “if you would extend the period given for bringing girls from Greece by the youth of America in marriage.”⁵³⁵ The group did not indicate whether their request was on behalf of young Greek GIs wishing to bring their fiancées or was a peculiarly parental plan, but, their appeal remains noteworthy for several reasons. As discussed in Chapter 1, time limits became a hallmark of war bride and fiancée legislation and proved a headache for those trying to take advantage of the laws. More interesting, the Greek community in Detroit was petitioning the government on behalf of Greek war brides, elucidating a connection between these immigrant women and their potential ethnic community in the United States. As the letter continued, “There are a number of young men interested in getting married in our churches that will be able to give some unfortunate girls happy homes here.”⁵³⁶ In many instances, European and Japanese war brides had little

⁵³⁵ Peter Caralis, letter to INS, December 19, 1948, Entry 9, RG 85, File 56230/853a, NARA.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

connection with existent immigrant communities once in the United States. In this case, however, the ethnic community felt invested in the fate of Greek fiancées.⁵³⁷

Race and Community

The relationship between Japanese and European war brides and their respective existing immigrant populations had an important impact on how war brides fit into American society. But ideas about race (and particularly interracial marriage for those couples who had married interracially) had an impact on the war bride couples and how they felt about communities as well, be they local neighborhoods in Hawaii or the United States as a whole. Many war brides commented on preferences for where they would like to settle based on what they perceived as more accepting communities for interracial couples. Other war brides, particularly the European war brides in the RASRL study, commented frequently on their ideas about race in the United States and how that skewed their view of their new country, as well as their place in it.

Picking a Community: Race and Settlement

⁵³⁷ The letter also revealed that the Greek American community felt it needed and used the fiancée act as a way to get more Greek women to the United States under U.S. immigration law that placed Greece under a tight and oversubscribed quota. Other Southern and Eastern European nations suffered the same oversubscription. Finally, the closing statement, “We ask this on behalf of the Greek Community of Detroit, and your cooperation will be greatly appreciated,” indicated the Greek community of Detroit was a cohesive one. At a time when second-wave immigrant groups were to have allegedly assimilated into white America, this group of Greek Americans remained a discrete and cohesive ethnic community. Immigration law, furthermore, was one of the aspects of life in the U.S. that made the community aware of their unique and non-white status, a fact reinforced by the INS’s postwar implementation of prewar racial and ethnic categories in the new context of war bride and fiancée immigration. This final significant aspect of the letter reinforces the argument put forth in Chapter Two.

Some war bride couples specifically came to Hawaii because it had a reputation for being more accepting of interracial marriages than the mainland. Mrs. O-48, a Japanese war bride married to a Caucasian GI, explained to the interviewer that she and her husband planned to come to Hawaii for exactly that reason. He did not feel his wife would be accepted on the mainland, and a friend also married to a Japanese war bride had told him about Hawaii. As Mrs. O-48 explained, “Through them we became interested in Hawaii, because we learned that for an intermarried couple like us, Hawaii would be the best place.”⁵³⁸ Mrs. O-58’s husband, a Caucasian man, agreed with Mr. O-48, and he brought his wife to Hawaii. Mrs. O-58 reported, “My husband thought Hawaii would be nice for me, because there were so many Orientals and other races and that I would feel comfortable. It is true. Here I don’t feel conspicuous or self-conscious.”⁵³⁹ But although Mrs. O-58 felt she blended in more in Hawaii, she preferred the mainland for her permanent residence because she wanted to be near her in-laws, just as many of the other Japanese war brides married to Caucasian GIs felt. Hawaii was simply too far away from her in-laws in Kentucky for Mrs. O-58, and being near them trumped the racial diversity of Hawaii.⁵⁴⁰

Although Hawaii could be more accepting of interracial couples, it was not perfect. One factor that many war brides mentioned was that some parts of Hawaii were better for interracial couples than others. Mrs. O-20, a Japanese war bride

⁵³⁸ O-48, War Brides Interview Project, 1. See also Chapter 4, in which Mrs. O-48’s views about this topic are also discussed.

⁵³⁹ O-58, August 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 4.

⁵⁴⁰ See Chapter Four and the section regarding in-law relationships for more detail regarding this phenomenon. Additionally, because of the “white” status Japanese war brides married to Caucasian GIs experience via racial coverture, they did not mind the mainland. The example of Mrs. O-31 from Chapter Four exemplifies this trend.

married to a Filipino GI, explained, “On Kauai, the people mix regardless of races. They are kind to each other as neighbors. They care for each other and help each other.”⁵⁴¹ Mrs. O-20 noted this was not the case in Honolulu, and German war bride Mrs. D-23 seconded her sentiments, “You see on the other island [unnamed], unlike Honolulu, all races and nationalities mix very well.”⁵⁴² So although all the islands of Hawaii were racially and ethnically diverse, some islands were better than others for interracial couples. Additionally, Mr D-111, a Japanese American husband of a Swiss war bride was present at his wife’s interview and explained how Kailua, a small town on Oahu away from Honolulu, was the best place for intermarried couples to live because, “everybody is accepted without any prejudice.”⁵⁴³ He felt this was important, particularly for raising children, as he did not want his biracial children to grow up feeling inferior to others.

A second problem that war brides faced in Hawaii was that the islands had their own racial hierarchy, and war brides married to men at the bottom of that hierarchy both noticed and took offense at the racial order. German war bride Mrs. D-38 was married to a Hawaiian American GI and although she reported that she experienced no trouble with the local people, the racial prejudice of white Americans became obvious to her as she lived in Hawaii. She recounted this during her interview and recalled a specific incident in which a Caucasian woman indirectly insulted her husband, “...since I came to Hawaii, I realized that Americans have race

⁵⁴¹ O-20, October 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁵⁴² D-23, May 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁵⁴³ D-111, July 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 4.

prejudice toward non-white people. Some haoles ask me whom I was married or how dark my husband is, etc. One of the haoles at my store said once, ‘I hope you have not married one of those Japanese here.’”⁵⁴⁴ But Mrs. D-38 quickly defended herself and her marriage and told the woman, “‘I happened to have married one of those darker ones, although he is not a Japanese.’ She shut her mouth after that.”⁵⁴⁵ Despite such discrimination, Mrs. D-38 liked Hawaii and hoped to make it the place of her permanent residence.

Racial discrimination in Hawaii was not limited to the small but powerful Caucasian elite, however. War brides reported instances of discrimination from the Japanese Americans in Hawaii as well. This was a particularly frequent occurrence for Japanese war brides married to Filipino GIs. Mrs. O-11, divorced from her Japanese American husband, began dating a Filipino American man. According to Mrs. O-11, her Japanese American neighbors gossiped behind her back and ridiculed her for her choice.⁵⁴⁶ Japanese war bride Mrs. O-20, married to a Filipino GI, experienced similar problems, as she told the interviewer, “I don’t like the Japanese in Hawaii. They seem to think that the Japanese are the only superior race in the world. Whenever they see me, they say to me, ‘You married a foreigner (non-Japanese)...you are no good.’”⁵⁴⁷ These comments not only angered Mrs. O-20, they alienated her from the Japanese American community. This racial prejudice toward Mrs. O-20’s husband and Mrs. O-11’s boyfriend fostered dislike and exacerbated the

⁵⁴⁴ D-38, September 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ O-11, War Brides Interview Project, 2.

⁵⁴⁷ O-20, War Brides Interview Project, 3.

already hostile relationship between Japanese war brides and the Japanese American community in Hawaii.

Although racial hostilities existed in Hawaii, many of the European war brides preferred it to the mainland because they did not like the way they and their husbands were treated there. German war bride Mrs. A-13 encapsulated this sentiment: “I am quite satisfied in Hawaii. On the mainland, especially in New York, I realized that the people are against intermarriage....On the mainland, people stared at us. Everybody (every war bride) had the same experience. The people stared at them.”⁵⁴⁸ Mrs. A-13, who was married to a GI of Hawaiian, English and Japanese descent, continued to say that she was not bothered by this treatment on the mainland, but it clearly bothered her enough that she preferred Hawaii as a place of residence.

German war bride Mrs. B-7 was married to a Japanese American man and also reported experiencing problems on the mainland. She explained, “On the mainland I met many Germans. They have been in America for twenty or more years since they left Germany. They all said they couldn’t understand why I married a Japanese. I think it’s wrong that they look down upon the people who are not white.”⁵⁴⁹ Mrs. B-7 went on to say that she believed the United States had made these German immigrants prejudiced towards other races—they had lived in America so long, they were like, “...other Americans and have much prejudice.”⁵⁵⁰ Mrs. B-7 seemed to have extrapolated this experience of racial discrimination to the whole of

⁵⁴⁸ A-13, January 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

⁵⁴⁹ B-7, February 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

America. Despite such problems, Mrs. B-7 was already an American citizen by the time of the interview and reportedly enjoyed living in Hawaii.

British war bride Mrs. D-26 described an incident that revealed the difficulties Asian Americans could experience on the mainland. “My husband told me that once when he went into a bar, there were several people drinking and as soon as they saw him going in, they called him a ‘Jap’ and a woman said, ‘Punch him.’ He was mad and left there right away.”⁵⁵¹ This incident differs from the previous two mentioned in that the discrimination was not based on interracial marriage, rather it was a case of racial discrimination towards an Asian American. Significantly no Japanese war bride, regardless of the race of her husband, reported such an instance of discrimination on the mainland. But European war bride Mrs. D-26 experienced such discrimination via her husband. She was unsure if she wanted American citizenship at all, and she did not indicate a preference for Hawaii or the mainland.

Many of the European war brides in the RASRL study commented more specifically on the inequities of the postwar racial hierarchy in America and the racism either they or their husbands experienced, as the examples above indicate. But German war bride Mrs. D-72, who lived and worked in New Jersey for two years before coming to Hawaii, clearly articulated a sentiment felt by many of the European war brides in the following passage from her interview:

...While working there [in New Jersey], I learned about the race prejudice Americans have. That was a disappointment for me but at the same time it helped me to understand this country. You see, before coming to America, I used to go to the American library (in Berlin) and read many books on America. As a result, I had a high idea of American democracy and equality

⁵⁵¹ D-26, May 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 4. Mrs. D-26 did not indicate where specifically this incident occurred, only that it was on the mainland.

of races. When I saw that the people in America were not living up to their ideals of democracy, I was very disillusioned.⁵⁵²

Despite her disillusionment, Mrs. D-72 still expressed a desire for American citizenship during her interview.

Many factors besides race came into play when war brides discussed where they wanted to settle: proximity to in-laws and friends, climate, and costs to name a few. Yet race certainly factored into some couples' decisions about where to live. Husbands of war brides, being more familiar with the various regions of the United States and Hawaii, often took particular care in selecting a place of residence based on what they perceived as places more accepting of people of various backgrounds and/or intermarried couples. And once Japanese and European war brides became more familiar with the United States and particularly Hawaii, they came into contact with American racial prejudice. These experiences sometimes influenced their preference for where they wanted to live permanently.

Building Their Own Communities: War Bride Clubs and Friendships

For war brides, one alternative to fitting into existing communities was to form their own communities. To some war brides, that meant forming or joining war brides clubs. Among the war brides interviewed in the RASRL study, however, there were two schools of thought on war bride clubs. One school described these clubs as an enjoyable social outlet, a way to make friends, and a way to maintain ethnic/racial solidarity, as war bride clubs often coalesced around country of origin. In fact the

⁵⁵² D-72, November 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

latter was so important to some that war brides also joined clubs based solely on ethnic/racial origin, rather than war bride status. It was not enough for some war brides to practice their culture in the privacy of their own homes. They wanted to celebrate it in public. Furthermore, they wanted to be kept connected to their homeland materially and through a shared community. The other school of thought found these war brides clubs to be more troublesome than helpful due to rampant gossip, and many of the war brides in the study avoided such interaction. Beyond that, some avoided friendships altogether for the same reasons, perhaps making them the most extreme example of the isolated 1950s housewife because not only were these women newly suburban: they were new immigrants with little or no relationship to an existing community.

Out of the total number of war brides in the RASRL project, a relatively small number were involved in war brides clubs at the time of the interview or earlier. Only 53 out of 335 interviewed, or 15.8%, were current or former members. European war brides made up the largest contingent of those involved, as they represented 36 out of the 53 (67.9%) war brides actively or formerly involved in clubs. The European war brides in this study were also more likely to be involved in multiple clubs, as some joined both war brides clubs and clubs based upon their ethnic origin. Perhaps European war brides felt the sting of isolation more readily than Japanese war brides living in Hawaii who had access to a Japanese American community and culture, even though that relationship was tenuous.

Belgian war bride, Mrs. D-13, discussed the formation of a war brides club she helped start in 1948 at the local YWCA. She was president of the club, which she

described as small and which had Asian and European war brides for members. But the interracial club did not exist as it was for long. Mrs. D-13 explained, "...we had Japanese, Chinese, Korean brides as well as European brides in the club. But later the Oriental war brides formed their own club."⁵⁵³ Mrs. D-13 did not offer an explanation as to why the women left to form their own club, but other war brides' discussions of the clubs help illuminate why that may have been so. German war bride, Mrs. D-49, did not belong to any war brides clubs because she thought there was too much gossip involved.⁵⁵⁴ Yet as the interview progressed, Mrs. D-49 offered her own idea for war brides clubs that suggest it was more than gossip that kept her away: "I wish there were separate clubs for war brides from different countries, a German club for German girls, an Italian club for Italian girls, a French club for French girls, etc, because each country has a different way of thinking and doing things."⁵⁵⁵ She went on to explain that she thought all the clubs could get together periodically, but that it was important for the clubs to meet individually so that the war brides could speak their own language and play their own music, for example. On a practical level, language may have been a huge barrier, especially for a club with an Asian and European war bride membership. As Mrs. D-49 also explained, "...we speak different languages. No matter how hard we try to speak English, German girls feel more at home when we can speak our own language."⁵⁵⁶ Many war

⁵⁵³ D-13, March 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁵⁵⁴ This was the most common reason cited for not joining war brides clubs among Japanese and European war brides.

⁵⁵⁵ D-49, October 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid. Mrs. D-49 also explained that she had spoken with her German war bride friends about her idea for such a club, and they all agreed it was a good idea. The club had not gotten off the ground at the time of the interview, however, because as Mrs. D-49 said, "...no one wanted to take initiative of

brides must have shared Mrs. D-49's sentiment, and at least one French war bride, Mrs. D-2 agreed with her. Mrs. D-2 belonged to the war brides club in Waikiki when she first arrived and said, "At first, it was fun and I enjoyed the club. But the members of that club are mostly German women. They speak German all the time and they don't speak to me."⁵⁵⁷ The stories relayed by both Mrs. D-2 and Mrs. D-49 reveal the difficulties in forming war brides clubs with members from different countries. They also help explain why the Asian war bride members of Mrs. D-13's club would have left.

For the women who did stay in Mrs. D-13's club, the club offered a social outlet, as well as help with domestic duties. The club met every Tuesday and gave the war brides, "...a chance to get together and talk about our common interest..."⁵⁵⁸ German war bride Mrs. D-12 discussed her reluctance to join the YWCA war brides club because of the gossip associated with it, but after her friend convinced her to go she enjoyed the forum for socializing. She also described it as a place she could take her children: "We take our children and relax on the beach or go for swimming."⁵⁵⁹ She and Mrs. D-13 additionally discussed the more practical assistance the club provided. The women exchanged recipes, sewed dresses, knitted, and crocheted. Mrs. D-13 and other members of the YWCA club also discussed making items, such as aprons, for the YWCA.⁵⁶⁰

starting a group, because it means work. Most of them have children and are busy with their own families."

⁵⁵⁷ D-2, January 1953, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁵⁵⁸ D-13, War Brides Interview Project, 2.

⁵⁵⁹ D-12, March 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 6.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid and D-13, War Brides Interview Project, 2.

European war brides described how the clubs held social events for the war bride and her entire family. Mrs. D-55, a German war bride married to a Chinese American GI, explained, “Our club (War Brides Club) has many occasions when our husbands and children participate in; for instance we are planning to have a Halloween party at the Beach Club; we have a Christmas party every year...”⁵⁶¹ These clubs thus provided not only war brides with a social network and forum for interacting with other war brides, it did the same for their children and families. Mrs. D-55 even invited her interviewer to the annual Christmas party.

European war brides also belonged to clubs based on their ethnicity, in addition to or instead of war brides clubs, which is hardly surprising given the sentiment of war brides like Mrs. D-49. Many of the war brides, European and Japanese, spoke of missing very particular cultural aspects of their homeland, and these ethnic clubs were a way to ameliorate that feeling. Italian war bride, Mrs. D-82, for example, told her interviewer, “But I do miss opera. Last Sunday, I listened to Tosca over the radio. It made me homesick.”⁵⁶² For war brides like Mrs. D-82, membership in an ethnic-specific club allowed these women to participate in the cultural activities of their country, such as speaking their language or listening to music. German war brides in particular mentioned belonging to the German Club.⁵⁶³ Mr. D-55 was present at his wife’s interview and described how she had many outside interests, including the German Club where, “...she enjoys meeting girls from

⁵⁶¹ D-55, October 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁵⁶² D-82, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁵⁶³ Although many of the European war brides discussed missing cultural aspects of their homeland, only German war brides mentioned belonging to an ethnically specific club in the RASRL study.

her own country and speak[ing] German.”⁵⁶⁴ He also described how she played the accordion for various organizations. Another German war bride, Mrs. D-65, mentioned enjoying the German club, which met once a month, because it was an opportunity to speak German and meet interesting people from her country. The club also met at the YWCA.⁵⁶⁵ Still other German war brides mentioned attending various German dinners. Mrs. D-66 attended the German dinner at the YWCA once a month because she met interesting people there.⁵⁶⁶ And Mrs. D-71 reported belonging to the German Conversation Dinner. She described it as, “. . .only for women. Among them is a German lady who is 80 years old. After dinner, we have socials; those who have made trips to Germany recently would talk to us about their trips or show us pictures they took. We speak nothing but German at this dinner.”⁵⁶⁷ Based on these examples, German war brides seemed to enjoy socializing in ethnically specific German clubs that celebrated their culture just as much as war brides clubs, as it was a way to maintain a tie with their homeland and culture.

War brides who avoided clubs found other ways to stay connected to their country of origin. As seen in Chapter Four this often involved maintaining cultural practices such as food preparation in the home, but there were other forms of connection that war brides could maintain. Mrs. D-8, a German war bride, did not care for war brides clubs for the same reason many war brides avoided them—

⁵⁶⁴ D-55, War Brides Interview Project, 3.

⁵⁶⁵ D-65, November 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3. Significantly, the person she described meeting was not a war bride, but an “elderly missionary from Africa.”

⁵⁶⁶ D-66, November 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁵⁶⁷ D-71, November 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

gossip.⁵⁶⁸ However, she was friends with other German war brides, and one of these women provided Mrs. D-8 with a direct connection to her hometown via its newspaper. She told the interviewer that, “My mother sends me newspapers of my old town. Also, another war bride lets me read her papers. So, I keep up with news of my old town.”⁵⁶⁹ Although clubs, both those for war brides and those specific to country of origin, provided an excellent way for war brides to socialize and be part of a community or to participate in their ethnic culture, those who chose to avoid such clubs still found ways to maintain connections to their homeland and feel a part of their own network or community.

Japanese war brides in the RASRL study also formed or belonged to war brides clubs as a way to build a community and stave off homesickness, but they did so with much less frequency than the European war brides in this study. One Japanese war bride relayed how she accidentally came upon a war brides club specifically for Japanese women, the Hibiscus Club, while exploring downtown Honolulu and not only joined but eventually became its secretary. Mrs. O-36 told the interviewer, “It is a very nice club. The members learn a lot of things.”⁵⁷⁰ Although

⁵⁶⁸ Colonial Historians have discussed the ways gossip among women had an impact within communities. Kathleen Brown, for example, explained how women used gossip as a form of social control on the behavior of women, as well as men, in Colonial Virginia. See Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: 1996), 99-101. The gossip among war bride social networks, however, (perhaps unintentionally) worked to exclude members from the community entirely when the war brides felt they could no longer participate in the clubs because of rampant gossip.

⁵⁶⁹ D-8, War Brides Interview Project, 5.

⁵⁷⁰ O-36, January 1955, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3. Another Japanese war bride mentioned the same club and also that it was helpful because, “. . .we learn so many things at the meetings.” She did not elaborate on what these things were either, however. See O-4, April 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 4.

Mrs. O-36 did not go into the details of what war brides learned at the club meetings, another Japanese war bride, Mrs. F-12, did. She said, “I also went to the YWCA war brides club and learned cooking there.”⁵⁷¹ Although the Hibiscus club also met at the YWCA, Mrs. F-12 did not mention it by name, so it is unclear if the women were referring to the same club. It was also unclear what style of cooking these women learned. The style of club does seem slightly different from the ones mentioned by European war brides who did not mention learning things at the meetings. But just as the clubs the European war brides mentioned, the Hibiscus Club also served a social purpose. Mrs. F-16 explained, “I attend the meeting every month and enjoy seeing young people. At Christmas we have family parties.”⁵⁷² This event paralleled the similar holiday events held by European war brides clubs.

Other war brides formed less official clubs among their friends. Mrs. O-3, a Japanese war bride married to a Chinese American GI, explained to the interviewer how one such club formed when she had first arrived in Hawaii and lasted for about three years. She said, “...I had six or seven Japanese war brides to meet here at my house once a month. They came here, because I had no in-laws to be living with and they felt that they could be free to let the steam out at my house.”⁵⁷³ The group was small and informal, but it seemed to serve the purpose of a communal network in which Japanese war brides could share their experiences and commiserate. The small club also staved off the loneliness these women felt as new immigrants, as Mrs. O-3

⁵⁷¹ F-12, October 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI. I do not have additional information about the YWCA operated war brides clubs, but they sound similar to the schools ran by the Red Cross.

⁵⁷² F-16, August 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁵⁷³ O-3, April 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 4.

continued, “They were lonesome too. So, I wanted to comfort them and together we could comfort each other.”⁵⁷⁴ Mrs. O-3 went on to explain how the group eventually disbanded, but that a few of the war brides from this club still visited her on occasion, so even though the club was only temporary, it provided these war brides with connections that outlasted the life of the small organization.

Just as with European war brides, many Japanese war brides avoided the war brides clubs. Many cited gossip as the main reason for avoiding the clubs. Even former members of such groups referred to gossip when discussing why they left war brides clubs. Mrs. O-5 was a member of the Hibiscus Club a couple years prior to her interview in 1954, but she quit the club because she, “...noticed too much gossip and jealousy among the members. They discuss each other’s dresses, etc.”⁵⁷⁵ Another Japanese war bride, Mrs. O-20, avoided the clubs because of the differences among the members, as she told the interviewer, “I am not interested in the war brides club. The members are of all kinds of backgrounds. Many of them use vulgar language. You would lose interest in such a group, if you hear it.”⁵⁷⁶ This reasoning was similar to an additional reason Mrs. O-5 left the Hibiscus Club. She did not care for the newer Japanese war brides that were joining her group and found them, “too practical and aggressive for us.”⁵⁷⁷ Mrs. O-5 found she did not have much in common with the values of these new war brides whom she deemed materialistic.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ O-5, April 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 3.

⁵⁷⁶ O-20, October 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 2.

⁵⁷⁷ O-5, War Brides Interview Project, 3.

All of the Japanese war brides who mentioned attending the Hibiscus Club were married to Asian American men. Only one Japanese war bride married to a Caucasian GI mentioned ever attending a club for Japanese war brides, Mrs. O-29, who belonged to such a club on the mainland. She explained, “We stayed in San Francisco for one year. I belonged to the Japanese War Brides Club. At first I was homesick but as soon as I joined it, I felt better.”⁵⁷⁸ Like other war brides, Mrs. O-29 found belonging to a war brides club helped stave off the loneliness of being in a new country.

Although only a relatively small number of war brides in the RASRL study had participated in war brides clubs by the time of the interview, they proved an important experience for those who did. These clubs supplied a social network outside of the in-law family on which so many depended. War brides were able to avoid the loneliness they felt as immigrants in a new country and form relationships based on the shared experience of being war brides. Yet being a war bride was not enough to bond all war brides together. Differences based on country of origin, such as language, prevented interracial or interethnic groups from being completely successful. More than that, many of the RASRL war brides avoided the clubs altogether because, despite the benefits such groups offered, those benefits did not offset negatives such as gossip.

Japanese and European war brides coming to the United States after World War II did not have an existent immigrant community to slip into as earlier waves of

⁵⁷⁸ O-29, November 1954, transcript, War Brides Interview Project, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, University Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI, 1.

immigrants often did. And since their settlement pattern dispersed them across the United States, they were not necessarily located near their respective ethnic communities, a fact especially true for Japanese war brides. Even when Japanese war brides did settle near the Japanese American community, as was the case in Hawaii, the experience was not always positive. While some Japanese war brides appreciated the proximity to their ethnic community, others deplored it, and still others were indifferent. Japanese war brides did not have enough in common with earlier waves of Japanese immigrants to make the relationship viable. Their backgrounds were different in terms of education, class, and regional origin. Additionally, enough time had elapsed between the waves of immigrants that Japan had changed since the Issei left, and the Japanese American culture had changed and evolved independently. Although the groups shared an alleged common racial background, in reality, they sometimes had little in common. This phenomenon reinforces the assertions of Historian Mai Ngai. When she argued that one of the problems with the 1924 Immigration Act subsisted in its basing quotas on national origin, she explained how the faulty concept of national origins was a precursor to problematic views of race and ethnicity as static. She wrote, “By reifying national origin, Congress and the Quota Board anticipated the term ‘ethnicity,’ inventing it...with the pretence of its being ‘eternal’ and ‘essential’ when, in fact, it is ‘pliable and unstable.’”⁵⁷⁹ Such false assumptions about race fostered a rocky relationship between Japanese war brides and the Japanese American community, which was difficult for some war brides to experience. Yet this difficulty served to distinguish Japanese war brides as a

⁵⁷⁹ Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law,” 79.

unique entity separate from other Japanese Americans, which made it easier for mainstream America to accept them.

Left with no natural immigrant community to fall into, some war brides chose to build their own community through war brides clubs. These clubs were not an ideal solution, however, as many war brides avoided them altogether because they thought the clubs were too much trouble or too gossipy for their liking. When clubs did form they often formed along racial and ethnic lines, leaving many war brides out of the fold. Japanese war brides had to deal with racial prejudice and the permutations of the American racial hierarchy in the 1940s and 1950s, but they also had to cope with the divisions among themselves. Being Japanese did not provide enough common ground to bind many Japanese war brides to the Japanese American community, but neither was being a war bride enough to connect Japanese and European war brides.

Conclusion

This dissertation sought to explain the admission of Japanese war brides to the United States in the 1940s and to study the Japanese war brides' experience in the postwar United States. It especially hoped to understand how race and gender structured both admission and experience. The first line of inquiry focused on the legislative changes spurred by the romances between American GIs and foreign women during the war and postwar occupations. The other focus of this project considered both how war brides construed their experience and also how others—government officials, voluntary groups, the mass media, in-laws, local communities—construed war brides. To what extent did America accept these new immigrants and how did that range of acceptance impact the lives of war brides in their first decade in the United States? On the one hand, this dissertation has attempted to show how one change, like the War Brides Act, could impact thousands. On the other, this project has also made an effort to draw broader conclusions from individual experience.

The major legislative changes that occurred in the postwar era to facilitate the immigration of war brides and fiancées were part of a series of immigration reforms that Congress passed both during and after the war. Despite their flaws, these acts were significant in that they circumvented the quota system of the 1924 Immigration Act. These bypasses were prompted by a groundswell of pressure from American GIs and their foreign brides and fiancées. Many members of the U.S. government strongly favored legislation for these wartime couples. Yet many others did not. Opponents had to be persuaded or outvoted by those in favor of the legislation. Ultimately, the most pervasive argument that passed war bride and fiancée legislation

time and again was that American GIs deserved the wives, husbands, and fiancées of their choice in exchange for service rendered their country. This logic was particularly useful not only in ensuring the passage of the first War Brides Act but also the Fiancée Act. To some degree, the motive among lawmakers and government officials echoed older assumptions about gender and conquest. In the colonial era, some British North American men, for instance, saw sex and marriage with American Indian women as a way to conquer the continent. But in the postwar World War II era there was a twist: military women, too, were now construed as having earned the right to bring home the mate of their choice. This shift in the relationship between gender and conquest was less striking than it might at first appear because policymakers clearly considered the normal case to be one in which an American man brought home a foreign wife, but the assumption by those same policymakers that American servicewomen should also benefit from the war brides legislation did represent a significant shift.

Other historians, such as Martha Gardner, have focused on how the impetus of family reunion factored into war bride and fiancée legislation, which was no doubt an important factor.⁵⁸⁰ The passage of these acts, however, hinged on rewarding soldiers not family reunions. Wives, fiancées, and children became the hard-earned prizes won by military service. This connection was obvious to some outside of government—Japanese Americans living in Hawaii in the postwar years, for example. Some detested the mere presence of Japanese war brides because they viewed them as a physical representation of Japan’s defeat during World War II.

⁵⁸⁰ While Martha Gardner also noted the war brides and fiancée acts, “...rewarded the sacrifices of soldiers by reuniting them with their foreign-born wives,” she focused on family reunion as the impetus for the legislative changes. See Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen*, 225.

The legislation subsequently passed and the implementation of the legislation were deeply racialized and structured by prewar ideas about race. The War Brides Act only allowed for racially eligible persons to immigrate, thereby excluding Japanese war brides altogether. Only after additional pressure was brought to bear on Congress did the Japanese War Brides Acts pass. The Fiancée Act never opened immigration to those racially ineligible persons under its auspices. When it came time for war brides and fiancées to take advantage of the opportunities these laws provided, however, the specificity of prewar ideas about race and ethnicity came into play in even more complex and specific ways. Not all war brides and fiancées were treated the same. The INS bestowed preferential treatment on Northern and Western European war brides and fiancées, even investigating GI husbands who had abandoned or deserted these women and trying to persuade the soldiers to do right by their foreign wives. Southern and Eastern European war brides and fiancées were never so lucky. They were the ones who instead of receiving support from INS officials faced increased scrutiny. Italian war brides even had the legal legitimacy of their marriages called into question. This experience of Italian war brides closely paralleled that of Japanese war brides. These disparities in treatment along racial and ethnic lines call into question the notion of World War II as a turning point in the whitening of second-wave immigrants. The war was over, but a new racial order was not fully realized.

Postwar ideas about gender also had an enormous impact on Japanese war bride immigration. In reality, Japanese war brides were not all housewives, just as other American women of the postwar era were not. The Red Cross workers strongly

promoting the role of wife and mother for Japanese war brides abroad and American women at home, for example, worked outside the home. Like other postwar women, they were exercising authority outside their homes, and their instruction of Japanese women at the bride schools exemplified that. Even though those who explicitly advocated domesticity as the center of postwar women's lives idealized Japanese war brides as exemplars of that domestic ideal, many war brides worked to contribute to the family income. They busily juggled work in the labor force with caring for their children, housework, community involvement, and sometimes even school. But in the end it may not have mattered that they deviated from one of the predominant notions of white middle-class America's ideal of the perfect American woman. For the most part, white Americans perceived them as, at the very least, striving for this ideal, which they literally wedded to assimilation and Americanization. And it was this alleged willingness on the part of the Japanese war brides to assimilate, rather than the more complex reality, that rendered these women acceptable immigrants. Although scholars like Caroline Chung Simpson believed this characterization of Japanese war brides as American housewives threatened white America by infringing on the domestic sphere, this dissertation has argued the opposite.⁵⁸¹ White Americans valued Japanese war brides for their presumed eagerness to fulfill the role of housewives and mothers. The brides schools run by the American Red Cross, as well as articles in the popular press like *The Washington Post*, revealed this set of assumptions. Furthermore, the Red Cross valued this domestic role for native American women in a very similar way and operated similar schools stateside for them. Significantly, the Red Cross believed this domestic role was new for foreign

⁵⁸¹ Caroline Chung Simpson, "'Out of an obscure place,'" 49.

and native American women alike and that it was one that could and should be promoted.

The experiences that Japanese women had with American women and with war brides schools in Japan remained important when these women arrived in the United States. It gave them a head start on the process of acculturation. This would be an ongoing process for most of the brides, however, who received a great deal of assistance from their in-laws and friends. But even more important than initiating the process of acculturation was the impression these war brides schools gave the American public. Not all war brides attended war brides schools, especially not the earliest wave, but all the war brides reaped the benefits of the image they projected of the new Japanese female immigrants. The war brides schools trained these women to be good American housewives—one piece of the ideal female American citizen of the 1950s, who also would have worked in the labor force and involved herself in local community affairs. What is more, the Japanese women, often in reality and always in perception, were viewed as eager to learn American ways. Thus, in many ways, Japanese war brides represented an ideal immigrant to 1950s America. Rather than arriving with groups of their native people, these women arrived construed as already domestically contained. Already married and sometimes with children, these women represented the most innocuous form of immigrant—one that was ready and willing to slip right into American society. As the experiences of the interviewed Japanese war brides revealed, this image, though not necessarily the reality, truly benefited these women. Not only did it incline Americans to welcome its new immigrant population, it also eased the women's transition into white American society.

Hollywood films also assisted Japanese war brides' entry into American society. Although it is impossible to determine the exact impact of films like *Sayonara* and *Japanese War Bride*, the films certainly portrayed Japanese war brides in a positive and sympathetic light. The obstacles Japanese war bride couples had to face were emphasized in both dramatic films. Even the comedy, *I Was a Male War Bride*, captured these hardships for war brides and *husbands* with a surprising degree of realism. The films lent credence to the idea that the new wives and husbands of American members of the Armed Services would have wanted desperately to come to the United States to be with their spouses in order to persist through the complex immigration process. In other words, they were not deviants trying to take advantage of American GIs and gain access to America any way possible. Interestingly, Hollywood films portrayed only potential German war brides in that way—as devious schemers attempting to take advantage of unsuspecting American GIs. This characterization of German women represented a disconnect from the actual experience of German war brides with at least the INS. The INS did not deter German war bride and fiancée immigration and in fact did the opposite. They worked to ease the process of immigration for these women. Furthermore, German war brides in the RASRL study did not report feeling less welcome in the United States than other European or Japanese war brides.

Just as war brides schools helped to acculturate war brides to the United States, so did their new in-law families. In many ways, the nature of a war bride's relationship with her in-laws determined her early experience in the United States. A helpful mother-in-law, for example, could introduce a war bride to American culture

via cooking lessons, as well as a new community via networks of friends and neighbors. A war bride who lacked a good relationship with her new in-laws could be left feeling marooned and isolated in her new country.⁵⁸²

Yet a distinction between transitioning to American life and assimilation must be carefully drawn. While all war brides sought assistance with their transition to life in the United States, not all war brides wanted to assimilate to American ways as others have assumed. Previous literature on war brides, Japanese and otherwise, have mostly emphasized the ways war brides were forced to assimilate once in the U.S.⁵⁸³ The example of the dinner table as a cultural borderland within the household demonstrated that this was not necessarily so. Many Japanese and European war brides strove to maintain their cultural identity once in the United States, and one of the ways they did so was through food preparation. What is more, they also attempted to share their culture with their new families. Sometimes these cultural exchanges were successful, and the dinner table served as a site where war brides and in-laws could each understand and appreciate the other through food practices. Other times, such exchanges failed and exacerbated the differences and possibly also the contentious relationship between war brides and in-laws. Regardless of the outcome, the dinner table as a cultural borderland proved a fruitful site of analysis for family dynamics and for revealing the ways war brides maneuvered to maintain their cultural

⁵⁸² The war brides in the RASRL study had a tendency to become overly dependent on their in-law families if they had a positive relationship with them, however. This potentially constricted their life choices, such as where they chose to live or future plans for movement. It also potentially hindered other relationships, such as friendships outside the family.

⁵⁸³ For examples of such studies see Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camp Town* and Lark, "They Challenged Two Nations." These two studies addressed Korean and Japanese war brides, respectively.

identity in a new country. In the end, most war brides in this study acculturated themselves to life in America rather than assimilating fully.

War brides did not have as much control over their identity in the public sphere. Their racial identity in particular was often literally wedded to that of their GI husband. A type of racial coopture sometimes characterized the experiences of Japanese war brides in the RASRL study. A Japanese war bride married to a Caucasian American serviceman could be elevated to his racial status on the mainland, while a Japanese war bride married to an African American GI endured the same type of racism that he did. The fluidity of a war bride's racial identity was also contingent on location. While the muting of a Japanese war bride's racial identity often occurred on the mainland, it was not likely to occur in Hawaii. Hawaii maintained its own specific racial order and prioritized a Japanese war bride's Japanese identity, regardless of her husband, and much to the dismay of war brides who had received preferential treatment on the mainland.

The specificity of a war bride's experience in terms of racial identity, which was highly dependent on her location within the United States, cannot be overemphasized and represents an avenue for future research. To analyze the experience of Japanese war brides, this project has drawn heavily on the oral interviews from the RASRL study conducted in Hawaii in the 1950s. This invaluable resource allowed a comparison between Japanese and European women, who also comprised a significant number of the project's interviewees. Because these war brides were members of military families, some had spent time in other regions of United States prior to their time in Hawaii. These locations were scattered all over

the mainland but were not consistent among the war brides in this study. While these reported experiences remain interesting and significant, more in-depth local studies in locations other than Hawaii would be sure yield fascinating and perhaps disparate results in terms of how white Americans ascribed racial identity to war brides and in turn how those ascriptions shaped the experience of war brides.

Future studies in locations outside of Hawaii would also prove interesting in assessing Japanese and European war brides' relationship to existing communities. Once again, Hawaii proved an interesting location for analysis in this project, as it allowed for the analysis of the relationship of Japanese war brides to the Japanese American community there. A tenuous and sometimes even antagonistic relationship distinguished these two groups of immigrants from Japan. So many differences existed between the two—education levels and class just to name two—that the alleged commonality of race proved to be little basis on which to build a positive relationship. Differences within the households of Japanese war brides and Japanese American in-laws mirrored these larger community-wide problems. Because these problems, within the household and in the community at large, were so racially specific, it would be extravagant to draw any broad conclusions about the relationships between war brides and existing communities in the United States. The connection between Greek fiancées and the Greek American community in Detroit, for example, hint at an entirely different dynamic.

Another avenue for additional study would be an even more expansive comparison of war brides and GI husbands of varying races and ethnicities. One of the ways this study has differed from previous studies of war brides, rests in the way

it compared the experiences of Japanese war brides to those of European ones as a way to contextualize their experiences. Most prior studies focused on only Japanese or only British war brides, for example. Directly comparing Japanese and European war brides has been particularly useful in revealing the ways race and ethnicity shaped a war bride's experience before, during, and after arrival to the United States. The inclusion of GI husbands of different races and ethnicities in the study proved particularly useful in that regard as well. Yet this comparison could have been more expansive. Due mostly to available source material, the oral interview sample in the RASRL study for instance, this study focused on Japanese and European war brides. Women from North Africa, the Middle East, and India also came to the United States as war brides, however, and their experiences would prove an interesting comparison to those of war brides from Japan and Europe. Additionally, the RASRL study did not include any war brides married to African American GIs.⁵⁸⁴ This project was able to draw conclusions on the experiences of war brides married to African American GIs based on the second-hand reports of war brides in the RASRL study and other secondary literature. More research into the experiences of Japanese and European Americans married to African American GIs would be valuable in more completely determining the acceptance of these women into American society.

Finally, this study chose to focus on the immediate postwar era as a way to gauge the immediate impact of war bride immigration, both on immigration legislation and the war bride herself, as well as her impact on postwar America. The long-term impact of war brides on the United States and the United States on war brides would reveal the permutations of change over a greater period of time. Since

⁵⁸⁴ It is unknown whether this lack of inclusion was intentional or not.

this study has shown the racial identity of the war bride to be mutable and contingent on geographic location, it seems reasonable to assume that chronological location played a role as well. The ascribed racial identities of Japanese war brides may have continued to shift throughout the long postwar era as America moved through the Modern Civil Rights Movement. Time may also have had an impact on the acculturation of war brides. It is possible that Japanese and European war brides may have adopted more aspects of American culture over time. It is equally possible they maintained their own cultural identity just as strongly as before. The latter may have even been more easily accomplished in the long-term once war bride families continued to move out of their in-law's homes and into their own.

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