2008

# Intergenerational dialogue within the Japanese American community

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*San Jose State University*

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Appendix E

Discussion Questions Part B for Thursday, July 19, 2007

Please answer these questions as openly and honestly as you can with your partner.

Please allow your partner the opportunity to answer these questions fully and openly.

Discuss these questions quietly with one another; please take notes about your discussion.

Q 1: How would you define Japanese American today?

Q 2: Most people know that the younger generations of Japanese Americans are

becoming more and more multi-racial. How does that impact the Japanese American

community?

Q3: How can the Japanese American community get the younger generations of Japanese

American's involved?

Personal Reflection:

Please take a moment to reflect and answer these questions. Please be as open and honest

as you feel comfortable.

Reflection Q1: How did it feel to have this conversation with an individual(s) from

another generation?

Reflection Q2a: What was hard about it?

Reflection Q2b: What was easy about it?

Reflection Q3: Were there any points of agreement between you and your partner(s)?

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE WITHIN THE JAPANESE AMERICAN

COMMUNITY


A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University


In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By


Larissa Akiko Favela

December 2008

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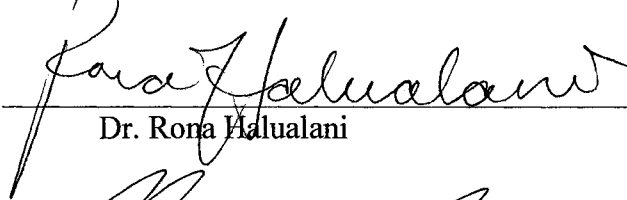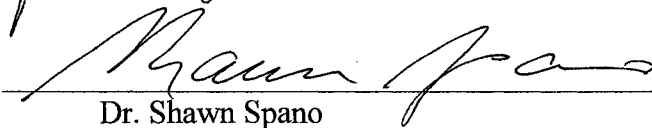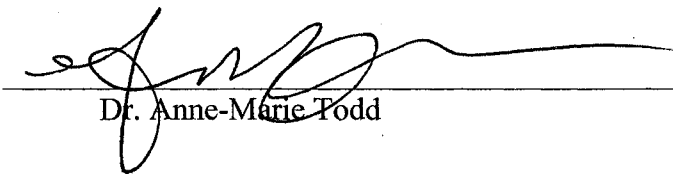
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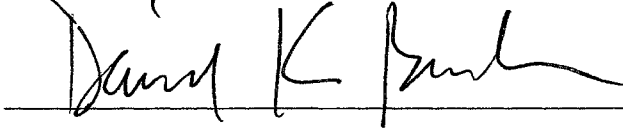
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ABSTRACT

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE WITHIN THE JAPANESE AMERICAN
COMMUNITY

by Larissa Akiko Favela

This study explored the lack of communication across the generations within the

Japanese American community. The purpose of the study was to engage the different

generations in an intergenerational dialogue. Focus groups were conducted to examine

the factors contributing to the lack of communication. Data from the focus groups were

analyzed using Spradley's (1979; 1980) thematic analysis and were used to inform the

content of the intergenerational dialogue session. The process and content of the

dialogue session conducted was analyzed according to the principles of dialogic

communication and community–based action research (Spano, 2001; Stringer, 1996).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this Master's Thesis could not have been accomplished without the assistance and support of many individuals. First, I would like to thank the Japanese American community and Japantown for their willingness to participate in this research. Without your contributions this Thesis would be nothing. Secondly, I would like to thank my graduate advisor Dr. Rona Halualani and the members of my graduate committee, Drs. Shawn Spano and Anne Marie Todd. Your guidance, encouragement and feedback helped to make this work possible. Finally, I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the multitude of family members and friends who prayed, encouraged, babysat, and assisted me above and beyond my expectations. This thesis would and could not have been completed without all of you there to help me. In particular, I would like to recognize my parents who never stopped encouraging me. I would also like to thank my husband for all of his love, patience, and support.

This Thesis is dedicated to my late grandparents, Abelino and Esther Bailon and Nobuko Lowe. You always told me I could be whoever I wanted and I could do whatever I wanted to do. I wish you could have been here to see the completion of this work. This research is also dedicated to my son, Lucas, and my future children - may you always remember and honor your roots.

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CHAPTER 1

Exploring Intergenerational Communication within the Japanese American Community

Introduction

On February 19, 1942, Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Roosevelt

and the lives of over 120,000 Japanese Americans, the majority of whom lived in

California and the Pacific Northwest, changed forever (Yoo, 2000). After three years of

imprisonment, the Japanese Americans were released from the internment camps in 1945.

"Those who were able to, moved ahead, determined to stake their claim as Americans in

the fullest sense of the word" (Yoo, 2000, p. 180). The Japanese American experience

not only reveals a tale of endurance, perseverance, triumph, and prosperity, it also

exposes our nation's problem with racism and discrimination. According to Yoo (2000),

this racism and discrimination created obstacles and challenges for Japanese Americans

that influenced opportunities and quality of life. The effects of these "national problems"

arose as issues in this study. Racism and discrimination contributed to the assimilation of

the Japanese American and the birth of a new multiracial generation. In the Bay Area,

the Japanese American Japantown San Jose community is in the midst of experiencing

and grappling with an intracultural and intergenerational predicament that reflects the

reciprocal relationship between communication and culture. Each successive generation

of Japanese Americans are becoming increasingly more Westernized and multiracial.

According to a New York Times article in 2004, those who identify themselves as

Japanese American are on the decline from 847, 562 in 1990 to 796, 700 in the 2000

census (Navarro, 2004). Based on data from Census 2000, in comparison to other Asian

ethnicities, Japanese Americans are the most likely to be multiracial with 31 percent indicating their racial status with the combination of another race category (Kim, 2002). In Santa Clara Country alone, 4.7 % of the participants responded as belonging to more than one race (United States Census Bureau, 2000). This is equivalent to 1 in 25 people in Santa Clara County. This is substantial for a county where 35, 124 people responded as Japanese alone or in any combination out of 8% of all respondents who declared themselves "Asian" (United States Census Bureau, 2000). For the Japanese American community this social trend is not unfamiliar.

The community has always been aware that at some point they will not only have to address the increase of multiracial individuals who are Japanese American, but also the implications of multiraciality for preserving Japanese American identity and community (King and DeCosta, 1996; Spickard, 2000). There are many factors contributing to this trend, including a decrease in Japanese immigration and increasing intermarriage between Japanese Americans with other races (Aratani, 2001; Navarro, 2004). According to Root (1998), Japanese-White births are almost 40% more common than monoracial Japanese births. Beginning as early as 1924 to 1933, interracial marriage is recorded between Japanese and other races at 2.3 %; 0.6 % of those marriages were to Whites (Panunzio, 1942, as cited in Kitano, Fujino, & Sato, 1998). According to Tinker (1982), from 1940 to 1949, 14.9 % of Japanese American marriages were outmarriages, or marriage with others outside of their race. From 1960 to 1961, Japanese American outmarriage rates were 67.9% in Los Angeles County alone (Tinker, 1982, as cited in Kitano, Fujino, & Sato, 1998). According to Kitano, Fujino, and Sato (1998), most

recent outmarriage data indicates that over 60 % of *Sansei* (third generation, American born Japanese Americans) women marry outside of their race, and over 50% of *Sansei* males marry outside their race. Additionally, data from Census 2000 reveals that out of the six major Asian American ethnic groups, Japanese Americans had the highest percentage of outmarriage (to another Asian or to another ethnic group) in proportion to their population at 30% (Le, 2008). This changing cultural landscape is causing uneasiness within the Japanese American community regarding the future of their culture. Specifically, these changes raise questions surrounding Japanese American cultural identity. This Master's thesis focused on the intergenerational and intercultural communication surrounding Japanese American identity, particularly in San Jose's Japantown community.

<div align="center">Description of the Issue</div>

Increasing assimilation of each successive generation and the increasing number of multiracial Japanese Americans is causing concern regarding the preservation of Japanese American culture and the Japanese American community. Initially, the topic of senior care emerged within the Japanese American community in Japantown San Jose as an issue of concern. The community was concerned about the issue of senior care because of the apparent lack of interest and participation of the younger *Sansei* (third generation), *Yonsei* (fourth generation) and *Gosei* (fifth generation) in the work of the Japantown San Jose Senior Center, *Yu-Ai Kai*. The *Nisei* (second generation) of the community are especially concerned about preserving the local and cultural legacy of caring for the elderly. I became aware of this concern while involved with Japantown

San Jose's senior community center, Yu Ai Kai. Although employees of the senior community center would talk about these issues, their complaint was that no communication was taking place in the larger community addressing these issues. Communication about the issues of senior care, the preservation of cultural values, and cultural identity seemed to be openly discussed only by the "elders" of the community, with little to no involvement of the younger generations. The individuals of the community who directly affect the future of senior care were not included in the conversation. This Master's thesis initially sought to explore this lack of open communication across the generations, how and why this lack of communication was taking place, and what could possibly done to address the issue.

As this study progressed, the issue of senior care was indeed an issue but other more significant and pervasive issues emerged from the conducted focus groups. These issues centered on the lack of interest, participation, and involvement of younger generations in the Japanese American community at large. Conversations reflected a growing concern about the definition of Japanese American cultural identity and the preservation of Japanese American culture even with the rise of multiracial Japanese Americans. Aside from the lack of open communication, the concerns that emerged within the focus groups were issues of conflict. Issues regarding interest and involvement of younger generations, the definition of Japanese American identity, cultural preservation and preservation of the community, and the issue of multiraciality are points of tension within the community. Discussion of these issues within and across

the Japanese American community reveals a diversity of opinions and perspectives that are also intensely emotional.

Further examination of this intergenerational predicament reveals the dynamic relationship between culture and communication. According to Gudykunst (1997), the relationship between communication and culture is a reciprocal relationship; one influences the other. Culture influences the communication style of individuals, and the way individuals communicate can, over time, change the culture (Gudykunst, 1997). This Master's thesis sought to explore this reciprocal relationship of culture and communication further by exploring the impact outmarriage and assimilation have upon the Japanese American ethnic culture and community.

Within the field of communication studies, there has been ample research on intercultural communication, including Japanese cultural communication patterns (Barnlund, 1989; Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Chen & Masako, 2003; Collier, 1996; Gudykunst, 1983; Gudykunst, Gao, Schmidt, Nishida, Michael, Leung, Wang, & Barraclough, 1992; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984; Hall & Hall, 1990; Kim, Hunter, Miyahara, Horvath, Bresnahan, & Yoon, 1996; Klopf, 1991; Ting-Toomey, 1991; Ting-Toomey, Gao, Trubisky, Yang, Kim, Lin, & Nishida, 1991). Most of the research findings suggest and/or support the theory that Japanese culture is collectivistic or, the harmony and good of the group or community as a whole takes precedence over the individual (Hofstede, 1980, 1983; Gudykunst, 1983, Gudykunst & Nishida, 1994; Nadamitsu, Chen, & Freidrich, 2001). A few studies on intergenerational communication have also been done within intercultural communication research, comparing and

contrasting Western communication patterns and Japanese, Asian American, or other Asian communication patterns (McCann, Ota, Giles, & Caraker, 2004; McCann, 2003; Mori, 2003; Sugimoto, 1997; Tanaka & Bell, 1996; Williams, Ota, Giles, Pierson, Gallois, Ng, et al, 1997). These studies argue that there is a strong sense of *filial piety,* or respect and deference of young Asian Americans to their elders, more so than their Western counterparts. It is this concept of *filial piety* that the Japanese American community fears is being threatened. In San Jose's Japantown San Jose, the lack of participation of the Japanese American *Sansei* (third generation, American born) and *Yonsei* (fourth generation, American born) (Nagata, 2001) in the affairs of the community is perceived by some to be not only threatening a deeply embedded cultural value, but threatening the preservation of the entire Japanese American culture and community in the Bay Area.

The focus of this Master's thesis was on intergenerational communication about issues affecting the Japanese American community, particularly Japanese American cultural identity and cultural preservation within Japantown San Jose's Japanese American community. This issue is particularly personal to me as a young, multiracial Japanese American. On one hand, I am not always perceived by some in the community as Japanese American because of my multiraciality. At the very least, I am not considered to be authentically Japanese. On the other hand, I, as a later, *Sansei-han* (third generation of a Japanese immigrant who immigrated after WWII) generation of the Japanese American community, do see the need and urgency to preserve the cultural values and traditions of Japanese American culture and the historical and cultural legacy

of Japanese Americans. In order to understand who I am, I need to understand the culture that shaped my grandmother and my mother. This study has helped me not only to understand my grandmother and mother even more, but this study has opened my eyes into my own cultural, personal identity. Additionally, this study has given me insight into why I believe what I believe, why I act the way I do – and essentially, what makes me who I am. The research is also particularly interesting and personal to me as the mother of a young, multiracial child. I would like my son to know his mother's, grandmother's and great grandmother's cultural heritage so as he explores his own identity, he will have a people to go to and a place to go where he will feel a sense of community because of similar shared experiences and perspectives.

Japantown San Jose and the senior community center, Yu Ai Kai, are the localized expressions of Japanese American cultural values (Mandziuk, 2003) and is the site of this cultural struggle. Japantown San Jose, the center of the Japanese American community, and Yu Ai Kai, one of the community's mainstays, are practical and symbolic places for the intergenerational communication event to take place. In order to understand Japantown San Jose's and Yu Ai Kai's significance to the community, it is important to be familiar with the historical context surrounding Japanese Americans.

*Japanese Americans – A Brief History*

The Japanese American experience is unique among most immigrant stories in the history of the United States. In 1890, Japanese immigrants began to land on the West Coast from Japan. From 1890 to 1924, a total of 295,820 Japanese came to the United States (Maki, Kitano, & Berthold, 1999). These original immigrants, those who

immigrated before WWII, are known as the *Issei,* those who were born in Japan and alien

to the United States. Their offspring, the *Nisei,* refer to the second generation, those of

Japanese descent who are "the American born" (Adams, 2001; Harth, 2000; Yoo, 2000).

By 1902, a small *Nihonmachi,* or Japantown San Jose, was established. By 1909, about

1% of the agricultural land was owned by Issei farmers (Maki, Kitano, & Berthold,

1999). Similar to most immigrant stories, the Japanese were subjected to discrimination.

However, they lived in relative peace until December 7, 1941. After the Japanese

attacked Pearl Harbor, resentment and distrust of the Japanese grew. As Japanese

American reporter Larry Tajiri observed, "We are Americans by every right, birth,

education and belief, but our faces are those of the enemy" (as quoted in Yoo, 2000, p.

95). Shortly thereafter, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order

9066, which authorized the mass evacuation of Japanese Americans to internment camps

(Maki, Kitano, & Berthold, 1999; Yoo, 2000). The evacuation was sudden and rushed,

leaving little time for those affected to make arrangements for their families, their

businesses, or even pack (Mackey, 1998; Riley, 2002; Shirai, 2001). The majority of the

Japanese Americans in Santa Clara County were tagged for identification and sent to

Heart Mountain, Wyoming, Poston, Arizona, and Manzanar, California (Asakawa, 2004;

Japantown San Jose website; Yoo, 2000). They resided as imprisoned American citizens

for three years within the internment camps. It was not until December of 1944 that they

were allowed to return to their homes. However, very few had homes to go back to and

very few were welcomed back to the towns and cities where their homes were established

(Eap, 2001). Even those who served in the United States military found little welcome

(Nachman, 2007). Santa Clara County, San Jose, and Morgan Hill passed resolutions that opposed the return of Japanese American's to the valley (Eap, 2001). The Japanese American community has struggled and survived and now fight to recognize, honor, and serve those who experienced the internment. The story of the Japanese Americans is one of hope, survival, perseverance, and triumph. This is the history and the story that the Japanese American community does not want their successive generations to forget. This is a story that the San Jose community and larger California community ought not to forget.

Yu Ai Kai, the Japanese American senior center, is a reflection of the notion of *filial piety*. The organization, conceived in the early 1970's by *Sansei* (offspring of the Nisei, third generation American born Japanese Americans) (Nagata, 2001) students from San Jose State University, is a source of pride of the community (Sweeney, 1990). It embodies the spirit of the Japanese tradition of *keiro* or respect or place of honor of the elderly. "The senior center was the product of these Sanseis' quest to honor their elders in the spirit of their culture while seeking their own cultural identity" (Karjala as quoted in Yu Ai Kai Community Senior Center, 2004, p. 2). The organization was meant to be a place of comfort and community for the elders, the Issei and the Nisei, who endured the humiliation of the internment. The organization's vision statement which can be found on their website (www.yuaikai.org) reflects the young Sanseis' aspiration: "To be a leader in promoting seniors as valued members of your community, both as contributors and beneficiaries, through sharing, preserving, and developing Japanese – American culture" (Yu Ai Kai, n.d). For over thirty years, Yu Ai Kai has been dedicated to

ensuring that this vision is realized by providing quality care and services to the senior

community, regardless of ethnicity. The aging Nisei and older Sansei, the pillars of the

organization, are still concerned about the younger generations losing touch with their

culture and cultural values. The Yu Ai Kai senior community center has become more

than a site that reflects the cultural value of caring for the elderly. The senior community

center is a monument through which the heroes of the Japanese American community are

honored. The lack of involvement of the younger generation in the matter of senior care

is the catalyst that brought the issues of multiraciality, cultural identity and cultural

preservation into the spotlight. There is a fear of losing or mitigating the cultural values

that characterize what it is to be Japanese American. There is a fear that the next

generations will forget the lessons from the past and the struggles of their parents and

grandparents.

*Definition of Terms*

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to define and explain terms used to

describe the different generations discussed in this research study. These terms, as noted

and pointed out by an active member of the Japantown San Jose community in a

conversation, reflect the cultural values of order and symmetry in the Japanese culture

(Asakawa, 2004; J. Yamaichi, personal communication, 5/21/07). Issei is the term to

describe the first Japanese immigrants to the United States, circa late 1800's and early

1900's (Asakawa, 2004). Nisei is the term used to describe the offspring of the Issei, the

first American born Japanese. Sansei describes those who are the offspring of the Nisei,

the third generation born in the United States; the second generation who are American

citizens. These three generations were those who were interned during World War II, however, some Sansei were born after the internment. Yonsei and Gosei are the fourth and fifth generations, respectively. A large percentage of these generational groups are biracial or multiracial. The term *hapa* is a Hawaiian term for "mixed" that originally had no ethnic connotation, but was later adopted as a term to refer to individuals who are racially mixed (Asakawa, 2004). Those who are hapa are not always perceived to be "pure" Japanese American due to the dilution of the blood line. *Nikkei* is a term used for an individual who comes from Japanese ancestry. This term usually implies that the individual is Japanese by blood, but not necessarily in lifestyle. In other words, they are genetically Japanese or Japanese American, but culturally "White" (Asakawa, 2004).

Several questions arise out of the history of Japanese Americans. These are: To what extent are the successive generations forgetting their heritage? Why or why not? Is there really a lack of interest in the younger generations to preserve and serve the community? Why or why not? While discussion about the issue of cultural heritage and preservation is taking place among the Nisei and the older Sansei, is this a discussion taking place across generations? If the Japanese American community is seriously concerned about cultural preservation, then communication regarding the future preservation of Japanese American culture must take place across the generations.

## Literature Review

Cross cultural and intercultural communication scholars have continually argued that Japanese culture is a collectivistic culture (Gudykunst, 1997; Hofstede, 1991; Ito, 1989; Sugimoto, 1997; Ting-Toomey 1991; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). Collectivistic

cultures are characterized as emphasizing group based information in order to understand and predict the behavior of others (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986a), rather than person based information which tends to characterize individualistic cultures. Collectivistic cultures tend to have only a select number of in-groups which heavily influence communication and one's identity is developed based on one's relationship with others (Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2005). According to Hamaguchi (1985), the Japanese culture tends to focus on conceptualism or emphasis on concepts such as *wa* (harmony), *amae* (dependency) and *enryo* (reserve or restraint) (as cited in Gudykunst, 1998). One's own personal wishes and desires will become secondary to that of the group. Therefore, one's identity is interdependent with the group, or one's identity is within the context of the group as a whole. This emphasis and interdependence on the group over the individual directly influences the style of communication. As Okabe (1983) explains that the Japanese are deeply involved with one another and know the speech codes so well, that simple messages with deep meanings can be easily understood by others within the culture. Hecht, Warren, Jung and Kreiger (2005) found that the Japanese culture was even more collectivistic than the Chinese culture, another Asian culture that is characterized as collectivistic. Within the Japanese culture there is an intimate knowledge and understanding of cultural rules, norms, and speech codes. This emphasis on the group and one's relation to the group tends toward avoidance of group or communal conflict and the promotion of group harmony and cohesion.

Cross cultural and intercultural communication research examining the Japanese culture and communication patterns, particularly in comparison to other Western cultures

(for example, France or United States), is very extensive (Barnlund, 1989; Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Gudykunst, 1983, 2004, 2005; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986a, 1986b, 1994; Hecht, Warren, Jung & Krieger, 2004; Hofstede, 1980, 1983; Sugimoto, 1997; Ting-Toomey, 1986, 1988, 1991, 2005; Ting-Toomey, Trubisky, & Nishida, 1989). Much of this research focuses upon and explores cultural communication patterns, not issues of cultural identity. Very little research has been done in intercultural or cross cultural communication that focuses specifically on Japanese Americans, those who are both American and of Japanese descent, their cultural communication patterns or their cultural identity. Examining how Westernization and assimilation of the Japanese Americans has influenced the culture and communication patterns would be a very valuable study, particularly as we examine diversity and multiculturalism within the United States. My research will explore how Japanese Americans, one of the oldest and most influential immigrant cultures in California, negotiate assimilating into Western culture while at the same time retaining and remembering their native ethnic culture. Japanese Americans are an integral part of California history. At one time, this community thrived in California. The internment of the Japanese Americans affected many Japanese Americans living in the Bay Area. Japantown San Jose is one of the last existing Japantowns in the United States (Navarro, 2004). The Japanese American Museum of San Jose, a museum dedicated to chronicling and preserving the history and experience of the Japanese American internment, is located in Japantown San Jose.

Research exploring intergenerational communication has also been conducted in both fields of psychology and psychiatry, particularly communication regarding race-

related trauma. The Japanese American internment experience has been conceptualized as a race-related trauma (Loo, 1993) for it is characterized as a prolonged exposure to racial discrimination. The internment had a profound effect on the Japanese Americans' sense of self and personal pride (Asakawa, 2004; Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians [CWRIC], 1997). The loss of businesses and livelihoods of many of the internees has been well-documented. Studies addressing race-related trauma have explored how race – based trauma is communicated intergenerationally, usually through storytelling, silence, and over – and under – disclosure (Danieli, 1998; Duran, Duran, Brave Heart, & Yellow-Horse Davis, 1998; Lichtman, 1994). A few research studies have specifically explored the intergenerational communication of the internment within the Japanese American community (Carr, 1993; Loo, 1993; Nagata, 1990, 1993, 1998, 2003). Japanese American intergenerational communication about the internment experience is less open in comparison to other studies exploring intergenerational communication within other racial groups (Nagata & Cheng, 2003). This finding is not necessarily surprising since it is consistent with past intercultural communication research regarding Japanese communication patterns. Carr (1993), Nagata (1990, 1993), and Nagata, Treirweiler, and Talbot (1999) found that there is a surprising lack of communication regarding the internment between the Nisei and the Sansei, especially since the language barrier does not exist between these two generations as it did for the Issei and the Nisei. However, in Nagata and Cheng's (2003) study exploring Nisei internees' intergenerational communication regarding the internment, the Nisei apparently reported 65% of conversations with their children were about the internment.

This number is twice as large as the 30% reported by the Sansei in a previous study regarding Sansei conversations with their parents (Nagata, 1993). Nagata and Cheng (2003) theorize that there may be inconsistency with what messages the Nisei may have intended to communicate about race-related trauma and what is actually received by their children. This same phenomenon could be taking place in Japantown San Jose regarding intergenerational communication about Japanese American cultural identity and preservation.

In the Communication Studies discipline, there are only a handful of research studies examining intergenerational communication across cultures, and the amount of literature is fairly limited (Cai, Giles, & Noels, 1998; Ng, Loo, Weatherall, & Loong, 1997; Ota, Giles, & Gallois, 2002; Ota, Harwood, Williams, & Takai, 2000; Williams, Ota, Giles, Pierson, Gallois, Ng, et al., 1997). However, these studies have indicated that younger generations have negative experiences when communicating with the elderly. For example, Williams, Ota, Giles, Pierson, Gallois, Ng, et al, (1997) found in their survey across nine different countries, that the Japanese rated high in perceiving the elderly as non-accommodative (i.e., inattentive, close minded, not listening), but they also tended to perceive the elderly with great respect and obligation. Ng, Loo, Weatherall, and Loong (1997) found similar results in their study in Australia exploring intergenerational communication experiences and contact within the Australian Chinese and European cultures. Their study also indicated that although the Chinese in Australia perceived the elderly with more respect than their European counterparts, there was very little evidence of voluntary interaction with the elderly within both cultures.

Additionally, McCann's (2003) study of perceptions of accommodation between generations across three different cultures (Thailand, Japan, and the United States) supported previous research that younger generations have negative communicative experiences with the elderly. His study compared two collectivistic, Asian (Thai and Japanese) cultures with the United States, an individualistic culture. The study indicated less openness but *positive* communication between younger generations and the elderly within the Thai and Japanese cultures, compared to the United States. So far, research exploring cross-cultural intergenerational communication seems to suggest that younger generations in collectivistic Asian cultures (like Japan) respect and accommodate the elderly (to promote harmony), yet perceive communication with the elderly as a negative experience. More recent research has begun exploring the effects of modernization and globalization on the perception of young Asian individuals toward the elderly and the cultural concept of *filial piety*. For example, Zhang, Harwood, and Hummert (2005) examined intergenerational perceptions of conflict and conflict communication styles with Chinese participants. The results of their study did support that modernization and globalization is starting to influence cultural values and communication styles, in regards to conflict.

Thus far, research conclusions exploring intergenerational communication are largely based on one-to-one interviews and surveys based on participants' perceptions of communication interactions with the elderly. However, this research only examines intergenerational communication across two or more national cultures, as opposed to within a single, ethnic culture. My research fills this void within the Communication

Studies discipline by focusing on intergenerational communication within the Japanese American community.

<div align="center">Description of the Study</div>

The intent of this thesis study is to explore what is contributing to the generational communication gap in the San Jose Japanese American community. Based on these findings, this research study attempts to bridge that gap by facilitating communication across generations in an intergenerational dialogue session. This thesis study employs qualitative research to: 1) examine and identify cultural issues and concerns of the Japanese American community regarding senior care and the preservation of Japanese American identity; and, 2) use the data to design and facilitate a dialogue session between the different generations within the community regarding these issues. In order to explore these issues, this study examines the following research questions:

RQ #1(a): How does each generation define Japanese American cultural identity? (Or, what does it mean to be Japanese American?)

RQ #1(b): What are the major concerns of each generation regarding the Japanese American community?

RQ#2: How is the Japanese American community changing? Are these good or positive changes? Why or why not?

RQ #3a: What characterizes the communication between Nisei and Sansei and/or Yonsei?

RQ #3b: What characterizes the communication between the Sansei and the Yonsei and/or Gosei?

RQ #4: Based on the insights gained from the research questions above, how can a dialogue about major community concerns (i.e., the future of the community, assimilation, and multiraciality, involvement and participation of the younger generations, preservation of the Japanese American culture, and others that emerge) be facilitated between the different generations in the Japanese American community?

The goal of this study was to promote more *open* and *positive* communication across the various generations in the Japantown San Jose community regarding the present issues that face the community. Specifically, the research focused on issues such as the future of senior care, involvement and participation of the younger generations, and preservation of the Japanese American community and culture. It is the younger Sansei (third generation) and Yonsei (fourth generation) who will bear the burden of caring for the Nisei (second generation). Eventually, they too will grow old and need care. Collaborating with the Nisei (second generation), Sansei (third generation) and Yonsei (fourth generation), the community will be able to identify the needs of the community (such as preservation of Japanese culture) and will be able to work together to address those needs. As a result of this cross-generational collaboration, the younger generations may have more of an interest in becoming involved, not only in the cultural tradition of caring for the elderly, but more involved in the Japanese American community as a whole. In order to accomplish this goal, this study incorporated the use of dialogue and dialogic communication principles as a framework for addressing and communicating about these issues. The next chapter discusses how dialogue as a method

and approach was used to encourage more positive and open communication across the different generations in the Japanese American community in Japantown San Jose.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical and Methodological Framework:

Dialogue and Focus Groups with San Jose Japanese American Generations

Using dialogic communication as a theoretical and methodological framework

this Master's thesis examined how to narrow the intracultural communication gap across

the generational divide. This chapter delineates the specific method of dialogue and the

use of focus groups as the basis for the intergenerational communication event.

Additionally, information is presented on how this research project contributes to the

field of community-based action research and how this field of research supports the

principles of dialogic communication.

Dialogue as Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Dialogic communication is an attitude and approach to communication. Dialogic

communication promotes what Stewart and Zediker (2000) describe as multivocal and

collaborative communication through which participants have the opportunity to

"alternately speak to the issue and with each other about points of convergence and

divergence in their individual perspectives" (p. 238). This thesis is unique in its purpose

to apply dialogic principles within an intracultural context. Research has been conducted

in applying dialogic theory to interpersonal and pedagogical contexts (Artz, 2001;

Howard, 2002; Hyde & Bineham, 2000; Pearce & Pearce, 2001; Pearce & Pearce, 2004;

Stewart & Zediker, 2000). There have also been studies analyzing the application of

dialogic communication to local community issues involving cultural tensions

(Gurevitch, 1989; Spano, 2001). This study adds to this body of research by applying

dialogic communication in an intracultural and intergenerational context – the Japanese

American community. This thesis explored *how* the dialogic communication model can

be applied to the communication issues within the Japanese American community.

*Dialogic Communication Defined*

Dialogue is sometimes perceived as a highly specialized way people talk,

assuming a relationship between the participants (Spano, 2006). Dixon (1996) describes

dialogue as, "a special kind of talk – that affirms the person-to-person relationship

between discussants and which acknowledges their collective and intellectual capacity to

make sense of the world" (p. 24). This definition and explanation gives us a sense of

how some people describe what dialogue *is*. Pearce and Pearce (2000) argue that this

understanding of dialogue reveals the perception of dialogue as a noun. By perceiving

dialogue as a noun, dialogue is labeled as a type of communication. The other perception

of dialogue is to see dialogue as an adjective or adverb, referring to a distinctive quality

of "'dialogic communication' or 'communicating dialogically' that can be done in any

form of communication" (Pearce & Pearce, 2004, p. 45). Dialogue is not a separate form

of communication, another type of talk, which can be compared and contrasted. Rather

dialogue is an attitude and approach to communication.

Pearce and Pearce (2004) describe dialogic communication as "enriching the

conversation…to probe for untold and unheard stories, to explore the differences between

stories lived and stories told" (p. 47) by inviting "participants into a different kind of

relationship with each other, enriching the stories of self, other, and community" (p. 51).

Hammond, Anderson, and Cissna (2003) describe dialogue as "a human opportunity for

discovering or creating truth and empowering action" (p.150). A dialogic approach to communication allows for creativity and discovery through the stories, the interpretations, and ideas of the participants. It provides new opportunity for participants to work together, to collaborate together, to learn and to be empowered to act. Dialogic communication encourages mutual understanding and respect amongst participants so that they will feel safe and confident to work together. Therefore, dialogic communication is the ideal attitude and approach to achieve intergenerational communication within the Japanese American community.

Dialogue is described as an ideal because one cannot force or make dialogue. One can attempt to communicate using dialogic principles; however, as stated earlier, dialogue is an attitude as well as an approach. According to Martin Buber (2002), dialogue will take place when people communicate with one another as "what they are" – this is the realm of the "interhuman," the only realm in which dialogue can "blossom" (p. 675). Buber outlined certain characteristics of dialogic communication such as being present during dialogue, meaning unfolding through dialogue, as opposed to being imposed, and "being" rather than "seeming", or being genuine rather than self-conscience in communication. This is when true dialogue occurs. Gurevitch (1989) expounds on Buber by explaining that dialogue begins "only when the two parties grant each other the power of presenting themselves as other origins of truth and justice" (p. 162). This opens up participation to all parties involved and it encourages a mutual respect for each other's beliefs, ideas, and perspectives. Hammond, Anderson, and Cissna (2003) describe dialogue in the following ways: invites differences and commonalities so that change can

occur; provides an opportunity for a group to learn and to collaborate together as a team; helps participants to feel safe in becoming vulnerable with one another; encourages mutual participation and cooperation; takes place in a certain context in history and possesses a place in the future; and allows commitment and honest communication about your own perspective. By encouraging and fostering a dialogic approach, it was hoped that a mutual understanding across the generational divide could be achieved. Therefore, providing an opportunity for the Japanese American community to move forward to meet the needs of the elderly as well as the community as a whole.

*Characteristics of Dialogic Communication*

*Open to the other while holding one's ground.* Openness to the other is one of principles of dialogic communication. Openness in dialogic communication refers to the acceptance of one's own position and perspective without requiring the adoption or assimilation of another's position or perspective (Pearce and Pearce, 2004). Dialogic communication research practitioner Kim Pearce (2002) explains that most people are comfortable either being completely open to the other or holding their own ground; meaning, it is remaining in the tension of those two that is the challenge and it is this tension that characterizes dialogic communication. This tension could be understood as the ability to be open to another's perspective, yet retain one's own perspective without imposing change on the other. According to Pearce and Pearce (2004) holding this tension is achieved not only through verbal and nonverbal communication of participants, but with the assistance of a facilitator and the careful design of the speech moment (in this case, the focus groups and the intergenerational dialogue session). Anderson, Cissna,

and Arnett (1994) point out that dialogic communication is not something that is "mandated" or forced, nor does it just accidentally and spontaneously occur either. It is something that needs to be facilitated. Encouraging this type of openness in communication, in contrast to forcing it, would be my challenge as a facilitator and research practitioner. As Pearce and Pearce (2004) describe, "the challenge in our work as practitioners is facilitating people not necessarily interested in dialogue to engage in this quality of communication in situations that are not conducive to it" (p. 47). This would be the challenge to navigate around while attempting to encourage and facilitate open and honest communication across the different generations about issues and concerns that were also points of tension and difference. Gurevitch (1989) explains "only when the two parties grant each other the power of presenting themselves as other origins of truth and justice can dialogue begin" (p. 162). By encouraging the participants to hold their own position, yet remaining open to the positions of others, the hope was that the community would be able to take a look at the issues in the context of their differing perspectives and work together to a) figure out what is meaningful and important to them as a community in regards to cultural identity and preservation, and b) discover productive, valuable, and workable solutions to address the concerns about cultural identity and preservation.

*Engaging the tension.* One of the major characteristics of dialogic communication is the engagement of participants in a tension – the tension of holding their own ground or perspective, yet being open to the other, or as Stewart and Zediker (2000) explain, standing one's ground while allowing others to happen to you. The key

word is *while*. This denotes a sense of both experiences happening at once and feeling

the tension that is created, yet allowing the tension to exist and engaging in

communication in spite of that tension. The facilitator must not only prepare and help the

participants engage in this communication moment. According to Pearce (2002), a

facilitator must tell the participants' story well, affirm the participants that their voice(s)

are heard, reflect how participants co-construct richer stories and perspectives, and gain

their trust and respect regardless of differing perspectives. These are all skills that need

to be learned and practiced by the facilitator.

*Facilitating in the not knowing position.* Dialogic communication, in a group

context, is invited, engaged in and practiced with the help of a skilled facilitator. In order

to allow for dialogic communication to occur naturally, the facilitator must put aside his

or her own preconceived ideas, assumptions, and opinions about the issues discussed and

hold a "not knowing position" or the position of neutrality. Neutrality does not imply

passivity, a point that Spano (2005) emphasizes. Rather, a facilitator that takes a neutral

or "not knowing position" allows for what Stewart and Zediker (2000) describe as

multivocality, or the opportunity for all voices and perspectives to emerge and be heard.

Additionally, as Spano (2001) describes, the facilitator is able to lead the conversation

with curiosity and wonder, "in order to remain fully open to unanticipated outcomes" (p.

38). It is important for a facilitator to be flexible and open to the unpredictable nature of

dialogic communication.

*Dialogic listening and eliciting stories.* The facilitator's ability to remain in the

"not knowing" position is assisted through engaging in dialogic listening and by eliciting

the experiences and stories of the participants. The goal of dialogic listening is not to evaluate or judge what is being said, but rather to attend to what is being said and help develop a mutual understanding of meaning (Pearce, 2002; Spano, 2001). This not only creates an atmosphere conducive for the participants to speak freely, openly, and honestly, but it also helps create a relationship of trust between the facilitator and the participants. In order to accomplish this goal the facilitator's responsibility is to verbally and nonverbally let the participants know that he or she is hearing what they were saying, free from judgment. The facilitator's role is to encourage all voices to be heard and all perspectives to be shared in order to encourage understanding. One way to encourage understanding about the differing perspectives is by encouraging the participants to speak about their personal stories and experiences. Spano (2001) explains how this human element moves beyond opinion, but rather reveals how circumstances and experiences brought participants to hold certain positions. Pearce (2002) describes this as "enriching the conversation" through encouraging participants to present their perspectives as fully and completely as possible allowing everyone to truly understand one another's position (p. 35).

*Systemic questioning.* Another method in promoting the sharing and even reflection on the participants' part about their own experiences and practices is through the strategic use or wording of questions. Penman (2000) describes this style of questioning as questions of practice, while Spano (2001) describes it as systemic questioning. Questions or practice or systemic questioning is a way of asking questions that do *not* ask for a direct response. Rather they serve the purpose of a prompt. The

goal and purpose is for all involved to come to a mutual understanding of the issues and to understand how one came to a certain position or perspective in order to come together and work cooperatively to address the issues. All the while, participants are acknowledging the different journeys, experiences, and practices that brought each participant to the position or perspective they hold. These questions of practice explore how and what, which helps explore how we engage, participate, contribute, and cooperate in the issues that affect our social lives (Penman, 2000). Spano (2001) explains the purpose of systemic questioning is to "elicit responses that demonstrate connections and reveal relationships that operate within a community, group, or organization" (p. 42). Penman (2000) and Spano (2001) encourage this method of asking questions for drawing out responses about experiences and ways of relating. This method of questioning explores and reveals relationships – relationships between the issues facing the community, group, or organization and how these issues relate to those involved and affect their experiences, positions, practices, and perspectives.

*Appreciative inquiry.* Appreciative inquiry is a method of engaging participants to consider what is positive or what is productive in a given context. It calls for participants to consider, identify and clarify, and draw on the resources that positively and productively contribute to their community as they come together to consider the future (Spano, 2001). The reason for using appreciative inquiry, particularly in the intergenerational dialogue session, was to reveal and encourage the points of contact that exist within the community and across the generations.

*Reflecting and reframing back.* Reflecting and reframing back is a key

component to inviting dialogic communication and is a responsibility held by the

facilitator. It is also the skill that proved particularly challenging for me as the facilitator.

"Reflecting back" is essential to the dialogue process and requires the full attention and

energy of the facilitator – researcher. "Reflecting back" is a technique, a skill that is

practiced and refined with experience. It provides a sense of perspective about the

communication moment(s) within the dialogic event. Its purpose is to help the

participants "come to a deeper understanding of the problems and issues that confront

them" (Spano, 2001, p. 43). Andersen (1992) describes reflecting as a "sophisticated

process" that helps frame and reframe what has been said and done (as cited in Spano,

2001, p. 43). For example, "reflecting back" is merely restating or relating what has been

said about a particular issue. It can sound like, "what I hear you saying is that there is no

future for the Japantown community…", or "what I am hearing is that there are differing

definitions about who or what makes someone Japanese American." Reflecting back

does not reveal any "correct" answers or interpretations, rather it helps the participants, in

this case the Japanese American community, to see the potential and possible connections

or relationships with the issues facing the community. An example of a "reflecting back"

statement emphasizing a relationship is "What I hear from many of you is that you think

the younger generations seem to have forgotten or have no memory of the internment

experience and this is a contributing problem to the preservation of the community and

culture."

"Reflecting back" can also be used as a means for the facilitator to challenge the "grammar" or the way issues are discussed and point out how that is helping or hindering the process of collaboration. An example of this is: "It sounds as though not all of you perceive the issue of multiraciality as a positive for the community." "Reflecting back" is particularly important when it can help point out multivocality or when there is a transition from univocality to monovocality. Hammond, Andersen, and Cissna (2003) describe this moment as a "surprise...where meaning emerges through relationships rather than through imposing or presuming individual will" (p. 141). The "surprise" is experienced when participants realize mutuality, mutuality of interests, positions, goals and outcomes, visions, even action plans. Participants realize that they may not all be using the same language, but the meaning is the same in terms of creating unity. "Reflecting back" can be a very powerful way to bring clarity to the conversation. It can also be very empowering for the participants as they start seeing the interconnections and the relationships between the positions of the others.

The exploration and application dialogic communication principles within the Japanese American community, an intracultural context, opened up new avenues for the relevance of dialogue as methodological approach. Additionally, it reinforced the idea of dialogue as a practical approach in its variety of applications. The principles of dialogue was applied and enacted in this research study along with the principles of community-based action research in order to support the community as they explored and examined the specific issues pertaining to them.

Community-based Action Research

This study also contributes to the growing number of research studies exploring

community-based action research. Action research as a method of inquiry is not limited

or restricted to one research discipline. It is used in a variety of fields to accomplish

specific goals. It stands as an approach to resolving community issues and problems

(Servaes, 1996, Stringer, 1996). The goal of action research is to empower citizens of a

community to enact change. According to Stringer (1996), community-based action

research possesses four characteristics:

- It is *democratic*, enabling the participation of all people.

- It is *equitable*, acknowledging people's equality of worth.

- It is *liberating*, providing freedom from oppressive, debilitating

  conditions.

- It is *life enhancing*, enabling the expression of people's full human

  potential (p. 10).

This approach rests on the assumption that human beings possess the intrinsic ability to

create knowledge (Kronenberg as cited in Servaes, 1996, p. 98) and they have the ability

and should have the opportunity to investigate and to discover knowledge. According to

Stringer (1996), the goal of action research "is to assist people in extending their

understanding of their situation and thus resolve problems that confront them" (p. 9).

According to Spano (2001), there are three core principles of action research:

- Action research as democratic participation

- Action research as skilled facilitator

- Action research and practical outcomes (pp. 49–52).

Each of these principles formed the foundation for action research and the dialogic framework used in this study.

*Action Research as Democratic Participation*

Action research, as a research approach and method of inquiry, is based on the involvement and the participation of the community. As Heron (1996) points out, action research works with the people and for the people. It is not research about them. It is the community coming together about a specific issue in their community and working together to resolve that issue.

*Action Research as Skilled Facilitator*

Action research involves the researcher as a partner with the community in exploring and resolving a community issue. In action research, the researcher is not the "expert", objectively examining the issue, and telling the community how to solve the problem. Rather, the researcher is a facilitator, consultant, or as Spano (2001) describes, a "conversational partner." The researcher encourages, assists, and guides the community as they explore the issue and seek to resolve it together. The researcher and the participants are both active in the research process. This aspect is particularly important to me as I am personally invested in the community and the issues being explored. I served in the dual role as both researcher and participant, as a Japanese American, a member of the younger Sansei generation, and multiracial. The issues and concerns facing the community, namely the concern about the younger generation's interest and participation, the impact of assimilation and multiraciality, are intensely

personal to me. My interest and positionality as a member of the community not only granted me direct access to the community and participants, but also provided me with a familiarity and intimacy of the community's cultural and communicative norms, the issues involved, and the mode of interaction between the generational groups involved.

*Action Research and Practical Outcomes*

A characteristic of action research is that it results in practical outcomes that benefit the participants and the community. Spano (2001) adds that these outcomes are "material" or tangible (p. 52). The participants and the community have the reward of seeing how their collaboration brings about specific results. Action research is a very powerful approach to research for it not only produces tangible results, but it is very empowering for the participants who get to see the results of their participation.

*Caring for the Well-Being of the People*

A key principle in community-based action research is the well-being of the people involved which makes it unique from the more traditional, "objective" procedures of academic research. Concern for the well-being of the people is not only an ethical concern, but as Stringer (1996) explains, it is also pragmatic. It helps the facilitator and research practitioner to invest in the people and their concerns which convince them that they are not research subjects or objects, impersonal, cold objects to be observed and analyzed, but rather personal, real research participants involved in the analysis and process of research. Caring for the well-being of the people involved helps generate the energy, commitment, and sense of ownership that strengthens the sense of investment and responsibility of the group, community, or organization members (Stringer, 1996). My

role as facilitator as well as a community member was an important vehicle to gain the attention of all the participants and encourage and empower them to consider how they can come together, work with one another, and make an impact on the future of the community.

*Action Research and Dialogic Communication*

Community-based action research fits well into the dialogic communication model. Community-based action research takes into account the histories and identities of participants, recognizes their culture and their social interactions with one another (Stringer, 1996). This approach to inquiry encourages the participation and collaboration of the community with the goal to enact change, which is consistent with the goals and outcomes of dialogic communication.

This study also explored and evaluated how a dialogic and community-based action research approach can be applied in an intracultural context within a specific cultural community. Dialogue and community-based action research have similar research approaches and goals. Both have similar ideals in democracy and the right of individual perspectives to be expressed and heard. However, this study examined how these two approaches adapt to an intercultural context through which cultural values, beliefs, and communication patterns may not be consistent with the goals and method of dialogic communication and community-based action research. What is "democratic" and "equitable" to those in Western cultures, may not be perceived and understood with the same meaning in other cultures. The United States is considered to be individualistic as the individual is emphasized over the group (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1994). Japanese

Americans are influenced by both the American culture (known as an individualistic culture), and the Japanese culture (deemed as more of a collectivistic culture). The Japanese concept of *enryo* was mentioned earlier as one of the major characteristics that influences communication patterns. *Enryo* is translated as reserve or restraint. This term implies social conformity, that one will sacrifice personal opinions, desires and preferences for the sake of group harmony (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1994). This attitude may hinder the possibility of true dialogue to take place. Dialogic communication allows for new and different perspectives to unfold which may not be consistent with Japanese American cultural communication patterns. Assessing the dialogue session was insightful as to how the Japanese cultural values, like *enryo,* influence the communication that takes place.

<div align="center">Strategy to Prepare for Dialogue Session</div>

In order to facilitate intergenerational dialogue in terms of a method, focus group sessions were conducted with members of Sansei (third generation) and Yonsei (fourth generation) and the Nisei (second generation) as well as those who are biracial or multiracial Japanese American (also referred to as hapa). Focus group sessions with the different generations allowed for each group to voice their concerns and therefore, community concerns emerged. This method follows in the footsteps of the Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC) in addressing the community concerns of Cupertino (Spano, 2001). The PDC conducted exploratory focus group interviews to encourage community members to speak freely regarding community concerns and tensions. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) state that focus groups "are particularly useful for exploratory

research where rather little is known about the phenomenon of interest" (as quoted in Spano, 2005, p. 60). The concern about the younger generation's apparent lack of interest and participation in the affairs of the community had not been openly discussed in a community setting and the community's thoughts and perceptions as a whole (and especially the younger Sansei and Yonsei generations) were largely unknown. For the purposes of this study, each focus group invited participants to discuss what it meant to be Japanese American and to voice their concerns about the Japanese American community.

*Focus Group Demographics*

Six focus groups were conducted with 34 participants in total over a five month period. Participants were largely found through their association with Yu Ai Kai senior community center, either as actively involved members participating in the center's services or volunteering at the senior center, or had a relation with someone involved in some way with the senior center. Participation was voluntary. Two groups consisted primarily of Nisei, another two groups included only Sansei, one group consisted of a mixture of Sansei and Yonsei, and one group involved hapa Sansei and Yonsei. The focus groups were arranged to keep the different generations as separate as possible in order to cultivate an open and comfortable environment for the participants to express their perspectives and concerns. Out of the 34 participants, 26% were Nisei, 47% were Sansei, 15% were Yonsei, and 12% were "other" [such as *Kibei* (born in US, but sent to Japan for education) or Gosei (fifth generation)]. The average age of all the participants was 55 years. 24% of the participants were between the ages of 18-27, with an average

age of 21; 29% of the participants were between the ages of 41-52, with an average age

of 50; 29% of the participants were between the ages of 62-78, with an average age of 70;

and 18% of the participants were between the ages of 80-90 with an average of 85.

Participants were evenly divided with 47 % male and 53 % female. All participants had

at least a high school education with 29% being high school graduates, 53% were college

graduates, 9% had a post-graduate education (the majority of whom were Sansei), and

9% were graduates of a trade school.

*Focus Group Procedures*

In order to incorporate the principles of appreciative inquiry, the process of

framing the conversation by first foregrounding a positive context from which the

conversation could begin (Spano, 2001). The focus group conversations began with a

question to the participants about what they enjoyed/appreciated about being Japanese

American. This not only provided a positive context for the beginning of the

conversation but it also provided the opportunity to see how similar and/or different the

various generations would respond. Secondly, the initial responses provided information

on how to frame the rest of the discussion questions. From there, focus group

participants across all living generations were asked how they define "Japanese

Americanness", what does being Japanese American mean to them and how they

perceive the Japanese American culture to be changing, and what concerns they have

about the Japanese American community presently and for the future. All of the

questions were prepared in order to provide information for the intergenerational

dialogue session to be conducted after all of the focus groups were completed. From

these questions, discussions arose regarding cultural discrimination and assimilation, the rise of multiracial Japanese Americans and their impact on the culture and community, and the interest of the younger, more Westernized generations in the Japanese culture. In order to foster more discussion on these issues, systemic questioning was engaged, or as Penman (2000) terms, questions of practice – questions that inquire about and highlight the participants' experience or everyday practice. These questions serve more as prompts to reflect a genuine curiosity of the researcher as well as encourage openness and the continuation of the conversation. According to Penman (2000), "the critical thing is to follow the flow of the conversation, using the questions as the means to go forward" (p. 123). The prepared questions and the questions of practice along with their responses, helped prepare the valuable content of the intergenerational dialogue session.

Focus group discussion also addressed perceptions of communication across generations and how that communication is/is not effective, and how communication could be improved. Through the focus groups, community issues and concerns of each generation emerged and were discussed. The emergent issues and concerns were used to inform the focus and direction of the dialogic intergenerational conversation. At the conclusion of the focus group session, the participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire anonymously for the purpose of demographic data (see Appendix A). This data was used to record the different generations who were involved in the focus groups.

*Recruitment of Generational Participants*

*Sansei (third generation) and Yonsei (fourth generation).* Sansei and Yonsei participants were invited from community organizations involved with Yu Ai Kai or with

Japantown San Jose. The conversations with the Sansei and Yonsei were intended to engage issues of cultural identity as well as their interest in participating in the community. The Sansei and Yonsei were asked to identify and frame their role within the Japanese American community, their perception of how the community was evolving, and what needs the community should address for future generations and future senior care.

*Nisei (second generation/elders of the community).* The Nisei participants were invited from Yu Ai Kai and other community organizations involved with Japantown San Jose. Conversations with the elders of the community were intended to provide insight into how they define cultural identity, how they identify and perceive their place within the Japanese American community, and how their needs are/are not met in the community in general, and through Yu-Ai Kai in particular. Likewise, these generational participants were included because they would provide a different yet valuable perspective on the future needs of the community.

*Hapa (mixed, with Japanese ancestry).* Hapa is a term originating in Hawaii that means "part" or "mixed" (Asakawa, 2004). Originally, the term did not refer to race or ethnicity. Now the term is colloquially used to describe those who are biracial or multiracial. Hapa participants, or those who were part Japanese American and were involved with Yu Ai Kai or Japantown San Jose community organizations, were invited to participate in the focus groups. Such participation would yield valuable insight into their definitions of Japanese American identity, their perceptions of their place in the community, their perception of how the community is evolving, and what needs the

community should address for future generations and future senior care. The contributions of the hapa participants were particularly important because they addressed and reflected the issues currently facing the community: that is, the tremendous increase of multiracial or hapa Japanese American youths.

*Focus Group Questions and Data Analysis*

The focus group conversations were audio recorded and transcribed. Data collected focused specifically on how each generation defined and perceived Japanese American identity, particularly what does it mean to be Japanese American. In order to examine intergenerational communication dynamics focus group questions also explored the perceptions each generation held toward one another. Questions addressed perceptions of each generation's relationship to the others and their perceptions of communication with other generations (See Appendix B for focus group research questions). Questions asked explored perceptions of interest and involvement of the younger generations, thoughts and perceptions about how the community was changing, and what concerns each generation had regarding their culture and community. The purpose of these questions was to determine how each generation perceived the other, how each generation perceived the changing cultural landscape of the Japanese American community, and how these perceptions affected each generation's attitude and approach to addressing these issues. The following constructs were used in the focus group sessions:

- What are the perceptions of multiracial Japanese Americans?

- How does this impact the community?

- What reasons were given across the generations for preserving the community and culture?

- What reasons were given across the generations for preserving the community and culture?

- Are they the same or different?

- What ideas arose in order to address this issue?

Also of interest was how each generation perceived the future of the Japanese American community and the obstacles they must overcome. Themes that emerged from the focus groups conversations were pieced together and analyzed as a whole based on the previous research in Japanese communication patterns, intergenerational communication, and communication of race-related trauma (Aronson, 1994). Responses from the focus groups regarding specific questions were examined to see if there were points of similarity within and across generations. Specific attention was given to the perceptions each generation held toward one another. Responses were also examined against Japanese communication patterns to determine the impact of assimilation (collectivistic versus individualistic) if any, across generations.

Conversations about the internment became another category due to the differences in generations in how the event was perceived and articulated as well as the notion of cultural identity. Differences seemed to exist about how these two issues were perceived and expressed by the different generations. By examining these responses, themes began to emerge that moved beyond communication patterns, indicating differences in perception and understanding of the issues such as outmarriage,

assimilation, and preservation, not only cultural preservation, but the preservation of Japantown San Jose. This information was collected and analyzed using Spradley's (1979, 1980) cultural thematic analysis. Thematic analysis explores explicit and implicit cultural values and beliefs that are lived and spoken. Often these cultural values and beliefs are revealed through relationships with one another. Based on the content of these conversations, particular attention was paid to similarities and differences in responses. Shared experiences, perceptions, concerns, needs, cultural values, and beliefs were catalogued and examined, looking for themes and relationships between the different categories. Experiences, perceptions, concerns, needs, values and beliefs that were not shared due to generational, cultural, or gender differences were also recorded. By examining the responses, comments, and ideas in each focus group and comparing them with one another, certain relationships and cultural themes emerged that formed the subject matter for the intergenerational dialogic session.

The goal in examining the focus group conversations was to see points of connection, or similarities in perceptions, observations, or solutions that not only unified, but also would prove to be a springboard for the dialogue across generations. Points of disconnection, tension, or disagreement among generational participants which could be raised later in the intergenerational dialogue session were noted as well.

*Intergenerational Dialogic Session*

The data collected from these focus groups was used to shape a final public dialogue session that included members from each generational group. Public dialogue allows for community members to foster respect toward one another and have open

curiosity of one another's point of view rather than confrontation and debate. According to Spano (2001), in a community engaging in dialogic communication regarding community issues, "the quality of decision making would increase and the commitment to the choices made would be enhanced" (p. 5). In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the dialogue session, a survey was handed out to the participants at the end of the dialogue session. The survey inquired after the insights gained about the Japanese American community and the whole communication process (see Appendix C for survey).

There were four main objectives for the dialogue session: 1) to bring the different generations together to discuss the specific issues that emerged from the focus group conversations (such as cultural preservation, assimilation and the growing reality of multi-racial Japanese Americans); 2) to encourage actual discussion across generations; 3) to clarify certain misconceptions and negative perceptions the generations held with regard to one another; and 4) to empower the community to collaborate together to find workable solutions addressing the issues facing the community. My skills as a facilitator of dialogic communication would directly impact the outcome of the dialogue session.

Intergenerational dialogue allowed for all members of the community to listen and speak to one another about the cultural and community issues that emerged from the focus groups. To provide a framework and guide for the dialogue session, the CVA (Concerns, Visions, Action plans) model was used. The CVA model is transactional and reflexive which, according to Spano (2001), means that we can start at any point and move to another freely – there is no fixed or prearranged pattern to follow. The CVA

model is an abbreviation that explores the relationship between concerns, visions, and action plans. As Spano (2001) explains, concerns that people have regarding a particular issue that affects their community or organization are often associated with the visions that they hold for their community or organization; action plans are specific, tangible steps the community or organization can complete to make their visions a reality. The CVA model helps individuals see the relationships between their own visions and concerns and the model helps empower them by discovering practical, workable solutions that address the concerns and help achieve their visions. Based on the perspectives in the focus group discussions regarding how to approach the issues facing the community the CVA model was used with the hope that both generations would see the areas of commonality in their concerns and visions. The desired outcome was a sense of unity or at least common ground for mutual cooperation, in spite of their age and generational differences. This common ground would also serve as a springboard to address the areas of difference as well as a mutual cooperation across generations in formulating constructive and workable action plans.

*Communication across generations through dialogue.* More specifically, the main purpose of the dialogue session was to facilitate and induce communication across the different generations. According to Saunders (1999), by engaging in dialogue "one's mind opens to absorb new views, enlarge perspectives, rethink assumptions and modify judgments" (p. 82). As noted earlier in the discussion regarding the focus groups, the older generations held a largely negative and cynical attitude toward the younger generation particularly around the issues of interest and participation in their Japanese

American culture and community. The younger generations often felt misunderstood or slighted by their elders. For this reason, the use of the CVA model as a guide for the dialogue session proved insightful for both generations, particularly in helping both generations realize their differences as well as their similarities. They shared similar concerns and visions as members of the same community. The expectation for the dialogue session was for the possibility of better understanding of the generations toward one another and how there are similarities in their experiences, beliefs, concerns, and visions for the community. The hope was that this understanding would pave the way for both generations to come to a point of contact from which they could collaborate and work together to reach their collective goals. This is not to say that each generational group ignores the differences that exist. Collaboration, as Spano (2001) explains, "means cooperating with people who are in some way different from oneself" (p. 31). Rather, the different generations would work together in spite of their differences, fully acknowledging and accepting those differences, but focusing their energy on those areas they have in common. By focusing on the areas where mutual interests are shared to achieve their common goals, the community can experience a unity that enables them to overcome the differences. Again, as Saunders (1999) expresses, "as partners in dialogue enlarge their common ground, they thereby change their relationships" (p. 84). This thesis sought to encourage and facilitate intergenerational communication and dialogue and by accomplishing this goal, the hope was that the community would also experience the additional benefit of more open and engaged relationships across the generations.

*Establishing common ground.* In order to help establish common ground, the dialogue session began by addressing those issues and themes that arose from the focus group discussions that were shared by all generations. The session opened with a brief synopsis of the focus group discussion results, focusing and highlighting the common themes and issues that arose from all of the group discussions. The commonalities that existed between generations, as well as with the hapa, were emphasized so that the dialogue participants would see what the community *shared* as a group, ethnically and culturally.

In order to encourage this perspective, the small group discussion questions addressed the following: a) personal and cultural identity (How does being Japanese American make you who you are? How is your Japanese American cultural identity reflected in your life?), and b) personal perspective about Japantown's significance to the culture and community and the important elements to preserve from generation to generation. These questions not only asked the participants to reconsider some of the issues discussed in the focus group sessions, but also highlighted some of the issues that generated the most talk and discussion. The questions were designed to encourage the participants to reflect, consider, and discuss in the dialogue session with the different generational groups and in turn, perhaps help reveal points of convergence and similarity (see Appendix D and E for discussion questions and reflections). Additionally, my expectation was by providing this foundation of commonality or similarity the transition to discussing those issues of difference would be less provoking or intense.

*From common ground to points of tension.* When discussing the points of tension or difference, delicacy and tact were two qualities used to preserve the best possible atmosphere for open, honest discussion. The most controversial or heated topic was the issue of multiracial Japanese Americans, their place and role in the community. In order to bridge these differences, the use of the CVA model, helped show how the different generations shared some bonds of unity and commonality; within this context, a dialogue about these larger, more intense and polarized issues could take place. Questions were asked so that the participants had to reflect and share their own perspectives, use their own definitions, and come up with their own solutions. The questions were designed not only to look outward toward the community, but for the participants to also look inward at their own position, their own identity, and their own role as members and co-contributors to the community.

In this chapter, the methodological framework in the preparation and design of the dialogue session was described. The dialogue session was specifically designed in order to encourage dialogic communication across the different generations in the Japanese American community regarding specific issues. The content of the dialogue session was derived from the preliminary focus groups of each generation. In the next chapter, the data from these focus groups is examined more closely followed by a discussion about how these themes were used to inform the planning and preparation of the intergenerational dialogue session.

CHAPTER 3

Focus Group Results and Analysis: Emergent Issues Across Generations

The content of the final dialogue session of this study was based upon the themes

that emerged from the focus group conversations. Focus groups with generational

participants yielded several key themes about how the different Japanese American

generations perceived cultural identity and the future development of the community.

These themes were largely consistent in all the focus groups revealing some

commonalties among the generations. These common themes became the basis of

unification and commonality for the dialogue session. These themes also became a point

of departure in a discussion that revolved around a number of issues affecting the

community that were considered by some to be "hot topics" or controversial topics. This

chapter discusses the planning and preparation of the focus group conversations and some

of the common themes that emerged from each focus group. Additionally, a more

thorough exploration of the themes most relevant and significant to the study is

conducted by looking at key illustrative examples from the focus groups.

Focus Group Procedures

Six focus group sessions were conducted over a five month period and lasted 1 ½

to 2 hours long. Participation was voluntary and participants received no monetary

compensation. Participants were largely found through their association with Yu Ai Kai

Community Senior Center, either as actively involved members participating in the

center's services or volunteering at the center, or had a relation with someone involved in

some way with the senior center.

As stated in Chapter 2, in order to cultivate more of an open and comfortable environment for expression of personal opinions and perspectives, the different generations were kept as separate as possible. Two groups consisted primarily of Nisei for a total of nine participants, another two groups consisted largely of Sansei for a total of twelve participants, one group consisted of a mixture of Sansei and Yonsei with six participants, and one group consisted primarily of hapa Sansei and Yonsei with seven participants.

*Focus Group Participant Demographics*

Out of the 34 participants, 26% (9) were Nisei, 47% (16) were Sansei, 15% (5) were Yonsei, and 12% (4) were noted as "other" [such as *Kibei* (born in US, but sent to Japan for education) or Gosei (fifth generation)]. The average age of all the participants was 55 years. 24% (8) of the participants were between the ages of 18-27, with an average age of 21; 29% (10) of the participants were between the ages of 41-52, with an average age of 50; 29% (10) of the participants were between the ages of 62-78, with an average age of 70; and 18% (6) of the participants were between the ages of 80-90 with an average of 85. Participants were evenly divided with 50 % (17) male and 50 % (17) female. All participants had at least a high school education with 29% (10) being high school graduates, 9% (3) were graduates of a trade school, 53% (18) were college graduates, and 9% (3) had a post-graduate education (the majority of whom were Sansei). Out of the seven participants in the hapa Sansei and Yonsei focus group, one was a college graduate and five were currently attending college.

*Focus Group Conversational Protocol*

*Question constructs.* The conversations began by discussing how the participants

defined and perceived their Japanese American identity and heritage. Each focus group

session began with the question: What do you like/enjoy most about being Japanese

American? This question was asked first to address the first research question and hear

the different perceptions each participant possessed of their own Japanese American

identity, not only generationally, but individually. The question was intended as a

starting point or a common foundation upon to build relationship and encourage

conversation.

The second question also addressed the first research question by asking

participants to articulate their individual perceptions of Japanese Americans and how

they defined what it is to be "Japanese American." It was the second question that not

only started to differentiate between the different generations, but even individuals within

each generational group. Questions then transitioned to how each generation saw

themselves in comparison to their grandparents and parents, children and grandchildren.

These responses paved the way for discussion regarding how open or closed

communication took place with each group's parents/grandparents and

children/grandchildren as well as exploration of the many factors that contributed to the

way the different generations perceived, related, and communicated with one another (see

Appendix B for focus group discussion questions).

Based on the responses and flow of conversation, discussions emerged and

evolved around different topics. Consistent themes emerged from those topics. The

themes that consistently arose addressed assimilation of the Japanese Americans, discrimination, the future of Japantown and the Japanese American culture, as well as issues surrounding outmarriage and multiracial Japanese Americans.

Emergent Themes Found within the Focus Groups

The themes that emerged in the first focus group that was largely Nisei (first generation) were similar to themes that emerged in the last focus group which was the younger Yonsei/hapa (fourth generation and racially mixed). This trend could reflect that although the older generations *perceive* a loss of culture in the younger generations, perhaps there are some cultural ties that remain and are continuous. This raises questions regarding preservation and assimilation and how these two phenomena are at work in the cultural community. However, the differences that did surface seem to indicate the existence of a generational and cultural divide.

*Emergent Themes Consistent across all Focus Groups*

There were many themes that emerged from the focus group conversations. The majority of the themes revolved around Japanese American cultural values and practices. What was surprising about the generational focus groups was the consistency of the themes throughout. Although the themes were talked about or interpreted differently from generation to generation, the consistency of their emergence seems to indicate that there are common threads woven across generations.

Out of all the themes that emerged from the focus groups, the cultural notion of shame, the importance of respect, the importance of the family, and the value of education surfaced in all of the focus groups. The importance of the Japanese language

and cultural traditions and festivals surfaced more in the Nisei and Sansei groups as well as the value of hard work and discipline. The internment arose more often in the Nisei and Sansei groups than the hapa/Yonsei group yet the attitude of *shikataganai* or "it can't be helped" emerged in both groups. Shikataganai was a theme that emerged more explicitly in the Nisei and Sansei groups, yet the implicit attitude emerged in the younger groups. A discussion of how shikataganai surfaced and was discussed by each generation is discussed later in this chapter. Although these emergent themes are significant and worth our consideration and exploration, for the purposes of this study a thorough exploration of all of these issues would be too much for one dialogue session. In order to encourage communication across the generations it was important to focus on the themes that reflected points of contact or commonalities and address the issues most pertinent to shaping the perceptions the different generational groups held toward one another. In the discussion of emergent themes, exploration focused specifically upon the concepts of respect and shame, the importance of family and tradition, and the emphasis on education since these themes emerged as common in all of the focus group discussions. Language, the notion of shikataganai and the impact of the internment represented "hot topics" related to assimilation, multiraciality, and preservation. All of these themes were used in the preparation and focus of the final dialogue session. The discussion will focus upon the themes that were common across all generations, and then those topics that seemed to be points of tension across generations.

*Unifying Themes across Generations*

      *Cultural pride.* All of the themes are interconnected and all were expressed in the focus groups, with some resonating more with specific generations. The overwhelming commonality amongst all the focus groups was the cultural pride in the Japanese American culture and history. Pride in their culture was most explicit in Sansei groups and the Yonsei/hapa group. Many participants considered themselves to be part of a "rich" cultural heritage. However, unlike the Sansei group, the Yonsei/hapa group seemed to be more proud of the legacy and reputation of the Japanese American culture because of society's positive perception of the Japanese Americans rather than recognizing the challenges and obstacles their own cultural group has overcome. For example, when asked what they enjoy about being Japanese American, one response went like this:

      Facilitator (Fac): What I would like to know is what do you like about being

      Japanese American?

      Response: The stereotype that we're smart.

      Fac: Why?

      Response: Um, well, there's a bunch of other stereotypes you could have being

      from a different race, you know what I mean? (F.G 6, p. 1, L 25-29).[1]

It was interesting that this young respondent refers to his/her perception by others and specifically, the perception that due to their Japanese American heritage, s/he is "smart." Many of the hapa and Yonsei seemed to be proud that there were not considered "FOBs," a pejorative term meant to designate Asians as "fresh off the boat" or newly arrived

immigrants (F.G. 6, p. 1, L 30). This comment refers to how assimilated the Japanese

Americans are in comparison to their Asian counterparts. This stereotype of being smart

is the direct result of the value the Japanese American culture places upon education, a

value that became very important particularly as the community recovered from the

internment. The young hapa Yonsei gave a quick response, unwittingly addressing more

complex issues rooted in the experiences of others two generations before.

In contrast, the pride expressed by the Sansei generation recognizes and alludes to

the sacrifices and the triumphs of their parents and grandparents. For example, here is

one response from a focus group participant answering the same question:

> Well, I just feel that with this grave injustice that happened to the Isseis, Niseis
>
> and...some Sanseis – their whole business about shikataganai, I just feel that
>
> they're role models for us. And that is what pulled us through all of these
>
> challenges...For them to go through this 3 ½ years of such a terrible injustice and
>
> then to be able to say, 'Well, it happened, shikataganai and we're going to make
>
> the best of it and move on'. It's just a role model for all of us...But, the Japanese
>
> American group was able to meet the challenge and move on and...make life
>
> better for themselves. And I just feel, back to your other question, about why you
>
> feel good about being Japanese American, that's another example (FG 3, p. 4, L
>
> 11-13, 17-21).

Both the Sansei and the Yonsei/hapa groups appreciate and express pride in the cultural

values instilled in their upbringing. But such pride is also based on generational

members' closeness to the internment experience and their perceptions and reasons for

that appreciation differ. The Yonsei/hapa groups appreciate the benefits of their culture's historical experience of moving on and recovering their lives post-war seemingly unaware of the cost. The Sansei, who remember the experiences of their parents and grandparents, realize the costs to their community and recognize the strength it took for a generation to recover and prosper after such a traumatic experience. These different perspectives and different answers to the same question reveal the far-reaching effects of the internment and how the event influenced communication and the culture.

*Centrality of the family.* When addressing the concern of preservation, all of the groups were asked what aspects of the culture they hoped would be preserved for generations to come? The answers revolved around cultural traditions, cultural values, and the family. All of the groups, Nisei, Sansei, and Yonsei/hapa voiced their appreciation of how the family is central. Some examples of group responses were: "It's all about the family" (FG 1, p. 3, L 13); "Family is more important than friends (FG 1, p. 16, L 14); and "Family is the most important thing" (FG 6, p. 3, L 21). Family plays an integral role in Japanese American culture. It is not only the center of developing cultural values, but it is also at the core of most of the Japanese American traditions. For example, one response from the fifth focus group, comprised largely of Sanseis was "close knit family ties". Similarly, the Yonsei/hapa group responded, "The importance of being close to family" and "How important family is" (FG 6, p. 11, L 43). The similarity of responses between the older Nisei and the younger Yonsei may surprise some, particularly those in the older generations (the Nisei and Sansei) who hold a very different perception of the younger (Yonsei and Gosei) generations. Some Nisei and

Sansei participants expressed their disappointment in the younger generations for not holding onto the cultural values and traditions. The older generations did not perceive the younger generations as caring or valuing the culture they possess referring to them as "assimilated," "Westernized," or the "spoon-fed" generation. This perception of the older generation is the basis of their concern regarding the future of their culture and community. In one focus group, a group of Niseis entered into a heated discussion about the younger generations' (including Sanseis) lack of interest in the culture. The following is a brief excerpt of the exchange:

"A": I know, but do you think that younger Japanese Americans are more interested in Japanese culture than we were?

Fac: I was going to ask you that question.

"B": Oh yeah.

"C": I don't think so.

A: You don't think so?

"D": Well, I think they're more so interested.

"C": In what way?

"D": Well, because we didn't think about it, but I think that –

"C": In what way are *they* [italics added] more interested in Japanese culture than we are? I want to know.

"D": But it was the younger generation who first started the uh, what's it called? Uh…redress kind of thing.

"C": Yeah, but that's redress, I'm talking about Japanese culture. I mean I'm

interested in Japanese culture. I like uh, the way back in Japan, like in the

Samurai days. I look into that.

"A": What about the people who play the *taiko* [Japanese drums]? They're

mostly younger people. Aren't they interested in that more than we were?

"C": Taiko?

"B": Well, you notice though, that -

"C": Taiko does not represent Japanese culture (FG 2, p. 10, L 33-51).

The exchange between participants C and D reflect the varying perceptions regarding the

definition of "interest" in one's culture. The discussion about how interest is defined

raises questions about the nature of culture. What is culture? Is it embodied or is it

performed? The exchange regarding the younger generation's interest implies that

culture is performative. Is one interested and/or invested in one's culture by seeking

redress? Or, is interest gauged more in terms of the knowledge and interest in one's

cultural history like the Samurai days? To what extent is cultural interest based on one's

involvement in cultural festivals? Is interest gauged externally or internally? The above

exchange raises important questions regarding interest, how interest in one's culture is

defined and ultimately, what defines and constitutes preserving one's "culture".

Understanding what interest in one's culture looks like will be extremely beneficial in

clarifying perceptions. For example, another Nisei described his perception of the

younger generations' interest toward their Japanese heritage as indifference:

"B": They don't have to have it, it seems like, you know? "We don't have to do that".

Fac: In what others ways do you see that they're – or you said "they don't have to have that". What do you mean? Can you give me an example?

"B": Well, like if you um,…well, I can't think of any right now, but uh, I can probably – you know, if we used to do something, um, well, we used to gather *more*, as a family. But not as much, because they're all busy with other things. Actually, New Years Day is the only day that I get all – everybody, my relatives, and everybody together. It used to be..*every* [italics added] holiday, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving…you know. (F.G. 3, p. 9, L, 35-42).

The respondent referred to her own children and grandchildren and described how they did not seem to need the Japanese part of their cultural identity. They were doing just fine without it, which was a concern for her. Even one Yonsei admitted to her and her contemporaries' privileged lifestyle saying, "I always think that my generation is the spoon-fed generation" (FG 1, p. 12, L 20). She goes on further to explain how many of her generational members do not understand the sacrifices and the challenges the older generations have faced and overcome and therefore, take the privileges earned by the older generations for granted. By examining the terms or descriptions used to refer to the younger generations, one observation is that older generations perceive the younger generations to be experiencing a sense of loss of their Japanese American culture.

Despite these differences in perception, there is one theme that consistently emerged, not only as an important part of the Japanese American culture, but also as a solution to this loss of culture. It is the theme of the importance and significance of the family. This particular cultural value may be perceived by some within the community as being attacked and in the process of deterioration, however, based on participant responses, family still remains precious regardless of generation.

*Language is culture.* Before the internment, the Nisei generation struggled with negotiating their identity as Japanese and as American. They also served as what at times could be a frustrating role of a bridge between two cultures: the culture of their parents, the Issei, and the culture of their home, the American culture. Due to discrimination, many of the Nisei worked within the ethnic community which required a functional knowledge and ability to speak Japanese (Yoo, 2000). Even so, their knowledge of the Japanese language was still limited. The Nisei always had the balancing act of retaining ethnic ties to their ethnic culture while trying to assimilate and become Americanized. They wanted to be Americanized. After WWII and the internment, Issei and Nisei were told forcefully to assimilate and to leave everything Japanese behind if they wanted to live a peaceful existence. As one respondent expressed:

> I know that after the war, they were told to assimilate, when they were leaving camp. So, to try to not carry on your uh, cultural activities, including speaking Japanese you know and all your traditions. To become American. In that way it would be the easiest for you. Because there would be a lot of resentment (F.G. 1, p. 10, L 25-28).

One Nisei whose family was interned while he fought for the United States Air Force described his experience:

> "A": Yeah, I was uh..You know before the war, I was raised in Warner Grove and uh.., after grammar school, when we would get home at 3 o' clock, we would all get together and speak nothing but Japanese. And I wore a uh, *geta* a wooden…uh, what is it?
>
> "B": box
>
> "A": Yeah. And we spoke nothing but Japanese… However, the Japanese teacher I had in Warner Grove, he uh, well…more or less pro-Japan. So, every April 29th, that's uh, Emperor Hirohito's birthday, we would march into the room with his picture and we would have to say, 'Bonsai'!
>
> *Laughing*
>
> "A": He'd know if you didn't say "Bonsai", and he would come over and hit your head with a stick!
>
> Fac: So, what happened…um, so you said after school you would only speak Japanese. When did that stop?
>
> "A": When the war started.
>
> Fac: When the war started.
>
> "A": Yeah. Until 1942, when we were evacuated. I think it was April (F.G. 2, p. 2, L 12-27).

Even before the war, Niseis were encouraged by the Japanese American community as well as the larger American community to "prove" their citizenship and show their

hardworking ethic (Yoo, 2000). After the internment, this test of citizenship was even more emphasized. Nisei and Sansei members felt that they had to once again prove their loyalty to America by becoming more American. They too, in a sense, lost their cultural identity. As one participant explained, "The best way to assimilate is – is to not – not continue with your cultural identity. Because you're gonna have a hard enough time" (F.G. 1, p. 20, L 9-10). The Japanese American community as a whole did not · discourage assimilation due to the humiliation suffered through the internment. This has resulted in the limited to nonexistent knowledge of the Japanese language in the Japanese American community.

In Asakawa's (2004) book, *Being Japanese American,* he laments how even members of the Japanese American community can not even correctly pronounce his or their own Japanese surname. But, he reasons, we should not be surprised at the fading of Japanese language competence when a whole community of people sought to assimilate into mainstream culture (Asakawa, 2004). This lack of awareness or consciousness of the internment and the loss of the Japanese language are precisely why the Niseis, and some Sanseis, are concerned and perceive the younger generations to be uninterested and indifferent regarding the Japanese American culture. The decreasing use of the Japanese language amongst the Japanese American community was a concern brought up in all focus groups, even the Yonsei/hapa. Here is an excerpt of one Sansei's opinion:

Fac: What else do you see being lost in terms of the Japanese culture?

"A": Well, definitely the language.

Fac: Definitely the language. Why is the language so important?

"A": Well, I think language *is* culture. And you know I didn't *Niho (in aud)* and

all that. And at one time I was trilingual, but I'm losing it because I don't use it

as much anymore and my son never even cared to learn. And in his era they

didn't go to Japanese language school on Saturday (F.G. 3, p. 9, L 47-50).

One of the participants in the fifth focus groups shared that out of all of the Sansei

members she is acquainted with, she can only think of two who are actually fluent in the

language. Similar to many other languages, Japanese cultural values are embedded

within the structure of the language. Language is seen as culture. It is the vehicle of the

Japanese values and beliefs that shape one's perspective of the world. For example, one

hapa who is fluent in Japanese explained:

Like in Japan, there's like showing respect for other people and stuff, its like built

into the language. But, in America, it's like a lot more impersonal even when you

are talking to someone that's..you know in a higher position than you at work or if

it's a teacher or its..I don't know. It's just very impersonal. (F.G. 6, p. 3, L 9-11).

To one Nisei, the fact that his daughter learned the Japanese language as an adult was one

of the many signs that encouraged him to believe that she cared for and valued her

cultural heritage (F.G. 4). The use of the Japanese language is seen as a means of

preserving cultural heritage. The decline of the Japanese language usage in the

community is perceived as diminishing the richness of the Japanese heritage. The newer

generations do not know the language and are not taught the language and therefore, they

do not know the culture. For the Niseis and some of the Sanseis, how can the newer,

younger generations preserve a culture that they do not know?

This particular criticism towards the younger generation seems to be harsh since many of the Nisei also no longer speak the language and the majority of the Sansei were never taught it. The decline in the use of the Japanese language does indeed signal a loss of cultural heritage and one aspect of cultural identity. As Asakawa (2004) proposes, it is very important for the younger generations to be able to communicate with the older generations so they can learn as much as they can about their ancestors and therefore their own roots. The knowledge of the Japanese language seems to be perceived, particularly by the older generation, as a marker of authenticity.

The questions of culture, as embodied or performed, are raised once again while examining the issue of language. Knowledge of the Japanese language seems to indicate the sincerity of one's interest and involvement in the community and therefore, right to identify as Japanese American. The issue of language suggests that it is a significant factor in the discussion of cultural identity. Language is so significant that it emerged once again and became a central topic of discussion in the intergenerational dialogue session. The hidden concern embedded in the language issue seems to be the issue of assimilation, Westernization, and outmarriage and their impact upon culture and cultural identity. What makes the majority of the younger generations different from the Nisei and Sansei? The younger generations are more assimilated into Western, American culture and more and more of the younger generations are products of Sansei marriages to others outside the Japanese culture. Although perceptions of the younger generation seem to imply a loss of culture, the cultural value of respect emerged in all of the focus groups, regardless of generation.

*Respect.* The notion of respect (respect for the dead, one's elders, one's family, and those in authority) is one cultural value that characterizes the Japanese American culture. Respect is a concept connected to family and is deep-seated in all of the cultural traditions. Nisei members may have more of a negative or skeptical perception of the younger generations, but many of the Sansei, Yonsei, and hapa express their appreciation for that cultural value and their desire to preserve and carry on that tradition. According to one hapa Yonsei, "Thoughtfulness and respect are two things in the Japanese culture and those are always good virtues to have" (FG 6, p. 11, L 41-42). The same Yonsei also referred to her own upbringing, "You have to respect, like certain things you don't do. It's like, the way you were raised..." (FG 6, p. 2, L 43). One Sansei shared that,

> I try to teach my children or try to impress to them is to never forget the – the people who gave us what we have today...I want to make a point to my children that when they see them in Japantown to introduce themselves and shake their hand and thank them for all that they've done to um, give my children, myself, and them what we have here today... (FG 1, p. 16, L 29, 31-33).

One Sansei explained, this is a reflection of the "Japanese heritage we grew up with" (F.G. 4, p. 2, L 37). In all of the Nisei and Sansei focus groups, one cultural value they hope is retained by the generations to come is respect. The notion of respect – respect for authority, respect for elders, one's family, respect for the law and for the dead was the constant, oft-repeated value the community would like to be preserved.

For the Sansei, respect for the elders is also respect for cultural history. The Sanseis are the generation that lives with the legacy of their parents and grandparents

internment during WWII. Many Sansei participants brought up their parents' and grandparents' experience of survival and accomplishment despite the discrimination and subsequent incarceration. They respected their parents' and grandparents' endurance, resolve, and attitude in overcoming an event that many Issei and Nisei perceived as shameful.

*Shame.* Shame is closely related to respect and honor, however in a more negative context. The notion of shame, prevalent in most Asian cultures, was implicitly or explicitly expressed in a variety of contexts in all of the focus groups. For the Nisei, they had the burden of overcoming the shame of the internment; the Sansei had the burden of not disappointing their parents and grandparents who suffered from the internment; and the Yonsei and hapa live their lives so that they do not bring shame onto themselves or their families. For example, one Sansei expressed, "And then of course, you know, there is a conduct of behavior...that not bring, uh, shame onto yourself" (F.G. 1, p. 4, L, 28). Comments that were given in the focus groups revolved around examples of how they tried to mitigate the shame brought on by the internment and its aftermath. By striving for educational and professional success, the Sansei generation and many of the Yonsei generation sought to avoid bringing more shame upon their families or the community. These examples reflect the implications of the internment and the reaction of the Niseis and the Sanseis toward being interned. The internment is a cause of shame. The internment was humiliating for the Japanese American community. As a one participant described "Especially...[the] Nisei thought they were American because they were born here. And so that – that could be uprooted like that really hurt their feelings"

(F.G. 1, p. 17, L 18-20). The Issei and Nisei generation are commonly referred to as the silent generation, due to their lack of communication and disclosure about their internment experiences. When asked why the Issei and Nisei were so silent, a couple of participants reasoned the following:

> Fac: Why – why do you think they wouldn't like really talk about it? What is that all about?
>
> "A": Maybe shame?
>
> "B": Yeah. They were humiliated (F.G. 6, p. 19, L 1-3).

As a result, many of the Sansei were encouraged to live respectful, quiet lives and not bring any unnecessary or shameful attention to themselves.

When one set of participants were asked about how open communication was between them and their parents, one respondent explained how her parents did not really mention "camp," but they always emphasized one thing:

> "A": When my parents uh, told me to be a good citizen and to obey the laws of United States and stay out of trouble. That's what he told me.
>
> "B": I think all of the Issei's emphasized that. Stay out of trouble, be a good citizen.
>
> "C": Don't spread shame.
>
> "B": Yeah, don't spread shame (F.G. 3, p. 18, L 3-7).

Due to their humiliation in being interned and treated as if they were traitors and criminals, the "silent generation" never really spoke about their experiences. However, the legacy of that experience affects the community to this day.

The notion of shame or guilt is such a deep seated cultural notion that it is even built into the Japanese language. For example, one reflection of the notion of shame is to be wasteful with one's food. The Japanese part of the Japanese American culture instills the idea of how shameful it is to waste food. The Japanese word for wasteful is *mottainai,* which carries a connotation of guilt. As Asakawa (2004) explains, this reflects many of the Japanese values and customs that still remain with the Japanese Americans. This idea came up in one of the focus groups when the participants were asked in what ways they saw themselves as different from their children.

> "A": I was taught not to be wasteful. I eat my rice to the last drop, you know? The last kernel, you know? But it seems like the kids nowadays are so much more wasteful.
>
> "B": Everything goes in the garbage.
>
> "A": Yeah (F.G. 3, p. 5, L 20-24).

However, that does not mean that this cultural concept is lost on the younger generations. The concept of shame was never explicitly discussed but seemed to be reflected in expectations that younger generation feels like they have to live up to. For example, one response to the question exploring how one would define being Japanese American, one response was:

> Values…You know when we're growing up, like how – like how many customs you're, I don't want to say required, but like expected to perform and like, things you're expected to learn. And you're expected to do well in school. And um, you know like certain things that are just like expected (F.G. 6, p. 3, L 27, 29-32).

The idea of expectations was explicitly expressed, however the implicit message seemed to indicate that if the younger generations do not live up to these expectations they will be a disappointment to and bring shame to their families. The idea of shame could even be seen in some of the younger generation's responses regarding their parent's perception of their cultural identity. One of the more obvious ways one counteracts the effects of shame upon one's family is through education.

*The importance of education.* For many of the Sansei and Yonsei, there is no question that one is to obtain a college education. For some, there was no question that grades were to be "As" only. These expectations for educational success were often unspoken. As one older Sansei expressed, "...from the Japanese culture, it was always you know, education is the most important" (F.G. 1, p. 4, L 20). Although it has been argued that the younger generations are not as concerned or motivated in regard to education, one hapa Yonsei expressed:

> You know when we're growing up, like how – like how many customs you're, I don't want to say required, but like expected to perform and like, things you're expected to learn. And you're expected to do well in school. And um, you know like certain things that are just like expected (F.G. 6, p. 3, L 28-32).

The Issei generation consisted of laborers with the Nisei becoming farmers or specialized laborers, and the Sansei pursued college degrees and higher education degrees. One conversation with two older Sansei reflects the connection between the cultural notion of shame and the value of education, is as follows:

"A": You dare not, do anything uh, bad because you bring disrespect to so many

people. And uh, that's uh, part of our Japanese heritage. I think that's why our

generation grew up the way we did. Uh, our uh, the Isseis, were basically farmers

when they came from Japan. The Niseis, our parents, they upgraded themselves to

become Japanese gardeners, ok. And when you got to become a Sansei –

"B": Education.

"A": You were educated, you went to college and became the engineers and

doctors and so on and so forth. Each time we elevated ourselves. Did you know

that the Japanese Americans are not considered a minority?

Fac: yeah.

"A": We're considered White. And that's because we have elevated

ourselves...(F.G. 4, p. 3, L 13–24).

The Japanese American community is very proud of their accomplishments. They are

proud that they have "elevated" themselves and are successful, respected citizens in the

San Jose community. However, at what cost?

One Sansei, who possesses a Master's degree, commented that education was one

means of assimilating as a response to the internment. His parents and his aunts and

uncles all encouraged their children to pursue their education. Education was encouraged

to such an extent that many of his generation received upper graduate degrees like PhDs.

"I guess they felt that this-this was the best way to assimilate into the mainstream –

through education. And, so all of us did" (F.G. 1, p. 4, L 24-26). After the internment,

education symbolized hope. The Japanese Americans could redeem themselves as

citizens. They could show their communities and American society that they could succeed and overcome the internment, as well as assimilate and be good citizens. In another focus group, one Sansei was explaining her college experience in the seventies and the difficulty for her to receive a scholarship for she was not recognized as a minority, "On the one hand, you're proud of that. That we've assimilated, that we've come this far" (F.G 4, p. 4, L 1). However, on the other hand, as some of the younger generation express, you are still seen as "Asian" with all of the racial connotations attached to that label. Furthermore, when your ethnic background is revealed, the legacy of the internment and the racism that fueled the motives behind the internment, are still very much alive. The older generations perceive the younger generations to be assimilated and Westernized. Culturally, perhaps the younger generations are assimilated. However, the experiences of some in the younger generation expose the reality that the challenges some of their parents and grandparents had to face, are still some of the same challenges that the younger generation must face today.

In the very institutions that have educated the Japanese American community and provided the means of their professional, social and civic success, these schools, colleges and universities have helped the Japanese American community to "assimilate". They are also sites of racial and cultural struggle where the Yonsei and the hapa sometimes have to fight subtle and not so subtle racist and discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. One cultural value is not only admired but it is still alive and well even in the younger generation: shikataganai. Shikataganai is an attitude that enabled the Issei and Nisei to

survive the internment experience and its aftermath. The older generation needs to know that this attitude is still alive in the younger generations (including the hapa members).

*Shikataganai, endurance, and perseverance.* One reason why the younger generations, especially the Sansei, respect the Issei and Nisei is due to the honorable attitude the Issei and Nisei held while interned and while recovering their lives after their release. The attitude of shikataganai, "it cannot be helped" (Asakawa, 2004, p. 60), or the firm resolve to move on despite suffering and hardship is admired, particularly by the Sansei.

> "A": I don't think I've ever had to put up with the overt discrimination that they [Isseis and Niseis] had to put up with...you know?...'cause I think those experiences were so traumatic..you know? Especially...Nisei thought they were American because they were born here. And so that – that could be uprooted like that really hurt their feelings. Because they thought they were participating in the – in the system. And then to find out that they really weren't.
>
> "B": That's one of the things I've always given them a lot of credit for was, that generation never passed down the bitterness or anger of –
>
> "A": No, no (interrupted "B") they kept it to themselves (F.G. 1, p. 17, L 18-21, 28, 30).

In the Nisei and Sansei focus groups, the internment would always come up explicitly. The attitude of shikataganai not only seemed to be admired, but also inspirational for all of the Sansei who had live through the racism and discrimination after the internment.

...Their [Issei and Nisei] whole business about shikataganai, I just feel that they're role models for us. And that is what pulled us through all of these challenges...For them to go through this 3 ½ years of such a terrible injustice and then to be able to say, "Well, it happened, shikataganai and we're going to make the best of it and move on". It's just a role model for all of us...(F.G. 3, p. 4, L 12-13).

In the Yonsei/hapa focus group, the internment was implicitly referred to and usually only in the context of discrimination in general or family history. This may imply that Yonsei/hapa focus groups may not be as aware or sensitive of their cultural history. The hapa in particular, do not seem as aware of the internment experience. Yet this generation is aware and knowledgeable of the racism and discrimination that their parents and grandparents faced. One could even argue that for the hapa, the struggle is even more challenging since many of the participants are struggling with their own identity. One hapa Yonsei who is ½ White and ½ Japanese shared how he has had largely negative experiences with White people and their reaction to his ethnic background. Here is an excerpt of one of his experiences in high school:

"A": When I was in uh, high school, I got blamed for Pearl Harbor so many times and I was like, I'm –

"B": Really?

"C": Are you kidding?

"A": ...They were just so ignorant all the time. That's probably why I only hang out with Asian people now. I mean, I don't shut myself off from everybody else,

but as my closest friends are concerned, they're all Asian. Except for those

people, who don't have a problem with, you know, they don't have a problem

with race, a problem with race either but we just find... that more

people...Other's might just look the other way, but we don't, that's our problem I

guess (F.G. 6, p. 6, L 49-51; p. 7, L 3-8).

Another hapa Yonsei, who is ½ Irish and ½ Japanese expressed some of her thoughts

about being hapa *and* surrounded by predominantly White friends in a predominantly

White school:

I have a lot of White friends and my nickname is always "Asia" or "Geisha", just

because I'm Asian, I don't know. Its, like, there's no harm in it I guess, but

they're always like 'we don't consider you "Asian"'. I guess like, that's kind of

like demeaning, when they say that 'cause its like what's wrong with being Asian,

you know? But, I don't know. They have Asian friends, but I don't know, I go to

a Catholic school where its like...the White people rule the school (F.G. 6, p. 6, L

34-39).

Most of the hapa and many of the Yonsei shared stories of discrimination. For the hapa,

the discrimination seemed to be the most challenging since they always experienced

tension, an inner push-pull between two or more identities that conflicted with one

another. When others would tease or ridicule their Asian side, they automatically felt the

struggle to defend one or the other cultural identities without denying one or the other.

Many of the hapa participants are just entering their college years and are still in the

process of negotiating and discovering their own personal, cultural identities.

Shikataganai, the same attitude that the Issei and Nisei held and exhibited during their struggle against racism, seems to have evolved and been redefined by the younger generations. The spirit of shikataganai, to endure despite hardship and make the best of a situation remains, however the attitude is manifested with a more "Western" cultural flavor.

Many of the hapa either ignore these racist and discriminatory remarks and behaviors, though hurtful, or they follow in their parents (the Sansei) footsteps and defend their cultural heritage and diversity. For example, one hapa who identifies more with her White side, than Japanese side expressed her reaction to being called "gook." At first she expressed that it did not bother her, she just ignores those who are ignorant. But, if pressed or provoked, her reaction takes on a more "Western" cultural response:

> Besides if they said something bad of course I have something to say back to
> them. And if they didn't like it, too bad you know? But...I mean I would defend
> it. Like what's wrong with it? Like she said, you know, what wrong with being
> Asian? (F.G. 6, p. 7, L 36-39).

The younger generation may not fully be aware of the internment or the attitude of shikataganai, but they are living with the presence of both whether they realize it or not. Shikataganai is expressed much differently now. Circumstances differ, yet the struggle against racism still remains. However, the spirit and essence of the attitude of shikataganai still seems to be intact and alive within the younger generations. The Japanese "culture" may not be performed as much in the younger generation as much as certain cultural values and characteristics are embodied by them. The spirit and attitude

of shikataganai is necessary if they want to make a difference not only in society regarding racial attitudes, but even within their own community, particularly those who are hapa. Discrimination exists within the community just as much as it exists without. Many of the older generations do not consider hapa to be truly a part of the Japanese community. Those hapa who consider themselves part of the Japanese American community are looked upon with suspicion and doubt by many Nisei and even some older Sansei. This leads one to consider the points of tension or difference amongst the varied generational groups. Though there were points of contact and similarity, there are also points of disconnect, disagreement, and dissonance.

*Themes that Reflect Points of Tension*

Within the common themes that emerged in the focus groups, points of contrast or difference emerged as well. The themes may be similar but the experiences, perceptions, and even the solutions to the community issues were different. The focus groups also revealed some interesting community issues and tensions regarding the impact of the internment on communication, interracial marriage, and the cultural identity of biracial and multiracial (hapa) Japanese Americans.

The focus of this study was to determine whether or not a communication gap existed between the generations. One purpose of the focus groups was to explore why this communication gap exists or does not exist and what is contributing to the lack of communication. Specifically, the following questions were examined: Is there a communication gap between the different generations? Yes. Why is there a communication gap between the different generations? Three issues seem to relate to this

lack of communication between the generations: assimilation, the loss of the Japanese language, and lack of communication about the internment and therefore a decline in the cultural group's historical memory. All three of these issues seem to be direct results of the internment.

*The impact of the internment touches all generations.* The lack of communication between the older generations and the younger generations seems to be highly influenced by perceptions. When the older generations were asked what contributed to their perception that the younger generations are losing their culture identity of Japanese American, responses centered on three issues: Westernization, multiraciality, and the loss of the Japanese language.

"A": They are more Westernized.

"B": There are lots of outmarriage.

"A": It looks like they are losing their identity with the Japanese (F.G 1, p. 12, L 4-6).

"X": You know, I think I – I never learned Japanese – I can speak it a little bit and understand it, but I never really learned Japanese. And my boys never went [to Japanese school]. I mean, do you all speak Japanese?

"Y": No.

*Clamor of responses, in the negative*

*Laughing*

"Z": I think we lost our language in one generation…And I am sure it has to do with the camps, and the internment…

*Murmuring of agreement* (F.G 5, p. 11, L 5-10, 13)

The younger generation's perception is a bit different. When asked why they enjoy being

Japanese American, a few responses implicitly addressed the issue of assimilation and

Westernization:

"P": You don't have to live up to old customs, as much as previous generations.

Fac: Why do you think you think that it is an advantage?

"P": Well, you have more freedom…(F.G. 6, p. 2, L 10-12)

"Q": I mean its [cultural influence] certainly influenced by Western…but

its…unique (F.G. 6, p 2, L 19).

"R": Um, I guess its just, like what he said, we are so…we have like, a uniqueness

to us. But a lot of people, when you go into other cultures, like Chinese, a lot of

the kids are brought up on the Chinese culture. And, Japanese are brought up on

their culture, the Japanese culture, but not to the extent where we feel we are

forced to, I guess? Does that make sense? (F.G. 6, p. 2, L 27 – 30)

The first response was expressed by a hapa Yonsei who is ½ Chinese and ½ Japanese, the

second by a hapa Sansei who is ½ Japanese, ¼ Black, and ¼ Chinese, and the last

response was from a Yonsei who is Japanese from her mother's side and her father's side.

All appreciated the fact that their generation is given the option to pick and choose

certain aspects of their cultural identity and how they live it out in their own lives. The

younger generation appreciates their uniqueness of their Japanese and American culture.

This attitude and perception is very "Western." For the older generations, the attitude is

different. Uniqueness is not necessarily a trait or characteristic that is desirable. In the

Japanese culture, one does not want to bring attention to oneself. As one Sansei explained, "We've heard the term, the nail that sticks up gets hammered down. Basically, the Niseis followed that" (F.G 3, p. 2, L 15-16). Perhaps the older generation sees many of the younger generation who are more assimilated and Western as well as "mixed" as nails that stick up, but refuse to be hammered down.

After the internment, the Niseis and Sanseis were forced to assimilate. The younger generations are more assimilated, beginning with the Sansei. Many of the Sansei did not learn or stopped using the Japanese language altogether. They pursued their education and started their own families. The "forced assimilation" led to outmarriage and a new "face" of Japanese Americans, the hapa members. This has altered perspectives regarding philosophy, lifestyle, and communication. For Sansei, the Yonsei and hapa, their culture and communication style is much more Western than their older counterparts. A couple of Sansei even admitted that ethnically they are Japanese, but culturally they are American. For example, one who grew up in Southern California shared, "I – I'm very American with Japanese ancestry. I'm not so much into this Japanese culture that those of you who grew up here [Bay Area], are" (F.G 5, p. 6, L 24). Many Sansei admitted to not becoming interested in their Japanese heritage until they were in college or after they had children. One Sansei expressed how she became acquainted with her Japanese heritage not through her family or her parents, who were interned, but after she went to college.

For me, it was uh, I was more of late comer to a lot of the Japanese culture.

*(laughs)* For some reason, my parents just sort of, I think 'cause of the camp

experience, they – they - it was just, you know, we gotta be - totally - …I mean

we didn't even really acknowledge a lot of the customs, except for, you know,

New Years, you know?...And it wasn't a rejection of it, but it just was not a part

of my growing up… And it was actually through getting involved with NOC

[Nihonmachi Outreach Committee] and you know, more of an activist type, as the

young adult, that made me aware of all that I was missing (F.G. 5, p. 3, L 11-20).

The internment influenced the majority of the Niseis to leave behind their Japanese

heritage in order to lead a more peaceable life. One Sansei who is involved in research

about the internment, shared some of the findings regarding Japanese cultural identity

development after the internment:

But the thing that I see the most, that really affects how Japanese you were in

your home was the war. So, if , when they got out of the camp, there was a very

strong ten years or so where people really tried *not* [italics added] to be too

Japanese in public. Maybe in the ho – house, people still ate Japanese food and

stuff, but there was a very big push to be as quiet or to be as – to at least to blend

in as much as possible (F.G 5, p. 12, L 1-5).

The forced assimilation, or at least the pressure to assimilate after the internment,

influenced a whole generation to leave behind their Japanese cultural heritage. The

issues of preservation, preservation of the Japanese American culture, community, and

Japantown in San Jose is directly related to the aftermath of the internment.

One outcome of the mass assimilation of the Nisei and Sansei was an increase in

outmarriage of the Sanseis to other cultures. In a few of the focus groups, some older

Sanseis who are both Japanese, discussed how outmarriage or out-marrying, forces families to "choose" which will be the dominant culture. One couple related their own personal experience with their daughter.

Fac: Are you noticing yet, in your own children, that maybe some of the culture is slipping away?

"A": Yeah. Because my daughter, I have a daughter, she's not married to a Japanese. She's married to a Mexican, and she's married twice and both times, married to a Mexican. One was a Mexican-White and then the other one, now she's married to a Mexican.

Fac: And you see that as - ?

A: And now she's slipping away from the Japanese culture.

"B": Yeah, but her kids were never in the Japanese culture.

Fac: Her kids were never even "in"?

"C": They were never involved here?

"B": That's why, that's why I personally, don't like it when I see Japanese marrying outside, because in my opinion, a great majority of the time, the Japanese heritage, which is in important to me, is gone. Is gone (F.G. 3, p. 15, L 4-15.

Again, in another focus group, one Sansei expressed how even if marriage occurs between two Asian individuals, one culture will predominate. "Well, once they're mixed (in aud) it's hard...to keep it. Like, like I was telling you, my two, my two nephews are Japanese and Thai. And they identify more with Thai" (F.G. 1, p. 21, L 24-26). For the

older generations, out-marriage is predominantly seen as a more harmful to the community. As a result of increasing interracial relationships and marriages, it is believed that more and more of the Japanese American culture is lost.

Assimilation and the implications of outmarriage are realities that affect the community. The depth of these two issues resonates the most powerfully in the experiences and perceptions of the younger Yonsei and hapa with others in the Japanese American community. One Yonsei who is also hapa, expressed the tension that exists between her and her Sansei mother: "I probably feel like I...as far as culture goes, identify with Japanese. My mom would say otherwise" (F.G 6, p. 8, L 40-50). When questioned about her parent's perception of her cultural identity, the tensions of being multiracial again emerged: "...not a disappointment, but, how should I say it? Um, not as *Japanese* [italics added] as she would like me to be. She always says I'm too white 'cause I'm too loud and I'm too open about how I feel (ibid, p. 9, L 35-37). The seeming lack of interest of the younger generations may not be so much a loss of culture but more of a struggle with their own cultural identity. Another hapa Yonsei expressed how both of her grandparents were interned, yet she knows very little about their experience. She even contributes her ignorance of the internment experience and her cultural heritage to her family's assimilation as a consequence of the internment.

I think through that they really didn't want to carry on the culture. I mean, um, like our aunties and uncles and stuff, they gave them you know, a taste of the culture, but not enough, like, they didn't learn the language, they didn't learn everything about the food, exactly. 'Cause I think is definitely important part of

it. (*chuckling*) But um, for us grandkids, I mean we barely know enough about the culture. We just know whatever they allowed us to know (F.G. 6, p. 12, L 24-29).

The Yonsei and hapa generations bear the consequences of the internment, just as much as the Nisei and Sansei, just in a different way.

*The multiracial factor – purity versus dilution.* It seems as though the common perception among most (not all) of the older Nisei and Sansei toward the hapa younger generations is that the hapa are not Japanese enough or too "white". Therefore, they are not qualified to be considered truly Japanese American. They need to "prove" their Japanese-ness before they can carry on the Japanese American legacy. This attitude is not only thought provoking and distressing but strangely familiar. It is reminiscent of an attitude that occurred two to three generations ago, but it was an attitude held by the Whites toward Japanese Americans during and after the internment. This discriminatory attitude makes communication and understanding of the younger generations much more challenging. The challenge could be intensified because many of the hapa perceive themselves to be a part of the Japanese American community. They cannot nor do they want to deny that aspect of their identity. This reveals a need for some level of compromise, acceptance and unity on the part of all generations within the community. The issue of multiraciality addresses the various definitions and perceptions regarding culture: what is it to be Japanese American? For the older generations, culture and identity seem to reflect performance – involvement in the community, in cultural events, and the practice of certain customs. The younger generations, particularly those with a

mixture of racial backgrounds seem to perceive and understand culture and their own identity through embodiment – it's their attitudes, their beliefs, their values. An understanding of these differing perspectives and ideas regarding culture and cultural identity is needed in order to help the Japanese American community explore their own definitions and understandings of culture. If the community wants to survive and preserve what is left of its cultural heritage, the community will have to come together and come up with workable solutions that accept the reality of multiraciality and assimilation on the one hand, yet maintain and retain the cultural values and traditions that all members of the community want to preserve.

*Lack of communication about internment and the loss of historical memory.* Another implication of the internment that has affected the community is the loss of historical memory. Earlier, it was mentioned how the internment was and is perceived by the Issei and Nisei as a shameful event. Therefore, the experience is not really talked about. Many Sansei expressed how very little their parents and grandparents speak of the internment. One Nisei privately expressed how hard it was for him to think about that time in his life, that he did not want to remember. It is an event that stirs up lots of intense emotions. One Sansei shared how she was part of a study examining the internment:

"A": …talked to those 100 people and no one wanted to talk about the camps, no one wanted to talk about it –

"B": Yeah, my dad would never talk about it. Ever (F.G. 5, p. 12, L 18-20).

Other participants shared similar experiences with their own relatives.

"A": ...but my grandma was in the camp. She never talks about it. I've...My family has basically said, you know, that at this age there is really no point in asking her about it because its bad memories or something like...but I've always been curious, so I'd bring it up and she doesn't really – she doesn't, never talks about her own life anyway (F.G 1, p. 19, L 5-7).

"B": They never talked to us about it [the internment]–

"C": Yeah, never talked about it (F.G 1, p. 17, L 32-33).

The younger generation's awareness, or lack thereof, of the internment is not only influenced by time, but also through the lack of communication about the subject. The perception that younger generations don't care about internment and what their ancestors suffered as a result of assimilation and outmarriage is not completely correct. How are the younger generations supposed to learn about the internment when their grandparents' experiences and thoughts about the subject are not communicated to them? Education is not a certain solution. For example, one Yonsei, who is full Japanese shared her high school history lesson about WWII:

I mean, I hardly even know much about my culture. I mean, the only time I learned more about my culture, was in high school, and it was like a two day thing – this is what happened, they bombed us, and that's it. Like, there was not really any talk about the internment camps, they said, oh, this is the internment camps – they were here from this point to this point and that's it. Next topic...(F.G. 6, p. 12, L 30-34).

When focus group discussions transitioned to solutions to preserving the Japanese American heritage and Japanese American experience, most of the focus groups came up with the same solutions: it starts in the families and the need to preserve Japantown San Jose as a place of public, historical memory.

*Suggestions and thoughts about the preservation issue.* The question of how to preserve the Japanese American heritage was answered similarly and yet differently in each generational group. For the Nisei, those who already raised their own children, the attitudes and answers were skeptical or quizzical. Many of the Nisei seemed skeptical usually because of the deep seated perception that the younger generation is disinterested and will probably not change; they seemed quizzical because they were at a loss when it came to coming up with solutions for the younger generation since they (the Nisei) were going to be gone soon anyway. Many of the younger Sansei in the focus groups expressed the need for the parents to be interested in their cultural heritage and to model interest and involvement for the benefit of their offspring. Most responses indicated that preservation begins and ends with the family. One active community member, who is Sansei, expressed the following:

> 'Cause I belong to the youth organization and I'm uh, *constantly* [italics added] trying get the um, membership, influence their children toward becoming more community active and more uh, volunteer towards the seniors. But I *cannot* [italics added] get the parents...to convince them, than I have no chance with the kids. So, I think the kids are, unfortunately are because of the parent's influence (F.G. 1, p. 13, L 18-22)

Another Sansei who is also an active community member expressed similar sentiments placing responsibility upon the older generations: "It's *our* [italics added] responsibility to do the teaching and the modeling…Because they learn it from us. In fact, I said earlier, role models of the Issei for me, was how I learned. And we just need to do more to model that" (F.G. 3, p. 12, L. 49; p. 13, L 5).

One Sansei expressed how the responsibility lies specifically with the parents. She shared how her Yonsei niece who did married out to a Caucasian is doing what she can to pass on her cultural heritage to her hapa children:

I think the parents need to bring them into the culture and let them learn from the culture and learn to keep the culture, because my niece is married to a Caucasian, but each of her children go to Japanese school. And, they've learned to read and write Japanese since, uh, I guess since, uh they were five they went to school. It's uh, Friday night after school kind of school for two hours. So they all went to the Mountain View Obon and the boys, and the girls, all danced so they would be in the culture. So, the parents bring them into the Japanese culture even though they may be ½ or ¼ or whatever. They could learn uh, the culture by being influenced by being around whatever is happening, that is, um reputable (F.G. 6, p. 21, L 28-35).

After the internment, it seems some families began to lose some, if not all, of their Japanese cultural heritage due to the pressure and preference to assimilate. The answer to the preservation question is for families to once again regain their cultural identity and heritage. One solution is to preserve a place where the struggles and triumphs of the

Japanese American community are kept in public memory. For the Japanese American community, that place is Japantown – San Jose.

*Preserving Japantown is preserving public memory and preserving cultural heritage.* All of the focus groups recognized the need to preserve Japantown as well as the reality that the Japantowns are fading. There are only three Japantowns left in California. Japantown San Jose is the smallest of the three, but the influence of the Japanese culture is the strongest. Japantown San Jose is significant because it is a place of public memory. Mandziuk (2003) noted how memorializing or commemorating public figures, places and events serves a rhetorical function where the "past mediates the present, public values and contains markers of cultural clash over significant issues such as race and gender" (p. 271). Mandziuk (2003) argues further that commemorating and memorializing places are not arbitrary actions. They are interpretive, symbolic acts that serve as an expression of cultural values, beliefs, or cultural knowledge, as well as sites of struggle regarding the past and its meaning and implications for the present (as well as the future). By exploring the events, figures, or places that are commemorated or memorialized, one can gain an understanding of that particular culture, what they define as "truth," and what cultural values and knowledge they would like to be remembered.

Japantown San Jose holds the *Issei Memorial Building,* which is the home of the Japanese American history museum. There the internment experience is chronicled and recorded for not only future Japanese Americans, but for the entire San Jose community. The older Nisei and Sansei find comfort and familiarity in Japantown. Japantown San Jose is where many who were displaced during the war, returned to rebuild their lives.

For many of the older generations Japantown San Jose is a taste of home. Many of the older generations use the services of Yu Ai Kai where they can eat Japanese food and partake in Japanese activities as they grow older. However, the main reason the older generations want Japantown to survive is they don't want their history to be forgotten. They want their story and their legacy to be communicated to the future generations. They want to preserve the physical place where many of them returned to rebuild their lives, where many of them partook of their cultural festivals and customs, where many of them lived. They don't want the future generations to forget that they lived.

The younger Sansei see Japantown San Jose as a place of education and cultural awakening for the even younger generations. Many of the younger Sanseis' offspring are high school, college, or post college age, the time of life where one usually is seeking their own personal, cultural identity. The Sansei believe that curiosity of one's cultural roots will bring the younger generations to Japantown so that they can be educated about their culture. One Sansei commented how her college-age sons are currently too busy to be involved in the community while pursuing their education. However, she believes that after they graduate and begin their lives and perhaps start families, they will have a stronger desire to know their Japanese cultural roots (F.G. 5). Japantown may also be a place of comfort and appreciation for the Sansei. A few Sanseis commented about how their parents, the older they become, the more the Japanese cultural traditions, activities, and even food are sources of comfort. These Sanseis wonder if they too will have a need for what Japantown offers, a place of comfort and familiarity

The younger generation of Yonseis and the hapa possess a desire to maintain Japantown San Jose, similar to the reasons that the Sansei have for preservation. When they are ready, they would like a place to go to, to find out who they are. As one hapa Yonsei explained:

> I feel like, the further we are getting from like, Issei, from the original... generation that came over, the closer - the more interested we are getting in our, our roots of where we came from. Because like the more Americanized or whatever, you become, the more you're searching for your identity and trying to figure out well, why am I this way? And, I know I am not American because I came from somewhere and..nowadays, half - the majority of people are mixed and its – its nice to know like where that came from. Where certain personality traits come from, certain ideas, like...my eye color. Like you know, little things even (F.G. 1, p. 23, L 21-27).

Based on responses from the hapa participants, Japantown is a place for them to understand a part of who they are – their own identity. When asked why they would like to preserve Japantown San Jose and the Japanese American community their responses were very revealing:

> "A": Still intact ...but the more and more time goes on that it's just going to get washed out because of such..things as interracial marriage and Japanese people, like when we came here, like, we after the war tried to assimilate a little bit...(F.G. 6, p. 12, L 19-22).

"B": I really hope it stays intact. I would like to preserve what we have. I mean, I hardly even know much about my culture…I think just more awareness of…that Japanese Americans are here and we're not going anywhere (F.G. 6, p. 12, L 30-31, 33).

Preserving Japantown San Jose and the Japanese American community seems to be more of a matter of concern for the younger hapa than even the full Japanese Yonsei. Some responses from the hapa seem to reveal a sense of resentment toward those who are full Japanese for they perceive the full Japanese to be taking their cultural identity and heritage for granted.

"A": The people – the people who are trying to keep it alive though, aren't Japanese.

"B": Yeah, I know, it's not Japanese it's all the –

"A": Most of the time Japanese people can't even – they could care less. That's what's happening. Like, my friends who are Japanese, they don't care. I tell them about it, and they're like, so?

"C": The ones that are full?

"A": Yeah, they're like so? –

"C": But they're full, that's not the same.

"A": They take it for granted. They don't understand what it's going to be like once it's gone. And when it's gone, its too late (F.G. 6, p. 13, L 22–31).

For those who are mixed, with multiple ethnic identities and influences, Japantown San Jose is a place where they could come to discover and understand a part of their identity.

When asked when, if and how they would be involved in the Japantown San Jose community, many of the Yonsei, hapa and full, responded that it would be after college and when they started their own families. This response seems to reinforce the thoughts and beliefs of some of the Sansei. Based on focus group responses, all of the generations have a desire and share the same opinion that there is a need to preserve the Japantown community. It is a place of comfort and familiarity for the older generations and it is a place of exploration and discovery for the younger generations. Ultimately, it is a place of memory.

*Steps Toward Shaping the Intergenerational Dialogue*

Examining the themes that emerged from the focus group discussion revealed numerous topics and issues upon which to base a dialogue session. The next task was to sift through the themes of contact and similarity as well as the themes of dissonance and points of tension and come up with helpful, purposeful, goal-oriented discussion questions that would address the needs and interests of the community. The goal for the dialogue session was to be eye opening for all the participants regarding their perceptions and misperceptions of one another, particularly surrounding the issues of culture as performed and/or embodied and the issue of interest and involvement, of what the community and what the Japanese American culture means to each generation. The dialogue session was designed to be constructively challenging for the community as they deal with the realities of assimilation and multiraciality. An additional goal for the dialogue session was for the time to be a valuable, positive, yet honest exploration of the attitudes and perceptions held by the community. Finally, the dialogue session would be

an opportunity for the community to address some of the real issues affecting the

community, issues that are jeopardizing its unity and preservation.

CHAPTER 4

Engaging in Dialogue: Application and Analysis of Dialogic Principles in Community-based Action Research with the Japanese American Community of Japantown San Jose

The purpose of the intergenerational dialogue session was to bring the different generational members of the Japanese American community together to discuss and converse about the issues facing the community in the present and the future. The dialogue session was not only an exploratory study of intergenerational communication but also an exploration of intracultural communication in a dialogic context. This Master's thesis is unique because it explored not only the content of a dialogue session, but it also explored the process of dialogue. In this chapter, dialogue as an engaged practice is examined with as much attention as the material discussed. This chapter explores the process of planning and preparing for the dialogue session, the process of encouraging and engaging in dialogic communication in the intergenerational dialogue session, as well as an examination of the content discussed in the intergenerational dialogue session. This exploration and analysis of the preparation, planning, and process of engaging in dialogue provides insight in the evaluation of how successful the community was in the practice of dialogue, along with the productivity of the meeting and its achievement of the objectives laid out for the dialogue session.

The dialogue session had four objectives: 1) to bring the different generations together to discuss particular issues currently facing the community such as preserving Japantown San Jose, cultural preservation and practice, assimilation, and the growing reality of multiracial Japanese Americans; 2) to encourage actual discussion amongst the

generations with one another; 3) to clarify certain misconceptions and negative perceptions the generations held with regard to one another; and 4) to empower the community to find workable solutions to address the pressing issues facing the community, specifically the younger generations' involvement in and preservation of Japantown. Analysis addresses the strategic design and preparation made for the dialogue session, what occurred at the actual dialogic event and my effectiveness as facilitator/researcher. Analysis also focuses on whether or not dialogue occurred, as well as the impact that the event and outcome had upon me as a co-participant/researcher of the community and culture under exploration.

<center>Event Preparation and Design: Analyzing the Process</center>

The following section is an exploration of how the dialogue session for the Japanese American community was strategically designed for the purpose of promoting dialogic communication. I also explain the steps of preparation for the dialogue session in regards to inviting participants, making the necessary arrangements at Yu Ai Kai, how the themes from the focus groups informed the process of planning the points of discussion, and preparation and considerations for me as the facilitator, a co-participant in the research process, yet also the researcher.

Examination of the design process of the dialogue session is important to this study just as much as the content discussed in the dialogue session. The purpose of the intergenerational dialogue session was not only to bring the different generations together and address specific issues but to also address these issues in a specific way through dialogue. Reinharz (1992) explains how a conversation or dialogue format demonstrates

the tentative, emergent and contextual social construction of knowledge and meaning.

With this in mind, great care needed to be considered in the format of the actual dialogue

event particularly in terms of the following: logistics of creating an atmosphere and safe

space for the dialogue to emerge; how to engage the participants in conversation, in

terms of surrounding points of tension and conflict; and my role as researcher-facilitator

in the dialogic process.

*Considerations Regarding Goals and Outcomes for the Dialogue Session*

One of the primary goals of the dialogue session was to promote open, honest,

constructive conversation across the generations of the Japanese American community

about significant issues concerning race, culture, assimilation, and preservation of the

community and San Jose's Japantown. Ideally, in the dialogue session the younger and

older generational members would be able to communicate frankly and sincerely about

their perspectives, ideas, and thoughts about community issues for the purpose of all

generations to come to a mutual understanding. Dialogue additionally reveals how the

community mutually constructs their own understanding of these issues and enables them

to develop their own expectations and responses to these issues, not as different

generations or even individuals, but as one community. I hoped to help encourage and

usher in a mutual respect for one another's perspectives, feelings, and ideas regarding

Japanese Americans as a cultural community that is changing due to assimilation and

outmarriage.

*Mutual respect.* Mutual respect for one another's perspectives and feelings is

particularly important as the community deals with the issues of assimilation and

outmarriage. Both of these issues emerged consistently in the focus group interviews as significant factors facing the community. These issues also stand as points of tension. For the older generations, these two issues are regarded more negatively not only as social realities, but also in regards to attitudes and perceptions about their impact upon the community and culture. Addressing these two topics would require a level of tact and acumen in order to encourage constructive, open, and yet honest conversation amongst generations, especially when some of the younger generations either engaged in or are direct results of these two social and cultural phenomena.

*The role of the research – practitioner.* It was also necessary for me to consider my roles as researcher, facilitator, and participant. One goal of this project is to contribute to the growing body of community-based action research. It is my responsibility and role as researcher and facilitator to assist this community in confronting, discussing, and collaborating together in order to resolve the issues affecting them. In community-based action research, the researcher/facilitator is an active co-participant in the research process inviting engagement and involvement with the community and its members. According to Kickett, McCauley, and Stringer (1986), my role was that of a *catalyst*, to help and enable participants to analyze and assess their situation and work together to determine what they want to maintain and hold onto and what they want to change (as cited in Stringer, 1996). Although the role of the researcher/facilitator in community-based action research does not require "objectivity" or being value-neutral and instead requires investing one's self into the research process and human growth, my position as a participant in the community was intensely personal.

As the researcher, I am also a hapa, younger generation Sansei Japanese American. My position as facilitator was at times challenging and problematic even during the focus group interviews. As a researcher, it was my responsibility to facilitate conversations that directly related and applied to me yet without making it personal and about me. The dialogue session addressed how I am perceived and accepted in the Japanese American community, as a younger, arguably more assimilated, byproduct of outmarriage. For the sake of the research process, I often found myself having to separate myself from the personal nature of the research in order to explore and examine the themes and issues in a constructive, productive fashion while at the same time recognizing my own feelings and perspective. I was also challenged to facilitate the conversation in a way that revealed those assumptions, behaviors, and practices that could be negatively contributing to the areas the community was concerned about. According to Stringer (1996), my role as researcher/facilitator in the dialogue session was to "create the conditions that will mobilize their [the community's] energy, engage their enthusiasm, and generate activity that can by productively applied to the resolution of issues and problems that concern them" (p. 25). It was my responsibility to be open to the honesty of the responses of the participants in order to help the community address the issues that concern them, in spite of the personal nature of those issues.

*Strategic Preparation and Planning for the Intergenerational Dialogue Session*

Bearing the goals and outcomes of the dialogue session in mind and my role as researcher, facilitator, and co-participant in the research process, planning and preparing for the intergenerational dialogue session necessitated the consideration of multiple

factors. First, in terms of content, it was requisite to consider how to address and discuss the emergent themes in a productive manner in order to achieve the goals and desired outcomes of the dialogue session without being repetitive. Additionally, it was necessary to bear in mind how to strategically and constructively address the points of tension that arose from the focus groups in order to engage and interest the community to find productive, workable solutions that addressed the areas of concern. I also had to consider how to encourage and energize the community to actively pursue and commit to those workable solutions that would address the issues and problems that concern them.

The second factor that required consideration was how to, with regard to method, address the content in a way that would promote active engagement of all the participants in the discussion. It was important to encourage thorough consideration of the points brought up in the dialogue session with open, voluntary contribution and collaboration of ideas to address and resolve the areas of concern especially across the generations. The intergenerational dialogue session was to be a discussion *across* generations, generations that previously were not communicating with one another about community issues. In order to promote communication and open, honest discussion amongst the different generations, I wanted to design the dialogue session in such a way as to engage the older generation with the younger generation in a discussion about a specific issue so that both generations would be able to understand the perspective of the other.

*Setting the Stage: Preparing the Place, the Participants, the Event, and the Research Practitioner*

*Preparing the place.* One principle of both community-based action research and dialogic communication is strategically and carefully setting the stage for communication to take place. Based on the community-based action research principle of focusing on the well-being of the people, I considered a location that would be not only convenient, but also comfortable and familiar (Penman, 2000; Stringer 1996). Penman (2000) also suggests considering whether familiar or neutral is more appropriate for the group of individuals involved and the issues at stake. For the context of my project, I thought a location that was both familiar and neutral would be appropriate. Yu Ai Kai is a well-recognized, respected non-profit organization in the heart of the Japantown community. By choosing Yu Ai Kai my project would not be associated with any business or religious organization in the community and therefore free from the appearance of a particular political or social agenda.

It was also necessary to pay close attention to the smaller details such as, the room the dialogic event will take place in, and how the room will be arranged. For the sake of familiarity as well as to promote a sense of intimacy due to the size of the room, I planned to conduct the dialogue event in the same room that the focus group discussions took place. In one sense, I hoped to take them all back to where the conversation began and continue the conversation. I planned for the participants and myself as facilitator, to be seated in a circular fashion, thereby promoting equality and openness where all the participants could see the faces of the other and hear what one another had to share. This arrangement also allowed me to be a co-participant and emphasized my role as a facilitator or guide rather than in a leadership or authoritative role. This arrangement was

particularly important to me as the facilitator for I was not there to provide solutions or give them answers. Rather, I hoped it would encourage the participants to engage in discussion and be empowered to produce and form their own solutions and construct their own answers as fellow members of the same community. The neutral role of facilitator is a principle of dialogic communication that promotes and ushers in the openness and the allowance for flexibility in the dialogic discussion event. The facilitator's skill in enacting and communicating in a neutral, open manner affects the way communication takes place. A neutral, open facilitator can help usher in more openness and engagement on the part of the participants within the dialogic event.

To further create an atmosphere of openness, intimacy, and to promote comfort, food and drink were offered to the participants. The purpose of this provision was two-fold: first, there was the consideration of physical needs and comfort, and secondly, relational and cultural considerations. The timing of the event, albeit most convenient for the participants, took place after work around dinner time. Well fed participants would probably be more apt to contribute to the conversation than participants who were starving or food deprived. Second, there was the cultural ritual of eating together. Many cultures possess customs regarding the ritual of eating or mealtime. For many of the Nisei, they lamented that one of the consequences of the internment experience was the fragmentation of the family during meals. They believe the corrosion of this custom began during the camps (F.G. 1). As one younger Sansei observed:

> I think camp...created one thing that I just noticed, not *just* noticed, but I've
>
> noticed is when people were in camp you went and ate at a certain time, so once

you finished you got up and you left, because the next group had to come in and eat...lunch. So, you just sat down, ate your food and got up. So, a lot of times the kids wouldn't eat with their parents. And would just – so it became uh, kind of, uh separation...of the family unit. (FG 1, p. 18, L 25-29).

Many Nisei and even some of the older Sansei perceive the growing trend of families not eating together to be a sign of increased assimilation and Westernization of the community. In order to invoke and cultivate a sense of community, even family, I purposely intended for the participants to partake in communal eating.

*Preparing the people.* In order for the dialogic event to be intergenerational, participants from every generation, ideally, would be present and active in interest and participation. To achieve this end, I set about inviting previous focus group participants to join the dialogic discussion that would continue the conversation from the focus groups but also continue my research study. Finding mutually convenient times for any large amount of people is challenging, however I was surprised at the greatness of this challenge. Due to the time consuming task of transcribing and analyzing the focus group discussions, the dialogue event did not take place until the summer of 2007 and the last focus group discussion took place the previous fall. Since some of the younger participants were in college, I hoped that the summer would be more convenient for their involvement and participation in the dialogue event. However, I did understand that the length of time would play a factor in the interest and demographics of the participants. The dialogue event was to be an intergenerational dialogue event therefore it was necessary to have participants from each generational group involved. Not only was the

participation of each generational group important, but I my intent was to include a variety of perspectives and positions that exist within the community. Therefore, a balanced group of participants, in regards to gender, community involvement, education, and etc... was needed.

Bearing these considerations in mind I knew that wording the invite to the participants would be crucial to gaining the right amount of participants as well as the right composition of participants. Penman (2000) suggests careful consideration of how you present what you are interested in exploring, what you expect from the participants, and what you hope to achieve. I contacted and invited participants to the dialogue session through email and by phone, using the contact information that was given with permission by the participants at the focus group discussions. The participants who provided their email and phone numbers were those who expressed interest in further participation of my research project. Gratefully, there were many participants to contact. The emailed invitation opened with a reminder of their participation in the focus groups as well as their interest at that time to be included in the final portion of my research, the dialogue session. The invitation included a note of gratitude for their participation, an invitation to consider participating in the next step to completing the research, and a brief summary of points to be discussed at the intergenerational dialogue session. Meeting particulars such as date, time and contact information were also provided. The invitation was worded to be concise and to the point, yet with grateful acknowledgement to the participants for their previous participation and a humble request to help me with my research once again. The original invitation included three potential dates and times to

accommodate for busy summer schedules. Initially, responses were difficult to obtain. However, after a couple more follow ups via email, I received more positive responses and finally, a date and time were settled upon for Thursday, July 19, 2007 from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Thirteen participants responded to being able to attend the dialogic event for this suggested date and time.

One of my first lessons in remaining open and flexible as a facilitator and researcher occurred in the process of navigating through all the responses and coming up with a workable time for the dialogue session to take place. It was frustrating when some of the focus group participants whom I considered to be valuable contributors to the dialogic process would respond in the negative for certain dates and times. It was a struggle to balance relying on participant's availability and attempting to maintain complete control over who would participate in the dialogue session. I wanted to preserve the organic and spontaneous nature of the dialogue, but I also wanted and needed those participants who would be most invested and engaged in the process. Some participants who I hoped could attend due to their interest in the study, their personal positions and perspectives, and involvement in the community, were unable to participate. One interesting and disappointing observation is that none of the participants from the sixth focus group were able to participate. Only two out of the seven responded to my email invitation. Unfortunately, neither was able to attend the dialogue session due to family and academic commitments. The sixth focus group was comprised of the younger Yonsei generation and was the most multiracial. The lack of their voices amongst the others in the dialogue session was a significant loss and left a substantial

void in the conversation. I will discuss other implications of their lack of participation later on in the next chapter (Chapter 5).

*Demographics of dialogue participants.* Out of the 13 respondents for the dialogue session, five were Nisei, six were Sansei, and two were Yonsei. One of the Yonsei was hapa. With regard to gender, the group was evenly divided with six women and seven men. Two of the six women involved were a part of the Nisei generation, three were Sansei, and one was Yonsei and hapa. Additionally, both Nisei women had grandchildren who were hapa, and two of the Sansei women had married *hanku-jin* men (or White men), and one of them had two children who were hapa. The age range amongst the female participants ranged from the age of 27 to 90, with the median age of 55.

Of the men, four of the men were Nisei, and three of the men were Sansei. The four men who were married, all married Japanese American. Two of the Sansei men had grandchildren who were hapa. The age range of the male participants ranged from 45 to 78. The median age was 61.

All of the participants involved were high school graduates and all, except two, received at least a college or technical school education.

*Planning for the event.* One of the unique and dynamic characteristics of dialogic communication, and therefore a planned dialogic session, is its unpredictability. Dialogue celebrates "in the moment" communication and promotes the openness and spontaneity of face-face interaction. As Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett (1994) aptly point out, dialogue cannot be forced or commanded, but it also does not happen by accident. It

is the spontaneity of dialogue that leads to more raw, honest, and genuine conversation. Pearce and Pearce (2004) affirm that by understanding dialogic communication "we think we have a better idea of how to invite and prepare the conditions for these moments to occur" (p. 46). In order to prepare the conditions that were conducive to dialogic communication I decided not to provide the specific discussion questions to the participants. I only provided a general overview in the email invitation regarding the direction and focus of the discussion topics. Upon reflection, providing more specific discussion topics or questions ahead of time may have better equipped the participants to engage in discussion and consideration regarding some of the issues addressed in the actual discussion questions.

In considering the goals of the dialogue session, primarily that the dialogue session was to be an *intergenerational* dialogue, it was necessary to think about how to encourage the different generations to discuss not only *soft* topics, or topics that were less controversial, but to also engage in meaningful discussion about some of the more controversial and emotionally charged topics. This consideration was of utmost importance particularly since the issue of the *lack* of intergenerational communication contributed not only to the undertaking of this project but was also repeatedly supported in the focus group discussions. The challenge was to not only initiate discussion between the different generations regarding discussion points, but for the generations to engage in discussion *dialogically*.

In order to accomplish the goal of communicating *dialogically*, the dialogue session was to be framed by the context in which it was taking place, as one of the last

steps in the research process. As the facilitator, I planned to briefly review the focus group discussions, the process, as well as some of the emergent themes from the focus group interviews, and explain how the content of those focus group interviews was analyzed and became the content of what was to be discussed in the dialogue session. For the actual dialogue session, I emphasized my role as a guide, to help the group engage and address the issues that emerged in their conversation. Their role as community members was to discuss the issues facing their community using dialogic principles. First, I emphasized the need to be open and honest about one's perspective as well as the need to be open to one another's perspective, even if it is different. Second, I emphasized the importance of active listening amongst the participants in order for them to gain true awareness and understanding of one another's perspectives. Then, I explained the design of the event. The event was designed to have four parts: two parts with dyads or triads (depending on number of participants) engaging in discussion, and then two parts of large group discussions based upon the smaller dyadic/triadic discussions. Participants would get together in dyads or triads to discuss the prompts for the dialogue session then, convene together as a group to discuss. This process would occur twice. The event was designed in this manner in order to encourage the different generations not only to converse and address the discussion points but to first process the issues to be addressed. After this was done, I would be able to hear another generation's and individual community member's perspective and practice some of the principles of dialogic communication in small groups before practicing in a larger group. When the larger group convened together to discuss the talking points of the dyads/triads, I once

again repeated the need for active listening and the necessity of open and honest approach to communicating one's perspective but to also have an attitude of openness towards perspectives different than one's own.

In order to explore the reactions of the participants' small group discussions, I intended for the participants to take time to privately reflect and record their personal thoughts about the questions asked and how they felt about the conversation with their partner(s). During the larger group discussion, after discussing the main issues, I planned to invite those who felt comfortable sharing their thoughts to discuss the process of addressing the small group discussion sessions. My goal in this exercise was to encourage the participants to not only be present but to also honestly explore how the communication moment affected them personally. I questioned them in terms of the following: Did the conversation make them comfortable or uncomfortable? Why? At any point did they agree or disagree with their partner? At any point did they not understand the perspective of their partner? These reflection-based questions were asked after each small group discussion and were designed to gauge a) the subject matter, and b) how the subject matter discussed affected the thoughts and emotions of the participants. The responses and reactions provided me with a better sense of how the questions and the conversations affected the participants and how it influenced the large group dialogue, and ultimately, the position and perspective of each participant.

*Preparing for facilitation.* One of the characteristics, yet challenges, of a dialogic event is the fact that it is "in the moment" communication, and therefore the outcome is unplanned and unpredictable. According to Pearce (2002), the skills of the facilitator are

"crucial" to a meaningful, purposeful outcome and the meaningful experience of the participants (p. 30). It is the responsibility of the facilitator to help create an atmosphere where dialogic communication can take place. In order to do this, there are some distinct skills that the facilitator must practice and model in order to guide the dialogic event.

*Not knowing position.* As the facilitator I needed to adopt the *not knowing position.* I needed to be flexible, not fixed in my expectations for the direction of the discussions as well as the outcome of the whole event. Taking an interpersonal communication course that emphasized dialogic facilitation skills and provided opportunities to practice these skills, helped me become more open to the unpredictable and unplanned nature of the dialogic event.

*Dialogic listening and eliciting stories.* In order to accomplish this goal I knew I needed to verbally and nonverbally let the participants know that I was hearing what they were saying, free from judgment. I also needed to be sure that I made each participant feel "safe" in speaking openly about their position, not allowing myself or other participants interrupt the speaker while speaking or evaluate what the speaker was saying. My responsibility was to allow all voices to be heard, all perspectives to be shared and to encourage understanding. This principle also reaffirmed the role of the research–practitioner in community-based action research as one who is concerned primarily with the well–being of the people and is concerned with the nature and quality of relationships (Stringer, 1996).

*Systemic questioning.* I also needed to consider how the discussion questions would direct the content of the dialogic discussion. Penman (2000) suggests the researcher

rehearse questions and anticipate potential responses and reactions in order to prepare the researcher and equip the researcher with the skills needed to preserve the atmosphere for dialogue. Following Penman's lead, I had to carefully consider not only how to word the discussion questions, but also based upon the participants, I considered potential responses and reactions. Understanding that the questions I would ask the participants would directly relate to the direction and outcome of the dialogue session. I paid careful attention to exactly what issues needed to be addressed and how I would ask the participants to think, explore, and discuss those issues. For example, the issue of multiraciality is a subject that is very real for the community, yet it is a very emotionally charged and weighted issue. The participants would not only be diverse in regards to generational group, but I also knew that some participants either were multiracial or had multiracial children. Approaching this particular issue required sensitivity, yet I considered it an issue that the community needed to address and explore. Drawing on community members' experiences, would make the issue less distant and abstract and instead, make the issue very real and personal. Additionally, for some issues which were regarded or perceived as negative, such as the issue of multiraciality, I wanted to encourage a thorough exploration of all sides of the issue, even exploring how these issues could be perceived positively.

*Appreciative inquiry.* Appreciative inquiry can be a very powerful method in exploring certain topics, especially topics that are very emotionally charged. By approaching the conversation and examining specific issues from a standpoint of respect and the desire to understand and by focusing on those areas that the different groups

share in common, the community would possibly be more open to the challenge of addressing sensitive issues. For example, the Japanese American community is proud of the resilience and success of their parents and grandparents who survived the internment experience. In the focus group discussions, the attitude, perseverance, and endurance of the past generations was admired and revered, particularly by the Sansei. For the dialogue session, I hoped to focus on these values and discuss with the community how these values were still at work and could be drawn upon to address issues, such as preservation, assimilation, and multiraciality, which faced the community.

*Reflecting and reframing back.* As a facilitator, I was challenged to be present in the conversation at all times, being open and not trying to anticipate or control the direction of the conversation in order to accomplish my personal agenda. Thinking quickly, summarizing the conversation, and "reflecting back" in a way that remained true to what was said but promoted more engaged or exploratory discussion was a challenge for me as a facilitator, particularly surrounding those issues that created tension. The careful consideration of framing the dialogue session, framing each discussion question, and even the wording of each discussion question could be put in jeopardy if I was not also careful in considering how I facilitated and reflected back the conversation that was going on. By reflecting and reframing, I hoped to show the community that how they spoke about issues affected the creation of meaning, which would directly affect the way they address, approach, and act regarding community issues. I was also aware of how I, as the facilitator, addressed, approached, and acted in that dialogic moment would affect the whole entire communicative, dialogic session. In order to practice "reflecting back,"

I reverted back to the training in the Interpersonal Communication course as well as rehearsing and anticipating, as Penman (2000) suggested, possible responses and reactions based on the focus group discussions. Most importantly, I needed to remind myself to be open, flexible, and allow the "other", in this case the participants and their responses, to happen to me (Stewart & Zediker, 2000). The Concerns-Visions-Action plans (hereafter CVA model) model proved to be very helpful in not only focusing the dialogue session, but it also served as a point of reference to help guide my facilitation style.

From Preparation to Practice: Engaging in Intergenerational Dialogue

*The Event Unfolds*

The dialogue event was planned to take place in the same room that the focus group discussions took place in order to promote a sense of familiarity and continuity for the conversation. However, the event actually took place in a larger, more open room due to the kind consideration of my contact at Yu Ai Kai who thought that the bigger room would be more convenient and to my liking and therefore allowed another meeting to take place in the room I originally intended to conduct the dialogue session. This was my second lesson as a facilitator to be open and flexible. Planning and preparation can not provide one complete control over circumstances, but it can provide the needed mental preparation to adapt to how events unfold. I set about to arrange the tables and chairs in as much as a circular fashion as possible so all of the participants were facing one another, not only to encourage conversation, but to preserve a sense of openness and honesty essential for dialogic communication. Upon arrival, participants were asked to

sign in and to enjoy the food and beverages that were provided for their comfort and convenience. Participants were then invited to sit down and make themselves comfortable. Again, to promote and encourage openness and a sense of familiarity, I asked the participants to briefly introduce themselves with their name and their generation. Some of the participants were acquainted and familiar with one another due to their connection to Yu Ai Kai, Japantown San Jose, or one of the focus groups, and others were not. Name tags were also worn by the participants and participants were asked to refer to one another by name when conversing with one another or responding to one another during the event to further encourage familiarity. The use of names was also a strategic tool to serve as a subtle reminder to all participants of the humanness of the others to whom they speak; that their fellow participants were also members of the same community that they all cared about and were concerned about as exhibited by their enthusiastic participation. My desire was to highlight the necessity and importance of respecting one another's perspectives.

After the introduction, participants were asked to split up into smaller groups of either a dyad or triad to discuss the dialogue discussion questions before meeting together again as a larger group. Participants would meet together in the dyads/triad twice, each small group conversation preceding two large group dialogues. Each dyad/triad met for 20 minutes before all participants convened together for two 20 minute dialogue sessions. The first dyad/triad meeting and dialogue addressed the issues or topics that the generations seemed to share. The second dyad/triad meeting and dialogue addressed the more intense topics or points of tension that surfaced during the focus group

conversations. The dialogue session concluded with a reflection and discussion of the evening's events and the research study as a whole process.

*Framing the dialogue session.* Dialogic researcher practitioner Penman (2000) stresses the importance of how the research practitioner *frames* the event for this influences the perception of the participants regarding the topic, the issues involved, the significance of the event, and their role as part of the research process. Additionally, it had been sometime since some of the participants were involved in the study with the focus group discussions. I thought it necessary to review who I was, what my thesis was about, and why I had originally undertaken the study, as well as how it had evolved based on the research. My intention was to state not only my academic interest in the research but also my personal interest as a member of that particular community. By sharing my personal interest and investment into the research and my desire to assist and give to the community, I tried to stay true to the goals of community-based action research that requires personal commitment and involvement in the research process.

Additionally, I wanted to provide the participants with a sense of progression of how the focus group conversations led to and informed the content of the dialogue session. According to Stringer (1996), my role was a *catalyst* - as the researcher/facilitator my job was to inspire and encourage mobilization and productivity. I wanted the participants to know that their time and energy mattered, that they were active members and contributors to not only the research, but toward the community. In order to achieve this I shared some of the common themes and points of tension that emerged from the focus group discussions and how those issues would provide the basis

of the dialogue session. Then, I explained the agenda for the evening, the rationale

behind first discussing the discussion questions in smaller groups before convening

together to discuss the issues as a larger group, as well the importance of reflecting and

recording their thoughts as a part of the whole research process.

*Framing the content.* Results from the preliminary focus group interviews

revealed the differing perceptions and misconceptions the different generations held

towards one another. These perceptions influenced how the generations communicated

and interacted with one another. These perceptions also influenced the expectations the

generations held for one another. Perceptions of the older generation in the Japanese

American community towards the younger generation were largely negative. This

negative perception was largely based on the perceived degree of assimilation and

acceptance of Western cultural values and norms by the younger generation. The older

generation interpreted the acceptance of Western cultural values and norms as

confirmation of the younger generation's assimilation into Western culture and lack of

interest in Japanese American culture. The younger generation recognized the existence

of cultural differences between themselves and the previous two to three generations due

to the effects of assimilation and acceptance of Western values and norms, yet some

perceived this as validation of their identity as Japanese American. Others expressed the

conflict of their own identity. The multiraciality of many of the fourth and fifth (Yonsei

and Gosei, respectively) generations of the Japanese American community emerged as a

significant contributing factor to the increased acceptance of and assimilation into the

mainstream Western culture. I set out to frame the dialogue session as an examination

and exploration of these generational differences as well as the cultural differences that were present, either explicitly or implicitly expressed, between the different generations: the older, more traditionally Japanese Nisei and older Sansei, and the younger, more assimilated Sansei, Yonsei and hapa Japanese Americans.

The concerns regarding Japantown San Jose's future and the preservation of the Japanese American culture were shared by the older generations as well as the younger generations, by those who were full blooded Japanese Americans and those who were hapa Japanese American. My desire was for the different generations to realize what they held in common, how their visions could be in common, that the unity would overcome the differences and that the community would come together and find workable, practical solutions to help the community at large.

The content for the dialogue session was framed and organized according to the CVA model that stands for the transactional and reflexive nature of communication, more specifically communication regarding concerns, visions, and action plans. The CVA model enables members of a community to see the relationship between their concerns, how that shapes their visions for the community, and how that practically influences their plans to address the concerns and achieve the vision. As I explained the discussion questions, I highlighted how these questions surfaced during the analysis of the focus group conversations. The first set of discussion questions addressed those issues that the different generational groups held in common. As discussed in the Method section (chapter 2), the first set of discussion points was intended to establish common ground in

order to emphasize what the community *shared*, those areas that unified them regardless

of generational group or ethnic or cultural make-up. Those questions touched on:

- How being Japanese American influenced one's life and how they "lived" and experienced this identity

- Why Japantown San Jose should be preserved and how

- What cultural traditions and customs should be preserved to carry on Japanese heritage

The first set of discussion points also served to prepare for the discussion of the second

set of discussion questions. The second set of discussion questions touched on those

issues that were more controversial and unsettling for some members of the community.

Before plunging into a discussion of some of the more emotionally charged issues that

arose from the focus group conversations, I wanted to provide a sense of common ground

to serve as a foundation for addressing the points of tension. Some of the "hot" topics

included:

- Who is included as "Japanese American" and how Japanese Americanness is defined

- Perceptions of the impact assimilation and multiraciality has on the community

- How to peak the interest and gain the involvement of the younger generations

Before handing out the first set of discussion questions, I reviewed the basic principles of

dialogic communication as a framework for the conversations that were to take place that

evening in both the small group discussions and the large group dialogue, emphasizing

the importance of openness and listening to the other. Participants were then dismissed

to their dyads and triads. The dyadic conversations are included in the dialogue session

process for they served as a preparation step. The intent of the dyadic discussions was to

help promote the principles of dialogic communication as well as provide an opportunity

for reflection and consideration. My hope was that the dyadic discussions would serve as

a smooth transition step into dialogic communication about important and deep issues.

*Dyadic Discussions*

Before dismissing the participants into dyads and triads, I handed out the

discussion and reflection questions. For each small group discussion time, participants

were asked to reflect upon and record their own personal thoughts about the discussion

questions before leaving and splitting up into their small groups and engaging in

discussion. They were also asked to do the same thing before the dialogue session.

Reflection questions and additional space for the participants to record their thoughts

were on the back of the discussion question sheet. Since open and honest communication

was desired and the discussion questions were intentionally meant to provoke thought

and consideration, I thought it important for each generation to have the opportunity to

consider and have the ability to articulate their own position, opinion, or thoughts about

the issues before commencing in a small group (and large group) discussion.

Additionally, I wanted to be able to gauge the comfort level of the participants regarding

the discussion of some of the issues.

In order to encourage intergenerational communication, I tried to arrange for a participant of a younger generation to be grouped with a participant of an older generation in each dyad or triad. I also hoped that this communication across generations within the smaller groups would prove to reveal and challenge each generation's perspectives and perceptions, not only of the issues being discussed, but also of one another. Due to the participants involved, one dyad ended up with two Niseis.

Additional rooms and additional space within the room where the dialogue session took place were provided for the dyads and triads to meet together for discussion. Two dyads and one triad met together in different areas of the larger room where the large dialogue session took place. Three other dyads met in three other rooms for discussion. As facilitator and researcher, I toured and observed each small group. In order to capture each smaller group's conversations, I brought along a research partner to help me record vignettes of the conversations for analysis of content as well as the effectiveness of the process.

*Setting Up and Concluding the Dialogue Session*

After each dyad/triad had some time to discuss the questions provided and record their own thoughts about it, all of the participants reconvened in the main room to have a dialogue. The majority of each dialogue session addressed the discussion questions, however, I reserved some time as the conversations concluded for the participants to share their thoughts about what was just discussed. I wanted to provide the participants the opportunity to voice any thoughts, concerns, or feelings of discomfort and if necessary, discuss together as a group.

In conclusion to the whole dialogue session, there was a brief discussion about steps forward for the community-based on what was talked about in the dialogue session. The event concluded with a very brief review of the issues addressed in the dialogue session and with my expression of gratitude to all the participants. Participants were then asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding the effectiveness of the dialogue session to be used as a tool of measurement in which to assess whether or not dialogue took place.

## Analyzing the Dialogue Session

One of the challenges of public dialogue is being able to preserve the raw, organic nature of dialogue while remaining focused and clear on the direction and purpose of the dialogue session. This is especially challenging with a large group of people who are not experienced in communicating using dialogic principles. According to Stewart and Zediker (2000) the practice of dialogue can be either enhanced or obstructed due to many circumstances – within and without. "Time available, exigencies of space, the presence or absence of an audience, role definitions, and cultural norms" are all potential enhancers or inhibitors to dialogue (Stewart & Zediker, 2000, p. 230). The fact that dialogue occurs reveals, as Stewart and Zediker remind us, its emergent quality (2000, p. 230). The planned dialogue session was the forum where theory met practice.

*Analysis of Introduction and Overview of Dialogue Session*

My review and analysis of the dialogue session recording exposes the lengthiness of the introduction. On the one hand, the introduction was very friendly in tone and seemed to put the participants at ease. On the other hand, the introduction and review of the research study should have been more succinct and focused for the sake of

maintaining the participant's attention. The verbosity of my introduction may have distracted the group away from listening, particularly to the directions for the small group discussions. Additionally, it took valuable time away (approximately 10–15 minutes) from the small group discussions and the large group dialogue, the implications of which are discussed shortly.

*Analysis of Dyadic Conversations*

Initially, the dyadic conversations seemed a bit awkward. Answers were short and straight forward with little disclosure or exploration of the discussion prompts. The second round of dyadic conversations went much more smoothly with participants immediately diving into discussion. Familiarity with one another and the event process could be what contributed to the energy and depth of discussion for the second round of prompts. Participants seemed to become more comfortable with one another about half – way through the first dyadic conversations which led to more personal disclosure of stories and experiences. Overall, the dyadic conversations seemed to help encourage a level of vulnerability in the participants. I noticed the most vulnerability, manifested through the level of personal disclosure, in the female participants and those of the younger generation Sansei and Yonsei. Two male Nisei participants who were partnered together related in the dialogue session how they had so much in common because of their generation, yet when I observed their dyadic conversations (at different intervals) they said very little to one another and only glossed over the discussion prompts. The following is the reaction of the two Nisei participants to my presence:

"A": *(murmuring 3rd prompt)*

"B": laughing

"A": (*singing*) I come from Alabama, my banjo on my knee.

*Both laughing* (Dialogue, p. 6).

These are the same two Niseis, discussed in the next section, who expressed in the first dialogue session (following the first round of dyadic conversations) their difficulty in recalling memories of their past. This levity exhibited by these two Niseis could be indicative of many things. It could be a reflection of the communication patterns of their generation, the "silent generation," a description that refers to their discomfort in discussing issues that evoke certain memories or feelings.

Based on the video recorded excerpts and feedback from research partner, it is important to note that the conversations that took place with my presence were significantly richer in content and more focused. There are many potential explanations for this. One explanation is my encouragement, elaboration, or clarification of the instructions or of the purpose of the discussion question. Some participants needed more explanation or prompting to begin discussing their own perspective. This need for prompting could be due to a lack of interest on the part of the participants, insufficient time to thoughtfully thoroughly consider the questions, or the vagueness of the discussion questions. Or, it could be due to the effectiveness of the discussion questions. For example, the two Nisei's mentioned previously. They were struggling over one of the discussion questions that explored how their Japanese American identity influenced who they were today. When asked about the struggle, both admitted how it was hard to

discuss this because they did not want to remember or trigger the emotions that were involved in remembering. For example, participants expressed the following:

"A": Well, it's hard.

Fac: It's hard? How so? What do you mean?

"A": Well, I don't want to remember, you know? I try not to remember. It's hurtful and I get angry and bitter. I mean, it's because I'm Japanese American that I was discriminated against...even though I was an American.

"B": Hmmm. Yeah. (Dialogue session, p. 3)

In these participants' reflections, they both expressed feeling the tension of feeling at ease and comfortable talking about that question while at the same time it was difficult to discuss. Reflecting upon that particular dyad, I wish I had grouped those two Niseis with those of a much younger generation and age group. Those two Niseis' experience and perspective coupled with those of the younger generation may have proved to be very insightful, valuable, and even inspiring to all included in the conversation. That moment further affirmed the value and the need for more intergenerational communicative moments to occur. The written reflections proved to be very valuable in relating how the participants perceived the whole dyadic communication process.

*Participant Written Reflections of Dyadic Conversations*

In their written reflections, some participants expressed how insightful it was to hear the perspectives of the younger or older generation. The reflections by a couple of the female participants described the experience as "talking with an older aunt" or "talking with my granddaughter" which seems to reflect the comfortable and intimate

environment that can be created in one-to-one communication (and perhaps the strong familial ties embedded in the Japanese American community). Many of the reflections attributed the high comfort level in openly expressing themselves to their peers to their familiarity with their co-participants.

This intimacy that comes with a smaller audience could also explain the richness and openness of the conversation that existed in the dyads/triad. For instance, in the second dyad/triad meetings, two participants were discussing how multiraciality will impact the community. The older Sansei (though Sansei by generation but whose contemporaries are Nisei), strongly expressed to the younger Sansei how multiraciality will lead to the demise of the Japanese American community. One of these Sansei was also skeptical regarding the interest of the younger generations, hapa or full Japanese American, in their culture.

"A": You don't think they are interested?

"B": Are they interested? They don't seem interested. I mean my grandkids they are mixed and they don't care. I mean, you know, third, fourth they don't seem interested and fifth? The fifth, well, Hmpf! I mean, what are they...1/8 Japanese? They're not Japanese American (Dialogue session, p. 14).

This conversation had the potential to be a very thought provoking and valuable conversation for the rest of participants. The issue of multiraciality and the younger generation's interest in the community was definitely addressed in the dialogue session with openness but these thoughts and feelings revealed in the dyadic conversation were

not given the opportunity to be fully expressed in the larger group dialogue. One example of this is in the following excerpt from the larger dialogue session:

> Fac: What ideas or opinions do you all have to get the younger generations to be involved?
>
> "B": Do they want to?
>
> "C": Well, you have to make it interesting and have different activities so that –
>
> "D": Like Sake San Jose, that brought out a different generational group (Dialogue session, p. 15).

Here the same participant who expressed a definite opinion within the dyad did not express his full opinion in the larger group dialogue. He did not necessarily have the opportunity to express himself fully due to his open-ended question and the responses of the other participants. This is an example of the spontaneity and emergent aspect of dialogic communication. You do not know nor have complete control over where the conversation may go.

Although all of the opinions, thoughts, and perspectives in the dyadic and triadic conversations did not get to be fully expressed in the dialogue session, I think the time was valuable. It provided an opportunity for the participants to first, consider their own perspectives and positions on the issues; secondly, it provided an initial opportunity that was more intimate and less intimidating for people to express these perspectives and positions, and thirdly, it provided an opportunity for the generations to make contact and converse with another about these significant issues.

*Importance of a Skilled Facilitator in the Dyads and Triad*

The situation with the two Niseis and the two Sanseis also reinforced the importance of a skilled facilitator. My role as a facilitator served to either enhance or inhibit dialogue from taking place. Reviewing my interaction and communication with participants in the dyads and the triad, I served mostly as an enhancer, encouraging responses, eliciting reactions, drawing out more disclosure from the discussion questions. However, I could also see how I served as an inhibitor, sometimes inadvertently causing the participants to fall into tangents or draw away from the conversation due to my questions. In one case in particular, one Nisei and Sansei were discussing how their Japanese American culture is reflected in their life. The two of them were discussing marriage and the many cultural considerations, both old and derivative of Japan, and new considerations formed from American influence. Their discussion explored how the two collided, combined, are different and yet the same. Due to my ignorance of cultural values and norms regarding marriage, especially those of Japan, my questions of clarification and curiosity drew the participants away from their initial conversation on the topic, a topic that they were both knowledgeable about.

*Group Dialogue Session Analysis*

As mentioned in the previous section, the dialogue session addressed many issues; Most of the discussions that took place within the dyads and triad were far more intensive and focused in addressing the discussion questions. Responses were rich with cultural experience and personal reflection. Pearce and Pearce (2004) assert that if the right conditions exist, conditions where the "participants feel respected and confident that their

interests will be protected, they often welcome the opportunity to speak more fully than usual about the things that matter most to them..." (p. 47). This seemed to be the case in most of the small group discussions. That is not to say that participant responses in the dialogue session lacked richness. Time was precious and limited, therefore not providing the needed freedom for the participants to have the opportunity to fully disclose personal experience or reflection. I often found myself struggling with encouraging more conversation on a specific issue and needing to move on to the next issue because of time constraints.

*Facilitation in the dialogue session.* The experience of facilitating the dialogue session impressed upon me the importance of the skilled facilitator in dialogic communication. As a facilitator I committed a misstep as the dyads prepared to reconvene and discuss the second set of discussion questions. Due to the time constraints, I asked the participants to focus on the last two questions and to dismiss the first question that addressed the definition of who is Japanese American. Reviewing the transcript and participant reflections, this proved to be a mistake. The question of who is Japanese American, who is included in that definition, was a topic discussed by most of the dyads in the first dyadic meeting and in the second meeting. The content of these conversations revealed and exposed many perceptions regarding cultural identity, how it is defined and who is included in the Japanese American community. For example, examining the dyadic conversation between participants "A" and "B" regarding interest of the younger generation, their conversation reveals one's perspective of who is Japanese American.

"A": Yeah. So, I – if you wanna talk about, I mean, I'm not Japanese. I mean

you can put out different...faces...yeah. I don't think I'm a Japanese American.

You know? I could never be Japanese.

*Laughing*

Fac: Write that down then.

"A": I'm not Japanese. I'd be fooling myself and I'd be fooling others, but I'm

more American. I think I'm more American...you know I think I'm more – I see

- you know the banana thing – yellow skin with the white inside, you know?

That's what I am.

*Both* [participants] *laugh*

Fac: I thought that was Japanese American, though?

"A": Yeah, but...yeah I know but, but they expect me to be very Japanese and all

that, you know. Martial art champion, you know? (*makes a face , what?!?*) And

um, yeah, I appreciate everything – I know all about American and...then that's it.

I go to American movies, American plays, I eat American food, of course, once

and a while I want to show my Japanese and go eat Japanese food...(Dialogue

session, p. 5).

In this conversation, "A" seemed to be identifying more with his American cultural

identity and slighting his Japanese ethnicity. Yet, in the conversation about the

community's preservation, he seemed to be critical of the younger generation interest and

identity that is tending to be more and more multiracial. He stated, "The fifth, well,

Hmpf! I mean, what are they...1/8 Japanese? They're not Japanese American" (Dialogue

session, p. 14). "A"s' rejection of his Japanese side yet skepticism of those who are more multiracial Japanese American reflects the perspective of some of the Niseis and some older Sansei, as well as the tension that exists in the community regarding Japanese American identity. "A"s' hesitance to identify himself as Japanese American could be in response to the post-internment era when many Japanese Americans felt that they had to prove their loyalty to America and that they were really American in heart and practice. As Gil Asakawa (2004) reminds us, in the postwar period, "[Japanese Americans] seemed to not want to bring any attention to themselves and endeavored only to be good, if quiet, Americans. Many Nisei parents raised their Sansei children in an entirely American environment, in some cases even forbidding the use of Japanese even at home" (p. 18).

A discussion with the larger group about "A"s' thoughts and what considerations are involved in the process of definition (such as culture, ethnicity, history, lifestyle, or interest), in the larger group dialogue would have been very enlightening. Addressing how Japanese American is defined and who is included in that definition in the large group dialogue session would have also enriched the conversation exploring the interest of the younger generation as well as the multiracial identity of the younger generations.

As a facilitator, this was a valuable lesson in the huge responsibility that is laid upon the facilitator as a guide and catalyst. It also revealed the tension that I experienced in my role as facilitator as researcher and a member of the community. Penman (2000) points out that in research in dialogue "it is in communicating that research is taking place" (p. 103). The limited time and my interest in the issue of multiraciality influenced

my decision to disregard the first question addressing the definition of Japanese American in the second set of discussion questions. My behavior as facilitator, the guide and catalyst of the conversation, compromised the opportunity for true dialogue about the issue to take place. I was to be proactively neutral, or attempt to, as Spano (2006) describes, "willing suspend a particular point of view" that would expose my bias on certain topics (p. 30). This neutrality does not mean I was to be passive but rather that I was to be open to all viewpoints so that all the different voices could be heard. Again, as Spano (2006) explains, "facilitators are not against anybody or any view but are for everybody and all views" (p. 30). As a co-participant and member of the community, I found myself struggling to not force or impose my own agenda and remain open not only to hear the many voices that spoke, but to hear the voices that would have spoken on an issue had they been given the opportunity. The incident makes me wonder how the dialogue would have been different if I had allowed events to unfold more naturally and spontaneously.

*Dialogue as a communicative practice.* Dialogue is a communicative ideal (Stewart & Zediker, 2000), a notion that will be discussed later on in this section, and moment-by-moment engagement in dialogue gets one step closer to attaining this ideal. In examining the dialogue session, it is valuable to look at the dialogical moments and how with more practice those moments will develop into patterns, and eventually a way of communicating.

Did dialogue happen? My answer is yes and no. Dialogic communication I believe did occur, yet not consistently. There is a difference between dialogical moments

and sustained dialogue. Dialogue as a communicative practice is not the traditional way of communicating where communication and meaning are understood as more transmissive rather than co-created or emergent. Traditional understanding of communication follows the transmission model where two or more parties are involved, someone speaks and another responds. Dialogue resembles more of a constructive model of communication, where meaning emerges and is co-created by all involved in the communication moment. Spano (2005) and his colleagues recognize the challenges of dialogue when participants are more familiar and more inclined to engage in non-dialogic forms of communication (i.e., hierarchical or debate-like communication styles). However, that is not to say that dialogue did not occur at all. What did occur is what Stewart and Zediker (2000) describe as "the occurrence of dialogue in moments" (p. 231).

*Dialogical moments.* Dialogic communication is a *practice,* a way of communicating that is learned and exists by remaining in *tension.* The dialogue session in many ways seemed more like a discussion of ideas and stories more than a dialogue, however, there were moments where I think dialogue "happened". Stewart and Zediker (2000) acknowledge that participants engaging in dialogue are "negotiating moment-by-moment" (p. 231), they are learning and practicing simultaneously. Therefore, sustained, consistent dialogue is unrealistic at this point in time. For example, when participants addressed the issue of multiraciality, an issue that is considered controversial and divisive, the dialogic tension of being open to the other while holding one's ground seemed to be at work:

"A": Well, when Gil Asakawa was here he was um, basically asked the same question and he said that the multiracial Japanese Americans seem to uh, speak up and represent Japanese American culture more than those who are uh, full.

"B": "C", tell us about what you told me about your family

"C": Well, I uh, think its individual. I mean, um, because my son is Japanese and he uh, married a, a White girl and they love Japanese stuff. And their kids are really into the culture. And then, there is my uh, other son, who is uh, Japanese and he married a girl who is uh, uh, Japanese and they...*(hands go up in the air, shrug)* they don't care. So, I think its individual.

"D": I think it's a generational thing. I think the younger generation and the mixed are searching for their roots, you know? I mean, I'm not sure, but I am a lot younger than most of you. *(laughing)*

*Laughing*

"D": I'm not sure, I'm just guessing. But, um, you know, the Issei came and they had to work hard...and the Nisei and Sansei worked hard to be successful...I'm from the spoon fed generation...I was handed a lot...I think we have so much time on our hands we have the time to ask "who are we"? (Dialogue session, p. 18).

This conversation included one Nisei, two Sansei, and one hapa Yonsei. Knowing the positions and perspectives of these participants based on their involvement in the focus groups and their conversations in the dyads, I was aware of the different perspectives

they all held about the issue, yet the communication that took place reflected an openness to hearing the other's thoughts and opinions about an issue that had the potential to be very emotionally charged. The participants had a freedom to share their own thoughts and experiences about identity and multiraciality. There were no responses or comments that took away from the atmosphere of openness and the atmosphere remained congenial as the discussion continued. Although the participants did not specifically comment about how this issue was talked about, perhaps the way the issue was talked about provided new insights into how multiraciality impacts the community.

*Intergenerational dialogical moments.* One of the main reasons this study was launched was to explore the perceptions held by the older Japanese Americans (Nisei and older Sansei) regarding the lack of interest of the younger generations in the Japanese American community. One of the main goals of the dialogue session was to not only provide a forum for intergenerational dialogue, but to also clarify the perceptions of each generational group held toward one another. In the dialogue session, the issue of interest was addressed:

"A": Are they [the younger generations] interested?

"B": I think that (*in aud)* to be involved.

"A": Do they want to?

"C": I think so.

"D": Yeah, I think so.

"A": I don't know.

"C": Well, I mean, like I was saying, you know. My generation is searching for our roots. So, yes we want to be involved but –

"E": Life is so busy.

"C": Yeah, but you also have to make it interesting. Have different activities.

"F": Sake San Jose seems to bring out different generations (Dialogue, p. 22)

In this moment, the perception participant "A", one of the older Sansei, held of the younger generation was challenged by the position of participant "C" who was hapa Yonsei. Participant "C"'s story and experience was heard by all of the other generations present. To further the conversation, as facilitator, I revealed some of the thoughts and opinions held by those in focus group six (the younger and mixed focus group) regarding the preservation of the Japanese American community and Japantown. Their thoughts were not dissimilar from those of participant "C". They wanted the community to endure and hoped Japantown would be preserved so they would have someplace to take their families and teach them about their culture. The conversations that followed addressed the many different ways the community could promote interest for the younger generations to be more involved.

"G": The churches [Buddhist and Methodist] promote a lot of activities.

"H": There is Yu Ai Kai too.

"A": What? Like bonsai tree trimming?

*Laughing*

"I": I think that is more for the older generation.

"J": There is CYS [Japantown youth basketball league].

"C": If you want us [younger generation] to get involved you need a good club or

bar or something. Maybe promote Japanese American D.J.'s? (Dialogue session,

pp. 22-23)

At one point, someone mentioned how the community's youth basketball league is

growing, however, to become a part of the league, players had to be at least 1/8 Japanese.

Referring to how the community will have to adapt to the multiracial Japanese

Americans, the response of one of the participants was: "Well, they're gonna have to

change. If they want to continue, they're gonna have to change" (Dialogue, p. 23).

Intergenerational communication took place and in the process new understandings

emerged regarding interest of the younger generation and multiraciality. While

collaborating together to come up with possible solutions to engage the interest of the

younger generation, the participants simultaneously addressed how the community will

have to change in order to allow for young hapa Japanese Americans. This is an example

of how dialogue can inspire mutual cooperation as well as change, or at least an openness

to change.

*More lessons in facilitation.* There were also moments that were not dialogical

moments, but rather learning moments, for the facilitator more so than the participants.

Spano (2006) and his colleagues acknowledge that even dialogic communication at times

"requires an engagement with and responsiveness to non-dialogic patterns of

communication" (p. 27). In order to engage and respond to non-dialogic communication,

they offer two suggestions: 1) teaching and modeling dialogic practices, and 2) strategic

planning and designing for the process and event (p. 29). Both of these suggestions are responsibilities placed upon the facilitator.

My behavior as facilitator served as either an enhancer or blocker of dialogue. Throughout the research process, during the focus groups and the dialogue session, I attempted to model and to teach dialogic communication practices. Yet, review and analysis of the dialogue session exposed my inexperience at facilitation and the need for more growth. Kim Pearce (2002) of the Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC) wrote a training manual on facilitation of dialogic communication. She emphasizes the importance of knowing who we are from all of our experiences, our desires, strengths, weaknesses, and fears, and how that knowledge influences how we facilitate. I answered the questions in her training manual for the purpose of knowing my strengths and weaknesses in order to provide insight into how my personality and communication patterns and perspectives would affect my ability to facilitate. Based on the questionnaire, two areas that indicated improvement were the areas of attentive listening and engaging the other through systemic questioning. In the actual dialogue session, one of those areas improved, yet at the expense of the others.

Listening enables us to hear and seek to understand the position and perspective of the other. It is a part of the process of allowing the "other to happen to me" (Stewart & Zediker, 2000, p. 237). I noticed an improvement in my listening skills, however, the evidence of this improvement is hard to perceive for it was not displayed through enough systemic questioning nor effective reframing and reflecting back. Systemic questioning is a technique that facilitators use to elicit the stories and

experiences of the participants and reveal the connections and relationships between all of the various perspectives (Spano, 2006). Reflecting and reframing is another technique used to reveal and foster understanding emphasizing the co-creation of meaning that is taking place within the group (Spano, 2006). Reflecting usually looks like attentively listening to all of the voices and the facilitator sharing what s/he heard and reflecting back his/her understanding of what was said. Reframing is taking reflection one step further. Reframing takes what is said in the group and recontextualizes it by suggesting and presenting new possibilities for understanding (Spano, 2006). Working together, these techniques help the group participant's understand the other perspectives in new ways and perhaps build toward collaborative relationships, solutions, and possibilities.

There were many instances in both dialogue sessions where the use of systemic questioning, reflecting and reframing would have encouraged more dialogue. As facilitator, I gave the participants too much control of the conversation and not enough guidance. Erring on the side of caution and realizing my lack of listening skills, I gave up too much control leaving too much room for the participants to take over. In the first dialogue session, the issue of identity negotiation arose, identity negotiation between being Japanese and American.

"A": When they – when they had Pearl Harbor they treated us, they treated us like Japanese.

"B": Yeah, yeah, but it was ignorance on their part too.

"A": I got discriminated against. So, I was very bitter.

"B": Yeah, but sometimes you know, during war time – who are you rooting for?

"A": Well, you know I was just a kid so –

"B": Yeah, I know but when you see those movies, like 37 Lower Tokyo [?],

who were you rooting for then?

"A": Well, I was rooting for the uh, uh –

"B": The American's right?

"A": Yeah.

"B": You know with the aircraft carrier and everything. Yeah. John Wayne.

What about that?

"A": Or the sands of Iwo Jima. I thought that was sad b/c he got killed.

*Laughing*

"B": So, there you go. You're American. (Dialogue session, p. 11)

Dialogue is a power equalizer (Anderson, Hammond, & Cissna, 2003; Gurevitch, 1989)

where all participants have a stake in the conversation. In the absence of dialogue,

participants fall into the categories of those who hold power and those who are

powerless. This exchange reveals the tension that exists in dialogic communication, in

this case the imbalance of the dialogic tension of openness to the other but holding one's

ground, as well as the tension the facilitator holds as a guide. Participant "A" did not

have the opportunity to complete his thoughts or fully relate his experience – a personal

experience that could have enriched the conversation and led to new insights about

cultural identity and its impact on the community. Participant "B's" voice became louder

than that of participant "A". The surprise of mutuality was suppressed by overwhelming

monovocality thus, stifling any opportunity for mutual understanding or creation of meaning.

The use of systemic questioning could have given participant "A" more of an opportunity to fully express his position about his own experience. Systemic questioning would have encouraged more perspectives to be expressed thus suppressing monovocality instead of mutuality. As Saunder's (1999) points out "inherent to dialogue is the potential for growth, change, movement, and direction. As individuals incorporate others' views into their pictures of a situation, their perspectives are enlarged" (pp. 83-84). For example, I could have asked participant "A" to elaborate on his feelings or share an experience that contributed to his thoughts, or I could have inquired how "rooting for America" yet being treated as the enemy made him feel or shaped his experience. Probing and inquiring into his personal story may have proved insightful to participant "B" as well as the rest of the group, not only to how participant "A" felt about his Japanese American identity, but also insight to the rationale behind those feelings. This example further reinforces the notion of the importance of a skilled facilitator in dialogic communication. I needed to be more present in that moment so I could help enhance that dialogical moment by challenging the monovocality and invite the introduction or the chorus of more voices. Instead, it seems as though a dialogical moment slipped away.

Although the participants and I discussed and addressed many of the pertinent issues facing the community, I fell short of taking the conversations to the place where the monovocality of the older generation could be challenged. The pervading, negative, even cynical or indifferent perspective held by many of the older generations, and even

some of the Sanseis, regarding the future generations and the future of the culture seemed to limit or at least bar creative discussion that could have given insights in addressing the issues involved with the concerns of the future. Reflecting upon the dialogue session I realized that I held an expectation for the participants to engage in the tension of their differences. I realized my desire for the various generations to hear, listen, and be introduced to a different perspective, the perspective of the younger generation. Additionally, I not only wanted the perspective of the younger generation to be introduced, I also wanted the recognition that this perspective is not only shaped by age, but by culture – the multiracial Japanese American's culture. My inexperience as a facilitator coupled with the fact that the hapa contingent consisted of me and only one other participant, contributed to the lack of engagement and exploration of other voices. Instead of challenging the monovocality, the monovocality was reinforced. The surprise of mutuality was not given an opportunity to voice itself.

My inexperience was revealed during another occasion when the issue of Japanese American identity negotiation emerged again. This moment could have been an excellent opportunity to explore Japanese American culture, how it is defined, and understood generation to generation. The conversation had moved toward characteristics that distinguish Japanese from Japanese American. One participant was recounting an experience from her recent trip to Japan. The bathrooms in Japan are different than those in the United States so when she went to ask where the bathrooms were located she also inquired about where a Western bathroom was located.

"A": Yeah, like when I went to Japan like, I don't know, last month, you know I don't like to use those Japanese toilets. The ones on the floor.

*Laughing*

"A": So, I asked this young girl, I told her I wanted a Western toilet, is there one in there? So, she went to one of the stalls and opened it and I go, 'Uh-uh'. And she gave me this look –

*Laughing*

"A": So she goes – she went back to where [X] was and she was laughing away. She says, 'There was this woman. She has a Japanese face but she talks funny'.

*Laughing*

(Dialogue session, p. 10-11).

From there the conversation turned into an inquiry of how the West is influencing Japan (one bathroom at a time) which went on longer than I should have allowed. If I had been more present in the moment, through the process of reflection and reframing, the group could have embarked on an exploration of "what is it to be Japanese American?" "What characterizes Japanese American culture"? A conversation and examination of culture and whether it is embodied, particularly in how one looks, or performed could have led to an opportunity for the hapa voice to be heard. Instead, a potential, valuable dialogic moment was lost. The conversation that did occur was very congenial. Participants seemed to be attending to what one another was saying, but the subject had no bearing on the purpose of dialogue session. Eventually, I was able to regain my footing and attempted to draw the conversations back to the issue at hand. Yet, my attempt to reflect

and reframe was cut short due to time. Instead, its tone sounded less like a reframing of the issue and more of a "telling" of the issue. Upon review of that moment, it seemed as though I was telling the participants what I heard, but in the way a lecturer speaks to students, rather than a facilitator trying to encourage understanding or invite the inclusion of other voices and perspectives.

My lack of experience in facilitation, particularly facilitation using dialogical communication principles, definitely played a role in the final outcome of the dialogue session. Some of the goals or desired outcomes of the dialogue session were for the different generations to have a better understanding for one another, to see their commonalities and differences, and to see how these commonalities and differences can work together to address the issues of preserving their culture and community. Although I think dialogical moments occurred and sustained dialogue is possible for future community discussions, I am acutely aware of the part I played in the process of *this* dialogue session; how I may have influenced the content discussed and direction of the conversation and my ability to help the participants engage in dialogue in terms of engaging in the tension, exploring the issues, and being open to one another. The dialogue session was a stepping stone for that journey. However, the perception of the participants was more optimistic and encouraging than my assessment. Their perception's of the process and content gives me hope that this study did benefit the community.

*Questionnaire Results*

The participant questionnaires at the end of the dialogue session provide insight into how the dialogue session was perceived by the participants. These questionnaires contained five questions asking the participants to rate certain qualities of the dialogue session on a scale of one to five, one measuring the least or lack of, and five measuring the most or very much so (see Appendix C). Questions addressed comfort level of participants, ability for full expression of thoughts and opinions, perception of opinions being heard and valued by others, relevance of the issues discussed, and perception of effectiveness of the dialogue session. Space was provided for participants to add comments regarding any one of these areas.

*Perceptions regarding openness and comfort.* The first three questions focused on respondent's perception regarding their own subjective experience. The last two questions addressed the process of dialogue. In regard to comfort level of the participants during the dialogue session, the majority of answers were measured either four or five. Sixty-nine percent of the participants responded as very comfortable (five). Those participants who commented about their comfort reasoned that they knew the other participants. Eighty-three percent of participants responded high as being able to express their thoughts and opinions with 60% of those responses were rated as very able to fully express themselves. Those that commented about the ability of full expression addressed how the lack of time contributed to their ability to fully express their thoughts and opinions. One participant commented about his or her slow response contributing to his or her ability to fully express himself or herself, however, time could still have played a

factor. Ninety-two percent of respondents considered that their opinions were very much heard and valued.

*Perception of effectiveness of dialogue session.* All of the participants considered the topics that were discussed were relevant with 66% responding the topics discussed were very relevant. Additionally, all the participants thought the dialogue session was effective with 58% of those participants responding as very effective. One participant responded that at times the discussion went off topic, but the discussion always remained interesting. Based on the responses to the questionnaire, the participants seemed to perceive the dialogue session as effective. All of the assessment questions ranged from three to five, the majority of responses measuring four or five indicating the positive perceptions of the participants to the whole process. Additionally, based on their responses it seems as though the dialogue session addressed relevant, important issues that face the community. As one participant commented, "It made me think!" Another participant suggested that I continue this research with more participants from the community and even expand my research to the rest of San Jose and the Bay Area. He expressed interest and curiosity in knowing what other Japanese Americans thought about the issues and concerns discussed in the dialogue session.

Impact of Dialogue Session

It is refreshing and encouraging to know that the participants perceived the dialogic session to be effective and successful. However, as the research practitioner, my evaluation of the effectiveness and success is grounded upon the theoretical principles the dialogue session was based upon as well as the specific outcomes of the session.

*Action Research and Practical Outcomes*

Spano (2001) points out that one of the keystones of action research and one of the characteristics that makes it such a valuable research perspective is the production of practical outcomes. Community-based action research includes the community and group into the research process and "seeks to engage people in formulating solutions to problems..."(Stringer, 1996, p. 35). One goal of this dialogue session was for the community members to consider workable ideas to encourage the involvement of the younger generations. A solid plan of action with concrete ideas addressing involvement of the younger generation still needs to be produced. Time constraints and the depth of the issue restricted the development of a complete plan of action. There is a need for more dialogue sessions in order to adequately address the issue of stimulating the involvement and interest of the younger generations. However, ideas were expressed, interest to be involved in the process was peaked, and the related issues surrounding this subject were clarified. The conversation about this issue was very encouraging from a facilitator's standpoint as well as a community member's perspective. The older generations in the community involved in the dialogue session, once they realized that there were those of the younger generation that were interested in their cultural roots, were enthusiastic about collaborating about ways to encourage and stimulate the youth's interest and involvement. The dialogue session ended on a note of hope – hope that although there were obstacles and challenges the Japanese American community must face, there was hope that the cultural roots and heritage will be preserved.

*Action Researcher as Co-Collaborator*

The action researcher is described as scholar-practitioners (Pearce & Pearce, 2004), a *catalyst* (Stringer, 1996), and a *stakeholder* (Penman, 2000). All of these terms emphasize the participation and inclusion of the researcher in the actual research. Action research and dialogic communication stresses the relationship the researcher has with her research, therefore it is a reflexive relationship. Recognizing one's role as the research practitioner and one's influence on the communication taking place, the meanings that are emerging, realities that are being shaped, then and only then the research process is complete. Therefore, another practical outcome of action research is the potential for growth in understanding and skills for facilitators (Spano, 2001). Reviewing my performance as a facilitator opened up my understanding of my limitations as a facilitator as well my strengths. In this alone, I would argue the dialogue session was effective and successful. The dialogue session furthered my understanding of how the researcher in action research cannot be divorced from her research. Additionally, it revealed how valuable this research perspective is in the development of theory, but also in its practices. Action research is very powerful in how it can enable communities, groups, and organizations to function with more unity and harmony in order to achieve their goals. Reflecting and examining one's role played in the research leads to new understanding of the emergent qualities of communication in general, and dialogue in particular. This opens the door for further development and refining of skills in order to make one better at facilitation, and wiser in the ways of action research.

The dialogue session proved the value of dialogic communication in a community context and reinforced the importance of community-based action research. The dialogue session demonstrated the need for additional dialogic opportunities and the need for further exploration. In the next chapter, I provide a fuller, in-depth reflection of my facilitation skills, of my role as a research practitioner and co-participant in the research process. I also provide suggestions for future explorations for the Japanese American community.

CHAPTER 5

The Need for More Dialogue:  Reflections and Future Explorations for the Japanese

American Community

The intergenerational dialogue session raised more questions than it provided

answers or solid workable solutions to the issues facing the Japanese American

community.  Examination of the whole dialogic event and process provides insight into

the intergenerational communication divide that exists, particularly around the issues of

the younger generation's involvement in Japanese American community and the

preservation of Japanese American culture.  The dialogue session also provided a

stimulating and challenging training ground to apply the theoretical principles of dialogic

communication, facilitation, and community-based action research to practice.

If one sought to judge this research study on this dialogue session alone, the

results may look unsuccessful.  Community-based action research is supposed to produce

results for the community in some material way (Spano, 2001; Stringer, 1996).  However,

this research is not complete.  It is a springboard for further exploration.  This research

only confirms the need for more examination of the issues that affect this community, my

community.  It raised valuable and thought provoking questions regarding identity and

inclusion (for me and others like me) within the Japanese American community regarding

the definition of culture and how it shapes identity, as well as the role of dialogue in

community-based action research as a research method and goal.  The dialogue session

was also a valuable exercise for me to apply theory into practice and to reflect upon my

strengths and weaknesses as a facilitator.  This research study was a successful first step

for the Japanese American community to begin the process of dialogue, addressing those issues that so heavily weigh upon them.

The Need for Additional Dialogue: The Community's Preservation and Transformation

I would argue that future dialogue sessions are imperative if the community is serious about preservation. If the community is sincerely concerned about the future of their community and culture and addressing those issues that influence the preservation of their community and culture, more discussion needs to take place. More questions than concrete answers or solutions emerged from the dialogue session. Questions that were already thought to be answered seemed to be resurrected due to the changing dynamics the community is experiencing. For example, what is Japanese American? This question is still relevant today especially as the community disagrees about who is included in this definition. An exploration of the nature of culture and how it is defined and described would prove to be a very insightful discussion not only for the Japanese American community, but for the Communication Studies discipline, particularly the field of intercultural communication.

One area that would be interesting to explore is how to preserve the Japanese American culture while the community itself is transforming. During this time where the cultural landscape is changing for many cultures, a re-examination of how we conceptualize "culture", particularly with the rise of more and more multiracial individuals, would be valuable. How "culture" and "cultural identity" is understood is transforming, away from the strict, traditional definitions of culture that are largely defined according to norms, beliefs, traditions and patterns of singular nation-states.

Currently, the field of intercultural communication is grappling with the dynamic and complex influence that assimilation and outmarriage have upon cultural identity formation. The dialogue session only affirmed that the issues of preservation, cultural identity and practice, and the impact of assimilation and multiraciality upon the Japanese American community will not be understood or resolved in one conversation.

Future dialogue sessions have the potential to be a forum where the "surprise of mutuality" could take place where more members of the Japanese American community could come and voice their own perspectives. The dialogue session of this study was a beneficial opportunity for the Japanese American community to engage in an intergenerational dialogue about community issues. Several of the themes that emerged in the initial focus groups continued to arise in the dialogue session. These themes not only reiterate the issues the community needs to address, but it also exposes the on going tension of assimilation and preservation the Japanese American community continues to face. The constraints of time and the gravity of the issues did not allow for thorough discussion and exploration of all of the themes that emerged. Future dialogic discussions need to address the transformation that is taking place within the community (i.e., the growing number of multiracial Japanese Americans) and this transformation's impact on the culture and community. The community needs to explore the various definitions and conceptualizations of "culture" and "cultural identity" that exist in the community. Without some mutual understanding of culture, what it is and how it is expressed, the idea of preservation will be threatened. A better understanding of culture and cultural

identity may also intersect and alleviate the concern regarding the younger generation's interest and involvement.

*Preservation, "Culture", Multiraciality and the Future*

The issue of preservation was a high priority for the older Nisei and Sansei generations, and surprisingly, it was a priority for the younger, hapa generation as well. The data from the focus groups, particularly the findings regarding the interest of the younger generations, their perception of Japantown San Jose and their culture, and their desire to preserve their cultural roots and Japantown San Jose, surprised some of the older participants. Responses from the sixth focus group and the dialogue session seem to suggest that multiracial Japanese Americans are not only the future of the Japanese Americans as an ethnic group, but also the future hope of preserving the Japanese American community. Participants from the sixth focus group expressed their desire to preserve the community, not only for their own exploration of cultural identity, but for the benefit of their children (F.G. 6, p. 12). This is a particular interesting response since the sixth focus group consisted of the Yonsei and hapa Japanese Americans. A similar response emerged during the dialogue session from the only participant that was hapa and Yonsei. This participant, as related in the previous chapter, also expressed her interest in the Japanese American culture in her quest of her own cultural roots. Preservation seems to be particularly important to the hapa in their quest for understanding who they are and where they came from.

Participant conversations in the focus groups suggest that at some point, multiracial individuals have a desire to know about their roots. This exploration of

identity seems to be particularly important to multiracial individuals who feel a sense of division – they do not belong in any one cultural group. Multiracial individuals participate and engage in multiple expressions of culture from a number of different cultures. Preservation is important so that multiracial Japanese Americans can participate and engage in something that has shaped who they are as an individual. The challenge for multiracial Japanese Americans today is finding acceptance and membership in one of their cultural communities.

*Preserving Japantown San Jose.* Discussion regarding preservation did not progress for long without the mention of preserving Japantown San Jose. Japantown San Jose's importance as a localized place of cultural expression and cultural memory can not be ignored. The importance of Japantown San Jose for the community as a localized expression of the Japanese American culture and historical heritage was a point that emerged in all of the focus groups and in the dialogue session. Participants expressed their belief in its importance for the preservation of the community, their desire for it to remain in existence, as well as their sadness in anticipating it to one day fade away and become a plaque of commemoration on the side of building. Having a place to engage and express the different aspects of their Japanese American culture emerged in the focus groups explicitly, and emerged more implicitly in the dialogue session. Preserving Japantown San Jose and preserving Japanese American culture seemed to be, at times, synonymous. Future conversations will provide insight into the reasons behind preserving Japantown San Jose, particularly the idea that Japantown San Jose is a place where you can express your "Japanese Americaness." If that relationship is true in any

way, it is understandable why the community is concerned about losing Japantown San Jose; it reveals that the community is indeed losing their culture.

Another interesting avenue of exploration in future dialogue sessions is uncovering whether there is more interest with the multiracial Japanese Americans or full Japanese Americans regarding the preservation of Japantown San Jose. In the sixth focus group, hapa and Yonsei participants made the observation that those who desire to preserve Japanese American culture and Japantown San Jose the most are those who are mixed, rather than those who are 100 % Japanese (F.G. 6, p. 13). The conversations with the hapa participants seem to suggest the need for a place, a point of reference to go to, to learn about their cultural heritage and participate in cultural practices. Exploration into this area could provide valuable insight into the community's understanding of Japantown San Jose's purpose and function, as well as address the complexities surrounding the issues influencing the racial and cultural transformation of the community and its impact and implications for preservation. Additional dialogue sessions could motivate and inspire the community, older and younger, full and hapa Japanese Americans, to come up with creative and realistic ideas for preservation.

*Perceptions of multiracial Japanese Americans.* In order for that conversation to take place, an examination focusing on the existing attitudes toward multiracial Japanese Americans is necessary. The community must face the different attitudes that exist in the community, even those that are less than attractive, and realize their impact upon the community. Studies done about outmarriage by New York sociologist Betty Lee Sung indicate the negative attitude held by Asian immigrants regarding outmarriage, with

responses such as "we want our grandchildren to look like us" (as quoted in Wu, 2002, p. 282). Some responses from the older generation Japanese American seem to be similar. Offspring from mixed marriages are called "diluted" by some of the older Niseis and Sanseis and therefore not really Japanese. How the Japanese American community conceptualizes and understands "culture" is important. Responses from some of the older generations imply that culture is largely performative (participating in cultural practices and traditions). This understanding of culture has led to the assumption and concern about the lack of interest of the younger generations. However, this understanding of culture, that it is largely performative, also speaks to an underlying idea of how a Japanese American looks. For many of the older generations, conversations in the focus groups and the dialogue session indicates that there seems to be a connection of cultural identity with physical appearance.

This connection needs more examination, particularly since conversations in the dialogue session touched on how Japanese Americans are culturally different from main land Japanese. Japanese Americans are even considered inferior to mainland Japanese. This judgment of inferiority is a result of the fact that although Japanese Americans do not look different from mainland Japanese, they act different; they do not "act Japanese." What is interesting is that multiracial Japanese Americans seem to be considered inferior by older members of the community because they do not "look" Japanese. Physical appearance is being equated with cultural identity and cultural authenticity. Discussions revolving around cultural identity also involved discussion about certain characteristics

that identify who is culturally authentic, or who was *really* Japanese American, and who
was not.

*Cultural authenticity.* Cultural authenticity, especially in regard to the hapa,
emerged as a point of tension across the generations. The older generations seemed to
hold definite markers which identified who were "truly" Japanese American. Physical
appearance, cultural practices and traditions, and the knowledge and use of the Japanese
language emerged as the three most definitive markers to be labeled Japanese American.
Knowledge of the Japanese language continually emerged as the most definitive of one's
cultural authenticity.

For example, in one focus group, a participant considered the lack of use of the
Japanese language in the younger generations and in the community as a sign of losing
the culture. When asked why, the response was, "Well, language is culture" (F.G. 3, p. 9,
L 48). In the dialogue session, many of the Sanseis expressed regret that they were not
taught the language. One Yonsei related her father's embarrassment of his ignorance of
the language. His embarrassment is compounded by the fact that she does know the
language and she is hapa (Dialogue session, p. 14). One Sansei expressed how one of her
hapa daughter's goals is to learn and speak Japanese fluently. She spoke of her daughter
with such pride. Knowledge of the Japanese language is obviously perceived as an
expression of one's "Japanese Americaness." This issue is very interesting due to the
increase of Japanese language schools in Japantown San Jose. The role of language in
the discussion of culture and preservation raises many interesting questions. What are the
perceptions of knowing the Japanese language generation to generation? Is this due to a

certain perception of language? Is it a response to multiracial Japanese Americans? Or, is it the response of multiracial Japanese?

Language also reflected the tension of cultural assimilation-preservation. In the dialogue session while the participants were discussing the importance of language to cultural preservation, one participant made a comment about how the Japanese language had evolved and the current language spoken by Japanese is different. He related how his parents went to visit Japan and experienced a level of discrimination.

> "A": …when they went back to Japan, I mean when my parents went back to
>
> Japan twenty years later, they were so disappointed. Their language now
>
> antiquated and they're kinda singled out … as being, as being
>
> uneducated…language evolves (Dialogue session, pp. 9-10)

While claiming language as a marker of cultural authenticity, the exchange quickly turns to the distinction between the Japanese language spoken by the Japanese American community and the Japanese language spoken by Japanese nationals. The evolution of the Japanese language signifies the impact of assimilation upon the Japanese American community. The Japanese language the Japanese American speaks is much older than the current language spoken in Japan. Yet, language is still perceived by many members of the Japanese American community (primarily the older generation) as an identifying marker of one's interest and involvement in one's culture and community. Yet, even the language reflects the process of assimilation the community has experienced.

Multiracial Japanese Americans may not speak Japanese or "look" Japanese, but they "act" Japanese American. In the focus groups, the younger generation's perception

of Japanese American cultural identity had more of a philosophical or even spiritual

quality than their older counterparts. One Sansei participant described her understanding

of culture as, "I think of it as being how you think and how you act..." (F.G. 4, p. 17, L

29). This response touches more on the "embodiment" aspect of culture. Culture is more

than just *following* certain traditions or practices or speaking a certain language. The

younger generations recognize this invisible cultural attribute at work within them – this

"being." Some have an understanding of it and an acquaintance with it and others do not.

All are searching for how it makes them who they are. Further inquiry is necessary in

order to examine the definition and nature of culture focusing specifically on examining

culture as embodied, performed, and, most of all, personalized. Insight into these issues

could help uncover some of the underlying prejudices and perceptions that exist within

the community. These insights could also help provide a better understanding of the

different aspects of culture and how culture shapes the Japanese American community. It

may also provide a tangible, understandable motivation for the community to unite and

collaborate on how to address the issue of preservation.

   *Preserving the memory of the past, preserving the future.* One issue that emerged

time and time again as a reason to preserve Japantown San Jose is the preservation of the

history and memory of the internment. Perhaps exploring discrimination and the impact

of the internment, another area that was not addressed thoroughly, could be a point of

contact and understanding across generations. Stories and experiences related to

discrimination and repercussions of the internment emerged repeatedly in all focus

groups, those that included the older, the younger, and even the hapa. One cannot

explore the Japanese American community in the Bay Area without recognizing and acknowledging the impact of the internment and the scars that still remain today. "Looming in our community's collective memory, whether our families were affected at the time or not, is the fact of the internment" (Asakawa, 2004, p. 18). A concern of the older generation is that the younger generation will forget the historical legacy of their cultural forefathers. Some Japanese American scholar's describe this as "historical amnesia" (Yoo, 2000). The concern is that the discrimination and humiliation experienced by the Issei, Nisei, and even some older Sansei will be forgotten. Yet, some experiences of the younger generation, one hapa Yonsei in particular, seem to indicate that the discrimination that led to the scars of the past still exists today. "When I was in high school, I got blamed for Pearl Harbor so many times..." (F.G 6, p. 6, L 48). The discrimination that fueled the internment, although not experienced personally by everyone in the community, is sadly still present today. The legacy of that event has been experienced across the generational divide. Another intergenerational conversation exploring the mutual experiences of discrimination and its relationship to Japanese American history and cultural formation could prove to be a point of contact. Future dialogue sessions could explore how understanding Japanese American culture, cultural experience, and identity forges new relationships that transcend the generational divide. By preserving the memory of injustices of the past, the present generation can work to ensure the preservation of the future.

*The Need for the Inclusion of More Voices*

Due to time constraints and the complexities surrounding these issues, thorough

discussion unpacking these subjects was not possible in the dialogue session for this

project. More dialogic conversations need to take place with the inclusion of more

voices, particularly those of the younger generation and those who are hapa. Although

the participants and perspectives present made a valuable contribution to the research, the

dialogue session was intended to be more intergenerational, with a wider array of ages

present. The inclusion of more voices would open the door to further insight about these

issues providing a wider variety of experiences, stories, and interpretations that could

shed light on how all generations interconnect and impact relationships in the

community.

*Interest and involvement of the younger generation.* Further development of ideas

about garnering the interest and participation of the younger generation in the community

is also needed. Based on the conversation in the dialogue session, interest in one's

culture seems to be interpreted as involvement and participation in the community and

cultural events. Or, more specifically, involvement and participation in Japantown San

Jose organizations and events. Most of the ideas in the dialogue session were based upon

this interpretation. For example, the youth basketball league (CYS), Yu-Ai Kai and the

Methodist and Buddhist churches, all located in Japantown San Jose, were mentioned as

options for the younger generation to become more involved in the community. Interest

also seemed to be interpreted as participation and involvement in cultural events, such as

Obon and Nikkei Matsuri, community cultural festivals that take place in Japantown San

Jose. It would be very insightful to explore if interest in one's culture equates to outward involvement in Japantown San Jose's activities, organizations, and events. It may be necessary for the community to reconsider how they perceive "interest in one's culture." It would further explore the discussion about culture as performed and or embodied. Is it outward participation and participation in a particular place (Japantown San Jose)? What is the place of cultural values, customs and traditions in the measurement of interest? Are cultural values, customs, and traditions evaluated only if performed outwardly or made a part of one's lifestyle? Is culture *doing* or *being?* Exploration of this issue could make the community reflect and consider their perceptions of who is included in the cultural community and who is not.

A more thorough exploration and examination of these issues is needed using action based research. Community-based action research, with its concern for the well-being of the community involved and its focus on pro-active collaboration and cooperation in order to find productive, workable solutions provides the direction and inspires the energy and motivation needed for the Japanese American community to become empowered and address their needs and concerns. The reality of assimilation and multiraciality and their influence upon the Japanese American culture and changing face of the community are factors beyond the control of the community. Community-based action research provides the method and approach that helps the community address and consider those areas in which they do have some control. This method and approach recognizes the responsibility of the community and gives them the power and prerogative to take action. The Japanese American community needs to be empowered

and inspired if they have any hope of addressing and solving the significant issues before them.

Dialogue and Community-based Action Research as a Research Method and Goal

Action research coupled with dialogic communication principles is a valuable, empowering approach and perspective in addressing these issues that face the Japanese American community. Saunders (1999) speaks of how dialogue concentrates on the dynamics of human relationships and explores how to change those relationships in order to usher in collaboration and cooperation to address issues and problems. The emphasis on collaboration, the improvement of relationships and circumstances, and mutual understanding provides the appropriate perspective and tools the community needs to come together, across generations and cultures. Dialogue allows for the stories, experiences, and individual perspectives to be expressed for the purpose of understanding, and working from that understanding toward the realization of goals the community sets for itself.

The impact of the internment experience upon the Japanese American community and the consequential assimilation and outmarriage are realities that cannot be erased. The community and culture that has survived and prospered in spite of adverse circumstances is the same community and culture that can come to a place of understanding, an understanding that is grounded in similarities of culture and experience. Based upon this common ground they can find the common goals to confront those issues that have divided them or at least inhibited true relationship with others (the hapa) in the community. Community-based action research coupled with

dialogue is the promising way for the community to come together and face these challenges. If any collaboration or cooperation is to occur for the Japanese American community, the notion of understanding is key; that is, understanding the complexities of the issues and the perspectives of all involved. Coming to a place of understanding will overcome the cynicism of the older generations and the disinterest and intimidation of the younger generations. Understanding will bring inspiration and hope that preservation of the culture and the community is possible.

Perhaps greater understanding of the complexities of the issues, such as the impact of assimilation and multiraciality, will also open the community's eyes to see that their community is changing and their culture is inevitably changing. But that does not mean that the culture is lost. It can be preserved. But acceptance of the change is essential. Change must be embraced by the community and the voices of the multiracial community members need to be heard. The community needs to "let the other [hapa] happen to them", one of the significant characteristics of dialogue, and experience the opposing tension to "holding one's own." Embracing the "other", in this case, the hapa, the community will open the door for appreciation, understanding, and hopefully, acceptance of those that reflect the future. Realizing the common thread(s) that they share together, the community will be able to be honest and grapple with those issues that create tension and make them feel uncomfortable. Engaging in the tension will open up new possibilities for this community to embrace the change that is inevitably in their future and work together to continue the legacy of our Japanese heritage rather than lose it forever.

*Unique Position of the Research Practitioner*

One of the most eye opening and challenging parts of this project was my role as facilitator, research practitioner. My role as research practitioner is not only unique due to the nature of the role in community-based action research, but also due to my identity as hapa. The role of research practitioner in community-based action research is a unique position for s/he becomes a part of the process, especially when examining how a community communicates. As Penman (2000) reminds us that "we are always moving between the role of hero in the moral domain – acting into the process – and the role of author in the aesthetic domain – reflecting on/comprehending the process" (p. 102). The researcher has an impact on the process just as much as the participant, especially when applying dialogic communication principles in research. Being open and neutral as a facilitator was a struggle for me at times, not only as a research practitioner, but personally, as a member of the Japanese American community. Facilitating free of one's agenda can be difficult during research and it is more difficult if your research subject is personal. As a hapa Sansei, I found myself reflecting and comprehending but also reacting to some of the participant responses or conversations. Issues such as multiraciality and who is included in the definition of Japanese American, tended to touch a nerve. Hearing from some of the older Niseis and Sanseis that I am "barely" Japanese American (referring to my ethnic composition of ¼) or that my Japanese American experience "doesn't count" (referring to my family not experiencing internment) made listening and leading with "awe and wonder" difficult.

Spano (2001) emphasizes the importance of modeling dialogic communication when dealing with those who may not be familiar with dialogic communication. Remarks about my identity were not made to intentionally offend or insult me. However, modeling openness to the other while holding my own ground, was more of a challenge than I had thought. I found myself in those moments reacting to what was being said, rather than attempting, or even wanting, to understand the individual communicating. I wanted to defend and vindicate who I was and prove to my detractors that I was Japanese American and did belong in the community. This feeling was particularly acute during one of the focus groups when I was questioned by one Nisei about how I, as a multiracial Japanese American who married "out" (outside the culture), was going to raise my children. How was I going to get them involved? I felt like I was being interrogated and challenged, not questioned out of curiosity. My initial thoughts regarding that moment and subsequent reflection and analysis of the interaction between me and the participant seems to suggest my "otherness" happened to him and his "otherness" happened to me. All of the hapa the participant knew or interacted with had no interest in their culture or in the Japanese American community and he was confronted with a hapa who was interested. The interaction itself in the moment was confrontational and intimidating for me. It was also a taste of the perceptions and some of the deep seated emotions that exist within the community.

My inclusion in the community and culture always seemed to be challenged by the older Nisei, particularly by the men. These experiences have only reaffirmed my belief of the significance and value of this project. If the younger generations feel as I

did, intimidated, challenged, and offended, then it is no mystery as to the reason of their disinterest in participating in the community. This experience only furthered my belief that more dialogic engagement like that one needed to occur in order for the community to be able to work together, in spite of their differences. More dialogue is necessary to talk about the feelings, perceptions, and prejudices that exist in the community that could compromise preserving the culture and community by excluding others based on the lack of enough Japanese blood or lack of participation in one generation's collective experience.

I must admit to a lack of understanding of how influential a role the facilitator is to the way of communicating in a dialogue session. Concepts that were initially theoretical became "real" as they were converted into practice. In dialogic communication, the role of the facilitator is very powerful in the sense of impacting the atmosphere. The facilitator either helps dialogue to take place or inhibits it from taking place. I feel the responsibility of this dual role, of hero and author, more now than I did "in the moment." For example, the significance of systemic questioning and reflecting and reframing in the process of dialogic communication makes more sense to me as well as how they are indeed skills that require practice and refinement. Actual practice and application of these theoretical concepts enabled me to understand their role in ushering in and encouraging a dialogic style of communicating.

This understanding has helped me realize how to facilitate with "awe and wonder" (Penman, 2000), an idea that remained elusive to me even up to the day of facilitation. Facilitating requires extra energy in order to have the attitude of "awe and

wonder" and remain mentally and intellectually present. What I mean by mentally and intellectually present is the constant awareness and attentive state one must sustain in order to hear the ideas, thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perspectives that are communicated. One must process and unpack them and proceed either with systemic questioning or appreciative inquiry, or reflect and reframe in order to continue the moment(s) of dialogue. It requires being caught up with what is being said, yet with a purpose in mind, rather than being distracted or merely listening. It is listening with constant awareness and quick thinking, or reflecting and comprehending, yet comprehending with a sense of openness and neutrality, so that the conversation would be guided down new avenues of exploration.

I look forward to the challenge of working with the Japanese American community as they embark on this journey. It will be a journey that will inevitably be challenging, grievous at times, but ultimately, lead to a place of acceptance and hope. With a renewed understanding of my community and the place from where they stand, I am inspired and motivated and now, equipped to share this understanding. I am also hopeful that those issues and topics that expose the vulnerability and incite emotions will be addressed and resolved. I hope to assist in bringing more multiracial voices into the conversation to share their perspectives and their thoughts about their culture. I envision a dialogue that moves away from monovocality to multivocality; where the pervading notions of culture, as fixed, performed, spoken, and visible, are challenged and even redefined or reconceptualized in order to encompass the dynamic, complex, personal, and

less visible quality of culture. I envision a dialogue where the limits of community are expanded to welcome those of us who are Japanese American and...something else.

Final Reflections and Conclusion

This study exploring intergenerational communication has only scratched the surface regarding the issues and challenges that face the Japanese American community. This study began as an exploration of how culture and assimilation influenced intergenerational dynamics. This thesis reinforces the notion that culture is not fixed, static or linear in its influence. Culture is dynamic and complex. It affects more than just communication. It affects everything. As our national landscape continues to become more and more diverse, particularly here in the Bay Area, the population of multiracial individuals will increase. Additional exploration and research could provide insight for other ethnic communities regarding the complexities and challenges of assimilation and cultural preservation. America is increasingly becoming a multiracial America. More and more ethnic communities will see the "faces" of their people change. Additional research in intercultural communication can explore multiracial identity formation, its impact on communication and our communities. The Communication Studies discipline can engage in the exploration of the communication dynamics in communities in order to equip our communities on *how* to address the reality of assimilation and preservation using dialogue and principles of community-based action research. Hopefully, our communities will collaborate to preserve the cultural diversity that makes our local cultural landscape so unique.

*Hope of Preservation*

I am confident the legacy of the Japanese American culture and community will continue. History shows the resiliency of the Japanese American community and its strength to overcome challenges. The Japanese American community is changing, in looks and in how culture is practiced. Future Japanese Americans will look less Japanese, but that does not mean they will act less Japanese American, yet in order for the culture to leave a significant mark upon these future generations, steps need to be addressed now. The community has already faced an evolution of culture three times over. The Niseis experienced the first evolution when they served as living bridges between the culture of their parents and the culture of their parents' homeland. They raised their own children to be more American. The Sanseis, bearing the physical characteristics of their Japanese ethnicity, lived through the second evolution. They embodied the American values of equality and justice, values that seem to contrast the Japanese values of shikataganai and gaman held by their parents and grandparents. Interestingly, it was the American values that led the Sansei generation to fight for reparations from the internment for their parents and grandparents. Now, the Yonsei, many of whom are multiracial, are exploring who they are and are returning to their cultural roots.

Culturally and in many cases, physically, the Yonsei and the succeeding generations reflect a hybrid culture. Bearing the marks physically, ethnically, and culturally of their diversity, yet seeking a community to belong to who will understand them. The Japanese American experience reveals a people who embody endurance,

perseverance, survival, triumph, and prosperity. They have the ability to face the challenges that are set before them, but only as a community. As a community they supported one another before WWII, during the internment, and post war. Now it is time for them to work together again, as a community, to adapt to the changing face of the Japanese American and preserve the rich cultural heritage they possess.

When I began this research project, I did it for myself, to prove to my community that I belong; to prove that I am Japanese American. Regardless of whether or not the Japanese American community recognizes my Japanese American identity, I know that I am Japanese American. I no longer need to prove it. I hope that I do not, nor any other hapa, need to prove one's cultural identity. Now, I hope to continue this study and work with my community for the sake of my son, so that he will know who he is, where his mother came from, and her mother before her. He will need a place to go to remember who he is and to be with people like him. If the Japanese American community works together, he will have a place to go, and there he will find other people like him.

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Footnotes

1. References to focus group conversations will notated by signifying the focus

   group (according to the order conducted), the page number of the transcript, and

   the line(s) quoted. For example, (F.G. 1, p. 3, L 12-13).

Appendix A

Focus Group Participant Questionnaire

Please fill out the following questionnaire. This information is used solely for demographic purposes. All information will be kept confidential.

1. What is your age? _____

2. Gender (please circle one):      M      F      prefer not to state

3. Area of residence (example: San Jose):

4. Place of birth:

5. Where were your parents born?

6. What is your education level? (please circle one)

   High school graduate      College graduate      Post-graduate

   Other (please specify):_____

7. What languages do you speak fluently, other than English?

8. Please answer the following three questions on a scale from 1 – 10, 1 = less involved or salient, and 10 = more involved or salient. Please provide 1 – 2 cogent examples to explain your answer (example, supports and participates in Japanese American community events, attends (ed) Japanese school, etc…).

9. On a scale of 1 – 10, how involved are you in the Japanese American community?

10. On a scale of 1 – 10, how involved are you in the San Jose – Japantown community?

11. On a scale of 1 – 10, how relevant or salient is your Japanese American identity to you personally?

Appendix B

Focus Group Research Questions

1. Set up focus group – introduce – I am a sansei

2. Please tell us your pseudonyms, where you live, and what generation you are.

3. What do you like about being Japanese American?

4. How do you define 'Japanese American'? Or What does it mean for you to be Japanese American?

5. To what extent are you similar to your Japanese American parents/grandparents (for younger generations)? To what extent are you similar to your Japanese American children/grandchildren? (for older generations)?

6. How would you characterize or describe your own generation?

7. How do you think the other generation would describe your generation?

8. How would you characterize or describe the relationship your generation has with the Nisei generation (or for older – sansei/yonsei)?

9. If says positive, do you think that your generation has a positive and open relationship with the older generation?

10. How might this be improved?

11. How would you describe how your generation communicates with the Nisei generation (or for older – sansei/yonsei)? Do they communicate frequently?

12. How might this be improved?

13. What do you think gets in the way of open communication with the other generation?

14. How is the Japanese American community changing?

15. Are these good or positive changes? Why or why not?

16. What major concerns do you have regarding the Japanese American culture/community?

17. Be open to other themes. If it comes up – ask the following:

    a. For seniors: How can we/the community get the younger generations interested in/involved with taking care of our elders/the older generations?

    b. For younger: Do you perceive your generation as caring for the elders and or interested in caring for the elders? what would make you get more involved with taking care?

    c. For seniors: With the increase in mixed Japanese Americans, how can the community adapt to the changing face of Japanese American cultural identity?

18. What concerns do you have regarding the future of the Japanese American culture/community?

19. What do you think needs to be done in order to address these concerns?

20. What do you think Japanese American identity will be like in the future (for younger – for your own kids – for older, for the younger generations)?

21. What is it about Japanese American culture would you like to be kept alive (or passed down)? What will be our legacy as Japanese Americans? [What would you like a Japanese American to "look like" in the future]?

22. Are you interested in dialoguing with the other generations? Do you think that the other generation is interested in dialoguing with you?

23. What would you like that dialogue to look like? Give me your wishlist for how you would like that dialogue to occur – where, on what topics, with what goals, what tone?

24. Ask if questions or would like to make comments

25. Announce that you have a sign-up sheet for interested people in doing a dialogue session – (prepare sign up sheet – ask for cell, email and name – and say good food will be involved).

Appendix C

Dialogue Session Survey for Thursday, July 19, 2007

Thank you so much for your participation in this dialogue session. Please take a moment to fill out this survey about the effectiveness of the dialogue session. Thank you!

Please answer the following questions based on a scale of 1 – 5; 1 being the least, and 5 being the greatest.

1. On a scale of 1 – 5, how would you rate your level of comfort during the dialogue session?

Least comfortable                                                                    very comfortable

    1        2        3        4        5

Why or why not?

2. On a scale of 1 – 5, how would you rate your ability to fully express your thoughts and opinions?

not able to fully express                                                very able to fully express

    1        2        3        4        5

Why or why not?

3. On a scale of 1 – 5, did you feel as though your opinions were heard and valued?

Not heard or valued at all                                    very much heard and valued

     1           2           3           4           5

Why or why not?

4. On a scale of 1 – 5, how would you rate the relevance of the topics discussed?

Not relevant at all                                                        very relevant

     1           2           3           4           5

Why or why not?

5. On a scale of 1 – 5, how would you rate the effectiveness of the dialogue session?

Not effective at all                                                      very effective

     1           2           3           4           5

Why or why not?

Appendix D

Discussion Questions Part A for Thursday, July 19 2007

Please answer these questions as openly and honestly as you can with your partner.

Please allow your partner the opportunity to answer these questions fully and openly.

Discuss these questions quietly with one another; please take notes about your discussion.

Q 1A: How does being Japanese American make you who you are?

Q 1B: How is your Japanese American heritage/culture reflected in your life?

Q 2: Why do you think it is important to preserve Japantown San Jose?

Q3: What cultural traditions, customs, and values would you like to see preserved and

carried on through the generations? Why those particular traditions, customs and values?

Personal Reflection:

Please take a moment to reflect and answer these questions. Please be as open and honest

as you feel comfortable.

Reflection Q1: How did it feel to have this conversation with an individual(s) from

another generation?

Reflection Q2a: What was hard about it?

Reflection Q2b: What was easy about it?

Reflection Q3: Were there any points of contact or agreement between you and your

partner(s)?