

JAPANESE AMERICAN'S SELF-IDENTITY PROBLEM IN MONICA SONE'S NISEI DAUGHTER

Emilia Tetty Harjani

English Departemen, STIBA-LIA Yogyakarta

email: emil_harjani@yahoo.com

Abstrak

Penelitian ini merupakan kajian terhadap novel yang ditulis oleh generasi kedua warga negara Amerika keturunan Jepang (Nisei), Monica Sone, yang menyuarakan masalah identitas Nisei dan perjalanan mereka untuk menjadi warga negara Amerika. Kajian ini bertujuan mengetahui masalah identitas diri dan faktor-faktor yang menyebabkannya. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan multidisiplin yang mencakup sejarah, sosiologi, dan sastra. Data dikumpulkan melalui kajian pustaka. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kelompok Nisei mengalami masalah identitas diri yang diakibatkan oleh kebingungan terhadap posisi kultural dan hukum mereka di Amerika. Masalah tersebut timbul karena faktor internal yang berasal dari masyarakat Amerika keturunan Jepang, yaitu kuatnya budaya Jepang, sehingga mereka berada dalam dua budaya (Amerika dan Jepang), dan faktor eksternal, yaitu rasisme kulit putih, yang menolak mereka sebagai bagian dari kelompok kulit putih meskipun kelompok Nisei adalah warga negara Amerika.

Kata kunci: warga negara Amerika keturunan Jepang, Nisei, masalah identitas, rasisme kulit putih, pelestarian budaya etnik.

INTRODUCTION

The remarkable attraction of the New World---a name given by the early English settlers to describe a new land that promises new life and prosperity-- was the driving force that brought migrants to America. It was these settlers that had formed the American culture which features most of their life background and beliefs. In the period between the 1800s and 20th century the greatest numbers of migrants were coming in three overlapping streams. The first great stream, the 'old immigration,' consisted mainly of people from Ireland, Germany, England, and Scandinavian, or generally speaking, people from northern and western Europe. Coming at the same period with these immigrants were the Chinese, who mostly came in the nineteenth century. The second great stream, the "new immigration", consisted

mainly of people from Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, or people from southern and eastern Europe. Japanese immigrants came in this period as their major emigration occurred roughly between 1880s and 1920s. The third great stream or "newest" immigration consisted mainly of people from Mexico, Cuba and the Far East (Feagin, 1984: 11, McLemore, 1983: 70).

It can be stated thus that there were two groups of migrants, the white and non-white. In their social interaction, many of the first mentioned could eventually blend with the dominant culture. But many others—the latter—did not. This had given rise to problems for both the coming migrants, including Japanese, and the established host society. Generally the problem was concerned about their identities. It is their experiences of and their feelings

about this problem that makes up one reason for the present writer to conduct the study.

The inclusion of the novel, *Nisei Daughter*, in *The Big Aiiieeee. An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* published in 1990 has meant that the work has been accepted in the canon of American literature. The work may be regarded as part of immigrant literature since they refer not only to the writing by the actual immigrants who moved from one country to another but also to the texts of the descendants of the early immigrants (Knippling, 1996: 125). The novel relates the story of Japanese Americans who experienced internment during the time of World War II. There were many other ethnic groups in America but only the Japanese Americans who were imposed. This certainly is a unique experience. This is another reason for the study. This study thus aims to explore how the novel voices second generation Japanese Americans' identity problem and their journey to be Americans.

This study intends firstly to investigate what the self-identity problem is like and secondly to discover the contributive causes of their problem.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is conducted under the American Studies theory proposed by McDowell, that is, reconciliation of tenses and disciplines (1948: 2-11). To apply the theory of reconciliation of disciplines, multidisciplinary approaches are used while reconciliation of tenses (past, present, future) used is embodied in the historical approach. The multidisciplinary approaches include the historical, sociological and literary approaches. The data derived from using the approaches are utilized to get a holistic study.

The historical approach is used to talk about the historical experience in the novel. It is used to reveal the historical journey of the Japanese American cultural conflict, before and in the wartime. Sociological approach is used to see the attitudes of American society and the Japanese Americans that result in identity conflict. The literary approach used is mimetic approach which views the literary work as an imitation, or reflection, or counterfeiting, or as representation of the world and human life (Abrams, 1971:10-14).

In this study, library research is carried out applying descriptive analytical method. Data collected from the primary source, that is *Nisei Daughter*, as well as the secondary sources such as books, essays, and journals, while electronic data in the forms of electronic journals and books accessed through the internet are also used. They are organized, classified and analyzed. The result is presented in the conclusion of the study.

DISCUSSION

The Japanese in America acknowledge generation stratification through the terms, Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, to name Japanese generation groups. The first generation is called Issei. The term derives from the numerical prefix added to the stem 'sei' (=generation); thus, respectively Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei refer to the first, the second, the third, and the fourth generation of Japanese immigrants in America (Miyamoto in Sone vii; Kitano 8). Issei were born in Japan; they are Japanese nationals that cannot naturalize to be American subjects due to American naturalization statute, while the following generations are American citizens by birthright.

Nisei are United States-born children of the Issei. They are Americans,

but not truly a part of American society; nor are they Japanese (Miyamoto in Sone, 1979: xi). There is also “a subgroup of Nisei who had received much of their education in Japan.” They are called Kibei. Meanwhile, an overall term, Nikkei, is used to refer to the entire Japanese population in America (Colins, 1985: 9)

The Japanese Americans in America

The poverty in Japan and demand of labor in Hawaii and Pacific Coast in America in the end of nineteenth century were the push and the pull causing the Japanese's arrival to America. Since their arrival, they had to encounter racist hostility and rejection from the whites, ranging from socially negative anti-Japanese prejudice, violence, segregation, labor exploitation to enforcement of laws such as Alien Land Law of 1913, that affected the Japanese to be unable to own land in America; Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, that ended the migration of Japanese labor to America and Immigration Act of 1924, that totally ended Japanese immigration to America (Takahashi, 1997:15, McLemore, 1983: 163-64). These immigrants, who were relatively educated compared to other counterparts, ended up settling in communities that cohesively clustered in the Pacific Coast areas. Their types of employment were also highly concentrated, in agriculture, wholesale and trade retail and service sector (Daniels, 1993:16). This discloses the limited occupational mobility of the Japanese, showing that Issei dan Nisei were only second class residents and citizens and the racist treatment of the whites to the Nikkei.

During the World War II, Nikkei had to experience mass internment. The excessive panicky reaction from the public, newspapers, government and military officials after the attack of the

Imperial Japanese Navy on Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, had pressured the government to evacuate them from the coast due to their belief that Japanese were dangerous race capable of spying, sabotaging, subversions, and doing fifth column activities (Daniels, 1993: 29). Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, the result of the pressure, authorized the military commanders to issue whatever orders necessary for national security (Murray, 2000: 5) and it led to the exclusion order applicable to all Japanese population only, both aliens and citizens, to empty the West Coast and interned them in ten desolate desert camps operated by War Relocation Authority, and surrounded them by barbed wire and armed sentries (Yamamoto, 2001: 39; Yoo, 2000: 97). The release of the Nisei for colleges, war-related work and forming segregated Nisei military combat unit was initiated in February 1943 by giving “loyalty questionnaire” containing two unsettling questions: whether or not the internee would be willing to serve in the American armed forces and whether or not they forswear allegiance to Japan. Those answered ‘no and no’ to the two questions were called the ‘No-Nos’, and had to serve prison terms for two till four years (Murray, 2000: 14-15).

History records the racist bias in the practice of internment of the Nikkei reflected in the unreasonableness in the internment decision. First, that fifth column activities, sabotages and subversions as reported by the newspapers and anticipated by the military were non-existent (Daniels, 1988: 201-202). Second, Japanese population in the West Coast was too tiny (less than 0.02% of the total population in America) to be a threat to the West Coast and the nation (Daniels, 1993: 8) and in reality, any menace posted by the Axis was much stronger on the East Coast than on

the West Coast (Murray, 2000:5). Third, the Hawaiian Japanese, comprising more than 35% of the island's population and more 'dangerous' for the islands' safety as it anchored U.S defenses in the Pacific, were not interned because they were crucial for America's economy (Murray, 2000: 8). Fourth, Italian and German Americans were not interned though they were of the same ancestors of the U.S enemies and the last is the Nikkei internment violated the U.S constitution of equal protection of the laws for both citizens and non-citizens, and deprived them of constitutional rights to procedural due process (Kurashige and Murray, 2003: 300).

The Japanese Family and Community in America

In the pre-war period, Nikkei community was under the leadership of Issei as most Nisei hadn't reached their adulthood. Despite the hardships and curtailment of Japanese migration to America, they managed to build families. In this community, families played important role for the Issei to instill their offspring with important norms and values, which were significant to be the foundation of the community establishment. As in Japan, family was a primary institution in a society. Kitano asserted that in a social learning sense, the structures and institutions of Japanese community; for example, family, acted as agents, shapers, socializers, and reinforcers; meanwhile, the norms and values determine the content, the direction, and the how and what of expected behavior (1993: 83). Consequently, the Japanese families in America were popularly thought to be generally intact and cohesive. The Issei's yearning to pass Japanese culture was embodied in the establishment of Japanese Language School (*Nihon Gakko*). This effort somehow reflects

Issei's desire to return to Japan some day after they got some money.

Japanese families, manifested in most Issei families, were traditional and were based on Confucian principles which believed that stable families ensured a stable society. And, roles based on hierarchy, age, status, and sex were important in Japanese families (Kitano, 1993: 117). When compared to American traditions which emphasized on individualistic views of love and romance, "Japanese American conceptions of marital roles placed more emphasis on group-centered duties, obligations, and responsibilities." (Fugita, 1991: 136) Therefore, the continuation of generations and producing of a family heir were a responsibility and duty for Japanese. They were more important than love relationship.

The norms and values were passed by the Issei to the Nisei to provide them with a guide for interpersonal behavior so that an individual had an acceptable way of interacting with others and, conversely, was able to judge the acts of others (Kitano, 1993: 84). These, for example, were obligation and responsibility to others, loyalty to superior, sensibility, denial of praise, modesty, suppression of anger and emotion, conformity and obedience, disciplines and hard work (Lebra, 1986: 162-166; Kitano, 1993: 85-86, 92).

Other features in Japanese American behavior were 'indirection', that functioned to avoid direct confrontation; 'invisibility', that was meant to avoid bringing other's attention to them; and 'preserving good name' which means that they had to follow the normative system so that there was no embarrassment and shame in the family and community (Fugita, 1991: 78). In addition, politeness, attention to parental wishes, cleanliness, neatness, honesty, the importance of education,

occupational success and good reputation were also values of Japanese Americans (McLemore, 1983: 172).

As Japanese American community was an extension of family institution, similarly, it functioned as shaper, socializer as well as reinforcer of Japanese culture. The community suggested the internalization of the Japanese norms and values and where all Japanese norms and values were applied and controlled. In this case, family control was not simply parental control, but community control as well.

Nikkei community also applied hierarchy of status. (Wagastuma qtd in Kitano, 1993: 84). In the community, the hierarchy was seen in, for example, leaders—who were occupied by Issei—and those who were led, teacher and students, parents and children. The terms Issei, Nisei, Sansei, actually also implied generation stratification, showing that there was hierarchy in the community.

Different from American society that emphasized individualism, Nikkei community emphasized collectivism. Fugita held that the “Japanese attach much greater importance to the smooth functioning and preservation of the group as a whole compared with the interests of any given individual. Interpersonal harmony was sought above all else. Consensus was more important than either autonomy or abstract rules”. Such relationship between individuals and groups were found in a variant of Confucian ethics that placed a high value on harmony, asceticism, and obligation (1991: 37). The values, consequently had created a normative system, in which attention was given to norms in interpersonal relationships, especially when obligations were concerned. This, thus, created Nikkei community as a cohesive and homogeneous people culturally

and psychologically. The characteristics mentioned could be seen in *kenjinkai*, an association containing those from the same *ken* or province. The purposes of *kenjinkai* went far beyond “sociable, business, and recreational activities as they also published newspapers, acted as employment agencies, provided legal advise, gave money to the needy, and paid for medical and burial expenses” (McLemore, 1983: 172). Within the community, a person could seek and receive help in locating a job, finding a place to live, or starting a business. Obviously, the ethnic community was simultaneously a tool to aid a new immigrant to adjust himself to the new life in America and maintain the way of life that had been left behind.

Meanwhile, Nisei were described as basically growing up in two worlds. They spent much of their time in the white world of school, but virtually their primary relationships were with fellow Japanese. They were not totally isolated from the mainstream currents of American life, but their most intimate relationships and institutional affiliations were found within the ethnic community. It means that they underwent some degrees of Americanization or assimilation. Concerning the cultural assimilation of Nisei, Miyamoto elaborated that “Nisei spoke English, knew its idioms and slang; they knew the popular songs and danced the latest dance steps; and their idols were the favorites of all Americans: Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Clark Gable, and Katharine Hepburn; however, most Nisei also absorbed more of Japanese culture than they realized” (qtd in Sone, 1979: xi)

Within the context of acculturation, the Nisei’s desire of being accepted as whole Americans, often clashed with the cultural fact they found in their ethnic community. The persisting ethnic culture, maintained by Issei, some way

has hindered their acculturation into the mainstream culture and created confusion for them.

Japanese American Writings

In the world of literature, Japanese American writings seemed to respond to all the cultural and social problems the Nikkei faced, especially the racist treatment they received. The writings can be traced from the Issei period due to the relatively 'high' literacy level of Japanese immigrants and that the fact they wrote as a hobby, resulting in the numerous production of early Japanese immigrants writings in America. The writings expressing the concern of the ethnic group themselves started to exist in Nisei era as the generation started to speak English. The Nisei writings were directed to counter the negative stereotypical image of Japanese Americans in American literature—foreign, sinister, brute, heartless, and treacherous—created by the whites' prejudice (Kim, 1982: 4-5). Monica Sone through her work tried to counter the portrayal of Japanese in literature by presenting new image of Japanese Americans and voicing the Nisei's concern on identity problem from their ethnic point of view due to the Nisei's cultural and social experiences in America (Knippling, 1996: 131).

In terms of the ethnic perspective used in the novel, in the history of Japanese American literature, *Nisei Daughter* is regarded as the first Japanese American autobiographical work (Kim, 1982: 24). It becomes known and prominent in American literature due to the emergence of Asian American Studies, where Asian American writers in the mid-1970s had chosen the novel to introduce ethnic literature, then a new topic, to American readers and published it in an anthology. This has helped promote and make the novel

notable in the American literature circle and the public (Nelson 286).

The novel was written by a Nisei and it expresses the confusing experience of Nisei under the pressure of racism and difficulty in acknowledging her immigrant heritage. It has the concern of expressing the Japanese Americans' response and feeling as the result of their experience as citizens of country whose most people are different racially. It also carries the hope of the author that one day the Nisei will be accepted to be part of nation life as implied through the character' resolution of her identity problem.

Japanese American Experience in *Nisei Daughter*

Nisei Daughter is written in the first person narrative, taking the setting in Seattle in 1920s till 1940s, and moving linearly from school years of the main character, Kazuko, till her camp release. The story itself revolves around one character, Kazuko Itoi, as the focus of narrative, concentrating on her experiences and her inner problem she faced.

Broadly divided, the novel consists of two parts. The first half of the book is about Kazuko's experience before the war, elaborating mostly Kazuko's life in her Japanese family and community. The second half of the book is about Kazuko's contact with the white mainstream.

In the first half of the book, the episodes begin with Kazuko's finding out that she is a Japanese biologically when her mother orders her to go to Japanese school or *Nihon Gakko* to learn Japanese language and culture. She is unwilling to accept the order.

And now Mother was telling us we were Japanese. I had always thought I was a Yankee,

because after all I had been born on Occidental and Main Street. Montana, a man who lived at our hotel, called me a Yankee. I didn't see how I could be a Yankee and Japanese at the same time. It was like being born with two heads. It sounded freakish and a lot trouble. Above everything, I didn't want to go to Japanese school (Sone, 1979: 18-19)

It is obvious that she always thinks she is an American, and although she finds out that she is a Japanese, she thinks that she is an American.

School days make her find that Japanese Language School is bothersome since the students have to study in restrictive atmosphere under the teacher's "vigilant eyes" like "a convict's hard labor" (Sone, 1979: 24). To Kazuko, learning Japanese language and its etiquette in Nihon Gakko has no applicability in her life in America; for example, she cannot use it to the hotel customers.

As far as I was concerned, Nihon Gakko was a total loss. I could not use my Japanese on the people at the hotel [that my parents operated]. Bowing was practical only in Nihon Gakko. If I were to bow to the hotel patrons, they would have laughed in my face. Therefore promptly at five-thirty every day, I shed Nihon Gakko and returned with relief to an environment which was the only real one to me (Sone, 1979: 28).

The impracticality of the Japanese etiquette and formality in American soil is further criticized by Kazuko because they may instead create problem for them. For example, Mrs. Kato creates congestion at a crowded streetcar town

in downtown Seattle because she bows slowly and politely to Mrs. Itoi, trying to let her proceeds in front of her while other travelers stare at them angrily (Sone, 1979: 48).

Meanwhile, the portrayal of Mrs. Matsui, who is ten years older than Mrs. Itoi and feels "responsible for her progress in America" (Sone, 1979: 26), as hawklike, strict, always picking out Mrs. Itoi's weaknesses on Japanese etiquette as she tries to direct Kazuko's and Mrs. Itoi's behavior to follow the etiquette shows Kazuko's disapproval to restrictive Nikkei community system of generation watching; elders should watch the young.

When she and her siblings go with their parents to visit the Matsuis on Japanese New Year, Kazuko is exposed to another experience that makes Kazuko dislike Japanese culture. She and her siblings have to restrain themselves as their host offers their favorite drink,

"Perhaps the little folks would rather have 'sodawata' instead?" Henry and Kenji smirked at each other while Sumiko and I hung our heads, trying not to look eager, but Mother said quickly, "Oh, no, please, Mrs. Matsui, don't trouble yourself. My children love tea." So we sipped scalding tea out of tiny, burning teacups without handles and nibbled at brittle rice wafers (Sone, 1979: 84-85).

They also have to politely refuse second helpings when offered some food during the visit.

Every now and then Mrs. Matsui urged us from the side line, "Please help yourself to more food."

And each time, we were careful to say, "Arigato, I have plenty, thank

you," although I could have counted the grains of rice I has so far consumed (Sone, 1979: 86)

Kazuko observes that both the guests and the host are busy of being polite to each other instead of being concern with each other's comfort. That's why she feels that rules in Japanese etiquette are restrictive for her.

There is time when Kazuko and her father have different perception on dancing and its costumes. Mr. Itoi refuses Kazuko's request of taking dancing lessons because on the father's standard, dancing is associated with *geisha*; besides, he has negative perception of the 'immoral' American dancing due to the costumes and movements (Sone, 1979: 44). Meanwhile, Kazuko's perception on Japanese dancing and its costume-*odori* is also as biased as her father's toward the American counterparts. Each of them regard the other's preferred dance as "evil" (Sone, 1979: 45). This actually shows the different values—American and Japanese—subscribed by the Nisei and Issei. This cultural difference results in familial conflict between generations in the house.

Sone further relates the difference when she tells of "Tenchoetsu"—the celebration of the reigning Emperor's birthday that could happen only to a Japanese. For the Issei, it is a solemn duty they have to do as citizens to respect the ruler of their country, but for the Nisei it is merely a burdensome and boring activity that they have to do every year as they do not even know "a single word of the Imperial message [delivered in the celebration], which was written in a style of speech used exclusively by the Emperor" (Sone, 1979: 67-68). This example only shows that Japanese ceremonial activity is meaningless to Nisei as they have no attachment to Japan—the unknown land for them.

This also shows the different national orientation between Issei and Nisei.

It is clear from the elaboration of examples above, starting from her disapproval and dislike to Japanese Language School, restrictive Japanese culture and ceremony, to the conflict with her father, that Kazuko's self-identification is American. She always regards herself as an American.

Her American self-identification is also obvious when she visits Japan. There, she undergoes cultural problem due to her Americanness. Her attitudes and acts, which are not like common Japanese girls, clearly show her Americanness; for example, she slapped her cousin in protest to her cousin's unwelcome attitude (Sone 1979: 93-94), 'savagely' bit one of the boys attacking Henry (Sone, 1979: 98), and tried to run up the arch of the Shinkyō Bridge that only the Emperor of Japan is allowed to walk upon (Sone, 1979: 94-95). Cultural problems, for instance: she does not know that she has to take off her shoes when entering a house (Sone, 1979: 91); she is not able to tuck her legs (Sone, 1979: 91); she finds embarrassment and no privacy both in public bathing and bathing in a rain barrel (Sone, 1979: 100-102) show further that she is not truly culturally Japanese. The visit to Japan and having contact with the real Japanese in Japan only make Kazuko feel to be an alien among people of her race primarily because of the cultural problem she undergoes and secondarily because the Japanese themselves look at her and her family as foreigners or "American-jin" (Sone, 1979: 97) and despise them for "their crude American manners" (Sone, 1979: 123). Kazuko, thus, becomes more convinced that America is her home though she respects Japan for its "exoticism, historic beauty and modernity" (Sone, 1979: 108). Thus, her visit to Japan strengthens her

identification that she is an American.

However, after years studying in Nihon Gakko, Bailey Gatzert School and Central Grammar, Kazuko, who formerly was a “jumping, screaming, roustabout Yankee” (Sone, 1979: 22), transforms into “a polished piece of articulateness” (Sone, 1979: 131). She opens her mouth only to reply questions. Although she has opinions in a discussion, she does not speak. In Kazuko’s words, her quietness is caused by her Japanese blood (Sone, 1979: 131). This shows that somehow she absorbs Japanese culture, revealing the strong impact of the culture on her.

Another example is obvious in an episode experience when she is treated for her tuberculosis in North Pines Sanatorium. Her fellow white patients misunderstand her as a rude person because of her being quiet in the accompaniment of others (Sone, 1979: 140).

What can be said here is that as an American from Japanese ancestry Kazuko shows the absorbance of both American and Japanese cultures. Compared to Issei, seen through her conflict with her father, she is more American but compared to white Americans, Kazuko still shows traces of Japanese culture, such as being less assertive and spontaneous.

Another trace of Kazuko’s Japaneseness is also apparent before the Japanese American evacuation when she and her family have to destroy everything and anything Japanese that could make them suspected. Kazuko especially cannot bring herself to destroy the “Japanese doll which Grandmother Nagashima had sent her from Japan” (Sone, 1979: 155). Her feeling that is “filled with indescribable sense of guilt for having destroyed the things she loved” (Sone, 1979: 156) shows her attachment to Japanese culture.

The second half of the book is

about Kazuko’s contact with the white mainstream. The first contact with the whites that she assumes strange is when two policemen come to her house, accusing her father as a bootlegger and arrests him. They will let him free of charge only if they pay them fifty dollars.

Mother shook her finger at him.
“See! We don’t have sake. We don’t make it. We don’t drink it. You make mistake. Somebody else. Not Mr. Itoi.”

“All right, all right. Just calm down now. Don’t worry about a thing.” He dropped his voice and whispered soothingly, “Just fifty dollars, Mama, just fifty dollars. No trouble then, see?” (Sone, 1979: 36).

Kazuko finds out that the police, who are supposed to serve and protect American citizens, are her family’s “sworn enemies” (Sone, 1979: 34) for their corrupt effort to blackmail minority like her father.

The next experience is when Kazuko and her mother try to find a rent cottage in Alki—warm climate area—for Sumiko’s recovery from her illness. It unveils a confusing fact to Kazuko because the whites do not want to rent the house to Japanese. Such treatment invites her to question why being a Japanese makes any difference.

I sat upright. That had not occurred to me. Surely Mother was mistaken. Why would it make any difference? I knew that Father and Mother were not Americans, as we were, because they were not born here, and that there was a law which said they could not become naturalized American citizens because they were Orientals. But

being Orientals had never been an urgent problem to us, living in Skidrow (Sone, 1979: 113).

This shows that Kazuko's first realization of being a Japanese in American white society means confusion of her own self. Such treatment makes her feel like being "torn apart between feeling defiant and then apologetic about her Japanese blood." (Sone, 1979: 115) and gradually, she learns in many other ways "the terrible curse that went with having Japanese blood" (Sone, 1979: 118).

Her eventual realization of the problem of being Japanese comes along with her awareness of how much the people hate Japanese. In time close to the war when the international matters heightened, people stare at her suspiciously and coldly on the streets, they shout for a boycott on Japanese goods, Japanese employees are replaced by Chinese, many editorials are covered with cartoons of a Japanese with "enormous, moon-shaped spectacles, beady and myopic eyes, massive square buck teeth, and a small moustache." (Sone, 1979: 119) They are also rejected in swimming pool (Sone, 1979: 119). These are parts of the series of white treatment towards Japanese Americans, after the immigration law, house and job segregation that make Kazuko angry and her pride hurt. Her years of effort to distinguish between Japanese and Japanese American are in vain. As an American in her own country, Kazuko is treated like an outcast—not as an American.

However, when other Nisei start to look at Japan as the land of hope, Kazuko still hangs her hope to America (Sone, 1979: 124) and believes in her democracy though she has to swallow her pride and learn to endure.

The Executive Order No. 9066

passed after the Pearl Harbor attack and President's Roosevelt's declaration of war against Japan gives Kazuko the worst realization on what being a Japanese means. Kazuko's initial response towards the order shows the intermixture between hope and anger because of her belief of her American status. She hopes that Nisei would not be evacuated as she says, "We were quite sure that our rights as American citizens would not be violated, and we would not be marched out of our homes on the basis as enemy aliens (Sone, 1979: 158)

Yet, she finds out her hope crashed as the order authorizes mass Japanese American evacuation regardless their citizenship; it leads to her anger, "Once more I felt like a despised, pathetic two-faced freak, a Japanese and an American, neither of which seemed to be doing me any good" (Sone, 1979: 158-159). Kazuko's rage is also very obvious when she looks at the soldier's rifle used by American soldiers to herd the Japanese Americans aboard the bus to the assembly center. She assumes that the rifle was presumably to quell riots but contrarily, she felt riotous emotion mounting in her breast (Sone, 1979: 170). However, she even still has the hope at the time she is leaving her house for the assembly centers that something or someone would intervene for them (Sone, 1979: 166).

Finally, however, her hope does not come true and she comes to the realization that she is regarded as an enemy by the white Americans. Although she is definitely not a Japanese since she has American citizenship, as an American, she is treated like a Japanese. So, there is no such thing as Japanese American. This is elaborated further when she lives in Minidoka camp, being imprisoned by her own government. A strong question rises in her mind, reflecting her anger.

What was I doing behind a fence like a criminal? If there were accusations to be made, why hadn't I been given a fair trial? Maybe I wasn't considered an American anymore. My citizenship wasn't real, after all. Then, what was I? I was certainly not a citizen of Japan as my parents were. On second thought, even Father and Mother were more alien residents of the United States than Japanese nationals for they had little tie with their mother country. In their twenty-five years in America, they had worked and paid their taxes to their adopted government as any other citizen... Of one thing I was sure. The wire fence was real. I no longer had the right to walk out of it (Sone, 1979: 177).

The War Relocation Authority's program to release Nisei gives a new hope to Kazuko. Though they cannot return to the West Coast, she hopes to be able to start all over again in the Midwest as she says, "Now that I had shed my past, I hoped that I might come to know another aspect of America which would inject strength into my hyphenated Americanism instead of pulling it apart (Sone, 1979: 216).

Her experiences in the Midwest actually may not be as pleasant as her friend, Matsuko, tells her, since she experiences exploitation when working as a dental assistant and is segregated when she is in Wendell College, but it is not also as bad as when she was in Seattle. In general, her life is better in the Midwest. And, the book ends in an optimistically sounding hope;

I had discovered a deeper, stronger pulse in the American scene. I was going back into its main stream, still with my

Oriental eyes but with an entirely different outlook, for now I felt more like a whole person instead of a sadly split personality. The Japanese and the American parts of me were now blended into one (Sone, 1979: 238).

Based on the episodes above, the writer views that the novel is about Nisei's question on self-identity existing because of her confusing position as a Japanese biologically, an American legally and that she absorbs double cultures. Such question is actually rooted in her desire to get acceptance in American society. In the first half of *Nisei Daughter*, Kazuko attempts to distinguish what Japanese is and Japanese American is. She prefers the latter. Since childhood, Kazuko has always identified herself as an American. In her contact with Japanese culture in the Nikkei community as well as in Japan, she describes her dislikes to it and how burdensome the ethnic culture is for her. Here, she clearly shows her American perspective. Because of her American identification and perspective, she is in cultural conflict with Issei.

Meanwhile, the second half of the book is about the attacks on Japanese American identity and Kazuko's gradual realization that her choice of being Japanese American is not possible to accomplish. Her encounter with white society brings out new realization to her. As an American, she is merely an outcast because of discrimination and prejudice she faces. She does not get acceptance from the white mainstream as she wants. Her identification problem becomes worse in the wartime because she becomes an enemy of the U.S as she is interned in camp.

The writer's opinion stating that the novel presents Nisei's question on self-identity above is in accordance with the online source on [Nisei Daughter](#) that

confirms that the theme of the novel is the Nisei's question of identity (<http://www.library.csicuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/389/jacobs.html> accessed on November 1, 2007)

All along, Kazuko sees herself as having both Japanese and American sides as she formulates herself as "two-faced freak, a Japanese and an American" (Sone 158). In response to her identity question due to her condition as both Japanese physically and culturally, American legally and culturally, Kazuko prefers to have reconciliation for her search of identity. At the end, she regards herself now a whole person because Japanese and American parts have blended into one. This thus gives the assimilationist ending to the novel.

Actually, Kazuko does solve her identity problem when she goes further and deeper into the American interior, that is, going to Midwest to Chicago. It means she tries to assimilate more into American society, and tries to blend herself into larger society as an individual, free from the cohesiveness of the previous Japanese community. Thus, the novel is complete in the sense that the character's question of identity is answered by the character, reflected through the resolution she makes.

CONCLUSION

The study proves that the novel voices the identity problem experienced by the Nisei, which is also the experience of the author. The different cultural condition between Issei and Nisei generations has proved to contribute to their confusion and hinder their assimilation. Racism also contributes to the existence of Nisei's identity problem because of the racist treatment they received as Americans, which find its climax in the internment in the wartime. It shows the author's attempt to voice the experiences of the Japanese Americans in

the wartime and the optimistic hope to be part of American life. It also exhibits the authors' effort to portray better image of Japanese American patronized by the whites in literature for a long time due to prejudice.

The novel actually has given an example of government's mistake of treating its citizens by interning and evacuating them as the enemies of the country. Yet, the government's willingness of righting the wrong it has done through responding the claims for redress in the following decades, in 1990s, should become a lesson to learn for every country, including Indonesia, with respect to acknowledgement of injustices done and readiness to respond any claim for compensation or rehabilitation.

The writer of this study owes gratitude to her sisters for their support from a distance for this research completion and for showing what a struggle means.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M.H. 1971. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. New York: W.W Norton and Company, Inc.
- Colins, Donald E. 1985. *Native American Aliens: Disloyalty and the Renunciation of Citizenship by Japanese Americans during World War II*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Daniels, Roger. 1988. *Asian American: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Daniels, Roger. 1993. *Prisoners without Trial. Japanese Americans in World War II. A Critical Issue*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Fugita, Stephen S and David O'Brien. 1991. *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community*.

- Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Feagin, Joe F. 1984. *Racial and Ethnic Relations*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Jacobs, Matthew. 2000. *Monica Sone. Nisei Daughter*. University of New York, New York <<http://www.library.csicuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/389/jacobs.html>> (accessed November, 1, 2007.)
- Kim, Elaine H. 1982. *Asian American Literature. An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Kitano, Harry H.L. 1993. *Generations: Japanese Americans*. Needham Heights, MA: Ginn Press.
- Knippling, Alpana Sharma (ed.).1996. *New Immigrant Literatures in the United States. A Sourcebook to Our Multicultural Literary Heritage*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Kurashige, Lon and Alice Yang Murray (eds.). 2003. *Major Problems in Asian American History*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Lebra, Takie Sugiyama and William P. Lebra (eds.). 1986. *Japanese Culture and Behavior: Selected Readings*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- McLemore, Dale. 1983. *Racial and Ethnic Relations in America*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Murray, Alice Yang (ed.). 2000. *What did the Internment of Japanese American Mean?* New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Nelson, Emmanuel S. 2000. *Asian American Novelists: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Sone, Monica. 1979. *Nisei Daughter*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Takahashi, Jere.1997. *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics*. Philadelphia; Temple University Press.
- Yamamoto, Eric K et.al. 2001. *Race, Rights, and Reparation. Law and the Japanese American Internment*. New York: Aspen Law and Business.
- Yoo, David K. 2000. *Growing up Nisei. Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California 1924-1949*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.