AMERICAN NATIVISTS AND THEIR CONFRONTATION WITH JAPANESE LABOR AND EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA 1900-1930

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ABSTRACT

The anti-Japanese sentiment that existed in California during the early part of the twentieth century was a reaction by white Americans to the perceived threats that Japanese immigrants posed to American labor and security. Fearing that the Japanese were on a mission to “Orientalize” the Pacific Coast, white Americans used racial and ethnic attacks against Japanese-Americans in an effort to persuade Americans to call for the exclusion of Japanese-Americans and to institute limitations on Japanese immigration. Following World War One, a heightened sense of American nationalism led to an anti-Japanese sentiment that focused on aspects of Japanese-American culture deemed to be “subversive” and a threat to American society. Japanese churches and schools were identified by “Americanists” as instruments of sabotage that would turn against Americans in the event of a conflict between Japan and the United States. The result was an attempt by the Americanists to “Americanize” aspects of Japanese culture so that they would teach Japanese immigrants how to be proper American citizens.

This thesis examines the anti-Japanese movement against Japanese-American labor and Japanese-language schools in the pre and post- World War One periods to illustrate how a nativist movement can form and the tools it will use to sustain itself. The anti-Japanese nativist movement was a movement based on economic anxieties and American nationalism that viewed foreigners as a threat. Americanists argued that Japanese-language schools that were formed in California at the turn of the century were teaching loyalty to Japan and imperialism to second generation Japanese-Americans. An examination of the early history of the schools reveals that while the schools’ curricula originally reflected the Japanese government’s insistence that Japanese subjects pledge allegiance to the emperor, it was the Japanese-language school officials
that first attempted to reform the schools so that they taught American ideals first, and Japanese heritage second. Together, the anti-Japanese labor movement and the Japanese language school crisis help to illustrate how a nativist campaign can stoke paranoia and provoke exaggerated fears of foreign “others” in an effort to sustain itself and gather support for its anti-immigration agenda.
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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the middle to late part of the nineteenth century and continuing into the early part of the twentieth century, immigrant groups such as Irish, Catholics, Italians and Chinese became targets of American nativist groups such as the Know-Nothing Party, the American Protective Association, and the Order of the Star Spangled Banner. These groups organized efforts that sought to define, limit, and protect what they determined to be the “national character.” Each of these movements combined to contribute to the long history of American nativism; anti-immigration movements designed to reserve the fullest privileges of citizenship for true “Americans.”¹ Beginning in the first years of the twentieth century and continuing through the Second World War, nativists sought to diminish the influence of immigrant Japanese, a group nativists perceived to be a threat to their economic well-being and American national security.

The first Japanese to immigrate to the United States, known as the Issei generation, began to arrive in significant numbers in the latter part of the nineteenth century continuing into the first few decades of the twentieth century. In 1890, the United States census shows that the total number of Japanese residents was approximately 2,039. That figure increased to 72,157 in 1900 and to 72,157 in 1910.² The immigrants arriving from Japan were desperately poor farmers and laborers who lived in poverty and because of overpopulation in Japan, were considered to be outcasts. Unable to find or maintain any kind of significant wealth in Japan, lower-class Japanese left for America in search of jobs that were unattainable in Japan. In general, the Japanese

immigrants were the least literate, the least westernized, most traditional of Japanese citizens, and as a result the most unlikely to assimilate into American society.\(^3\)

These newcomers to the West Coast of the United States found jobs in many different areas of American society. Large numbers of Japanese found work on fishing boats and in fish canneries, while others turned to work as farm laborers. Eventually, the Japanese were recruited for seasonal labor in lumber mills. Working these blue-collar jobs allowed the Japanese to accumulate enough income to eventually purchase their own land. While living in Japan, the *Issei* developed knowledge of drainage and fertilization techniques. Bringing this knowledge to America combined with an intense work ethic, the *Issei* were able to transform undesirable land and swamps in thriving farms.\(^4\) Many *Issei* who chose not to become farmers were able to establish themselves up and down the West Coast as business owners as they opened restaurants, hotels, and boarding houses while others became fishermen.

The economic success of the *Issei* put them in direct competition with the elite white American business owners residing on the West Coast. American farmers appreciated the Japanese as hard-working agricultural laborers, but they felt increasingly threatened as the immigrants became successful and grew to be the farmers’ direct competition. The *Issei* who had established farms and businesses on the West Coast decreased the pool of available labor and offered economic competition to white businesses.

The *Issei*’s success also challenged the idea of white supremacy. The failure of the *Issei* to “fulfill their role” in society angered whites of all social classes.\(^5\) To white American business

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owners, the role of the Japanese-American was one of blue-collar worker who labored in the fields and worked all day on American boats. As the Japanese integrated themselves into American society, the perception of them as being “unassimilable” increased. While the Issei had demonstrated themselves to be hardworking, law-abiding, devoted to family and community, and exemplars of small-scale, free-market capitalism, most white Americans simply could not accept the Japanese as their competition. Instead, they chose to create for themselves a fictional view of Japanese-Americans that characterized the Japanese as “unassimilable.”

In addition to the growing West Coast anti-Japanese sentiment was the emergence of Japan as an imperial threat in the wake of its victory in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War. During the early stages of the war, many Americans felt sympathy for the underdog Japanese believing that that a small island nation stood little chance in its attempt to defeat such a powerful European nation with a large army and fleet. Japan’s victory over the Russians revealed not only its strong naval force but also served, in President Theodore Roosevelt’s view, to threaten the balance of power in Asia following Russia’s defeat. Roosevelt’s short-term solution was to broker a treaty between the two warring nations, and the resulting Treaty of Portsmouth, while ending the war without crippling the Russian strength in Asia, also gave Japan significant control in the southern China, Manchuria, and awarded Japan several new naval bases in Asia. These submissions would lead future President Franklin Roosevelt to now consider Japan to be America’s chief rival in the Pacific.

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The emergence of Japan as a member of the “imperial club” only added to the growing tensions that existed on the West Coast of the United States and in Hawaii. Building on the theme of the Japanese being “unassimilable,” San Francisco Mayor James D. Phelan declared that, “The Japanese are not bona fide citizens. They are not the stuff of which American citizens can be made… Personally we have nothing against Japanese, but as they will not assimilate with us and their social life is so different from ours, let them keep at respectful distance.”

Driven by increasing economic tensions, American business owners and laborers initiated attempts to diminish Japanese “competition within” California businesses. In addition to restricting Japanese land ownership, an attempt was made by the San Francisco School Board to segregate Japanese-American schoolchildren in American schools. Influenced by the San Francisco based Union Labor Party, a group formed in 1901 that was instrumental in enacting several key initiatives such as demands for restrictions on Asian immigration and the creation of segregated schools for Asian children, and the Asiatic Exclusion League, the segregation order created enough tension between the two nations that it brought them to the brink of war. It was only after President Theodore Roosevelt issued the 1907 Gentlemen’s Agreement that tensions began to ease. The attempt at segregation in San Francisco began the movement by labor unions and trade councils to advocate immigration restriction. While the attempt at segregation

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in San Francisco schools was short-lived, anti-Japanese platforms were beginning to gain popularity and by 1910 were a part of all major parties’ state election campaigns.  

The Japanese, perceived by many white Americans as a threat to American society, had to be prevented from identifying with any aspect of Japanese culture. Continued affiliation with Japanese heritage was detrimental to the Japanese ability to join American society. Japanese culture within America was perceived by exclusionists as allowing Japanese-Americans an alternative to learning American ideals and become active members of American society. As the Japanese formed separated communities, the Japanese desire to isolate themselves was viewed by many Americans that the Japanese were developing an anti-American view that would prove dangerous in the event of a conflict between the United States and Japan. Anti-Japanese nativists sought to “Americanize” aspects of the Japanese-American society, such as Japanese schools and churches, perceived to be “subversive.” Exclusionists viewed that Japanese language schools, which were developed at the turn of the century, were weapons of subversion used by the Japanese government in order to teach Japanese-American schoolchildren maintain loyalty to the nation of Japan, its emperor, and its ideals.

This thesis will examine the movement against Japanese-American labor and education in California during the early part of the twentieth century in an effort to illustrate how a nativist movement develops and the tools it implements to sustain itself. The anti-Japanese movement was formed by American economic anxieties and Japan’s emergence as a global power. Exclusionists, white Americans that viewed Japanese immigrants as stealing jobs away from Americans, introduce legislation designed to limit further Japanese immigration. Americanizers,

white Californians wishing to reform the language schools so that curriculum emphasized American citizenship, derided Japanese-American claims’ that aspects of their culture, such as education, were established so that the Nisei, second-generation Japanese citizens, could learn about their Japanese heritage. Instead, Americanizers argued that Japanese-Americans had been “deployed” by the Japanese government to conquer foreign lands. Together, exclusionists and Americanizers made up the anti-Japanese nativist movement that used racial attacks against the Japanese character and exaggerated aspects of Japanese culture in order to gather support for their movement by making Californians believe that the Japanese represented a danger to American jobs and security.

As Japanese-American laborers asserted themselves into the American labor market, exclusionists argued that the Japanese would eventually replace white Americans and the West Coast would become “Orientalized.” The focus on Japanese-American labor shifted after World War One, being replaced by a heightened American nationalism and the desire of many Americans to “Americanize” parts of society they viewed as too foreign in nature. Americanizers claimed that the Japanese language schools were a challenge to Japanese assimilability into white society. Activists in the Japanese “Americanization” movement sought to show that the language schools were preaching the same ideals as schools in Japan. These ideals, such as the Japanese belief in imperialism and vowing loyalty to the emperor, were argued by Americanizers to represent dangers to American society. As the decades continued and war became an increasing possibility, Americanizers in California began making attempts to influence the curriculum of the schools until they ultimately became “Americanized,” teaching American ideals, customs, and most importantly in the event of war, loyalty to the United States, not Japan.
A short historiography of nativism reveals that historians have uncovered several ethnic, psychological, and nationalistic reasons why nativism has endured for so long in America. Aristide R. Zolberg argues in *A Nation By Design* that the engineering of immigration policy has been prevalent since early American history. Zolberg examines American reactions to several immigrant movements to show the influences that business interests, labor unions, ethnic lobbies, and nativist ideologues have had in shaping immigration policy.\(^{14}\) When analyzing the anti-Japanese sentiment, historian Ronald Takaki’s interprets nativism as a direct result of economic competition. In *Strangers From A Different Shore*, Takaki provides an overview of Asian American history. He contends that although Asians have been a part of American society for well over a century, Americans still know little about Asian culture and that Asians are still often still considered “foreign.” Asians, because of their non-European origins, are viewed by white Americans as incapable of assimilating into American culture.\(^{15}\) Takaki asserts that while anti-Japanese sentiment may have resulted from factors such as ethnicity, it was the economic challenges that the Japanese were perceived to present to white Americans that drove the nativist cause.

Many historians of immigration view John Higham’s *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* as the most important work on nativism. Higham examines nativist movements between 1860 and 1925 and argues that nativism was basically a variant of nationalism. Higham himself calls his book, an account of the “intensification of nationalism” and insists that the fluctuations of nativism that he describes are related to “intense kinds of national feeling.” Writing in the 1950’s, Higham seems dismayed that nationalism never became


a major focus of research among American historians and was never perceived as an important cause. Higham examines organized labor, which took several positions on the immigration question: liberal reformers who tried to Americanize newcomers; Protestant ministers who feared the Catholic and immigrant threat to the nation; and government officials who argued for 100 percent Americanism. For Higham, the actions of these groups represented free expression of attitudes and values that represented cultural attitudes as variations on nationalism. These groups sought to defend the nation against the threat of foreigners and the culture that immigrants brought. American nationalism was articulated in language that described foreigners as being threatening and harmful.\footnote{John Higham, \textit{Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925} (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955).}

While many scholars who choose to write about the history of Japanese-Americans focus on the sentiment and how it related to the start of World War II and led to the Japanese internment camps, there are a few works that document the crisis that surrounded the Japanese-language schools. Among these are works by Noriko Asato and Eileen Tamura that do a respectable job of documenting the effects that the anti-Japanese sentiment had on the schools as well as the legislation enacted by exclusionists in an attempt to gain control over the schools’ curriculum. While Asato’s \textit{Teaching Mikadosim: The Attack on Japanese language schools in Hawaii, California, and Washington, 1919-1927} focuses primarily on the “Japanese-language schools crisis” beginning with an analysis of the crisis at its peak in the post-World War I years, Tamura views the conflict as a part of a larger American desire to “Americanize” all things foreign. In \textit{Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: The Nisei Generation in Hawaii}, Tamura explains that Americanizers accused the schools of encouraging Japanese nationalism
through patriotic celebrations, the employment of “alien” teachers who knew little or nothing about American traditions, and the use of textbooks that encouraged loyalty to Japan.\textsuperscript{17}

The American perception that the schools were teaching loyalty to Japan is a common theme among those who write about the language school controversy but in some cases, observers disagree over whether this perception was correct. An examination of three works on the topic shows that while a majority of authors view an evolution taking place as Americanization policies increasingly influenced the curriculum of the schools, there are those who feel the schools were “Americanized” from the start and always maintained a policy of teaching loyalty to America first. While writers such as Tamura and historian Roger Daniels are considered to be the foremost scholars of the subject of the Japanese in America, their works include only a chapter or two on the schools and thus will be put aside for now.\textsuperscript{18} Instead, an examination of three works, including Asato’s \textit{Teaching Mikadoism}, whose primary focus is the Japanese-language schools, helps to illuminate the discussion that this paper intends to address.

Providing an overview of the history of California schools from the mid-nineteenth century to 1975, Charles M. Wollenberg analyzes segregation of non-Caucasian students in California in \textit{All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California School, 1855-1975}. Included in this examination is an analysis of the Japanese language schools. Wollenberg asserts that the Japanese institutions were not training Japanese children to return to Asia but were instead set up to help the \textit{Nisei} fit into the American way of life. It had become necessary for the young Japanese-Americans to be able to communicate with their \textit{Issei} parents so that family cohesiveness and discipline would not disappear. As early as 1913, the Japanese Education

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{18} Tamura, \textit{Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity} and Daniels, \textit{Politics for Prejudice}
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Association, an organization of language-school teachers, had emphasized that the schools were “not intended to perpetuate the traditions and moral concepts of Japan.” 19

Wollenberg writes that the concern over the Japanese-language schools arose from the now often-cited fear of the “Yellow Peril” that existed in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Newly arriving Japanese experienced the same prejudice felt by other Asians who had earlier migrated to the United States. Organized labor worried about job competition and low wages, while prejudice loomed with the fear of the “yellow menace.” 20 While the Chinese became the focus of the anti-Asian sentiment in the late nineteenth century, Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese war and the influx of Japanese into the West Coast increased the calls for exclusion laws and segregation policies.

Turning his focus towards the schools and their curriculum, Wollenberg finds evidence that the language schools taught very few Nisei children to speak acceptable Japanese and did little to absorb Japanese culture or nationalism. 21 Nisei children idealized America, preferring to speak and read English and found American schools more rewarding than the language schools. The schools simply served a “social function” by bringing together the Nisei youth, separating them socially from their white contemporaries. Parents of the Nisei expressed satisfaction with the schools’ assimilationist strategy, even to the point of attending classes themselves to learn how best to adjust to the ways of American life.

Although Wollenberg’s argues that there is evidence to support his conclusion that the schools were in fact teaching assimilation, he fails to present the evidence to the reader. For Wollenberg, the idea that the schools were teaching Japanese ideals and culture as a way of

20 Wollenberg, All Deliberate Speed, 50.
21 Wollenberg, All Deliberate Speed, 70.
encouraging loyalty to Japan was a false perception held by Americans. Thus, the white American population began to institute a plan that would either control the teachings of the Japanese-language schools or abolish them completely. In 1921, the California State Board of Control introduced legislation that allowed American control over the schools, establishing qualifications for language-school teachers and setting standards to assure that textbooks did not reflect un-American values. For Wollenberg, changes in the schools’ curriculum never occurred as they maintained their assimilationist policy. Americans simply stepped in to monitor the schools, making sure the schools did not stray from their “Americanized” policies.

In *Public School Education of Second-Generation Japanese in California*, Reginald Bell performs an analysis of the Japanese-Language schools including a general overview of the schools before going into an in-depth analysis of the performance of the students. Written in 1935, Bell provides an in-depth explanation about his methods for judging the students’ overall academic performance and relates his discussion about the problems of segregation and how it negatively affected Japanese school education.

Bell begins his examination of the Japanese language schools by explaining the crisis that surrounded the schools narrowing it down to one question that was being asked by white Americans, “Were these ‘foreign’ schools preparing these Japanese-born on American soil for successful citizenship in a democracy, or were they completely Japan-centered?” 22 Following the end of World War One, Japanese-language schools in California became the focal points of criticism for outspoken patriotic groups, such as the Asiatic Exclusion League and anti-Japanese League, which promoted exclusion and Americanization. The strength of Bell’s introduction to the schools is his use of primary sources to show the importance given to the Japanese schools

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by Japanese-American political leaders. As the anti-Japanese sentiment grew, the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization held a hearing in 1920 where the Secretary of the Japanese Association of America explained the importance of the schools, “the immigration groups usually face two alternatives in educating the children, namely to organize some such institution as language school to maintain the group communication, or to leave the group to disintegrate so fast that the result is socially detrimental…The Japanese have already chosen the former.” 23 The secretary’s quote is a declaration that the Japanese felt the schools represented a way to retain a Japanese identity, its own national or racial characteristics, while simultaneously being a full-time participant in American society.

Bell assesses the performance of the Japanese-language school students and explains his calculations at exhausting length. He performs a similar analysis to show how Japanese, Chinese, and other non-Caucasian students who had been segregated in school districts in and around Sacramento County, California performed in relation to students who had not been segregated. Bell’s analysis is heavily focused on statistical data from both segregated and non-segregated schools, and while it provides a very detailed review of the legislation enacted against the schools and its effect on their performance, its focus on numbers leaves out an analysis of how the schools adjusted to Americanization laws passed in 1921 and 1923. Textbooks are briefly introduced but any mention of their evolution is left out. A similar situation exists with discussion about the daily activities of the schools including any changes that occurred regarding teachers, students, and curriculum.

Building on Bell’s study of California, Noriko Asato offers a comparative historical approach in his examination of how the anti-Japanese sentiment affected the Japanese language schools in Washington, California, and Hawaii from 1919-1927. *Teaching Mikadoism* describes how each crisis in each state differed as a result of each state’s peculiar social, economic, and political climates.

Economic forces drove the school controversy in California. The Japanese, successful land owners and farmers, provided economic competition to whites and thus the anti-Japanese language school situation was part of a larger attempt to restrict Japanese immigration and to fight Japanese land ownership. White exclusionists questioned the Japanese ability to assimilate and generated a fear that an unassimilable, mass Asiatic population with strong economic power would take over the West Coast and eventually control the whole nation. The emergence of Japan as a military power allowed Yellow Perilists to conclude that Japan was in a position to instigate a war with the United States. Japan wanted to gain any type of advantage it could and for Americans, which included sending Japanese immigrants to infiltrate American society. As the United States and Japan joined forces against Germany in World War One, the anti-Japanese sentiment largely dissipated only to be revived after the war in a much more intense version that challenged the Nisei’s loyalty to America and sought to deprive them of their American citizenship. The Nisei, the largest obstacle in removing Japanese influence from state agriculture, needed to be either “Americanized” or removed completely. A similar situation existed in Washington, but unlike California, the state had successfully enacted laws that forbade foreigners from owning land. Americanization legislation introduced in California in 1921 and 1923 eventually was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Thus, without the threat of

land ownership, despite the formation of an Anti-Japanese League and its warnings about the dangers of the Japanese-language schools, the state was unsuccessful in passing any type of laws that affected the schools and its teachings.

Asato presents her study in a generalized manner that provides only an overview of the language school controversy. She provides the number of students and schools as well as the origins of the schools but leaves out any discussion of the curricula of the schools on a day-to-day basis. This does not allow the reader to view the evolution that the schools experienced as the anti-Japanese sentiment grew and influenced the schools. Asato simply sets up the beginnings of the schools before immediately shifting to a discussion of the crisis and the problems that the schools were perceived to have presented. By focusing on the external influences and ignoring the internal transformations of the schools, Asato fails to show how the schools were affected and the changes that occurred in the curriculum as the schools became “Americanized” beginning their shift from focusing on Japanese identity and culture.

This study will bring together the scholarship on nativism with the work that focuses on the Japanese language school crisis in an effort to illustrate how the anti-Japanese sentiment was a movement formed out of economic anxiety and American nationalism. This thesis will first establish the economic and nationalistic elements of the exclusionist movement against the Japanese before focusing in on the Japanese language schools to show how Americanists exaggerated aspects of Japanese culture, including the schools connection to the Japanese ideals of nationalism and imperialism, to insight paranoia amongst Americans and a fear that Japanese-Americans represented a danger to the American well-being and could not be trusted.

While each work that focuses on the Japanese language school crisis does a credible job in his or her analysis of the conflict over the Japanese language schools, it becomes clear that
each chooses to focus their examination on a large-scale, leaving out how the schools were affected on a daily basis. Each scholar examines the school crisis by focusing on the American legislation and how it was designed to affect the schools. This thesis will examine the crisis from a different perspective; that of the Japanese language schools. These scholars leave out important questions such as: How did the schools change in the midst of the “Americanization” attempts, and how were these changes perceived within the Japanese-American community? The following study, by examining the schools curricula, textbooks, and reactions, aims to provide these missing answers. The “Americanization” of the language schools helps to place the anti-Japanese sentiment along with other nativist movements that shared its economic and nationalism features. By examining the nativist reactions to the economic threat posed by Japanese-Americans and the perceived threat that Japan represented following World War One, both the elements of a nativist movement and the tools that such a movement implements will be illustrated. Equally visible is the immigrant reaction to a nativist movement. As anti-Japanese Americans attempted to dissuade Japanese immigration through exclusion and “Americanization” legislation, the Japanese-American reaction revealed how groups such as the Japanese reacted to the nativists and illustrates the effect an anti-immigration movement can achieve.
Economic anxiety and nationalism were the driving forces behind the development of the anti-Japanese sentiment in the pre-World War One and postwar years. While racial prejudices were common, they were derived from economic and nationalistic fears. The Japanese males that immigrated to the United States in the first few years of the twentieth century brought with them from Japan a vast knowledge of farming and agriculture. The ability to turn the most desolate land into thriving farms combined with a hard-work ethic allowed the young Japanese to ascend quickly within the American labor market and to obtain their own land and businesses. Many native-born Americans, fearing that Japanese upward mobility would harm their own economic position, set out to warn Americans against a Japanese invasion that would result in white American loss of jobs and a growth of race that was unassimilable into American society. Originating in San Francisco, anti-Japanese sentiment would spread throughout California as labor unions made attempts to curtail further Japanese immigration.

CONFRONTATION BETWEEN JAPANESE-AMERICANS AND WEST COAST LABOR

The majority of Japanese-Americans who were part of the initial immigration to the United States came from the southwestern areas near Hiroshima, Kumamoto, Wakayama, Fukuoka, and Yamaguchi. The first Japanese immigrants were male laborers who first arrived on American shores beginning in the 1890’s. While most Issei held only the equivalent of an eighth grade education, they also came from a strong farming class. Coming from an agricultural background, the gravitation toward farming was predictable. Upon their arrival, farm labor on the West Coast was in short supply, and the immigrant population, made up mostly of men, was able to conform to the seasonal demands of the agricultural occupation.
Agriculture offered many advantages for the male-dominated Japanese population. Agricultural jobs paid well and were more certain than anything they could hope to find in cities. Labor was in short supply, and the population was able to conform to the seasonal demands of this type of occupation. In addition, because the men lived and worked together, they were able to form labor gangs, represented by agents, for convenient negotiations with employers. Finally, agriculture did not require any type of initial cash investment or technological skill.  

Young male Japanese workers quickly learned survival English and moved out from under the thumb of the labor contractors to find jobs on their own. Although large numbers continued to work in railroad construction, lumbering, mining, and cannery work, the majority of Japanese-Americans chose to remain in agriculture and aspired to be farm and land owners. The Japanese laborers – young, male, single, mobile, and industrious – were not likely to remain simple farm workers. Many Japanese began to work their own land either as tenants or purchasers. The farming experience brought over from Japan and the eventual development of a business structure that could handle all aspects of agriculture from the farming and harvesting to the retailing and wholesaling, made for rapid success. The Japanese quickly progressed from the level of ambitious laborers to that of economic competitors. The Japanese-American desire for upward mobility drew suspicion from the white farming community. Many Californians could not accept the idea that nonwhites should share in the American dream.

The Issei who established farms and businesses on the West Coast shrunk the pool of available labor and offered economic competition to elite whites. In addition, their success challenged widespread and accepted notions of white supremacy – their failure to “keep to their

26 Kitano, Japanese-Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture, 16.
A 1910 editorial published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* summarizes the feelings of the American community towards Japanese upward mobility, “Had the Japanese laborer throttled his ambition to progress along the lines of American citizenship and industrial development, he probably would have attracted small attention of the public mind. Japanese ambition is to progress beyond mere servility to the plane of the better class of American workman and to own a home with him. The moment that this position is exercised, the Japanese ceases to be an ideal laborer.”

With the publication of articles in 1905 by the *San Francisco Chronicle* that included headlines like “How Japanese Immigration Companies Override Laws,” “Brown Men are Made Citizens Illegally,” and “The Yellow Peril – How Japanese Crowd Out the White Race,” the anti-Japanese sentiment in California had begun. Other newspapers, such as the *San Francisco Examiner*, the *Los Angeles Citizen*, and *Sacramento Bee*, would soon join the *Chronicle*. In addition, several anti-Asian organizations began to form in the hopes of restricting immigration laws in order to prevent the Japanese from wanting to come to the United States.

The *San Francisco Chronicle*, a conservative newspaper edited by John P. Young, was instrumental in initiating and spreading an anti-Japanese sentiment. The *Chronicle* warned that if the “inundation of the Japanese” was not checked, then the result would be the “complete Orientalization of the Pacific Coast.” Focusing on the shoe trade industry in California, an article that appeared in the March 12, 1905 issue of the *Chronicle* titled, “Effect of Jap Invasion on American Labor,” warned about the emergence of the Japanese emergence in the industry and their affect on American jobs and wages. By 1905, the Japanese had come to own nearly two

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29 Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial*, 10.
30 Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice*, 26
hundred shoe repair establishments in California. “This, of course, means that a precisely corresponding number of American skilled workmen have been disposed, that wages have been lowered throughout the whole industry and that an American organization has been disorganized and discouraged.”

Coming at a time when the Japanese men that made up the majority of the Issei population were first completing their ascension in agriculture and obtaining land ownership, the timing of the Chronicle’s reaction suggest that the attacks on the Japanese were economic rather than racial in nature, instead of being racially motivated. The racial prejudices that eventually did appear in the paper’s headlines followed the attacks on the Japanese labor and appeared to be designed to call attention to the dangers that the Japanese posed to American workers. Previously certain Japanese characteristics such as industriousness and ambition were viewed favorably when the Japanese were simple farm laborers. Now the Chronicle set out to attack the Japanese, suggesting their lack of desire or ability to assimilate into American society.

While the anti-Japanese sentiment was caused by the economic threat posed by immigrant Japanese, exclusionist attempts to garner support for their anti-Japanese movement took on a racial aspect. In March 1905, the Chronicle ran an article simply titled “The Japanese Character: Why Contact Must Impair Our American Civilization.” While this article was one of many articles printed by the paper at the time, it was the first to attack the Japanese character and suggest American actions to restrict Japanese influence on American society. “There are certain racial characteristics which seem common to all. Among these are a fatalism which exclude all fear of death, low ideals of womanhood, and little conception of sexual morality as we know it; a tendency of the upper classes to abstract philosophical speculation; class distinctions such as

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never existed in any Aryan race, and which are almost impossible to be overcome.” The references to the Japanese view of womanhood were an attempt to portray the Japanese as “barbaric or uncivilized.” The article continued its attack on the Japanese character by shifting to the Japanese way of life, “Japanese contain a standard way of life which we call low, but which they call sensible - simple diet, cheap dwellings, unchanging fashions, long hours of labor, abject submission to authority, and, above all, the habit of adhering to their ideals, customs, habits, and racial and national characteristics wherever they go.” 32 This last sentence reveals the purpose of the article, to assert their inability to assimilate into the American way of life. The Japanese were a different race from a different part of the world. They were part of a race that maintained a different way of life than that of Americans. With such a gap between Japanese and American heritage, the Japanese simply lacked the ability to exist in American society.

The Chronicle’s call for exclusion received support from various labor organizations within San Francisco. The Federation of the Mission Improvement Clubs, a group of clubs and organizations designed to protect American interests in labor, stated its support for the Chronicle’s message that “the importance of the Japanese menace to the United States, its industries and its people; be it resolved that the Federation of Mission Improvement Clubs heartily indorses the attitude of the Chronicle in this direction and urges the continuance of the good work.”33 The Chronicle’s message was rapidly gaining support throughout San Francisco. The city represented the origins of the anti-Japanese movement. Mainly driven by a large influx of Japanese laborers into the city’s labor market, the Chronicle and labor unions began a movement that would spread throughout the state. American workers in cities such as Los

Angeles and Sacramento that experienced a similar number of Japanese immigrants entering the labor markets, reacted in a similar manner to their counterparts in San Francisco.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Los Angeles was an agricultural and railroad center that provided the ideal landscape for Japanese immigrants. The first sizeable number of Japanese had entered the country in the late nineteenth century as section hands on the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroads. In the early 1900’s, the railroads, preferring Mexican workers, began to lay off Japanese hands. Seeking alternatives, the Japanese began turning to the evolving agriculture of Southern California. Agriculture provided the backbone for an ethnic economy that sustained the Los Angeles Japanese – American community until World War Two. It was an industry that would also bring Japanese-Americans into direct conflict with American-born citizens of Los Angeles. A continuing influx of Japanese into the Los Angeles labor market and the continued upward mobility of its Japanese citizens, led Los Angeles labor to follow the lead of the San Francisco labor unions. In June 1907, the Los Angeles Central Labor Council stated its anti-Japanese position in its official newspaper, the Citizen, “Japs to the right of them, Japs to the left of them, Japs in front of them. Compact organization is the only way to fight these people and their employers. There is now being waged, all along the Pacific Coast, the fiercest struggle in labor history between organized capital and the trades unions.”

Sacramento Bee owner Valentine Stuart McClatchy described the early pre-World War One anti-Japanese movement as “not based on racial prejudice, but on unanswerable economic grounds. Because of different tastes and different discipline, the Japanese easily drive the whites out of any community in which the two civilizations meet in economic competition. It is for this

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35 *Los Angeles Citizen*, June 7, 1907.
reason that the Japanese is an undesirable immigrant, for it is assumed that the American Nation desires to retain this country for the white race.”  

V.S. McClatchy, along with his brother Charles Kenny McClatchy, inherited ownership of the Sacramento Bee and the paper’s headlines were heavily influenced by V.S. McClatchy’s anti-Japanese stance. McClatchy viewed Hawaii as a “Lost Territory” to Americans and the United States. Fearing the same for California, McClatchy claimed that the state’s rich lands were the favored spot of the Japanese. California, representing the western-most outpost of American civilization, needed to be defended from the Japanese “peaceful invasion.”

A month after the series of articles began to run in the Chronicle, California politicians took up the anti-Japanese crusade. Both houses of the state legislature approved implementation of anti-Japanese resolutions that followed the proposals of the Chronicle Japanese-Americans were described as “undesirable,” and as not wishing “to assimilate with our people or to become Americans.” The closing of the resolution again warned of the dangers of allowing the Japanese onto the west coast. Again, the warning was one that echoed the Chronicle’s fear that Japanese immigration would lead to the West Coast becoming completely “Orientalized.” The resolution concludes, “the close of the war between Japan and Russia will surely bring to our shores hordes, to be counted only in thousands of the discharged soldiers of the Japanese Army, who will crowd the State with immoral, intemperate, quarrelsome men, bound to labor for a pittance, and to subsist on a supply with which a white man can hardly sustain life.”

Also following the lead of the Chronicle were several anti-Asian organizations. The most prominent, the Asiatic Exclusion League, originated in 1905 around the same time that the

36 V.S. McClatchy, Japanese Immigration and Colonization; Skeleton Brief (Memphis, TN: G.P.O, 1921), 127-128.
37 McClatchy, Japanese Immigration, 131-132.
38 Daniels, The Politics of Prejudice, 10
*Chronicle* was first publishing its anti-Japanese headlines. Formed in San Francisco, the League marked the first organized anti-Japanese movement and was founded by the combination of sixty-seven labor groups becoming a joint lobbying and propaganda group. Its stated aims were to spread anti-Asian propaganda and influence legislation restricting Japanese immigration. In its early stages, the League was an extension of the San Francisco labor unions. The most prominent labor leaders attending the initial meeting of the League were Patrick Henry McCarthy, head of the Building Trades Council of San Francisco, and Andrew Furuseth and Walter MacArthur, both of the Sailors Union.39 Arguing on economic grounds, the League stated its reasons for Japanese exclusion:

1. We cannot assimilate them without injury to ourselves
2. No large community of foreigners, so cocky, with such distinct racial, social and religious prejudices, can abide long in this country without serious friction
3. We cannot compete with a people having a low standard of civilization, living and wages
4. We cannot extend citizenship to Asiatics40

The League’s stated principles not only pointed to the dangers of the Japanese-Americans but also began the campaign to exclude all future Japanese immigration. As stated in the League’s Declaration of Principles, “Absolute exclusion for the future of all Japanese immigration, not only male, but female, and not only laborers, skilled and unskilled, but “farmers” and men of small trades and professions.” 41

Unlike earlier European immigrants that had arrived in America who had, with varying degrees of success, assimilated themselves into American society, many Americans viewed the Japanese as being an entirely different race that was unable to assimilate itself into American culture. The message of the Asiatic Exclusion League builds on this image, while also touching on the perceived economic problems that the Japanese posed, “The conditions of life are, in the last analysis, determined the conditions of labor, the Caucasian and Asiatic races are unassimilable. Contact between these races must result, under the conditions of industrial life obtaining in North America, in injury to the former, pro-portioned to the extent to which such contact prevails. The preservation of the Caucasian race upon America soil, and particularly upon the West shore thereof, necessitates the adoption of all possible measure to prevent or minimize the immigration of Asiatics to America.” 42 Exclusionists viewed Japanese as being an inferior race and were referred to in ways that made them nonhuman or subhuman. Japanese were often perceived to be animals, reptiles, or insects. Dehumanizing the Japanese allowed white America to widen the gap between “us” and “them” to the point where the gap seemed unbridgeable. 43 It was on this perception that the Asiatic Exclusion League founded and spread its message. As one League leader stated, “an eternal law of nature has decreed that the white cannot assimilate the blood of another without corrupting the very springs of civilization.”

Maintaining their message from the day of its founding in May 1905 until the end of World War Two, the Asiatic Exclusion League represented the most established anti-Japanese movement. Beginning in San Francisco, the early hotbed of the anti-Japanese sentiment, the League worked with small organizations such as the Anti-Jap Laundry League and the Anti-

Japanese League of Alameda County. Like the larger Asiatic Exclusion League, these two smaller groups also drew their strength from the ranks of labor unions. The labor unions warned against the Japanese invasion of California by spreading literature and statistics in an effort to educate the public about the dangers posed economically by Japanese. The propaganda issued in labor unions’ organs such as the State and Local Building Trades Councils of California’s *Organized Labor* credited the actions of the exclusionist League with bringing the perils of the Japanese invasion. “Thousands of fair minded and well meaning people who were biased and ignorant on the question of Japanese immigration have during the last year, entirely changed their views on the subject. They have learned the truth that the Japanese coolie is even a greater menace to the existence of the white race, to the progress and prosperity of our county than is the Chinese coolie.” The same article, published in 1906, explained how the city of San Francisco was so appealing to the Japanese and how they would continue their efforts to take control the Western areas of the United States. “California, the land of fabulous wealth, revenue and mountains of gold, and San Francisco with its wonderful wages will be exploited before the ignorant coolies until they will come in ship loads like an endless swarm of rats.”

With the establishment of the anti-Japanese front, made up of prominent journalists, legislators, and exclusion organizations, the Asiatic Exclusion League’s attempts to restrict Japanese immigration represented the first official requests to reduce the Japanese presence in California. Influenced by these initial efforts, legislators moved to segregate San Francisco schools. The movement, introduced by the San Francisco School Board in 1906, experienced only short-lived success before President Roosevelt stepped in to resolve the situation in order to stave off a diplomatic crisis with Japan. The school board’s attempt to segregate Japanese school

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children was a movement based on racial prejudice, but, more importantly, it emerged from the economic threat that white Californians perceived from their Japanese neighbors.

California law had long allowed “separate schools for children of Chinese or Mongolian descent,” and San Francisco had established a segregated school for Chinese pupils in the 1870s. On October 11, 1906, local school officials attempted to officially do the same for Japanese children. Largely unobserved by the American population, the “San Francisco School Board Incident” was first mentioned by a Tokyo newspaper and came close to igniting an international incident between Japan and the United States.

The reaction within the Japanese government was initially one of shock and disbelief. The government immediately lodged a protest with the United States government, angrily claiming that the school board actions violated a treaty provision guaranteeing Japanese children in the United States equal educational opportunities. 46 The school board incident came on the heels of the Japanese military defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War. President Roosevelt, who respected the emerging military power of Japan and feared an international incident, immediately moved to quell the School Board’s segregation attempts. Roosevelt scolded the school board for the segregation of Japanese children stating that “The cry against them is simply nonsense.” 47 In a letter to Secretary of State Elihu Root, he complained that “our people wantonly and foolishly insulted the Japanese in San Francisco.” 48 Roosevelt, putting aside his own racial prejudices, was able to sign an agreement with the Japanese that, for the moment, eased the tensions between the two nations and diminished any chance for conflict. The Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907-08 took the form of a series of notes exchanged between

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46 Takaki, Strangers From a Different Shore, 201.
48 Takaki, Strangers From a Different Shore, 201.
Roosevelt and the Japanese government resulting in Japan’s agreement to stop issuing passports to Japanese laborers to come to the United States in exchange for an American promise not to legislate against Japanese immigrants.  

While the “San Francisco School Board Incident” can be considered a relatively small episode in the Japan-United States relationship, it represented the first official attempt at Japanese exclusion. Like the efforts of the Chronicle that had preceded it, it was driven largely by economic anxieties. Roosevelt, himself, viewed the segregation order as part of organized labor’s pressure for immigration restriction. Labor unions such as the Union Labor Party, West Coast Seamen’s Union, and the local Building Trades Council had long been on record as advocating segregation of Asian students. Segregation was an attempt to dissuade Japanese from wanting come to or remain in America. At the time of the incident, there were only 85 Japanese-American students in primary and grammar grades in the San Francisco schools. The driving force behind the push for segregation was O.A. Tveitmore, secretary of the Building Trades Council. Tveitmore was a key figure in the Asiatic Exclusion League and sought similar Japanese exclusion laws that had previously been applied to Chinese laborers in the late nineteenth century. Tveitmore and other labor union leaders were bitterly opposed to the Japanese because they had cut the price of unskilled labor. The segregation endeavor had been the labor unions’ attempt to dissuade current Japanese laborers from maintaining residence in the city and also served to reduce Japanese desire for continued migration to the United States.

The Gentlemen’s Agreement appeared to satisfy those who favored Japanese exclusion. While the attempts at segregation had proved unsuccessful, the terms of the agreement had

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49 Daniels, Prisoners Without Trial, 13.
50 tenBroek, Barnhart, Matson, Prejudice, War, and the Constitution, 41.
included the desired limits on immigration that the exclusionists desired. However, the agreement experienced only limited success. From 1908-1913, the number of Japanese laborers entering the United States, either directly from Japan or by way of Hawaii, Mexico, or Canada, diminished by a third. But, after 1913, a large number of brides and wives swelled the figures again. Some five thousand more Japanese entered the United States between 1917 and 1924.

V.S. McClatchy, now a leader in the Japanese Exclusion League, declared in front of the House Immigration Committee, in a 1922 hearing, “if friendly relations with Japan are to be maintained, the United States Government must effectually stop the continued admission of Japanese and the rapid increase of Japanese population.” McClatchy argued that the Gentlemen’s Agreement should be cancelled as it had failed to carry out the purposes for which it was made, and that the United States, by treaty or legislation, should accomplish the intent of the agreement as set out by President Roosevelt.\footnote{52}

McClatchy had been a leading voice for the exclusion of the Japanese following the First World War, and the articles that appeared in the pages of the Sacramento Bee strongly reflected his exclusionist views. For McClatchy, the Japanese-Americans were “maintaining here a government within a government, most dangerous to American institutions. The citizenship of those born here is being “utilized largely for the purposes of Japan.” McClatchy claimed that of the ninety thousand Japanese claiming rights as Americans up to 1921, only seventy-three had applied for expatriation from Japan and only sixty-four had received it. Thousands of Japanese were being “lost for loyalty to this country.”\footnote{53}

\footnote{53} “Says Agreement Fails to Keep Japanese Out: McClatchy Tells House Committee that ‘Excursion Brides’ are Now Arriving,’ New York Times, Feb. 10, 1922.}
McClatchy’s views are symptomatic of an overall shift reflected in white social attitudes toward immigrant groups following World War One. They suggest that economic motives behind the words of the anti-Japanese exclusionists were giving way to another set of motives rooted in a strong sense of American nationalism. The heightened American nationalism following World War One originated from America’s emergence from the war and a strong belief in American exceptionalism. Americans, unsure of how to handle their new categorization as a world leader, feared that American security was in danger. Arising from this fear was the desire to “Americanize” every aspect of society deemed to be “foreign.” While American nationalism created confidence amongst Americans in regards to American ideals such as democracy and capitalism, nationalism also led to a heightened paranoia amongst Americans that immigrants were now maintaining loyalty to their home country and would commit sabotage in the case of conflict. During the war, Japanese immigrants had experienced a short hiatus from anti-Japanese harassment and boycotts as Anglo-Americans turned their attention to German-Americans. However, in the years immediately after the war, acts by the Japanese government such as the Twenty-One Demands upon China, the Shantung questions, and an Anglo-Japanese alliance widely perceived to be aimed at the United States, once again encouraged anti-Japanese Americans to focus their animus on Japanese-Americans. These actions by Japan built on the American belief that Japan intended to build on the large sphere of interest in northern China and Manchuria achieved through its victories in the first Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. These victories allowed Japan to join the ranks of the European imperialist powers in their scramble to establish political and economic domination over China. Americans feared the new Japanese aggression represented a threat to American security.
Using a term coined by McClatchy, many Californians now came to view Japan as the “Germany of Asia.”

HEIGHTENED AMERICAN NATIONALISM IN THE POST WAR ERA

World War One had significantly weakened European civilization in four short years. As the United States emerged as the global economic and military leader, Japan accelerated its imperialistic efforts. As the two non-European imperial powers began reshaping global relations, they also moved towards conflict over China and with each other. The postwar world with a collapsed European influence lent itself for emerging nations, such as Japan and the United States, to insert themselves in a global manner. While this provided each nation with a prominent opportunity, it also put them in direct competition. Adding, and perhaps representing the cause, of the conflict was the two differing ideologies of the two nations’ leaders. Emperor Yamagata’s policies were fueled by a passion to use the army to find security and independence for Japan. President Woodrow Wilson hoped to use a more democratic government to reform, or restore, the economic world of corporate America before class warfare erupted. The contrast of the two ideologies led exclusionists to develop an idea that there was a fundamental difference between the Japanese and Americans. Japanese were militarized and barbaric as they sought to insert Japanese influence into China and western lands using their military. This was in direct conflict to the American pursuit of power that included teaching others America’s democratic ideals so that other nations may learn and benefit from learning how to become an “American.” Yellow perilists believed that the Japanese, both as a nation and a people, had no desire to understand

54 Daniels, Politics of Prejudice, 51.
foreign cultures. Japanese were tied to Japanese ideals including imperialism, and the use of the military to expand its borders.

Postwar exclusionists viewed the Japanese as “always being Japanese” and as tensions increased between Japan and the United States, an attack by Japan appeared imminent to many Americans, leaving them to question the loyalty of their Japanese neighbors. The United States-Japan relationship had become strained at the turn of the century. America’s Open-Door policy had led it to occupy the Philippines following the Spanish-American War and to take an active role in pursuing China’s economic markets. Japan and the United States seemed to be on a collision course as the Japanese economic machine headed for the Asian mainland. Japan’s key industrial sector, textiles, targeted Manchuria as well as other Chinese markets. Japan’s demonstration of its power as it defeated Russia in the 1905 Russo-Japanese war left most Americans to fear Japan as a legitimate military threat but also as an expanding imperial force in direct competition with the United States. As author Homer Lea had written in the Valor of Ignorance in 1909, “the Japanese naturally sought to expand their empire over the globe, just as the European ‘races’ had. The Japanese would soon conquer the rest of East Asia, where their military was dominant, and would follow up with a swift movement into the Philippines, Hawaii, and Alaska, that were not defensible against a rapid strike. Once this was accomplished, the Japanese would strike at the West Coast of the United States.” 56 Japan’s increased acceleration of its economic offensive during the war and an additional conflict with the United States over actions in Siberia culminated with more calls for Japanese exclusion from the West Coast of the United States. Senator and Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee Henry Cabot Lodge wanted Japanese neither emigrating to the United States nor controlling the western Pacific. For

56 Robinson, By Order of the President, 18.
Lodge, there was “not the slightest danger” of war with Japan, the senator believed, “if Japan understands that she cannot get control of the Pacific.”

In his attempt for re-election to the California senate, James D. Phelan, who had previously warned against the economic dangers that the Japanese posed to white Californians, adopted as his campaign slogan, “Keep America White.” The former mayor of San Francisco had become part of the exclusionist movement that was increasingly growing fearful of the Japanese influence on West Coast American society. Phelan argued that the Japanese “will destroy American civilization as surely as Europe exterminated the American Indian.” Phelan’s 1920 campaign poster contained the headline “Save Our State From Oriental Aggression” and contained facts about the growing Japanese “invasion” such as the Japanese birth rates in agricultural counties and cities such as Los Angeles and Sacramento.

The previous fear of an economic “peaceful invasion” by the Japanese was replaced by a fear that Japan was a legitimate threat to attack American soil and that Japanese-Americans were working from the inside to sabotage the United States in an attempt to militarily spark a Japanese takeover. Whereas, before the war, attempts were made to restrict Japanese land ownership to limit their economic influence, refusing admission to Japanese immigrants became the only acceptable method to combat the Japanese “problem.” The Asiatic Exclusion League sought to have the earlier Gentlemen’s Agreement cancelled and absolute exclusion for the future Japanese implemented.

Exclusionist options were limited, however, as an editorial in the Fresno Republican illustrates:

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57 LeFeber, The Clash, 35.
59 McClatchy, Japanese Immigration and Colonization, 154.
“There is only one important Japanese question, and that is one which the state can do nothing about. We cannot prohibit the immigration of Japanese, deport those who are here, nor deprive them of the equal protection of the laws. These are the only things the anti-Japanese care anything about, and they are all national, not state questions. We can not deny native-born Japanese the right to vote. The law of California does deny that right to native-born Chinese, but the law is null and void, and they do vote. We cannot limit their right to work at any jobs they can get, and to live where they please. We can not even limit their right to own and lease land for business, manufacturing, or residence purposes.”

If preventing Japanese immigrants from migrating to the United States or restricting Japanese-American land and business ownership was not an option, anti-Japanese Americans were now forced to try and gain some sort of control over how Japanese-Americans lived.

Anti-Japanese sentiment had taken the form of two distinct movements in the pre and post – World War One periods. Early Japanese economic success in California had led the many young Japanese to become direct economic competition to the white, natural-born American population. White Californians feared that the Japanese were launching a “peaceful invasion” that would result in an “Oriental” economic dominance. This, in turn might jeopardize American jobs and destroy the prevailing American culture.

Coinciding with the Japanese arrival on the West Coast of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century was Japan’s emergence as a strategic rival of the United States. While political leaders such as Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, as well as Woodrow Wilson had long viewed Japan as a challenge to the American Open-Door foreign policy in China, it was World War One, and the introduction of a strong sense of American nationalism, as well as postwar Japanese economic expansion in Asia that led the American public to renew the dormant anti-Japanese sentiment with a new focus on Japanese subversion.

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60 Editorial, Fresno Republican, April 12, 1920.
The Immigration Act of 1924, a federal law that restricted the annual number of immigrants that could be admitted from foreign countries, successfully reversed the Gentlemen’s Agreement, yet white Americans renewed their attempts to diminish Japanese culture and heritage on the West Coast. Japanese came to be seen as isolationists, often confining themselves in “Japan-Towns” that propagated their own societies and values. Anti-Japanese Americans sought to attack aspects of Japanese culture that could be considered “tools of subversion.” Therefore, any facet of the Japanese-American society that was perceived to be encouraging loyalty to Japan needed to be eliminated. The Japanese-language schools that originated in the early years of the twentieth century immediately came under attack in the postwar years as a direct result of the Japanese loyalty question. The “Japanese-Language School Crisis” was born out of the American fear that the Japanese schools were teaching students to swear allegiance to Japan. Japanese opponents moved to change the curriculum in the schools so that the schools would become “Americanized.” If complete Japanese exclusionism was not a reality, Americans now sought to teach them how to be Americans.
CHAPTER 2: THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL CRISIS

The first Japanese language schools were established in California during the first decade of the twentieth century. Unlike the language schools in Hawaii, the schools in California were largely funded by tuition paid by parents. By 1918 there were eighty language schools in California. By 1933, the number increased to 220 with more than sixty-five percent of Nisei youth attending the schools for an average of about three years. Like Chinese-language schools, that had been established in the late nineteenth century, classes were held for an hour or an hour and a half in the in the late afternoons and on Saturdays, and tuitions were low. Elected boards from the local Japanese community usually established policy and the schools often were informally linked with chapters of the Japanese Association.\(^{61}\) While Americanizers viewed the schools as being propaganda tools of the Japanese imperial government, Japanese-Americans argued that the schools’ mission was to (1) make communication possible between parent and child, and (2) to provide a tool essential to the Nisei if they were to obtain employment within the Japanese community. The language school crisis reached its peak in the post war period as American nationalism grew leading Americans to question all things foreign. The language schools became targets of Americanizers that argued that the schools were maintained to “inculcate American-born Japanese with the national ideals of Imperial Government.”\(^{62}\)

**THE AMERICANIZERS’ ARGUMENT**

A heightened sense of American nationalism produced by the First World War led Americans to examine aspects of immigrant communities deemed to be “subversive.” In regards to the Japanese-language schools in California, Americanizers sought to uncover answers to

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\(^{61}\) Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed*, 69-70.

several questions: Were these “foreign” schools preparing Japanese born on American soil for successful citizenship in a democracy, or were they completely Japan-centered? Were the second-generation Japanese destined to be another hyphenated-American group? Where would the loyalty of its members be in the event of crisis arising between the homeland of their parents and that of their own birth? The answers to these questions reveal that Americans feared the influence of the Issei on second generation Nisei. The attempt to “Americanize” the Japanese language schools was part of a battle between native-born Americans and first generation Japanese-Americans. White Californians feared that Issei were attempting to preach Japanese heritage, customs and morals to their children in an effort to secure their children’s allegiance to the Japanese empire. This perceived threat motivated the “Americanization” movement to change the schools’ curriculum so that it would reflect American ideals and customs.

American fear of Japanese isolation was an extension of the “Yellow Peril” fear that originated in the first years of the twentieth century out of economic anxiety. In the years following World War One, American nationalism combined with a perception that ethnic Japanese lacked the ability to dissociate themselves from their loyalty to the emperor. “Mikadoism,” the teaching of allegiance to the emperor, led to American fears that the Japanese government and military controlled the Japanese-American thought. Institutions of the Japanese-American community, such as churches, businesses and schools, were instruments of Japanese expansion. Americans who had previously been fearful of the Japanese taking American jobs now feared complete Japanese domination of the United States. Many Americans thought that the language schools, therefore, were designed to preach allegiance to the emperor, to the Japanese military, and the Japanese imperialism project. Most importantly, the schools were

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63 Bell, Public School Education of Second Generation Japanese, 393.
teaching *Nisei* schoolchildren to favor Japan over the United States. The Japanese government continued to exert full authority over its subjects on American soil in spite of Japanese denials of the fact. The exclusionist campaigns of political leaders and media outlets such as V.S. McClatchy and the *San Francisco Chronicle* insisted that Japanese-Americans refused to announce their allegiance to Japan and demanded the abolishment of all Japanese language schools in the United States.64

Roland Sletor Morris, American ambassador to Japan from 1917 – 1920, analyzed the Japanese-American crisis as it existed in the first few years after the First World War. Morris’s 1921 report titled *Japanese Immigration and Alleged Discriminatory Legislation Against Japanese Residents in the United States* exemplified the American view of the Japanese isolation within California and the perceived problem of the Japanese language schools. “The Japanese in the United States, and particularly in California, appear to have settled in well-defined areas where they set up a community life more or less separate and apart from the other inhabitants.” Morris continued, “These communities operate Japanese schools which the children of Japanese parents attend outside of public school hours. The curricula of these are based upon those prescribed in the schools of Japan.” Morris’s analysis illustrates how Americans interpreted the institutions of the Japanese community, such as churches and especially the language schools as weapons of subversion designed to influence the worldview of the Japanese-American children, “Religious organizations, with headquarters in Japan, maintain religious and cultural centers in

64 *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 14, July 28, May 4, 1922, July 17, 1924.
the Japanese communities in the United States, and every effort is made to keep the younger
generation of children away from the current of American civic life.” 65

Japanese were perceived to be isolated from American society, maintaining separate
communities that allowed them to avoid interaction with many Americans. The Japanese desire
to maintain their own communities concerned Americans who believed that isolation equaled
subversion. Japanese ties to ancestral homeland institutions and practices attracted the scrutiny of
their white neighbors and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The FBI conducted investigations
into Japanese communities as “fronts for espionage activities.” FBI officials determined that
Japanese-American societies that espoused social, educational, and religious goals “masked their
pro-Japanese activities behind campaigns for the ‘Americanization’ of their members.
Investigations centered on Buddhist and Shinto churches and Japanese language schools.
Japanese churches and schools, maintained by Japanese communities to integrate themselves into
American society were viewed by Americanizers and federal agencies, such as the FBI, as
“frauds;” institutions that appeared to promote Americanization but which instead preached
Japanese heritage and loyalty. 66

The most serious criticism of the schools by native-born Americans pertained to the
teaching of Japanese morals. Americans viewed this as a way to teach Japanese nationalism and
culture. V.S. McClatchy argued that the real purpose of the schools was “to teach Japanese ideals
and loyalty and to make dependable Japanese citizens of the young Japanese children for who

are claimed, by birth, all rights of American citizenship.”

Responding to Dr. Sidney Gulick, a Minster, educator, writer, and third-generation missionary to Japan who claimed that the Japanese were capable of assimilating into American society and would pledge loyalty to America in the event of conflict between Japan and the United States, McClatchy responded that the language schools were instilling in Japanese schoolchildren the ideals and national aspirations of Japan. McClatchy argued, “It is not doubted that some Japanese children born in this country would become loyal American citizens who could be depended on even in a crisis. It would be unwise to assume that all, or even a majority of the Japanese born in this country would develop into dependable American citizens.” McClatchy viewed the language schools as an antithetical to assimilation, “There is no opportunity for assimilation and he drops back into Japanese trend of thought and ideals.”

McClatchy spoke on behalf of the Japanese Exclusion League, an organization headed by McClatchy that viewed the rising population of Japanese as a direct threat to American safety. As the number of Japanese-Americans increased, such exclusionist organizations argued that the Japanese character simply did not permit them to assimilate into American society. The Japanese were indoctrinated to believe in their emperor and their nation, their moral codes, and societies. Aspects of Japanese culture were not only strengthening Japanese beliefs, they were threatening the American way of life. The Exclusion League viewed the language schools as “anti-American.”

In America and Japan, McClatchy argued that the “the Japanese schoolchildren in California have been persistently taught in the separate language schools, which they are compelled to attend after public school hours, the ideals and national and racial aspirations of Japan. A Survey

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67 V.S. McClatchy, America and Japan: Their Treatment of Foreigners and Resulting Conditions; Policies in Immigration, Exclusion Land Ownership and Lease, Citizenship, Dual Citizenship (San Francisco, June 1925), 12.
68 V.S. McClatchy, America and Japan, 12.
Commission of the Department of Education at Washington in 1920 denounced these schools as
‘un-American if not anti-American’ and recommended they be abolished." \(^{69}\)

McClatchy argued that the Japanese government was directly involved with the Japanese
language schools, “Japan not only claims as her citizens all Japanese born on American soil, but
she takes great care that they grow up really as Japanese citizens, with all the ideals and loyalty
of the race, untouched by Japanese notions prevalent in this country, which would weaken that
loyalty.” \(^{70}\) McClatchy viewed the schools as an extension of the Japanese aim to teach the Nisei
that the Japanese race was superior. “The Japanese are taught from childhood that theirs is the
greatest race on Earth, with a God for its ruler, and destined eventually to lead or conquer all
other races. Naturally they have no desire to assimilate with or submerge themselves in other and
inferior races.” \(^{71}\) McClatchy noted that the Japanese “disinclination to relinquish their citizenship
is not a fault, but a virtue in them,” but then argued that this “favorable” character trait
represented a danger for Americans. “This furnishes one of the outstanding reasons for the great
national solidarity of Japan, unique among the nations of the Earth. But it furnishes an equally
good reason why the average Japanese may not make a good citizen of the United States.” \(^{72}\)

Whereas many Japanese-Americans viewed a return to Japan as a necessity because of
anti-Japanese sentiment that existed in California, McClatchy saw the schools as the first step in
the Japanese attempt to influence the national allegiance of the Nisei. McClatchy argued that the
schools taught the Nisei the Japanese language and customs in order to prepare them for a return

\(^{69}\) V.S. McClatchy, America and Japan, 12.
\(^{70}\) U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization,
Japanese Immigration Hearings, 66\(^{th}\) Congress, 2\(^{nd}\) session, 1921 (Washington DC: GPO<
\(^{71}\) V.S. McClatchy, “Assimilation of Japanese: Can They Be Molded Into American Citizens” in
Remarks Before the Honolulu Rotary Club (October 27, 1921), 10.
to Japan where they would attend Japanese schools before returning to the United States
“definitely fixed in their loyalty to Japan, and yet entitled to the rights of American citizenship.”
McClatchy provided a figure: in San Francisco alone 6,649 children of ages generally under the
age of ten were sent back for this purpose in the three years ending July 1, 1922.73 For anti-
Japanese Americans such as McClatchy, the language schools represented a training ground for
the Japanese to train Nisei in the ways of Japan so that they would be influenced to oppose the
United States in the even the two nations came in direct conflict with one another.

Japanese-Americans argued that teaching the Japanese language was not a way to teach
Japanese culture and moral codes. The Japanese Association of America, an association created
by Japanese-Americans to maintain links to Japan, to fight discriminatory legislation and to
provide mutual aid and social activities for its members, issued a statement that argued that, “The
schools are primarily for the study of the Japanese language and are not intended to perpetuate
the traditions and moral concepts of Japan.74 They are supplementary schools, and at the worst,
there is much less in them to adversely criticized by hostile Americans than in the parochial
schools attended by so many children of the South and European immigrants.”75 ‘After studying
the language schools in Hawaii, the California State Board of Control was slow to believe the
Japanese Association’s message.

73 V.S. McClatchy, America and Japan, 12-13.
75 State Board of Control of California, California and the Oriental (Sacramento: California
State Printing Office, 1922), 215. Parochial schools were schools that taught religious
education and were attended largely by European immigrants. The schools experienced a
similar movement on the West Coast to that of the Japanese language schools. Fearing that
the schools were not teaching ideals of American culture, states such as California and
mainly Oregon introduced legislation in the post-World War One Period designed to
eliminate the parochial schools. Pierce v. Society of Sisters was a 1925 Supreme Court Case
that was the schools’ response to the initiatives introduced by Oregon legislators that the
schools felt limited their right to enroll students. For further information, please see Pierce
“While these schools are said by the Japanese to be primarily for the study of the Japanese language, and not intended to perpetuate the traditions and moral concepts of Japan, nevertheless, when an attempt was made in the Territorial Legislature of Hawaii to require teachers in the Japanese language schools to qualify for a certificate to teach, by passing an examination in the English language, American history and American civics, the measure introduced in the legislature for this purpose was strongly opposed by Japanese educators and editors on the ground that it would force Japanese schools in that territory to close.”76

The view of the Japanese as “unassimilable” rooted in the economic fears of the first decade of the twentieth century, had shifted to the nationalistic fears in the wake of the First World War. Accompanied now by a growing strategic challenge from Tokyo, the language schools further represented the American fears that the Japanese were isolating themselves and teaching Japanese schoolchildren to admire their Japanese homeland, race, and culture over their adopted home of America. This admiration would lead schoolchildren to eventually turn against America in the event of a conflict between the United States and Japan. The language schools, like other aspects of Japanese-American culture, represented a subversive element. Exclusionist leagues and anti-Japanese leaders saw two options: eliminate the Japanese population; thus reducing the subversive element, or find a way to influence the curriculum of the schools so that they taught loyalty to America, and not Japan. The Gentlemen’s Agreement and various land acts proved that the first option was not obtainable.

Thus, the attempt to “Americanize” the Japanese language schools began. Legislation in 1921 established qualifications for language-school teachers and set standards to assure that textbooks did not reflect un-American values. In 1923 a bill abolishing the schools passed the

76 State Board of California, California and the Oriental, 214.
legislature but was vetoed by Governor William Richardson who feared that the laws were unconstitutional.77

THE JAPANESE-AMERICAN RESPONSE

In October 1920, Kiichi Kanzaki, General Secretary of the Japanese Association of America issued a statement in response to the anti-Japanese exclusionists’ claims that served as the Japanese Association’s analysis of the language schools. The statement provides a summary of the arguments shared by the schools’ supporters and also serves as a response to school opponents. Addressing the Americanist argument, Kanzaki replied to the charges that the language schools were a menace to American ideals and institutions. Kanzaki responded,

“The grounds for these charges is that these schools are teaching not only the Japanese language and customs but also the Japanese religion and doctrine of state after the fashion of Japanese nationalism. Furthermore, there are in this rather complicated and difficult matter of language and immigrant group certain misrepresentations and misunderstandings current among the general public as to the Japanese sentiment toward the problem of the language schools in general, particularly with the difficulties met in selecting proper textbooks for the use therein.”78

Kanzaki, along with the Japanese Association of America, deemed it urgent to present certain fundamental facts and to explain the attitude of the Japanese in an attempt to answer the conflicts that existed in regards to Americanization and naturalization. In order to do so, Kanzaki presented each of the main exclusionists’ arguments and provided a response to each point:

Objectives of the Japanese language schools – The Japanese language schools being founded upon the practical view of social efficiency and family organization, the fundamental objectives to be obtained is naturally to teach the children to speak the Japanese language properly, to read the rudiment of the language, perhaps newspapers, and write very simple letters or communications.

77 Wollenberg, All Deliberate Speed, 72.
Japanese language schools and Americanization - The fallacy of the charge that the Japanese schools are promoting emperor worship and teaching the fundamentals of the Japanese religions, is obvious. There is no room for such instructions, and they are far away removed from the purpose under which the schools are founded. On the contrary, the schools are treating the children as the American citizen and the language is being taught as a valuable asset both for parents and children, family organizations, and social economy. The Japanese always desire that their children will become good American citizens and also make distinct contributions by means of the finer qualities of their parentage.

Japanese Attitude Towards Educating their Children - The fundamental proposition upon which the Japanese residents in America educate their children is to bring them up as best Americans who will not only participate in American life but also contribute their distinct share to this cosmopolitan civilization. Thus, the language schools among the Japanese today are all supplementary in nature and the spirit of Americanization is amply carried out even in these schoolrooms.79

While Americanizers feared that the schools were teaching Japanese school children to isolate themselves from American society while pledging allegiance to Japan, Japanese authorities argued otherwise. According to one Nisei educator, the ultimate aim of the schools was to make “good American citizens out of the children of Japanese parentage. Parents and teachers should feel proud of educating and turning out good American citizens of their race.”80

Issei parents viewed the purpose of the schools as to impart their native tongue and cultural heritage to their children. Issei felt that both they and the Nisei generations should use a common language in order to establish good communication. Parents were urged to make an attempt to provide children with their ancestral language for better communication, and subsequently, to create better citizens of America.81

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Japanese parents feared that if the Nisei did not learn the Japanese language, they would be alienated from their children. Japanese children had little trouble learning English, but they knew little Japanese. Alienation from their parents would result since the parents, particularly the mothers, spoke relatively little English. This became especially problematic when it came to interpreting the finer points of moral and social control, and might result in disrupting the family unit. Without the family unit, Japanese children could fall prey to delinquency. For the Issei, the language schools represented something other than simply teaching Japanese schoolchildren the Japanese language, customs, and morals. The schools taught Japanese children how to be law-abiding, moral citizens living within American society. Without the schools, Japanese children contribute to social chaos. 82

As early as 1913 the Japanese Educational Association of America, an affiliation of Japanese language school officials, described the goals of the language schools: “our education is to bring up children who will live and die in America, and as such, the whole educational system must be founded upon the spirit of the public instruction in America.” 83 This mission statement illustrates the Association’s desire to promote the schools’ function of teaching Nisei how to fit into American society. Kiichi Kanzaki, the General Secretary of the Japanese Association, added that Japanese parents only wished to instill Japanese morals in their children so that they could contribute to American society, “Indeed, from the point of view of the Japanese immigrant they desire that their children shall become not only good citizens of American birth, but also that, being born of Japanese parentage, they shall make a distinct contribution to their American national life by means of some of their finer qualities of their parentage.” 84

82 Bell, Public School Education, 393.
83 Japanese Immigration Hearings, 679.
84 Japanese Immigration Hearings, 679.
Japanese consul Ujiro Oyama supported the assertion that teaching the Japanese language allowed Japanese-Americans to become better American citizens, “The United States is a country where people from all over the world assemble and create one whole unit. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Japanese-Americans to make the effort of studying Japanese, understanding Japan’s culture and further transplanting its cultural heritage onto American soil. The Japanese-American children’s attendance at Japanese language schools should be welcomed by the United States and Japan.” Oyama also found the teaching of the Japanese language essential for Japanese in order to gain employment, “Japanese-Americans must learn Japanese, for they have few choices but to find jobs which require Japanese language ability. Those who cannot speak Japanese are indeed suffering because of the scarce employment opportunities.”

Oyama’s assertions illustrate the two different strands of Japanese thought in favor of the Japanese language schools. First, Oyama extols the benefits of the schools as bridges between Japan and the United States. Second, he observes the practical value of the schools in teaching economic survival skills to Japanese-Americans.

Frank Miyamoto, a Nisei student who attended the Japanese language schools, listed three reasons for the schools’ creation:

“One, the Japanese community was, to a large extent -- in the early years especially -- a community of what might be called sojourners who's intent was to go back to Japan once the family made its mint of money and could go back as well-established status people. That dream of going back to Japan, you know, disappears in the course of time, but there's always a question remaining in the minds of the Issei, largely because of the discrimination that they encountered, as to whether they could ever make a lasting, established settlement here, or they would have to go back. So, the idea was that the kids ought to be trained in learning Japanese language in order to be prepared if they have to go back to Japan. Secondly, even if there was not that kind of intent of, in going to Japan, the idea was that within the, within the family and within the community the, an understanding of the Japanese language was very important. Therefore, the kids ought to

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learn the language. And thirdly, if the Nisei were to remain here in the country, their chances, however, of being absorbed into the larger community was not, was far from being sure as very limited and the basis for success and their economic life might hinge very much on a knowledge of both the Japanese, as well as English. And therefore, again the thought that it was important for the Nisei to get a good grasp of the language."  

Kiyoshi Karl Kawakami assesses the ideological and economic functions of the language schools in “The Real Japanese Question.” Kawakami supported the notion that learning the Japanese language was essential to the Nisei’s ability to succeed in the United States. Kawakami argues, “In seeking employment either in Japanese or American business firms, an American-born Japanese can command a higher salary if he knows both the Japanese and the English language. This is especially the case on the Pacific Coast.”

Kawakami’s work served as a response to the anti-Japanese argument that the Japanese, because of their character, simply could never assimilate into American society. An optimist, Kawakami’s writing was designed to promote “the innate capacity of the Japanese to live harmoniously with the Americans, and their ability to emerge happily from their present plight incident to an organized campaign of slander and fabrication that has been directed against them. It entertains faith in the sound common sense which will enable the leaders of the two peoples to arrive at an amicable solution of the question so befogged by this propaganda.” In addition to his support for the economic value of the language schools, Kawakami also justified the schools’ existence in light of the shortcomings of Western textbooks. Commenting on these textbooks, Kawakami remarked that, “the Occidental textbooks are too sparing in dealing with the history and geography of the Orient. Worse still, they often do Oriental nations gross injustice by

86 Frank Miyamato, interview by Stephen Fujita, March 18, 1998, transcript, Densho Visual History Collection, Seattle, WA.
disseminating mistaken ideas…Americans or European writers of textbooks are not entirely free from the notion that the whole Orient is peopled by inferior or backward races.”

For Kawakami, the language schools were needed in order to correct the misunderstandings of the Japanese character and nation depicted in books written by white Americans and Europeans. Kawakami argued, “It is advisable that the Japanese children should be given correct knowledge of Japan and the Japanese.” Japanese morals, ethics, and heritage were important for Japanese children to learn. “They [Japanese schoolchildren] should know that Japan has had an intensely cultivated civilization of her own, that her people are possessed of moral fiber as strong as that of any other people, that her history is replete with stories of noble deeds and achievements. Such knowledge makes them confident of the potentialities of the race, and teaches them to respect not only themselves, but their parents and all men of their kin.”

David Yoo, a Nisei student who attended the Japanese language schools in the mid-1920’s, did not feel that the schools were contributing to the perception that the Japanese were unassimilable. Instead Yoo felt the schools were important contributors to the socialization of many Nisei. Yoo, a Nisei student that attended the Japanese language schools in the mid-1920’s, remarked that the schools represented a key site of socialization for Nisei in California during the years between the world wars. Students encountered administrators and teachers who viewed education as a primary instrument in bringing immigrant children into the “mainstream” of American society. Yoo observed that, “much of the effort to mold students fell under the umbrella of Americanization.”

Frank Miyamoto, like Yoo, viewed the schools primarily as a socializing mechanism. Miyamoto described how most of his friends were those friends he met at the schools, “I would say that the Language School was, for at least the majority of the Nisei, a social event. We did not learn very much at the language school, but we were doing what our parents wanted us to do and so that we took care of that. Otherwise, we would play handball, we would play baseball, we would get together for social activities extramurally and that's why I got to know quite a number of my Japanese Nisei friends, at the Language School.” While most Japanese-Americans viewed the schools as essential, Miyamoto viewed the majority of the schools’ teachings to be ineffective, leaving socializing as the schools’ only purpose. Yoo felt otherwise, seeing the schools’ teaching of Japanese as essential for the Nisei.

Like Oyama and Kawikama, Yoo also viewed the schools’ Japanese language instruction as essential for the Nisei as they entered the job market. The Nisei discovered upon graduating that they were largely shut out from work outside the Japanese-American community. Many helped with family-owned businesses, while others worked in agriculture-related jobs or in domestic service. Most male students sought white-collar jobs such as bookkeeping, engineering, and architecture. Female students desired to work in commercial art, teaching, and nursing. After encountering difficulty, most students accepted that their best chance of finding jobs in their most desired fields lay in Japan. Thus, learning the Japanese language was essential.

Paul Waterhouse, a missionary to Japan, agreed with the economic and social necessities of the schools, however, Waterhouse attributed the existence of the schools to the anti-Japanese sentiment. Waterhouse remarked that, “the anti-Japanese agitation has been the most potent

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92 Interview with Frank Miyamato
93 Yoo, Growing up Nisei, 32-33.
factor in producing these Japanese language schools. If the Japanese were sure of a welcome here or at the least that they would not be legislated out of the privilege of farming the land, if they were sure of not being discriminated against, there would very soon be no Japanese language schools. It is the anti-Japanese attitude fostered and aroused by politicians who twist and exaggerate the truth and do everything in their power to cause misunderstanding between Americans and Japanese that make these schools necessary in the eyes of the Japanese.”

Waterhouse viewed legislation introduced to gain control over the schools as the direct cause of why the schools existed. Waterhouse’s observation that legislation did not provide a solution to the Japanese “problem” would go unnoticed and as the 1920’s began, legislation increased as Americans attempted to insert their ideals and methods into the language schools.

The Immigration Act of 1924 limited the number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 2% of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States in 1890. The Act triggered a Japanese-American response that was more receptive to restricting the language schools both in number and in their curriculum. Japanese feared strengthening the anti-Japanese sentiment amongst Americans. Issei leaders and educators engaged in a spirited debate over the future of the Japanese language schools and the need to instill Japanese moral values in the Nisei generation. The Japanese consul in Seattle, Ohashi Chuichi, offered advice on how all West Coast Japanese language schools represent themselves, “It will be necessary to educate Nisei children as complete American citizens. The Nisei should be reared and educated as ‘one hundred percent Americans.’” Japanese language schools were obstructing the realization of this goal by creating quasi Americans who were neither American nor Japanese. White Americans despised and discriminated against such Nisei because they were

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94 Japanese Immigration Hearings, 543.
not versed in American culture, thought, religion, and customs. So, if the Nisei ever hoped to be recognized and accepted as equals by white Americans, they had to become one hundred percent American.” Consul Chuichi’s views seem a direct rejoinder to American exclusionists, such as V.S. McClatchy, who argued that the schools greatly diminished the Japanese ability to assimilate into American society.95

Kanamaru Kenji of San Francisco represented a small population of Japanese that supported the opinions of Consul Chuichi. Kenji traced the origins of Japanese language schools to what he called the “egoism” of the Issei generation. The schools were established because the Issei could not understand the Nisei who were being educated in American schools and being inculcated with Americanism. The Issei’s poor command of the English language and ignorance of American society led most Issei into not comprehending the fact that the Nisei could achieve a secure life in America without a knowledge of Japanese or any other foreign language. Kenji concluded that the Issei had established Japanese language schools for themselves, to enable them to communicate with the Nisei. To the Nisei, the schools were unnecessary and irrelevant to their future in the United States. 96

Kenji and Consul Chuichi represent a small segment of the Japanese-American community that viewed the language schools as unnecessary and, in fact, contributed to anti-Japanese sentiment. The pillars of the Japanese-American community and culture, such as churches, businesses and schools, helped to isolate the Japanese from Americans and strengthened the notion that the Japanese would never be able to acclimate themselves to American society. Japanese had simply failed to adapt themselves to American society and

worse, their refusal to let go of their Japanese origins was now leading them to attempt to shape the way of life of the *Nisei*.

Critics of Kenji and Chuichi refused to admit that the Japanese were to blame for perpetuating the anti-Japanese sentiment. The opposing view argued that a “white racism” amongst Americans was the fundamental reason for the refusal to recognize the *Nisei* as Americans. As long as white prejudice persisted, white Americans would never fully accept the *Nisei* as American citizens. These critics dismissed the argument that the continuing existence of the language schools would bring further anti-Japanese sentiment. Suzuki Takashi, principal of the Golden Gate Institute of San Francisco, believed that it was essential for the *Nisei* to commence studying Japanese in childhood. Americans had readily recognized the importance of learning foreign languages and Japanese should not be treated differently than any other language. Suzuki felt that the United States had acknowledged that the teaching of foreign languages to children was not an obstacle to Americanization. Suzuki insisted that the cause of the anti-Japanese sentiment was attributable to “white racism” and had nothing to do with the existence of the Japanese language schools.\(^7\)

Fearing that Japanese schoolchildren who learned to be loyal only to Japan would pose a threat to American security, many Americans believed that the American legislation designed to turn control of the schools over to the California Board of Education needed to be introduced so that the schools’ curricula would reflect American ideals. The Americanizers’ efforts led many Japanese to question the importance of the schools. While many *Issei* may have felt the schools were essential, others felt the schools strengthened the anti-Japanese element.

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The debate over the schools examined in this chapter helps to set the stage for the next chapter. The outcome of the Japanese language school crisis resulted in the schools surrendering to Americanizers’ demands and transforming the schools into institutions that strove increasingly to reflect American ideals and customs as exclusionists defined them. However, certain questions remain which must be answered from the perspectives of both the Japanese-Americans and the Americanizers. Specifically, were the Americanizers’ suspicions of the schools justified? Were the schools teaching loyalty to the emperor and Japan or were the Japanese correct in stating that the schools were simply teaching the Japanese language along with Japanese morals and customs in order to bring together Issei parents with their American-born children and to allow the Nisei more opportunities in the United States? By examining the curriculum of the language schools both before and after the crisis, it is possible to answer these questions and gain insight into how the crisis transformed the schools. Indeed, the transformation of the Japanese language schools reveals much about the broader theme of post-war “Americanization” and problematizes the concept of the American “melting pot.”
CHAPTER 3: THE AMERICANIZATION OF THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

The Americanist argument that the language schools were teaching Japanese ideals such as Japanese imperialism and nationalism were based on a perception that the schools were organs of the Japanese educational system and government. The Americanizers’ attacks on the schools, in the early 1920s not only exaggerated this connection, they were made too late. During the schools’ first years of existence, the schools were influenced by Japanese educational methods, specifically the Imperial Rescript on Education. However, by 1912, Japanese-American school educators sought to reform the schools so that they reflected American ideals and could avoid further anti-Japanese agitation. By the time that Americanizers began making their claims in 1920 that the schools were “subversive” and fostered Japanese-American disloyalty to the United States, language school reformers had been working for more than a decade to transform the schools so that they reflected fewer of the ideas taught in their Japanese counterparts. The failure of the Americanizers to recognize these efforts to reform the language schools from within ensured that their attacks were without merit. Further, state legislation designed to “Americanize” the schools failed. In the end, the schools were reformed, but not because of Americanist legislation. Rather, the reforms were completed by Japanese-Americans working to pre-empt the efforts of Americanizers who feared the “Yellow Peril” would engulf the West Coast.

EDUCATION IN JAPAN DURING THE MEIJI RESTORATION

Following the evacuation of Japanese-Americans into internment camps in early 1942, Lieutenant General and Western Defense Command Leader J.L. Dewitt issued his Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast. The report provided Dewitt’s analysis of the Japanese-American threat to Americans in an effort to justify their internment. Included was an
analysis of the Japanese language school crisis and the reason for its existence. Dewitt concluded that, “one extremely important obstacle in the path of Americanization of the second-generation Japanese was the widespread formation, and increasing importance, of the Japanese language schools in the United States. The purposes and functions of these Japanese language schools are well known. They employed only those text books which had been edited by the Department of Education of the Japanese Imperial Government.”

Dewitt’s statement, coming twenty-five years after the language school crisis, appeared to validate the foundation of the Americanizers’ suspicion. The Japanese language schools in California were designed to resemble Japanese schools reformed during the Meiji period in Japan. In order to gain a better understanding of the curriculum of the language schools in their first years of existence, it is essential to examine the Japanese educational system and its teachings at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Meiji Restoration began in 1868 and was characterized by its mission to reform Japan into an imperial nation that revolved around loyalty to the Emperor Meiji. Meiji reformers viewed education as critical to Japan’s ability to train workers and talented leaders required to “catch up” to the West. Leaders realized that a certain standard of intelligence of the masses was required in a modern state, and that a nation-state could not satisfy its imperial mission if the people remained ignorant of, and passive, to the goals of the state. The Imperial Rescript of Education, issued in 1890, demanded that the nation develop its intellectual faculties and perfect its moral powers. The school system was transformed so that it contained a modern curriculum in

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support of feudalistic ideology. 99 By adapting western educational methods, leaders within
Japan’s central government sought to instill through education knowledge of Western
civilization and the world situation in order to encourage the masses to support the political goals
of the Meiji leadership. 100 Moi Arinori, Minister of Education, expressed the goal of the Meiji
educational reform when he asserted, “Our country must move from its third-class position to
second class, and from second class to first; and ultimately to be a leading position among all
countries in the world. The best way to do this is by laying the foundations of elementary
education.” 101

The Monbusho was established as the Ministry of Education in September 1871 in order
to nationalize education by bringing all schools under the supervision of the nation. In 1872, the
Monbusho issued its preamble that stressed, “the only way in which an individual can raise
himself, manage his property and prosper in his business and so accomplish his career is by
cultivating his morals, improving his intellect, and becoming proficient in arts…These are the
reasons why schools are established: from language, writing and reckoning for daily use, to
knowledge necessary for officials, farmers, merchants and artisans and craftsmen of every
description, to laws, politics, astronomy, medicine, etc.” 102 This early statement on the
organization of Japanese schools portrays the Monbusho’s mission as a conservative one,

99 Satoshi Yamamura, “National Education Policy and the Masses in Modern Japan: The
Origins of a State-Oriented Mentality and the Long Detour to the New Form of Citizenship
100 Yamamura, “National Education Policy and the Masses in Modern Japan,” 8.
101 Leonard James Schoppa, Education Reform in Japan: A Case of Immobilist Politics (New
102 H Passin.” Document 17. Preamble to the Fundamental Code of Education: 1872” in
Society and Education in Japan (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University Press,
1965), 210-211.
focusing on establishing a utilitarian method of education. There is no mention of the emperor or the schools’ responsibility to extol the virtues of nationalism or imperialism.

The Monbusho’s original conservative method of educational design changed as a shift occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century. The original Meiji education design was a national one borrowed largely from the French. Education Minister Tanaka Fujimaro, upon returning from a visit to America in 1872, proposed basic departures from the current system and moved to reform Japanese education to resemble the American system. The new educational platform emphasized national strength, the conditions of people’s life, and the existing culture. The new system was accompanied by a personal statement made by Emperor Meiji listing his views and hopes of what the educational system would accomplish, “Basing ourselves on the teachings of our ancestors, we should teach benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, and filial piety, and our moral teachings should be based chiefly on Confucius.”103 Emperor Meiji’s statement represents the shift from a conservative outlook on education to one that was focused on the ideals of nationalism, patriotism, and Confucianism’s core of humanism.

The framework for the Meiji’s educational mission was proclaimed in the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education. Issued on October 30, 1890, the Ministry of Education instructed teachers to expound Rescript’s principles:

Know ye, Our subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and

The purpose of the Rescript was to provide Japan with a uniform standard of moral education and to establish the emperor as the nation’s moral authority. Firmly grounded in traditional morality, the Rescript called for civic service and emphasized the special virtue of the Japanese nation by adding a new and distinctive allegiance to Japanese nationalism. 105 This meant training the next generations to speak and understand the same language, behave according to the same social norms, and acquire and utilize the same knowledge and technology. On a spiritual level, nationalization meant inculcating pride in the same history and traditions, and belief in the tenno as the moral center of an ethnic nation for which nationals should want to live and be willing to die. 106 The Rescript was sent to all schools accompanied with a photo of the emperor and his message that, “students should be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all, pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws.” 107 The Rescript, as well as the emperor’s stated mission reflected the Meiji government’s desire to focus education towards the administration’s goal to

105 Schoppa, Educational Reform In Japan, 29.
modernize Japan and shift to becoming an imperialist nation. Japanese citizens became “subjects,” who held a responsibility to serve the emperor.

The Ministry of Education developed national curricular guidelines that comprised the educational standards. The Monbusho enforced academic standards by certifying textbooks, overseeing regional and national entrance examinations, and regulating the training of teachers.\textsuperscript{108} An outline of the course of study for elementary schools was issued based on the Imperial Rescript. The concept and subject of morality was clearly defined as follows:

The Teaching of morals must be based on the Imperial Rescript on Education, and its aim should be to cultivate the moral nature of children and to guide them in practice of virtues.\textsuperscript{109}

Textbooks were standardized in the late 1890’s as the Monbusho took over the compilation of elementary school textbooks from private publishers. Schools began to use uniform and official national texts, in ethics as well as history, language, and geography. Rules and guidelines for teachers and for normal school education were produced. With the Rescript as a moral basis, a catalog of national textbooks, and a body of publicly trained and employed teachers, the Monbusho pursued its mission of civic education. Echoing the sentiment of Emperor Meiji, the Monbusho designed its national regulation of moral education “to develop the spirit of loyalty, filiality, patriotism, and advance the nation’s civilization.”\textsuperscript{110} Monbusho guidelines advocated the spirit of reverence for the emperor and love for the nation of Japan. The curriculum of morality was carried over to the Japanese language schools in California until

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Japanese language schoolteachers, reacting to the negative American attitude toward the Japanese presence in West Coast labor, sought reform of the schools’ curriculum in an effort to avoid further anti-Japanese agitation.

THE MONBUSHO INFLUENCE ON THE CALIFORNIA LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

Unlike the Japanese language schools in Hawaii, which were primarily controlled by both Buddhist and Christian missionaries, the California language schools were run by Buddhist temples. The first Japanese language school in California, the *Nihon Shogakko*, was established in 1902. By 1912, as the population of Japanese immigrants increased, the number of schools increased to twelve, eventually reaching 118 in 1919. During the first decade of the schools’ existence, the schools functioned largely independently of each other. Some schools stressed *nisshu beiju*, the primacy of Japanese education, considering American education secondary. Other schools conducted curricula using *beishu nichiju*, which viewed American education over Japanese education. Subjects taught at the schools included Japanese history and geography. 111

The use of the *Monbusho curricula* combined with the Imperial Rescript on Education in the early years of the Japanese language schools appeared to support Americanist claims that the schools were indeed teaching Japan nationalism, imperialism, and loyalty to the emperor. Throughout the Rescript, the terms “subjects,” “imperial,” and “empire,” are repeated and are intended to preach that it is the responsibility of Japanese citizens to maintain the Japanese social and moral codes, wherever they reside, as they are forever loyal subjects to the nation of Japan. This leads to the conclusion that, in this early period, the schools were structured in the same manner as the schools in Japan. Thus, during the early period of the Japanese language schools, regardless of their religious affiliation, the schools were operated according to the ideals of the

Japanese education system. Japanese immigrants were under government contracts and intended to return to Japan upon expiration of their contract. The Japanese language schools were designed to instruct Japanese citizens in accord with the Japanese educational system using Japanese textbooks as compiled or approved by the Japanese Ministry of Education. *Monbusho* textbooks in California included such texts as *The Elementary School Japanese History Textbook* (1915), *Elementary School Science Textbook* (1919), *Elementary School Japanese Language Reader, Books 7, 10-12, Elementary Shushin Textbook*, and *Shogakko Kokugo Tokuhon*, the Japanese Language Reader, which included a chapter describing the strengths and weaknesses of the Japanese people:

“It is our distinguished national talent and the glorious three thousand years of history that made it possible for Japan to have become one of the five greatest powers of the world. Needless to say, we stand alone in the world when it comes to the fine custom of ours – *chuko* (loyalty and filial piety) – which wholeheartedly makes for commitment to the Emperor and one’s parents.”

In addition to textbooks, the language schools adopted many of the traditions of the Japanese schools such as the reading of the Imperial Rescript on Education and singing the Japanese national anthem during ceremonies on Japanese national holidays. The language schools had been designed to teach Japanese social and moral codes, and loyalty to the Emperor Meiji, but the teaching of Japanese ideals was recognized quickly by Japanese language school officials as a shortcoming of the schools. Japanese educators realized that teaching Japanese ethics was not only unnecessary for *Nisei* schoolchildren but could possibly help draw the ire of exclusionists that were currently focused on Japanese labor.

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The adoption of the *Monbusho* curriculum by the language schools helped to support the Americanist argument that the schools were educating loyal subjects of the emperor who were infiltrating American society. Anticipating General Dewitt’s argument in his *Final Report*, Americanist arguments directed against the language schools in California were based on a perception that the Japanese government was controlling the schools. Americanizers felt that the schools were extensions of the Japanese aim to conquer foreign lands and to spread Japanese ideals throughout the West. Japanese-Americans were viewed by Americanizers as subjects of the emperor who had been deployed by the Japanese government in order to spread the Japanese message of imperialism. As American nationalism grew following World War One, the language schools were deemed by Americanizers to be sources of Japanese nationalistic propaganda, cultivating allegiance to Japan.\(^{114}\)

V.S. McClatchy considered the connection of the schools to the *Monbusho* as he wrote, “It is charged that these Japanese schools are not maintained to assist in Americanization, but carefully planned and controlled in instruction and curriculum by official Japan and maintained by Japanese for Japanese and to insure control to Japan of the young Japanese born here and claiming American citizenship. The frank expression of Japanese newspapers as well as the conduct of the schools certainly give the impression that is neither the desire nor the intent of the Japanese to permit these schools to be used for any purpose not helpful to Japanese solidarity in this country.”\(^{115}\) McClatchy’s statement, appearing in the *Sacramento Bee* in December 1922, was directed not only at the schools and their connection to the Japanese educational system; it was also an attack on the Japanese-Americans who had been slow to transform the schools.

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Many Japanese-American educators had realized during the first decade of the schools’ existence that the schools would possibly serve to further agitate anti-Japanese Americans. They sought to reform the schools so that they would less resemble the schools in Japan. However, financial problems hindered the schools’ efforts to reform themselves and as the end of the second decade drew near and American nationalism increased following World War One, the Japanese educators’ slow response to reforming the schools led to an increased Americanist fear and desire to gain control of school curriculum, including teacher selection and textbook orientation as a way of preventing the schools from teaching Japanese emperor loyalty, morality, and imperialism.

Speaking at the sixth annual Japanese Educators Conference in San Francisco, held from December 6-8, 1917, Japanese Consul General Masanao Uyehara, listed the problems that the schools encountered as reform attempts proved unsuccessful. Uyehara viewed the schools as having to overcome a very difficult situation within the state; “It seems to me that the Japanese language schools throughout the State of California are facing a difficult situation. First of all, finances of the school are poor and there is difficulty operating the schools; secondly, because the environments are different, education cannot be provided here as it is in Japan. I wish to extend my heartfelt sympathy to you educators who are making great efforts to teach indefatigably in such difficult conditions. I sincerely hope that you will reflect on these problems and rise to the challenge of surmounting these difficulties and attaining the true educational goals.”

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The early recognition by Japanese language teachers of the anti-Japanese sentiment and the effect that the schools could have in perpetuating it are discussed in Ken Ishikawa’s “Study of the Japanese language schools.” Isikawa provides an overview of how and when school administrators and teachers discovered that school lesson plans needed to be adjusted so that Japanese schoolchildren were being taught less about being a proper Japanese subject and more about how to be a better American citizen. Ishikawa notes that, “in 1912, the first teachers’ meeting was held in San Francisco, when it was decided that the Japanese language schools should supplement public schools, and that the children should be so educated that they might preserve such racial strong points that would make them better American citizens. Subjects taught in Japanese language schools were lessened gradually, and hours of instruction together with the number of the days taught in a year reduced accordingly.”

The Japanese-American attempt to reform the schools began in 1912 not only because of the growing anti-Japanese sentiment, but also due to the change of government regimes in Japan. The death of Emperor Meiji in 1912 led to the creation of the Taisho period, which would last from 1912 until 1926. While many of the Meiji reforms on education continued throughout the Taisho period, including an increasing centralization of education, less emphasis was put on maintaining an influence on Japan’s “subjects” that resided outside of the country. Educational reforms moved away from the Meiji era’s emperor worship towards teaching Japanese students methods of modernization and industrialization. Thus, while the Taisho period ushered in a new era that resulted in improvements to higher education and the establishment of “imperial

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universities,” foreign education aspects, such as the language schools, were allowed more freedom to reform their methods and curricula.\textsuperscript{118}

The annual meetings held by the Japanese language school teachers beginning in 1912 played an important role in how the schools were to be transformed and changed. While Americanists such as McClatchy and Mayor James Phelan were warning their fellow Americans about the dangers the language schools posed to American society during the early 1920’s, Japanese school officials had been discussing how to reform the schools at annual educational conferences. While many Issei felt that a Japanese language education was necessary, they also believed that schools needed to be constructed in a manner that taught the Japanese heritage while at the same time avoiding the criticism that the schools were “anti-American.” The first step in the process was that the language schools needed to be recognized by all Japanese-Americans as secondary to American public school instruction. The schools could not be divided between being “American first” and “Japanese first” schools, they all needed to stress the importance of American citizenship. The schools, while still viewed by many Japanese-Americans as important, would be regarded primarily as “supplementary” schools to American public school education, which was now viewed by the Issei as being essential for every Nisei.

The conferences represented the first efforts to transform the schools in order to avoid continued anti-Japanese actions. At each annual teachers conference, school officials met with the intention of how to restructure the schools so that curriculum no longer abided by the Rescript of Imperial Education. Japanese language school representatives met for the first time in San Francisco on April 4 and 5, 1912 in order to redefine the schools’ objectives and to answer three essential questions: (1) What is the objective and policy of the education of the Japanese

children in the United States? (2) What is the possibility of the establishment of nursery schools? And (3) What is the current administration of the Japanese language schools and the method of their future management? Attempting to answer the first question in regards to the schools’ purpose, officials agreed that the purpose of the Japanese language schools should be to educate active citizens residing in the United States and that the education of the American schools should be compulsory while the Japanese language school shall teach the language and national traditions of Japan as supplementary schools. Officials also decided that while moral training based on the Imperial Transcript of Education should continue to be taught in the schools, its teaching of Japanese nationality should be combined with the good traits of the American spirit.\(^{119}\) The annual meetings held by school officials continued in the same vein as Japanese educators continued their attempt to transform the schools into something different from the Japanese education system.

In June 1913, at the Second Annual Conference of Japanese Teachers of America, the creation of new textbooks appeared on the agenda. Textbooks designed by the Japanese Ministry of Education were deemed to be inappropriate and unnecessary as they failed to reflect the daily life of a Nisei living in the United States. Thus, it was decided that new textbooks needed to be compiled specifically for those children who were born and raised in the United States.\(^{120}\) During the 1915 conference, Japanese teachers selected a committee on editing adequate textbooks, since they could not obtain one already in print, other than the textbooks published in Japan. The range of subjects being taught in the Japanese language schools ranged from sewing, arts, crafts,


\(^{120}\) Morimoto, *Japanese-Americans and Cultural Continuity*, 42.
and Shushin. Committee members decided that the new textbooks should teach the Japanese language, Japanese history, geography, and singing. Moral instruction was left out as an individual subject, instead being incorporated within each subject. The selected committee went ahead and edited books from No. I to No. IV, but owing to the lack of funds, was forced to cease the work of publishing them.

As Japanese school officials moved to reconfigure the schools’ textbooks, language school educators passed several resolutions in 1915 designed to transform the language schools’ curriculum and mission statements so that they further deemphasized the Monbusho curricula. Among the resolutions passed was:

1. The object of our education of Japanese children shall be to make it supplementary to American public instruction, and the curriculum shall be limited to the teaching of the Japanese language

2. Every child who comes to a Japanese school and not attending the public school, should be directed to attend the public schools

3. The interpretation of anything in the adopted textbooks which may be contrary to the spirit of Americanism should be carefully corrected

4. We should endeavor to publish proper textbooks that correspond to the spirit of true Americanism. This proposition shall be presented to the General Conference of the Japanese Association of the Pacific Coast

5. There shall be selected a Committee on Americanization.

Each of the resolutions reflected the Japanese-American desire to avoid further anti-Japanese agitation. Curriculum, including textbooks, was to be designed so that they emphasized American ideals. No longer would the Rescript’s repeated use of the words “imperial,” or “loyalty” be emphasized.

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121 Japanese Moral Lessons
122 Hokka Nihongo Gakuen Kyokai, Beikoku Kashu Nihongo Gakuen Enkaku-shi [A Historical Record of the Japanese language schools in California], 48-49.
123 Morimoto, Japanese-Americans and Cultural Continuity, 43.
The annual Japanese teacher conferences served as the main opportunity for language school leaders to come together in order to make changes to the schools’ curriculum. In July, 1918 the General Conference of Japanese Associations on the Pacific Coast met in Seattle, WA and passed two resolutions considering the reform of school curriculum: to establish an educational research bureau and to publish special textbooks. The conference further resolved that the American system of compulsory education is a necessity to the American citizen; that the Japanese be taught only after the public-school hours; that in view of the importance of the question, it is the duty of the Japanese associations on the Pacific coast to take into serious consideration the question of the language schools; and the present textbooks are inadequate and should either be revised or written entirely anew.\textsuperscript{124} The Conference asserted that “the goal to be attained in our education of the Japanese children shall be to make it supplementary to the American public instruction, and the curriculum shall consist wholly of the Japanese language.”\textsuperscript{125} While the Conference appeared to be addressing many of the issues that plagued the existence of the language schools, such as the American perception of the schools and the inadequacy of the textbooks, it also revealed how the schools were slow in deciding what changes needed to be made within the schools and how to implement those changes. The conference in Seattle came a full six years since the first Japanese teachers conference and the same problems discussed at that first meeting remained unresolved.

The problems discussed annually at each conference continued to go unsolved leaving Kiichi Kanzaki to address the issues in his testimony at the Japanese Immigration Hearings in 1920. Kanzaki’s statement on the Japanese language schools echoed the attendees of the conferences held every year since 1912. Kanzaki argued that the Americanizers’ criticisms in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124} \textit{Japanese Immigration Hearings}, 698.
\item \textsuperscript{125} tenBroek, \textit{Prejudice, War and the Constitution}, 270.
\end{itemize}
regards to the schools would soon be rectified, “there has been early recognition, both by the educators and the Japanese associations, of the inadequacy of the present textbooks and that there are several projects under way to make necessary alterations and corrections.” However, recognition did not necessarily mean that the Japanese educators and associations, mentioned by Kanzaki, were effectively transforming the schools in order to meet exclusionist demands. Kanzaki was forced in his testimony to address the problems plaguing the slow transformation, “the difficulty met by the committee was to finance the whole project of publication, which was estimated at not less than $10,000. In the meantime, while these textbooks are being prepared, the teachers in many schools are using the textbooks revised by the individual teachers with a view to avoid the objectionable features in the text.” Kanzaki’s statement suggests that while change may have been limited, it was at least in process. The Japanese Immigration Hearings in 1920 represented one of the last Japanese defenses of the Japanese language schools before the heightened American nationalism of the early 1920s reached a peak level. Americanist demands for abolishment of the schools gave way to legislation designed to influence the schools to reflect American ideals. The Japanese opportunity to transform the schools to be Japanese schools in America had closed. Instead, the schools now faced becoming American schools with merely a Japanese influence.

Americanizers wishing to reform the schools so that they emphasized American ideals ahead of Japanese ideals in their curricula largely ignored the Japanese-American attempt to reform the schools. Professor and author Walter Pitkin argued that Japanese-Americans remained attached to their own institutions and language schools, which Americanizers believed to be agencies of the Japanese government. Americanization legislation was required to prevent

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126 *Japanese Immigration Hearings*, 698.
127 *Japanese Immigration Hearings*, 698.
Japanese from continuing to find loopholes in the Gentlemen’s Agreement.\textsuperscript{128} As Iyenaga argued in \textit{Japan and the California Problem}, Japanese education revealed how the Japan wished to use all its citizens as subjects,

“The Japanese Government, again, adheres to a policy of extreme paternalism with regard to her colonists abroad. It seems true that in case of an aggressive and military government it is from necessity the devotee of a pure race and a solidified population. Japan does not wish her subject to become naturalized, nor does she encourage them to lose their racial or national consciousness. This is clearly seen in her policy of dual nationality which aims to retain the descendants of the Japanese who are born in America, and hence are citizens thereof, as subjects also of the Mikado. It is likewise observable in the spirit of Japanese education, which is fundamentally nationalistic. Such a policy of nationalism inevitably incites the suspicion of countries to which Japanese immigrants go, and discourages the people from making an attempt at assimilating the Japanese. This, together with their nationalistic training and education, renders the assimilation of the Japanese exceedingly difficult.”\textsuperscript{129}

State Legislation designed to allow American control of the language schools was passed in June 1921 and went into effect on August 2, 1921. The California Foreign Language Control Law required that:

(1) No person shall conduct or teach in a private school, conducted wholly or in part in a language of a foreign nation in this state unless and until he shall have first applied to and obtained a permit so to do from the superintendent of public instruction

(2) No permit to teach in a private school, conducted wholly or in part in a language of a foreign nation, shall be granted unless and until the superintendent of public instruction or deputy is satisfied that the applicant for the same is possessed of knowledge of American history and institutions and knows how to read, write and speak the English language

(3) After being granted a permit to conduct or teach in such school, to abide by and observe the terms of this law and the regulations and orders of the superintendent of public instruction, to the best of his ability, so direct the minds and studies of pupils in said private schools, conducted wholly or in part in a language of a foreign nation, as will tend to make them good and loyal American citizens.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, March 22, 1920.
\textsuperscript{129} Toyokichi Iyenaga, \textit{Japan and the California Problem} (Chicago, IL: GP Putnam’s Sons), 1921, 86.
\textsuperscript{130} California Department of Public Instruction, \textit{School Law of California} (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1921), 70-72.
The Foreign School Control Bill resembled previous legislation designed to regulate the Japanese language schools in Hawaii. Introduced in 1920, the Hawaii law regulated the employment of Japanese language school teachers by requiring that all teachers hold a certificate from the Territorial Department of Education, showing that they are possessed of ideals of democracy, knowledge of American history and institutions, and know how to read, write, and speak the English language.\(^{131}\) The California bill, introduced nearly a year later, contained similar language and, in a similar fashion to the Hawaiian legislation, was designed to control who taught within the foreign language schools. Introduced under Political Code 1534, the California Foreign Language School Control Bill defined a foreign language school as “any school that is conducted in any language other than the English language except Sabbath schools.” As a result of the bill the State Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Sam H. Cohn, was placed in charge of monitoring the Japanese language schools. Cohn, speaking to a newspaper reporter, described how the state legislators believed that the “Japanese language schools threatened the very foundation of the United States government because they taught American-born children imperialism and loyalty to Japan.” Cohn argued that the operation of the language schools was equivalent to another country forming inside the nation.\(^{132}\)

California legislation also designated the tools that the schools would be permitted to use. The fifth point of the law assigned that, “the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall have full power from time to time to approve the course of study and the textbook to be used in any


private school, conducted wholly or in part in a language of a foreign nation and no other course of instruction or textbooks shall be used in such schools except the ones approved by the said superintendent.” This was followed by the sixth point, which provided the superintendent or any deputy to visit and monitor the schools at any time.133 The new code followed failed attempts of enacting Alien Land Laws designed to exclude Japanese-Americans from settling in America. The movement to gain control of the language schools represented a shift for anti-Japanese Americans from attempting to exclude Japanese immigration to controlling how the Japanese would live within American borders.

Americanizers viewed the California law as too conservative and wanted further, more restrictive legislation to be passed. McClatchy criticized the law stating, “Manifestly, a mere knowledge of the English language and American history on the part of a Japanese instructor offers no guarantee that he will teach his young pupils that their duty is first owed to this country and not to Japan.” 134 McClatchy was part of an anti-Japanese group that had originally wanted to see the schools abolished, proclaiming them “un-American.” Following the recommendation made by a 1920 Federal Survey Commission, California Senator J.M. Inman introduced a bill in 1923 that would first restrict the schools by requiring that from September 1, 1923 to 1930, every student had to have first satisfactorily completed the American public school fourth grade before attending any foreign language schools. Inman’s bill provided for the abolition of the schools by 1930.135 The Inman Bill passed both the House of Representatives and Senate but before going into effect was declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court in the Meyer v.

133 California Dept. of Public Instruction, School Law of California, 73.
135 Letter, Yada to Uchida, January 20, 1923 in Tamezo Takimoto, General Secretary of the Japanese Association of America’s Report to appeal to the Senate Education Committee to fight the 1923 Inman private school control bill (Sacramento, CA: DRO 3.8.2.339-I-3).
State of Nebraska case.\textsuperscript{136} Strict legislation became the exclusionist primary aim and for many, the California language school control law was simply inadequate.

McClatchy viewed the Hawaiian laws to be more restrictive and thus, more successful as he viewed Japanese-Americans in Hawaii as more amendable to change. Regarding the Hawaii laws as precedent for California legislators to follow, McClatchy remarked that “the Japanese-American Committee finally adopted unanimously certain recommendations to the effect that the course of schools should be restricted to the six upper grades of the public school system, thus eliminating the two lower grades and the kindergartens, and that the textbooks should be prepared with the pupil in mind whose normal medium of expression is English.”\textsuperscript{137} While the Hawaiian laws may have not reached the point of abolishing the Japanese language schools as many Americanizers wished, the laws were at least making progress in changing the schools so that the curriculum was limited in its teaching of Japanese customs. The schools were slowly becoming “Americanized,” as reflected in McClatchy’s assertion that the textbooks were now being created with teaching “Americans” first, and Japanese second.

Following the passage of the California Foreign Language Control Law, Japanese-American education representatives of both Southern California and Northern California met in San Francisco with the goal of reaching an agreement on the preparation of new textbooks: (1) the prospective textbooks should follow the California Foreign Language Control Law and aim at accurately teaching the Japanese language to Japanese children living in the United States. Thus, the compilation of textbooks would reflect Americanization; (2) topics should not be

\textsuperscript{136} Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U.S. 390 (1923), 390-391. Robert T. Meyer was a German language school instructor that successfully challenged a Nebraska state law that forbade the teaching of any language other than English to a child who had not completed the eighth grade.

limited to literary works but include many different spheres of life. Materials should parallel the children’s psychological development in America; (3) a budget of $5,500 was approved. While Japanese educators in California continued to only discuss reforming the publication of textbooks, they failed to make any significant progress. The California State Board, viewing the hesitation on the part of Japanese educators, moved to cut several stories from the existing *Monbusho* texts. Some materials eliminated included stories on Japanese historical figures and events that the Board feared encouraged Japanese nationalism.\(^{138}\)

Legislation designed to sway Japanese language schools towards teaching *Nisei* students seemingly failed as the United States Supreme Court ruled in the 1927 case of *Farrington v. Tokushige* that both the Hawaiian and California Foreign Language School Control Laws were unconstitutional. Leaders of the Japanese community and Japanese language schools had apparently won the right to teach and control the language schools in whichever manner they wished. However, the legislation combined with the continuous anti-Japanese sentiment proved to have a lasting effect on the schools following the Supreme Court ruling in 1927. A group of Northern California language school officials that formed to make The Northern California Language School Association gathered immediately following the ruling in order to determine the official guidelines that would govern the schools going forward. Reflecting the objectives adopted by the General Conference of the Ninth Japanese Educational Association held in October 1920, the new guidelines reflected an increased emphasis on Americanization:

The purpose of the language schools, which belong to our Japanese language school Association, shall be to assist in the education of good citizens based on the spirit of the American public schools:

(1) We shall instruct the Japanese language to the children who are attending the public schools for thirty minutes to one hour after their public school, and promote better mutual understanding between parents and children and bring happiness to their homes.

(2) We shall use the unified textbooks approved by the Department of Public Instruction, the State of California, as heretofore.

(3) We shall employ full-time and permanent teachers who are able to understand both English and Japanese who are suited to the education of the second generation.\textsuperscript{139}

The immediate adoption of textbooks approved by the Department of Public Instruction perhaps represents the most profound effect of the exclusionist attempt to “Americanize” the schools. Whereas prior to the heightened focus on the language schools when Japanese educators, while open to reform, were slow in furthering and completing the textbook reformation process, the change was now immediate. New textbooks were compiled under the supervision of the Department of Public Instruction by the Japanese Association in the United States and the Southern Central Japanese Association with the purpose to instruct the correct Japanese language to the Japanese children in the United States in compliance with the California Foreign Language School control laws.\textsuperscript{140} Although the foreign school laws had been ruled unconstitutional, the laws still proved effective. Americanist’ demands for the schools to increase teachings directed toward being an American citizen were met and as a result the Japanese language school crisis effectively ended.

The pro-Americanization rhetoric of Issei leaders reflected strategy as much as it did support of American lifestyles and perspectives. Japanese-American parents had a voice in the socialization of their children and used community resources toward those ends. While Japanese-Americans accepted the language schools as supplementary to American public schools, the

\textsuperscript{139} Hokka Nihongo Gakuen Kyokai, \textit{Beikoku Kashu Nihongo Gakuen Enkaku-Shi} [A Historical Account of the Japanese language schools], 100-101.

\textsuperscript{140} Matsubayashi, \textit{Japanese language schools in Hawaii and California}, 187.
language schools still provided an important shared experience for thousands of Nisei and reinforced generational ties. While Issei may have believed in some form of Americanization such as good citizenship, they clearly stressed that second generation Japanese were Americans of Japanese ancestry.\footnote{Yoo, Growing Up Nisei, 29.}

By the early 1930s, virtually every Japanese-American community had its own Japanese-language school operated by a church or Japanese association. Some communities had two or more schools. Occasionally, both Buddhist and Christian churches in a community supported their own Japanese language schools. Teachers were often church ministers, their wives, or well-educated persons in the community.\footnote{A History of Japanese-Americans in California in Five Views: An Ethnic Historic Site for California http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/5views/5views4c.html (accessed March 1, 2012).} With the arrival of this “golden” period of the Japanese-Language schools, it appears that Japanese-Americans had greatly benefited from the language school crisis. Schools in the late 1920’s increased greatly in number, more and more Japanese-American students attended the schools and thus, a greater number of the Nisei generation were learning the Japanese language and customs.

Japanese-Americans believed that they had emerged from the language school crisis as successful negotiators. Although the schools were less reflective of the Meiji Restoration and Monbusho curricula, they still taught the Japanese language to second generation Japanese-Americans and they instilled in students an appreciation of their Japanese heritage. Turning control of certain educational aspects such as the preparation of the textbooks over to the California School Board was a small price to pay for Japanese-American educators who truly only wished to teach Nisei students about their Japanese ancestry without fear of igniting anti-Japanese agitation. The 1930’s represented a golden period for the Japanese language schools.
because Japanese-Americans had successfully freed themselves from American attacks and arguments that the schools were subversive.

By basing the language school curriculum on the *Monbusho* guidelines, the language schools allowed themselves to be interpreted by Americanizers as teaching the same Japanese ideals being taught within the Japanese educational system. These ideals, based on the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, included accepting that as a subject to the Japanese empire students remain loyal to the emperor and to the idea of Japanese imperialism. Japanese language school educators were among the first in the United States to realize the schools’ shortcomings and that teaching within the guidelines of the *Monbusho curricula* would help exacerbate the ongoing anti-Japanese sentiment that existed within the first and second decades of the twentieth century. The inability of Japanese educators to quickly transform curriculum so that it did not resemble the *Monbusho’s* curriculum in Japan was met with American criticism and assertions that the schools were teaching loyalty to Japan.

The Japanese language school debate in California underscored the nativists’ tendency to exaggerate aspects of a foreign culture, in this case the language schools’ connection to the *Monbusho*, in an effort to depict an immigrant group as being “untrustworthy” and “subversive.” Japanese-American educators were able to use the nativist actions against them as they successfully “negotiated” the Americanization of the schools. The outcome allowed the language schools to grow and continue to teach the Japanese language and certain Japanese ideals to *Nisei* schoolchildren, which was the original goal of the *Issei*.

Grading the success of the “Americanization” movement to transform the schools remains difficult. While the schools were transformed throughout the 1920’s, the transformation was not a direct result of legislation introduced and passed by Americanizers. Instead, the reform
of the schools can more readily be attributed to the Japanese-American school officials who sought to reform the schools themselves to avoid further anti-Japanese actions.

Finally, it is worth nothing that the “Golden Era” of the language schools that began at the end of the 1920s cannot only be attributed to the fact that the schools had been successfully transformed. Nationalistic nativism primarily results from a sense that a nation’s security is at risk. Tensions between Japan and the United States had reached their most trying level following the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act. The Japanese saw the act as reaffirming their conclusion that the Americans preached universal principles but practiced national discrimination. Following 1924 however, Japan’s tentative moves towards political democracy and more assertive commercial foreign policies were buried under an avalanche of economic disasters. While relations between the two nations did not improve, Japan had become less and less of a threat to the United States as the decade wore on. With the 1929 Stock Market crash, many Americans began to question the strength of their own democracy and the heightened sense of nationalism that existed at the beginning of the decade diminished. Accompanying the decline of American nationalism was the will of anti-Japanese Americans. The language schools were allowed to persevere and grow simply because the nativist movement against them had died out. When Japan’s Kwantung Army moved to place all of Manchuria under Japanese control in September 1931, tensions between Japan and the United States were once again renewed, at a fever pitch, and the anti-Japanese sentiment began to build again eventually culminating with the abolition of all language schools following Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

CONCLUSION

Author Charles Wollenberg was incorrect in his assertion that the language schools, from their origination, taught assimilation. For the first decade of their existence in California, the schools’ reliance on the Monbusho curricula led the schools to include teachings that emphasized Japanese nationalism and loyalty. However, there is no evidence to support the nativist claim that the Japanese language schools were teaching Nisei schoolchildren to pledge allegiance to Japan and to oppose their adopted home of America. Americanizers were correct to link the language schools to their Japanese counterparts, but incorrect in their assumption that remaining loyal to Japan equated to opposing the United States in the event of a conflict. As Seicchi Michael Yasutake argued in his dissertation on the relationship between the Nisei, Issei, and Sansei, the white settlers in California were made up of those who left the “western frontier” states and even the Deep South. These white “immigrants” brought with them more than dreams of riches and new opportunity: they brought their distrust of all things foreign. These white newcomers to California were mostly rural and made up the majority of the California population. Yasutake asserts that, “Orientals became a convenient target for ridicule, vindictiveness or paternalism, whichever suited the fancy of those who considered themselves now the “natives” of California. The state of California developed a highly emotional brand of jingoism masquerading as patriotism.”

The anti-Japanese sentiment that began around 1905 and continued through the Second World War was centered on the economic threats posed by the Japanese immigrants and the

\[144\] The Sansai generation were the children of the Nisei generation and are considered the third generation of Japanese -Americans.

military threat that Japan became following the First World War. Economics and American nationalism gave rise and sustained the anti-Japanese movement that argued against Japanese-American labor and culture. In 1905, the *Coast Seamen’s Journal* asserted that Japanese immigration threatened American democratic freedom because continued admission of the Japanese would not only take away jobs from Americans but would also divide the country into property owners and laborers and the workers would inevitably descend from freedom into servility. The Japanese would drag the American down for the Japanese could never change his way or assimilate into American society.  

Author Roger Smiths argues in *Civic Ideals* that as America began to build itself as a nation, the ideals of democracy and liberty failed to create a sense of shared “peoplehood” and have instead led many Americans to claim that they are a “chosen people,” a “master race,” or superior culture. Smiths views race and ethnicity to be the driving forces behind most American nativist movements. However, when examining the anti-Japanese sentiment, ethnicity and race were used as weapons by anti-Japanese Americans to highlight how the Japanese character was incapable of assimilating into American society. Historian Roger Daniels studied various nativist movements in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and determined that while race and ethnicity can play an important role in nativist movements, they are rarely the primary causes of such movements. Instead, race and ethnicity are used to show that immigrants should be viewed as a threat that will corrupt American values and that an immigrant group is innately inferior and not capable of self-government and is a danger to American political

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146 *Coast Seamen’s Journal*, October 26, 1904.
Daniels assertion is in direct contrast to. While Smiths argument that race is the main contributor to the formation of a nativist movement, it is Daniels argument that race is used to unite Americans against foreigners that is correct when examining the anti-Japanese sentiment in California.

When using race and ethnicity as a propaganda tool designed to influence Americans, language becomes a powerful weapon. The emotional brand of jingoism that Yasutake refers to led white laborers in California to initially argue that the Japanese threat existed during the first decade of the twentieth century. The Japanese character was viewed positively when the Japanese first arrived in California and were helpful farmlands. However, as Japanese-Americans began to advance themselves within industry and became successful land and business owners, they went from being viewed as “hard-working” and “knowledgeable” to being seen as “undesirable” and a “menace.” While the exact beginning of the anti-Japanese movement is difficult to pinpoint, it appeared to begin with the San Francisco Chronicle’s publication of several articles in 1905 and 1906 that were attacks on the Japanese character. Again, The Chronicle was implementing the use of racial attacks as a tool. The primary motive was to call American attention to the dangers of Japanese-American labor. The Japanese became “brown men” who were dangerous to American labor or “brown artisans” that stole the jobs of whites. Language played an important role in state legislation as well. Legislators claimed that Japanese were “debarred from naturalization,” and “mere transients who do not buy land or build or buy houses.” Anti-Japanese resolutions charged Japanese with being “non-contributors to society”

that “added nothing to it wealth, and they are a blight on the prosperity of it, and a great and impending danger to its welfare.”

Anti-Japanese Americans used language to argue that the Japanese were “unassimilable.” While a racial attack by nature, questions of a group’s ability to assert themselves, or the ability to “adapt” to the American way of life, it was a method used by many nativist groups. Italian immigrants migrating to the United States in the nineteenth century brought with them several negative stereotypes that nativists used to argue that Italians could not, or would not, become participating members of American society. As author Matthew Frye Jacobson illustrates in *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Americans in the period following the Civil War began to view immigrants according to the notion of “variegated whiteness.” Italians may have been white in the legal sense, but they were less white and therefore less desirable than “Anglo-Saxons.”

While the nativist campaign against Italian-Americans was primarily charged by negative ethnic stereotypes, the initial anti-Japanese movement, fueled by economic reasons, also shared with the Italian movement the idea that the immigrants were “unassimilable.” Exclusionists contended that the continuing stream of Japanese coming into the United States would inflict permanent damage on American customs and institutions. The Japanese character was viewed as repugnant. Japanese were frequently characterized as “brutal,” “inhuman,” and “immoral.”

The question of Japanese loyalty, which was the crux of the postwar nativist movement, aimed at the language schools following the First World War. It was used by Americanizers to contend that the Japanese were incapable of letting go of their allegiance to their homeland.

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Japanese were held by anti-Japanese Americans to view Japanese culture as superior. While they were able to reach great heights in cultivating their society, the Japanese were committed to the idea of supporting a dense population on their land—an idea ruinous to the American way of life. Nativists argued that the Japanese were fatalistic, lacked sexual morals, and held women in low self-esteem. The Japanese accepted sharp class distinctions and did not question authority.\footnote{Richard Austin Thompson, \textit{The Yellow Peril: 1890-1924} (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 216-217.}

Author Eban Brewer wrote in a 1907 \textit{Harper’s Weekly} article that the Japanese nation thought nothing of the world but only its own welfare.\footnote{Eban Brewer, “The Menace of Japan,” \textit{Harper’s Weekly}, Vol. LI, No. 2646 (September 7, 1907), 11.}

Exclusionists and Americanizers focused on the Japanese-American desire to isolate themselves from Americans. Senator James Phelan emphasized Japanese isolation by stating that the Japanese racial exclusiveness prevented them from mixing with white Americans even if Americans desired it.\footnote{James D. Phelan, “The Japanese Evil in California,” \textit{North American Review} 210 No. 766 (September 1919), 323.} As V.S. McClatchy argued in the pages of the \textit{Sacramento Bee}, the Nisei were “American citizens in rights but a group set apart.”\footnote{V.S. McClatchy, \textit{The Japanese Problem in California} (San Francisco, 1929), 8-9.} McClatchy’s description is accurate as Japanese-Americans rarely mixed with the white Californian population, instead choosing to form their own “Japan-Towns.” The Japanese desire to preserve their own communities that included their own churches and schools allowed them to live in the United States without requiring routine interaction with Americans. The Japanese-American separation from white Americans helped contribute to the growing “yellow peril.” The Japanese-American community quickly became the “unknown.”
A primary component of a nativist movement is a fear of the unknown. Japanese-Americans were slow to integrate themselves into American society because of both their desire to maintain their own communities and because of the American aversion to allowing them into American society. White Americans viewed Japanese culture as “different” and “odd.” As is the case with other nativist movements such as the preceding anti-Italian and anti-Chinese movements, the fear of the unknown led American nativists to believe that this “foreign” entity was dangerous.

American fear cannot be overlooked when studying the causes of nativism, especially in regards to the anti-Japanese movement. In America for the Americans, Dave T. Knobel provides an analysis of why nativist movements formed and sustained themselves. Knobel argues that nativists view themselves as the best judges of who was and was not “American.” Nativists were not simply selfless patriots with disinterested concerns about preserving a particular American “national character” but people who derived private satisfaction from organized nativist activism. Nativist activists joined national identity and personal identity, in addition to joining organizational identity and personal identity. Performing these actions provided nativists with a feeling of personal worth as well as social benefits. Knobel’s analysis, while offering good insight to the mindset of nativists, fails to include fear as a factor in its analysis.

Nativists fear that a foreign “entity” will replace them or work against them, thus disturbing the “natural order.” The nativist natural order in the United States places white Americans at the top of the order with all other ethnic and foreign peoples listed below as their subordinates. Political nativism results from the fear that a certain group will lose its political power. Ideological nativism results from the fear that an immigrant group will deplete a nation’s

natural resources and destroy its culture. In the case of the early twentieth century anti-Japanese sentiment, it can be seen that economic and nationalistic nativism was created from the nativist fear that American jobs and security were in danger. The prewar anti-Japanese nativism, formed out of economic anxiety, was the nativist response to their perceived displacement from their “rightful” place in society. White agricultural landowners and laborers, as Americans or “natives,” felt that farming jobs and land ownership rights were reserved for them. Japanese immigrants were foreigners who were unjustified to gain employment by farming lands or were unfit to own their own land.

Americanizers implemented many of the same tools as the focus on the Japanese economic threat shifted in the postwar period to being based on American nationalism and the growing military threats posed by Japan. Historian John Higham viewed his book, Strangers in the Land, as an account of the “intensification of nationalism” and insisted that the fluctuations of nativism as being related to “intense kinds of national feeling.” These “intense feelings” are commonly intensified by war and military influences. The American nationalism that occurred as the United States entered the First World War in 1917 continued into the interwar years as Americans reacted to the country’s entry into the “global order.” American nationalism during this period was fueled by the nation’s belief in American exceptionalism and its attempt to defend that exceptionalism against all threats.

Commonly accompanying the American nationalistic brand of nativism and its defense is the nativist charge that foreigners are attempting to sabotage the United States from within its borders. Immigrants are deployed by their home nations in an effort to gain a foothold in the United States so that they can eventually sabotage it. As Germany became the primary enemy of

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157 Higham, Strangers in the Land, 74.
the United States during World War One, German-Americans who had previously been viewed as the most assimilable immigrants, became dangerous. Streets with German names were renamed; German businesses were boycotted as Americans attempted to eliminate all aspects of German culture. Similarly, following the war, as military tensions between the United States and Japan re-emerged, nativist attacks became focused on Japanese culture within the United States.

Included within these attempts against Japanese culture was the nativist movement to “Americanize” the Japanese language schools in California. The Japanese-Language school crisis helps to illustrate the commonly used nativist tools such as the attack on an immigrants’ character and their “unassimilable” nature. These tools were on display in the prewar period in addition to several other tools used by nativists. The Americanizers’ accusations against the schools exposes both the paranoia of the white nativists, as well as their ability to take aspects of a foreign culture and portray them in such a manner as to deceive the general American public in an effort to make Americans believe the foreigners represented a danger. The most prominent example can be seen when examining the Imperial Rescript of Education. It is true that the words “loyalty,” “subject,” and “Emperor” appear in the document and the mission of the document was to have all Japanese citizens, domestic and foreign, pledge a commitment to the nation of Japan. However, in no way did the document suggest that pledging allegiance to Japan meant committing acts of subversion or sabotage in a foreign country. The goal of the Meiji Restoration effort was to help Japan modernize in an effort to assert itself among the world powers. The educational aspect of this effort was to adopt American educational methods to help students gain knowledge of modernization. For Meiji leaders, nationalism was essential in their effort to modernize Japan. For a nation to strengthen and advance itself, the Meiji Government relied on the Japanese people to believe strongly in Japan as a “nation.” The message that Japan could
become like its western counterparts is what lay behind the words in the Imperial Rescript. It is the power of nativist movements, such as the anti-Japanese movement in California, which allowed them to persuade others to join their effort and become a mass movement.

The unassimilable nature of the Japanese again came under nativist attack during the language school crisis. Dr. Iyenaga offers a concise analysis of why nativism arises during times of intense nationalism, “What accentuates the difficulty in the situation is that the countries which receive such Japanese immigrants also uphold a policy of nationalism, which runs full tilt against the “influx” of immigrants who do not readily become amalgamated or assimilated. The inflow of such a population, they claim, threatens and endangers the unity of the nation, and therefore it must be stopped or resisted. This is the capital reason which is being ascribed for the discriminatory effort against the Japanese in California by the leaders of the movement.”

Nativists argued that the schools teaching of Japanese nationalism further displayed that the Japanese had no wish to become good American citizens. For Japanese-Americans, good American citizenship meant that the Nisei should incorporate the best of Japanese culture with the best of American culture. Japanese-Americans argued the language schools promoted good citizenship because the schools taught Japanese moral values compatible with American values that made good American citizens. Learning Japanese did not interfere with learning English but it did expand job opportunities and promote family harmony by improving communication between parents and children, and having jobs and good family relations made for productive and contributing members of society. Exclusionists called Japanese language schools “un-American” because the schools prevented the Nisei from “accepting American customs,

158 Iyenaga, Japan and the California Problem, 87.
manners, ideals, principles, and standards.” Summarizing the Americanizers’ views of the schools, Hawaiian Governor Wallace Rider Farrington referred to the schools as being “a daily effort to keep the children as fully alien as the teaching of an alien language in an alien atmosphere and under alien ideals can make them.”

Two important aspects ignored by the yellow perilists demonstrate how nativists either choose to ignore immigrant acts designed to assimilate themselves into American society or how nativists are often naïve and unknowledgeable about a foreign culture. Anti-Japanese Americans knew little about the first Japanese immigrants who had arrived on the West Coast of the United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Exclusionists were unaware that the first Japanese immigrants were considered outcasts of Japanese society. The initial wave of Japanese to arrive in America had left Japan looking for new opportunities. Just as the white settlers had left the Deep South and other parts of the United States in their search for new opportunities, the Japanese immigrants were doing the same. The Japanese government had little reason to deploy these “outsiders” and more than likely, they failed to notice they were even gone.

Americanizers accused the schools of encouraging Japanese nationalism through patriotic celebrations, the employment of “alien” teachers who knew little or nothing about American traditions, and the use of textbooks that encouraged loyalty to Japan. Exclusionist accusations at one point proved true. The schools did reflect the nationalist and emperor loyalist teachings of the Japanese educational system. However, it can be seen from the examination of the schools that this was recognized early on not by Americanizers, but by Japanese language school educators. Meeting annually, these educators understood that the schools needed to lessen their

resemblance to Japanese schools by reforming the language school textbooks and changing the curriculum so that the schools were teaching less about Japanese heritage and more about how to be a good American citizen. The educators were the first to realize that they could no longer argue that the schools were an attempt to blend Japanese and American ideals together in an effort to teach the Nisei how to properly live in America. Educators began to meet annually in 1912, continuing through World War One and into the early 1920s, discussing how to reform the schools’ curriculum and textbooks.

Americanizers failed to realize or acknowledge the Japanese-American effort to reform the schools and once again moved to use the early connection between the Monbusho and the Japanese language schools’ curriculum to support their arguments that the schools represented a danger to American society. Americanizers’ demands that the schools be reformed eventually led to state legislation designed to give control of the language schools to the California State Board of Education. However, the “Americanization” movement against the schools was also designed to call attention to the “unassimilable” nature of the Japanese character. The schools, like the early century attacks on Japanese labor, represented the nativist attempt to use the schools as evidence that the Japanese were unwilling to let go of their past, portraying them as being subservient to the nation of Japan and its emperor.

The majority of attacks against the schools began in 1920 and 1921, well after the language school officials had begun to meet annually and discussed how to reform the schools so that they could escape anti-Japanese agitation. If the Americanizers had made their claims against the language schools’ teaching of Japanese ideals such as loyalty, nationalism, and imperialism in the years leading up to World War One, they may have had some justification. However, the claims made against the schools came nearly ten years after the first Japanese
language school conferences began. The analysis of the changes made by language school reformers suggest that although change had been slow, by 1920 the schools had made significant progress in regards to at least planning how textbooks and curriculum would be reformed. The Americanists’ charges that the schools were still based on Japan’s *Monbusho curricula* stunted the reformation process. Instead of allowing the language schools to reform themselves, Americanizers introduced legislation designed to give control of the schools to California’s State Board of Education. While this legislation was later deemed to be unconstitutional, it can be argued that it was successful in pressuring language school educators to speed up their reformation process. The schools emerged in the late twenties as a blend of focusing on teaching both the Japanese language and how to be a good American citizen.

The anti-Japanese sentiment based on economic anxiety and American nationalism helped to display several key components of a nativism movement how it formed and sustained itself. Race, while commonly believed to be a driving force behind most nativist movements, is often used, as is the case with the American movement against Japanese immigrants, as a weapon. Attacks on the Japanese racial aspects, while an important aspect of the anti-Japanese movement, were used in an attempt to prevent them from gaining employment and displayed how they could not be trusted. The movement against Japanese immigrants continued in the interwar period and throughout the Second World War. Japan’s actions in Manchuria continued to exacerbate American fears of its imperialistic aims. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Federal Order 4042 that effectively eliminated a West Coast Japanese-American presence by placing them in concentration camps and closing all Japanese language schools.
As author Peter Schrag describes in *Not Fit for Our Society*, a work that attempts to analyze nativist scholarship, the American attitude towards immigration represents “a double helix with strands of welcome and rejection wound tightly around one another.”\(^{162}\) Nativism is in the American DNA. Americans, viewing their nation as exceptional, could not allow the nation to be defiled by the dregs, the criminals, the anarchists, and the too fertile. This study of the Japanese language schools illustrates just one example of how nativists attempted to influence foreign culture in the United States. The movement against Japanese labor and education helped to reveal how and why the anti-Japanese movement began and how it sustained itself. Similar studies on aspects of foreign culture can help to unravel how other nativist movements formed and prolonged themselves. American exceptionalism is built on the American master narrative that illustrates the United States as the “chosen” nation, a nation with a unique history that will help lead the world to be a collective, peaceful community. Nativism is a prominent example of showing how the master narrative is largely a myth. The immigrant experience in the United States helps to reveal the shortcomings of American exceptionalism. Further studies of American reactions and movements towards foreign culture will continue to help to show the myth and tragedy of American exceptionalism.

America had indeed become a melting pot where a constant struggle existed between forbidder and forbidden. Nativism is driven by economic and security factors. In times of economic distress, nativist sentiment increases as Americans view the immigrant as an obstacle to obtaining employment. Additionally, as nativists feel that American security is becoming threatened, they will view the immigrant as being “subversive” and “untrustworthy.” Anti-

\(^{162}\) Peter Schrag, *Not Fit For Our Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 194.
Japanese sentiment in the early twentieth century serves as an important reminder that the economic and nationalistic influences may explain the formation of nativism, and in a global community where nations continually challenge each other for economic and military superiority, there is always the possibility that it will return.
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