

DOMESTIC SERVICE[DST's "Working Draft"]

The Japanese immigrants--and, later, their citizen children--were barred from access to most urban occupations by both formal employment restrictions, imposed by trade unions, and the reluctance of Caucasian firms to employ nonwhites in professional, commercial, and clerical capacities. Domestic service became an important economic outlet, for those who looked towards later professional and white-collar careers in their own ethnic group in the expanding Japanese communities in West Coast cities. To the latter it served, opportunistically, as the initial rung in their climb up the urban occupational ladder. To some of the former, hampered by linguistic and educational handicaps, it affords a chance to develop skills highly appreciated and well-compensated by the employing majority group. To most of the group, however, it became in the course of time a blind-alley, one of the few means of livelihood in an otherwise closed and prejudiced urban economy. This aspect was especially prominent among the Nisei at the outbreak of World War II.

Entering domestic service as a chance to earn "bed and board," and to learn the English language and American ways of behaving while pursuing another goal--mainly education for the professions or business--was characteristic of the very earliest Japanese immigrants. By the 1880's they had established a pattern of work which became known as the "school boy" job.<sup>1</sup> This was part-time work by students who lived in private, Caucasian households, worked short

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1. Ichihashi, op. cit., pp. 107-110.



hours, and devoted the rest of their time to attending classes in schools or colleges and in private study. They received room and board and "pin money" for services up to three or four hours a day and nominal wages for additional hours of work. This type of job apparently originated with the Japanese and was not common among the Chinese immigrants or other early minority groups.<sup>1</sup> In later years, as the second generation emerged, "school girls" became even more numerous than "school boys."

The skilled categories of domestic service included full-time servants, especially cooks, housekeepers, butlers, and "couples," where the husband cooked and sometimes took care of the garden, while the wife did the general housework and served the meals. Most of these servants lived in the employers' households. These categories were necessarily limited to the demands of wealthy

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1. Ichihashi gives a probably biased interpretation of the Japanese-Chinese differential. He contends that "early Japanese arrivals were mostly students; some of these found work in private families, but only in order to get education." In contrast, "the Chinese who came here were almost exclusively laborers, or so-called coolies, from Canton, and had no education to speak of, knowing next to nothing of the progressive spirit until very recently." (Ibid., pp. 114-115).



Caucasians. At the same time there developed an elaborate contract system of "day workers," organized to meet the needs for part-time specialized service by middle class Caucasians who found the wage scale of house-servants too high. These day workers were "on call" for such jobs as house-cleaning, window washing, laundry work, cooking, waiting on tables, etc. As was the case with contract farm labor, offices for day workers were early established, and through them housewives had ready access to service in accordance with their irregular needs. It is claimed that only the Japanese ever organized in an effort to meet such needs.<sup>1</sup> In the early 1900's contract laborers often lived "in groups of from 2 to 8, the average number being 5 or 6. Frequently they live with cobblers and at the cobbler shops or other offices receive orders for work to be done."<sup>2</sup> With the changing population composition--from bachelors to family groups--jobs tended to become individualized, the contractual system deteriorated, and much of the group-living disappeared. Many of the day workers established regular rounds of households, which they

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1. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23, p. 94.

2. Ibid., p. 184.



visited for certain hours of the day, or on specified days per week or month. In some cases the work was highly specialized, but in many a single worker covered a wide range from house-cleaning to laundry to "plain cooking."

Within the day worker category there developed an important group of garden specialists. These achieved numerical importance after the post-World War I building boom, particularly in Southern California where the rapid influx of population accelerated the rate of home building. The newly built residences usually included lawns and gardens, which, because of the mild climate, the absence of any dormant period, and the low rainfall, required care all the year round. As in the case of other day workers, gardeners organized on a group, contractual basis at first, and group living in "gardeners' boarding houses" was common, but the trend towards individualization was apparent in later years. A single gardener cared for a dozen or more small homes or several large estates, and his set of clients developed an equity value which often could be sold for several hundreds of dollars. The more highly skilled



specialized in landscaping and constructed lawns and gardens as subcontractors in the building of new residences.

It is impossible to determine, accurately, the number of Japanese employed as domestic servants. The U.S. Census of 1940 throws some light on the distribution and characteristics of servants working for private families, but gives no accurate indication of the number, distribution, or characteristics of gardeners. In the occupational classification, gardeners are "lost" in the unrevealing categories of "proprietors" and of "other laborers"; in the industrial classification, most "daywork" gardeners are probably included as "domestics" but the more highly skilled, e.g. landscape gardeners, are "lost" in the agricultural category.

According to the occupation statistics there were 3,541 domestic servants employed by private households in the three Western states. These represented 7.3 per cent of the total Japanese in all occupations. They were heavily concentrated in California, where they accounted for 8.0 per cent of the total Japanese labor force, compared to 4.1 per cent in Washington and



2.1 per cent in Oregon. And within California their relative density was much greater in the San Francisco Bay area than in any other region. In the city of San Francisco 38 per cent of all employed Japanese were domestic servants; in Oakland and Berkeley 19 per cent and in the other metropolitan cities (balance of Alameda,<sup>1</sup> Marin, Contra Costa and San Mateo) they represented 19 per cent. In contrast, only 5 per cent of the workers in Los Angeles and less than 9 per cent of those in Sacramento were in the domestic-service category. It should be noted that the heavy concentration in San Francisco did not mean a greater overall demand for domestic service in this area: Los Angeles, for example, had 24,522 domestic servants of all races (4.2 per cent of all employed persons), while San Francisco had only 8,751 (3.2 per cent of all employed persons). Rather, it reflected both Caucasian preference for this ethnic group as servants in San Francisco, and the blocking of opportunities for other occupations for the Japanese Americans, particularly, as will be shown later, for the Nisei who

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1. Oakland and Berkeley are in Alameda County.



were by 1940 entering the labor market in large numbers.

The historical setting of Japanese domestic service can be reconstructed from several sources, but a reliable determination of numerical trends is impossible. Ichihashi cites the Japanese Consul in San Francisco as authority for the statement that in 1874 most of the 80 Japanese living in California were "school boys."<sup>1</sup> Many of the later 19th Century immigrants took up some sort of domestic job soon after entering the ports of San Francisco and Seattle. The Immigration Commission, in its 1909 report, summarizes the situation as follows:

The Japanese have long been conspicuously employed as domestic servants in San Francisco. In 1898 it is probable that 700 or 800 were so employed. In 1904 it is estimated that the number had increased to more than 3,600, but recently [by 1909] the number has diminished.... In 1909 it was estimated that about 2,000 were employed as domestics. A large percentage of these are "school boys."

. . . . It appears that the number of Japanese entering upon domestic service has not been sufficient to do more than offset the decreasing number of Chinese servants and to provide for the larger number of servants employed in consequence

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1. Ichihashi, op. cit., p. 107.



of the growth of population.

Japanese are also employed to do cleaning and related work about private houses and gardens. . . . The maximum number of "day workers" may be reckoned at about 1,000.<sup>1</sup>

The situation in Seattle was quite similar to that in San Francisco, according to the same source, which estimated some 1,200 as domestics in private families in 1909.

The Japanese have been employed as domestics for several years, at first at somewhat lower wages than are now paid. The work is shared by these Japanese men (few Japanese women being so employed) and white women, a large percentage of whom are Scandinavian immigrants or of Scandinavian extraction. The Japanese constitute a minority of the persons so employed, and the wages they command are about the same as are paid to others of equal efficiency. Some 300 of the total of 1,200 Japanese in domestic service are "school boys."<sup>2</sup>

The number of immigrant domestics probably reached its maximum during the first decade of the 20th Century. Their increase up to this point is attributable to (1) rapid influx of new immigrants from Japan, (2) the decreasing number of Chinese domestics, (3) the

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1. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23, pp. 183-185.

2. Ibid., p. 275.



increase in demands for house servants due to the growth of the general population on the Coast, and (4) the popular appeal of "on call" servants, such as "day workers" and "gardeners," and economical part-time workers, such as "school boys." In 1909 the domestic labor market was largely composed of Chinese and Japanese males, and Caucasian females, many of whom were recent immigrants. There were hardly any Japanese women in the occupation. It is also noteworthy that the Japanese domestics on the whole had not displaced those of other races already in the field, but had merely filled the gap created by withdrawals of a large number of Chinese and the increase in job openings.<sup>1</sup>

Their decrease in subsequent years reflected in part the opening up of professional and business opportunities in the Japanese communities on the West Coast, in part the immigration restrictions which stopped the influx of new servants. At the same time public hostility curtailed some of the domestic jobs that had earlier been available to the Japanese, and the growth

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1. Ibid., p. 93.



of the Filipino and Negro population on the Coast introduced competitors who were often willing to work for lower wages. The increase of Filipinos as houseboys and of Negro women as cooks and maids in California cities after the twenties was especially conspicuous.

Surveys undertaken by Caucasian investigators since the Immigration Commission Study tend, in general, to give much lower proportions of domestic servants than do Japanese sources (e.g. consular investigations). Strong<sup>1</sup> found only 61 male domestic servants and 31 females in an extensive sample survey, in which information on occupational status was obtained for 10 per cent of the Japanese residents of California in 1929. Recognizing that this was an underestimate, he pointed out that

those so engaged are apt to live away from the business section in San Francisco and Los Angeles, also to be scattered widely throughout the country near the homes of the wealthy, and so have not been properly sampled in our survey. . . . Another explanation for the low total is that, although many earn their living in this way part

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1. Edward K. Strong, Jr., Japanese in California. Stanford University Press, 1933, pp. 106-107.



of the time, they prefer to report other part-time activities as their primary vocations.

Ichihashi challenged the 1920 census figure of 6,556 Japanese in domestic service in the whole United States:

The Japanese consul at Los Angeles investigated the occupational distribution of 6,846 Japanese gainfully occupied in 1927, and found that 3,656 were engaged in domestic and personal service, including gardeners (day workers), house workers and cooks, employees in restaurants, chauffeurs, and waitresses. These constituted 53.4 per cent of the total number investigated.<sup>1</sup>

The Census figure for 1930 is also at variance with other investigations of Japanese consuls at San Francisco and Los Angeles. The latter reported that there were, in 1930, 3,553 house servants on the Pacific Coast,<sup>2</sup> and this total presumably did not include hundreds of Japanese classified as "day workers" or "gardeners."

The total of 3,235 Japanese domestics in the Pacific Coast states,<sup>3</sup> as reported by the Census for 1940, (or even the higher

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1. Ichihashi, op. cit., p. 112.

2. The Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin Shi, pp. 591-606.

3. The Census for 1940 does not report the total number of Japanese domestics in the United States.



total of 4,744 by the industrial classification) is also an underestimate according to Japanese sources. For example, the Japanese Association of America stated that in 1940 there were from 4,000 to 5,000 "day workers" in the United States and claimed that from 700 to 1,000 of these "day workers" were located in San Francisco,<sup>1</sup> where the Census reported there were only 982 Japanese in all lines of domestic service. Even if these higher figures for the totals are taken into consideration, there is no doubt that the number of Japanese domestic workers declined appreciably during the thirty-year period before 1940.

The wage scales of domestic workers in the early years were reported by the Immigration Commission. In 1900 the wages for "plain cooks" varied from \$20 to \$30 per month in San Francisco, and in 1907 from \$30 to \$40. Those for general house workers were from \$15 to \$25 in 1900 and from \$25 to \$35 in 1907. In 1909 they earned "from \$25 per month for those of little skill to \$60 per month for experienced cooks."<sup>2</sup> Marked advances in wages were noted

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1. The Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin Shi, p. 291.

2. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23, p. 184.



in later years. Mears estimated the following wage averages among Japanese domestics in San Francisco for 1926, and it is presumed that most of them received board and lodging in addition.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ichihashi, however, claims that Mears' figures are too low. He states that what is given in Mears' table "as 'highest' must be increased by from 10 to 20 per cent, and . . . as 'average' should read minimum." (Ichihashi, op. cit., p. 113).



TABLE

AVERAGE MONTHLY WAGES (ESTIMATED) OF  
JAPANESE DOMESTIC SERVANTS IN SAN  
FRANCISCO, 1926

Occupation	Highest	Average
Cook	\$125	\$95
General housework	100	80
Butler	100	85
Janitor	90	70
Porter	90	65

Source: E.G. Mears, Resident Orientals on the American Pacific Coast, p. 313.



For 1940 a general idea of wages of household servants can be obtained from a sampling of WRA records of evacuees from San Francisco.<sup>1</sup> Of those who reported themselves as general house workers, a majority of the males received between \$70 and \$85 per month and a majority of the females received between \$30 and \$50. The same sex differential existed for cooks, the pay scale for male cooks ranging from \$40 to \$135 per month, with two-thirds receiving \$85 or more per month. The scale for females ranged from \$35 to \$100 per month, but some three-fourths of them received \$60 or less per month. Since most of these servants received room and board besides the cash wage, their net earnings were, on the average, quite large.<sup>2</sup>

Pay scales for day workers were substantially similar to those for general house servants, when for the latter cash wages are considered together with room and board. For 1909 the Immigration Commission, upon investigating 53 of such day workers in San Francisco, reported as follows:

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1. See Appendix to this chapter.

2. These pay scales were tabulated from the WRA records of the 84 individuals in the sample who worked full time in one household. The count of those reporting their wages was as follows:

Males	36 out of 46
Females	34 out of 38



The wages for cleaning was 30 or 35 cents per hour (depending largely upon whether calls from the given place were numerous or infrequent), or \$2.50 per day; for waiting on table, 35 or 50 cents (with white coat), or \$1 (with dress coat); for gardening, 50 cents per hour; for window cleaning, 5 cents per window. As would be expected, the work is irregular, so that the earnings of the 53 house cleaners varied between \$20 per month as a minimum and \$70 as a maximum. The average of the earnings of the 53 was \$42.74 per month and \$512.83 per year. The earnings of 4 were less than \$30 per month; of 15, \$30, but less than \$40; of 12, \$40, but less than \$50; of 15, \$50; of 6, \$60, but less than \$70; of 1, \$70 per month. Their earnings per day were higher than formerly, when the number of newly arrived Japanese was larger than during the last two years. According to the testimony of Japanese employment agents the rate per day for ordinary cleaning was \$1.50 in 1900. By 1903 it had risen <sup>to</sup> ~~by~~ \$1.75, by 1907 to \$2 per day.<sup>1</sup>

In the late twenties pay scales ranged from \$4.50 to \$6 per day (eight hours),<sup>2</sup> and in 1940, according to our WRA sample, hourly rate ranged from 50 cents to 75 cents, while the day rate was \$5. Half of those reporting their monthly incomes stated that they earned \$100 or more, while all the rest except one reported their

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1. Ibid., p. 95. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23,

2. Ichihashi, op. cit., p. 114.



monthly earnings as less than \$100 but more than \$60.<sup>1</sup>

House servants and day workers were, as noted, unduly concentrated in San Francisco and the Bay Area. The relative density of gardeners, however, was greatest in and around Los Angeles. A crude estimate of the distribution of day workers among gardeners is obtained by subtracting "domestic servants" according to the Census occupational classification ~~is~~ from "domestic service" according to the industrial classification. This gives a total of 1,204 for the three western states, some 1,158 of whom were found in California. Of these, 717 were in Los Angeles County, and 536 (or about half of all the California cohort) in the City of Los Angeles. Our own estimate suggests that the number in Los Angeles was actually from two to three times this figure, namely, at least 1,000 and possibly as many as 1,500.

Gardeners were, in fact, small entrepreneurs. The vast majority

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1. Of a total of 176 domestic workers, 72 were day workers. Of 27 out of the 49 Issei male day workers reporting their income, 5 earned \$150 or more per month; 7, more than \$100 but less than \$150; 6, more than \$75 but less than \$100; 1 less than \$75. Six reported their daily income as \$5, and 2 reported their hourly charge as 65 cents and 75 cents, respectively. Of 9 out of the 12 Issei female day workers



(240 out of our Los Angeles sample of 258) were self-employed. Of 151 of those reporting monthly earnings, two out of three received between \$100 and \$200 per month, and approximately one out of six received over \$200, and about the same proportion under \$100.00. Among the latter were the few "helpers" who worked for the entrepreneurs. The level of the wages seems high, compared to those received in many other branches of activity in 1940, but this level was achieved only because of the great amount of unpaid family labor upon which the entrepreneur drew. These unpaid laborers, mostly male Nisei, are greatly underrepresented in the statistics.

The extent to which gardening and other sorts of domestic work were often enterprises occupying all the spare time of the various members of the family is suggested by the following case of a Berkeley family:

My father went into gardening around some of the rich estates in Menlo Park, California. He later moved the family into Berkeley. He continued the gardening work and he also

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reporting their wages, 2 received \$100 per month; 3, \$60 per month; 1, \$45 per month; 1, \$5 per day; 2, 50 cents per hour. Most of the native-born day workers reported 50 cents per hour or \$65 per month.



did other domestic work to make more money.

My father did very well in Berkeley because they paid good wages and he was able to save up enough money to buy a home. As he prospered a bit more, he bought an automobile. After that he was able to expand his gardening business even more. My mother started to do domestic work part time in order to help out. Later she started a laundry in our home. Sometimes my parents would go out to a Caucasian home in the evenings to do dishwashing for the parties which were held.

My dad was able to do fairly well in the years that followed. He did not employ any other workers to help him out. He did most of it himself except when my brother and I got old enough to start helping him after school and during the summer time. He was able to keep up his business with this limited help. Occasionally he used to go to Piedmont or Oakland to take an outside job. My mother continued to do the laundry in the basement of our home all the way up to the time of evacuation. We had 15 regular customers and my mother did all of the washing and ironing for them.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from the historical ecological trend (concentration of household servants in San Francisco, of gardeners in Los Angeles) and the diversification and specialization developed by the immigrants to meet the needs of the Caucasian population, and, from the

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1. Case History #30, pp. 5-6.



standpoint of the minority group to serve several purposes, (a) a means to other ends, or (b) a relatively lucrative career, the most noteworthy aspects of the domestic service situation in recent years were three closely connected developments:

(1) The transfer of the "means to other ends" pattern to the Nisei.

(2) The decline of the "career" aspect, with the aging of the Issei and the reluctance of the well-educated Nisei to accept this occupation as an end in itself, but

(3) The backing-up, nevertheless, of Nisei, particularly Nisei girls, in temporary, often part-time, jobs in the domestic service field because of limited opportunities to earn a living elsewhere.

The following table, derived from U.S. Census data of 1940, shows these aspects clearly:



NUMBER AND PERCENT OF JAPANESE IN DOMESTIC SERVICE,  
BY NATIVITY AND SEX, PACIFIC COAST STATES AND SELECTED  
CITIES AND COUNTIES

(Occupational Classification)

Area and Occupation States	Total	Foreign born		Native born	
		males	females	males	females
California					
Domestic	3,235	808	598	370	1,459
All Occupations	40,374	18,227	4,982	11,883	5,282
% Domestic	8.0	4.4	12.0	3.1	27.6
Washington					
Domestic	269	37	35	36	161
All Occupations	6,546	2,984	1,145	1,526	891
% Domestic	4.1	1.2	3.1	2.4	18.1
Oregon					
Domestic	37	2	4	4	27
All Occupations	1,771	877	241	443	210
% Domestic	2.1	0.2	1.7	0.9	12.9
California, Washington and Oregon					
Domestic	3,541	847	637	410	1,647
All Occupations	48,691	22,088	6,368	13,852	6,383
% Domestic	7.3	3.8	10.0	3.0	25.8
Area and Occupation Cities					
Oakland & Berkeley, Calif.					
Domestic	266	59	74	23	110
All Occupations	1,392	551	191	412	238
% Domestic	19.1	10.7	38.7	5.6	46.2



Area and Occupation Cities	Total	Foreign born		Native born	
		males	females	males	females
Los Angeles, Calif.					
Domestic	540	92	88	87	273
All Occupations	10,589	4,755	1,365	3,039	1,430
% Domestic	5.1	1.9	6.4	2.9	19.1
San Francisco, Calif.					
Domestic	982	399	185	119	279
All Occupations	2,580	1,194	367	525	494
% Domestic	38.1	33.4	50.4	22.7	56.5
Seattle, Wash.					
Domestic	192	27	20	28	117
All Occupations	3,089	1,395	611	602	481
% Domestic	6.2	1.9	3.3	4.7	24.3
Area and Occupation Counties					
San Francisco suburban*					
Domestic	368	79	103	38	148
All Occupations	1,890	793	259	548	290
% Domestic	19.5	10.0	39.8	6.9	51.0
Balance of Los Angeles† County					
Domestic	324	70	66	42	146
All Occupations	6,416	2,550	1,056	1,917	893
% Domestic	5.0	2.7	6.2	2.2	16.3

\* Alameda, excluding Oakland and Berkeley; Marin; Contra Costa; San Mateo  
 † Excluding Los Angeles City

Source: Photostat Tables, U.S. Bureau of the Census.



In the three western states less than 4% of the Issei males were engaged as household domestics (slightly more than 4% in California and a negligible proportion in Washington and Oregon), Only in San Francisco (33%), Oakland-Berkeley (11%) and the remainder of the San Francisco suburban centers (10%) were these occupations any longer of importance as "careers" for the immigrant males. Immigrant females showed consistently larger proportions (averaging 10% compared to 4% for males), but, in general, the nature of the jobs held was of a lower, less-skilled order than those held by the males. This situation is clearly shown in the wage differential between Issei males and females, discussed above, pp.

The most noteworthy aspect of the Census data, however, is the proportions of Nisei females found in the domestic labor market. In the three Pacific Coast states some 26% of all Nisei females were engaged in household service. Even in Washington and Oregon, where other classes of Japanese were infrequently employed as domestics, 18% and 13% of all Nisei females were so engaged, while the California proportion was 28%. As might be expected, the "backing-up" was greatest



in the San Francisco-Bay Area: no less than 56% in the City of San Francisco, 46% in Oakland and Berkeley, 51% in the remainder of the San Francisco Suburban area. Even in Los Angeles, the proportion reached 19% for the city and 16% for the balance of the county, and it exceeded 24% in Seattle.<sup>1</sup>

The reactions of Nisei to domestic work were, for the most part, unfavorable.

A Nisei girl, who worked as a "school girl" while attending high school and junior college in Pasadena, California, recalled her reaction to her work in the following words:

Doing a school girl job was part of my life and many Nisei girls were doing it. I always told the other Nisei girls not to do it if they didn't have to because they would miss so much by not living at home. School girl work kept us confined to the

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1. Our samples of San Francisco and Los Angeles cities do not "catch" as many Nisei females as would be expected from the Census proportions, primarily, we believe, because many were (a) nonresidents and were probably erroneously recorded as residents in the Census (possibly to some extent also "double-counted") or (b) had joined their families in other areas just prior to evacuation, whatever their residence status. A secondary factor is that noted by Strong, i.e., reluctance to admit domestic service as an occupation. See Appendix as sample.



job many evenings.<sup>1</sup>

College boys were often especially resentful of the situations in which they found themselves. Two are quoted below:

I did not like the job, but stayed on for two reasons.

One: I realized this was in all probability the only position available to me in San Francisco which would enable me to go to college. Two: My employers tried from the start to be considerate of my peculiarities, as they must have seemed to them. . . . .

I started in college in the fall of 1935. By then my attitude toward my job was formed--a sort of to-hell-with-it philosophy, which I maintained for the next two years. I told myself the job was a means to an end.<sup>2</sup>

I had \$106 to my name when I started U.C.L.A. . . . . After living with my older brother for a short time I went to work in a home as a school boy. I had come from a very backward area so that when I first entered my work as a school boy, I looked at my employer as being on a superior level to me. I felt like a servant and I used to rebel inwardly to myself when I had to go and scrub the latrine. I was in a constant state of rebellion as I thought that I was lowering myself. I knew that no other Japanese would ever scrub a

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1. Case History 39, p. 21-22.

2. Louis Adamic, From Many Lands, Harper and Brothers, 1939, p. 205.



toilet. I repressed all of these feelings and my boss could never understand me. They treated me as nice as they could but I was very unhappy. I worked there all semester and after I got used to the place, I had to do more and more work. Soon I was putting in 40 hours of work a week instead of the required 20. Like a fool, I wanted to impress them at first and I did extra things to please them. After that I had to do all of these things as a part of my regular work. I only had one Saturday and two Sundays off during all that semester.

Towards Xmas I became fed up from repressing myself so much and I was on the verge of exploding and revealing my true feelings. I assumed that I would get the Xmas season off so I could go home while my employers assumed that I would stay there. They got extremely angry when I told them that I was going home anyway. They said I was a most ungrateful person for putting them at such an inconvenience. Boy, I certainly felt lost as I got fired for the first time in my life.<sup>1</sup>

Many of these "school boys" and "school girls" after graduating from high school, or sometimes from college, became permanent domestic workers. The scarcity of employment opportunities and the lack of specialized vocational training were some of the major causes that forced them to accept permanent positions in domestic service.

Concerning the many Nisei girls applying as housekeepers at the State

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1. Case History #27, pp. 25-26.



Employment Service office, a research worker wrote as follows:

They had no special training in any kind of work so they have gone into this field as the easiest means of making money. The majority of them have been in San Francisco less than five years. They have come into this city from small towns and country homes in order to help out with the family finances, or merely to be occupied until they get married, or else to search for prospects. . . .

There were a number who have lived in San Francisco all of their lives. They have gone into housework without premeditation. Many started as schoolgirls and worked part time in families. After graduation from high school they found that they had no experience in any occupational work except domestic work. Consequently, they just continued in this field on a full time basis. Many went on into business college after having done some housework and took a commercial course, but . . . with no openings . . . drifted back into housework.<sup>1</sup>

A Nisei girl, who graduated from junior college but "did not have anything else to do," said:

After I got my associate of arts degree I did not have anything else to do so . . . I decided to take a domestic job. I felt that I might as well be doing

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1. California State Employment Service, Junior Counseling Department, "The Japanese American Youth in San Francisco," 1941, (Unpublished manuscript prepared by Charles Kikuchi).



something rather than loafing around the house. . . . I liked the work because the people were very nice to me. However, I did not like the idea of doing domestic work because I felt that it was an inferior position. I did not feel that I was inferior and my bosses always treated me as equals, but there was still the thought that I was a domestic worker. However, I continued on with my work as best I could.<sup>1</sup>

Another Nisei girl, who took a domestic job to help her family, told of her plight thus:

I graduated from high school in 1932. I wanted to go on to a sewing and designing school but I never got this chance as times were getting pretty hard. In order to help out the family I got a domestic job as a maid in a wealthy home. I only made \$30 a month and I used to give my mother most of the money so that the rest of the kids could continue to go to school. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Nisei in full-time domestic service/<sup>were</sup>also often unhappy in their daily routine. A Nisei girl in her early twenties held a domestic job in San Francisco, and told of her reactions in the following words:

I had a feeling of frustration when I was doing domestic

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1. Case History #16, p. 17.

2. Case History #49, pp. 18-19.



work and I got sick of scrubbing other people's floor when I wanted to go to school like all of the Caucasians did. It was not because I hated my boss or anything like that. The people I've worked for have always been kind to me, but I had that feeling of resentment all the time. Being in a domestic job, you don't get to meet anybody or do things you want<sup>to</sup>/do and I guess I got sort of neurotic when I had to do domestic work. I know that I thought about it all the time but I couldn't do anything about it at all. I had to be resigned to it. When you are by yourself so much, you have too much time to think. That is why I day-dreamed a lot when I was in domestic work and I hoped that some day I would be in a position to hire people instead of working for them. I day-dreamed mostly that some day one of my mother's relatives would die and leave me a lot of money. And then I could go to college or do whatever I wanted to do without being a maid in a home. I had other worries like being concerned over a lack of social contacts.<sup>1</sup>

Some of these permanent workers, however, rationalized their domestic servant status as being "a means to an end." Some would say that they were remaining as house servants as a stop gap until they could find better jobs, and others said until they had saved enough money to get the specialized training they desired, or to

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1. Case History #20, p. 18.



start some business of their own. Such hopes, however, usually dwindled as they continued to be domestic servants. A Nisei girl who had come to San Francisco from Hawaii with great ambitions recounted her experience thus:

I had great hopes and ambition of becoming a librarian. I was so restless in the islands and I did not see any future there at all. I was determined to get a specialized librarian training course and then I thought maybe I would have more of a chance for a job after I went back to Hawaii. After I got to San Francisco, however, things did not go along according to my hopes. I was only receiving \$30 a month to start with. There were so many new things that I could spend money on that I did not even begin to save anything for a whole year. My initial expenses were rather heavy as I had to get warmer clothes for the San Francisco weather. Then I started to go around and I spent a lot of money seeing plays, operas and ballets as I have never had this opportunity in Hawaii. I was also sending \$10 a month home regularly, and even more later when I was getting a larger salary. Because of these things I soon lost my ambition and I was afraid to get out of domestic work.<sup>1</sup>

Some, who really achieved the "end" towards which service had been a "means," were able to say in retrospect, "Domestic work

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1. Case History #12, p. 25.



wasn't too bad."

The domestic work wasn't too bad because I learned quite a bit from it. I've never regretted doing that kind of work for a year and a half. I have very good relationships with my employer and I was treated almost as one of the family. This work gave me an opportunity to enjoy the sort of American culture I had always longed for. It opened up a lot of new possibilities for me. My employers were musically and artistically inclined and they had traveled widely over the world so that I benefited from listening to them. They encouraged me to continue with my music lessons and I was able to practice on their piano in the afternoons.<sup>1</sup>

A Nisei housewife in her early thirties expressed a similar opinion in the following words:

I don't resent my experiences in domestic work because it taught me a great many things. For the first time, I learned how to set an American style table and to cook American food. I learned how to clean house properly and other household things like that which came in very handy after I started a home of my own. I think that this experience helped my personality development also as I became less timid and less self-conscious around Caucasian people. . . .

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1. Case History #59, p. 50.



I have the fondest memories of my . . . employer. She was exceptionally good to me and she didn't try to make me feel like a servant or an inferior being. She bought me a lot of dresses as I didn't have any money to buy them myself. That domestic job raised my standard of living considerably and I got a good taste of how the more wealthy people lived.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Case History #49, p. 19.



## APPENDIX

### Sampling WRA Records for Analysis of Domestic Servants in San Francisco

The WRA Form No. 26 sheets have been bound in volumes, each containing the records of 200 individuals. For sampling, those volumes that contained an estimated minimum of 50 or more evacuees from San Francisco were selected. There were 44 such volumes, arranged by serial number of the schedules. Every third of these 44 volumes, or 15 volumes in total, were selected. From the 15 volumes the record of every person who was born in 1921 or before a reported that he worked full-time in San Francisco in April, 1940, in a position which could be classified under "domestic service" by the 1940 Census industrial criteria was tabulated and compiled in Table . The Table includes 176 such Japanese, and the percentage distribution by sex and nativity as compared with that of the Census is shown below:

	U.S. Census (1940)		WRA Records, Sample I (1940)	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Foreign-born				
Male	429	41.8	106	58.9
Female	189	18.4	35	19.4
Native-born				
Male	124	12.1	16	8.9
Female	<u>284</u>	<u>27.7</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>12.8</u>
Total	1,026	100.0	180	100.0

Significant differences between the two tables appear in the foreign-born male and native-born female groups.

To check this discrepancy further, the remaining <sup>2</sup>39 volumes were divided into 2 further samples (Sample II = 15 books succeeding those in Sample I; Sample III = remaining 14 books).



## Appendix - 2.

The three independent samples give similar results (with due regard to their small size and corresponding large sampling errors).

Full-time servants are distributed as follows:

	Sample I		Sample II		Sample III		All Samples	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Foreign-born								
Male	106	58.9	100	53.1	89	56.7	295	56.2
Females	35	19.4	45	23.9	27	17.2	107	20.4
Native-born								
Male	16	8.9	18	9.6	11	7.0	45	8.6
Female	23	12.8	25	13.3	30	19.1	78	14.9
Total	180	100.0	188	99.9	157	100.0	525	100.1

And part-time as follows:

Foreign-born								
Male	1	5.3	0	-	0	-	1	1.6
Female	3	15.8	4	16.7	5	23.8	12	18.8
Native-born								
Male	1	5.3	3	12.5	7	33.3	11	17.2
Female	14	73.7	17	70.8	9	42.9	40	62.5
Total	19		24		21		64	100.1

Combining full-time and part-time for the three samples gives the following comparisons with the Census data:

	All samples		U.S. Census	
	No.	%	No.	%
Foreign-born				
Male	296	50.3	429	41.8
Female	119	20.2	189	18.4
Native-born				
Male	56	9.5	124	12.1
Female	118	20.0	284	27.7
Total	589	100.0	1,026	100.0

It is apparent that, even when we combine part-time and full-time workers, our samples are still markedly underrepresented by



Appendix - 3.

Nisei females. We infer, but cannot prove, as described on pp. above, that this systematic underrepresentation is attributable to (1) errors in residence classification in the Census, (2) movements out of the city by students and other young people, who rushed to join their families before the "freezing" deadline on evacuation. If, as seems probable, Issei were fully represented in our sample, we have only two-thirds as many Nisei as would be "expected." On the basis of full-time workers alone, we have slightly less than half as many Nisei as the Census proportions (which, of course, include part-times) predict--assuming complete Issei representation.