THROUGH INNOCENT EYES: CHILDHOOD AND THE JAPANESE-
AMERICAN INCARCERATION EXPERIENCE

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Brittany Alicia Daniloff
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The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Thesis of Brittany Alicia Daniloff:

Through Innocent Eyes: Childhood and the Japanese-American Incarceration Experience

Eve Kornfeld, Chair
Department of History

Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley
Department of History

Veronica Shapovalov
Department of European Studies

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my grandfather, Mark Samuel Daniloff. I miss you.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Through Innocent Eyes: Childhood and the Japanese-American Incarceration Experience

by

Brittany Alicia Daniloff

Master of Arts in History
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In 1942, Nikkei alongside the West Coast of the United States were uprooted from their homes and placed into incarceration camps ranging along the West. After the 1941 attacks made on Pearl Harbor created an imminent threat of another Japanese attack, paranoia increased. President Franklin D. Roosevelt enacted Executive Order 9066 in February of 1942. This executive order called for the placement of all 120,000 Nikkei along the West Coast, where 112,000 lived, to be relocated into “internment camps” to prevent espionage from any Japanese on American soil. The process of relocation took full-effect in spring of 1942, removing all Nikkei, a term for all of Japanese descent, from their homes and placing them into different assembly centers, relocation centers, and internment camps.

The incarceration of Nikkei psychologically traumatized the young children during incarceration, creating insecurity and subjugation to racism at young, developing ages, as well as leaving young children to seek outlets to cope with incarceration through exploring agency within the camps. Although some children experienced trauma, the exploration of agency by children influenced participation in activities within the camps, such as sports and youth groups. The experiences throughout the duration of incarceration influenced these children’s identities later in adulthood, both positively and negatively.

With little scholarship done on the lasting psychological effects left on these children survivors, this thesis will uncover how these children have lived with their experiences of childhood incarceration against their will, how they internalized the inflicted racism they experienced, and how these events shaped their development into adulthood. This project aims to add psychological methodologies to understanding how the incarceration of roughly 25,000 Nikkei children affected these children’s perceptions of themselves, their identities, and their development into adult years.
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To my grandmother Eileen, my mother Norma, my father Kenneth, and my brothers Steven and Anthony, and to all of my friends throughout the process, thank you for all of your love and support.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My twin brother, James, and I were students... We were 15... we ended up at the Santa Anita Race Track... It was called an assembly center... but it was a concentration camp... surrounded by barbed wire fence and watch towers with machine guns soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets. We were given mattress covers and told to stuff straw in them. The toilet facilities were terrible. They were communal. Since there was no toilet paper in the latrine, we had to carry it on our persons lo and behold, for those who ran out or forgot, it was not comical. It was embarrassing and humiliating. It was dehumanizing.

— Thomas Minoru Tajira

This vivid memory from a Nisei child survivor of Santa Anita Assembly Center expresses the humiliation and embarrassment that camp life brought for him as a child. The description of the armed weapons that guards had to protect the internees haunted Thomas. Machine guns, bayonets, rifles, barbed wire, and dehumanization characterized the new lives that survivors of the 1942-1945 Japanese-American incarceration camps would live with for years to come. Facing inhumane treatment and a loss of freedom was a reality for nearly 120,000 persons of Japanese descent along the west coast of the United States. Out of these 120,000, about 25,000 of those detained were children. Lasting impacts of not only the haunting treatment and dehumanizing conditions of the camps did not only affect adult survivors; child survivors, up to age nineteen, recall their experiences to be impacting on their adulthood and identity formation.

In the Japanese-American wartime internment camps during the years 1942-1945, Japanese-American children were identified as the enemy by their peers and their

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1 Joanne Oppenheim, Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration during World War II and a Librarian Who Made a Difference (New York: Scholastic, 2006), 72.

government. Studying early childhood development is crucial to understanding history. During development in childhood and adolescence, children are growing to reach their cognitive potential in understanding not only their surroundings, but their also own identities. However, what happens once this period of development is impeded on by wartime paranoia, which led to years spent in incarceration? A situation where a child is uprooted from their familiar settings, friends, families, and daily lives leave a child without an identity that has begun creation. How does this child find himself/herself if the self has become wrongly targeted and encouraged to assimilate? Upon separation from their lives and being subjected to prevalent racism, these children were left in an unfavorable position.

Different terminology is used in order to differentiate between generations of survivors. “Nikkei” refers to all persons of Japanese descent, whether American citizen or non-American citizen. “Issei” refers to the first generation Japanese who are the initial immigrants into the United States. “Nisei” refers to second generation Japanese who are American citizens and are children of first generation Issei.

In 1942, Nikkei alongside the West Coast of the United States were uprooted from their homes and placed into incarceration camps ranging along the West. After the 1941 attacks made on Pearl Harbor created an imminent threat of another Japanese attack, paranoia increased. The Munson Report, which clearly stated that there was no necessity to have any suspicions towards those of Japanese descent, Franklin D. Roosevelt persisted in the implementation of Executive Order 9066. President Franklin D. Roosevelt enacted Executive Order 9066 in February of 1942. This executive order called for the placement of all 120,000 Nikkei along the West Coast, where 112,000 lived, to be relocated into “internment camps” to prevent espionage from any Japanese on American soil. The process of relocation took full-effect in spring of 1942, removing all Nikkei from their homes and placing them into different assembly centers, relocation centers, and internment camps. The majority of Nikkei were placed in ten relocation centers, termed as incarceration centers, in seven states along the west: California, Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Arkansas. These camps were intended to detain those of Japanese descent, but in the process ultimately changed their lives forever by forcefully removing them from their daily lives and treating them with distrust and fear.
When society is directed to blame an enemy, a child is not exempt. Forced to live under imprisonment, these children remained relatively voiceless to the outside world during the years of incarceration and decades following. World War II incarceration affected these children’s ability to not only live comfortably, but also to be themselves comfortably. In doing so, there remained a forced silence of their experiences, due to their physical resemblance to the “enemy.” Without the ability to seek understanding from a society that turned the other cheek, children often suffered decades without validation of their experiences within the camps.

Nisei children were left to their own devices in order to have their voices heard. Using memoirs, letters, diaries, and drawings as a medium for their voices to be heard, Nisei children expressed their identities throughout the duration of incarceration. Nisei children participated in camp education, youth groups, sports, and other social networks that would guide their ability to express themselves amongst one another and create lasting bonds between Nisei.

However, in order to explore agency these Nisei children experienced, while left to bear the burden of a government’s blunder, it is crucial to study how incarcerated life impacted these Nisei children’s lives. Often, children are left without a voice given to them in moments of impact such as incarceration. These children are left at a moment of ambiguity and uncertainty of their surroundings, their lives, and even themselves. In moments like these, children are able to discover and shape their own identities, whether that is of their own volition, or of society’s. Placing importance on the study of Nisei children validates their experiences, which were often not spoken of due to their own cultural and societal pressures to remain silent about this moment in their lives. Exploring the Nisei child’s experience under incarceration allows the child’s voice to be heard.

The period of Japanese-American incarceration remained nearly invisible in history for decades after Executive Order 9066 was rescinded in late 1944, after Japanese espionage or attack was no longer a threat. Those who were incarcerated often lived up to thirty years after incarceration without any validation of their experiences, forcing them to repress their experiences. However, the 1970s and 1980s marked an important moment in history: historical redress on Japanese American incarceration had begun. Although arriving decades after the “internment” experience, the historical re-examination of past events allowed for
survivors’ experiences to be publically acknowledged, analyzed, and addressed. The rewriting of Nikkei history was finally a possibility with the emergence of primary source documentation, such as letters, diaries, photographs, and survivors willing to speak of their experiences via interviews. Both historians and Nikkei were able to come together to gain understanding, analysis, release, and retribution. The fields of history, ethnic studies, sociology, and psychology, all contributed to this historical redress during the 1970s and 1980s.

The emergence of this redress sparks the question, why was the period starting in the 1970s-1980s a starting point for revisionist scholarship on the historiography on Japanese-American incarceration? During the 1970s, members of the Japanese American Citizen League protested and called for redress, compensation, and retribution for survivors of incarceration. Many of their protests demanded that the incarceration was not out of military necessity. Instead, the incarceration, as aforementioned, was a result of years of racism against Asians. While the Japanese American Citizen League began their protests for Japanese American civil rights concerning the years of incarceration, this brought the issue of redress to public knowledge in controversial protests. In the outcome of this, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians began their research on Japanese-American internment. Although the outcome was delayed by nearly a decade, the Reagan administration announced the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 and issued roughly 80,000 dollars in reparations to survivors, after the protests ignited in the 1970s.

The early protest events of the 1970s certainly brought the issue of incarceration to public knowledge and provided some retribution to survivors. This changed the current (late twentieth century) public rhetoric of the past and allowed for further research and

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development of the rhetoric. These events, in particular, triggered the revisionist trend to emerge in the historiography of Japanese-American incarceration. In addition to the revisionist trend, several more trends that occurred in the general historical narrative would influence the works in the historiography of Japanese-American incarceration. With the emergence of feminist and gendered analysis and critique during the 1980s and early 1990s, Japanese-American historians would emerge and rewrite the Japanese American experience during incarceration, including the women’s experience with gender roles, roles with the family, and children. The late 1990s and early 2000's sparked the trend that focused on the historiographical development to include the perspective of Nikkei children and their development after the experience of incarceration. These trends came to be more prominent as works emerged, challenging the normative historical narrative, rewriting the narrative that left many survivors’ experiences to be ignored or written in as supplemental.

Historical redress was important for survivors, historians, and authors in other fields as well. Historians were now able to rewrite history and address the silence that survivors felt, giving them historical retribution and allowing survivors to come together, with encouragement, to discuss their experiences without shame or embarrassment. For historians, it meant rewriting the traditional, normative historical narrative to encompass the silenced experiences, the minority historical narrative, and promote the evolution of analysis of survivors’ experiences. For fields such as psychology and sociology, authors in these fields could produce psychological and sociological interpretations and analysis of child and adult survivors’ experiences and troubles with identity, racism, and development. The works that emerged out of the protests, the historical necessity for redress, and the emerging trends within the field all contribute their own topics of study. These topics differ from initial research on the incarceration, by initially focusing on the lasting trauma that survivors had experienced.

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6 Valerie Matsumoto’s 1984 work “Japanese American Women During World War II,” introduced women into the historical writings on Japanese-American internment, while paying special attention to gender roles and agency that women experienced within the camps.

7 Dear Miss Breed: The Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration and a Librarian Who Made a Difference by Joanne Oppenheim showcases letters and memoirs of children survivors who struggled with identity and psychological trauma.
The historians and works in the field of history that are notable to revisionism in Japanese-American historiography are: Gary Okihiro’s works in the 1970s, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America’s Concentration Camps* by Michi Nishiura Weglyn, published in 1976; *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*, published in 1982; Valerie Matsumoto’s works such as *Japanese American Women During World War II*, published in 1984; *What Did the Internment of Japanese Americans Mean?* by Alice Yang Murray, published in 2000; *Last Witnesses: Reflections on the Wartime Internment of Japanese Americans* by Erica Harth, published in 2001; and *Japanese American Internment During World War II* by Wendy Ng, published in 2002. As the publications went into the early 2000s, the trends concerning gender, agency, and children, within Japanese-American incarceration developed. The history of Japanese-American incarceration no longer remained a generalized history that focused on events, but rather has become a history documented by survivors’ experiences before, during, and after incarceration.

Gary Okihiro’s works throughout the 1970s gave insight into Japanese-American incarceration, while sparking controversy. Okihiro’s following works address incarceration resistance, Japanese-American voice, race, and gender. In 1973, Okihiro wrote the article “Japanese Resistance in America’s Concentration Camps: A Re-evaluation,” which addressed the myth of Japanese-American complacency within the camps. Okihiro began the discussion on the topic of Japanese-American incarceration during the 1970s, following until contemporary times, with publications such as *The Press, Japanese Americans, and the Concentration Camps, Religion and Resistance in America's Concentration Camps, Storied Lives: Japanese-American Students and World War II, Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of Japanese American Internment*, among others. While Okihiro began the revisionist trend in Japanese-American history, “few academic journals were willing to publish Okihiro’s revisionist interpretations because the editors didn’t consider Japanese American protests a part of American history or Western history.”

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Okihiro’s work on *Storied Lives Japanese American Students and World War II* adds a perspective to Japanese-American incarceration scholarship by adding college attending Japanese Americans during World War II, and the issues that they experienced after release from incarceration. Using photographs, twenty seven oral testimonies, college archival documents, surveys that Okihiro conducted with the colleges these Nisei attended, newspapers, governmental archival reports, and a bit of psychological analysis, Okihiro uses the lives of these twenty seven students to argue that second generation Nisei lived in a society that was still racist after release from the “relocation” camps. Okihiro focuses on the aspect that Japanese-Americans attended these colleges after the implementation of Nisei education.

Okihiro places the focus on a younger age-range of adults in college, focusing on the Nisei, rather than children Nisei or Issei, relating to the studies of children of the camps. While he does not include children, under the age of eighteen, his study focuses on the lives of children after the camps and their experiences with racism, a post-war society, and their attempts to express individuality outside of legal racist constraints.

In addition to Okihiro, Michi Nishiura Weglyn’s work *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America’s Concentration Camps*, published in 1976, and *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* both address the initial call for “relocation,” and argues that the Japanese incarceration as a political mistake based off of racism, thus leaving lasting financial, social, and psychological effects on survivors. Weglyn builds off of Roger Daniels’ work *Concentration Camps USA: The Japanese Americans and World War II*, published in 1971, by focusing the incarceration experience with primary source research, including interviews, government documents, photographs, and testimonies. Rather than detailing the reasoning behind the decision to incarcerate Japanese-Americans, Weglyn focuses on the Nikkei experience in relation to the incarceration process.

Michi Weglyn applies much statistical analysis, with brief psychological analysis to her vast use of sources, including: governmental records and archives, testimonies from

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United States officials, newspapers, military documentation, statistics, declassified records, propaganda films, and racist stereotypes to argue that the experiences of Nikkei after Pearl Harbor was motivated out of racist intentions, and uses the Munson Report as the basis of her argument. Weglyn’s book applies indirectly to the experiences of children in the camps by understanding, and writing about the Japanese-American incarceration experience from the experience of a Nikkei writer. She aims to uncover the truthful experience and loss that Nikkei experienced with the “relocation” and incarceration experience, and their psychological detriment with proving American citizenry, protests while incarcerated, and issues with betrayal and disaffection.  

In the book, *Personal Justice Denied*, nearly every aspect of Japanese-American incarceration is covered, from before the events of Pearl Harbor, to “relocation” centers, loyalty, military service, and life after incarceration. The purpose of this book is to open readdress on the historical interpretation, understandings, and writings about Japanese-American incarceration and the importance of this event and the violation of civil rights. The Civil Liberties Public Education Fund and the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (WRIC) used sources such as public hearings throughout the 1980s, testimonies from 750 witnesses, government archival records, amongst secondary supplemental materials to construct a foundational work that includes the entire experience, highlighting that it is all constructed with governmental findings, and promoted the necessity for redress, reparations, and apology. By using these sources, the Committee was able to take from the testimonies and court cases and implement the psychological, economic, sociological, statistical, and role analysis to entirely understand the experiences of those incarcerated, truthfully and historically.

The argument that the book makes about the entire incarceration experience relates to the experience of children in the camps, because of its focus on the effect that imprisonment left on children and the difficulties with identity and freedom in dealing with being incarcerated. In addition, the discussion on recreational activities, education, and parental

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influence to move children away from the states after incarceration directly relate to understanding and uncovering the child experience. Although the main argument of the book is to generally uncover and address the difficulties that incarceration projection onto all internees, the periphery arguments made about education, recreation, and family concerns give insight into understanding how the camps affected children.

*Personal Justice Denied* is an important work to note because of its sole aim. After the protests in the 1970s to investigate the government-issued “relocation,” the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians began their investigation and published their findings in this book. This study remains so crucial to the historiography because it “represents the government’s own findings. The same entity that initiated and justified the incarceration forty years earlier now concluded that it had erred in its basic assertions.”

By basing the research on nearly 800 testimonials, interviews with survivors and government officials, historians, professionals, and court cases, this study makes a prominent public acknowledgement of the government’s folly during World War II. These works by Okihiro, Daniels’, and the WRIC all helped to lay the base for the discourse on Japanese-American incarceration in the early 1970s. With the following works and trends, the field grew deeper calling to redress the issue of internment.

With the emergence of a new trend in the field of history, the 1980s began a questioning period of gendered history and gendered analysis of works done by previous scholars that have often times excluded the female experience. Matsumoto’s article “Japanese American Women During World War II,” written in 1984, focuses on prescribed gender roles within Japanese families and culture, analyzes gender roles and how the incarceration camps liberated or disintegrated traditional female and familial roles. In doing so, Matsumoto’s research and work gives insight into the conditions that prisoners were forced to live in, refuting the propagated notion that the camps were well-suited, clean, and prepared for “internment.” The mistreatment and detainment of the Japanese-Americans in these camps, although crude and uncivilized, was justified by the United States government, using the war and feelings of mistrust expressed by fellow Americans, as a vehicle to drive

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12 Ibid., xix.
anti-Japanese sentiment. In addition to the differences in prescribed gender roles and conditions of the camps, Matsumoto also discusses the disintegration of the family unit in the camps. Living conditions in the camps involved small rooms intended to house eight people or more, public showers and restrooms, and were entirely surrounded by barbed wire. These conditions did not allow any privacy for any of the internees and provided for the deterioration of interpersonal relationships among friends and family.  

Matsumoto applies gender analysis, psychological analysis, and some microsociological analysis to her use of letters, oral interviews, newspapers, and records from the camps. Matsumoto focuses on women’s experiences in the camps, typically aging from late teenage years into their early twenties. She argues that incarcerated Nisei women experienced economic and psychological hardships with the adjustment to life within the camp and their own perceptions of their futures. In terms of fulfilling their motherly and wifely roles, while highlighting the difficulties women had with re-integrating into society after the incarceration experience. Matsumoto’s article directly relates to the experiences of children in the camps because she analyzes the female (including late teenagers) experiences and their own hardships with being incarcerated, being female, and the difficulties experienced with the disintegration of the familial unit within the camps. Matsumoto focuses on some of the general experiences of children with the breaking of the family unit, the low wages children received while working in the camps, and the difficulties after incarceration with maintaining the family unit.  

Erica Harth’s 2001 publication *Last Witnesses: Reflections on the Wartime Internment of Japanese Americans* compiles a series of essays that revolve more around the family, from the incarceration’s impact on family and children during imprisonment, and how the incarceration affected the family unit after the incarceration was relieved. Her inclusion of essays from survivors helps to showcase her argument, that the incarceration left lasting effects on survivors.

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14 Ibid.
Applying textual, visual, and psychological analysis of photographs, letters, and diary entries, Harth’s intention is to collect a volume of essays from survivors and second generation writers who challenge the historical silence that had been adopted by the American teaching of Japanese American incarceration that have left survivors (both first Issei and second generation Nissei) with traumatic histories. Harth argues that despite the World War II Japanese-American incarceration being one of the most documented blunders in American history, much of the general public still remains ignorant about the entire process that the incarceration included, despite the past six decades of progress that Nikkei survivors have made to make their experiences public. Harth’s inclusion of several aspects of surviving narratives depicts the hardships that Nikkei survivors experienced. The issues that families had regarding the silence about the camp experiences and what the incarceration experience meant for the future of Nikkei survivors. Much social stigma, which branched from ignorance about treatment within the camp, was faced by survivors. Since the Nazi death camps were occurring at the same time as United States incarceration camps, many survivors felt their experiences were not as bad as the victims of the Holocaust, so their outreach was not deemed necessary.\(^\text{15}\)

In addition to directly relating to the children’s experience within the camp, Harth’s book also calls for application of psychological methodology. Since there is scarce research done on the psychological development on survivors, it is worth noting the development of the field of psychology, in relation to important themes in Japanese-American incarceration.

The historiography of Japanese-American incarceration has developed immensely. Historians have first uncovered how the events of World War II were not the primary factors in the decision to incarcerate nearly 120,000 people, two thirds of whom were American citizens, and called for governmental recognition and reparations. The shift towards the aim to understand the experiences of child survivors has increased within the last roughly fifteen to twenty years with the construction of works by Karen L. Riley’s 2002 *Schools Behind Barbed Wire: The Untold Story of wartime Internment and the Children of Arrested Enemy Aliens*, Michael O. Tunnell, George W. Chilcoat’s 1996 *The Children of Topaz: The Story of*

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a Japanese-American Internment Camp, and with Joanne Oppenheim’s 2006 Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration During World War II and a Librarian who Made a Difference. These works have narrowed the scholarship down to understanding the experiences of children, while arguing that the incarceration experience had an effect on the children. While some historians have included letters, diaries, testimonies, and statistics for evidentiary support, these authors do not develop any further analysis of these primary sources, and leave many questions to remain unanswered. What did these letters, diaries, and testimonies reflect about the survivor’s experience? What underlying emotions or experiences was the survivor projecting in these letters, poems, diaries, and interviews? How did the survivor live with their incarceration after the camps? These vital questions have yet to be fully answered, and much of the existing documentation has yet to be properly analyzed to understand the meanings, intentions, and understanding of how the survivor projected their incarceration emotions into writing.

While Riley’s 2002 book emphasized the importance to psychological understanding of what it meant for children to experience incarceration with scarce historical attention, she leaves her work at that. Riley’s book, although vital and helpful to the existing scholarship, does not include any psychological theory in order to analyze the children’s experiences. Her study, Schools Behind Barbed Wire: The Untold Story of Wartime Internment and the Children of Arrested Enemy Aliens, adds to the discourse by depicting how familial life entailed while detained in the Crystal City Family Internment Camp in Texas. Riley’s focus on how children developed in the camps, the activities they engaged in, and how they developed relationships with the detained German children, add depth into understanding the experiences of children, separate from the family as a whole, and without generalizing their experiences to equate the experiences of adults. In her study, Riley applies sociological, and comparative analysis to the letters, testimonies, newspapers, reports, media, and governmental and national archives to argue that the experiences of Japanese-American children and German-American children in Crystal Lake Relocation Center differed in ways that emphasized education specifically, their involvement and participation in extracurricular
activities, cultural activities or maintaining cultural practices, and their involvement with school-centered activities.\textsuperscript{16}

Riley sums up the experiences of children and their projections into the future quite well, “rarely are the stories or experiences of children the material from which history is written. Yet, the stories of children interned with their parents at Crystal City, Texas, are inextricably linked to the history of the camp itself and to World War II... What can be said about growing up … in a civilian prisoner-of-war camp?”\textsuperscript{17} Riley’s lingering question about the future of these children who grew up in the camp, calls for psychological understanding of their experiences. However, Riley’s inclusion of social development also indicates agency displayed among detained children. These relationships and activities that children engaged in often aided in their experiences through the duration of the camps.

While Riley’s book suggested a need for psychological understanding of what it meant for children to experience incarceration, she leaves her work at that. Riley’s book, although vital and helpful to the existing scholarship, does not include any psychological analysis of the children’s experiences and the impact that incarceration made on children’s psychological development. However, Chilcoat, Tunnell, and Oppenheim also acknowledge the emotions portrayed by children by offering slight analysis of their drawings, or of the problems with their identity, with their Japanese ancestry and their incessant need to prove their American-ness, that children experienced. However, much like Riley’s work, Chilcoat and Tunnell’s work tends to be more informative about including children into the scholarship, while including brief visual analysis of children’s drawings, rather than furthering their analysis with psychological or textual analysis. Oppenheim does take the analysis of works a step further and acknowledges the difficulties children had, when children blatantly expressed emotions stating that they are the enemy, or they were nothing but a “squint-eyed yellow-bellied Jap.”\textsuperscript{18} The letters that Oppenheim includes from children express more upfront emotions about their identities, their experience with racism, and their


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 155.

\textsuperscript{18} Oppenheim, \textit{Dear Miss Breed}, 47.
experiences with uprooting, resettling, and incarceration. While Oppenheim’s book is also imperative to my studies, she offers little analysis of their bold expressions of dismay, confusion, sadness, or any of their emotions so courageously expressed.

In Valerie Matsumoto’s 2014 publication, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World In Los Angeles 1920-1950*, the voice of the young Nisei girl is brought into focus. In *City Girls*, Matsumoto explores Nisei youth culture and the “forgotten world of urban Nisei girls’ ethnocultural networks in California.” Differing from her 1984 work and 1993 study *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California: 1919-1982*, this study uses several interviews, community records, and publications. Matsumoto argues the community experience in which agency developed from both external factors concerning immigration, agriculture, and war, as well as internal family and community difficulties. *Farming the Home Place* concerns the community experience while emphasizing the agency developed between the Nisei generation and the first generation Issei. However, in *City Girls*, the development of Nisei agency is exemplified. The social networks, recreational activities, and youth culture throughout the Nisei community in Los Angeles helped to provide young Nisei girls with a community experience that helped shape Nisei development in pre-World War II communities and during the resettlement period post-World War II. Relying on interviews, publications, and memoirs, Matsumoto is able to exemplify the social and cultural developments that young Nisei girls created in order to build strong social relationship for this ethnic community. Persistence in a Nisei culture helped young Nisei girls not only experience personal growth, but communal growth that permeated throughout the incarceration experience. Without social networks that provided Nisei with strong relationships, incarceration may have proved more detrimental to personal and psychological development.

It is clear to understand where the scholarship on children in the camps must go towards, and what needs to be done to these letters, diaries, and testimonies. These children’s experiences must be analyzed to understand the impact that incarceration really had on them. It is necessary to understand and interpret these children’s voices, which were often silent.

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during incarceration and afterwards, but in their letters, poetry, drawings, and reflections, shouted for understanding. What I will do to these primary documents is build off of the existing scholarship. I will take the works of Chilcoat, Tunnell, Riley, and Oppenheim, and I will answer the question that Riley proposed: What did incarceration mean for these children?

I aim to build off of these scholarly works and construct a new chapter to add to the historiography on Japanese-American incarceration. I will continue the analysis on the documents that Chilcoat, Tunnell, and Oppenheim have compiled together, while also incorporating poetry that children wrote in the camps, and after their incarceration. Moreover, I will apply psychological analysis in more depth than these authors, to make and prove my argument that incarceration left lasting psychological and detrimental effects on these children’s psychological development, adulthoods, and perceptions of the world. I also aim to analyze propaganda that reinforced the decision to detain Nikkei in incarceration camps.

The use of stereotyping, the internalization and projection of racism from both the victim and the perpetrator will further my argument as to how racism was the main factor behind the decision for incarceration, and how society projected their racism on Asian-Americans before, during, and after the World War II incarceration period. By analyzing wartime propaganda, pre-war propaganda and racist signage and stereotypes, I will prove my argument that the United States’ pre-existing racist sentiment was the main deciding factor into the imprisonment of over a hundred thousand Nikkei, thus moving me forward into my argument in understanding how Nikkei internalized these decades of anti-Asian sentiment. The addition of psychological, psychosocial, and sociological analysis will not only develop the existing scholarship on children in the camps, filling in the empty spots for analysis that previous historians have left, but it will allow for analysis of these documents, experiences, and the impact that incarceration had on surviving Nikkei. The addition of reflections on their experiences through later interviews and letters will be added to the sources that have been used by historians. I will use their later reflections on their experiences to understand how survivors have internalized their experiences, how they have lived with their incarceration experience, and to understand if the racism experienced left detrimental psychological barriers or influences on their adult years.
With little scholarship done on the lasting psychological effects left on these children survivors, this thesis will uncover how these children have lived with their experiences of childhood incarceration against their will, how they internalized the inflicted racism they experienced, and how these events shaped their development into adulthood. This project aims to add psychological methodologies to understanding how the incarceration of roughly 25,000 Nikkei children affected these children’s perceptions of themselves, their identities, and their development into adult years. This will further the growing scholarship on Japanese-American incarceration by applying psychological methodologies, psychological analysis, textual analysis, visual analysis, and gender analysis to understand just how the incarceration experienced robbed these children’s childhoods and replaced them with decades of shame, mental imprisonment, and difficulties with development into their adulthoods. Using the letters, poetry, diary entries, and later testimonies that children created during and after incarceration, this thesis will reveal how their developmental stages were manipulated by incarceration. In addition to shifted psychological development, this project will also explore different avenues that Nisei children, and often Nisei women, used in order to cope with the incarceration experience within the camps. Whether it be social groups, sports, or education, Nisei were able to explore their own agency in dealing with imprisoned life.

First, I will apply Erikson’s psychological methodologies. Erikson’s works specifically deal with the problems of identity. Erik Erikson, a German developmental psychologist proposed eight different psychosocial developmental theories, in his 1950 book *Childhood and Society*. Erikson looked at differing ages of childhood that dealt with topics specifically relating to the stages of life when humans develop personality traits such as: trust, autonomy, shame, guilt, competence, fidelity, isolation, and intimacy. Erikson finds that social factors weigh heavy on these developments, and help to form the identity of the child, and later, the adult. According to Erikson, the development of the identity lies within childhood and adolescence. These theories of psychological development that Erikson proposes can be applied to the study of Japanese-American survivors of incarceration, specifically those who were children during incarceration. With the countless pressures from society, in terms of loyalty, suspicion of espionage, and being treated like a prisoner, the developmental stages of the identity were shifted.
These theories and methodologies have yet to be applied to these documents by historians. This project will further this discussion within the field to entirely understand how these children have been psychologically affected, in early adolescence and well into their adult years, by forced imprisonment.

Building research on the foundation of the historians of Japanese-American incarceration will further explore territories that have been left unanalyzed in the majority of scholarship. The majority of my research concerning children comes from a collection of letters entitled, *Dear Miss Breed: The Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration and a Librarian Who Made a Difference* by Joanne Oppenheim. The collection of letters here allows for deeper insight into the experiences of Nikkei children in dealing with the beginning of the United States’ involvement with the war, racism felt amongst peers, relocation, and incarceration.

The letters that Oppenheim includes give insight into the emotions of the children, their feelings of betrayal, unhappiness, or estrangement. Oppenheim applies a great use of textual and only slight psychological analysis to her collection of letters, all of which were from children, ages 0-19, who were incarcerated during World War II. By doing so, Oppenheim is able to argue that these incarcerated children were treated as enemies and prisoners, which inflicted difficulty with their own lives and development, despite being innocent bystanders in a forced, racially fueled “relocation” process. Oppenheim includes the different experiences that incarcerated children had, ranging from their experiences in school in the camps, building relationships within the camps, their reactions to the prevalent racism in the United States after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and how these children coped with the camps, both physically and psychologically. Although Oppenheim acknowledges that the detainment affected Nikkei children’s psyche, typically through expression in letters, she does not directly use psychological methodology in order to analyze how these experiences affected the children’s psychological development.

This project also analyzes the experiences of the Nikkei in order to develop an understanding of the events that were a result of century long racist sentiment that reached its apex during the 1942 decision to intern thousands of Nikkei along the west coast of the United States. While my thesis begins in the eighteenth century and expands to the late twentieth century movement for political redress that the Reagan administration granted to
those who were incarcerated, the focus of this project is the immediate prewar years, the war era, and the decades following 1945. The incarceration of Nikkei psychologically traumatized the young children during incarceration, creating insecurity and subjugation to racism at young, developing ages, as well as leaving young children to seek outlets to cope with incarceration through exploring agency within the camps. Although some children experienced trauma, children also exercised agency via participation in activities within the camps, particularly in youth groups. The relationships that social groups brought for these children aided their experiences throughout the duration of incarceration. Their experiences during incarceration influenced these children’s identities later in life, both positively and negatively.

Chapter 1 traces the lead up to the decision to incarcerate thousands of Nikkei along the west coast. In doing so, this chapter examines anti-Asian propaganda, ranging specifically from the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. After examining eighteenth century racist ideology, specifically concerning the “Yellow Peril” and the propaganda surrounding this belief, this chapter will then survey the legalized racism that aimed to exclude Asians from the United States in the early 20th century. A focus on laws that were enacted in the early 1900s emphasizes the prevalent, socialized, and legalized anti-Asian racism that ran rampant and eventually aided the decision to incarcerate these Nikkei after the Pearl Harbor attacks, despite the lack of any connection to espionage or terrorism. This chapter highlights the use of “monstering,” a tactic used to dehumanize an “other” or enemy in order to justify inhumane treatment of them. The aim of this chapter is to emphasize that the 1942 incarceration was not a sudden act of xenophobic racism aimed only at Japanese-Americans in the United States, but was instead a result of a deep-seated anti-Asian racism.

Chapter 2 delves into the analysis of letters, diaries, and journals written by children that express their experiences before incarceration, during incarceration, and after their release. These expressions of their experiences often show the children’s discontent with society’s marginalization of Japanese-Americans, and how racism targeted these children unassociated with the war. Beginning from post-Pearl Harbor attacks, these letters emphasize the mistreatment that Japanese-American children experienced from their school peers, their experiences with the uprooting and relocation process and their experiences within the camps
and how they dealt with life in imprisonment. This chapter focuses heavily on the use of textual, visual, and psychological analysis with the aim of understanding the children’s traumatic experiences with the incarceration process as a whole.

Chapter 3 aims to understand the ways in which those detained Japanese-American Nisei exercised agency in order to cope with their experiences within the camps. This chapter includes the experiences of Nisei girls and women in order to highlight how the experiences of boys and girls differed under incarceration, and shows that older women experienced agency by exploring different spheres under incarceration. This chapter relies on the use of gender analysis of those involved.

Chapter 4 uncovers ways in which their experiences under incarceration influenced children’s adulthood and their perceptions of themselves, specifically with identity, and of the world around them. This chapter also explores the cathartic experiences that Nikkei experienced while uncovering their experiences, from post-incarceration to the late 1980s, after the Reagan administration called for reparations to survivors of the incarceration camps.
CHAPTER 2

PROPAGANDA AND THE ASIAN MONSTER

Figure 1. An anti-Asian 1899 publication by unknown artist titled “The Yellow Terror In All His Glory” depicts an Asian man wielding several weapons and stepping over an unconscious woman.\(^\text{20}\)

The image above, from 1899, clearly depicts an angry, unpredictable, and hostile Asian man stepping over a seemingly docile woman, with the text below reading “The

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Yellow Terror In All His Glory.” Here an Asian depicted as a monster angrily basks in the happiness created out of his destruction. The facial characteristics are angry and readily seeking destruction. He holds a knife between his teeth, in order to keep his hands readily available to use either his pistol or torch, both of which are still smoking and ready to use. All of his excessive weaponry has done what the title has described, terrorized. Referencing “Asian” cultural beliefs, this illustration alludes to the traditional Asian, specifically Chinese, notion of women being submissive to men. However, this image also alludes to the limited ability Chinese women had to immigrate into the United States once the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was passed. As the years went on, such imagery and sentiments became widespread across the United States. The notion that a frightening and unpredictable Asian threat was drawing closer to the United States helped to create this racist and striking imagery to justify the ill-treatment, or in this case the exclusion, of Asians. These propaganda images circulated from the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century not only to condone treatment against the “Asian threat,” but to also validate the anti-Asian sentiments that outlasted propaganda. However, once such propaganda made its way into publications, this is where not only the othering of Asians began, but also the “monstering” as well.

As political conflict arises within the United States, the image of the monster has constantly shifted. Through the use of propagated images that reinforce the belief of the ideology of us versus them, the recognition of the monster is easily reached. However, herein lies the conundrum: the monster becomes easily unidentifiable because of the capability to easily change identities. The creation of the monster and the “monstering” of another group of people make it easy to perform and perpetuate inhumane treatment. To “monster” a group of people, typically an ethnic minority, is to construct a harmful being that incorporates fear and anxiety. In imagery, the monster is exaggerated with horrifying and ghastly physical features or intent.

How can a society create a monster that is seems to shift identities? In order to understand the beginnings of monstering, it is crucial to take into account one of the early

ideologies that characterize othering, and in doing so, monstering a certain ethnic group, culture, or country. Much of the history of “othering” is primarily credited to Edward Said and his work *Orientalism*. Said argues that the representation of the East, primarily the Middle East and Asia, has long been under the hegemony of the West and western ideologies. In doing so, the East has often been depicted as “aberrant, underdeveloped, inferior,” while the West is portrayed as “rational, developed, humane, superior.” Said argues that the misinterpretations of the East by the West often leave all countries of the East to be similar, based on Western assumptions. This becomes problematic, resulting in very problematic Western perceptions of the “East.” The portrayal of the East is often childlike, barbaric, uncivilized, in comparison to the West; the Occident is opposite in nearly all ways. These cultural misinterpretations preserve the wrong portrayal of other ethnic groups. Said also touches on the power relations between the East and the West, arguing that the West’s knowledge of the East automatically, and wrongly, assumes power over the East. Although this binary ideology appears to be outdated, Said draws on World War II society to illustrate that these ideologies are still in existence and prominent. So, how is it possible that a cultural philosophy seems to transgress time and specifically, boundaries which it targets? The fear of the other is often the case, but in this case, it is specifically the fear of the East, or Orient. This is where anti-Asian ideology fits perfectly into the scope of American history concerning the Other and the Asian monster. The concept of “othering” is not identical to the concept of “monstering.”

In Jeffrey Cohen’s 1996 publication *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, Cohen constructs the seven aspects that signify a monster: the cultural physical manifestation of the monster, the monster’s existence at the precipice of crisis, the monster encapsulates all that is different, the monster questions possibilities, the monster can invoke fear as well as desire, and the monster causes a re-evaluation and questioning of normalcy. Monster theory here describes the capabilities that a monster possesses, not only in their creation, but in the

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23 Ibid.
reflection of the societies that create these monsters. These monsters not only bring an aspect of anxiety and concern amidst their creation, but in turn, return to the society that created, in order to create a new understanding and order of the society. The monster does more than just exist at the precipice of uncertainty. The monster causes a schism.

In “monstering” an ethnic group, it does more than force them to the boundaries, cause segregation, and create an identity. The use of monstering in propaganda not only creates a literal monster, but as a result, causes a recognition of the implications that monstering creates. Use of monstering allows for society to not only project their own fears in the manifestation of a inhuman creation that seeks harm, but also allows for society to deem unjust behavior and treatment of this monster as humane. In contrast, to encounter the other means that the Other has “the ability to misunderstand, to face down the danger of fragmentation or division, and to reinforce the coherence of the constructed self.”

The Other has the ability to entice and appear exotic, while exploring the boundaries set between the normal and abnormal. The Other is different, but also manages to appeal to the normal. The Monster is constructed to be feared and avoided. The Monster seeks to create harm and impede on normalcy of life. This is where the difference lies between monstering and othering.

John Dower, in his 1986 publication *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, analyzes wartime 21st century films, propaganda, illustrations, and publications to demonstrate the rampant anti-Japanese stereotyping and racism in the United States. In early 1930s Hollywood films up until the moment that the United States was involved in the War in the Pacific, hatred of Japanese was perpetuated and used in order to evoke hatred towards these “other” people. Western propaganda, as Dower states, “portrayed the Japanese as inherently inferior men and women who had to be understood in terms of primitivism, childishness, and collective mental and emotional deficiency.”

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25 Ibid., 5.
stereotypes were used in order to create the mental dichotomy of the Western and Japanese image as non-other/other and safe/harmful. In distinguishing the Other, it becomes easier to fear this unidentifiable entity, leaving room for the observer to create the identity for this other. Anti-Asian othering, argues Dower, “facilitated the decisions to make civilian populations the targets of concentrated attack…”

Dower, without the use of monster theory, analyzes the Western use of anti-Japanese propaganda in its relation to the Pacific War. Dower’s analysis of the anti-Japanese propaganda deemed Japanese as treacherous, barbaric, and harmful, thus permitting the U.S. attacks on Japanese by the use of fire bombing and atomic bombing. United States’ attacks on Japan soil sought destruction, but did not differentiate between enemy and civilian Japanese. The 1942-1945 fire bombings of Tokyo and the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki exemplified the use of aggressive force to those not directly involved in war. The bombing of these cities, and roughly 400,000 civilians, emphasized the brutality and defiance towards Japanese.

As Dower argues, despite United States’ bombings of German cities, the Japanese bombings resulted in little protest from the United States due to the nonhuman and dehumanizing representations of Japanese. The Japanese were characterized as nonhuman, whereas Europeans were still human.

World War II propaganda aimed to degrade and dehumanize those of Japanese descent, whether American citizens or not. The xenophobic hatred that had been perpetuated for centuries reached its peak during 1942 with the decision to incarcerate thousands of innocent Nikkei living in the United States. Not only was this event completely unjustified by any evidentiary attacks or espionage by Nikkei, it in turn caused a momentous and traumatic event in history. By analyzing propagated wartime images, songs, and illustrations, this chapter will demonstrate the evolution of anti-Asian sentiment, to the monstering of Nikkei and Japanese during World War II. In building off Said, Cohen, and Dower, the use of monster theory illustrates how these images bred internalization of racism, and then

1986), 9.

28 Ibid., 11.
29 Ibid., 41.
30 Ibid., 81-82.
detrimentally influenced the creation of identities amongst Nikkei, later reflected in their testimonies.

Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again.\textsuperscript{31}

Throughout the eighteenth to mid twentieth century, the United States created the Asian monster to be feared. As the centuries progressed and World War II erupted, the identification of the monster became clearer when attacks on United States’ soil were made. The monster exists when moments of impact occur. The monster’s “ontological liminality [causes the monster to appear] at times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematizes the clash of extremes.”\textsuperscript{32} The monster gradually became more obvious to United States’ citizens: the “Asian monster” quickly became the more specific Japanese monster who sought to bring destruction and threaten the safety of the nation. This notion justified the incarceration of roughly one hundred thousand Nikkei, or people of Japanese descent, whether citizens or non-citizens, and without trial. Through the use of propaganda, the United States was able to create unnecessary panic, place the clear identification of the monster on those of Japanese descent, and justified the mistreatment of an entire group of people during the years of United States involvement during World War II.

Before the United States’ government placed the clear identification of the monster on the Japanese Nikkei, several events from the eighteenth to twentieth century solidified this oncoming hatred. Discriminatory laws against Asians made their way into American legalities. Laws such as the Naturalization Act in the eighteenth century, the Chinese Exclusion Act in the nineteenth century, and the Alien Land Law in 1913 all reinforced this negative view and stereotype of the Asian monster. In order to keep the monster out, legal action was believed to be needed to justify their exclusion.

The first act of discrimination, the Naturalization Act of 1790, aimed to limit the naturalization of any non-white person. In limiting the naturalization of a non-white person,

\textsuperscript{31} Cohen, \textit{Monster Theory}, 4.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 6.
or his/her ability to become a citizen, this greatly impeded the ability of Asian immigrants. In the case where there was successful immigration into the United States, there was a legal blockade in gaining citizenship solely due to xenophobic beliefs. The Naturalization Act states, “That any Alien being a free white person, who shall have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States for the term of two years, may be admitted to become a citizen…”33 In addition to proof that this person must be white and of good character, he must also “entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty whatever…”34 There was to be absolutely no ties to any home country that may deter loyalty to American beliefs.

Moving towards a more limiting law, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, although initially drafted to limit the immigration of Chinese laborers into the United States, eventually developed into the first legal act of discrimination and prevention of a specific ethnic group from entering into the United States. This exclusion act not only prevented Chinese from entering into the United States, but retroactively affected Chinese already living in the United States by making it illegal for them to become citizens. While very targeted to a specific time frame during which an influx of Chinese laborers migrated into the United States, this law was not abolished until 1943. While the Chinese faced legal discrimination, the Gentleman’s Agreement of 1907 agreed to “not pass discriminatory legislation against Japanese immigrants and try to stop individual states from discriminating.”35

In addition to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Alien Land Law of 1913 also aimed to target a specific ethnic group. The Alien Land Law in 1913 prohibited “aliens” from owning any agricultural land. Although this law was targeted at most people of Asian or Eastern descent, primarily those of Korean, Chinese, Indian, or Japanese, it was specifically associated with those of Japanese descent along the West Coast in California.

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34 Ibid.

The early 1900 anti-Japanese sentiment was due to the influx of about 28,000 Japanese immigrants into California and their economic successes upon entering.\(^{36}\) One major success for Japanese immigrants was farming.\(^{37}\) Farming created economic security for Japanese in early 1900 United States. Japanese easily entered into the United States work force due to their experiences farming in Japan, their readiness to accept low wages for work, and ability to easily migrate to several parts of California.\(^{38}\) This adaptation into agricultural work created great success for Japanese in both working within agriculture and owning land, as well. White-Americans believed that Japanese immigrants were impeding on “white” land, farming opportunities, and employment opportunities.\(^{39}\) With an already present Yellow Peril, white-Americans feared the economic success of Japanese immigrants. Anti-Japanese hate groups and California legislature began to reflect this hostility with the Alien Land Law of 1913.

However, in its name, the “law itself avoided direct reference to the Japanese. Instead it employed the phrase ‘aliens ineligible to citizen- ship,’ but it was legislated with the Japanese in mind. The law prohibited individual Japanese and companies…, from purchasing agricultural land.”\(^{40}\) Not only did this law continuously perpetuate this fear of Asians, it reinforced the segregation of Americans and non-Americans: us versus them.

These laws and Anti-Asian sentiment perpetuated the fear that was invoked by the United States government and later allowed for the justification of the imprisonment of thousands of citizens and non-citizens without trial. As Tunnell and Chilcoat state, “…when Pearl Harbor was attacked, people who already were prejudiced against the Japanese Americans suddenly had a reason to justify all their old hatreds.”\(^{41}\)


\(^{38}\) Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place*, 22.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 18.


Although often attributed to Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany in the late 1890s, the belief of Yellow Peril narrative also became popular in the United States. The pre-existing yellow peril idea that developed in the United States in the eighteenth century backed the creation of the above-mentioned discriminatory laws and created an unsuitable, hostile, and racist living environment for anyone of Asian descent. The notion of yellow peril remains harmful in that it does not identify the monster, it solely defines this “other” as yellow, referring to the racist notion of differing skin colors of those of Asian descent. Here the “other” is solely identified by obvious Asian characteristics. Asia had become dangerous, evoking “strong [feelings] of uneasiness, apprehension, or imminent peril.”

Yellow Peril itself encompassed the fear of the Orient, the East, and those of Asian descent, primarily those of Chinese or Indian descent. Fear of the Eastern threat to Western values was represented in the peril idea. Although the Yellow Peril threat began discrimination towards anyone of Asian descent, it slowly began to identify with different ethnic groups. First, the Chinese were targeted as the Yellow Threat. Images propagated in America stereotyped Chinese immigrants as an inferior people, typically due to their employment in manual labor in the United States. The characterizations of ethnic groups to be feared would shift once the “other” was identified, typically due to large influx immigrant groups into the United States.

Not only does this Yellow Peril idea initiate a xenophobic fear, but it also perpetuates and justifies inhumane and immoral behavior towards this group of people. Yellow Peril is often characterized as the intent, usually by any person of Asian descent, to threaten the normality of life for Westerners by means of threatening well-being, security, society, and oftentimes sexuality. This propaganda reached an apex in targeting Japanese in the 1920s United States with blanket statements such as: “JAPS KEEP MOVING This is A WHITE

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43 Ibid., 109.

MAN’S NEIGHBORHOOD.” This harsh statement was displayed on a board above the porch of a residential home in 1920 in the United States. This demonstrates that this racist and prejudiced sentiment was not kept in secret; the anti-Japanese sentiment perpetuated this racist ideology and exclusion of the “other,” although the definition of the other remains unknown and interchangeable. As the monster lingers between characterization and ambiguity, it “eludes all notions of identity and difference, and therefore also the notion that places it ‘outside’. … All monstrosity is therefore deeply, and inevitably, political. It is the promise of unsettling subversion.”

The identification of the monster was solidified and recognizable: the Chinese and the Japanese embodied the monster. Popular media began to include the anti-Japanese notion in distributed songs. Anti-Japanese hate groups emerged out of the early 1900s and became dominant in Los Angeles. These hate groups propagated songs on leaflets, such as this song that surfaced in 1922-1923:

JAPS
You came to care for our lawns, we stood for it.
You came to work in truck gardens, we stood for it.
You sent your children to our public schools, we stood for it.
You moved a few families in our midst, we stood for it.
You proposed to build a church in our neighborhood, but
We DIDN’T and WE WON’T STAND FOR IT
You impose more on us each day until you have gone your limit.
WE DON’T WANT YOU WITH US. SO GET BUSY, JAPS, AND GET OUT OF HOLLYWOOD.

This 1922 anti-Japanese song clearly states the hostility directed towards Japanese-Americans in California. This reinforced the backing of intolerance towards Japanese-Americans and the inconvenience that they brought with them. Japanese-Americans are a disturbance to the normalcy of white-American life. Their presence and assimilation into the

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American life was deemed unacceptable at the end of the song: “We don’t want you with us. So get busy, Japs, and get out.” The blunt intolerance towards those of Japanese descent was clearly displayed here. However, throughout the song, it indicated a non-sympathetic tone indicating forced tolerance: “we stood for it” clearly denotes the feelings that these residents had to endure, despite their dismay of the Japanese presence.

By the 1920s, Japanese attempts at assimilation into American life had been rejected and prohibited. Not due to their religiosity, employment, safety, or anything detrimental, these Nikkei were ostracized based on their presence alone. Their unknown culture, unknown presence, and unknown intentions struck fear into the common Americans, especially those who administered the spread of this hateful speech. This otherness was explicitly stated once again. As the decades go on, and World War II came closer, the anti-Japanese hatred had already become widespread propaganda. The intolerance of the Japanese was clearly spread throughout popular culture. These few examples highlight the justification of the later treatment of Nikkei in incarceration camps. How would it be possible to mistreat thousands of people, had there not already been a boundless epidemic of negative stereotypes and hatred towards those of Asian descent?

Propaganda about the Japanese monster was expanding, as the attacks on Pearl Harbor were made, newspapers following the events of December 7th, 1941 screamed on newspaper fronts. These images surfaced as an infection of text, constantly reappearing and reinforcing a sense of worry, panic, and most importantly, fear. Newspaper titles began surfacing across the country that invoked an acute sense of uneasiness and uncertainty. Enlarged, bolded letters engulfed 1941 front pages of the New York Daily, the San Antonio Express, screaming: JAPS BOMB HAWAII, JAPS BUTCHER AMERICANS, WAR! The language used aided in associating the attack on United States soil with fearful and violent words such as: butcher, war, attack war, among others. These frightening words to a general public stimulated and forced anticipation of events to come. In screaming out these headlines, publishers created hysteria among the general public that induced suspicion and anxiety from Americans. These words aimed to catch the attention of the reader and in doing so, manipulated their perspectives of the events that occurred, creating an expectation of another attack to occur. As Alison Renteln states, “the fact that the Japanese Americans were
portrayed as animals in much of the World War II propaganda may have helped convince the American public that inhumane treatment was acceptable.”

Out of fear and distrust of this monstrous other, Executive Order 9066 legally ordered the placement of over a hundred thousand Japanese in areas declared as military zones, because “the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage to national defense material…” The fear that another attack was pending justified “military relocation” of Nikkei persons, mainly from the West Coast to ten relocation centers across the non-coastal West. The Japanese monster “born of political expediency and self-justifying nationalism [functioned] as living invitations to action, usually military [action],” therefore promoting the necessity of detainment to hinder the monster’s further attack.

By depicting these camps as “relocation” camps, versus “prison camps” or “incarceration camps,” it desensitizes the reality of those who were incarcerated; World War II terminology intended to evoke passive feelings from the American public regarding the “internment” in order to deliberately dismiss and justify the events that occurred. This decision to create “relocation camps” was publicly announced in a 1943 World War II propaganda film. In this film, Milton S. Eisenhower stated about those being “interned”:

...Some among them were potentially dangerous. Most were loyal, but no one knew what would happen among this concentrated population should Japanese forces try to invade our shores. Military authorities therefore determined that all of them, citizens and aliens alike, would have to move. ... Neither the army, nor the war relocation authority, relished the idea of taking men, women, and children from their homes, shops, and their farms. So, the military and the civilian nations alike, determined to do the job as a democracy should, with real consideration to the people involved...We are protecting ourselves without violating the principles of Christian decency.

Eisenhower clearly regarded those of Japanese descent as “they” as he groups citizens, non-citizens, and potential threats to the United States as one entity. This allowed for the

50 Cohen, Monster Theory, 13.
American public to see any Nikkei as an “other,” justifying their incarceration, while labeling the relocation of Nikkei as democratic and stemming from “Christian values.” In doing so, the government keeps the American public under the façade that the uprooting of thousands of Japanese-Americans was necessary, justified, and rationalized. How better to trap a monster? Place the monster behind barbed wire, under threatening surveillance, and dehumanize the monster by treating it as so. The monster must remain under entrapment and cannot escape.

This image was not propagated by the United States government to the public. The propaganda film created an enigma: although this monster had to be detained, it/they were properly housed and given “plenty of healthful and nourishing food for all…”\(^52\) Although we should fear this distrustful, unpredictable, and frightening monster, it is necessary to portray the detainment of the monster as humane. The portrayal of the monster’s detainment as humane allows for the reputation of the American government, which placed the Nikkei under incarceration, to remain untarnished and wholesome.

The conditions that the Japanese were forced to live in often meant that these “centers” used to temporarily house them before they went to concentration camps, were previously used to house livestock. Justification for housing Nikkei in such places was due to “the fact that the Japanese Americans were portrayed as animals in much of the World War II propaganda … [which] helped convince the American public that inhumane treatment was acceptable.”\(^53\) The treatment of the Japanese-Americans during detainment did not become any better; the living conditions were still terribly inadequate for human life, the families still experienced inhumane treatment, and terror was still struck into some of the detainees.

Through psychological analysis, it is clear that what was happening during the detainment was by no means acceptable, but because of the prevalent racism and fear that was struck into Americans, the inhumane treatment of Japanese-American families was somehow acceptable. Despite the racism towards Japanese-Americans based on war experiences, there was no such extremist racism that occurred towards the German-Americans or Italian-  

\(^{52}\) Ibid.  
Americans in the United States. California Attorney General Earl Warren explained in 1942 that Americans, in terms of racism, tended to favor German-Americans or Italian-Americans because Americans knew of their culture and their communities, but when dealing with Japanese-Americans, Americans had no idea of their lives at all, allowing more breeding room for racism. Even groups such as the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) failed to protest against the detainment of Japanese-Americans, stating that they “had more pressing agenda items, [they] wanted to support the war efforts against Nazism and Fascism, and [were] based in New York, far from Japanese Americans on the west coast.”

Although the detainment was a large ordeal, many overlooked the reasoning behind evacuating the Japanese-Americans, and failed to protest it.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, many Americans felt as if the Japanese could not be trusted, and essentially found any reason to isolate and segregate the Nikkei. If the racism wasn’t based on superficial qualities, such as the inability to decipher the Japanese language, then it was based on an economic standpoint. Since Japanese-Americans were usually succeeding in their workplace, which was usually in the farm or doing farm work, many Americans envied them. Many Americans thought of the Japanese as being “saboteurs,” not only towards society, but towards the purity of the American race; this lead to the discussion of eugenics and where it tied in with the racism towards Japanese-Americans. Through state enforced sterilization, the impurity of the American race would no longer be in question. Those physical and psychological characteristics that were deemed as inferior would no longer be an issue, due to “the racist version of eugenics held that the ‘superior’ races had to be protected from the ‘inferior’ races.” Ultimately, the resulted breeding of Japanese and American would be detrimental to the purity of the American society. Intermarriage between Japanese, or any Asian, and Americans would be outlawed, in order to keep the American race “pure” and not tainted. Americans had many ideas about the Japanese and their attempts to contaminate the American race. Many of these “ideas” against

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54 Ibid., 623.
55 Matsumoto, Farming the Home Place, 18.
56 Ibid., 628.
the Japanese included their inability to assimilate into American culture, making them a threat to the American way of living. Another stereotype against the Japanese included their sexual nature and their “beastly” urges to violate American women. The racism towards Japanese-Americans exceeded into everyday life, pre-war, during the war and post-war. The stereotypes of Japanese males circulated through American society, not only in the mindsets of Americans, but through visual depictions. These racist ideologies are what ultimately helped shape the detainment of Nikkei during the 1940s.

Often, these racist ideologies were simply a projection of society’s own fears. The concept of projection is a psychological device in which any desires and anxieties are displaced onto a person or a group. The stereotypes against the Japanese reflect back on the American making the stereotypes. The racism felt towards Japanese-Americans stemmed from Americans’ insecurities, or from their own feelings of desire towards Japanese-Americans. Since this was not desired by most Americans, it was beneficial to send the Japanese-Americans into the concentration camps to keep them away from corrupting the purity of the American race.57

While the incarceration was deemed humane, the imagery of the Japanese quickly reinforced the monstrosity behind the Japanese. Images that surfaced clearly marked the enemy and portrayed Japanese, typically men, as evil, harm seeking, rapacious, and unpredictable. Often times, the Japanese were portrayed as animalistic creatures that were seemingly harmful, usually with some sort of weapon and posing a threat to a white American woman. In this 1942 propagated image reading “THIS IS THE ENEMY,” the Japanese soldier is blatantly viewed as a threat (see Figure 2). He is harmful, endangering to the Americans and is represented as a menace to the Americans. The Japanese soldier has a lifeless, draped, naked woman across his back, insinuating that he has raped and killed a white American woman. This image metaphorically represents the potential “rape” of the country, should the enemy not clearly be identified and stopped. This image, different than many of the propaganda posters, does not portray the Japanese soldier as a monstrous being, but rather attributes monstrous qualities to the man. He is stoic, while fleeing from the flame-

57 Ibid., 627.
engulfed background, with bodies strewn up, carrying a dead, white American woman over his back, and holding a handgun. The imagery here certainly reinforces the monstrous Japanese man who aims to cause harm to the vulnerabilities of the United States, represented as a naked and defenseless American woman. Taking control of the disaster and vulnerability that this Japanese has brought, the Japanese man leaves with a pistol in one hand and a naked, unconscious woman draped over his other. Drawing on fears of sexual prowess of the Yellow Threat, this Japanese man exemplifies that in this image. In the case that the haunting imagery, flames, silhouettes, and shadows included was not enough to invoke the perilous presence of the Japanese, it boldly states on the left side of the poster, “THIS IS THE ENEMY.” Leaving behind a destroyed area, burning in flames, with silhouettes of hanged bodies amidst the flames, this poster gives direct reasoning for the Japanese to be feared.

Figure 2. A 1942 anti-Japanese propaganda publication by the War Production Board states “This Is The Enemy,” as an Imperial Japanese soldier is seen carrying a naked, lifeless woman away while wielding a pistol.  

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58 Records of the War Production Board, 1918 – 1947, "This Is The Enemy," digital image, National Archives Catalogue.
Figure 3. A 1943 anti-Japanese propaganda publication by the War Production Board states “No Time To Let Loose! It’s a Fight to a Finish!” This illustration depicts a successful American arm gripping the Japanese viper, referencing the war in the Pacific from 1941-1945.59

In Figure 3 titled “NO TIME TO LET LOOSE! It’s a Fight to a Finish!” the Japanese is portrayed as a treacherous, harmful, and venomous viper. The Japanese soldier in this image not only appears to have a threatening demeanor, but has exaggerated piercing fangs, small slanted eyes drawn on, and appears to be uncontrollable and hostile. This 1943 image, unlike the last, does not express any oncoming threat from the Japanese because here, the strong American arm that reads “American worker” has a firm grasp around the serpent’s neck. The Japanese, although vicious and remains hostile while physically restrained by the American, still persists angrily. This image perpetuates the strong American’s ability to dominate the Japanese. The Japanese soldier in this image is not intended to appear rapacious, sexualized, and a threat to national security. The colors used in the photo are specifically black, grey, and a large amount of red shading, perhaps illusory to the color of blood and invoking a sense of anger and passion. These two images are often perpetuated in different propagandized posters. The American man is always portrayed as strong, dominant,

59 Records of the War Production Board, 1918 – 1947, “No Time To Let Loose! It’s a Fight to a Finish!” digital image, National Archives Catalogue.
and ready to take on the challenge. Contrarily, the Japanese is portrayed as cowardly, vicious, and ready to threaten any American values.

In both of these posters, the monster is identifiable in different ways. A monstrous man seeking to take advantage of a susceptible situation after leaving destruction is given monstrous and undesirable characteristics. In the other poster, giving the Japanese a monstrous appearance denotes that these people are worthy of inhumane treatment.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 4.** A 1942 anti-Japanese war effort propaganda publication by the War Production Board states “Keep This Horror From Your Home, Invest 10% In War Bonds, Back Up Our Battleskies!” This image portrays a hostile and threatening Imperial Japanese soldier gripping the throat of a shocked American woman.⁶⁰

Another route that anti-Japanese propaganda took was feeding into the fears of the American people. By making the imagery more terrifying on a personal level, the image is able to serve its purpose and scare submission of the American people by ostracizing and monstering the Japanese. The 1942 image of a demon-like Japanese man, with sharp, unsettling teeth is taking forceful control over the white American woman. Here, much like the first image, the Japanese man is portrayed as not only harmful, but as rapacious, evil,

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demonic, and threatening to the vulnerabilities of the harmless American woman. The poster plays on the gendered aspect of female security as a reflection of nationalistic self-image. If the woman becomes at all vulnerable and susceptible to the Japanese man, the American country is tarnished and defeated. In order to prevent the Japanese man from invading the homes of Americans and risking the safety of the American women, and the country, it calls for the investment of war bonds. This commercialistic, propagandized poster is, in a sense, an advertisement for the funding of military bonds. However, in order to promote the funding of the American military, it is first mandatory to present the Japanese man as over-sexualized, hyper-masculine and overall threatening to the American peoples. The oversexualized monster “embodies [the] sexual practices that must not be committed, or that may be committed only through the body of the monster…The monster is transgressive, too sexual, perversely erotic…[and] must be exiled or destroyed.”

The constant hyper-sexualized Japanese man posts a constant threat to the American society, reinforcing and supporting the

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61 Records of the War Production Board, 1918 – 1947, "This Is The Enemy."

62 Cohen, Monster Theory, 14-16.
fear and unjust treatment of the Japanese people and culture, which are represented by this aggressive, predatory, and voracious illustration. In both of these images, the identification of the enemy is clear. The headline of the images calls for aid: “Keep this horror from your home… This is the enemy.”

However, the use of monstrous imagery was not used solely in posters. Referring to the Japanese as a sneaky, treacherous viper made its way into newspapers, as well. In a 1942 Los Angeles Times newspaper article titled “The Question of Japanese-Americans,” written by W.H. Anderson states:

*A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched…. So, a Japanese American born of Japanese parents, nurtured upon Japanese traditions, living in a transplanted Japanese atmosphere… notwithstanding his nominal brand of accidental citizenship almost inevitably and with the rarest exceptions grows up to be a Japanese, and not an American…. Thus, while it might cause injustice to a few to treat them all as potential enemies, I cannot escape the conclusion… that such treatment… be accorded to each and all of them while we are at war with their race.*

The identification of a monster here relates back to the non-human, treacherous characteristic of a viper, unable to become “human” or acceptable. Anderson maintains that a Japanese-American, not a member of the Imperial Japanese army, is unsuited for normal treatment and must be treated as potential enemies. This includes American citizens. This does not exclude based on age, gender, or loyalty; this newspaper article calls for the condemnation of all Japanese-Americans to be treated as enemies because these Japanese-Americans cannot escape their viper ancestry. There is no differentiation between enemy and non-enemy. Any person of Japanese descent is liable to inhumane treatment. If Japanese-American citizens are perceived as enemies, “then the real Japanese enemy abroad could only be perceived as a truly faceless, monolithic, incorrigible, and stupendously formidable foe.”

Representing the Japanese as beastly or venomous characters allowed for inhumane treatment. Ridding of the Japanese by hunting and exterminating them was deemed

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64 Dower, *War without Mercy*, 80.
necessary, as one does to dangerous creatures that impede on your safety.\textsuperscript{65} Giving the Japanese reptilian or ape-like characteristics allow them to be deemed as: subhuman, unpredictable, treacherous, and frightening. The United States “possessed a more intricate web of metaphors with which to convey” this inhumanity and beastliness towards the Japanese.\textsuperscript{66}

This manipulative use of psychological warfare by the United States government was used to condemn an entire group of people and is present throughout this small sample of propaganda posters. These posters continually portray the Japanese as sub-human monsters who seek to destroy Americans and their culture. This type of propaganda promotes the mistreatment of people based on a manipulative and scheming lie: that the monstrous Japanese are out to destroy the Western culture. The further mistreatment of the Japanese people not only affected them on United States’ soil, but on Japanese soil, as well. The preexisting racism within the United States further justified the dropping of two atomic bombs on two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. This immense display of power not only aimed at ending the war with Japan nearly a year after the events of Pearl Harbor, but also intended to completely obliterate these two Japanese cities.

However the monster is portrayed, whether physically monstrous or taking on monstrous personality traits, the underlying common denominator is that the monster is not like us. The monster often seeks to harm or corrupt us. The monster comes in all shapes and forms, as there is no “one size fits all” portrayal of them. The monster has the ability to appear normal and “does not necessarily … possess supernatural powers or appear in outlandish situations; instead, he may be a human being whose actions and philosophy remove him from what respectable society deems normal.”\textsuperscript{67} The normalcy and ability to become close to us is what makes the monster terrifying. In the cases that the monster is not supernatural, and is indeed human, their characteristics become monstrous. Human monsters seemingly lack the humanity that is necessary to not be a monster. They are human. Their

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 89.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 56.
abilities are those of humans. They appear as human. The monster is constantly adaptable, adjustable, and moldable to represent our worst fears. The malleability of the monster continues to frighten the onlooker; there is no one representation of the monster. The monster can shift from portraying people of Jewish descent during the First World War, to becoming the Japanese during the Second World War, to becoming the United States after the dropping of the atomic bombs. In the fantastical sense, monsters are able to be created as outlandish and bizarre. Monsters themselves pose a threat to the creators. Not only does the monster contain some monstrous trait about them, but they also

[ask] us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. They ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance towards its expression. They ask us why we have created them.68

The malleability of the monster’s embodiment relies on the creators themselves. The questions begged are often answered by a deeper understanding: the monster is not the creation itself, but the creator. The propagated monstering then is perceived as truthful, causing harm to those the propaganda aims to target. However, “the propagandistic depiction often lies, not in the false claims of the enemy atrocities, but in the pious depiction of such behavior as peculiar to the other side.”69

What happens when this propaganda, which highly exaggerates characteristics both physical and mental in the enemy to be feared, is perceived by the ethnic group that it is targeted against? These perceptions of propaganda and racist sentiments in the United States were felt by the Nikkei, not only during the war, but in the years leading up, as well. Nikkei adults and children then began to understand that their culture, their ethnicities, and ultimately, their identities were wrong. They were other.

In a moment of uprooting and relocation, not only was their culture being targeted, but their identities are condemned because they resembled the enemy, which was so harshly caricatured in the use of propaganda. Impacting their developmental states and identity formations, Nikkei children were subject to not only observing society’s identifying markers

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68 Cohen, Monster Theory, 20.
69 Dower, War without Mercy, 12.
on themselves, but now begin a state of questioning their own identities. When a group is collectively discriminated against, as were developing Nisei children, their identities begin to shift. Here propaganda did not differentiate between enemy-Japanese and American-Japanese. The ability to distinguish the two was nearly impossible as propaganda did not aim to separate which Japanese were harmful. Instead propaganda aimed at Japanese as a collective to be feared. In this regard, the Japanese community within the United States now had the ability to develop a social identity of an enemy, of an Asian Monster. This form of identity “differs from personal identities in that the [social identities] are based on an individual’s social group…, whereas the [personal identities] are derived from an individual’s unique attributes,” including physical appearance.\textsuperscript{70} The creation of a negative social identity of the “enemy” places a harmful categorization of any Japanese, enemy or non-enemy, in an unfavorable one.

Developing children begin to identify only with their ethnic group and display “in group favoritism in their racial and ethnic attitudes from as early as 4 years of age.”\textsuperscript{71} In facing discrimination on a national level, young Nisei are to identify now only with their Japanese peers due to segregation and discrimination against Japanese. Facing this racism not only upon the decision to incarcerate Nikkei, young Nisei were subject to internalized racism by their peers after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Developing children typically place high importance on their peers. Discrimination occurring amidst peers, in an educational setting, and in public settings resonate with children and adolescents the most.\textsuperscript{72} Many Nisei children were identified by their peers as being one of the enemies, as presented in Chapter Three: Trauma. These differing facets of discrimination all challenge the Nisei’s preconceived identities, thus impacting their identities entering adulthood.

\textsuperscript{70} Stephen M. Quintana and Clark McKown, \textit{Handbook of Race, Racism, and the Developing Child} (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 74.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 88.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 137.
CHAPTER 3

TRAUMA

Let not harsh tongues, that wag
in vain,
Discourage you. In spite of
pain,
Be like the cactus, which through
rain,
And storm, and thunder, can
remain.

-Kimii Nagata

This encouraging and moving poem, written by a Kimii Nagata, age sixteen years old, high school student detained in Tulare Assembly Center, California, expressed the sentiments felt by many of the internees, including both children and adults. The negative impact that the imprisonment of thousands of Japanese-Americans had on children was prevalent in their poetry and letters. The decision to incarcerate Nikkei living along the west coast was rationalized by the attack on Hawaii. In turn, this led “…people who already were prejudiced against the Japanese Americans [to suddenly have] a reason to justify all their old hatreds.” All Nikkei who lived along the Pacific coast were transported to “relocation camps,” largely located along the non-Coastal west coast. These camps were intended to detain those of Japanese descent, but in the process ultimately changed their lives forever by removing them from their daily lives and treating them with distrust and fear.

The Japanese-American incarceration camps that detained thousands of Nikkei affected not only the adults in these camps, but also the children. Although most

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74 Tunnell and Chilcoat, *The Children of Topaz*, 44.
documentation about this period in time solely covers adults and their experiences in the camps, it is also important to note that roughly 25,000\textsuperscript{75} children occupied the camps and were psychologically affected by their detainment. Children aged up to nineteen were incarcerated during the years 1942-1945. Although most younger children, up to the age of five, did not explicitly document their feelings about identity, adolescent and teenage children often described their experiences. Documentation specifically includes letters from children that describe their time in these camps and their feelings about the detainment. The children who were kept in these incarceration camps suffered psychological damage because of: mistreatment and racism by peers, relocation and readjustment to a new lifestyle in the imprisonment camps, and learning new traditions within the family.

These camps where Japanese-Americans were placed were not suitable for living conditions. As months and years passed, the conditions of the camps became worse. The living conditions remained inadequate for sustaining human life, those detained experienced inhumane treatment, and terror was struck into most of the detainees. Although the process of uprooting and relocation remained generally low violent, the use of aggressive force was used. Some of the detainees were “shot and killed… even children were sometimes targets” of the aggression.\textsuperscript{76} In four cases, five detained Nikkei men were shot, with three resulting in death.\textsuperscript{77} These Nikkei men were accused of attempted escape or not cooperating with the guards. Although four cases of these shootings were of adult men, the case of Hijoji Takeuchi was of a twenty year old Nisei.

It is clear that those detained experienced a life-changing unprovoked incarceration. The experiences documented by children who express shock, discontent, and trauma require the use of psychological analysis to provide a deeper understanding of the effects on these children.

\textsuperscript{75} Renteln, "A Psychohistorical Analysis," 620.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 621.
\textsuperscript{77} The shootings included Ichiro Shimoda (May 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1942 in Oklahoma), Hikoji Takeuchi (May 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1942 in Manzanar), Toshiro Kobita (July 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1942 in New Mexico), Hirota Isomura (July 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1942 in New Mexico), and Shoichi James Okamato (May 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1944 in Tule Lake). The shootings of Ichiro Shimoda, Toshiro Kobita, and Hirota Isomura resulted in death. The shooters were found not guilty, with the exception of one guard forced to pay a fine of one dollar.
This chapter will analyze the experiences of ten Nisei children who were incarcerated from the years 1942 to 1945. Out of the hundreds of letters left by children, adolescents, and young adults, the experiences of these ten children require analysis through a psychological lens. These letters express the deep and detrimental impacts of incarceration on the Nisei children and adolescents who experienced problems concerning identity, self-identification amidst discrimination, and trauma from their experiences. By the use of documentation provided by children before, during, and after incarceration, textual, visual, and psychological analysis will be employed in order to obtain a direct understanding of the incarceration experience on children’s psyches and identities.

These ten Nisei children and young adult ages range from ten to twenty-one. These Nisei children were detained up to three years in several “relocation” camps across the West. Aside from one, all of the Nisei children resided in San Diego, California before relocation to incarceration camps.

Applying several concepts and theories of Erik Erikson, passages written by incarcerated children will be analyzed with the attention to crisis of identity and the formation of the self. While several of these passages show parallels with confusion in identities, it is imperative to emphasize how detrimental the experience of incarceration was to these children during differing stages of development. Several of the identifiers that are placed on these children are often unfavorable. Children experience “identity-consciousness,” or as Erikson defines it “painful self-consciousness which dwells on discrepancies between one’s self esteem, the aggrandized self-image as an autonomous person, and one’s appearance in the eyes of others.” The language that children use to describe their experiences amongst peers, the relocation process, and during incarceration, give direct associations with feelings of confusion, loss, and trauma. Shifting a moment of development not only harms the individual in the current moment, but that moment is reflected later in their final moments of development. When a new identity is placed upon an individual, typically enforced by outside pressures such as war and racism, it is usually

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reflected in the individual’s reflection and identification. This causes, as Erikson coined, an identity confusion and identity crisis.

These incarceration camps affected the detainees psychologically by dehumanizing and belittling the Nikkei that were located inside them. In doing so, this also means that children were also victims of the inhumane treatment inflicted on the detainees and further exploration is necessary to fully understand the experiences and effects that the camps had on children.

The detention of Japanese-Americans not only forced them to deal with the burden of being completely isolated and detached from their normal lives, but also to endure harsh treatments inside the camps. In addition, the living conditions where they were transferred, made their new lives more difficult. In a letter written by Nisei woman in Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming, who responded to the statement from American newspaper reports that the Japanese-Americans in the incarceration camps were being treated well: “I’d welcome anyone to try living behind barbed wire and be cooped in a 20 ft. by 20 ft. room.... We do our sleeping, dressing, ironing, hanging up our clothes in this one room.”

The mistreatment and detention of the Japanese-Americans in several camps remained crude and uncivil. Living conditions in some camps involved small rooms intended to house eight people or more, public showers and restrooms, and living entirely surrounded by barbed wire. These conditions did not allow any privacy for any of the internees and led to the deterioration of interpersonal relationships among friends and family.

Living conditions in different camps, or centers, was generally similar from Nikkei documentation. Upon initial relocation, internees were taken to assembly centers for a temporary amount of time. These centers were often the worst experienced due to the initial uprooting and the lowly conditions of the assembly centers. These centers were generally created on horse tracks and were intended to temporarily house internees, while their more permanent location was configured. For the longer detention, internees were sent to ten relocation centers, referred to as internment camps, but realistically resembling incarceration camps. Depending on the severity of the suspicion of the Nikkei internee, nine camps were

designed as detention centers for those suspected of espionage or those of Italian-American and German-American descent. Although the camps had different purposes, the conditions were unsuitable for basic housing.

Although the experiences and reflection of adults are easier to come by, as many of them spoke out or wrote memoirs of their experiences, it is important to also take into account the children’s experiences, considering children made up roughly 25,000 of those detained. As Renteln stated, “Over 100,000 Japanese Americans were placed in concentration camps… Half of those in the camps were under the age of twenty-one. Approximately one quarter of those interned were young children and infants…”

Although young children, generally up to age ten, only made up a fourth of the total number of those who were detained, it is necessary to understand their perspective and how the camps ultimately affected the children as a whole, whether positively or negatively. Since they were developing children, it was a difficult task for them to fully comprehend why they were being taken from their normal lives and forced to live in isolated camps. This moment of incarceration not only occurred randomly in their lives, but at an integral developmental stage, as well. Differing stages of life, specifically in childhood until the age of nineteen, affect a child’s perceptions of not only themselves, but of their peers around them. Adult Nikkei during incarceration often practiced traditional Japanese beliefs of “gaman,” which referred to the traditional Japanese Buddhist belief of remaining stoic and patient in times of crisis for perseverance. Nikkei children were typically “unhindered, openly demonstrating their dislike of the degrading environment.”

Understanding different experiences by age group allows for insight into the developmental shifts that incarceration brought onto these Nikkei. While adult Nikkei often remained silent about their experiences within the camps,

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81 Erik Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development examined in ten stages: infancy, early childhood, preschool age, school age, adolescence, early adulthood, adulthood, and maturity. While all stages prove crucial to one’s psychosocial development, the stages of school age and adolescence prove most vulnerable here. In these stages, children develop their industry, inferiority, identity, and role confusion identifications. By placing children of these crucial developmental ages in detainment, these developmental stages are hindered and altered by outside forces.
young children often wrote of their experiences without hesitation. By having young Nisei letters reflect their experiences without any inhibitions, the impacts discrimination and incarceration had on them is clearly stated.

A collection of primary documents that depict the experiences of older children and teenagers in the Japanese-American incarceration camps come from the book *Dear Miss Breed* by Joanne Oppenheim. During War II, a librarian in San Diego, CA, Clara Breed communicated back and forth with many of the detainees in the camps, including many children, who previously lived in San Diego. All of the children, ranging from ages up to twenty, corresponded with Clara Breed from their initial uprooting from San Diego to their experiences in several different camps along the West. This book, which is a compilation of letters from mainly children in the camps, offers a clearer look into the camps, how the conditions were, and how these children felt and were affected during the duration of their incarceration.

The experiences of five Nisei girls, Kimii Nagata (age sixteen), Margaret Ishino (age seventeen), Sally Kirita Tsuneishi (age eighteen), Toyo Suyemoto (age nineteen), Louise Ogawa (age seventeen) and four Nisei boys Richard Karasawa (age fourteen), Robert Moteki (age ten), Minoru Tamaki (age nineteen), George Kaizo Kobu (age fourteen) are used, while one student’s details remain unknown. The camps these Nisei children were relocated to range from the West to the Northwest; not all children were placed in the same camp.

One letter, written by Margaret Ishino who was seventeen years old and junior in high school at the time, recalls when agents came to take her father from the home and her experience about the racism and relocation to Santa Anita Assembly Center in general:

> *When the FBI came to our house, that was a very traumatic experience. Two agents came. My mother was lying in bed because she had just given birth to my brother. They threw the sheets and blankets off her. They said that maybe she was hiding some-thing in the bed, that’s why they did that. And they took anything that had anything to do with Japanese... Nothing Japanese was left in the house.*

This selection of the letter clearly depicts how that event caused some confusion and upset Margaret Ishino. She specifically uses the word “traumatic” to describe the event of FBI agents forcing themselves into her home, terrorizing her mother, and ridding the house of

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83 Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 27.
anything Japanese. The experience of sudden force used by authorities in order to detect some secrecy and remove her father was not only shocking for her, but also terrifying. Forced removal of her cultural identity is also evident. The eradication of “anything to do with Japanese,” spurred out of racist intentions, left Margaret with a loss of familiarity, both personally and culturally. This moment is explicitly clear in recognizing anything Japanese as bad and cause for removal. Margaret’s cultural identity is now associated with the negative removal of all things Japanese. As Erikson demonstrates, her identity “[fused] the negative images held … by the dominant majority with the negative identity…”

Not only was Margaret’s association with her Japanese culture challenged as bad and shameful, she was also left with a distorted sense of authority. She had to witness the government agents rip the blankets off of her mother, leaving her mother thoroughly exposed and vulnerable. In doing so, this revealed how powerless her mother, the matriarch of the family, truly was in this moment of trauma. Exposing women as a show of authority was not only depicted in Margaret’s experience as systematic prejudice against Japanese, but also in the early propaganda posters that criticized the fears of Japanese men as a hypersexualized threat. This act of aggression by the agents left Margaret in a crisis. Margaret loses her self-identify when legal force was used to destroy her culture, and ultimately, her identity.

Some racism experienced did not reflect such extremes, compared to previous letters that depicted hostile behavior from government officials. For example, a fourteen year old boy in a San Diego high school, Richard Karasawa, recalls an event in which his friend jokes with him:

...first thing before class we used to congregate and Jimmy Papas, my Greek buddy... comes up and says to me... “Hey Baby, you’re an enemy now!”... Then he says... “I’m only kidding” and he put his arm around me and gives me a hug... When Roosevelt was making his speech on Dec 8- we were listening to him in homeroom class. ... I was the only Asian in the class. I can’t remember all that I felt, but I know I felt bad.

Richard Karasawa’s experience with this newfound racism was not exceptionally bad besides the “lighthearted” joke from a classmate now identifying Richard Karasawa as “an enemy”

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85 Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 29.
rather than a classmate. Although students are joking with each other, it is clear to see that they are aware of the situation and who the target is for blame. On the surface, this playful act between children is a joke amongst friends. However, moments of identification such as these, cause considerably shift, and potential damage, to a young Richard. Although Jimmy’s joke towards Richard can be constituted as playful, it still racism and is detrimental to Richard. In this case, even this insult between friends with “no evidence of harm taking place … [may be] …seen as problematic.” Richard was later relocated to two different camps, Santa Anita Assembly Center in California and Poston War Relocation Center in Arizona.

When these young Nisei children experienced racism and rejection expressed by their peers, who these children often spent most of their time with outside the home, this became a moment of lasting impact on the children’s perception of their own identity. Being classified and grouped with that of the “enemy,” as explicitly and derogatory as possible, the Nisei child’s own self-perception deviated from their normal view of themselves. Here, Richard’s friend jokingly replaced his identity to “an enemy” leaving Richard to feel a certain sense of guilt for events which he has no association. As Erikson demonstrates, Richard is “‘recognized' at a critical moment as one who arouses displeasure and discomfort” by being identified as an enemy.

As his friend Jimmy Papas made a joke toward Richard, Richard understood that he should feel guilt for the situation that the United States was currently in as Roosevelt declares war on the Japanese, despite having no direct connection to the attacks on Pearl Harbor. Because of his ethnic identity, Richard knows that he has the physical characteristics of the enemy, and he felt ashamed of them. This newly found national identity is reflected in the passage written by Richard Karasawa.

Another student, Robert Moteki, a ten year old boy, experienced similar sentiments by classmates and peers before his relocation to Portland Assembly Center:

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87 Erikson, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis*, 160. Erikson’s theories of community identifications onto a individual have the potential to shift their own perceptions of identity, often causing a problematic identification with themselves, or the way the community identifies the individual. Erikson states, “a community’s ways of identifying the individual, then, meet more or less successfully the individual’s ways of identifying himself with others.”
I was just 10 years old when I became suddenly a ‘squint-eyed yellow-bellied Jap’ to my fourth grade schoolmates, who had formerly been my friends. I vividly remember the agony of hiding behind the barn and crying after returning home from school and being unable to tell my father. I could see that he was shattered and confused by the order that our family was to pack what we could carry and be taken to what the Government called a relocation camp... I vividly remember wartime propaganda posters and newsreel accounts about the ‘sneaky, treacherous, rapacious, yellow-bellied Japs’ who were the enemy. Nobody in the Government made distinctions between the ‘Japs’ of the Japanese Imperial Army and me. I was one of the enemy, though 10 years old, and placed in a concentration camp. Robert Moteki’s experience with the racism of Americans and even his fellow young classmates caused psychological damage to him: he uses words such as ‘agony’, ‘shattered’, ‘confused’,”‘enemy’ all in relation to how he and his family felt. At only ten years old, Robert Moteki comprehended that he was now identified as the enemy, although he had done nothing more than be born of Japanese descent. Robert Moteki felt indifference and dismay when being blamed and penalized for the events of Pearl Harbor, despite having no association with him personally. He was identified as being a “yellow-bellied Jap” and was placed in a concentration camp. Robert’s identity was forcefully changed from a young boy, student, and American into an enemy. He was now viewed by other Americans as the enemy, despite his age and disassociation with the true Japanese army. Robert no longer was identified as an innocent young American; instead as he states, “I was one of the enemy.” Here Robert’s recognition of himself is now that of the enemy. The Asian monster, which has been so strikingly represented in propaganda, has been internalized by Robert, thus creating his own identity crisis between the polarized self and other. His anguish felt in describing the experience of identity shift, occurred at a crucial stage of development.

Robert’s inability to self-identify rests upon the identifier that society has placed upon him. Not only causing detriment and confusion, Robert internalized and suppressed the effects that this racism had on him. Without the ability to express to his own father the crisis, with which his father was experiencing as well, created a forced repression of this shameful guilt that Robert was forced to experience.

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88 Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 47.
A moment of national crisis sparked crises amongst individuals. This left children to deal with the burden of a state of confusion, causing “irreversible childhood identifications [that] would deprive an individual of an identity of his own.” Instead, Moteki’s identity is now shifted to those perpetuated and propagated by the American government. The nation’s fear of the Asian threat, i.e. Yellow Peril and Orientalism, now became Moteki’s self-identity. A child without connection to political troubles, aside from physical characteristics, was left in a purgatory of identity crises.

These students, who sometimes encountered different reactions from their peers about the attacks and their association with them, were ultimately forced to deal with racism and discrimination by their peers, regardless of severity.

Sally Kirita Tsuneishi, age eighteen, wrote about her confusion, destruction of her identity, and loss that she felt living in America during these times, putting her in a liminal state of being. Her identity was slowly torn from her, leaving her between the state of an American student and an enemy of the state. Sally’s identity was resting in a period of liminality. Sally was no longer identified as a young student; instead she would be branded the identity of the enemy:

As I passed my high school, I saw the American flag waving in the wind, and my emotions were in turmoil. I thought of the prize-winning essay that I had written for my English class titled ‘Why I Am Proud to be an American.’ As tears streamed down my face, an awful realization dawned on me: I am a loyal American. Yes, I had the face of an enemy. The trauma of being uprooted from many friends and home and school left me confused with a deep sense of personal loss. Sally Kirita Tsuneishi, felt stripped of her identity of a loyal American, with no real provocation. She was judged by her appearance and deemed the enemy, forcing her to undergo the trauma of leaving her entire life behind to enter the imprisonment camps. She was forced to leave everything familiar and loved, simply because she resembled the enemy. Sally recognized and distinguished the embodiment of the enemy. The enemy had the same physical characteristics as she had. The fearful, treacherous, and frightening “Jap” that

90 Ibid., 247.
91 Oppenheim, Dear Miss Breed, 52.
propaganda had meticulously created had afflicted Sally’s identity; she had the face of the enemy. Physically, Sally reflected the socially constructed Asian monster.

Sally was forced cope with the psychological stress and trauma of starting over again in an unfamiliar place, without the comfort of friends, home, or school. Many children similar to Sally felt betrayed by fellow Americans and experienced the trauma of having to move their entire lives and enter this questionable, liminal, and confusing period in their new lives.

Minoru Tamaki’s experience also reflected the confusion felt by children before entering the camps. Not only was Tamaki confused by the bold racism that other Americans presented, but also by the lack of positive governmental intervention. Minoru Tamaki wrote:

Under the door the following note was left… ‘This is a warning. Get out. We don’t want you in our beautiful country. Go where your ancestors came from. Once a Jap, always one. Get out.’ As we became increasingly the target of blind hate, our government failed to come to our aid. Indeed, the government joined the hysteria by over-reacting, rounding up supposed enemy agents and, above all, keeping silent about the increasing antagonism against all Japanese Americans. Minoru Tamaki, aged nineteen year old boy, described the note that was left, stating such obvious racism towards Japanese and targeting specific people, in spite of having no connection to the attacks. Minoru felt that it was government’s fault for not standing up for the Japanese-Americans who were enduring this blatant racism, but instead created and contributed to it by later keeping Japanese-Americans in imprisonment camps. Minoru used wording with negative connotations such as ‘blind hate’, ‘failed’, ‘over-reacting’, ‘and antagonism’ to describe the situation that Japanese-Americans were left. The words, although strong, project the bitter situation of Japanese-Americans.

Minoru Tamaki’s letter contrasts with Richard Karasawa’s letter. While Richard experienced a more easygoing exposure to the newfound racism by receiving a “lighthearted” joke from a friend, Minoru experienced the more blatant, crude exposure to racism and new societal identification of those of Japanese descent. Minoru’s previous identity, excluding race, was shifted to a negative perception of himself, his culture, and the Japanese presence in the United States.

92 Ibid., 34.
Minoru is now subjected to realizing his society has marked him as an enemy, changing her perception of herself for life. Erikson’s theories behind identification and identity suggest that children, during the stage of adolescence, such as Minoru, become adaptable to their new identifiers for life. Their new characterizations, here as a “Jap” and “enemy,” no longer allow the stage of childhood to be playful and experimental, but was interrupted, thus creating a new identification for Minoru. He created a new identity that would be a lifetime identification.93

In addition, Minoru’s identification of being an American citizen shifts. The terminology used by Minoru when describing the government’s reaction to this crisis shifts from “our government” to “the government” once he realizes that the government that represented him, chose to deny him and marginalize him based on physical characteristics.

Once children were forcefully removed from their normal lives and placed into the camps, their feelings about the incarceration and adjustment to a new lifestyle did not change. Feelings of abandonment and betrayal by their country remained prevalent among children who were entering the camps. Readjusting to a new lifestyle under constant watch and threat was troubling for children. One teenage student, age fourteen years old, George Kaizo Kubo, wrote about the bleak experience of entering Santa Anita Assembly Center in California and the grim and depressing emotions that were evoked:

Before my very eyes my world crumbled. From the instant I stepped into the barbed wire enclosures of our destination, I felt that queer alienable presence within me. All the brash bravado I had saved for this precise moment vanished like a disembodied soul. I suddenly felt incredibly small and alone. So this was imprisonment.

The oppressive silhouette of the guard towers looming cold and dark in the distance affected me in only one way. They seemed to threaten, to challenge me. I hated their ugly hugeness, the power they symbolized. I held only contempt for that which they stand. They kept poignantly clear in my mind the inescapable truth that I was a prisoner.

... An incomprehensible air of tension hung over the confines of the entire center. Twenty thousand souls brooding. It was not pleasant. The next abruptly discernible phase was a lifting of the silence and in a surprisingly short time, the

93 Erikson, Identity, Youth, and Crisis, 155.
atmospheres had changed to a noisy, equally unpredictable show of human emotions. Camp life was like that – uncertain.\textsuperscript{94}

Kaizo Kubo’s letter uses more somber language when describing the camps, ultimately laying out his feelings about the camp altogether. Words such as ‘oppressive’, ‘threaten’, ‘challenge’, ‘ugly hugeness’, ‘prisoner’, ‘brooding’, and ‘uncertain’ all are used negatively and essentially amplify Kaizo’s emotions about the camp and his experience in the camp. The imagery that Kaizo describes is remarkably vivid, allowing an outsider to not only see what he saw in the camps, but to feel the ominous feelings that the camp summoned. The description of the guard tower as an “oppressive silhouette… looming cold and dark in the distance…” also allows an outsider to fully understand the psychological stress and damage that the incarceration camps inflicted on children, and even adults. The notion that the guards had “challenged” him also allows for an outsider to understand exactly what Kaizo, as well as many other children and adults, felt by being confined to a prison camp with guards to ensure their detainment. Kaizo’s identity switched from being an innocent American child, to a prisoner. Not only was Kaizo literally imprisoned behind barbed wire, but felt mentally imprisoned once he entered into the camp. Against his will, Kaizo was forced to deal with the new orders and had to live in a place that he does not associate with home. Similar to Sally Kirita Tsuneishi’s letter about leaving for the camps, Kaizo’s letter also depicts a negative view of the camp while entering a new, liminal state of life. Now in between being a student and freedom, Kaizo is forced to become imprisoned, leaving him in this state of uncertainty and confusion.

The uncertain atmosphere of camp life and identity is reflected in Kaizo’s letter. The uncertainty of identity left Kaizo at the precipice of crisis. Feeling the “queer alienable presence” and disassociation with his self-identification before the camps, Kaizo’s self-perception then transforms into a minimalized state. This state of divided consciousness leaves Kaizo to have feelings of shifting identities. His feelings of emptiness and loneliness reflected his insecurities in identifying not only himself, but the environment. His understanding the environment around him is essential to the creation of the self. Without understanding a context that impacts his being so vehemently, Kaizo cannot identify himself.

\textsuperscript{94} Oppenheim, \textit{Dear Miss Breed}, 67-68.
Despite children often being overlooked by historians, or not having enough documentation from children to allow for research. The letters from the children in their later years describe their emotions and experiences previous to the imprisonment camps, about the prison camps, and their firsthand experiences. The letters that these children wrote vividly describe their experiences with the sudden racism and intolerance directed at them from fellow peers and Americans, and also with the process of losing their freedom from going to imprisonment camps.

Another source that provides insight into how children adapted to the camps is the book *The Children of Topaz: The Story of a Japanese-American Internment Camp* by Michael O. Tunnell and George W. Chilcoat. This book discloses how the children inside the camps settled in and the activities that they engaged in while detained in the camps. Tunnell and Chilcoat use a classroom diary from the incarceration camp in Topaz, Utah to examine what children did while in the camps, how the children settled into the camp, and what activities they participated in.

Initial feelings while first adjusting to the camp lifestyle left a heavy burden on children’s psyche. The sudden change of living areas became even more detrimental for children to experience because instead of resembling their homes or any living structure, the camps resembled prisons. “The U.S. Army was in charge of the assembly centers, which were enclosed in barbed wire and guarded like prisoner-of-war camps.”95 Despite these camps having intentions to house thousands of families, instead, the families were being treated as if they were prisoners, living in empty barn houses and having little to no privacy at all.

The treatment of families as prisoners began to tear at family relationships and cause families to drift apart. Family traditions, such as eating together, would soon become a thing of the past as the condition of the camps pushed children to separate from their families and vice versa. “…Families who were used to preparing meals and sitting together around a

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dining room table had to stand in long mess hall lines to eat unappetizing food." The conditions of camp lifestyle would cause family traditions to decay.

While some detainee families were being slowly torn apart due to the harsh conditions of the camps, Toyo Suyemoto, age nineteen years old, stated that her experiences with her elders in Topaz War Relocation Center in Utah proved to be a bit opposite. While the camps directly tore down family traditions and structures, some families held tightly to their values and tried their best to preserve them. Suyemoto states, “Now, amid the disruption of the internment, the Issei tried to maintain normality by fostering the family and community ties of prewar years in continuing to show respect for elders and courtesy towards all others.” This normality that Issei tradition maintained derived from the traditional Confucian emphasis on filial piety, a virtue in which one cares for and respects fathers and elders. Children must take care of their parents and do well for themselves and for the reputation of the family name. This strong philosophy of familial importance was difficult to maintain once incarcerated separated families.

Not only detrimental experiences for children in these camps, Issei also faced difficulty with the disintegration of the family unit with the structure of the camps. Nearly all camps separated the family unit aside from the immediate nuclear family, which in Japanese tradition was unusual for the family. Pre-war life encompassed the multi-generational family unit working together and spending ample time together, inside and outside of the home. However, upon relocation, nuclear families were kept together, while larger webs of families were separated. Nisei children learned from traditions, that “the loss of honor for the family was abhorrent." This shift in group identity thus causes a shift in personal identity.

Developing children identify with family bonds in order to have an understanding of kinship and developmental roles. These strong Issei bonds were reflected in Nisei children in

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96 Ibid., 9-10.
97 Harth, Last Witnesses, 12.
the camps. The disintegration of the family unit caused a schism in a child’s identification with expectations. These developing Nisei children “identify with a number of people,… and establish a kind of hierarchy of expectations,” which become essential to their identity construction. These changes in traditions then prove “traumatic to identity formation: [breaking] up the inner consistency of a child’s hierarchy of expectations.” Not only disrupting the developing Nisei’s familiarity with family life, the separation of family members left a detrimental impact specifically on young Nisei girl’s development. The separation “leads to different images of self and relationships.” While traditional Issei customs reinforce a strong parent-child relationship, the separation and disintegration of family units would reflect in young Nisei girls. These family traditions not only affect the family unit, the culture, and the adult Issei, but in turn affected the developing Nisei.

The familiar, traditional family life was no longer in place. Desperate attempts to maintain familial ties resulted in further disintegration as children explored camp life. The disintegration of family life was often attributed to “the overcrowded barracks and communal dining and bathroom facilities…. With pseudo-kinship ties weakened, the collective mentality that also undergirded the family was further loosened.” The dependency of children and parent relationships continued to come apart as the necessity for parents weakened, and children engaged in other activities within the camps.

One dominant activity that children often participated in while living in the camps was attending the schools that were available in the camps proctored by Nisei women. While children were intimidated and frightened by the incarceration camps initially, they began to settle into the camps and engage in many activities to keep them occupied. One teacher, Yoshilo Uchida, recalls her emotions on how many children attended school: “I was touched… to see their eagerness to learn despite the desolation of their surroundings, the meager tools for learning, and in this case the physical dangers they encountered just to reach

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100 Erikson, Identity, Youth, and Crisis, 159.
101 Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 38.
103 Tong, “Race, Culture, and Citizenship,” 17.
school.”

Despite the awful conditions in which these children were placed, their ambition to attend school outweighed the burden of being in that terrible camp. Many children were able to express their emotions in school, through writing their diaries or illustrating their experiences. Although experiencing solidarity with other detained children, this experience was not exempt from expressing trauma as well.

Many students, while writing their diaries in class, took notice of their surroundings or the war and began to illustrate them in the background of their diaries, rather than writing them in directly. Some children illustrated the camp zone, being surrounded by bleak deserts with animals that turned into skeletons from dying off. Other children illustrated war planes flying overhead, bombs falling in the sky, and tanks driving throughout the camps. Letters from children often directly expressed their discontent with the current situation through the use of vivid language and expressed disorientation. However, in these diaries, children do not necessarily express themselves and their own interests; instead they expressed fun activities they completed throughout the duration of the day, what families were being relocated, and other tasks which often correlated with tasks that aided the war effort they completed.

Within school diaries, there was a clear shift in how children wrote about and described their experiences within the camps. There was a vast change in the descriptions alone and no mention of the sense of identity or confusion of identity. Children, compared to adolescents, often described “surroundings, expressed awe of and also complained about the… [new environments]… and pined for the life they left behind, though rarely analyzed their fortunes within the context of racism, wartime hysteria, or government control.”

Once these children became more involved in the camps, perhaps causing a temporary replacement of memories, compared to the traumatic ones that were initially felt when entering the camps, they were able to partake in activities that affected their self-perceptions in a more positive regard.

The cause of children feeling more secure in a classroom setting may be attributed to the influences they had during this period of development. As Erikson illustrates, the

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importance of having a secure figure during this developmental period may be attributed to their feelings of safety and not those of fear. The feelings of marginalization, inferiority, and “otherness” that many children expressed throughout their letters has the potential to be “minimized by a teacher who knows how to emphasize what a child can do” rather than accentuating the differences and negatives.106

Children expressed themselves not only by attending school with such ambition, but also through drawing and including themselves in other activities such as sports. An activity that children in the imprisonment camps engaged in regularly was sports. “Baseball was the most popular of these pastimes; some of the internees even felt that baseball kept them from going crazy in the camps.”107 Sports and activities provided an escape for child detainees in the camps. In order to prevent their own crises within the camps and “going crazy,” this outlet allowed children to engage in fun, carefree activities that allowed them to converse and associate with other children. Having the ability to alleviate the stress of camp life, these children were able to engage in group activities that reduced crisis and psychological distress.

Although sports were relaxing activities for all children, teenagers still had some difficulty assimilating into the imprisonment camps. Since they were older than the younger, elementary children, teenagers had a firmer grip on reality and were unhappy about the relocation. Teenagers were able to understand what was going on and how unfair and unjust it was that they were being forced to relocate to desolate camps with terrible conditions. One student, age unknown, recalls their experience:

*I sometimes pinch myself, am I really in Utah... or is this California, do I live in a barrack with other people and have only 2 rooms, not 7 or 8 I used to live in, are we going to school learning a new system, which seems odd to me, and do we have teachers of our own race, do we go to school in barracks and then I pinch myself once, twice and then I am out of my daze.*108

While younger children did not think so deeply about their experience in the imprisonment camp, rather than channeling the experiences onto their own identities, older children were able to comprehend all of these issues and think about them in depth, with a better

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108 Ibid., 53.
understanding of the situation, politics, and arrangements. This high school student had disbelief and confusion, but with the ability to temporarily repress the realities of living in imprisonment pinching themselves, which removed them from their “daze.” Questioning the entire structure of the camps, this student faced an internal struggle with the concept of identity. Struggling in their state of disorientation, this student cannot conceptualize any aspect of camp life without feeling immense confusion and uncertainty.

Another high schooler, Louise Ogawa, age seventeen years old, notes her experience with the realization that she was in Santa Anita Assembly Center: “...When I awoke this morning one year ago, I looked up at the ceiling and a funny strange feeling came over me. I knew I was not at home and I had a terrible yearning to go home... That day I felt as lost as the deep blue sea...” Louise Ogawa’s reflection explicitly states her feeling of loss and uncertainty with her own identity. Louise’s metaphorical expression of confusion reflects her struggle with her own identity crisis. Taken from her familiar home, here Louise was at the peak of crisis. “I often wonder how I have changed in thought, actions, knowledge, and facial and physical features during the short memorable one year,” she wrote.

Louise’s acknowledgements of her own thoughts, actions, and physical features denote her internalization of the racial prejudice that saturated both society’s perception and Louise’s perception of what it meant to be Japanese. Louise’s attempted to understand her own confusion and loss affected her own self-understanding. Reconciliation with her otherness proved to be detrimental. This internalized isolation grew out of her otherness.

As school or other distractions became available, younger children had an easier time dismissing the experience for the time being. High school aged children were able to think in depth about the camps and question, in detail, their experiences, the causes, and the justification of it all. Although children were provided with some distraction from the camps, whether sports or school, some children were not consoled by them and the burden of imprisonment weighed heavy in their thoughts.

109 Oppenheim, Dear Miss Breed, 74.
110 Ibid, 74.
Studying Nisei children’s experiences during incarceration is crucial to understanding the detriment that incarceration brought to developing children. As Erikson emphasizes in his eight stages of development, the identity formation stage lies in the age range from childhood to adolescence. The Nisei children mentioned in this chapter write in this stage of development. Their expressions of trauma, confusion, identity, and ultimately uncertainty amidst this moment of crisis indicate the obvious developmental anguish that these children experienced. This momentous period of development left these Nisei children vulnerable and susceptible to instability. This moment of crisis, as Erikson states, does not denote a catastrophic occurrence, but rather a “turning point, a crucial period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential, and therefore, the ontogenetic source of generational strength and maladjustment.”

This period of developmental growth proves necessary to Nisei children; however, pre-war racism, incarceration, and discrimination all affected these children’s ability to create a basis of an identity for themselves and for those who had, their identities became lost. Focusing analysis on this age range of children serves to support that their identities experienced a glitch in development, carrying on to their adult years and shaping their experiences with education, their peers, their family lives, and themselves.

These letters indicate psychological trauma. Their expressions, their confusions, their losses of self are significant determinants that the experience of camp life was detrimental to the developing psyche of children. Their internalization of centuries of otherness and monstering is reflected in the letters, diaries, and concepts of self throughout the duration of incarceration.

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CHAPTER 4

AGENCY

The Experiences of Nisei Women and Girls during Incarceration

...The good part of it is that those who have ambition and the courage to brave the uncertainty of outside life are the ones going out... Then too there are many young people who are held back by parental objections or obligations (by obligations I mean that the condition of one parents is such that they cannot move so the youngster has to stay home to look after the family)...

- Tetsuzo Hirasaki

Dealing with the erosion of family life that incarceration brought for young Nisei in the camps, these Nisei managed to create a new culture within the camps that differed from Japanese tradition and obligations. Ambition, bravery, and the desire to create a new self-image allowed these young Nisei to seek different outlets of agency within the camps. Experiences in the incarceration camps often provided opportunities for those detained to create and maintain new lifestyles that were often different from those before detainment.

Agency displayed within the camps aided in the creation of identity for Nisei woman and girls. Agency is defined for Nisei women and girls here as, “…routines, habits, future thoughts, and how actors negotiate the past and their vision for the future to shape their choices within present circumstances.” Traditionally, Nisei women and girls were kept within the domestic sphere of the Japanese household. However, once Nisei woman and girls entered into the camps and all normalcies were shifted, these Nisei were able to explore their own agency by experiencing new lives that broke free from tradition and transcended the spheres with which they were familiar. Nisei women and girls escaped the dichotomies given

112 Oppenheim, Dear Miss Breed, 191.

to them of mother/wife or daughter/future-wife. With the use of social and communal networks within the camps, Nisei expressed their own agency and in turn, created new identities for themselves.

Differing from the experiences of Nisei men and boys, who certainly explored new experiences within the camps, the experiences of Nisei women and girls were directly and positively linked with agency and identity formation, and expressed in primary sources. Young Nisei boys often participated in youth groups that drifted towards delinquent and rebellious behavior, which reflected the shift of responsibility within family life and work. Nisei men experienced difficulty with the shift of responsibility within the camps, as well. Traditionally and in pre-war life, Nisei men were typically the providers in the families, but camp life offered a new lifestyle that did not immediately allow for men to be family providers. Nisei women had time for leisure within the camps, opposed to pre-war life which they were accustomed to “long days of work inside and outside the home; [Nisei women] found that the communally prepared meals and limited living quarters provided them with spare time.”

These women and children employed their own agency within the camps. As Chapter Three illustrated, camp life proved to impede on ambition for some children and adolescents. This is not to say that trauma encompasses the experiences of all incarcerated Nisei youth. Nisei also sought out new avenues of self-expression, self-identification and exploration. The Nisei displayed agency in order to escape and cope with life inside the camps. However, agency displayed in the camps by Nisei youth and women was employed through their desire to break from the dreariness of daily camp activities and life.

The terminology of agency here is used to display the actions exhibited by Nisei in order to create their own self-expression. Pitted against their free will, self-exploration was not limitless within the confines of imprisonment. Nisei youth and women sought out ways to confront confinement and the limitations of camp life. Nisei acted against the different ways wartime society discriminated against them. Already detained for their race, Nisei girls

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114 Matsumoto, *City Girls*, 156.
and women sought to challenge the traditional customs that Japanese-American culture placed on them.

This chapter will illustrate how differing involvement between Nisei women and girls in a new lifestyle helped them to create new experiences that were different than those of pre-war Japanese communities. Although not all experiences of Nikkei were positive, some groups of Nisei experienced different outlets to partake in a differing wartime culture that created a shift for these Nikkei. By analyzing different recreational activities and social groups, this chapter will emphasize how Nisei women and girls explored agency in their liminal state during incarceration in order to deviate from traditional pre-war cultural norms. Although Nisei men and boys’ experiences allowed for agency exploration, Nisei women and girls’ experiences more clearly impacted their self-identification and traditional constraints.

Often, traditional Issei customs involved a clear distinction of gender roles, a tight knit family structure that involved the immediate nuclear family as well as extended family, and opposed “American” values and culture. Pre-war Nikkei social communities remained substantially close and tight knit. Participation in activities involving social, religious, and other gatherings reflected the Issei’s initial cultural closeness of community. Several of these activities aimed to “foster a strong sense of ethnic identity in these Japanese American children and adolescents.”115 However, incarceration meant halting not only developmental periods in the detainees’ life, but also increased Americanization. Recreational activities in the camps often allowed those detained, specifically Nisei, to participate in activities that sought to temporarily relieve the dreariness of camp life. Sports, social groups, and social “outings” often provided an escape for the detainees and created different social outlets for Nisei.

The majority of experiences that moved away from Issei culture were those of Nisei girls and women. Participation in these new activities differed by age and gender. Children, up to about ten, experienced camp differently than those in adolescence and adulthood. Younger children participated in schooling, usually involving participation in daily activities such as education, journaling, drawing, and activities that were centered on school.

115 Tong, “Race, Culture, and Citizenship,” 8.
Adolescents and young adults sought out more social activities that would provide a temporary distraction from camp life that often affected this age groups psychological development and identities more so than any other age group. Adolescents and young adults’ experiences with social activities differed according to gender, typically. Young Nisei girls and boys often explored different social outlets within the camps, which helped them regard the incarceration experience a bit more positively than the experiences of most adults. Nisei girls participated in more social gatherings, while Nisei boys more often took part in sports, or delinquency that was a result of disintegrating power structures in the Nikkei lifestyles (upon incarceration). During life inside the camps, young girls faced a conflicting crossroads with their own identities, leading them to seek different cultural explorations. Life for young girls was “particularly [conflicting]… though attracted to mainstream notions of modernity, they also felt the pull of traditional Japanese womanhood.”

Differing psychological developmental processes are visible in the primary different activities that Nisei boys and girls participated in. Nisei girls’ participation in youth groups and more social activities is often attributed to girls identifying with “experience of attachment with the process of identity formation.” In contrast, boys’ development is often associated with the separation of the family, while girls’ identification is often with relationships, or in this case, social settings. In addition to general development, Issei traditions often offered “relatively more freedom [to boys] than the girls, who had tasks within the home in addition to field labor.” These cultural traditions were essential to young Nisei development in pre-war Japanese communities.

For incarcerated Nisei girls, developing social clubs helped to create a social life in the camps, easing the monotony of incarceration. The clubs, gatherings, and activities that Nisei girls participated in not only helped create a social outlet, but an outlet to create a new

116 Ibid., 9.
117 Gilligan, "In a Different Voice," 8.
118 Ibid., 9. Psychological development of Carol Gilligan, opposed to Erik Erikson, suggests that female and male development often is focused around the female’s identity formation and building relationships, whereas boys development is focused around the separation from mother at an early age, often times leaving different modes of development for males.
119 Matsumoto, Farming the Home Place, 63.
identity. Nisei girls were exposed to “the ideas, styles, and pastimes of the more sophisticated urban youth; in the camp they had the time and opportunity to socialize—at work, school, dances, and sports events, in an almost entirely Japanese-American environment.”

Different camps along the West experienced different social groups, gatherings, and activities, but on a general level, camp-life allowed for these youth to engage in communal activity. Popular activities that Nisei girls participated in the Poston War Relocation Center, for instance, included Girl Scouts, journalism groups, and newspaper groups.

Distancing from traditional Issei beliefs, these Nisei girls now had the ability to explore and create new culture within the camps, and a mini-society that did not include discrimination or prejudice, as outside American life did. The blend of traditional Japanese culture with American youth culture helped Nisei girls explore their own agency, within the camps. Nisei social activities and youth groups helped to provide “vital support, understanding, and a measure of agency for youth who faced racial and economic barriers to full participation in American society.”

While many of these groups and activities formed within incarceration camps, many of these Nisei girls perpetuated social rituals that were developed before their time spent in incarceration camps. Much of pre-war life offered little to no inclusion of racial minorities, specifically those of Japanese descent, leaving no outlets for socialization for Nisei youth. Family life often consisted of working inside and outside of the home, also offering no outlets for young Nisei. With both societal, and typically racist, restraints on the ability for Nisei youth to socialize or participate in American youth culture, young Nisei adolescents were left with creating their own network of friendships and entertainment. Strict Issei beliefs also placed young Nisei girls in the unfavorable position of serving as the family ambassador, the one who should reflect the cultural and traditional virtue of Japanese culture. The cultural and traditional beliefs left young Nisei girls at the disadvantage of a “sexual double standard… subject to more surveillance” compared to their male counterparts.

120 Matsumoto, City Girls, 157.
121 Ibid., 159-160.
122 Ibid., 2.
123 Ibid., 38.
war Nisei communities of young girls sought to create bonds that would fill this social void.\textsuperscript{124}

Within the camps, life for young Nisei changed drastically. Here, instead of spending time living and working only with the family young Nisei were spending “more time than ever before in the company of their peers.”\textsuperscript{125} As family traditions and family life as a whole began to deteriorate, children made their own experiences worthwhile and found joy elsewhere, including participating in different activities or sports, including baseball, or attending the schools inside the camps. A new social structure within the camps allowed these young Nisei to explore different venues of socializing, developing their own cultures, and creating a new community that would blend cultural traditions with new ones. Young Nisei girls sought to create girl groups that would help develop “identifications, adaptations, and dreams” of girls involved.\textsuperscript{126} One Nisei girl’s, Katherine Tasaki, experience encompasses these groups: “The girls in our room have started a club called the Dramatic Damsels... I was chosen for one of the play writers. That’s quite an honor.”\textsuperscript{127}

Groups within the camps provided opportunities for Nisei to become more intertwined with their peers, rather than strictly with families. The different social groups that emerged in the camps “…which also took the form of dances, talent shows, sporting events, civic participation… were more than ‘lifeboats in the daily boredom of exile’.\textsuperscript{128} Margaret Ishino recalls the activities her and her friends engaged in:

\begin{quote}
We gathered at the Colorado River, sang songs, played baseball, and went on a short hike. The cook made delicious sandwiches and even baked a cake... the desert wildflowers were beautiful and the greenery about the River had such a peaceful atmosphere I forgot I was in a concentration camp. For our Senior Prom, we danced to the records of Glenn Miller...\textsuperscript{129}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[124] Matsumoto, \textit{Farming the Home Place}, 5.
\item[125] Ibid., 111.
\item[127] Oppenheim, \textit{Dear Miss Breed}, 216.
\item[128] Tong, “Race, Culture, and Citizenship,” 16.
\item[129] Oppenheim, \textit{Dear Miss Breed}, 183.
\end{footnotes}
For young Nisei women, participating in dances and social clubs concerning writing, journalism, and self-help, helped Nisei girl groups, which were created before incarceration, flourish. Creating groups helped build camaraderie and positivity amidst a somber time in the camps. One major outlet for these young Nisei girls was the socialization that was afforded by dances. Dances often served as an outlet for young Nisei women to challenge traditional gender norms. Exploring their own interests and creating their own “norms,” these young Nisei women disregarded Issei beliefs that aimed to maintain chastity amongst Nisei girls, and engaged in mingling, dating, and marrying those outside of the community. In this manner, Nisei women sought to challenge the Issei traditions of arranged marriage, and instead, pursued their own individuality in finding potential suitors.\textsuperscript{130} This aspect remained one of the most important aspects of shifting cultural traditions with young Nisei girls.

Young Nisei girls were able to seek their own interests in potential partnerships through dances or co-ed social gatherings. These girls were engaging in something that was done out of individual volition, rather than pre-conceived arrangement by Issei. Now, finding a marriage partner was “a personal one, based on a concept of romantic affection accepted in popular mainstream culture.”\textsuperscript{131}

In addition to seeking new opportunities with romance, Nisei girls also attempted to maintain a higher morale by appealing to interests in fashion, cosmetics, and other facets of the larger American culture.\textsuperscript{132} Creating a life that mirrored outside American culture, the creation of these journal columns kept Nisei women stimulated within the camps.

**Education**

Another facet of camp that offered opportunities for Nisei women was the ability, starting in September 1942, to resettle in different areas, specifically the Midwest and East, to pursue education.\textsuperscript{133} Although incarceration was still in place, Japanese-American women were given the opportunity to expand not only through education, but also through the work...
force. Japanese-American students were relocated to universities and schools to promote their career in education.

First generation Issei taught the strong cultural value of the importance of education to young Nisei. Nisei pursuing education was as the “key to overcoming the ‘handicap’ of discrimination and the ‘racial mark of the Mongolian face.’” During the time of incarceration, Japanese-American women were allowed more freedom than what was usually expected under such circumstances. Although they were detained in these camps, women began to attend college and later become assimilated into the workforce through student relocation. Student relocation allowed 5,500 Nisei men and women to relocate to over 600 institutions along the East. The breakthrough from the gendered sphere allowed for Nisei women to explore new outlets with education and in the workforce, which was not usual in traditional Issei culture. However, “…societal and parental pressures urged the Nisei women students not only to earn a higher degree but also to become representatives of the Japanese American community behind the barbed wire fences.”

The NJASRC (National Japanese American Student Relocation Council), created in May 1942, aided these previously detained Japanese-Americans from incarceration to enrollment in colleges and universities. The War Relocation Authority requested that previously detained Japanese-American students be relocated to different universities and colleges throughout the United States, which was approved by the government. This relocation council sought to relocate Japanese-American students into available positions in order to allow for a positive image of Japanese students. Funded by several outlets, the government and support groups aided these Nisei to relocate. Upon their successes, hard work, and adaptability, the Japanese-American students would aid a better relationship between Nikkei and non-Japanese Americans. As Ito states the WRA “set the agenda and defined the role that these students would play as representatives of the Japanese American community.”

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134 Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 213.
community in anticipation of Japanese American resettlement.”¹³⁷ Not all Nisei were afforded the opportunity to participate in this relocation. Academic tests, personal records, and recommendations determined which Nisei were eligible for relocation. Although the opportunity was open to Nisei men and women, Nisei women were pressured by pre-existing ideologies that women were the representatives of Japanese families and culture. In addition, many “favored Japanese American female students over male students because they believed that women attracted less suspicion of espionage and wartime paranoia.”¹³⁸

However, the NJASRC encountered difficulty in finding not only available positions for these Japanese-American students, but institutions and living arrangements outside of the camps that were not hostile towards Japanese-Americans. In addition to finding possible relocation institutions, funding for the relocation was not provided by the government. Japanese-American students relied on funds raised in the camps, or from sponsors, to aid them with their journeys.

Japanese-Americans were relocated to universities and schools to encourage, restore and regain faith and optimism that was lost due to the “wartime image of Japanese Americans.”¹³⁹ Of the many Nisei who attended colleges and universities, Ito states that “roughly 39 percent were women.”¹⁴⁰ Women were encouraged to attend college to represent those still stationed in the internment camps and also because, compared to men, they were less suspected of espionage and distrust. Girls before the incarceration were not usually pressured to attend college as much as boys were; girls’ education competition with boys usually ended around high school.¹⁴¹ However, incarcerated Nisei women continued to feel pressured to continue their education. Ito discusses the pressure that Nisei women felt to care for their families by using an anecdote including a young Nisei girl, Momo Nagano. Although Momo had planned to attend college, the absence of her father due to relocation to different concentration camps left her with a great domestic duty and the need to be a

¹³⁷ Ibid., 2.
¹³⁸ Ibid., 3.
¹³⁹ Ibid.
¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.
¹⁴¹ Ibid., 4.
“faithful daughter.”\textsuperscript{142} These domestic pressures that Momo felt, which hindered her capability to attend a college, were felt by many of the Nisei women. Often, family pressures and anticipated obligations of the Nisei women were the reason that prevented their leave. Louise Ogawa recalls:

\begin{quote}
I am trying awfully hard to convince my father that I should go out but he feels that I should wait a little while. He believes I am too young, in mind if not in age. I talk to him so that he says he even dreams of me talking to him of going out. I can just about image how he finally said yes... but this doesn’t satisfy me cause it was not in reality... But on the other hand, the thought of leaving my father leaves me hesitant.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

Feeling the excitement of possible separation and exploration, Louise also feels the difficulty in leaving her family behind. Caught between self-exploration and obligations to the family, Louise’s dependency on familial relationships prevents her from leaving.\textsuperscript{144} This effervescent concept of filial piety hindered the ability for many Nisei girls and women from leaving their familial duties behind.\textsuperscript{145}

After the detainment in the camps, men were less likely to be the heads of the households, allowing women to be “freed from many traditional domestic chores.”\textsuperscript{146} Nisei women’s entrance into the workforce allowed them to separate from their domestic responsibilities and become the breadwinners of the households. Not only were women becoming more independent, but children were as well; the development of their own personal interests had begun, and personal independence within the camps was beginning to sprout.

Upon student resettlement, Nisei women were once again placed in a liminal state, however now it concerned ethnic identity. Pressured to be the ethnic ambassadors of Japanese identity, Nisei women faced difficulties with American society upon resettlement.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{142}{Ibid., 6.}
\footnotetext{143}{Oppenheim, \textit{Dear Miss Breed}, 192.}
\footnotetext{144}{Gilligan, \textit{In a Different Voice}, 114. Gilligan’s theories on female development encompass the difficulty women feel abandoning relationships. Gilligan states, “the truth of relationship, however, return in the rediscovery of connection, in the realization that self and other are interdependent and that life, however valuable in itself, can only be sustained by care in relationships.”}
\footnotetext{145}{See Chapter 3: Trauma for discussion on filial piety.}
\footnotetext{146}{Ito, “Japanese American Women,” 7.}
\end{footnotes}
Amidst the racist propaganda that stemmed from deep seated hatred against those of Asian descent, once released from camps, many of the Nisei women found that American society had difficulty in identifying them. A Nisei woman, Mary Nishi Ishizuka, reflects, “[They] didn’t know whether we were Chinese, Japanese, or whatever… it was the first time I felt people accepted me for what I was…” With the fortunate confusion that society felt about their identification, Nisei women were able to become accepted, rather than discriminated against because of their ethnicity. However, experiences similar to those of Mary were not always the majority.

While Nisei women experienced freedoms of living outside of camps through student relocation and entrance into the workforce, they also experienced racism and differences between themselves and their European-American peers. This notion of self-differentiation by the observation of others emphasized different physical characteristics for the Nisei, typically denoting a negative perception of themselves based on prevalent wartime racism. The ideal ethnic ambassador identity was challenged once resettled to areas outside of the camps. Anti-Japanese racism remained prevalent.

Although Nisei women felt the hostility towards them outside of the camps, “Nisei were able to dispel the anti-Japanese propaganda that stigmatized Japanese American community” and “were nevertheless always reminded of their role as representatives of the Japanese American community.” Despite the good sentiments that the Nisei women felt by their colleagues, there was still apparent racism that was detrimental to the Nisei women, and affected their psyche greatly. In a personal account from a Nisei woman, Masaye Nagao, she states that she felt as though there was an “invisible fence around [her]” because of the threats and extremely apparent racism that still existed outside of the camps. On a larger scale, students outside of the camps were forced to deal with hostile environments and people, while Americans outside of camps were unable to identify Japanese Americans from the ‘enemy’.

147 Matsumoto, *City Girls*, 168.
149 Ibid., 9.
150 Ibid.
Although these Nisei attempted to represent their community, the prominent racism that was present made this difficult. Many white Americans retained their negative sentiments towards the Nisei, and as Masaye Nagao recalls, one proclaimed that the Nisei should feel fortunate for being detained and “protected” in the camps, as opposed to being subjugated to violence outside of the camps.\textsuperscript{151} Despite several attempts to oppress the Nisei voice, Japanese-American women sought to instill change into the American perspective. Nisei were becoming more communal and more active within their communities in order to inspire change within the communities, and to respond to racist ideology with education. Nisei men had the opportunity to display American loyalty through military service, while “the incentive [for Nisei women] to prove their loyalty to America through their presence on a college campus was attractive.”\textsuperscript{152} Nisei men provided about 18,000 of the total 30,000 Nikkei army enlisted from incarceration camps.\textsuperscript{153} Both Nisei men and women sought to act as ethnic ambassadors outside of the camps.

Although these experiences were liberating for Japanese-American women, Nisei women were challenged when expected “to participate in wage labor and the domestic sphere.”\textsuperscript{154} Even after attending school and exploring the education sphere, during the post-war period, Nisei women still experienced immense discrimination in the workforce. Even working on university campuses, Americans could not identify second generation Japanese-American women as being Americans, rather than representative of the evil “other,” the Asian monster. By working in universities and on college campuses, Nisei women were trying to assimilate into American life, but white Americans still had extreme difficulties accepting Nisei women into their community. Ito prominently states that “the ways in which the Nisei women students actively sought visibility was exceptional for Asian American women of [wartime society].”\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{154} Ito, “Japanese American Women,” 5.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 13.
Although they were greatly aided by the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council in attending college, most Japanese-American women still needed to find another source of income to help them financially.\textsuperscript{156} Nisei women were beginning to enter the domestic workforce left behind by American women, who were now entering the industrial workforce in order to fill in for their husbands while they were away at war. Nisei women took up the domestic work including household chores, which would later aid them with their own families and households. Although Nisei women, post-college, were finding a surplus of household opportunities for work, the challenge of facing racist attitudes was daunting. For instance, in a personal account from Katsumi Hirooka Kunitsugu, who after graduating from college sought opportunity for work, she faced immense difficulty in finding employment that would disregard not only her gender as a woman, but her race as a Japanese-American. She states, “I think because being a woman was one thing and being Japanese American was another. I did send out all kinds of letters and all that but received no replies, no encouragement whatsoever.”\textsuperscript{157}

Facing several roadblocks on their paths to freedom from racism, these Nisei women managed to make do with what possibilities they had, made positive changes in their lives, and attempted to change how they were perceived by European-Americans. Nisei women “continued to carry their civic and community responsibilities with them by becoming teachers, lecturers, and philanthropists to ensure that the atrocities of concentration camps in the United States would not reoccur” in postwar America.\textsuperscript{158} However possible, Nisei women sought and found opportunities that were available to them upon resettlement. In general, most Nisei women found jobs in “industrial, clerical, and managerial occupations…[including jobs as] secretaries, typists, file clerks, beauticians, and factory workers.”\textsuperscript{159}

Japanese-American women in internment camps during the 1940s were forced to deal with extreme racism, switching of gender roles, and many experiences that ironically made a positive impact on their lives. Gender roles during the internment camps already had been

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{159} Matsumoto, \textit{City Girls}, 172.
blurred; families were separated and the unity in a family was disintegrating. Women entered the work sphere and gaining access to small amounts of freedom from not only the concentration camps, but also from the prescribed gender roles.

Early Issei migration to the United States aimed to seek employment opportunities and expand on any businesses that Issei had. While most of the employment was maintained by Issei men, Issei women held small jobs that assisted their husbands’ work. Issei gender roles were fairly strict about what work Issei women were allowed to perform. The initial work and roles that Issei women were faced with were challenged by the new experiences of their Nisei children had. This is not to say that the incarceration camps led to the abandonment of old Issei ideology and lifestyle, but it certainly broadened the scope for Nisei children. Although the Nisei lived a much more independent and assimilated lifestyle, there was much traditional cultural indoctrination from the Issei. The Issei “instilled in their children a deep respect for education and authority.”

Many Nisei women felt caught between two options: venture out into the “real” world and enroll in university or in the workforce to become more independent, or stay and care for their parents or others in the camps. As the Nisei women began venturing off, many received suggestions on how to assimilate into American life, and to distance themselves from the lifestyle of the internment camps. However, Nisei women sometimes displayed uncertainty with the decision to leave camp. As Fusa Tsumagari recalls with her experience:

*It’s really tough on people my age who have just gotten out of high school... Everyday [sic] we see ads for work outside. Lots of girls take domestic work just to get outside, then they plan to move into some other line of work. I, myself, don’t like domestic work and have been told that it isn’t the best line of work to go into... it won’t get us anywhere so this is enough of my troubles.*

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161 Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 190.
As the Nisei women received suggestions and advice, nearly forty percent of incarcerated Nisei women left the camps to pursue employment or education.\textsuperscript{162} As many were leaving the internment camps, the camps soon came to an end and relocation for the remaining internees would occur, due to the lack of a Japanese threat. After the final closure of incarceration camps by late 1945, many jobs outside of the domestic sphere became more accessible to the Nisei women such as “secretaries, typists, file clerks, beauticians, and factory workers” and as the end of the 1940s came to an end, roughly “by 1950, 47 percent of employed Japanese American women were clerical and sales workers and operatives; [while] only 10 percent were in domestic service.”\textsuperscript{163}

New changes occurred for Nisei women throughout the incarceration process. From emerging from strict Issei customs and experiencing incarceration due to racist intent, Nisei women underwent several lasting impacts. Although they had known freedom before the camps, leaving the camps sometimes proved difficult for Nisei women. The lasting psychological impact that these internment camps left on the Nisei was tremendous. Civil groups and religious groups, such as the NJASRC, helped to re-assimilate the Nisei women into society.\textsuperscript{164} Despite the many efforts to try and aid the Nisei women into life outside of the camps, the psychological damage that was done could not be overlooked or undone. Post-war America soon began to feel remorse for wrongly detaining these innocent Japanese and provided financial reparations that were rewarded to them after their stay in the camps. However, attempting to reconcile such a large catastrophe was difficult for survivors. It is difficult to “place a figure on the toll taken in emotional shock, self-blame, broken dreams, and insecurity.”\textsuperscript{165} Although these women were now legally free after 1945 and to go back to a society they once knew, it had become extremely difficult for them.

\textsuperscript{162} Matsumoto, “Japanese American Women,” 11.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 13.
CONCLUSION

These experiences, of both Nisei women and girls, challenged not only their identities, but their culture, as well. Forced into a state of liminality, they were able to transgress the identities that were placed upon them in the camps. Labelled as the enemy, who must be incarcerated, the Nisei created a new identity that overlooked the ones given to them by their own strict Issei upbringing and by the American government. These Nisei girls and women managed to shape their own experiences while imprisoned. Whether it be drifting away from Japanese tradition and exploring new outlets of self-expression, or breaking from traditional gender roles that characterized Nisei women, Nisei women were able to open up new possibilities that deviated from the norm. Exploring their agency within the camps via youth groups, blends of cultural practices, and leaving “home” within the camps allowed for Nisei girls and women to seek new venues in self-expression, despite the monotony of camp life.
Yeah, if you’re a prisoner in a concentration camp at seven years old, you think everybody is... No one tells you any different... I don’t think my mom or dad ever explained to me why I was in camp. I don’t think anybody ever did. ...I started to talk to people and to wonder at what point, like a victim of rape, is it okay to talk about? Do you bring more harm? Do you bring more denigration to yourself by admitting something bad happened to you? You really don’t know so you kind of let it go.

-Mako Nakagawa

The construction of ethnic identity often relies on the placement of the ethnic minority group in question. Society’s reaction to the ethnic group will dictate the social identity that the ethnic group will create. The different constructs created by American society for Nikkei have “been the primary justification for the stratification of groups in American society and has been used to create a sense of inferiority in non-majority groups.” The identification of Nikkei as the other for centuries reflects in the passages that Nikkei create. The internalization of this socially constructed inferiority based on outdated, hollow fears facilitated the ability for Japanese-Americans to identify as either Japanese or American, and in rare cases, both. Their racial identities given to them mirror as Erikson states, group identities. Generational differences indicate differing perceptions of their own identities, as well. First generation Issei and second generation Nisei harbor varying interpretations. Nisei are aware of hateful historical discrimination which affects their views

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168 Ibid., 14.
of Japanese identities in the United States. The effects of Asian monstering persisted throughout their adulthoods, however Nisei internalized and lived with their experiences of discrimination and identity, both positive and negatively.

Erikson’s concept of adulthood repression and the ability of adult minds to, as he states, “deprive themselves of the awareness of their own complete histories and the sensual knowledge of the world before it was overly rationalized.” If repression occurs in identity formation, where does this leave the Nikkei who were ashamed to speak of their experiences of incarceration? Their identities, in relation to the young Nisei experiencing trauma, embody their otherness and rely on the social construction of identity to be their identifier and thus trigger forceful silence on experiences that harbor confusion.

As seen in Chapter 2 “Trauma,” the traumatic shift that incarceration impeded on an important developmental period of a childhood, specifically with adolescence. In this period, the identity entered into a crisis, as Erikson suggests. The halting of the developmental stage, in particular, where children learn to identify themselves based on society’s identifications for them, caused them to experience a troubling moment. Their identifications were not those of their own; instead, these incarcerated children soon began identifying themselves as enemy, traitor, and carrying the physical characteristics of those who were enemies of the state.

However, how is this developmental shift reflected in their adulthood? Is it possible that there is a resolution to this identity crisis in later development?

The survivors’ experiences widely left them with feelings of shame, trauma, embarrassment, and repression without any redress or recognition until the late 20th century. Many of the incarcerated Nisei “repressed memories of the war because they blamed themselves for the incarceration.” The survivors of the incarceration experience not only lacked validation of their experiences, but also left with decades of several facets of psychological impacts concerning skewed perceptions of themselves and the world around

\[169\] Ibid., 91.
\[171\] Murray, *What Did the Internment*, vi.
them, caused by spending their youth incarcerated and living their adult lives with the mindset of being a marginalized ethnic minority. By addressing their sentiments on their experiences and encouraging child survivors to speak of their experiences, a new chapter of history has opened and survivors have experienced a cathartic release.

This chapter uncovers how Nisei experiences shaped their perception of the world around them, paying close attention to: developing relationships with others, how their experiences shaped their perspectives, and ultimately how their experiences influenced their identities as adults. This chapter focuses on how these survivors speak of their experiences decades after incarceration, and how incarceration has impacted their lives and long term identities. Often, Nikkei survivors identify with shameful self-identification, with cases of positive self-identification. The questions of how did the experiences of incarcerated Nikkei children during 1942-1945 shape, limit, or encourage them to discuss, in public, their experiences and how their experiences have molded their identities and perspectives of the world has only been minimally explored. These questions have been addressed, but require further research.

In order to fully understand how these children coped, or suffered, from their incarceration experience, it is necessary to introduce psychological and sociological methodology into their redress. In order to interpret the whole experience, even from the government’s perspective, first recognizing psychological theories assists in grasping how the incarceration was justified, how those incarcerated dealt with the process, and how incarceration affected them years after the incarceration. Theories from Erik Erikson will assist in the research and explanation of the effects of discrimination and racism on the Nikkei development.

Erikson’s theories of psychosocial development suggest that the stage following adolescence is early adulthood (ages 20-39 years). This stage of development is focused primarily on relationship building, while not necessarily solely concerning romantic relationships. Here, identity should be solidified and the indicator of potential relationship building. If the identity has been halted in previous stages in life due to incarceration, it then leads into potential issues concerning the detainee’s ability to build relationships with other members of society due to fear, rejection, and confusion. As adulthood is reached, the ability
to understand what it means to function within a society is developed.\textsuperscript{172} Moreover, factoring in years of imprisonment will certainly derail these abilities that adulthood and identity offer. Life after incarceration proved to be difficult for several generations of those incarcerated. These detainees were released into a society that continued to harbor discriminatory feelings and in turn, created difficulty for detainees to feel accepted. However, incarceration is reflected in identity formation with the use of testimonies Nikkei provided.

During adolescence, many of the detainees experienced crises with their identities, leading to immense suppression and difficulty dealing with the experiences of incarceration based on racism. As these children grew with crises in their identities, “the adult mind operates to distort, in part repressing and suppressing the emotions of childhood, wishing to never again feel as small, powerless, and incompetent.”\textsuperscript{173} However, traditional Japanese cultural beliefs often influenced suppression of the experiences of incarceration. Not only was there discomfort in publically speaking about their experiences due to possible rejection or having their experiences diminished, the cultural belief of “shitaka ga nai,” meaning “it can’t be helped,” was often attributed to the experience of incarceration for justification and minimization.\textsuperscript{174}

**SHAMEFUL SELF-IDENTIFICATION**

*As we were driven out of the barbed-wire enclosure of Santa Fe Camp the relief we felt showed in our faces. I inhaled deep breaths of freedom for the first time in four years. Of course we were not entirely free yet. Until our release from custody and the designation ‘internee’ was struck from our records, we were still subject to many restrictions. In this way, life behind barbed wire continued for a while.*\textsuperscript{175}

This reflection, written by Yasutaro (Keiho) Soga, described his release from the incarceration camp. Taking deep breaths upon his release, Soga feels relief, while realizing...

\textsuperscript{172} Hoare, *Erikson on Development in Adulthood*, 27.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 162.


that the incarceration is not yet over. The restrictions would continue on for Soga, and many other detainees after their release from detainment. Although freedom came with the removal of literal barbed wires, the mental barbed wires stayed in place for decades following the years 1944-1945. Countless Nikkei were “freed” from camps that unjustly housed them for several years. Their pre-war homes, belongings, culture, and communities would no longer be in existence for them. Like Soga, these restraints did not disappear after the war.

In December of 1944, Executive Order 9066 was overturned. Nikkei were entirely released from the camps in 1945 and the camps were completely dismantled after the War Relocation Authority closed in June 1946. Upon their release from the camps and reintegration into American society, Nikkei faced rampant anti-Japanese hostility that prevented an easy transition. Nikkei’s belongings, homes, and land had been stripped from them upon incarceration. Nikkei were released from the camps with nothing. Nikkei often resorted to living in lower class neighborhoods out of financial desperation. Nikkei were strongly encouraged to not live together and reform communities that existed in pre-war society, for it could target them for anti-Japanese hatred. Their properties and funds were not given back to the Nikkei upon reintegration into American society. Their losses would not be redressed until the Reagan administration with the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, in which Ronald Reagan granted surviving Nikkei twenty thousand dollars back in reparations. For decades, Nikkei went without not only their belongings, but political redress.

Reflections on the incarceration experience often expressed the challenges of facing a society that wrongly placed them into incarceration, often times, without even the opportunity to reach out for validation, employment, or housing that was non-discriminatory.

The government identifier “internee” lasted with survivors. Their identifications was placed upon them by their experiences, voiding them of any culture or identity; instead, “internee” was their social identification.

The World War II incarceration experience left camp prisoners, who were able to recollect their negative experiences and document them, with long-lasting effects that did not end with the war. As the war ended and the Nikkei interned in the incarceration camps across
the United States were released, many of the Nikkei returned to what was left of their homes, if they had a home or possessions to return to, in a confused state.\textsuperscript{176}

The life that encompassed living under imprisonment included rationing, fear, distrust, and marginalization that lasted from months to several years. There was no set time that these internees would be released, and many adopted the mindset that should the worst happen, they would be ready for that experience. Living in harsh conditions, which were typically located in desolate desert areas, such as the camps in Poston, Arizona and Topaz, Utah, surrounded by barbed wire and guards on constant duty, living with guilt for the events of the war, and not knowing when internment would end, all contributed to the detrimental psychological confusion, trauma, and crises that those interned experienced while incarcerated. Incarcerated Nikkei were treated as war criminals, under constant surveillance, removed from society, and reprimanded for crimes they did not commit. They were robbed of childhood, adolescence, and ultimately, their identities. These experiences lingered with child survivors; the effects of the war permeated throughout the remainder of their childhood and into their adult years; forced to live with a mindset of a prisoner, a criminal, in decades of silence.

As the need for historical redress emerged in the 1970s, many of the child survivors began to write recollections of their experiences. While the United States’ relationship with Japan was quite close after World War II, perhaps this was an influence on the speaking out of Nikkei incarceration survivors to the public. The relationship between Japan and the United States went from hostile to nurturing during the postwar years. The harmful and fearful Asian monster was no longer a threat after the war. As Dower states, “the sick Other now became not an ominous threat but a troubled patient, and the victors unhesitatingly assumed the role of analyst and healer.”\textsuperscript{177} The United States beneficial treatment of postwar Japan strengthened U.S. and Japanese relations abroad, perhaps influencing the survivors of incarceration camps to speak of their experiences.


\textsuperscript{177} Dower, War without Mercy, 304.
The In addition, the events of the redress and payment of reparations to incarceration survivors, by the Ronald Reagan administration in 1988, may have certainly encouraged survivors to speak of their experiences. The Reagan administration proposed for reparations during the 1970s.\textsuperscript{178}

Many of those incarcerated found no outlets to speak of their experience, or felt shame when they remembered their experience. Upon returning from camps and attempting to resume any sense of normalcy in life, despite difficulty re-assimilating into a still prejudiced and racist society, open discussion of their experiences during incarceration were nearly nonexistent. The memory of incarceration amongst the surviving Nikkei was disappearing. The possibility of speaking comfortably and openly about their memories in the camps seemed unimaginable, for who would take the risk of subjecting themselves to a prejudiced audience when their vulnerability had already peaked?

One survivor, Chizuko Norton, recounts the experience:

\begin{quote}
Our experience during World War II was so painful and so humiliating that without our discussing it with each other, most of us decided to raise our children as if they were white. Don’t talk about what happened during World War II. In fact, don’t even talk about Japanese culture.\textsuperscript{179}
\end{quote}

Chizuko describes his experience as painful, humiliating, and shameful to speak of as an adult. His experiences within the camp are forcefully suppressed due to fear of possible societal rejection and lack of validation. Although fearing shame for his own identity and catharsis, Chizuko was willing to shape the identities of his future children. The physical characteristics and resemblance to the fearful Asian, the other, created a lasting impact that not only affected Issei and Nisei, but third generation Sansei. This manifestation and internalization of discrimination reappears in Chizuko’s memoir. In order to maintain safety, complete identification with the Japanese culture must be avoided. Chizuko’s identity has been changed due to incarceration.

\textsuperscript{178} Densho Encyclopedia, “Civil Liberties Act of 1988.”

\textsuperscript{179} Fugita and Fernandez, \textit{Altered Lives, Enduring Community}, 112.
Nikkei found almost no safe outlets to discuss their experiences upon release, and many of the Nikkei underwent an experience of “social amnesia,” often choosing to not speak of their experiences.

Social amnesia is characterized as “a group phenomenon in which attempts are made to suppress feelings and memories of particular moments or extended time periods. It is a conscious effort, an attempt to cover up less than pleasant memories.” This, in correlation to the Issei’s strict beliefs in the Japanese tradition of maintaining a culture of silence and the prohibition of speaking of past experiences negatively, left an erased period in American history for the survivors of incarceration. With both Nikkei and the American public suppressing the history of the incarceration camps, little validation was left for these survivors to seek.

One major outlet for speaking out about their experiences and offering validation were through workshops aimed at creating a safe environment for Nikkei to openly discuss their incarceration. One survivor, Dr. Satsuki Ina, who was born in 1944 in the incarceration camp Fort Lincoln in North Dakota, began her project to bring survivors together in a therapeutic, comforting way for survivors to speak of how their experiences affected their adult years. In her 1999 project, *Children of the Camps*, Ina aimed to

facilitate a healing experience for our community. We felt that it was important that Japanese Americans, not just the individuals who participated in the Children of the Camps workshop, but the larger Japanese American community could benefit from seeing how a group of Nikkei men and women talk honestly about their internment experience. In discussing its impact on them and their families, expressing their pain-filled anger and deeply buried sorrow, it was thought that other Nikkei might see a part of themselves mirrored in the experience, feel validated and encouraged to begin their own process of being released from the invisible barbed wires of camp... 

Dr. Ina’s effort to encourage survivors to speak out in a comforting environment succeeded. Of the survivors who spoke of their experiences, there is deeper insight into how their imprisonment haunts their current, daily lives. For some, it corrupts their ability to make

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friends with others, because of being brought up in their youth as marginalized and
permanently labelled different, the comfort of forming bonds with others has been removed.
Dr. Ina remembers her experience, at the age of 54, of living in the camp as a young child,

*I lost a childhood... Being viewed as the enemy, being viewed as a risk to national
security, was very difficult to make sense out of. I think for the most part, most
Japanese-Americans who are my age will tell you that their parents never talked
about their internment experience. Too painful, too shameful, too much a part of
the past that never made sense, even for them.*

Dr. Ina addresses the childhood that was stolen from her. Not only did she understand the
identification as an enemy, at a young age, she remains confused and left without validation
or explanation of her experience. Identifying with racialized and perhaps gendered shame as
well, Dr. Ina’s inability and her parent’s inability to speak of their experiences reached no
clarity. Perhaps admitting the experiences in breaking gender roles was perceived as
shameful to openly discuss, in terms of Nikkei men no longer providing for their families,
while Nikkei women went out to work. The experience of incarceration denotes shame, guilt,
and embarrassment. Incarceration impeded on physical and mental aspects of internees’
lives. The vulnerability inflicted on them for decades.

The shame that burdened the survivors’ lives was difficult to remove, and it was
difficult to find those willing to speak of their shameful and painful experiences, especially
while living in the United States after relocation was relieved in 1944. The prejudice,
discrimination, and racism inflicted on Nikkei did not dissipate after the war with Japan
ended and relocation was ended.

As seen in Chapter one, the prejudice against all Asians in the United States was too
prevalent to end immediately after the war. The rampant anti-Asian sentiment that already
existed in the United States for centuries turned towards the Japanese during World War II.
The stereotyping and caricature propaganda posters that existed in the United States did not
take the racism with them after V-J day. The sociocultural prejudice that lingered after
World War II ended kept the stereotypes of Nikkei which were “acquired through

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182 *Children of the Camps*, directed by Satsuki Ina, National Asian American Telecommunications
Association, 1999, VHS.
socialization, media influences, and... [were] maintained by social reinforcements." Now after the war had ended and Executive Order 9066 was relieved, Nikkei were released to uncertain conditions. The family lives, communities, and properties that Nikkei owned had dissipated. The re-assimilation into a familiar prewar society was difficult.

Many Japanese-Americans dealt with the difficulties of their daily living after incarceration, especially dealing with the lasting racial prejudice. One account, of Ben Hara, who was twenty-four when he began job-searching after his release from incarceration at Minidoka relocation camp in Idaho in 1947, expresses the inability to find a job. Ben Hara recounted his experiences in his testimony:

*When I was honorably discharged from the Army in 1947, I was not able to get a job for many months in [San Francisco] because of the anti-Japanese propaganda of WWII, even though I was fully qualified as an x-ray technician and jobs were plentiful in my specialty at that time... the stigmata of disloyalty and traitor is still upon us since the United States committed that grievous error regarding the loyalty of the Japanese in America.*

Ben Hara’s experience with the deep-rooted and longstanding discrimination that remained in the United States prohibited him from obtaining any job within his field, despite being a fully-qualified applicant. Even after serving and risking his life for the United States in the Army, he was rejected by the people who he had served. Although he was honorably discharged from the United States Army, Hara still suffered from the stigma of questionable loyalty because of his resemblance to the “traitor.”

One Nikkei survivor from the Poston relocation camp, Bebe Reschke, recounted her experience of incarceration in 1981 at age 48. Although after those incarcerated were freed, but not freed from lingering social prejudice:

*I remember in particular a high school in Detroit, who was relentless in presenting her visions of the Second World War in our history class. She would*

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Reschke was forced to deal with blatant racism in the classroom. Her teacher used the derogatory term “jap” forced Reschke to feel the racist remark due to her Japanese descent. By saying “they were sneaky, you can’t trust any one,” her teacher allowed Reschke to see her use of aversive racism. Aversive racism is the expression of racism that “is more likely to be expressed when it can be justified on the basis of some factor other than race; in this way …racists can maintain their [non-prejudiced] self-image.” By using the events of Pearl Harbor, Reschke’s teacher manipulated and distorted the image of all Nikkei: they are ALL sneaky. She does not specify whether only the Japanese serving under the Imperial Army are sneaky, but claims “they” are all sneaky and “you can’t trust any one.” Although Reschke’s teacher was attempting to address the issue of the attacks on Pearl Harbor, she was unable to do so without displaying anti-Japanese sentiment, and isolating Reschke.

Reschke continues on:

...Many Japanese Americans such as myself felt the way to prevent such devastating occurrences from happening in the future was to become 100 percent American... to lose the Japaneseness [sic] that we felt was partially responsible for getting us in trouble. We spoke American, ate and cooked American food and associated in the main with non-Japanese.

Reschke clearly identifies the lingering effects that incarceration had on herelf and on society. While the end of incarceration meant freedom for the Nikkei detained, it was also a harsh reality to return. Despite having “served” their time as enemies, prisoners, and the guilty, when re-assimilated into the outside world, survivors quickly learned that the prevalent racism had not dissipated or been corrected.

Reschke was willing to give up her identity as a Nikkei, and “become 100 percent American.” To become visually acceptable in a discriminating society meant that Reschke, and all other Nikkei, would be accepted and avoid the “devastating occurrences” from happening. Not only did Reschke express her interest in abandoning her Japanese descent,

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189 Testimonial of Bebe Reschke on August 6th, 1981 in Oppenheim, Dear Miss Breed, 230.
Reschke felt guilt for looking Japanese. This introversion of racism appears as internalization of racism and projected as guilt. The “responsibility” for Japanese incarceration lingered among survivors, and added onto the additional guilt that was experienced. Reschke continues:

> In fact, part of the fantasy was that if our children didn’t look Japanese, perhaps they would somehow escape the consequences of racism, which we had to face... I learned that rejection by one’s country can be one of the most painful rejections and have serious psychological consequences.\(^\text{190}\)

Reschke’s feelings of pain, rejection, and psychological trauma became internalized. The wish for her children to be able to appear white, they would have the ability to disconnect and free themselves from the repercussions of looking like a “traitor” in the United States. The overt racism that Americans displayed did not end. Reschke suffered psychological scarring because of her physical appearance, despite having no ties to the attacks on Pearl Harbor or the Japanese Imperial Army. Survivors were banished from a society that they were a part of, served a sentence that was wrongfully given, and still experienced mistreatment from society upon returning. Reschke goes so far as to denounce her Japanese ancestry and physical appearances in order to be accepted into society as a true, loyal American, despite never mentioning those feelings before incarceration. The intense, powerful anti-Japanese propaganda, as mentioned in Ben Hara’s case, that was used during World War II manipulated society into believing a lie: that Nikkei living on American soil were all untrustworthy, disloyal enemies of the state.

Returning to the experiences of Yasutaro Soga, he recalls his time in the incarceration camp more clearly:

> Time flies. Our group of 450 came back by way of Seattle on November 13, only a little more than a month and a half ago. With the return of 900 Issei and Nisei and their families on December 10, all who had been sent to the Mainland from Hawaii were finally home except for those who had chosen to go on Japan. For the first time in a long while we could rest easy. When I reflect on my life as an internee during those four years, many images cross my mind like those on a revolving shadow lantern. Of course life was not easy, but the camps proved to be an invaluable training ground for the human spirit.\(^\text{191}\)

\(^{190}\) Ibid., 230.

Soga sees the experiences of those who were returning home after incarceration as freeing. Those imprisoned could “rest easy,” with their families in a familiar land, and in hopes of escaping the camps that were unfit for sustaining human life. His image of the “revolving shadow lantern” insinuates dark times that flash before him. Despite his freedom, the lingering experiences of imprisonment still haunt him. However, Soga views these experiences as “invaluable training ground for the human spirit,” versus entirely internalizing his experiences as traumatic. Soga learned human “training” from his experiences, allowing him to flourish from this and remain resilient, despite harsh treatment by guards. Soga continues on to describe how the events of incarceration did leave a fatalistic lingering concern with him. Since he, as well as all of those incarcerated, did not know the length of time that they would be held captive, dark thoughts permeated their lives within the camps, and lingered after their release from the camps:

The fallout from war hysteria threw us—innocent victims—together in a place of exile where we shared a common experience. I had presumed that a war between Japan and the United States would never come to pass, no matter how tense the situation became, but it was just wishful thinking. Of course I was prepared to accept my fate should the unthinkable happen… The fish on a cutting board cannot escape no matter how much it struggles.  

Soga’s powerful imagery used in his haunting last sentence, “The fish on a cutting board cannot escape” leaves a deathly, impending-doom sentiment regarding his experience. Despite having the ability to remain resilient in a time of imprisonment for an unknown about of time, Soga still experienced the dread of death that could have occurred. Not only does Soga identify as the squirming fish, suffocating on the chopping board, he goes further to say that it “cannot escape no matter how much it struggles.” He internalized this experience of being trapped, suffocating, and waiting for death, no matter how much he tried to avoid the outcome, the outcome would remain the same.

The experiences of Nikkei left them with experiences that were not easy to ignore after the war ended. Dealing with emotions that left psychological scars stayed with the survivors, and perhaps encouraged their silent suffering for several decades. Although survivors were encouraged to speak of their experiences with Dr. Satsuki Ina, or in the case

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192 Ibid.
of more public cases, with the reparations in 1988, these adults still remained psychologically affected by this.

_There is nothing_
_More sorrowful than war._
_Here alone,_
_All of life’s sadness_
_Is brought together._

193

In previous analysis, this project argued that many incarcerated Nikkei children from the Japanese-American incarceration camps suffered decades long psychological trauma from their imprisonment. In the 1980s, these Nikkei children were encouraged by historians and psychologists to speak, write, or retell about their experiences, which often revealed the psychological damage of incarceration. They often told about their inability to properly re- assimilate into American society and to view themselves as Americans. They had not viewed themselves as Americans, and the only way “to become 100 percent American… [is] to lose the Japanese[ness] [sic].”

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Often, these survivors recognize their anguish and damage that they live with, and express it in clear terms and statements in their interviews, such as “I lost a childhood,” expressing their complete loss of important developmental years for a child, instead, recollecting times of being under surveillance and being forced to live enclosed behind barbed wire fences. Additional statements such as “my childhood was a camp,” leaves the Nikkei survivor with no experiences of a free child. Feeling the entrapment of being in a camp hinders a child’s ability to flourish without detrimental psychological trauma of glancing into their past and seeing a camp, a prison, or a time when they were treated as enemies of the state as their childhood. These experiences left Nikkei survivors to feeling isolated about their past: “there was a part of my life that was so secret… there was no place to get any validation.”

195 The shame of carrying life-long guilt plagued their perspectives of themselves, others, and their past.

193 Ibid., 15, Yasutaro Soga.
194 Testimonial of Bebe Reschke on August 6th, 1981 in Oppenheim, _Dear Miss Breed_, 230.
195 _Children of the Camps_, reflection of Dr. Ina
POSITIVE SELF-IDENTIFICATION

While my argument shows that many imprisoned Nikkei children expressed their psychological trauma and the detriment that incarceration left them with throughout their later adult years, specifically through sources such as interviews, letters, or journal entries, there are also many Nikkei, children and adults, who did not necessarily experience detrimental psychological trauma from their incarceration. There are survivors of the incarceration camps who had more positive experiences. Many Nikkei children and adults experienced a paradox within their imprisonment, liberation under incarceration. Nikkei women were often the survivors who experienced the most liberation, compared to young girls, boys, and men.

In addition, several letters and diaries from children, often show how liberating it was for the children to be “free” in the camps. Some children survivors recall their experiences as joyous, due to being able to connect with children in a similar situation. This included playing sports, typically baseball, with other children in the camps and generally being able escape strict Japanese rules that bound the prewar family together, in living spaces and outside of the home.\footnote{Matsumoto, “Japanese American Women.”}

There are accounts of Nikkei survivors who reflect on their experiences positively, even if there is still lingering trauma present, as there are survivors who look back on their experiences and project them positively onto their lives. In addition, they take their experiences and accept them as merely a part of their lives, which is left open for analysis as well. As a well-known survivor of the incarceration camps, George Takei states, “children are amazingly adaptable. What would be grotesquely abnormal, became my normality in the prison of war camps… it became normal for me… being in a prison, a barbed wire prison camp, became my normality.”\footnote{George Takei, “Why I Love a Country that Once Betrayed Me,” Ted Talk, last modified July 2014, http://www.ted.com/talks/george_takei_why_i_love_a_country_that_once_betrayed_me/transcript.}

Takei identifies how “grotesquely abnormal” the incarceration camps were, but acknowledges that these camps, typically unpleasant, became his everyday life. Takei did not experience the everyday loathing feeling of being in the camps. His quick adaptability as a
child allowed him to experience life in the camps as a life experience, a “normal” experience. However, Takei takes his experience and allows it to be translated as a positive perception of America, American government, and society, rather than letting his experience be projected negatively. Takei states,

*I am dedicated to making my country an even better America... to making our government an even truer democracy, and because of the heroes that I have and the struggles that we have gone through, I can stand before you as a gay Japanese American... but even more than that, I am a proud American.*

His experiences shaped his life positively and allowed for his childhood to create a better future. Instead of feeling trauma, he took his experiences and created a positive self-identification, despite traumatic experiences. His identity as a homosexual ethnic minority does not interfere with his ability to identify as an American. His identity was shaped by incarceration positively, as reflected later in his adult years. His positive self-identification with past trauma surpasses any marginalization experienced with race, sexuality, and citizenship. Takei, Dr. Satsuki Ina, and many other survivors, have taken their experiences, reflected on them, and in turn, used them constructively.

Nikkei’s experiences during incarceration have left lasting impacts on their identities, whether through forced silence or by viewing themselves as the enemy. The ability to self-identify was complicated by the placement of Nikkei into imprisonment. Nikkei were eventually given the opportunity to express their confusion, grief, and traumas in the public without facing stigma. With the emergence of political redress and creation of positive outlets allowing Nikkei to comfortably speak of their experiences, Nikkei are able to receive validation from their experiences and problematic self-identifications.

**CONCLUSION**

*The Japanese were not robbed, nor frightened, nor bullied; they were not thrown into concentration camps; they were neither starved nor beaten; there was no third degree, nor incommunicado dungeon. This is the American way, the Christian attitude. Decidedly NOT the way of the Gestapo. We can be glad and proud that justice and fair play prevailed.*

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198 Ibid.
When a nation turns its back on a group of people, most of which are American citizens, it leaves one to wonder why survivors of incarceration would reach out to a society which blatantly scorned them. Left to experience decades of suppression, incarcerated Nikkei persevered, sometimes unwillingly. With the atrocities and horrors perpetuated onto other ethnic groups overseas, Nikkei often saw no reconciliation or resolution in speaking of their own confusion and turmoil when other ethnic groups were experiencing horrors beyond comparison. However, a violation of human rights is still a violation of human rights, no matter the scale, nor how it is propagated. Despite acting with “American values,” the American government unjustly acted on racist influences in order to subdue a nonexistent Japanese threat.

By acting on the possibility of what could occur, the American government in turn, caused an entire generation of Nisei adolescents to endure lasting psychological hardships by impeding on an otherwise normal developmental period crucial to identity formation. Nisei adolescents entered these developmental periods with shifted identities, halted life experiences, and uncertainty with their own selves and futures. Not only would this disrupt their lives, but their developmental processes, as well. Often reflected in their adulthood, these Nisei children and adolescents often encountered and endured issues with identity, without the validation of receiving treatment or the opportunity to openly discuss their experiences until decades later.

Nisei were placed in a liminal space as soon as the incarceration process began. Once the enemy became identified as the ever fearful “Jap,” these Nisei had identities placed upon them. Once American citizens, they were now classified as the adversary, a criminal deemed worthy of imprisonment under no just reasoning. Having their identities dictated for them, Nisei now stood at the threshold of new identities, a new culture, and a new society in which they would soon be resettled into. Both Issei and Nisei detainees experienced the presence of a transitional period. Deviating from traditional Issei cultural customs, both Issei and Nisei experienced, even if only temporarily for some, a new period of self-exploration and self-identification. During the wartime period of incarceration, Nikkei were able to transform their unfavorable position in society into a time of metamorphosis and development, despite
the uncertainty of the situation. Although Nisei were often advised to “not make waves … [and not to] stand out…,” during a period of uncertainty, Nisei managed to create their own waves amidst one another. Those who bore the burdens of traditional customs sought to create a new culture by infusing their culture with popular American culture. Harmonizing the two, young Nisei girls and women managed to find solidarity and comradery, and to employ agency during a circumstance where all agency seemed to be impossible.

Taking into account the Nikkei experience during the World War II incarceration camps not only allows the public to understand the blunder that occurred in American history, but to learn how a group of people managed to persevere despite facing immense violation of human rights. Minding the mistakes that were made in the not-so-distant past, it is still important in current times not to ignore xenophobic behavior, as it is still very much a perpetuated ideology towards other cultures and ethnic groups. Past mistake reveal that perpetuation of propaganda, racist ideologies, and racist intentions provokes violence and mistreatment of ethnic groups, despite their American citizenry or constitutional rights. Centuries of propagated hate came to a peak during the years 1942-1945. The wrongful accusations of threat placed upon a group of people caused years of financial, psychological, and cultural anguish. Not only affecting citizens of the same country, propagated hate also encouraged the destruction of Japanese of people oversees via the use of firebombing and atomic weaponry.

The incarceration of an ethnic group of people forcefully encouraged Nikkei to strive to surpass the racist ideology that was not halted after their resettlement and after the war ended. Upon relocation, Nikkei now had to strive to create a better identity in American society. By the 1980s, Nikkei found that the stereotype of them had moved from unfavorable to a model minority. This” positive” stereotyping was largely due to the arising conflicts of the Cold War. The tensions were no longer aimed at those of Japanese descent, but now reverted back to those of Chinese descent. The political hostilities created another easily identifiable monster to be feared.

200 Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation, 300.
While this thesis focused mainly on the incarcerated Nikkei survivors being psychologically damaged throughout their adult years, it would be worth researching several survivors’ experiences that were not able to document their experiences at the time. The portion of Nikkei who were not American citizens because they were first generation were often times not included in documentation due to translation, the inability to speak or write English, or the stigma that was attached to maintaining Japanese culture. Taking the experiences into account of those who were not able to be documented would allow for an even more enriching understanding of the whole Japanese incarceration.

Overall, the incarceration shifted identities in both Issei and Nisei. For Issei, their non-citizen status was primarily the key reason for their detainment. However, once incarcerated, Issei were forced to revoke their Japanese-citizenship, while also being refused American citizenship because of their appearance. This, in turn, revoked Issei of all self-identification. No longer allowed to claim Japanese citizenship, these Issei were forced to identify as Americans in a country that treated them as enemies. Often, although Issei experienced a hostile and confusing imprisonment, Nisei had a more psychological response to incarceration. Nisei were aware that their American citizenship standing and their constitutional rights as Americans was entirely ignored. Nisei “saw themselves first as Americans with rights under the Constitution despite prewar discrimination.”\(^{201}\) Although both Issei and Nisei were placed into camps unwillingly, this thesis demonstrates that the impact on the issue of identity is exceedingly reflected in Nisei.

\(^{201}\) Ibid., 299.
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