

REPRODUCING EVACUEES: JAPANESE AMERICAN WOMEN'S  
EXPERIENCES WITH REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH  
DURING UNITED STATES INTERNMENT,  
1942 – 1945.

By

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1942, just over two months after Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) issued Executive Order 9066, which gave the Secretary of War and military commanders the authority to declare military areas within the United States. Further, Executive Order 9066 gave the Secretary of War and military commanders the authority to relocate people considered a threat to national security, who resided within the military zones, to barracks created by the government.<sup>1</sup> Under this order, Lieutenant General of the U.S. Army, John L. DeWitt, declared areas inhabited by large Japanese American communities as “military zones,” requiring all people with Japanese ancestry to relocate to federally-owned facilities, called “Relocation Centers” at the time, within the U.S. for contained observation.<sup>2</sup> These centers, which are now referred to as Internment Camps, were primarily built inland, away from the Western U.S. coast. The government constructed the camps away from the West Coast because the military wanted to eliminate the potential for Japanese Americans to communicate with Japanese military forces traveling across the Pacific Ocean. According to the U.S. census, the U.S. population of people with Japanese descent totaled 93,717 in 1940.<sup>3</sup> Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote to Lieutenant General DeWitt, “in emergencies, where the safety of the Nation is involved, consideration of the rights of

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<sup>1</sup> Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Executive Order 9066: Authorizing the Secretary of War to Prescribe Military Areas” (General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1942), accessed Oct. 25, 2021, [https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/executive-order-9066?\\_ga=2.86677592.1559574319.1647399482-74838671.1620114476](https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/executive-order-9066?_ga=2.86677592.1559574319.1647399482-74838671.1620114476).

<sup>2</sup> “Japanese-American Internment During World War II,” in Educator Recourses, National Archives and Records Administration, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, accessed Jan. 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/japanese-relocation.>; Valerie J. Matsumoto, “Japanese American Women during World War II,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 8, no. 1 (1984), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Y. Okiihiro, *American History Unbound: Asians and Pacific Islanders*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 276.

individuals must be subordinated to the common security,” when targeting the already discriminated against minority.<sup>4</sup> The government attempted to justify relocation and internment by insisting that Japanese Americans were inherently too Japanese to identify as Americans, regardless of the majority of *Issei* (first generation immigrants from Japan) and *Nisei* (second generation) attempts to seem nonthreatening through compliance and by pledging loyalty to the United States, “two thirds of whom were U.S. citizens, and the remainder excluded from citizenship under U.S. law,” since 1924.<sup>5</sup>

The U.S. government’s establishment of ten Relocation Centers inland, in the states of California, Idaho, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and Arkansas meant that the U.S. government, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and military could round up whole communities and force them to assembly centers, usually by train, and later relocate Japanese Americans to internment camps enclosed by barbed wire fences and monitored by armed guards.<sup>6</sup> For the next two to three years, depending on camp protocol and individual circumstance, the U.S. military denied Japanese Americans access to sanitation, privacy, and a choice in diet and healthcare. Historian Valerie Matsumoto summarizes the evacuation as a situation that “left many Japanese Americans numb.”<sup>7</sup> Internment drastically changed interned people’s familial positions and limited personal freedoms of choice, while adding anxiety to pre-internment stress related to

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<sup>4</sup> United States Army, Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, “Final report, Japanese evacuation from the West coast,” 1942 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, July 19, 1943), p. 5.; Valerie J. Matsumoto, “Japanese American Women during World War II,” 7.

<sup>5</sup> Okihiro, *American History Unbound*, 341.; Norman Minteta, Andrea Warren, and Monica Hesse, “Enemy Child: The Story of Norman Mineta,” (Library of Congress, November 19, 2019), <https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-8963/>.

<sup>6</sup> “Japanese-American Internment During World War II,” in Educator Recourses, National Archives and Records Administration, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, accessed Jan. 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/japanese-relocation>.

<sup>7</sup> Matsumoto, “Japanese American Women during World War II,” 8.

WWII. Japanese American mothers could no longer guarantee safety for their children. The government made decisions for Japanese American children and according to the mothers, did not provide them proper nutrition or healthcare, all while preventing mothers from raising their children in any other environment.

Pregnant Nisei mothers' experiences, although often overlooked by historians, are crucial to developing a full understanding of WWII internment. Historical work on internment does not always specify experiences based on gender difference, or it is highly focused on the male experience.<sup>8</sup> When women are the focus of U.S. internment research, historians typically write about young, single women and emphasize the work opportunities they experienced under a somewhat experimental system of welfare under FDR.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, my research focuses on historical sources that engage with interned mother's perspectives on pregnancy, birth, and caring for newborns from 1942 to 1945 internment. Japanese American women who went through pregnancy, gave birth, and became mothers of newborns while being interned expressed dissatisfaction with internment in ways that men and single women did not.

Most historians who have published work on the topic of Japanese American internment typically either suggest internment as negative on all accounts including civil

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<sup>8</sup> Roger Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.); Peter Irons, *Justice at war: The Story of the Japanese-American Internment Cases*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.); Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.); Izumi, Masumi. *The Rise and Fall of America's Concentration Camp Law: Civil Liberties Debates from the Internment to McCarthyism and the Radical 1960s*, (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2019.)

<sup>9</sup> Susan L. Smith, "Women Health Workers and the Color Line in the Japanese American 'Relocation Centers' of World War II," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73, no. 4, (December 1, 1999), 598.; Leslie A. Ito, "Japanese American Women and the Student Relocation Movement, 1942 - 1945." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 21, no. 3, (January 1, 2000), 1-24.; Samuel O. Regalado, "Incarcerated Sport: Nisei Women's Softball and Athletics During Japanese American Internment," *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 3, (2000), 431-444.

liberties violations, harsh conditions, and destruction of community, or counter such claims by listing examples of how Japanese Americans had more time for leisure, since they were provided free housing and new work opportunities after leaving their household responsibilities when they were evacuated in 1942. Few focus on reproductive health. However, historians of women's history have explored the various reproductive politics that women of color have been subjected to in the United States, finding a long history of colonialism and medical experimentation.<sup>10</sup> My project takes these issues and applies them to the context of Japanese internment by focusing on the reproductive health of Japanese American women during World War II. Interviews conducted with Japanese American women who experienced reproductive internment heavily influence this project's tone, and their voices are reenforced by oral histories from relocation center doctors and nurses and War Relocation Authority reports.

Japanese American Nisei mothers' oral histories collected by the Densho project reveal new information on the gendered challenges of U.S. WWII internment, revealing that the War Relocation Authority (WRA) did not adequately prepare internment camp barracks, hospitals, or staff for pregnancy, birth, and post-partum care for Japanese American mothers. Instead, the WRA scrambled to adjust for reproduction as problems arose and frequently neglected to make new mothers feel safe, healthy, or secure.

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<sup>10</sup> Brianna Theobald, *Reproduction on the Reservation: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Colonialism in the Long Twentieth Century*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Deirdre, Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017); Dorothy E. Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*. (Vintage Books, a division of Penguin Random House, 2017); Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America 1750–1950*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Loretta J. Ross and Rickie Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017); Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe V. Wade*. (New York: Routledge, 1992.)

## 2. HISTORIOGRAPHY

Valerie Matsumoto is the leading scholar to uncover the unique experiences of Japanese American women. She has influenced U.S. women's history and Japanese American history with her ground-breaking work on Japanese American women's internment during WWII. Not only does Matsumoto summarize the Japanese American experience in her book from 1993, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese Community in California, 1919 – 1982*, but she also dedicated an article in 1984 specifically to Japanese American women's WWII experiences. In "Japanese American Women During World War II," Matsumoto differentiates between the experiences of Issei and Nisei women. Matsumoto finds that the U.S. government discriminated against Nisei women, but also gave labor opportunities and economic advantages to Nisei women.<sup>11</sup> This distinguishing of generations remains an essential analytic approach for historians when evaluating conditions of internment and expanding on research about Japanese American experiences in the 1900s.

Matsumoto conducted interviews with formerly interned women and compiled them with other women's autobiographies to provide scholars of U.S. history, Japanese American history, and women's history with a sense of Japanese American women's thoughts about, and experiences of, internment. According to Matsumoto, "Overlying the mixed feelings of anxiety, anger, shame, and confusion, was resignation."<sup>12</sup> Matsumoto also notes that these women felt numbness and disorientation. However, elder Issei women would mention, on occasion, that they felt relieved by the structure provided by

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<sup>11</sup> Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II," 6.

<sup>12</sup> Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II," 8.

the camps because they no longer had to support their families through full-time domestic work and felt relieved to have food provided for them and their families.<sup>13</sup> Both generations of women, she maintains, had been spared from racial discrimination in the camps because they rarely interacted with non-Japanese Americans.

Matsumoto's article documents both the positive and negative experiences of Japanese American women who went through internment but concludes with the argument that single Nisei women were the most successful at adapting to life during and after internment. The cost of single Nisei women's development was harsh and unfair, but they navigated through governmental restraints, anti-Japanese sentiments, and developed skills for self-reliance that promoted Japanese American women's labor force participation after the war ended.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of these opportunities, "camp was still an artificial, limited environment."<sup>15</sup> Matsumoto also discovered that interned Issei and Nisei used the Japanese term "shikata ga nai," meaning "it cannot be helped" or "it is what it is" to express how they survived internment.<sup>16</sup>

After the publication of Matsumoto's work, scholars began to focus on linking gendered experience during internment with specific theories, rather than further elaborating on "women's experiences with internment" as a dedicated area of study. Unlike Matsumoto, who presents both negative and positive aspects of women's development during and after internment, more recent scholarly works on Japanese American internment argue that women's experiences were strictly harmful, strictly

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<sup>13</sup> Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II," 9.

<sup>14</sup> Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II," 13.

<sup>15</sup> Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II," 10.

<sup>16</sup> Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II."

beneficial, or, following Matsumoto, that second-generation women had experiences that propelled them toward success and acculturation. Historians who published works on the topic in the 1990s also tended to analyze Japanese American women's experiences through a lens that compared the experiences of Asian women with the experiences of African American women.

Susan L. Smith's work on gendered experience of internment recognizes a disproportionate amount of blame placed on Japanese American women during WWII. Smith utilized testimonies from healthcare professionals in her 1999 article, "Women Health Workers and the Color Line in the Japanese American 'Relocation Centers' of World War II" to build a social history of the experiences of women who worked as nurses in internment hospitals. Her historical analysis on nurses in internment camps is inclusive of white, Black, and Japanese American women. Smith's work on internment exposes both a racial hierarchy and a generational hierarchy within medical professions. White women demanded an increase in pay when they accepted jobs as internment nurses and internment camp doctors encouraged Nisei women to become nurse aids and go to nursing classes if they wanted to develop their medical skills. In contrast, the doctors in camp permitted Black nurses to work in internment hospitals only if staffing needs could not be met by white or Nisei nurses.<sup>17</sup> Finally, white supervisors did not feel comfortable with Issei women's citizenship status, their knowledge of the Japanese language, and their attempts to use traditional Japanese medicine and promotion for midwifery.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, Issei women were barred from nursing. Smith's devotion to analyzing the

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<sup>17</sup> Susan L. Smith, "Women Health Workers and the Color Line in the Japanese American 'Relocation Centers' of World War II," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73, no. 4, (December 1, 1999), 598.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, "Women Health Workers and the Color Line in the Japanese American 'Relocation Centers' of World War II," 600.

separate experiences of Issei and Nisei women, following Matsumoto, benefits the study of women's internment during WWII because she acknowledges that generational experiences differ within internment while she suggests the opportunities offered to female Nisei nurses as almost satisfactory when compared to the lack of opportunity offered to Issei and African American nurses.<sup>19</sup>

Samuel O. Regalado, a sports historian, also emphasizes positive aspects of internment life for Nisei women in his 2000 article, "Incarcerated Sport: Nisei Women's Softball and Athletics During Japanese American Internment." The article includes a picture of a women's softball team to show the reader the commonality of women's sports during Japanese American internment. Unlike other historical commentary of the 2000s, Regalado minimizes the negative experiences of internment by adopting a dismissive tone and referring to Nisei women with terms like "the Nisei female" and writes about Japanese Americans as having "appeared" on the Western coast of the United States. He also explains Issei families as "male Issei summoning picture brides" from Japan to "produce offspring," where the offspring means the Nisei, American-born, generation.<sup>20</sup> Regalado's use of unsympathetic, and problematic, vocabulary toward Japanese Americans may be related to his reluctance to bring attention to the importance of gendered experience as that would not suit his argument, signifying that he is more interested in sports than in emphasizing the gendered experience of internment. Regalado argues that historians should pay more attention to the use of sports when evaluating morale boosting during imprisonment.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Smith, "Women Health Workers and the Color Line in the Japanese American 'Relocation Centers' of World War II," 585–601.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel O Regalado, "Incarcerated Sport: Nisei Women's Softball and Athletics During Japanese American Internment." *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 3, (2000), 432.

<sup>21</sup> Regalado, "Incarcerated Sport," 439.

Although Regalado's writing recognizes that Nisei participation in sports was ultimately an activity used to find recreation and entertainment while interned, his work primarily focuses on Nisei women's participation in softball as an avenue for Japanese American advancement. Regalado also utilizes quotes from Matsumoto's article to further emphasize positive outcomes from internment for Nisei women.<sup>22</sup> Regalado's article urges social historians to research the importance and prevalence of sports, instead of arguing for the development of a well-rounded excerpt on women's experiences during WWII internment.

Leslie A. Ito's article from 2000 also focuses on opportunities provided for Nisei women during internment, but challenges arguments, such as Smith's and Regalado's, that largely ignore the negative implications of Nisei advantages. Ito discovered that the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC) provided full university scholarships to 5,522 Nisei women.<sup>23</sup> Religious educators responded to the government's refusal to fund Nisei education by founding the NJASRC, in Chicago on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1942.<sup>24</sup> The scholarships gave Nisei women the option of leaving internment camps to get university and trade school degrees.

Ito references interviews with Nisei women students from Mount Holyoke college who criticized their position as cultural ambassadors. Although American citizens, Nisei women feared speaking harshly about the NJASRC's expectations or the government's internment of their families because they felt their safety and freedom depended on being

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<sup>22</sup> Regalado, "Incarcerated Sport," 435.

<sup>23</sup> Leslie A. Ito, "Japanese American Women and the Student Relocation Movement, 1942-1945." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 21, no. 3, (January 1, 2000), 2.

<sup>24</sup> "The National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC)," in *Our Origins, Nisei Student Relocation Commemorative*, (2021), accessed Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021, <https://nsrccfund.org/history/our-origins/>.

perceived as “American.”<sup>25</sup> Ito also criticizes the NJASRC’s controlled environment over Nisei students and explores the lives of the students “on the basis of gender and sexism, race and racism, and citizenship and loyalty.”<sup>26</sup> She argues that the NJASRC limited Nisei women students’ self-expression by expecting Nisei women to portray a positive image of Japanese Americans through proof of assimilation to American college life.<sup>27</sup> Ito reviews interviews conducted by the NJASRC with Nisei students and summarizes Nisei women as unfamiliar with college because their Issei parents prohibited their daughters from attending higher education under the assumption that doing so would disrupt their capability or upholding the traditional Japanese gendered expectation for young women to become wives and mothers.<sup>28</sup> Ito finds that the Nisei women granted an opportunity to leave internment and attend college as a result of the NJASRC’s scholarships found themselves scrutinized as students and limited in exploring freedoms that non-Japanese American students had access to. This is because they remained under the colleges’, the government, and the NJASRC’s intense supervision. For example, college and university rules forbade Nisei women from leaving campus during vacations due to non-Japanese Americans fear that the Nisei women would participate in behavior that could do harm their communities.<sup>29</sup>

Thomas Y. Fujita-Rony’s article from 2006, “Remaking the ‘Home Front’ in World War II: Japanese American Women’s Work and the Colorado River Relocation Center,” provides scholars with Japanese American history covering the beginning of internment

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<sup>25</sup> Ito, “Japanese American Women and the Student Relocation Movement, 1942-1945,” 12.

<sup>26</sup> Ito, “Japanese American Women and the Student Relocation Movement, 1942-1945,” 2.

<sup>27</sup> Ito, “Japanese American Women and the Student Relocation Movement, 1942-1945,” 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ito, “Japanese American Women and the Student Relocation Movement, 1942-1945,” 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ito, “Japanese American Women and the Student Relocation Movement, 1942-1945,” 9.

through the end of internment. He also reworks the idea of the U.S. “home front” against the Axis powers as a time of restriction on Japanese American women. Fujita-Rony argues that Japanese American women “had to learn new skills and new ways of thinking, often with little to sustain them besides the overriding needs of the moment” as Issei and Nisei women showed resourcefulness and resilience as they struggled between proving their American citizenship and accommodating each other in “alien” environments.<sup>30</sup>

Fujita-Rony builds his argument by referencing interviews conducted with formerly interned Japanese Americans, War Relocation Authority (WRA) records, photographs, and *Piston Chronicle* newspaper articles found in the National Archives. His work includes information about generational difference, Nisei nurses, Nisei women’s education opportunities with a focus on the Colorado River Relocation Center in Arizona. Fujita-Rony’s article expands on research about Japanese American women during internment because of his focus on a specific location and because he investigates multiple occupations held by Nisei women during internment that had not been expanded on previously. Fujita-Rony makes references to the *Piston Chronicle*, written and run by Japanese American women, which reported on areas of labor shortage in the camp.<sup>31</sup> The *Chronicle* allowed Japanese American women to directly contribute to the “home front” within their area of detainment.<sup>32</sup>

Instead of analyzing Japanese American women’s internment history to explain opportunities and their drawbacks, some historians of Japanese American women’s experiences internment have sought to explain why Japanese Americans were targeted to begin with. In 1995, Alison Dundes Renteln used a psychological approach to analyze the

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<sup>30</sup> Fujita-Rony, “Remaking the ‘Home Front’ in World War II,” 197.

<sup>31</sup> Fujita-Rony, “Remaking the ‘Home Front’ in World War II,” 187.

<sup>32</sup> Fujita-Rony, “Remaking the ‘Home Front’ in World War II,” 189.

reasons for Americans' desires to force Japanese Americans into internment by attempting to answer the reason why the government targeted Japanese Americans. She looks beyond standard reasonings like economic competition and wartime hysteria by interpreting U.S. anti-Japanese propaganda and stereotypes associated with Japanese people as stemming from a desire to limit sexual reproduction of interracial couples.

Dundes Renteln draws upon white fears of African American sexuality that produced excessive accusations of rapes made about Black men of White women and equates these anxieties to anti-Japanese sentiments during WWII. She refers to this dynamic as, "projective inversion."<sup>33</sup> However, her work is impossible to prove with undeniable evidence because leaders of the time did not openly state that Japanese American internment was a direct response to race mixing. Yet, her interpretation alerts scholars to possible underlying causes for the inhumane treatment of Japanese American women, as white Americans may have assumed Japanese American women to be hypersexualized and willing to seduce white men at the cost of disrupting white, nuclear families. Dundes Renteln analyzes common terms used to describe Japanese women during the 1940s, such as "exotic" and "able to please men" when she reviews a 1944 comic strip of Captain America protecting a white woman from Japanese men.<sup>34</sup> She labels this hyper sexualization of Japanese women an unconscious projection of white American men's desires to have sexual relationships with Japanese women, which is again, reminiscent of racist stereotype of Black men as aggressively sexual people, even though white men much more commonly assaulted Black women during legal

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<sup>33</sup> Dundes Renteln. "A Psychohistorical Analysis of the Japanese American Internment," 619.

<sup>34</sup> Dundes Renteln, "A Psychohistorical Analysis of the Japanese American Internment," 646.

enslavement and afterwards. Dundes Renteln's interpretation calls for a reevaluation of the event of Japanese American internment during World War II as a period of not only controlling Japanese American men, women, and children, but by considering internment a time of limiting white men's exposure to Japanese American women and Japanese American men's access to white women.<sup>35</sup>

When considering Japanese American internees' experiences of pregnancy and childbirth, this research also engages the growing literature on the history of reproduction. The U.S. government's fears about interracial couples, sexuality, and reproduction reached Puerto Rican and Native American communities as well. Laura Briggs argues in *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* that the U.S. government instilled ideas of fear around Puerto Rican sexuality and family structure to convince white Euro-Americans that Puerto Ricans were too dangerous to gain full citizenship status. The U.S. initially targeted Puerto Rican women because of an assumption that women prostituted and carried venereal diseases that white men would contract and bring home to white women, potentially causing issues with white familial childbearing. This idea was prevalent while white American soldiers were stationed in Puerto Rico during WWII and led to the U.S. government experimenting with contraceptives and sterilization on Puerto Rican women.<sup>36</sup>

Other historians have followed Briggs' lead by looking at how U.S. federal policy shaped reproduction of colonized women. Government policy towards reproduction

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<sup>35</sup> Dundes Renteln, "A Psychohistorical Analysis of the Japanese American Internment," 618–48.; Okihiro, *American History Unbound: Asians and Pacific Islanders*, 276.

<sup>36</sup> Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.)

extended to Native Americans through the Indian Health Service. Brianna Theobald published *Reproduction on the Reservation* in 2019. Her book is about Indigenous women in the United States with a focus on midwifery, motherhood, and the politics surrounding Native women's reproduction. Theobald explains forced sterilization by tracing this practice back to the U.S. government's influence over the Crow Native American reservation. There, she found that physicians used coercion to convince Native women that sterilization was the best option for them, in some cases without telling the women that the procedure was permanent. Fears of Puerto Rican high rates of childbirth also caused the U.S. government to encourage treating the colony as a laboratory in the development of new medical technology like the pill and to use new population control public health policies. In *Reproduction on the Reservation*, Theobald argues that the U.S. used sterilization and other forms of reproductive control to both limit the growth in Indigenous populations and force those populations to assimilate to standard U.S. family values by eliminating Indigenous tradition and medical practices.<sup>37</sup>

My research encompasses generational and reproductive analysis by following Matsumoto's attention to gendered experiences through generational difference, but contrasts arguments like Regalado's and Smith's by incorporating Theobald and Brigg's focus on reproductive health. This approach highlights the importance of pregnant Nisei women and mothers of newborns experiences with federally-enforced internment, showing that they did not directly benefit from communal camp activities or educational opportunities, and believed the government neglected their needs. This thesis is organized

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<sup>37</sup> Brianna Theobald, *Reproduction on the Reservation: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Colonialism in the Long Twentieth Century*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.)

in two parts. The first part, “Evacuation and Pregnancy,” explains evacuation, includes pregnant Nisei women’s responses to relocation, and evaluates the challenges that the WRA and pregnant women adjusted to during early internment. The second part, “Birth and Caring for Newborns,” covers birthing practices within internment camps, women’s concerns about their health and their newborns’ health during camp rationing, and highlights mothers’ anxieties about raising children while being detained by the government.

### 3. EVACUATION AND PREGNANCY

The forced migration of 120,313 people from Japanese American communities devastated Issei and Nisei mothers during WWII. They lost monetary wealth, their property, privacy, jobs and careers, familiar schooling, expected forms of healthcare, access to sanitation, and in some cases, relocation split families between multiple camps. All of which uprooted Japanese American stability associated with communities that had been constructed over decades in the United States.<sup>38</sup> Assembly centers and relocation centers were made from tarps, tents, wood, gravel, and tin, which the government filled with Japanese Issei and Nisei evacuees from across the Western U.S. Formerly interned Lily Yuriko's first impression of assembly centers is documented in her autobiography as, "horse stables...that's where they billeted the first wave of evacuees from the West Coast. By the time my family—my mother, my father, my brother, and I—arrived at the Santa Anita Racetrack, renamed the Assembly Center, there were makeshift tar-paper barracks."<sup>39</sup> Additionally, internees had no guarantee of when they would be released, which of their family members and friends would survive sickness and diseases that spread through the camps, and the internees could not predict the status that would be pinned on them after relocation ended, let alone not knowing how WWII would end.<sup>40</sup> Interned pregnant mothers found it difficult to comprehend the toll internment would force them to endure, as they could not guarantee the safety or security of their own lives or the lives of their unborn children. Nisei mother Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga summarized

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<sup>38</sup> Valerie Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese Community in California, 1919–1982*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 93.

<sup>39</sup> Lily Yuriko Nakai Havey, *Gasa Gasa Girl Goes to Camp: A Nisei Youth Behind a World War II Fence*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014), 1.

<sup>40</sup> Fujita-Rony, "Remaking the 'Home Front' in World War II," 176.

her thoughts on pregnancy during internment as being exceptionally hard “under trying circumstances,” when pregnancy is already hard “under the best of circumstances.”<sup>41</sup>

Forced evacuation and relocation perplexed some Nisei American mothers, leaving them in a state of disbelief. Fumiko Hayashida denied the repercussions of established military zones under Executive Order 9066. Hayashida told Densho interviewer, Debra Grindeland, that she did not expect to be affected by Executive Order 9066 or the implementation of military zones when she received news of the evacuation. Although Hayashida was ethnically Japanese, her pregnancy with her third child and her status as a law-abiding American citizen with no connections to Japan led her to believe that relocation would not apply to her.<sup>42</sup> Other pregnant women felt so apprehensive about evacuation and the uncertainty that came with it, that they attempted to hide their pregnancies from the Army, which oversaw the first evacuations with rifles, because they feared for their safety and their babies’ safety.

Mothers prepared for a worst-case scenario after learning about Japanese American evacuation. Ogawa remembers hearing stories of pregnancy and evacuation from his mother and father. Kenji Ogawa told Densho that his pregnant mother, fearful of the treatment Japanese Americans would receive from the military, decided to hide her pregnancy during the relocation process by wearing loose men’s clothing and wrapping a blanket around her belly. She expected, according to Ogawa, that Japanese Americans

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<sup>41</sup> Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, “Herzig-Yoshinaga Interview II,” Interviewed by Tom Ikeda. July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Courtesy of the Densho Visual History Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, Accessed November 8, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-250-13/>.

<sup>42</sup> Fumiko Hayashida, “Fumiko Hayashida Interview,” Interviewed by Debra Grindeland, February 25, 2006, Courtesy of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community, available at Densho Digital Repository, Accessed November 9, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1001-1-1/>.

who seemed unfit for work would be targeted, possibly in violent ways, by the U.S. Army. In addition to worrying about protecting her unborn child, she cut her hair short and dressed in a masculine fashion to separate herself from her husband who had strong ties to Japan.<sup>43</sup> The U.S. government's history of handling interned women of color gave Ogawa's mother, and others like her, cause for heightened anxiety and concern. In the 1930s, the United States sterilized Native American women on reservations. Theobald noted in *Reproduction on the Reservation*, "government physicians on underresourced and often isolated reservations" ... "were well positioned to blur the lines between 'therapeutic' and 'eugenic' sterilizations."<sup>44</sup> Although Ogawa could not confirm that his mother's fear directly related to sterilization or a forced termination of her pregnancy, she erred on the side of caution while considering the government's decision making based on racial profiling and eugenics.<sup>45</sup> Ogawa's mother attempted to distance herself from womanhood and motherhood, which shows how little information Japanese American mothers had about what the government intended to do with internees during relocation.

Primary care providers attempted to comfort pregnant Japanese American mothers during evacuation and protect them from the Army's stress-inducing handling of the mothers, which could have been potentially harmful to gestating babies' health, by giving the U.S. government and the military recommended treatment plans for their

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<sup>43</sup> Kenji Ogawa, "Kenji Ogawa Interview," interviewed by Kristen Luetkemeier, May 21, 2015. Courtesy of the Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 9, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-170-8/>.

<sup>44</sup> Theobald, Brianna. *Reproduction on the Reservation: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Colonialism in the Long Twentieth Century*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 95.

<sup>45</sup> Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015.)

patients.<sup>46</sup> The Medical Service Department expected the military to make relocation exemptions for pregnant women and mothers of newborns by allowing them to remain in their homes or in hospitals between their eighth month of pregnancy through the first six weeks after their baby's birth.<sup>47</sup> However, as forced evacuation became an emergency that required the immediate transfer of all Japanese American people to assembly centers, and later to relocation centers, the military order for evacuation overruled doctors' guidelines. According to the Medical Service Department's memo on forced relocation, "when the evacuation orders were issued, all persons regardless of the condition of the party, were evacuated either by ambulance to the County Hospital, or by buses to the Assembly Centers."<sup>48</sup>

The WRA gained control of evacuation and relocation on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1942. Leading up to this transition of control, Japanese Americans received little communication about how they would be treated during internment and were not sure if it was safe to disclose their pregnancies to the U.S. military. Dillon Seymour (D.S.) Myer, director of the WRA, reported on the Army's treatment of pregnant Japanese Americans as "inexperienced."<sup>49</sup> With the WRA in charge of Japanese American mothers' medical treatment, along with all other affairs of interned Japanese Americans, some of the

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<sup>46</sup> "Memo Regarding Forced Relocation of Pregnant Women and Babies," (California State University, Dominguez Hills, Archives and Special Collections, 1942), accessed March 13, 2022, <https://calisphere.org/item/bc5be801523524263f729b371f280298/>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Dillon Seymour (D.S.) Myer and Julius Albert (J.A.) Krug, "Administrative Highlights of the WRA Program United States Department of the Interior. War Relocation Authority," (Washington D.C., 1946, GRAD D 769.8.A6 A5 1946. University of Michigan, 1946), accessed Jan. 26, 2022, 67. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015008862990&view=1up&seq=5&skin=2021>.

mothers' concerns eased as they learned to expect at least minimal support from the Authority.

In response to doctors' concerns and Japanese American anxieties about treatment toward pregnant women, Wartime Control Administration officials announced that all trains carrying evacuees would include a train car designated for pregnant mothers, and mothers of babies under one year old, that would provide adequate care during their relocation. The maternity train cars contained a doctor, two nurses, and a social worker who would provide evacuated mothers and babies with medical treatment, should they need it, along with dried milk and water to make formula. Since these provisions would be provided, the Army did not allow mothers to bring food or formula on the trains.<sup>50</sup> When Fumiko Hayashida received a notice to prepare for evacuation within one week, she worried about what food she should bring for her two-year old, thirteen-month-old, and the baby who would be born soon after internment. After learning that food would not be allowed on the train, she filled her suitcase with diapers and clothes for the children.<sup>51</sup>

U.S. rationing during WWII magnified Japanese America mothers' anxieties under the uncertainty of internment while the WRA struggled to meet the basic needs of the detained population. American soldiers required food, medical treatment, and military equipment during WWII, leading to shortages in goods produced. Some government-

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<sup>50</sup> Wartime Civil Control Administration, "Wartime Civil Control Administration Press Release No 4 - 13," (John M. Flaherty Collection of Japanese Internment Records: Gerth Archives & Special Collections, April 11, 1942.)

<sup>51</sup> Fumiko Hayashida, "Fumiko Hayashida Interview," Interviewed by Debra Grindeland, February 25, 2006, Courtesy of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community, available at Densho Digital Repository, Accessed November 9, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1001-1-1/>.

made special accommodations for pregnant Japanese Americans in relocation centers included the performance of monthly medical checkups for pregnant women in each camp's temporary hospital and that "block mothers" distributed rationed items, like milk, to pregnant mothers in camp mess halls. Block mothers honored requests for items like milk, as long as camp doctors provided written documents asking that special rations be provided for each pregnant woman on a regular basis.<sup>52</sup> Even with doctor ordered requests for certain food items, pregnant Japanese Americans had limited access to dietary necessities like protein, calcium, and prenatal vitamins for pregnant women.<sup>53</sup>

Although the War Relocation Authority made accommodations for pregnant Japanese Americans, many mothers continued to feel that care under the WRA was uncomfortable and unsatisfactory.<sup>54</sup> For example, the WRA did not distribute maternity clothes for pregnant women in Manzanar. This meant pregnant women, like Fumiko Hayashida, resorted to writing letters to non-interned women with requests for clothing to be mailed to camps.<sup>55</sup>

The lack of privacy in the camps also caused discomfort for pregnant women during internment. Japanese American Patricia Mariko Morikawa Sakamoto's Nisei mother attempted to hide her pregnancy while living in Manzanar, but her reasoning was different from that of Kenji Ogawa's mother who anticipated a government-organized

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<sup>52</sup> Myer and Krug, "Administrative Highlights of the WRA Program United States Department of the Interior. War Relocation Authority," 64.

<sup>53</sup> Myer and Krug, "Administrative Highlights of the WRA Program United States Department of the Interior. War Relocation Authority," 6.

<sup>54</sup> Nina Wallace, "Photo Essay: Japanese American Mothers During WWII," May 11, 2017, <https://densho.org/catalyst/japanese-american-mothers-wwii/>.

<sup>55</sup> Fumiko Hayashida, "Fumiko Hayashida Interview," Interviewed by Debra Grindeland, February 25, 2006. Courtesy of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community, available at Densho Digital Repository, Accessed November 9, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1001-1-1/>.

attack. Morikawa Sakamoto's mother had gotten pregnant out of wedlock and other Japanese American mothers in the camp criticized her for being pregnant without a husband. Morikawa Sakamoto remembers her mother considering suicide during Manzanar internment because she could not escape the women who harassed her. Morikawa Sakamoto's mother had hoped to keep her pregnancy hidden and raise her baby without judgement for her single status, but the close proximity of internment did not allow her to distance herself from people who made her feel uncomfortable.<sup>56</sup>

The lack of privacy within the internment camps also impacted married Nisei women. Apartment living within camps allowed for intimate moments, like sex between couples, to be shared with the people who lived within the same apartment block as the couple. One woman recalls the moment of becoming pregnant with other internees in the same room as her and her husband, with only a thin divider between them and other Japanese Americans.<sup>57</sup>

The lack of privacy during internment, unavailability of clothing that fit, uncertainty of relocation expectations, and limited access to food frustrated pregnant Nisei women in ways that no amount of allotted WRA accommodations could make up for. Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga felt hungry, yet she could not cook her own food, and constantly longed for running water that was only available in apartment block laundry facilities. She insisted to interviewer Tom Ikeda that Manzanar did not provide pregnant

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<sup>56</sup> Patricia Mariko Morikawa Sakamoto, Patricia Mariko Morikawa Sakamoto Interview," Interviewed by Rose Masters, May 19, 2015, Courtesy of the Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 9, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-167-8/>.

<sup>57</sup> Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, "Herzig-Yoshinaga Interview II." Interviewed by Tom Ikeda. July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Courtesy of the Densho Visual History Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 8, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-250-13/>.

women with nutrition necessary for gestation and worried that her child would suffer from lack of nutrition after birth.<sup>58</sup> The WRA refused to lessen rationing restrictions for pregnant mothers and babies because the agency wanted to avoid backlash from Americans outside of internment.<sup>59</sup> According to Matsumoto and WRA reports, U.S. newspapers reported to the public that, “Japanese Americans were living in luxurious conditions.”<sup>60</sup> WRA director, Dillon Seymour Myer, and Julius Albert Krug, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, admitted in a 1946 report that “these restrictions were self-imposed by the Agency to avoid public repercussions.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Herzig-Yoshinaga, “Herzig-Yoshinaga Interview II.”

<sup>59</sup> Myer and Krug, “Administrative Highlights of the WRA Program United States Department of the Interior. War Relocation Authority,” 57.

<sup>60</sup> Matsumoto, “Japanese American Women during World War II,” 8.

<sup>61</sup> Myer and Krug, “Administrative Highlights of the WRA Program United States Department of the Interior. War Relocation Authority,” 57.



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Figure 1. Pregnant Japanese American Visiting Doctor. July 3, 1942. (Densho Digital Repository: Parent Collection, Dorothea Lange Collection, July 3, 1942), <https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-151-418/>.

In contrast to the WRA's reluctance to fulfill pregnant women's requests, Japanese American doctors, like Dr. James Goto, advocated for women's reproductive health. Dr. Goto graduated from University of California at Los Angeles medical school in 1937 and ranked first out of 150 medical applicants. Forced relocation interned Dr. Goto in Manzanar, where he served as the camp's medical director in 1942.<sup>63</sup> He and Dr.

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<sup>62</sup> Dorothea Lange, *Pregnant Japanese American Visiting Doctor*. (Densho Digital Repository: Parent Collection, Dorothea Lange Collection, July 3, 1942), <https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-151-418/>.

<sup>63</sup> James A. Garfield Senior Highschool, "Dr. James Goto, Manzanar's Medical Director," accessed March 2, 2022, [https://www.garfieldhs.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=1158176&type=d&pREC\\_ID=1927152](https://www.garfieldhs.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1158176&type=d&pREC_ID=1927152).

Masako Kusayanagi Goto Miura married and worked together in the camp hospital.<sup>64</sup>

Interned mothers' praised Dr. Goto in their interviews for his excellent treatment of pregnant women. As the WRA restricted rations on Japanese Americans, including suggesting the removal of vitamins from camps, formerly interned Ann Sugimoto recalls Dr. Goto refusing to follow the WRA orders because the "pregnant women needed vitamins."<sup>65</sup> Sumiya Takeno, an interned nurse's aid, worked with Dr. Goto and described him as having many close relationships with his patients.<sup>66</sup>

Even though the WRA improved basic camp conditions for pregnant women after taking over for the Army, the Authority did not ease Nisei mothers' concerns regarding privacy or nutrition, or assure the mothers that the WRA prioritized the health of their babies. The Medical Service Department, Japanese American camp doctors like Dr. Goto, and Nisei nurses did attempt to alleviate the concerns of pregnant mothers during internment. Yet, none of their efforts could completely distract mothers from the fact that the U.S. government supported the military's forced evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans while the WRA failed to adequately provide comfort for the interned.

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<sup>64</sup> Mas Hashimoto, "Dr. Masako Kusayanagi Goto Miura, a Medical Doctor's Camp Experience," Feb. 10, 2020, accessed March 8, 2022, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2020/2/10/masako-kusayanagi/>.

<sup>65</sup> Ann Sugimoto, "Ann Sugimoto Interview," Interviewed by Richard Potashin. July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Courtesy of the Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 5, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-72-1/>.

<sup>66</sup> Sumiya Takeno, "Sumiya Takeno Interview," Interviewed by Richard Potashin, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Courtesy of the Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 6, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-36-1/>.

#### 4. BIRTH AND CARING FOR NEWBORNS

The WRA commissioned Tule Lake hospital staff to write a report on Japanese folklore surrounding birthing customs. By April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1944, the staff had consulted with the detained community and produced a report on pregnancy folklore, birthing traditions, and compared Japanese traditions to typical U.S. birth traditions. The U.S. tradition, the staff wrote, was for the baby's father to pass out cigars after the birth of a son. The Tule Lake reported that during pregnancy, Japanese superstition warned mothers to avoid spicy food as it may negatively affect the baby's brain, and that sour food would result in a softening of the baby's bones. If a pregnant mother became frightened, by fire for example, and placed her hand on her body in that moment, the baby would be born with a birth mark in the same spot. The staff documented that during childbirth, a Japanese mother must only think of "beautiful" thoughts because this led to the baby having a beautiful soul. Also, "a Japanese woman should not cry out at child-birth, for the moment is one of great pride and to do so is very shameful."<sup>67</sup>

Theobald found reproductive folklore in Native American communities as well, showing that Crow people also honored pregnancy rituals predicting the outcome of births. Crow people instructed pregnant women to, "sleep with their feet facing a doorway throughout their pregnancy because they believed this act would bring about unobstructed delivery."<sup>68</sup> They also urged pregnant women, "to avoid looking at anything deformed" because they feared it would "come out in the child."<sup>69</sup> The WRA's

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<sup>67</sup> War Relocation Authority: Tule Lake Center, "Japanese Folklore About Birth," United States Department of Interior, April 26, 1944, Densho Digital Repository, <https://ddr.densho.org/ddr-csujad-2-59/>.

<sup>68</sup> Theobald, *Reproduction on the Reservation*, 31.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

recognition of these cultural differences could have been used to accommodate pregnant Issei women, however, the WRA's interest in cultural sensitivity only developed toward the end of internment, considering that the Tule Lake staff reported on reproductive folklore two years after internment began which delayed "development in this area of medical history."<sup>70</sup> Nisei women, as native-born American citizens, may have viewed the WRA's community assessment as a lack of distinction between them and their immigrant parents. Nisei integrated, "both the Japanese ways of their parents and the mainstream customs of their non-Japanese friends."<sup>71</sup> Regardless of generational difference, from 1942 through 1944, Issei and Nisei women labored and delivered babies in camp hospital rooms that they shared with multiple other birthing women. Mothers who gave birth in internment felt their hospital care adequate at best, and many who interviewed with Densho expressed utter dissatisfaction with the treatment provided while delivering their babies during internment. A total of 5,981 babies had been born in relocation centers.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America 1750–1950*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 6.

<sup>71</sup> Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II." 7.

<sup>72</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, War Relocation Authority, "The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description," (1946), 8.



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Figure 2. Nurse Hamaguchi showing a newborn baby (Fukomoto) to the mother, Frances Yokoyama, through a nursery window in Manzanar. Photograph by Ansel Adams, located in the Library of Congress. Ansel Adams, “Nurse Aiko Hamaguchi, Mother Frances Yokoyama, Baby Fukumoto, Manzanar Relocation Center, California/ Photograph by Ansel Adams,” (Library of Congress, 1943), accessed March 6, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002697854/>.

Transitions in reproductive medical practices in the 1940s brought U.S. labor and delivery to hospital beds, ignoring cultural traditions practiced in Japanese American communities prior to relocation and internment. Historian Judith Walzer Leavitt notes that “the entrance of physician-accoucheurs into the practice of obstetrics in America during the second half of the eighteenth century marked the first significant break with tradition,” as pregnant mothers in the U.S. began choosing male doctors to delivery their babies, instead of relying solely on midwives.<sup>74</sup> Allowing women to give birth outside of

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<sup>73</sup> Ansel Adams, “Nurse Aiko Hamaguchi, Mother Frances Yokoyama, Baby Fukomoto, Manzanar Relocation Center, California/ Photograph by Ansel Adams,” (Library of Congress, 1943), accessed March 6, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002697854/>.

<sup>74</sup> Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, 38.

a hospital was deemed “un-American” during the 1940s heightened fear of at-home births.<sup>75</sup> The “popular image of superior education” taught only to male doctors influenced pregnant women to trust men to deliver babies for the first time, leading them to hospitals, where physicians encouraged them to deliver babies.<sup>76</sup> Birthing away from the home also appealed to women because birth is messy and at the hospital, mothers did not have to clean stained sheets, towels, or blankets.<sup>77</sup> Nurses took on that responsibility, alleviating mothers’ concerns about cleanliness within the home. “By 1940, 55 percent of American’s births took place within hospitals; by 1950, hospital births had increased to 88 percent.”<sup>78</sup> Births in relocation centers between 1942 and 1945 followed this trend as the WRA encouraged interned Japanese American women to birth in camp hospitals, rather than birthing inside of their apartment blocks, even when that meant the women would labor and deliver their babies without family present.<sup>79</sup> The transition to motherhood while detained by the U.S. government added stress to Issei and Nisei women’s experiences. Learning to care for a newborn while relying on the camp staff for necessities limited Japanese American women’s ability to provide for themselves and their babies.

Camp officials were initially not prepared for the logistical challenges of providing care to birthing mothers. Fumiko Hayashida was the first woman to give birth from her block at Manzanar. She had given birth to two other children, but she had always labored and birthed her babies at her home. Hayashida explained that she walked

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<sup>75</sup> Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*.

<sup>76</sup> Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, 39.

<sup>77</sup> Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, 177.

<sup>78</sup> Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, 171.

<sup>79</sup> Myer, and Krug, “Administrative Highlights of the WRA Program United States Department of the Interior. War Relocation Authority.”

outside of her barrack and called for an Army truck for help when she realized her labor started. The Manzanar hospital was still under construction when she went into labor, so the soldiers drove her to a temporary hospital which consisted of a large tent, cots, police, and Japanese American volunteer nurses.<sup>80</sup> The police prevented the truck driver from leaving while asking why Hayashida needed army transportation and questioned their intended destination. Hayashida stressed that they had not left the Manzanar and did not intend to leave. The line of questioning, along with a line of patients ahead of her, postponed her treatment and added further stress to the birthing process.<sup>81</sup>

Limited medical supplies within camp hospitals also stressed hospital staff and birthing women, causing mothers to feel skeptical of their medical treatment. Nisei Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga remembered giving birth at the age of eighteen, next to six other laboring Issei and Nisei women at the Manzanar hospital. Herzig-Yoshinaga spoke with a tone of distrust when mentioning that the White Manzanar doctor, a man who the camp knew as an alcoholic, delivered her baby with equipment that seemed unlike what she expected to be standard practice in hospitals outside on the internment camps.<sup>82</sup> While recalling the strangeness of the equipment used, although not providing specific details about the equipment, Herzig-Yoshinaga mentioned that her father, whom she visited in the Jerome camp, died in the Jerome hospital due to heart issues and a lack of life saving equipment in 1943.<sup>83</sup> During the passing of her father, Herzig-Yoshinaga overheard his doctor complained to the nurses that the hospital's lack of medical and surgical

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<sup>80</sup> Hayashida, "Fumiko Hayashida Interview."

<sup>81</sup> Hayashida, "Fumiko Hayashida Interview."

<sup>82</sup> Herzig-Yoshinaga, Aiko, "Herzig-Yoshinaga Interview II." Interviewed by Tom Ikeda. July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Courtesy of the Densho Visual History Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 8, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-250-13/>.

<sup>83</sup> Herzig-Yoshinaga, "Herzig-Yoshinaga Interview II."

equipment. Japanese American doctor Masako Kusayanagi Goto Miura, who went by Dr. K during internment, graduated from University of California at Los Angeles medical school and served as a physician at Manzanar. She remembered the hospital supplies consisting of, “a hot plate, a wash basin, a few instruments, and gloves.”<sup>84</sup>

Hanako Hoshiyama Fukumoto, another pregnant Nisei woman at Manzanar, started bleeding vaginally when her labor started and walked to the camp hospital. At the time, her Japanese American husband worked in Oregon and her mother suffered from high blood pressure.<sup>85</sup> Hoshiyama Fukumoto’s father worked as a janitor at Manzanar’s hospital, but her father did not attend the birth of his grandson because both Japanese and US culture discouraged men, except for hospital staff, from witnessing births.<sup>86</sup> Also, complications during birth and a lack of family support led to Hoshiyama Fukumoto staying in the hospital for a month.<sup>87</sup> In some cases, but not all, “patients were transferred to hospitals outside the centers for suitable medical attention.”<sup>88</sup> Dentistry during internment lacked standard equipment, too. Former aid at Manzanar’s dental clinic, Mary Suzuki Ichino, learned how to care for patients on the job. She explained that the dental

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<sup>84</sup>Hashimoto, “Dr. Masako Kusayanagi Goto Miura, a Medical Doctor’s Camp Experience.”

<sup>85</sup> Hanako Hoshiyama Fukumoto, “Hanako Hoshiyama Fukumoto Interview,” interviewed by Kristen Luetkemeier, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Courtesy of the Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 8, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-136-1/>.

<sup>86</sup> Behruzi et al, “Facilitators and barriers in the humanization of childbirth practice in Japan,” May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2889847/>; Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*.

<sup>87</sup> Hanako Hoshiyama Fukumoto, “Hanako Hoshiyama Fukumoto Interview,” interviewed by Kristen Luetkemeier, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Courtesy of the Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 8, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-136-1/>.

<sup>88</sup> Philleo Nash, “Report: Second Quarterly Report, July 1 to September 30, 1942, War Relocation Authority, Not Dated, c. Late 1942.” (War Relocation Authority, Second Quarterly Report, 1942. Harry S. Truman Library Museum, National Archives), 33, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/report-second-quarterly-report-july-1-september-30-1942-war-relocation?documentid=NA&pagenumber=1>.

clinic was “primitive” because it did not have plumbing and commented on the staff’s terms for medical waste, like a pan of discarded teeth and blood being referred to as “the soup,” which another aid dumped outside once per day.<sup>89</sup> These situations legitimize Herzig-Yoshinaga’s, and other birthing mother’s, concerns about the quality of care they received.

Matsumoto’s research shows that, “a good number of Issei women, accustomed to long days of work inside and outside the home, found that the communally prepared meals and limited living quarters provided them with spare time.”<sup>90</sup> However, first time mothers and mothers who preferred to take charge of their baby’s nutritional intake resented the WRA’s restrictions of domestic independence. Many of the mothers emphasized how unsettling it made them feel to rely on the WRA rather than having the ability to respond to their babies’ nutritional and sanitary needs, because they believed that they, as mothers, were better suited to provide for their children. Rationing concerned mothers who were unable to breastfeed during internment. Because the WRA rationed cow milk, some mothers may have been unable to feed their babies entirely if the camp lost or lessened its food supply for the babies of detainees.<sup>91</sup> Fortunately, camps provided a low, but steady, supply of food for interned people until the government started shutting down the camps.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Mary Suzuki Ichino, “Mary Suzuki Interview II,” interviewed by Richard Potashin, December 3, 2008, courtesy of the Manzanar National Historic Site Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 5, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-manz-1-52-13/>.

<sup>90</sup>Matsumoto, “Japanese American Women during World War II,” 9.

<sup>91</sup> Yae Wada, “Yae Wada Interview,” Interviewed by Patricia Wakida, April 12, 2019, courtesy of the Densho Visual History Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 7, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-476-9/>.

<sup>92</sup> Myer and Krug, “Administrative Highlights of the WRA Program United States Department of the Interior. War Relocation Authority,” 13.

Additionally, Issei and Nisei women's partners could only provide minimal economic and emotional support to their families due to the constraints placed on them by internment work expectations, beginning with the WRA expecting "all able-bodied persons" to work.<sup>93</sup> By late September of 1942, only six months after President FDR's executive order 9066, the WRA had recruited 5,302 evacuees for group agricultural work, "mainly by representatives of the beet-sugar companies in collaboration with the United States Employment Service."<sup>94</sup> Even during meals, a time for familial bonding prior to internment, "mess halls encouraged family disunity as family members gradually began to eat separately; mothers with small children, fathers with other men."<sup>95</sup> After a year of internment, tension and concern increased between detained Issei and Nisei. With WWII ongoing and no end to internment in sight, women like Yea Wada tried to reconnect with their families and plan an escape from camp.

Mothers in Topaz prepared for an imagined scenario in which the U.S. government decided to execute a mass killing of interned people. Wada and other mothers in Topaz planned out locations to hide their children in case the government or the military lost interest in housing them and supplying them with food.<sup>96</sup> Wada and two of her pregnant friends made a pact with each other, ensuring that if one of the mothers got killed, the surviving mother, or mothers, would care for the orphaned children. Wada received five bottles of formula for her baby each day while she stayed in the hospital for roughly two weeks after the birth. Wada expressed her uncertainty to the Densho

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<sup>93</sup> Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II," 9.

<sup>94</sup> Nash, Philleo. "Report: Second Quarterly Report, July 1 to September 30, 1942, War Relocation Authority, Not Dated, c. Late 1942," 11.

<sup>95</sup> Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II," 8.

<sup>96</sup> Wada, "Yae Wada Interview."

interviewer when mentioning that the camps did not distribute calendars to the internees. Wada could not rely on support from her husband because he worked outside of Topaz. After being discharged from Topaz's hospital, Wada faced further difficulties when trying to keep her baby clean. She had to wash herself, the baby, and their clothes with a Lye soap available in the camp that burned their skin.<sup>97</sup> Wada's discontent and uncertainty convinced her to plan an escape and live with her unhoused husband because he worked outside of camp, and she was desperate for freedom. Wada accepted risking her life, her husband's, and her children's life to get out of interment, but the family never went through with the plan.<sup>98</sup>

The WRA facilitated community entertainment like baseball and softball, movie screenings, and camp classes to prevent internees from experiencing an overwhelming sense of hysteria, but motherhood limited interned Nisei women's potential to participate in camp activities.<sup>99</sup> Entertainment consumed by men, single women, and children was not easily as accessible, or as enticing, for mothers of newborns because they devoted their time to caring for their babies. Interned mothers rarely mention having had interest in the activities during their interviews, and when interviewers asked the women about entertainment, they responded by explaining that the stresses of caring for sick and malnourished newborns occupied their time. A mother formerly interned in Tule Lake, Yaeko Nakano, stated that the hospital staff did not allow her to leave the delivery room until ten days after her the birth of her baby. Her experience entailed her baby being

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid

<sup>98</sup> Wada, "Yae Wada Interview."

<sup>99</sup> Sugimoto, "Ann Sugimoto Interview."

taken away from her and only returned during feeding times.<sup>100</sup> Caring for a newborn did not get easier for Nakano after returning to her apartment block in Tule Lake. Her baby constantly cried so she carried him as often as she could. Nakano stressed about her baby's health and felt responsible for quieting him so that his cries would not bother the other internees, who had little insulation between the apartment rooms to muffle the noise. As Valerie Matsumoto mentioned, "even the smallest noises traveled freely from one end of the building to the other."<sup>101</sup> Nothing Nakano did consoled her baby and eventually she realized that the baby discomfort came from a lump on his belly button. After she took him to the hospital, the doctor determined that the baby had a hernia but did not offer any treatment and claimed that he could not operate on Nakano's son because of his age. The interview segment ends with Nakano saying that she found a penny and taped it to her son's belly button, but it is unclear if the issue ever got resolved.<sup>102</sup> Yae Wada's stresses about her own health and the baby's health multiplied when the doctor examined her daughter and discovered a heart murmur. The doctor instructed Wada to prevent her daughter from playing sports, since it could kill her. Wada made the decision to discourage the daughter as she got older but did not want to explain to the daughter that she had a health issue, expecting that it would limit her potential to live a happy life while growing up in internment.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Yaeko Nakano, "Yaeko Nakano - Hiroshi Nakano - Kenichi Nakano - Stanley Nakano Interview," interviewed by Tracy Lai, July 4, 1998, courtesy of the Densho Visual History Collection, available at Densho Digital Repository, accessed November 9, 2021, <https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-70-10/>.

<sup>101</sup> Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II," 8.

<sup>102</sup> Nakano, "Yaeko Nakano - Hiroshi Nakano - Kenichi Nakano - Stanley Nakano Interview."

<sup>103</sup> Wada, "Yae Wada Interview."

Even experienced mothers found it difficult to care for newborns as they divided their time and attention between multiple children. Fumiko Hayashida's devotion to her newborn led her to entrust other women in the camp to watch over her toddler daughter. For example, caring for a newborn and two young children consumed Hayashida's time and attention, so she, "did not have time to keep up with anything else going on in the camp."<sup>104</sup> This responsibility did not fall on her husband because societal expectation urged women to raise children, thus the toddler roamed Manzanar and frequently returned to her mother having been neglected and covered in sand, including on her face and in her mouth. The daughter also suffered from repeated high fevers. Fumiko Hayashida took her daughter to the camp hospital to ask why her daughter had fevers and insisted on eating sand, assuming that the toddler suffered from malnutrition, but the doctor's responded by telling Fumiko Hayashida that she should not be concerned as long as her daughter is alive, advising her to "wait it out" and assume that she would feel better after she finished teething.<sup>105</sup> Fumiko Hayashida had little time for anything other than raising her three children. Within a year of delivering her third baby at Manzanar, Hayashida became ill. She felt so exhausted that she could not mop the floor. Hayashida rarely felt sick, except during pregnancy, and her husband felt worried about her because she had always been "stronger than a horse."<sup>106</sup> When Hayashida visited the camp doctor, he told her that she needed a hysterectomy because she might have had a tumor, or tumors. Hayashida hesitated during the interview before saying that she never felt ill after the hysterectomy. Later in the interview, Hayashida confessed that prior to the

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<sup>104</sup> Hayashida, "Fumiko Hayashida Interview."

<sup>105</sup> Hayashida, "Fumiko Hayashida Interview."

<sup>106</sup> Ibid

hysterectomy, she agonized over the thought of having more babies and wondered, “when am I gonna stop?”<sup>107</sup> While none of the women interviewed explicitly mentioned doctors offering an option for sterilization, Theobald’s work expresses a tendency for the U.S. government to target and coerce relocated women into sterilization based on ethnicity, especially when the mother “already had several children.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid

<sup>108</sup> Theobald, *Reproduction on the Reservation*, 95.

## 5. CONCLUSION

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, “met only once with WRA Director Dillon Myer,” and did not apologize for the years-long detainment before dying on April 12, 1945.<sup>109</sup> The WRA closed Tule Lake, the final U.S. internment camp for Japanese and Japanese Americans in March of 1946.<sup>110</sup> In 1976, U.S. President Gerald Ford formally revoked Executive Order 9066 but the federal government did not formally apologize for WWII internment until 1988.<sup>111</sup> Norman Mineta, who went into interment at age ten, later went on to become a member of Congress and advocated for the passing of the Civil Liberties Act signed by President Regan in 1988, which gave reparations to people who had been in the camps.<sup>112</sup>

Thorough planning by the government and the War Relocation Authority in preparation for the forced evacuation and relocation of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans could have mitigated many of the stressed pregnant, birthing, and new mothers encountered during internment. However, interned Nisei mothers’ experiences, as told through oral histories, physicians’ accounts, and WRA documents show that WWII internment officials reacted to problems as they arose, rather than preventing issues related to reproduction before the WRA became responsible for over 120,000 interned people. Even when the WRA recognized malnutrition and insufficient healthcare practices within the camps, the WRA still did not address many of the mother’s concerns.

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<sup>109</sup> Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 245.; Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 250.

<sup>110</sup> Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 250.

<sup>111</sup> Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 251.

<sup>112</sup> Norman Mineta, Andrea Warren, and Monica Hesse, “Enemy Child: The Story of Norman Mineta,” (Library of Congress, November 19, 2019.) <https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-8963/>.

Poorly built relocation center barracks operated while understaffed and undersupplied on food, running water, and medical equipment. Interned nisei mothers also faced a heightened sense of stress, which caused them to abandon the Japanese term “shikata ga nai,” as the U.S. government failed to communicate their intentions for the interned, including whether or not their babies would be safe under the WRA’s care, nor did the government acutely express when internment would end, causing many interned mothers to endure extreme anxiety about the possibility of imminent danger.

Although the WRA allowed interned Issei and Nisei to experiment with community gatherings, like sports, movie showings, and offered classes for them to attend, many mothers concerned about their health and the health of their babies did not feel they had time to indulge in leisure activities. An implementation of reliable camp daycares may have given mothers a chance to relax, but the mothers who interviewed with Densho tended to seclude themselves with their newborns or ask other interned mothers for support. The WRA reluctantly made accommodations for pregnant women and mothers of newborns because the WRA prioritized the free public’s perception of internment over the experiences of the interned Issei and Nisei. The War Relocation Authority’s lack of genuine concern for the evacuees caused the interned to accumulate stresses about healthcare and nutrition that could have been avoided if the WRA had not limited food and medical supplies when the allocation of rationed items for internees equaled more than what the WRA distributed to Japanese Americans in their care.

The reality of federally determined internment, whether in the case of WWII Puerto Rico, mainland U.S. Native American reservations, or mainland WWII Japanese American Internment, is that the detained populations suffered on many accounts, and the

history of interned mothers provide scholars with a view of evacuation and relocation that cannot be accounted for if their experiences are neglected. Mothers carry the burden of trying to protect themselves as individuals and the lives of unborn children during pregnancy and birth.

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