Snapshots of Confinement: Memory and Materiality of Japanese Americans' World War II-era Photo Albums

Whitney J. Peterson
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd

Part of the Asian American Studies Commons, Museum Studies Commons, and the Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1518

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu,dig-commons@du.edu.
Snapshots of Confinement: Memory and Materiality of Japanese Americans’ World War II-era Photo Albums

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Whitney J. Peterson

November 2018

Advisor: Dr. Bonnie Clark
Abstract

The US government’s incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II denied over 120,000 people basic rights and civil liberties. Limits on owning cameras inflicted unique hardship as people were unable to photographically document their lives as they had before the war. My research focuses on photographs that people managed to take and acquire in the camps, investigating the role of snapshot photography in remembering and understanding World War II experiences of incarceration. The photo albums I researched are housed in museum collections at two former sites of confinement: Manzanar National Historic Site in the Eastern Sierra of California and the Amache Museum in southeastern Colorado. Through documenting album biographies, conducting a material analysis of the photographs, and interviewing album donors, this thesis examines the use and meaning of photographs as they have changed over time and in different contexts. It explores how everyday material objects illuminate the complexities of the human experience and how museums can best engage with them.

Key words: Photo Albums, Photography, Materiality, Japanese Americans, World War II
Acknowledgements

A special thank you to Bob Akaki, Rose Tanaka, Rosie Kakuuchi, Joyce Seippel, and Tami Kasamatsu for welcoming me into your homes and sharing with me you and your family’s life stories. While your photographs and stories were foundational to my research, they are instrumental in making sure this history and the people who experienced it are never forgotten.

This thesis could not have come to fruition without the opportunities I was offered as an employee working at Manzanar National Historic Site. I would like to thank the staff whose dedication to preserving and interpreting stories of Japanese American World War II incarceration goes above and beyond. In particular, I would like to thank Alisa Lynch, Mark Hachtmann, Patricia Biggs, and former Manzanar employee Kristen Luetkemeier for being great coworkers and helping get my research off the ground. I want to give a special thank you to Manzanar Park Ranger, friend, and fellow dictionary-lover, Rose Masters for all of your support. Thank you for filling my pages with red ink and always being up for a much-needed wilderness adventure.

Thank you to Dr. Bonnie Clark for providing me with the opportunity to continue my research of Japanese American World War II experiences, introducing me to the Amache and Granada communities, and illuminating the restorative power of collaborative research. To John Hopper and the Amache Preservation Society, keep up the amazing work, and thank you for welcoming me into your community and museum. Lastly, thanks to my family for always supporting me in my endeavors, even as they inevitably take me far from home.
# Table of Contents

1. Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
   1.1. A Note on Language .................................................................................................. 4
   1.2. Chapter Summaries ..................................................................................................... 4

2. Chapter 2: Background ........................................................................................................ 8
   2.1. Previous Research: Photography and WWII Incarceration ........................................ 8
   2.2. History of Japanese American Incarceration ............................................................. 11
       Japanese Immigration and American Communities Prior to World War II ............... 11
       Japanese American World War II Incarceration ......................................................... 13
       Photography During Japanese American World War II Incarceration ....................... 20
       The US Government’s Use and Control of Photography ............................................. 21
       Japanese Americans’ Access, Participation, and Use of Photography ......................... 26
       Post-War: Redress and Establishing Historic Sites ...................................................... 37
       Present-Day Preservation at Manzanar and Amache ................................................ 40

3. Chapter 3: Research Design: Theory, Methods, and Ethics ............................................. 45
   3.1. Theoretical Framework .............................................................................................. 45
       The Social and Material Lives of Objects .................................................................. 46
       Cultural Narrative and Memory ................................................................................. 49
   3.2. Research Questions .................................................................................................. 51
   3.3. Site Selection ........................................................................................................... 52
   3.4. Research Methods .................................................................................................... 53
       Archival Research ...................................................................................................... 53
       Participant Observation .............................................................................................. 54
       Semi-Structured Interviews ....................................................................................... 56
   3.5. Research Analysis .................................................................................................... 57
       Coding ........................................................................................................................ 57
       Album Biographies .................................................................................................... 58
       Field Notes ................................................................................................................ 58
   3.6. Photographic Histories and Methodological Ethics ..................................................... 58
       History of Photography and Visual Anthropology .................................................... 59
       Mitigating Ethical Concerns in My Research ............................................................... 71

4. Chapter 4: Album Biographies ............................................................................................ 76
   4.1. Katsumi Taniguchi’s Photo Album ............................................................................ 78
   4.2. Hatsume Akaki’s Photo Album ................................................................................ 85
   4.3. Rosie Kakuuchi’s Photo Album ............................................................................... 88
   4.4. Rose Tanaka’s Photo Album .................................................................................... 93
   4.5. Tami Kasamatsu’s Photo Album .............................................................................. 96

   5.1. Katsumi Taniguchi’s Photo Album ............................................................................ 101
   5.2. Rose Tanaka’s Photo Album .................................................................................... 104
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Hatsume Akaki’s Photo Album</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Tami Kasamatsu’s Photo Album</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Rosie Kakuuchi’s Photo Album</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Chapter 6: Album Conversations</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Rosie Kakuuchi</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Tami Kasamatsu</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Joyce Seippel</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Bob Akaki</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Rose Tanaka</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Chapter 7: The Social Lives of Photographs</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Photographs, Connection, and Group Formation</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family and Identity</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People Who have Passed Away</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camp Communities</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Heritage</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Chapter 8: Conclusion</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Digitization and Context</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Chapter 2

Figure 1: Girl being photographed at the Amache Photo Studio.......................... 34

Chapter 4

Figure 2: Katsumi Taniguchi’s photo album ........................................ 78
Figure 3: The front cover of Joyce Seippel's book of Katsumi Taniguchi's photographs ................................................................. 79
Figure 4: The inside of Joyce Seippel's photo book .......................... 79
Figure 5: A photograph of Katsumi Taniguchi and his father at Manzanar ....... 81
Figure 6: Hatsume Akaki's photo album ..................................................... 85
Figure 7: Bag of photo corners in Hatsume Akaki's album ...................... 86
Figure 8: Rosie Kakuuchi's album pages showing that they came from other albums ..................................................................................... 92
Figure 9: One of Rose Tanaka's album pages in an archival sleeve .......... 93
Figure 10: A printout of a page in Tami Kasamatsu's photo album ........ 96

Chapter 5

Figure 11: Photograph on the first page of Katsumi Taniguchi's photo album .. 101
Figure 12: Pages from Katsumi Taniguchi's photo album showing his creative arrangement of photographs and captions ........................................ 102
Figure 13: Page in Katsumi Taniguchi's album showing captions on the bottom of the photograph .................................................................................. 102
Figure 14: Page from Rose Tanaka's photo album ...................................... 104
Figure 15: Photograph in Rose Tanaka's album showing a photograph signed "Rabbit" .................................................................................................................. 105
Figure 16: Photograph in Rose Tanaka's album showing signatures on the back ................................................................................................. 106
Figure 17: Photograph in Rose Tanaka's album showing a note written on the back ................................................................................................. 106
Figure 18: Photographs in Rose Tanaka's album with inside jokes on the back 107
Figure 19: The backs of photographs in Rose Tanaka's album showing notes about the people and their graduation year .............................................. 108
Figure 20: Photographs in Rose Tanaka's album showing unique captions ...... 109
Figure 21: Back of photographs in Rose Tanaka's album showing stamps ...... 109
Figure 22: Photograph in Rose Tanaka's album with stylized border .......... 110
Figure 23: Backs of photographs in Hatsume Akaki's album showing stamps on the back ......................................................................................... 111
Figure 24: Photograph in Hatsume Akaki's album that came from Nakako Studio ................................................................................................. 111
Figure 25: Photograph in Hatsume Akaki's album with signatures on the back 112
Figure 26: Photographs in Hatsume Akaki's album showing notes and signatures on the front ......................................................................................... 112
Figure 27: Document in Hatsume Akaki's album made in the Amache silk screen shop with a stamp from the “Granada WRA Police Dept.” ........................ 113
Figure 28: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu's album taken both outside and in a studio................................................................................................................................. 114
Figure 29: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu's album showing different border styles .......................................................................................................................... 115
Figure 30: Front of Rosie Kakuuchi's album titles "Manzaknights"........................................ 117
Figure 31: Photographs in Rosie Kakuuchi's album showing the diversity of captions written by Rosie and her family members ........................................................................ 119
Figure 32: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi's album showing a caption written by her sister Ruby's former high school teacher ................................................................. 120
Figure 34: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi's album showing paper discoloration ........................................................................................................................................... 121
Figure 33: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi's album with a hole likely made by a tack on the top..................................................................................................................... 121
Figure 35: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi's album of Rosie performing in a play that has Japanese writing under it ........................................................................................ 121
Figure 36: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi's album that is a copy of an official government photograph .................................................................................................. 122

Chapter 6
Figure 37: Photographs in Rosie Kakuuchi's album showing different social groups in camp including baseball teams and co-workers (6 images)............................... 125
Figure 38: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi's album showing people who lived near her in camp (2 images)........................................................................................................ 130
Figure 39: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi's album where the landscape shaped her narratives of life at Manzanar (2 images)........................................................................ 131
Figure 40: Photographs in Rosie Kakuuchi's album that relate to narratives of change over time (3 images)................................................................................................. 133
Figure 41: Photographs in Rosie Kakuuchi's album of people who have passed away (7 images).................................................................................................................................... 135
Figure 42: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi's album related to Manzanar reunions ................................................................................................................................. 139

Figure 43: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu's album related to social groups in camp including her coworkers at the hospital and pre-war communities (4 images) .................................................................................................................. 141
Figure 44: Photograph in Tami Kasamatsu's album who lived in her block ...... 145
Figure 45: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu's album of landscapes that influenced her experiences at Manzanar during the war and today (5 images).......................... 147
Figure 46: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu's album showing American and Japanese cultural practices (2 images).................................................................................. 151
Figure 47: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu's album related to change over time and people leaving and coming back to camp (6 images).............................................. 153
Figure 48: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu's album of people who have since passed away (5 images) ....................................................................................................... 158
Figure 49: Photographs in Joyce Seippel's book related to social groups in Katsumi Taniguchi’s album and Joyce’s relationship to the groups (5 images) 162
Figure 50: Photographs in Joyce Seippel's book related to family relationships (2 images) .......................... 165
Figure 51: Photographs in Joyce Seippel's album related to her experiences tied to the Manzanar landscape .......................................................... 167
Figure 52: Photograph in Joyce Seippel's photo book that sparked stories about Katsumi's time in the military ................................................. 168
Figure 53: A photograph in Joyce Seippel's book showing one of the guard towers ............................................ 169
Figure 54: Photographs in Hatsume Akaki's album where Bob tried to identify people (2 images) ................................................................. 170
Figure 55: Photographs in Hatsume Akaki's album in which he tried to identify places in the photographs (2 images) ............................................. 171
Figure 56: Photograph in Hatsume Akaki's album showing her coworkers at the Amache Co-op .......................................................... 173
Figure 57: Photograph in Hatsume Akaki's album with Japanese writing on it. 175
Figure 58: Photograph that Bob Akaki found published in a Denver Post article showing his aunts at the Granada train station .................. 176
Figure 59: Photograph in Rose Tanaka's album showing her friend Ralph Lazo 178
Figure 60: Rose Tanaka's books and photographs she uses to talk to people about her experiences during World War II and the injustices perpetuated by the US government .......................................................... 179
Figure 61: Photographs in books that remind Rose Tanaka of the injustices people experienced during World War II (4 images) .............. 180
Figure 62: Photographs in Rose Tanaka's book that show her family, friends, and different community organizations and activities (3 images) .......................................................... 184
Figure 63: Photographs in Rose Tanaka's yearbook that demonstrate community resilience (4 images) ................................................. 187
Figure 64: Rose Tanaka's photograph that she keeps in her apartment showing the brass band she was part of at Manzanar .......................... 190
Figure 65: Rose Tanaka's photograph of her grandchildren visiting Manzanar NHS .......................................................... 191

Chapter 7

Figure 66: Government photograph showing Rosie Kakuuchi playing baseball with the photographer's caption ............................................. 217
Figure 67: Government-produced photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi's photo album with her own captions .................................................. 217
Chapter 1: Introduction

Among the thousands of archival pages that document the lives of over 120,000 Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II, the words of a mother confined in the isolated California desert mourn the personal loss of life without a camera.

“Here our children are getting older, day by day. And once their childhood is gone, nothing on this earth can bring it back, and if we have no mementos of their growth, we feel cheated and a little bitter to think that just a snapshot now and then, even if it was taken in a ‘concentration camp,’ is better than nothing at all” (Alinder 2012, 94).

These words demonstrate how snapshot photographs serve a purpose beyond visually capturing a moment in a camera viewfinder. They are mementos that document personal experiences and family histories, material memories that for a period of time were denied to those of Japanese ancestry simply because of their ancestry. This thesis investigates visual material culture that Japanese Americans produced during this time and what it tells us about this history and how camp experiences are remembered today.

My research is centered on photographs that incarcerees managed to create or acquire in the World War II camps and subsequently compile in photo albums. While the albums are important family keepsakes, they are also useful for the museums that preserve them in their collections, providing unique insight into experiences of Japanese American World War II incarceration. Of the ten camps where the US government
confined Japanese Americans, I focus on two that are managed and maintained today: Manzanar in the Eastern Sierra of California and Amache in southeastern Colorado. The two museums where I conducted research of photo albums are Manzanar National Historic Site (NHS) and the Amache Museum. The context of the albums in the lives of album donors guides the central approach of my analysis. Through research of photo album biographies, material analysis of the photo albums, and interviews with album donors, the following pages explore photographic meaning and use. Through studying photographs as objects of material culture, I investigate their uses and meanings as they have changed over time and in different contexts. Utilizing these material traces, I explore how these photographs are part of the ways people mediate relationships with the world around them, negotiating the past through their present lives.

The year I began my research, 2017, marked the 75th anniversary of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s signing of Executive Order 9066 that made the US government’s World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans possible. In addition to this anniversary, these historic events have gained significant public attention as political rhetoric and policies towards minorities echo the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II. By investigating snapshot photography in photo albums, a type of visual representation that people often take for granted, my research illuminates the agency of seemingly everyday objects and what their contextualized narratives say about those whose identities are under siege. My thesis research examines a time when through a lens of discrimination and fear, people in power inflicted hardship on a population with already limited access to political representation. Through the present-day context of
photo albums and their histories, this thesis highlights the social role of photographs that
people often take for granted. While photographs have the ability to provide insight into
the past, they are also part of present-day social networks that influence how people
understand themselves and their communities.

My ideas for this thesis stem from my own experiences working at Manzanar
National Historic Site. A major project that I undertook during my time there was doing
research and analysis of their historic image collection. Through this project, I had the
opportunity of seeing thousands of photographs of Japanese American World War II
incarceration. These included both government-produced photographs as well as images
that Japanese Americans took while incarcerated at Manzanar.

In addition to my work with their photograph collection, I had the opportunity to
meet and interview people who were confined at Manzanar and other camps during
World War II. Their stories about the rupture it caused for their families and the
resiliency of camp communities significantly impacted the way I connected with this
history. Much of my work involved talking with visitors to the site, and through these
experiences, I saw the power of a place that provides the rare opportunity to talk about
historic injustices and how prejudice and discrimination are still firmly rooted in the
everyday lives of people around the world today.

My research was also shaped by my experiences as part of the University of
Denver’s Amache Research Project, led by Dr. Bonnie Clark. Through my involvement
with the project, I had the opportunity to work in the Amache Museum during the
summer of 2018. I was able to spend time working with people who have family ties to
the site and history of incarceration. Through this process, I saw how collaborative research with stakeholder communities addresses power imbalance between researchers and the researched contributing to more nuanced and ethical research.

These experiences were instrumental to the formation and direction of my work presented in the following pages. Although my research is focused on understanding the role of photo albums, another aim is to provide a platform for stories of Japanese American World War II incarceration and the sites and museums that preserve and interpret these histories. This thesis and interview transcripts will be available at these sites.

**A Note on Language**

Debates continue regarding the language used to discuss the places and experiences of Japanese American World War II incarceration (Daniels 2008; Densho 2017; Japanese American Citizens League 2013). Throughout this proposal I will use the words confinement and incarceration interchangeably. When I use the word “camp” to describe the places where the US government confined Japanese Americans, it is with the understanding that they were isolated places that through their function, construction, and administration denied people their basic civil liberties and human rights.

**Chapter Summaries**

In Chapter 2, I discuss previous research and the historical background that provides the context for my work. This background includes the history of Japanese American communities, the events of their World War II incarceration, and post-war efforts to preserve this history and sites of confinement. I also present original historical
research about government policy and Japanese Americans’ use of photography in Amache and Manzanar. This historical background provides the context in which Japanese Americans created and acquired photographs in the camps. It is particularly important to my research in shedding light on the power dynamics that influenced the creation of the photographic record of Japanese American World War II incarceration.

In Chapter 3, I discuss how the history of anthropological thought, the development of photography, and ethics surrounding images of World War II Japanese American incarceration have shaped my research. I first outline my theoretical framework, discussing anthropological theories and those of other influential scholars interested in materiality, social networks, cultural narrative, and memory. This is followed by a discussion of my research questions, process of site selection, research methods, and research analysis. I then take a critical look at the historical development of photography and visual anthropology, investigating histories of thought and practice and how these contextualize and inform my research. Lastly, I discuss the ethics associated with the production and use of photographs of Japanese American World War II incarceration and how these ethical concerns lay the groundwork for my research.

In Chapter 4, I present photo album biographies based on my interviews with album donors. Following Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff’s work on studying historical trajectories of objects, I present historical information about the lives of the photo albums including how people have used and modified them. These histories contribute to a better understanding of how photo albums have changed over time and in different contexts, shedding light on the significance of photographs in people’s lives.
Chapter 5 presents my second set of research results where I conducted a material analysis of each photo album. This section highlights the importance of observing a photograph not only in terms of what a visual image can tell us, but the information that its material reveals. This kind of analysis allowed me to collect details about photographic production and use that I was not able to acquire through interviews. I present an analysis of each of the albums separately, paying particular attention to markings and modifications.

Chapter 6 is the last section of my research results. In this chapter, I present an analysis of conversations I had with album donors, identifying common themes associated with specific photographs. This information is crucial to my research, because it investigates the narrative role of photographs from the perspectives of Japanese American donors, addressing issues of interpretation and representation. I organized my analysis by my conversations with each person and subsequently by themes that I identified through analyzing them.

In Chapter 7, I discuss my findings presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Here, I argue that photographs are not simply static visual images that reveal information, but they are part of social networks, mediating relationships and shaping how people understand themselves and their place in the world. In particular, I explore how photographs are integral to processes of group formation related to family, identity, people who have passed away, camp communities, heritage, and history.

Lastly, in Chapter 8, I reflect on my research and explore how it contributes to asking more nuanced questions about understanding and using photographs of Japanese
American WWII incarceration. As these photographs increasingly become part of digital landscapes that provide more public access to visual representations of experiences of incarceration, I address concerns about context. Finally, I present recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2: Background

My research of photography of Japanese American WWII incarceration is founded on decades of work by other researchers, scholars, and individuals who have shared their community and personal family experiences from this time. In the following chapter, I provide an overview of previous research that is foundational to the work I have done. Utilizing this knowledge and my own investigation of primary documents, the rest of the chapter provides an overview of the history of Japanese American WWII incarceration and the use and production of snapshot photography in the camps. While there is a significant body of work that covers the history of the incarceration as well as focused research on government-produced images of this event, I have compiled much of the information regarding vocational photography in the camps for the first time. This historical framework is crucial to my research, as the context of where the photographs came from is instrumental to how photo albums have changed and been reinterpreted in different contexts over time.

Previous Research: Photography and WWII Incarceration

Research, discussion, and education about Japanese American World War II incarceration has become more prominent in recent decades. As photographs are often an integral part of how this history is preserved and told, a number of researchers have focused their scholarly attention on photography of the time. Studies related to government photography of the World War II incarceration are important for my
research, because these photographs are part of the photo album in my research, and the context of their production is integral to understanding power dynamics of the time.

While there has been limited research of Japanese Americans’ snapshot photography in the camps, a number of people in Japanese American communities have utilized these images to tell personal stories. In 1996, Professor Masumi Hayashi curated an exhibit at the Cleveland State University Art Gallery titled *The Family Album*. An online component of the exhibit displays album photographs of seven Japanese American individuals incarcerated during World War II (Hayashi 1996). Another project related to photographs of the camps is a 1988 film titled *Family Gathering* created by Lise Yasui. Throughout the film she utilizes a family photo album to investigate and understand her own World War II family history (Yasui 1988). Lastly, in the book *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts*, Kirsten Emiko McAllister utilizes family photographs of Japanese Canadian World War II incarceration found in an archive to reflect on her family’s personal history (McAllister 2006).

The book *Colors of Confinement* edited by Eric Muller presents vibrant color Kodachrome photographs taken by a Japanese American man, Bill Manbo, at one of the camps, Heart Mountain, in Wyoming. In addition to the photographs, the book contains insightful commentary by a diverse set of contributors regarding the images and historical circumstances in which photographs were created.

Although not specifically of World War II-era Japanese American photography, Richard Chalfen’s book *Turning Leaves*, focuses on Japanese Americans’ family photo albums. Through interviewing the creators of the albums, he investigates major themes in
the images. While the photographs and personal narratives presented in the book cover a significantly long time, spanning back to early immigration in the late 1800s, the period of incarceration is missing from the photo albums and therefore not included in Chalfen’s analysis (Chalfen 1991).

A number of scholarly works about professional and government photography of this time provide insight into the role of photography during the forced incarceration. A newer publication titled *Un-American* investigates the stories behind the images. The authors tracked down many of the people in government and professional photography of the incarceration period, contextualizing the images with their stories (Cahan and Williams 2016). Jasmine Alinder’s comprehensive study, *Moving Images*, looks at professional photographs taken both by government officials, independent photographers, as well as professional Japanese American photographers. Her analysis critically engages with photography’s role in negotiating ideas of citizenship and race when these identities seemingly came into conflict with one another.

A number of scholars have researched specific photographers from this time. These include Linda Gordon’s book *Impounded* about government photographer Dorothea Lange, Lane Hirabayashi’s book *Japanese American Resettlement through the Lens* about Japanese American government photographer Hikaru Carl Iwasaki, and Ansel Adams’ book of Manzanar photography titled *Born Free and Equal* edited and expanded upon by Wynne Benti, among others.

In addition to these works, the extensive research that people have undertaken regarding the history of Japanese American WWII incarceration has been instrumental in
forming the goals of my research and my knowledge of this period in American history. I am particularly grateful to the Japanese Americans who have shared their own research and stories of their experiences of World War II incarceration. These stories have influenced my desire to know more about how people continue to be resilient in the face of hardship.

**History of Japanese American Incarceration**

*Japanese Immigration and American Communities Prior to World War II*

Today’s Japanese Americans are part of a relatively recent movement of immigration. Japanese immigrants first came to Hawaii and the United States in the late 19th century, slowly establishing themselves on the mainland West Coast after a more significant migration to Hawaii. They organized schools, businesses, religious institutions, and community organizations, maintaining cultural ties to Japan while simultaneously engaging in common practices of their adopted homeland. Japanese American communities grew as the first-generation Japanese diaspora known as *Issei* established families and had children. US law prohibited *Issei* from becoming naturalized citizens until after World War II. Second generation Japanese Americans, or *Nisei*, were the first to become US citizens of Japanese descent. *Nisei* that grew up in the US, and a segment of this population that studied in Japan known as *Kibei*, were forced to navigate their responsibilities of citizenship and the cultural complexities that came along with their status (Ishizuka 2006, 6).

The culmination of the US government’s decision to incarcerate Japanese Americans during World War II was influenced by a century of growing anti-Asian
sentiment and discrimination in the United States. This sentiment is perhaps most visible in the series of exclusionary laws that limited the rights of Asian Americans through strictly controlling their abilities to become citizens, and therefore active members in the US democratic system. The Naturalization Act of 1790 explicitly limited the ability to become a naturalized citizen to “any alien, being a free white person.” As Chinese immigration significantly increased in the middle of the 19th century, anti-Asian sentiment grew (Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) 1983, 29). Through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the government prohibited the naturalization of people of Japanese descent (Unrau 1996, Chapter 1). As Japanese immigrants came to the United States at the end of 19th century, discriminatory practices towards Chinese were extended to them. While a small number of Japanese immigrants were granted citizenship, the 1922 US Supreme Court case, Ozawa Vs. United States, ended this practice and explicitly prohibited the naturalization of people of Asian ancestry (Irons 1983, 12).

Heightened discrimination against people of Japanese descent in the United States influenced the establishment of a “Gentleman's Agreement” between the US and Japan which denied new immigration of male Japanese laborers, but had a loophole permitting their family members entry into the US. Many people of Japanese descent came to the United States under this agreement from 1908 to 1924, many as “picture brides” resulting from arranged marriages between women in Japan and men in the United States. Revisions of US law in 1924 explicitly prohibited further immigration of people of Japanese descent, remaining in place until after World War II (CWRIC 1983, 29). It was

Legal restrictions that influenced Japanese Americans’ abilities to participate in American life extended beyond controls of citizenship status. Many states passed laws that prohibited people of Asian descent who were not US citizens from owning land and marrying people considered white, influencing the formation of Japanese American communities. Despite these restrictions, Japanese Americans established numerous prosperous communities along the West Coast, contributing to many economic sectors. The 1940 US census lists a total of 125,947 people of Japanese descent in the United States. Roughly 63 percent of those were born in the United States and were therefore US citizens, while the 37 percent who were foreign born living in the US were not eligible for citizenship (Bureau of the Census 1943, 516).

**Japanese American World War II Incarceration**

Historically informed social relationships between communities with established power and marginalized groups influenced Japanese Americans’ expressions of various cultural practices and the degree of participation in particular American institutions. The combination of unique cultural practices of Japanese American communities and a history of anti-Asian sentiment provided a hotbed for hostility as Japan became a clear enemy of the United States. With increasingly volatile global relations and fear of war, racialized local interactions became fodder for the US government’s justification for the incarceration of Japanese Americans.
Military officials cited common characteristics of Japanese American communities as evidence against them, when in reality these characteristics were likely influenced largely by the history of discriminatory policies aimed at people of Asian ancestry. A consistent argument for the incarceration of Japanese Americans was their vicinity to sensitive areas along the coast, such as major transportation hubs. Another justification was that Japanese Americans tended to live in communities mostly comprised of other Japanese Americans. In a letter to the Chief of Staff of the US Army, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt writes, “The continued presence of a large, unassimilated, tightly knit racial group, along a frontier vulnerable to attack constituted a menace which had to be dealt with” (DeWitt 1943, ix).

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, granting power to the Western Defense Command to remove “any and all persons” deemed necessary for national security from prescribed military areas (Executive Order No. 9066, 1942). By the spring of 1942, the federal government had publicly singled out people of Japanese ancestry regardless of citizenship or any other individual quality as a threat to national security. World War I veterans along with orphaned children were among the more than 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast forced to leave their homes and livelihoods only to be confined in remote army-style camps. The narratives perpetuated by various branches of the US government regarding policy towards Japanese Americans were riddled with contradiction. Military personnel justified the incarceration stating that the “very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a
disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken” (Western Defense Command and Fourth Army 1942, 34).

The process of forcibly removing and incarcerating over 120,000 people from the Military Exclusion Zone on the West Coast was a massive undertaking. Throughout the course of the war, the majority of Japanese Americans were forced to move through multiple sites of confinement. While the government primarily incarcerated people in ten camps, there were at least 69 sites associated with the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II (Densho 2008). Multiple branches and agencies of the US government administered, managed, and facilitated the process. The bureaucracy involved often led to confusion and uncertainty, not only for individuals directly involved in operating the camps, but most significantly for the thousands of Japanese Americans whose lives were directly impacted by their decisions (Kashima 2004, 7). The primary entity that managed the ten largest camps throughout the war was the civilian run War Relocation Authority (WRA) eventually placed under the umbrella of the Department of Interior.

The major sites where the government confined Japanese Americans were most often officially referred to as War Relocation Centers. Amache and Manzanar were two of the ten War Relocation Centers where Japanese Americans were confined. Before living in these more permanent camps, Japanese Americans were forced to live in what the government called Assembly Centers. The army hastily constructed these camps in temporary facilities such as horse tracks and fair grounds. Many families also had relatives or friends, often people who were leaders in their communities or had more
significant ties to Japan, who were sent to Justice Department internment camps immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and throughout the war. For many families this meant separation from people who were heads of the household and community leaders for part or sometimes the entire duration of the war.

While each of the ten camps varied to a degree in construction and administration, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed them as military-style camps where people lived in communal barracks with almost no privacy. None of the camps were fully capable of housing the diversity of the Japanese American communities forced to live there, particularly failing to accommodate people with specific needs such as infants, the elderly, and disabled. All the sites were in remote areas with extreme weather conditions, but many Japanese Americans innovatively transformed their surroundings, making the best of their situation. The Japanese word *gaman* meaning “enduring what seems unbearable with dignity and grace” is often used as a guiding idea of how people carried out their lives in the camps, using what little they had to transform their surroundings (Hirasuna 2005). With a huge portion of the confined population having experience in agriculture and gardening, people at all of the camps cultivated extensive agricultural fields, crafted ornamental gardens, and transformed the landscape. All of the camps developed communities, forming contained cities with significantly larger populations relative to the surrounding rural areas. Each camp had mess halls, schools, a hospital, newspaper, and community co-op. Many Japanese Americans had jobs or were involved in community organizations such as camp government, social clubs, musical groups, planning committees, and sports teams.
The WRA pushed Japanese Americans in the camps to take charge in organizing a community. While many Japanese Americans stepped in as leaders even before the government initiative, differing political opinions divided groups about how they should live their lives as the government continued to infringe upon their basic civil rights. While some felt that accommodating government orders and policy was part of their contribution to the war effort, others felt that it was their democratic duty to resist further violations of the constitution. As some people were politically motivated, thousands of others were primarily concerned with finding ways to carry on with their lives and plan for the uncertain future.

Each person confined in the camps has unique stories and perspectives. While there is no singular narrative that tells the history of Japanese American World War II incarceration, there are commonalities in people's memories, particularly with people who were of similar ages and backgrounds. One of the most tumultuous experiences that people faced in all the camps was answering a questionnaire commonly referred to as the “loyalty questionnaire.” People’s answers to two questions determined if they were loyal to the United States in the eyes of the government. The nature and fallout of the questionnaire caused significant turmoil throughout the camps. Responses to the questionnaire initiated a further mass movement of people in 1943 and 1944 as the government sent those deemed “disloyal” to the Tule Lake War Relocation Center in California, which then also became a Segregation Center. Thousands of people who had been at the Tule Lake camp before the segregation were transferred to other sites of confinement including Amache and Manzanar.
The implementation of the questionnaire sped up the process of resettling people outside of the camps and led to reinstituting the draft for Japanese Americans. Roughly 33,000 people of Japanese ancestry served in the military throughout World War II, mostly in segregated units, many of them joining voluntarily. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, an all Japanese American unit, is often cited as the most highly decorated unit for its size and time in combat in US military history (Densho 2018).

While people confined in the camps had shared some similar experiences, unique communities developed at Amache and Manzanar. The US Army constructed the Granada War Relocation Center, more commonly known by its postal designation Amache, near the small town of Granada in the high plains of southeastern Colorado (Clark 2015). While Amache was the smallest of the ten camps, it still constituted a major migration of people to a particularly rural area of Colorado. At its peak the camp confined 7,318 people, and over the course of the three years that the camp was open roughly 10,000 people passed through the site (Otto 2009, 126). A barbed wire fence surrounded the one-square-mile boundary of the camp with six guard towers on the perimeter manned by armed soldiers for part of the time that the camp was in operation (Burton 1999).

Most of the people confined at Amache were from three counties in California: Los Angeles, Merced, and Santa Clara. Unlike Manzanar, Amache was outside of the area designated the Military Exclusion Zone, and people were allowed to leave the camp and visit the nearby town of Granada. Amache was the only site of Japanese American confinement that had a silk screen shop. It produced posters, calendars, and invitations
used internally at the camp, in addition to making over 250,000 posters for the US Navy (Shew 2014).

Similar to Amache and the rest of the camps, Manzanar was built in a rural, isolated area. The army constructed the camp at the site of an abandoned orchard community in the high desert in California. Manzanar is often easy to visually distinguish from the other camps in photographs because of its proximity to the Sierra Nevada mountains which protrude abruptly from the desert floor fewer than 5 miles west of where the camp was constructed. Manzanar had a larger population than Amache, confining just over 10,000 people at its capacity. Over the three-and-a-half years of its operation, more than 11,000 people were confined at the site.

Unlike Amache, Manzanar was both an Assembly Center and a War Relocation Center meaning almost all of the people sent to Manzanar did not have to go to another camp first. Most of the population came from Los Angeles, while smaller portions of the population came from Sacramento, California and Bainbridge Island, Washington. Because Manzanar was the first center established, Japanese Americans who had lived near what the government considered particularly sensitive military areas were sent there. Manzanar was the only camp that housed orphaned children. It was also the only camp to host a research program where Japanese American scientists successfully developed new forms of rubber from the desert plant guayule.

The incarceration of Japanese Americans did not take place fully uncontested. Many people, including those confined, spoke out against the mass incarceration. Numerous cases opposing the incarceration made it to the US Supreme Court, but the
court continuously upheld the program. Finally, in 1944, the court ruled in *Ex parte Mitsuye Endo* that “citizens who are concededly loyal” could not be confined in camps.

While this decision initiated the end of the forced incarceration of Japanese Americans, it did not ultimately address the foundational constitutional concerns of denying thousands of citizens the right to due process or the ethical considerations of detaining people based solely on their race. In June 1945, Eugene Rostow, a professor at Yale Law School, wrote about the dangerous implications of the incarceration and the failure of the courts to directly address it.

“It has established a precedent which may well be used to encourage attacks on the civil rights of citizens and aliens, and may make it possible for some of those attacks to succeed. It will give aid to reactionary political programs which use social division and racial prejudice as tools for conquering power” (Rostow 1945, 491).

**Photography During Japanese American World War II Incarceration**

The contradiction and complexity of the world Japanese Americans were forced to navigate during World War II is evident when examining the role of photography. While the US government’s ban on cameras and photography limited people's civil liberties, the criminalization of engaging in photography was one of the many ways that Japanese Americans’ embodied identities were used as evidence against them. The historical context of how people were not only limited in their ability to take and acquire photographs, but also how people navigated these power dynamics in order to maintain and carry out their lives, is crucial for the understanding where the photo albums in my research originated.
There are numerous studies of professional and government photography of this time, but few people have framed these images directly within the context of Japanese American experiences. Rather than provide a comprehensive history of all photography of the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans, I will focus on the ways in which photographs, professional and vocational, intersected with people’s daily lives in the camps. As there has been limited historical analysis of how the official government policy related to Japanese Americans’ access and use of photography, I will provide evidence of the multiplicity of ways people at Amache and Manzanar engaged in taking, acquiring, and interacting with photographs while incarcerated.

**The US Government’s Use and Control of Photography**

Regulation and policy related to how the US government used and controlled photography during the incarceration greatly influenced how Japanese Americans were able to participate in visually documenting their lives during this period. While government rhetoric and policy criminalized Japanese Americans with cameras, they simultaneously used photography as a means of surveillance, documentation, and propaganda. Government photography and the rhetoric surrounding these actions affected people's daily lives in the camps and the public perception of Japanese Americans’ status.

Like many Americans, Japanese Americans owned and used cameras prior to World War II, but overnight this act of possessing a camera changed from being rather ordinary to presenting a threat. Just as the government justified Japanese Americans’ untrustworthiness based on simple facts of their everyday lives, such as where they lived and the community organizations they were part of, their possession of cameras was used
as further evidence that they were engaged in suspicious activity. The criminalization of owning and using cameras influenced the complexity of ways in which Japanese Americans were forced to navigate the meaning and use of images. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, photographs became an increasingly fraught means of representation for Japanese Americans.

Immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the FBI conducted raids on Japanese American households, arresting over 1,000 prominent community members in a matter of weeks. For fear of being associated with Japan, people destroyed family heirlooms such as clothing, keepsakes, and photographs associated with their heritage (Alinder 2009, 24). The federal government declared cameras in the hands of *Issei* a threat, and in January 1942 ordered all West Coast Japanese aliens to turn over cameras and other items considered contraband. By May of that year, the FBI had seized 2,014 cameras along with guns, ammunition, dynamite, and radios. The Justice Department stated, “We have not found a camera which we have reason to believe was used in espionage” (CWRIC 1983, 88). Nonetheless, this official ban on cameras remained until late 1942, well into the time Japanese Americans had been forced into the camps and had begun to establish a sense of normality in their new lives of confinement (Muller 2012, 85).

One of ways the US government first used photography during this time was as surveillance. Presidential Proclamation No. 2537 issued on January 14, 1942 ordered all enemy aliens 14 years or older to register their status. Japanese Americans were instructed to provide a photograph of themselves for their registration card (War
Relocation Authority 1946, 11). The government's use of photography as a means of keeping track of Japanese Americans continued beyond the initial period of forced evacuation. Numerous examples in the archives indicate that as people left the camps, they were forced to carry an identification card with them (Manzanar Free Press April 10, 1943). An article in the Granada Pioneer, the Amache camp newspaper, instructs all Japanese Americans to have their photograph taken at a designated time in their residential blocks “whether or not they plan to leave the center in the near future” (Granada Pioneer May 12, 1943). These aspects of surveillance were unsettling for many Japanese Americans. Dennis Bambauer, an orphaned child confined at Manzanar, remembers a warning a soldier gave him when he went to get fingerprinted before leaving the camp. The soldier said, “This is in case you do anything bad, we'll be able to catch you.” Reflecting on his experience, Dennis recalled, “That was a traumatic experience for me, and I'm sure that the soldier didn't mean anything of that, but it really knocked me for a loop” (Manzanar National Historic Site 2002).

In addition to surveillance, the government took over the role of photographically documenting Japanese Americans’ lives by establishing the WRA Photographic Section (WRAPS). While the intentions of WRA Photographic Section was generally to document and later to foster the peaceful transition of Japanese Americans back into American life, portraying them in a neutral or positive light, the incarcerated population had little say in the matter (Hirabayashi 2009, 2). Photography was one of many facets in which Japanese Americans suddenly found their personal lives under a magnifying glass. WRA director Dillon S. Myer wrote in his final report, “The West Coast people of
Japanese descent were subjected throughout the course of the war to a mass probing and surveillance process which was almost certainly without parallel in American history” (War Relocation Authority 1946, 44).

The visual narratives presented by the WRA Photographic Section changed over time in relation to the WRA’s mission, often tasked with balancing contradictory messages. Without undermining the federal decision to incarcerate US citizens, it was simultaneously charged with portraying the confined Japanese American population as loyal. As part of a major effort to close the camps and resettle Japanese Americans throughout the country, WRAPS photographers took pictures of people who had already resettled outside the camps, often accompanying the images with long narratives about their experiences of success. Many of these images were displayed in the camps in hopes it would promote people to leave and resettle elsewhere in the United States. Black and white WRA photographs were displayed and shown to Japanese Americans at Amache through Block Managers, the Relocation Program Office, and the Relocation Committee (McClelland 1945, 24). The Reports Office was in charge of organizing the display of resettlement photographs, rotating them through different mess halls each week (McClelland 1945, 5). Joseph McClelland, the Amache Reports Officer described the display of resettlement photographs as highly effective, stating, “It was felt that the evacuees, seeing sons of their friends happily located outside, felt a little ashamed that they had not made the break themselves and gained a greater confidence in their own ability to go and do likewise” (McClelland 1945, 6).
Many well-known photographers worked for the government and photographed the forced evacuation, incarceration, and resettlement, some working full-time, while others were employed through short-term contracts. Some of these included Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, Clem Albers, Francis Stewart, Charles Mace, and Tom Parker, many of whom had previously been part of the Works Progress Administration as part of the New Deal program. In the later years of the war, the government also employed Japanese American photographers. Hikaru Iwasaki and Takashi Aoyama, who were both incarcerated at Heart Mountain in Wyoming, were instrumental in photographing the later resettlement period (Hirabayashi 2009).

Because of the propagandized nature of the WRA images, they remain controversial. While some of the photographers such as Dorothea Lange openly opposed the government’s incarceration of Japanese Americans, this did not always come across in their images. This is particularly the case since separate administrative personnel were often charged with writing captions or censoring them altogether (Gordon 2006). Recent publications of Dorothea Lange’s work demonstrate that the government impounded images that did not fit the desired official government narrative. Understanding the controversies surrounding the government-produced visual catalogue of Japanese American WWII incarceration is important as they continue to play a primary role in how both Japanese Americans and the public understand this history and the ways participants in my research relate to photography of this time. Particularly relevant to my research is how Japanese Americans have utilized official government photographs in their photo albums and in telling stories of their experiences of incarceration.
Japanese Americans’ Access, Participation, and Use of Photography

The context surrounding Japanese Americans’ use and access to photography during the World War II incarceration is crucial to my research as it provides a foundation for understanding how people acquired photographs for their photo albums and the power dynamics involved. In addition to investigating people's access to cameras, evidence of official WRA photographs in people's personal albums raises questions about the role that government photography played in how people documented and understood their day-to-day experiences of incarceration. The appearance of these images in people’s albums challenges the idea that government photography was strictly perceived as a harmful invasion of Japanese Americans’ privacy, but perhaps also provided a means for individuals to document their experiences when they were unable to fully do so themselves.

Throughout my research and time working at Manzanar National Historic Site, I have heard conflicting narratives about the prohibition and use of cameras in the camps. Through archival research and interviews with participants I have been able to organize a more complete picture of the degree of access people had to cameras and photographs, specifically in Manzanar and Amache. The scope of my research is limited by not having accessed archives of the WRA’s Photographic Section which are located at the National Archives in Washington DC. Luckily, Jasmine Alinder’s research of these archives and her contribution to the book Colors of Confinement has provided insight into the apparent difficulties that WRA national authorities experienced in deciding how to handle the position of cameras as contraband. Based on my research of archives, historic
newspapers, and interviews, my impression is that the WRA’s national policy and rhetoric related to contraband items such as cameras was not strictly followed within the camps but did influence people's access to cameras and their ability to photographically document their lives.

The policy and regulations issued by various branches of the US government provide a good indication of the difficulties Japanese Americans faced in taking photographs of their lives during World War II. On March 24, 1942, the US Army issued Public Proclamation No. 3 stating that, beginning March 31, 1942, “No person of Japanese ancestry shall have in his possession or use or operate at any time or place within any of the Military Area 1 to 6 inclusive” (Western Defense Command and Fourth Army 1942). Cameras are listed last after firearms, bombs, radios, and signal devices. Later civilian exclusion orders refer to this proclamation citing items that Japanese Americans were prohibited from bringing with them to the camps (Western Defense Command and Fourth Army 1942).

These orders remained in place during the fall of 1942, but balancing issues related to public relations and the continued infringement of citizens’ rights, WRA officials grappled with what to do about the contraband. An excerpt from a letter addressed to the WRA Regional Director Joseph Smart from WRA Director Dillon Myer at the end of October 1942 demonstrates the confusion.

“You will notice that in our proposed regional instruction no mention was made of cameras as contraband. This question has been the subject of considerable discussion with Project Directors, and we all feel that the possession and use of cameras should be permitted on the projects. We would prefer that evacuees on leave not use cameras because of possible difficulties with outside peoples and peace officers, but I doubt if we have any right to prohibit it” (Alinder 2012, 84).
Announcements related to lifting the prohibition on cameras appear at different times in the camp newspapers. An article titled “Cameras Okayed” published December 12, 1942 in the *Granada Pioneer* explains that while *Issei* were still prohibited from owning cameras, the prohibition did not apply to Japanese American citizens. The article continues, “However, use of cameras by citizens at Amache should be limited to personal snapshots of family and community life…Pictures of camp installations such as water pumps, storage tanks, military police buildings, etc., should be avoided” (*Granada Pioneer*, December 12, 1942).

A WRA guidebook for Japanese Americans published in May 1943 states that the WRA had “adopted no contraband regulations,” but they were cooperating with the Western Defense Command and Justice Department to carry out their policies. The report states that anyone of Japanese ancestry living inside the Exclusion Zone is prohibited from possessing the contraband items including cameras, but citizens of Japanese ancestry living outside the Exclusion Zone could consult the appropriate authorities to obtain their property. Depending on when and where their items were taken into custody, the report lists numerous authorities Japanese Americans might contact to request their items including the Army or Wartime Civil Control Administration, Relocation Center Project Directors, Evacuee Property Officers or Project Attorneys, and the Justice Department through “the United States Attorney who has custody of the surrendered property.” Given the vague directive, it’s doubtful that acquiring these items was an easy process for people incarcerated at Amache and other camps outside the Exclusion Zone.
While citizens were technically permitted to use cameras at the camps outside the Military Exclusions Zone, for the majority of the war people incarcerated at Manzanar, Tule Lake, Gila River, and Poston – all within the Exclusion Zone – were technically prohibited from owning and using cameras no matter their citizenship status. In addition to cameras and other contraband items the government also prohibited “certain types of books, photographs, maps, and drawings.” The report also indicates that the Western Defense Command will make provisions at all camps in the Exclusion Zone to inspect packages and remove any contraband items from the parcels (War Relocation Authority 1943).

Following the decision of *Ex parte Mitsuye Endo* and the government’s lift of the of West Coast exclusion order in early 1945, the Western Defense Command regulations no longer applied to US citizens incarcerated at Manzanar and other camps in what had been the Exclusion Zone. By early February, Japanese American citizens in these areas were technically permitted to own and use cameras, but the prohibition still extended to all enemy aliens. An article in the *Manzanar Free Press* warns, “Nisei who allow an alien to have access to contraband, will subject the alien to the risk of being arrested and interned for the duration of the war” (*Manzanar Free Press* February 10, 1945).

While it is clear that Japanese Americans ran into obstacles in taking and obtaining photographs, particularly in the early years of incarceration, people still managed to do both. Well-known stories among Japanese Americans confined in the camps, including Manzanar and Amache, demonstrate people’s defiance or tendency to disregard the contraband regulations (Alinder 2009). At Amache, Jack Muro built a dark
room under his barracks floor after a relative taught him techniques of professional photography at the camp in 1943. Through the Amache Co-op canteen catalog, Muro purchased photo chemicals necessary for developing the images. As a young man who tried a number of jobs at Amache, his photographs document wide ranging experiences in the camp (Ono 2013).

At Manzanar, Toyo Miyatake snuck in a camera lens and other necessary equipment and built a camera out of wood. As a previously well-known photographer from the Los Angeles area, his photographs present both professional and artistic scenes from the perspective of a community member. Miyatake’s early photos are recognizable because of a small light leak in the wooden case. Eventually the Manzanar administration found out about his camera. They allowed him to continue taking photographs, but an administrator had to press the shutter button. Eventually they allowed him to take photographs freely, and he became instrumental in the establishment and operation of the camp’s photo studio operated through the Manzanar Co-op. In my interview with Rosie Kakuuchi she recalls Archie Miyatake, Toyo’s son, reciting his father’s words about why taking pictures was important. “You know, I need to take pictures for historical reasons, because this day, no one’s going to know about it unless we have pictures to show” (Kakuuchi 2017).

In addition to photographs that documented life at Manzanar, he felt an obligation to the community. An official WRA interview with Toyo Miyatake conducted in early 1945 states one reason he wanted to remain in the camp until at least three months before it closed. It states he wanted to stay because “of responsibility to remain at the Co-op
Photo Shop, where he is needed and is training 3 assistants to succeed him” (War Relocation Authority 1945). Through conducting interviews and researching oral histories, people remember both Toyo and his son, Archie, taking photographs in camp, including images they had in their albums. Tami Kasamatsu remembers Archie Miyatake taking many of the photographs in her album, particularly of her co-workers at the Manzanar hospital. “Well he developed them, and I guess he gave it to us, or we had to buy it” (Kasamatsu 2017). Jack Muro and Toyo Miyatake are only two of the many individuals who took photographs early on in the camps. As more people donate photographs to museums and archives, we will likely learn of more stories of people who felt compelled to document their lives and the experiences of those in their World War II communities.

While some people found ways to take photographs before official WRA policy permitted it, most people had to wait for the ban to be lifted as well as navigate the bureaucracy of acquiring their cameras. Amache’s camp newspaper, the Granada Pioneer, presents a timeline of the changing regulations related to cameras in the camp. The earliest indication that the government allowed cameras at Amache is from a December 2, 1942 Granada Pioneer article. It explains that citizens could use cameras for personal uses such as “snapshots of family and community life,” but Issei were still prohibited from owning cameras and other contraband (Granada Pioneer 1942).

Although after December 1942, the WRA allowed people at Amache to acquire and purchase cameras, they still faced many obstacles. Policy changes at the national level were difficult to manage locally in the camps, as misinformation and difficulties
acquiring cameras from authorities in California persisted throughout 1943. A letter signed by Mrs. T. Muta and published in the *Granada Pioneer* later that month requests that Project Director Lindley write letters for individuals who are requesting shipments of their cameras. She writes, “The cameras are of no value to the owner if left in Los Angeles, and to buy another one is impossible” (*Granada Pioneer* December 19, 1942). A response appears in the *Granada Pioneer* mid-January of 1943 stating that there has been no news regarding people’s camera requests, because coast officials had not received permission to send the cameras to Amache (*Granada Pioneer* January 12, 1943).

A newspaper article published in May 1943 outlines guidelines for citizens requesting cameras, warning that while citizens can obtain them they should still not be used by those who are not citizens. “Ennis [Edward Ennis, the Justice Department’s Director of Enemy Alien Control Unit] requests that all citizens applying for the return of such articles be told the dangers in making these articles available in the same household” (*Granada Pioneer* May 1, 1943). While this warning appears in early May, it is not until May 22 that citizens could actually once again make requests for their cameras. Finally, on October 10, 1943, about a year after the first announcement that cameras were allowed, the *Granada Pioneer* states that peoples’ radios and cameras have arrived, listing names of people who need to pick up their items (*Granada Pioneer* October 27, 1943). Another shipment of 100 cameras and radios arrived in late March 1944 (*Granada Pioneer* March 24, 1944). By the end of the war, many more people likely had cameras in the camp. By the summer of 1944, the Amache High School offered photography classes
(Granada Relocation Center Reports Office 1944). Of the many groups that utilized the Amache “Hospitality House,” a facility used for community events, was a “Picture Taking” group (Neal 1944, 9). Books in the Amache High School Library include *How to Make Good Pictures* by the Eastman Kodak Co. and *Photographic Occupations* by Captain Burr Leyson (Granada War Relocation Center 1942-1945).

While those confined at Amache and Manzanar had little access to cameras in the early part of the war and still had only limited access later on, the WRA attempted to provide photographic services. The WRA specifically offered photographs of funeral services for Japanese Americans if the camp did not have photographic services through their co-op. They gave families two free prints, but if they wanted more, arrangements would have to be made with a commercial shop (War Relocation Authority 1943, 13). People utilized this service at Amache to varying degrees. While the Amache WRA Reports Division undertook photography as “strictly an emergency activity” when the WRAPS could not take photographs, Joseph McClelland, the Reports Officer, took the majority of funeral photographs until the co-op opened its photo studio (Joseph McClelland 1945, 47). Robert Brown and Joseph McClelland who were Reports Officers at Manzanar and Amache were both engaged in photography of the camps. It appears that Reports Officers filled in as local representatives of WRAPS when they were needed, while also sometimes acting as intermediaries between WRAPS and the local populations in each of the camps.

WRA officials and Japanese Americans pushed to establish photographic services through camp co-ops, which Japanese Americans operated mostly independent from the
government but with administrative oversight. The hope was that these establishments would not only provide Japanese Americans with a means to take their own photographs and prints but also to order official WRA photography. An Amache Community Enterprises report dated November 11, 1943, describes a huge demand for images, particularly of official WRA photographs.

“The Co-op until recently, has steadfastly refused to handle even prints of WRA pictures for the convenience of residents...The Board appears to have been short-sighted in refusing to carry out a function of distributing photographs earnestly desired by many residents.”

The report further states that the only way for people to acquire WRA photographs is through the Co-op (Rademaker 1943, 3).

By February of 1944, the Amache Co-op had succeeded in organizing the sale of these official photographs. A *Granada Pioneer* article published February 2 states, “An assortment of some 500 official WRA photographs, illustrating Amache camp life, is expected to go on sale at the local Co-op store the latter part of this month.” The article

![Girl being photographed at the Amache Photo Studio](image)
instructs Japanese Americans to order the images based on numbers listed in a sample book, expecting the photographs to be 4x5 and 5x7 inches in size (Granada Pioneer February 2, 1944). Photographs were officially made available in March 1944 through the Amache Co-op. Most of the available photographs were taken by WRA Photographer Tom Parker (Granada Pioneer March 11, 1944). To make the images available, the Reports Office loaned the WRA negatives to the Amache Co-op. For people to have original photographs taken in camp, the co-op also arranged services with outside commercial photographers until they established their own photographic studio that opened August 8, 1944 in the Block 9H recreation hall (Amache Co-op Souvenir Album 1945, 28). They stopped offering this service in early 1945, because it became too difficult to acquire photographic paper supplies. They transferred the process of ordering and developing official center photographs to the Amache Silk Screen Shop in January of 1945, relying on Japanese American workers who had their own photographic equipment (McClelland 1945, 47).

As most people confined at Manzanar technically could not take pictures until early 1945, there seems to be less discussion of contraband and the use of cameras in the Manzanar Free Press. Like at Amache, there was significant demand for a photographer. A Block Manager report dated July 21, 1942 includes a letter from a man expressing anger about not having access to a photographer. “There are many parents in this camp demanding for a ‘Photographer.’ They all are anxious to take a picture of their young child and baby for remembrance.” Suggesting that Toyo Miyatake be allowed to take
photographs he further states, “After all we are ban [sic] from carrying or owning a camera” (Yamaguchi 1942).

A little less than a year later in April 1943, Toyo Miyatake became the photographer at the newly opened Manzanar Photo Studio, operated through the camp co-op. Perhaps because Toyo Miyatake was Issei and technically not allowed to operate a camera or because Manzanar was located within the Exclusion Zone, the announcement of the opening of the photo studio also lists an “official” photographer stating, “Alan Hennebold of Hollywood camera experience, will be the official photographer under WRA instruction” (Manzanar Free Press April 10, 1943). While photography of Manzanar is well known in a large part because of work of professional photographers at the camp such as Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams, the Japanese Americans who ran and operated the Manzanar photo studio were renowned in their own right. A Manzanar Free Press article provides short bios for the people employed at the studio stating, “Yes, Manzanar’s photo studio is filled with professional artists that cannot be equaled in the majority of outside studios” (Manzanar Free Press April 21, 1943). While the photo studio was operating in 1943, there were setbacks due to a small staff and limited equipment (Manzanar Free Press April 28, 1943).

Japanese Americans found other ways to acquire photographs in the camps as there were clear limitations in people's ability to access cameras. Japanese American soldiers who visited the camps with cameras were one way that people in the camps were able to obtain photographs early on. A November 1942 article in the newspaper from Rohwer, a camp in Arkansas, explicitly states that while soldiers were not allowed to
leave cameras with people in the camp, there were “no restrictions for visiting soldiers” 
(The Rowher Outpost November 25, 1942). Other visitors to the camps likely provided images as well. When Ansel Adam visited Manzanar in 1943, he took portraits of many Japanese Americans. Rose Tanaka, whose brother was featured in Ansel Adams’ subsequent publication of Manzanar photographs Born Free and Equal, remembers receiving a copy of the book. During our interview, she showed me her original copy, explaining, “This is an original published, and [he] gave everyone a copy in the camp. Ansel Adams produced a whole stack of these. The camp people all received a copy (Tanaka 2017).”

Social connections both with people outside and inside the camps were likely an important aspect of how people acquired photographs. Tami Kasamatsu does not recall owning a camera at Manzanar but relied on other people to provide her with photographs. “Well, whenever anybody takes pictures, I think somebody had their own cameras too, and so whenever they took the pictures, I asked for copies” (Kasamatsu 2018). The social exchange of photographs is also evident in my research of the physical photo albums, which I will further discuss in Chapter 7. The unique circumstances under which these images were created and arranged into albums provides a particularly powerful lens to explore the experiences of Japanese American confinement during World War II.

*Post-World War II: Redress and Establishing Historic Sites*

Both Manzanar and Amache closed in the fall of 1945, and the US government provided each person confined in the camps with $25 and a train ticket. For many people, this meant starting their lives over again. The incarceration and resettlement dispersed
Japanese American populations throughout the US, some establishing themselves in new communities throughout the East Coast and Midwest, while thousands also returned to the West Coast. Some families had more difficulties than others, but overall Japanese Americans experienced an estimated total loss between $810 million and $2 billion in 1983 dollars (CWRIC 1983, 5). People also experienced different kinds of hardship as the incarceration of Japanese Americans coupled the with reports of thousands of soldiers who had engaged in brutal combat in the Pacific, did little to quell the anti-Japanese sentiment on the West Coast. People who had lost their property or business found it difficult to reestablish themselves in communities that had transformed in their absence. Some were lucky enough to have friends and neighbors care for their property while they were gone, while others found their property trashed, looted, or sold from underneath them.

In the 1960s, influenced by the cultural climate of the Civil Rights Movement, Japanese Americans started speaking out about their World War II incarceration. People began pilgrimages to the former sites of confinement. People also pushed for recognition of significant days related to the incarceration such as the Day of Remembrance, marking the day President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. These activities correlated with the development of the Redress Movement as Japanese American community leaders campaigned for an official government apology and monetary compensation for those incarcerated during World War II. Years of difficult lobbying culminated in the congressionally ordered Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) tasked with investigating the reasons behind the forced incarceration.
Throughout this process, hundreds of Japanese Americans testified about their experiences of World War II incarceration, marking the first time many people had spoken about it. The investigation culminated in a report published in 1983 which determined that the government’s actions were not of military necessity, but instead resulted from “race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership” (CWRIC 1983). These findings led to the eventual passage of the Civil Liberties Act in 1988 where the US government issued an official presidential apology to Japanese Americans who had been incarcerated. The government also paid each survivor reparations amounting to $20,000 per person.

The Redress Movement was hugely successful in pushing for official government action and acknowledgement of the injustice inflicted upon Japanese Americans during World War II. The movement also demonstrated how Japanese American communities are not homogenous as the actions of the government during World War II had stereotypically assumed. Just as Japanese American communities during the war disagreed about how they should represent their communities in the political process, there was significant disagreement among Japanese Americans regarding the right way to push for redress, some believing that it shouldn't happen at all. Resulting from decades of grappling with these different perspectives, many people today advocate for more equal representation of the diversity of Japanese American voices when discussing the legacy of Japanese American World War II incarceration.

Reactions to receiving the presidential apology and monetary compensation varied. Mitsuye May Yamada recalls that it was a major step forward for Japanese
American communities, but she also had mixed feeling about the restitution. “Too late, too little, too late. Because the *Isseis* were, like, many of them were in wheelchairs.” (Yamada 2002). Bo T. Sakaguchi who was incarcerated at Manzanar recalls,

“Well, up to that point...I always felt like a second-class citizen, you know, having, being listed as 4-C ‘enemy alien’ and being treated the way we were treated during the war....So when I got the apology, something was lifted off my head, that I felt like a, hey, a decent citizen” (Sakaguchi 2002).

**Present-Day Preservation at Manzanar and Amache**

The push to recognize the wrongs committed against Japanese Americans during World War II occurred simultaneously with movements to establish museums and commemorative monuments at the former sites of confinement. While there is at least a monument at each of the ten former camps, local and Japanese American communities have approached developing the sites in different ways. The first pilgrimage to Manzanar in 1969 ignited a movement to preserve and develop the site. The Manzanar Committee, a grassroots Japanese American organization, was instrumental in getting the site established as a California State Landmark in 1972, a National Historic Landmark in 1985, and finally a National Historic Site in 1992.

Efforts for preservation did not go unchallenged. A letter sent to the California governor in 1979 protested the idea of developing interpretation focused on Japanese American World War II incarceration, arguing that it would create nothing “but bad feelings and enmity.” Many locals did not want to focus on a shameful period of three-and-a-half years during World War II when the site’s history comprised much more,
particularly the history of early pioneers. Local Native American groups also had issues with the proposed plan, pointing to the long history of the US government’s violent acts against their communities stating that “the valley is sprinkled with the blood and bones of our ancestors” (Unrau 1996, 61). While protests of the National Historic Site’s presence and development have dwindled over the years, there remains resistance from those who have argued that the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II was justified as well as from some in the local communities. Some Japanese Americans are also opposed to the site’s current management, believing that the US government should not be tasked with interpreting its own problematic past. Manzanar’s current management under the National Park Service parallels the site’s history during World War II as both the War Relocation Authority and the National Park Service were and are under the umbrella of the Department of Interior. Forty-eight years after the Department of Interior administered the incarceration of Japanese Americans at Manzanar, the same government entity once again took over management to interpret this history.

Since 1992, the National Park Service has managed the 814-acre site which is mostly comprised of the historic living area that was within the barbed wire fence during World War II. For many years the site’s development remained fairly static. In 2004, the National Park Service transformed what had been the high school auditorium during World War II into a museum. Multiple non-profit organizations such as the Manzanar Committee and Friends of Manzanar continue to be actively involved in preservation, fundraising, and the direction of the site.
Today the National Park Service has restored the site to delineate the historic roads and firebreaks that divided the camp. A “demonstration block” comprised of two barracks, a latrine, and a World War II-era mess hall show what life was like in the camp. A driving tour brings visitors around the one-square-mile site where they can see Japanese style gardens that National Park Service archaeologists and volunteers have excavated and restored. Manzanar National Historic Site continues to host Manzanar Committee’s annual pilgrimage along with other events throughout the year. The site actively collects objects for their museum collection which is permanently housed at the a nearby museum facility in Death Valley National Park. Visitation continues to increase, with an estimated 110,000 people visiting annually (National Park Service 2016, 6).

Manzanar National Historic Site’s official statement of purpose reads they exist “to preserve Manzanar’s cultural and natural resources and interpret the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants during World War II” (National Park Service 2016, 8). The site’s newly updated foundation document extrapolates on the site’s function.

“Manzanar became a national historic site because people whose lives had been affected by it vowed that such an injustice should never happen again, to any group in their country. A visit to Manzanar is an invitation to consider our Constitution and the protections it promises at a place where – so long ago – they were largely ignored” (National Park Service 2016, 6).

Development at Amache has followed a different path, and today is still managed by the local Granada community. The first pilgrimage to the site began in 1976 as an effort to remember those who had died at Amache and the Amacheans who had died serving in World War II. Japanese Americans in the Denver community established the
Denver Optimist Club in 1979, which was instrumental in the early preservation efforts at the site (Otto 2009, 131). Other groups such as the Amache Club, the Amache Historical Society of Woodland Hills California, and Friends of Amache have contributed to major preservation efforts over the years. The site became a Colorado State Landmark in 1994 and a National Historic Landmark in 2006 (Otto 2009, 131).

Like Manzanar, there was some resistance to establishing the site. While some locals were initially open to the idea, there remained some animosity in the local area regarding the government’s use of what had been people’s private property to build the camp (Otto 2009, 134). Despite some pushback, local efforts for preservation prevailed. John Hopper, who was a local teacher at Granada High School and is currently the Granada High School principal, developed a class focusing on Amache in 1990. Students worked on projects about Amache, culminating in the establishment of the student-run Amache Preservation Society (APS) which today continues to operate and maintain not only the site but also a small museum in the town of Granada. In addition to actively preserving and interpreting the history of Amache, the students also travel, educating the broader public including occasional international trips to Japan. Since 2005, the University of Denver has also been actively involved with the site, conducting an archaeological and museum studies field school every other year since 2008 (Otto 2009, 133). Research undertaken by Dr. Bonnie Clark and her graduate students over the years have contributed to the expanding body of knowledge about the site and its significance today.
The Amache Preservation Society operates a website with historic photographs, documents, and interpretive materials for the public that also includes an audio driving tour, which visitors can listen to as they drive around the site. In a partnership between the Friends of Amache and Colorado Preservation Inc., they have reconstructed a barracks building, guard tower, and relocated the historic water tower back to the site. In the spring of 2018, they also relocated a historic recreation hall back to its original location in the former camp (Colorado Preservation Inc. 2018). Both Japanese American communities and the local Granada community have increased efforts to get the site established as a National Historic Site. In the summer of 2018, the Amache Study Act was introduced in the House of Representatives. If the act becomes law, it would authorize the Department of Interior to conduct a resource study to determine the site’s eligibility as a unit of the National Park Service.
Chapter 3: Research Design: Theory, Methods, and Ethics

This chapter covers my research design, which includes my theoretical framework, research questions, site selection, and research methods and analysis. It also includes a comprehensive investigation of how the historical development of photography, visual anthropology, and ethical concerns related to Japanese American WWII incarceration have influenced my approach to research. Framing these aspects of my research in one chapter highlights the degree to which theory, methods, and ethics are connected and inform one another in anthropological research.

Theoretical Framework

Questions about what constitute cultural or social phenomena and groups continue to be a central point of debate for anthropologists. My approach in framing the formation of cultural and social phenomena around photo albums of Japanese American WWII incarceration is influenced by theorists rooted in studies of materiality, visual anthropology, and visual studies. While the theorists vary in the particularities of their approaches, all of them share the idea that the material world, experienced visually or otherwise, is foundational to how people live out their everyday lives and understand their world. Similarly, they all maintain that the sociocultural world is never static, and cultural phenomena are always part of dynamic social processes. In the following chapter, I discuss how these theorists have influenced how I have carried out my research but also how I have interpreted my findings. In particular, I examine where these
theorists converge in thinking about the social lives of objects, cultural narrative, and memory in the context of people’s everyday lives in the past and present.

*The Social and Material Lives of Objects*

The foundation of my theoretical framework stems from anthropologists concerned with the ways objects are part of and influence the socio-cultural worlds that people experience every day. Arjun Appadurai, Igor Kopytoff, Elizabeth Edwards, and Bruno Latour are particularly influential in thinking about the processual and relational power of objects. In Appadurai’s anthology, *Social Life of Things*, shifting and multidimensional relations are grounded in objects. Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff’s essays in this anthology both emphasize that although anthropologists are concerned with the lives of people who give things meaning, to fully understand these meanings researchers must also research the objects. Appadurai (1985, 5) writes,

“We have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things.”

Objects follow different paths throughout their lives and their meanings and values continuously change as they are resituated in new contexts. Appadurai explains that an object’s cultural biography and social history are two ways of understanding object trajectories. A cultural biography maps the trajectory of a specific object, while social history documents an entire class of objects. While useful to observe these narratives as separate, often both the localized and more general trends of objects and classes of objects can shift and change one another over time (Appadurai 1986, 36).
Anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards builds off of these theories of materiality and argues that photographs should also be observed as material objects, challenging studies that have historically focused on the semiotic role of images. Edwards pays particular attention to how people create, manipulate, and exchange images in time and space transforming their material form, meaning, and use (Edwards 2012, 230). While Edwards’ studies of the lives of photographs and their material form relate to the work of Appadurai and Kopytoff, she also acknowledges that object histories and biographies are perhaps too linear for understanding trajectories of photographs, which people often duplicate. This resonates with my research as both during World War II and particularly today with digital technologies, copies of photographs are entering many different contexts and taking on multiple lives simultaneously.

Bruno Latour also frames understanding the social role of objects through an object’s narrative, but advocates observing objects in relation to the networks they are part of. Instead of imposing data on prescribed social structures, he advocates tracing relationships between observed phenomena. With Actor Network Theory, he writes it is “possible to trace more sturdy relations and discover more revealing patterns by finding a way to register the links between unstable and shifting frames of reference rather than by trying to keep one frame stable” (Latour 2005, 24). He describes two kinds of entities that transport meaning: intermediaries and mediators. An intermediary “transports meaning or force without transformation” while mediators “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” (Latour 2005, 39). Given the
fluid interpretive nature of photography, the concept of mediators is most applicable to understanding how photographs of Japanese American WWII incarceration are understood in different social contexts.

Edwards advocates observing photographs in similar sets of shifting relationships through what she calls placing. Placing is “the work of a photographic object in social space through which questions of materiality adjacency, assemblage, and embodied relations frame the meaning of the image.” This act of placing an image situates the historical and present-day context of a photograph within changing sets of social relationships, providing insight beyond what the image signifies, emphasizing why the photograph matters. Edwards points out that the act of placing is never static. As photographs physically change and enter new contexts over time, the possible meanings of photographs change as well.

Appadurai, Kopytoff, Edwards, and Latour are not only concerned with how objects change meaning over time in different contexts, but also how objects initiate these changes and influence social interactions. The idea that objects do not just exist in social processes but are also social actors is important to my research, because it frames photographs as much more than passive platforms transmitting visual messages. Instead, photographs have a direct impact on the actions of people in their everyday lives. Latour argues that the study of object agency is not a social explanation for any action but a way to reveal relationships that are otherwise obscured (Latour 2005, 65). Given that objects and materials are so integral to people’s everyday lives, to overlook their existence would ignore phenomena that make people who they are. He writes, “One cannot call oneself a social scientist and pursue only some links – the moral, legal, and symbolic ones – the
stop as soon as there is some physical relation interspersed in between others” (Latour 2005, 78). Instead, material objects are often involved in the active transport of social meanings, and therefore part of the dynamic formations that constitute social relationships and networks.

Edwards applies object agency specifically to photographs. By approaching the study of photographs from a material standpoint, she argues that researchers can better understand the role of images in people’s everyday lives, incorporating not only what an image might signify but what it does. Specifically, photographs initiate sensory encounters that go beyond visual experiences such as touching, pointing, or gesturing. Edwards also argues that these sensory experiences are often linked to personal biography and orality. The narrative power of photographs is important for my research as people negotiate history and identity through processes of memory and storytelling.

**Cultural Narrative and Memory**

In her book *Biographical Objects*, Janet Hoskins focuses on understanding the role of objects in relation to how people develop personal narratives. While she originally intended to collect people’s personal histories through interviewing them, her research revealed that objects are inseparable from how people narrate and understand themselves and the communities they are part of. She argues that object narratives do not simply exist in the world for researchers to go collect, rather narratives are part of ever-changing processes of negotiation. The narratives Hoskins solicits through interviews are tied to people’s personal identities as well as their cultural world. She writes, “Since a life history is not only a recital of events but also an organization of experience, the way
memory is rendered in narration of the self is a part of both individual style and cultural fashioning” (Hoskins 1998, 7). In particular, her research reveals the gendered ways people understand themselves and construct narrative through objects.

As Hoskins demonstrates, the role of memory is integral to the study of narrative. The work of Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps is important to my research, because they look at how narrative is integrally involved not only in people’s development of personal identities and social connection, but also collective memory. Understanding the role of memory is crucial to my research, because of photography’s ability to seemingly capture past events, making photographs particularly susceptible to becoming mnemonic materials. Ochs and Capps argue that narratives of the self are only partial representations as their formation is part of processes of remembering and forgetting. Remembering and forgetting do not exist as binaries, but rather “remembering is a form of forgetting” (Ochs and Capp 1996). Through these processes of negotiating memory and narrative formation, people create meaning. They write, “While narrative does not yield absolute truth, it can transport narrators and audiences to more authentic feelings, beliefs, and actions and ultimately to a more authentic sense of life” (Ochs and Capp 1996, 23).

While my research is founded on anthropological epistemologies, scholarly work in art, cultural studies, and visual studies are also important to my theoretical framework, particularly with their focus on the relationship between photographs and memory. In Annette Kuhn’s studies of everyday family photographs, she tries to better understand the intersection of people’s personal memories with collective forms of memory (Kuhn 2007, 283). Kuhn utilizes an approach she calls memory work, in which assumptions about truth behind the memories that photographs elicit are cast aside. Her approach “undercuts the
assumptions about the transparency of or the authenticity of what is remembered, taking it not as ‘truth’ but as evidence of a particular sort: material for interpretation, to be interrogated, mined, for its meanings and its possibilities” (Kuhn 2007, 284). Influenced by the work of Richard Chalfen and Martha Langford, Kuhn describes how family photo albums are unique phenomena that solicit “occasions for communication, cross-cultural exchange and cultural continuity” (Kuhn 2007, 285).

All of the theorists that are influential in my research observe the social world as existing within constantly shifting processes of negotiation. While documenting object biographies, tracing social relationships, and recording object narratives are all means of understanding people and the ways they carry out their lives, the information that these methods elicit are fleeting. The cultural phenomena I document in this thesis appear fixed, but they are in constant fluctuation. Another anthropologist would not produce the same results or conclusions. As the theorists I have outlined in this chapter demonstrate, the study of culture is just as dynamic as the cultural processes themselves. As the photo albums of Japanese American incarceration are uniquely tied to material and visual worlds, theories grounded in materiality, the social lives of objects, cultural narrative, and memory form the foundation of my research and discussion.

Research Questions

My investigation of photo albums of Japanese American WWII incarceration began framed by three central questions:

1. How are Japanese Americans' photo album narratives constructed within the album and how are they interpreted in both the private (donor narrative) and public (museum narrative) space?
2. How have the material conditions and functions of the photo albums changed over time and in different spaces?

3. What do the material conditions of albums and their correlating narratives tell us about the patterns and particularities of Japanese American World War II experiences of confinement and how these experiences are remembered today?

These questions take an anthropological approach by investigating the narrative power of images over time and space through their material context. While the questions provide the necessary framework for carrying out my research, my conclusions are not direct answers to my questions. Instead, my research complicates the notion of discrete narratives and concepts of public and private space as further discussed in Chapter 7.

Site Selection

Of the ten camps where the US government confined Japanese Americans, my research focuses on two that are managed and maintained today: Manzanar in the Eastern Sierra of California and Amache in southeastern Colorado. These two sites present an interesting comparison, because Manzanar has developed as a unit of the National Park Service since 1992, while Amache continues to be preserved and developed through more grassroots efforts and organizations. As a former employee at Manzanar and a current student involved in the University of Denver Amache Research Project, these two sites also provide the best opportunities for access and greater possibilities for making a more significant impact with my research through these relationships.
Research Methods

My research methods were comprised of a number of different approaches including archival research, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. All methods helped me better understand not only the current role of photo albums in people’s lives and in the museum but also the historical contexts of the albums and photographs. Since my research takes an interpretivist approach and is focused on narrative and the stories that photographs elicit, my methods are primarily qualitative and not quantitative (Bernard 2010, 20).

Archival Research

Understanding the context in which people produced photographs of Japanese American WWII incarceration is particularly important to my research since it provides the framework for understanding power dynamics and the role of photo albums in museums. There also remains ambiguity regarding people’s access to cameras in the camps and government regulation of people’s use of cameras. I extensively researched National Archives microfilm at the University of Denver library containing extensive primary government documentation regarding Amache during World War II. I also researched digitized copies of the Amache camp newspaper, the Granada Pioneer. The newspaper provided the most information regarding regulations related to photography and the process of acquiring cameras in the camp.

While conducting research at Manzanar National Historic Site, I researched their digital archives. They have a large collection of digitized microfilm both from the National Archives, University of California, Berkeley, and University of California, Los
Angeles. Similar to my research of the Amache newspapers, I also looked at the *Manzanar Free Press*, the camp’s newspaper. While I found some information about photography in the newspaper, this research was more difficult than the Amache newspaper, because it is not word searchable. In addition to researching general information about photography in the camps, I also did some background research on the families associated with each photo album. This included compiling their camp rosters, which provide information about when people arrived and left the camps as well as where they lived in the camps.

In addition to researching archives related to the history of the use of photography in the US government’s incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, I also conducted archival research of museum records to gain a better understanding of where the albums came from and how the museums acquire, use, and preserve them.

**Participant Observation**

A primary method of my research was participant observation, in which a researcher spends time with participants and not only observes but also simultaneously participates in the world or phenomena that the researcher is studying. There are different kinds of participant observation, some involving full participation. For example, when a researcher identifies as a member of the community being studied, they are perhaps more fully participating in the cultural activities that they are researching (Bernard 2011, 260).

The ways anthropologists have understood their role as a researcher and positionality relative to those they study has been a primary point of debate since the founding of anthropology as a discipline. Paul Hocking describes two kinds of images that exist in a visual anthropologist’s work that align with different viewpoints of the
researcher and researched. Emic images are those that “pertain to and originate from a particular culture and find their meaning within it.” Etic images or approaches to research are those an anthropologist produces, often referred to as ethnographic images or data (Hocking 2014, 437). While these images can be separated into these two categories based on their production, in an anthropologist’s interpretive practices, these two concepts are perhaps inseparable. An anthropologist’s work is the product of their own meaning making, deriving from an attempt at not only understanding but participating in the meaning making processes of their participants.

Rather than simply producing a record of events or data, Tim Ingold describes the successful practice of participant observation as “a way of knowing from the inside” (Ingold 2014, 5). Only by being part of the phenomena that anthropologists study can they say anything about it. He argues that anthropology is needed “not to accumulate more and more information about the world, but to better correspond with it” (Ingold 2014, 7).

My approach to research of photo albums that document Japanese American WWII incarceration follows this concept of participation as a process of knowing. In addition to conducting a semi-structured interview with each album donor or creator, I first sat down with each person and we looked at the photo album together. While in some ways I tried to allow the donors and creators to take the lead on the activity of looking at the photo album, I also fully participated in engaging with the photo album and with the people who were looking at the photo album with me. These acts of looking at the photo albums together was a collaborative process of meaning making. Utilizing Tim Ingold’s idea of correspondence, looking at the photo albums was not only a
correspondence with the albums and images, but also with the participants. The positionality of myself as a researcher, each participant’s personal history and connection to the album, and the unique material assemblage of each photo album contributed to the social context for each interaction. In order to record not only our conversation, but how our conversation connects to the physical photo album and our interactions with it, I recorded this as both an audio and video digital recording.

Many of the participants in my research likely observed me as part of the museum community, since I met most of them through my relationships with people at the Amache Museum and Manzanar National Historic Site. My work at the Amache Museum and Manzanar National Historic Site also contributes to my positionality as a researcher. While I am not part of Japanese American communities and am not able to identify with the experience of existing in the world as an Asian American, to some degree, I am not fully an outsider. From my years of researching and educating people about the history of Japanese American WWII incarceration, I have a level of knowledge about people’s experiences that many people in Japanese American communities can relate to or want to know more about. Particularly, younger generations of Japanese Americans who had parents or grandparents who rarely talked about their life during World War II are often interested in learning more about experiences of incarceration. As my research demonstrates and as I more fully articulate in Chapter 7, the boundary between museum communities and Japanese American communities is perhaps more fluid than discrete.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

In addition to engaging in participant observation, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant. I created an audio recording of these interviews that I
later transcribed. The goal was to better understand the biography of each photo album as well as the relationships that the albums have initiated historically and today. H. Russell Bernard suggests conducting semi-structured interviews when a researcher likely will not have another opportunity to interview participants (Bernard 2011, 157). My time with participants face to face was limited due to the travel necessary to set up interviews. In order to conduct interviews, I traveled to Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Omaha, and Denver. For each interview, I created a list of questions to ask each album donor or creator. These generally followed the same format, but I asked additional questions when I felt it was necessary to gain a better understanding of the album and its social context. I also restructured the order of the questions or did not ask certain questions depending on what kind of information I learned while looking at the photo albums with participants.

**Research Analysis**

**Coding**

A significant portion of my research analysis consisted of thematic coding. After sitting down with participants and looking at the photo albums together as well as conducting a semi-structured interview, I transcribed the entirety of our conversation and interview. In order to connect our conversation and interactions with the photo albums with specific photographs, I inserted screen shots of the video recording into the corresponding portion of the transcripts. After creating the transcripts, I carefully analyzed them, marking specific themes in significant portions of the transcripts. Bernard and Ryan state that intent of theme coding “is to tag or index the text or to assign it values of scale” (Bernard and Ryan 2010, 87). By coding the transcripts, I was able to
observe patterns both within and across conversations and interviews with different participants and photo albums.

*Album Biographies*

In addition to thematic coding of my conversations and interviews, I analyzed the transcripts looking for contextual and historical information about photography and the photo albums. This information was crucial to piecing together as much of the biography of each photo album and how the albums have changed over time and in different spaces. Some of this information came from my archival research of the government archives and museum records.

*Field Notes*

Throughout my research, I took notes and photographs for later analysis. For example, I took photographs of museum exhibits and interpretive materials that incorporate photographs from the photo albums. I also took notes and photographs documenting how Manzanar National Historic Site and the Amache Museum preserve the photographs both digitally and physically. My analysis of these notes and photographs are crucial in understanding how the use of these images has changed over time and in different spaces. While I did not conduct an in-depth analysis of the photographs in museum, documenting their current context was important to better understand the changing role of photographs of Japanese American WWII incarceration.

*Photographic Histories and Methodological Ethics*

Shifting meaning and values of images of Japanese American WWII incarceration over time and in different spaces necessitate similarly fluid ethical considerations. From an anthropological perspective, this not only includes raising historical and present-day
ethical questions regarding the photographs I am researching, but also how my own 
research creates new platforms and photographic contexts necessitating ethical critique of 
my own research practices. Ethics have informed my research methodology by taking 
into consideration the history of photographic thought, use, and research in the discipline 
of photography and approaches of visual anthropology as well as the historical and 
present-day production and use of photographs of Japanese American WWII 
icarceration.

**History of Photography and Visual Anthropology**

To better situate ethics in my research, it is necessary to contextualize 
photographs in the history of photographic thought and practice. Just as Maruska Svasek 
oberves how the universal categorization of art “disregards the fact that art is itself a set 
of historically specific ideas and practices that have shifted meaning across the course of 
centuries,” photography is similarly rooted in different sets of historical and cultural 
contexts (Svasek 2007, 3). Understanding the historical development of photography is 
necessary to better situate historical and present-day practices surrounding photography 
of Japanese American WWII incarceration.

Today, people are bombarded with images in almost every aspect of their daily 
lives. From the moment we wake up we are confronted with images. With the advent of 
digital photography, digital images are also integrally part of how we communicate, 
particularly through popular social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. 
Perhaps given the ubiquity of images in our everyday lives, there exists a general silence 
regarding the ethics of image production, exchange, consumption, and use.
While the supposed truth of images is often contested in public spheres, such as in advertising, ideas related to photography’s emergence as a scientific tool that replicates or even improves upon the human eye’s capacity to capture an unmediated reality have been persistent since people invented the first cameras. In his 1840 article “The Daguerreotype” Edgar Allan Poe describes the new medium:

“If we examine a work of ordinary art, by means of a powerful microscope, all traces of resemblance to nature will disappear—but the close scrutiny of the photogenic drawing discloses only a more absolute truth, a more perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented. The variations of shade, and the gradations of both linear and aerial perspective are those of truth itself in the supremeness of its perfection” (Hayes 2013, 378).

Tension between photography’s ability to seemingly capture the reality of a moment in time and an image’s aesthetic or artistic quality have persisted well into the 20th century and today. In a 1908 article published in Camera Work, painter Henri Matisse wrote, “Photography can provide the most precious documents existing, and not one can contest its value from that point of view. If practiced by a man of taste, the photographs will have the appearance of art.” (Newhall 1982, 235).

For my research, the negotiation between perceived boundaries separating the science and art of photography in the decade before World War II is most illuminating. Documentary film, and subsequently documentary photography, emerged in the 1930s in reaction to the global depression as a means to address the realities of humanitarian issues playing out in people’s daily lives. Debates persisted regarding the classification of documentary film as art. Filmmaker John Grierson wrote, “documentary was from the beginning an ‘anti-aesthetic’ movement…what confuses the history is that we had always the good sense to use the aesthetes” (Newhall 1982, 238). Documentary photography
became a highly politicized tool of the US government in 1935 under Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal program as the government hired photographers to help fight the Depression. They created images that were simultaneously emotive and informative with the goal of evoking and instilling a sense of American community. This government-sponsored documentary trend provides the cultural context in which people created the photographic record of Japanese American WWII incarceration.

During and following World War II, perhaps in reaction to the traumatic and dehumanizing consequences of world war, people embraced modernist universalizing interpretations of art and photography. Ansel Adams’ attempted to highlight unifying qualities of “Americanness” of Japanese Americans in his war-time photographic project at Manzanar. Similarly, Edward Steichen’s exhibit and publication The Family of Man promoted universal themes that he attributed to all humanity through the display of photographs of people from all over the world. Steichen included one of Ansel Adam’s photographs taken at Manzanar, but chose a photograph of the Sierra Nevada mountains, one of very few images that did not include people or any context indicating that it was taken at a site of Japanese American confinement. While Steichen’s exhibit received considerable acclaim as it traveled around the world, some were critical of its universalizing affect. Literary and cultural critic Roland Barthes noted that it suppressed “the determining weight of history” through its promotion of an “ambiguous myth of human ‘community’” (Marien 2015, 335) (Clifford 1988).

With the advent of postmodernism in the 1960s and 1970s, photographers and filmmakers became increasingly critical of photographic realism. Following Michel Foucault’s work on power and the “gaze,” photographic theorists interrogated subjective
practices of those behind the camera as not simply a mechanical record but an interpretation or “way of seeing.” In recent decades, focus has also shifted to subjectivity of the viewer and the importance of the viewer’s context.

Anthropological research and use of visual material culture have followed similar discourses to photographic disciplines in the negotiation of truth. The visual practices of anthropologists of the 19th century aligned with their goals to establish anthropology as a scientific discipline, but postmodernism in the mid to late 20th century raised new questions about the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Pink 2003, 191). Similar to the discourse surrounding the impact of aesthetic choices of a photographer on the supposed reality observable in their photographs, anthropologists began to critically interrogate how their own subjective experiences influenced the production of their ethnographic data. The postmodern shift greatly influenced anthropological practice, but some anthropologists have criticized early Visual Anthropology texts such as Collier and Collier’s *Visual Anthropology* for maintaining a realist framework (Pink 2003, 189).

Anthropologists have embraced the practice of reflexivity as a means to address positivist interpretations that disregarded power dynamics in both the process and presentation of anthropological work. Visual anthropologist Sarah Pink describes reflexivity as “a need for understanding ‘where the researcher is coming from’ and how this impacts on the knowledge produced” (Pink 2003, 88). Reflexivity exposes the lens or positionality of the researcher, acknowledging that just as a photograph is constructed and mediated, so is anthropological data and interpretation. Ethical concerns related to reflexivity have informed the development of new methodological approaches of visual
anthropology in recent years. Pink describes the main approaches to the study of visual images in anthropology to include: “(a) the context in which the image was produced; (b) the content of the image; (c) the contexts in, and the subjectivities through, which images are viewed; and (d) the materiality and agency of images” (Pink 2003, 187). Rather than simply focusing on image content, anthropological research of the visual world attempts to observe how images are situated within historical and present-day material processes.

Other ethical concerns addressed in visual anthropological work is the role of anonymity of research participants. Concealing the identity of those being researched has been a common practice throughout the history of anthropology and has served as a means of minimizing the effects of an anthropologist’s research on those being studied. Today, many anthropologists are questioning the necessity of using pseudonyms as a standard practice. Visual anthropologists’ work in particular leaves little room for an option of anonymity. Using film and photography as a means of ethnographic research as well as studying visual material culture has the potential to visually expose the identity of the people in the images.

Visual anthropologists have addressed ethical concerns of exposing people's identities not only with practices of reflexivity, but also collaboration, resisting the idea that ethnographic work is ever purely observational (Pink 2003,188). Through collaborative work, people who were once seemingly passive research subjects not only provide ongoing active consent through their participation but are given agency in conducting and interpreting the research. Collaboration also confronts anxieties surrounding the complexity of visual interpretation and aesthetic experiences.
Pink writes, “A collaborative approach demonstrates how many aspects of experience and knowledge are not visible; and even those that are visible will have different meaning to different people” (Pink 2003, 190).

**Ethics in Photographic Production and Use of Japanese American WWII Incarceration**

The history of image production and subsequent use provides the groundwork for my discussion of ethical considerations related to use and my research of photographs of Japanese American WWII incarceration. Instead of observing photographs as existing within the dichotomy of either art/aesthetic or artifact/documentary, Svasek’s concept of aestheticization provides a useful tool for observing transitional meanings of photographs in different contexts. The concept of aestheticization challenges common notions of inherent beauty and truth that continue to linger in art and photographic interpretations and focuses on sensory experiences and interpretations through the lens of different discursive frameworks (Svasek 2007, 10).

The power dynamics present during the production of photographs of Japanese American WWII incarceration as well the ways people have historically framed the practice of photography and use of photographic materials are important when considering the present-day contexts in which these photographs are used and understood. Ethics has informed my research design through my observation of images in different online spaces of digitized government archives and online vendors. While one of the most intriguing aspects of photography is its ability to seemingly defy the progression of time through capturing a specific moment, event, and place, this also raises difficult ethical considerations since what is visibly captured in the image must be
negotiated and interpreted by the viewer. Citing Freedman, Ruth Phillips observes that an "'image stands for reality, but its force goes beyond what the image represents’" (Phillips 2005, 254). This is especially the case with photography of Japanese American WWII incarceration as people’s personal experiences from this time have now become part of broader public narratives of American history.

As these images of Japanese Americans’ private lives have become very public, privacy is also an important consideration. Visual anthropologist Jay Ruby notes that in addition to considering the agency of people being photographed, the transparency of the photographer’s intention, and consideration of the viewers, image ethics necessitate consideration of “the often neglected or freely interpreted right to privacy” (Vene 2016, 16). For photographs of Japanese Americans during World War II, understanding privacy must incorporate contextualizing the photographs in people’s everyday lives both during World War II and today.

Today, the government’s WWII photography is part of an extensive archive that documents observations of the everyday lives of Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II. Due to efforts by numerous cultural and academic institutions, many of these documents are digitized and available to the public online. While today’s extensive government archive of Japanese American WWII incarceration is valuable for scholars and historians, it also presents potential ethical problems, particularly related to privacy. Not only were Japanese Americans actively alienated by their own government simply because of their ancestry, but it was carried out in a highly public manner. The archives expose a time that many people experienced as shameful. Overnight, Japanese Americans, most of whom had lived in the United States their entire lives were suddenly
labeled the enemy. This experience of being publicly ostracized was traumatic for many people. Matsue Watanabe remembers being escorted by armed military from Bainbridge Island, WA to Manzanar.

“So, they came by with their guns and they stand there at attention …we're standing there with all the military around us as if that we had really done something bad, and so they were gonna take us away...I didn't want to look at anybody I knew there, because I felt ashamed to be having to go away. And then, of course, when the ferry dock went off and we landed in Seattle, we were marched over to the train…And I just recall seeing all those people hanging over the viaduct looking at us, and I felt like we were strange animals, because they were all there just to see you leave.” (Manzanar National Historic Site 2006).

For many people, feelings associated with the stigma of Japanese American WWII incarceration persisted after the war. May Sasaki recalls questioning her identity associated with Japan as a result of her camp experiences.

“Up until the time I had gone into camp, everyone referred to me with my Japanese name, which was Kimiko. And so, I was always Kimi-chan, Kimi-chan, and that was okay. But I began to sense that it was because I was Japanese that I was in this camp, because I looked around and we're all Japanese. And I think that's when I came to this decision that whenever I get out of here, I'm not gonna be Japanese anymore” (Manzanar National Historic Site 1997).

The sense of shame remained after the war for May Sasaki.

“I do remember one incident where a young Caucasian boy came up to me...and he said to me, ‘What are you?’ And I knew what he was looking for, but I said,
'I'm Chinese.' And he looked straight at me and says, ‘No you're not. You're a Jap’...And that kind of still reinforced that there's something dirty or something bad about being Japanese. So, I didn't realize how strong that was in me, but even when I got married and had kids, I didn't try to share with them too many Japanese things.”

After going through a cultural identity awareness program as an adult, May became more aware of how her World War II experiences had impacted her. “I found that the depth of my guilt, or I don't know if you call it self-hatred, but I know I didn't like being recognized as being Japanese. And it took a while before I understood that that was okay. But I have to admit, it took into adulthood, that whole feeling” (Manzanar National Historic Site 1997).

Not only does the government’s archive expose people’s identity and association with an event that for some might unearth feelings of shame and stigma, the government archives online have the potential to perhaps more publicly expose people’s identities visually, continuing the government’s war-time hegemonic processes of invading and displaying people’s personal lives without their consent. While the government intended to portray Japanese Americans in a positive light in many of the photographs as part of a public relations effort to successfully resettle them outside of the camps, these images raise complicated questions of representation.

Judith Butler provides an analysis of photographic ethics by focusing on issues of representation. Challenging assumptions that images capturing “aesthetics of the face” are necessarily humanizing, she cites media imagery following 9/11. She argues that images that highlight the human face and even contextualize them with people’s names
can still be dehumanizing. Butler instead states that the most humanizing images are those where subjects possess or obtain agency and representation. She writes, “Those who gain representation, especially self-representation, have a better chance of being humanized, and those who have no chance to represent themselves run a greater risk of being treated as less than human, or indeed, not regarded at all” (Foster 2008, 88).

These questions of representation are important in the case of Japanese American incarceration, particularly as these events are currently recontextualized in historical narratives that are meant to problematize the government’s actions. As these images transition into different contexts, what kinds of interpretive assumptions do they initiate? While many people acknowledge the fluid interpretive nature of images, within the context of archives these images are generally observed and used as historic documents, communicating some degree of reality about the lives of the people in the photographs. The University of California, Berkeley, digitized over 7,000 of these government photographs which are currently available through the Online Archive of California. Like most archives, there is very little contextual information related to the production of the photographs or for interpreting the government’s captions that accompany the images. Additionally, these images are free to download and use as people wish. As archives become more accessible and their content arguably more malleable through online platforms, what responsibility do institutions have in providing adequate context?

Some of the ethical dangers in a lack of context are exemplified in other online spaces where these photographs have transitioned into the commodity sphere (Appadurai 1988). In November of 2017, Walmart sold government photography of Japanese American WWII incarceration as art on their website. The description on the photographs
stated, “Perfect Wall Art for any home, bedroom, playroom, classroom, dorm room or office workspace.” Walmart experienced heavy backlash, particularly from people in Japanese American communities. People were outraged, stating that selling the images was unethical. One Twitter user wrote, “The featured images, which show the prisoners seemingly enjoying life in their cramped detention facility, were from a series of photos taken by government photographers to depict the concentration in a positive light.” In response, Walmart explained that they go through licensing companies, and sometimes text accidentally goes through their automated filters. One of the images for sale depicts a group of young women outside of the camp barber shop at Tule Lake, a former site of confinement in northern California. In response to Walmart eventually taking the photo down, an individual tweeted, “Let’s also be glad for the sake of these women and the history they lived, we all stood up to say that this history is not for sale.” The National Japanese American Citizens League, a long standing Japanese American activist organization, denounced the selling of images utilizing the hashtag #noconcentrationcampart.

The transition of these photographs in the art market effectively brought the images into a space where their historical context was no longer their primary lens of creating value and meaning. Svasek differentiates between art by intention and art by appropriation. In this case, the photographs have become art by appropriation as they are used in the context of the art market and money-making entities (Svasek 2007, 11). While archives typically exist as non-profit institutions and are supposed to preserve materials often used for education and research, they also partake in the market system as a means
to provide revenue for their institutions. With less government funding supporting cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, and archives, it is perhaps understandable that these entities need to support themselves monetarily to some extent. What is most problematic is that for-profit entities continually make money from selling these images.

Numerous stock photography websites and self-identified online archives sell photography of Japanese American incarceration. The online vendor Granger Historical Picture Archives, an intermediary online retailer for Walmart, was involved in the incident (Rafu Shimpo 2017). On their website, hundreds of government photographs that people could acquire for free from the Online Archive of California are for sale. By law, creations of the federal government exist in the public domain, meaning free access to the public, unless deemed confidential for certain purposes. While there exists a number of ethical concerns with the government’s acts of photographing Japanese American WWII incarceration, government produced materials were never intended to enter a monetary market system.

Photographs of Japanese American incarceration can be found for sale on Amazon, eBay, stock photography websites, and other online for-profit entities. Natasha Varner, communication and public engagement manager at Densho, a nonprofit digital repository of Japanese American WWII history states,

“The bottom line is this: if you choose to sell prints of historical trauma or other sensitive issues, think about the communities those images represent. Engage them. Make sure the proceeds benefit them. Give them the agency and respect they were denied at the time those photographs were taken” (Yam 2017).

As photography of Japanese American WWII incarceration has been recontextualized in separate social spheres such as art markets online, institutional
archives, or museum exhibits, the fact that these photographs document the daily lives of real people during an extremely difficult time has the potential to get lost somewhere in the transition. In particular, many have observed anxieties surrounding digitization, citing the loss of their place in the tangible material world. Anthropologist Ruth Phillips writes, “Cyberspace has made us hyperconscious of the gap between image and presence, because it annuls and denies embodied and multisensory experiences of objects even more radically than the photograph, the slide, or the celluloid film reel” (Phillips 2005, 254).

**Mitigating Ethical Concerns in My Research**

As I have demonstrated, photographs of Japanese American WWII incarceration necessitate continuous ethical consideration as they are resituated in new contexts. Informed by the work of visual anthropologists and the historical context in which people produced photographs documenting Japanese American WWII incarceration, my research is grounded in these ethical questions. Specifically, my research methodology addresses the everchanging concerns of providing adequate historical context and representation.

Perceptions regarding the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II have shifted over time, influencing how people perceive and use objects documenting this history. While many people during World War II viewed the incarceration of Japanese Americans as an injustice, the general public attitude aligned with the government’s justification that it was a military necessity. In the seventy-five years since the incarceration, public opinion regarding the government’s justification has transformed, and it is now largely regarded as a major violation of American democracy.
Efforts to research and educate publics about this time in history have greatly relied on the extensive archive, mostly compiled by the US government throughout the war. The imagery documenting Japanese American WWII incarceration that is most accessible to the public today are photographs taken by government photographers produced largely beyond Japanese Americans’ control. The following section addresses how ethical concerns related to the historical production and present-day use of these images have informed my research of Japanese Americans’ photo albums.

Following Svasek’s use of aestheticization, my research is concerned with better understanding photographs in transit from the more private spaces of people’s homes and personal life histories to more public spaces of the museum. My choice to observe them in these contexts acknowledges the dynamic nature of images and how the photographs initiate the formation of different kinds of knowledge and meaning in different contexts. My focus on researching the photographs in different spaces also addresses anxieties surrounding the use of these images where they are further removed from the context of their production. Through interviewing album donors and creators, my goal is to try and gain a better understanding of not only how the photographs came to be, but how the images relate to the lived experiences of those incarcerated and the negotiation of these experiences today.

My focus on the materiality of photographs also stems from concerns regarding context. By observing the photographs as objects, I have been able to analyze them within different cultural contexts to better understand how they act as agents in the social worlds they inhabit (Gell 2017). Rather than focus on what the photographs visually show, analysis of photographs as objects provides a framework of analysis to observe
how people have exchanged, displayed, manipulated, and donated the photographs over time and in different spaces. My concern with material context grounds the photographs in the everyday lived experiences of the people represented in the photographs.

Through my engagement with individuals in Japanese American communities, I have attempted to address ethical concerns of representation in the photographic archive of Japanese American WWII incarceration. While a number of scholars have done extensive research on government photography and photographers to address ethical concerns related to artistic intention, I am mostly concerned with the representation of the people in the images. Do they feel that these photographs are representative of their experience? Even if at the time the images were taken, they had limited say in their representation, how do they relate to the photographs in today’s context? Following Butler’s logic, perhaps the first step in understanding representation is by asking those who were “not regarded at all.”

As Butler argues, consideration of representation is essential in negotiating the ethics of image production, consumption, and use. By focusing my analysis on photo albums that Japanese Americans created and actively involving them in my research, I have observed how people have used images as a form of self-representation. A primary portion of my data comes from interviews I conducted with Japanese Americans who either created or donated the photo albums. After transcribing the interviews, I sent the transcripts to all participants and asked for their input and edits, receiving a significant amount of feedback from the donors and creators.

While my methods have sought to address issues of representation, I must remain cognizant that my research is not necessarily fully collaborative. I also must take into
consideration how my research is actively influencing the social world in which the photographs are situated, and subsequently the ethical concerns involved in the impact of my research. Citing anthropologist Charles Menzies, Lamphere discusses applied collaborative work stating that it should identify “the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of the research partner and researcher” (Lamphere 2004, 433). He also states that in addition to open dialogue and community consultation, the researcher should organize a research team comprised of members of the community.

While my research encompasses many of these practices, I do not have community collaborators that are continually involved in the analysis of the data to an extent equal to my involvement. While this limits the collaborative process, I have made every effort to consult the people that my research has the most potential to affect, recognizing that as an anthropologist my research actively changes the existing social relationships I am studying. I have therefore also consulted participants to better understand the future trajectories that they would like to see for photographs of Japanese American WWII incarceration.

Following Svasek and Edward’s understanding that objects take on new meaning in new contexts and through different sensory experiences, I have outlined how the dynamic nature of photographs in transit has contributed to the foundation of the ethical groundwork in my research methodology. In various spaces over the last seventy-five years, people have observed images of Japanese American WWII incarceration as historical evidence, personal mementos, art, propaganda, and commodities. By observing the photographs as part of ongoing processes, I can see how changing contexts relate to changes in photographic meaning and valuation, and therefore new ethical questions.
Research of the photographs deserve as much care as research involving the people whose stories they tell.

As outlined in this chapter, the design of my research incorporates not only the anthropological and qualitative methods employed in data collection, but also ethical and methodological concerns. Taking into consideration the history of photography and visual anthropology, my approach attempts to build on previous research and make unique contributions. While a number of people have researched photographs of Japanese American WWII incarceration, my research questions and anthropological foundation are original, requiring different ethical and methodological considerations.
Chapter 4: Album Biographies

Researching and documenting the photo album biographies is an important aspect of my research, because it provides a contextual background for how the photo albums came into existence as well as how the albums have changed throughout time and in different spaces. Changes in the albums’ contexts and material forms can highlight the ways photographs and albums mediate localized relationships as well as broader cultural changes in which they are situated.

Igor Kopytoff differentiates between two spheres of tracing the life of an object: A thing’s social history and thing’s cultural biography. A cultural biography is the historical and present-day trajectory of a specific object, while the social history observes and entire class of objects over a long period of time and on a larger scale (Appadurai 1986, 34). Here, I document specific album biographies, tracing their trajectories from their present-day context through the history of their creation and use. Observing these biographies within the context of social histories of photo albums in general reveals cultural shifts in the status and valuation of photo albums of Japanese American WWII incarceration.

In this chapter I document biographies of photo albums of Katsumi Taniguchi, Hatsume Akaki, Rosie Kakuuchi, Rose Tanaka, and Tami Kasamatsu. For all of the photo albums I researched, there remains a significant amount of ambiguity regarding their creation and use throughout certain periods of their lives. As Kopytoff writes in
relation to writing biographies of people, “Biographies of things cannot but be similarly partial” (Kopytoff 1986, 68). In the following biographies, I have chosen what biographical information is relevant to understanding the shifting cultural contexts of the albums over time and in different spaces.

The biographies are also limited by what information is available to me. While it is easier to research and describe present-day positions of the albums, obtaining specific details about their creation and use over the last 75 years has proven more difficult. Not only has the passage of time impacted the degree of what people remember about the early years of the albums’ lives, but I suspect that the highly social position of the albums and photographs means that people often take them for granted. Perhaps most surprising for me was that album biographies became much more difficult to trace when I was able to speak to the people that created them as opposed to speaking to their relatives who donated the albums. This likely speaks to complexities of the social processes that the albums have historically and are currently part of. In order to create more complete biographies of the albums, I have conducted archival research and analysis of the physical albums in addition to interviews with the album creators and donors.

The biographies of photo albums are particularly complex, because they are made of photographs and ephemeral materials that before their incorporation into the albums came from different people and places. While some of these albums remain intact, presumably similar to how they were when people made them, all of the albums and the photographs inside them have experienced some kind of reassemblage, either physically or digitally. Given the dynamic nature of the albums, I have included biographical
information related to the albums’ roles in different contexts, providing information about the practices, places, and people involved in the life of the albums and album contents.

**Katsumi Taniguchi’s Photo Album**

Katsumi Taniguchi’s album is one of two albums that were donated by a relative of the person who created it. Through talking with Joyce Seippel, the album donor, in addition to doing archival research, I have been able to piece together some history of the album. The photo album is currently housed in Manzanar National Historic Site’s museum collection facility located in Death Valley National Park, roughly a two-hour drive from the site. The album is kept along with the other donated items in an archival box stored in their climate-controlled collections room. Since the album is now part of the public domain, visitors and researchers can make appointments to see it. Currently, this is the only place where people can see the photo album in the way Katsumi originally made it.

*Figure 2: Katsumi Taniguchi’s photo album*
While the physical album is housed quite a distance from Manzanar National Historic Site, Katsumi’s photographs are available at the site digitally. The photographs are saved on a hard drive with thousands of other historic photographs that employees have digitally scanned. Many of these photographs are available in a FileMaker database the staff has developed over the years. This database is used internally among staff members for research and program development. None of the digital copies include full album pages.

*Figure 3: The front cover of Joyce Seippel's book of Katsumi Taniguchi's photographs*

*Figure 4: The inside of Joyce Seippel's photo book*
Densho, an organization dedicated to digitally preserving and presenting the testimonies of Japanese American experiences of World War II incarceration, created the scans of the Taniguchi photographs to add to their online digital repository as well as provide digital images for Manzanar National Historic Site. There are a number of possible reasons that the digital scans do not include the context of the photo album. When I visited Joyce Seippel, she showed me copies of negatives that she found along with Katsumi’s materials related to Manzanar. It is possible that the photographs on Densho came from the donated negatives and not the actual photo album. The book I utilized in interviewing Joyce was not a copy of the album that exists in Manzanar’s museum collection. Instead, Joyce and I talked about the images using a book that she had put together from the negatives that she found among Katsumi’s things.

When I spoke with Joyce, she did not recall seeing the photo album or donating it. There is a significant amount of overlap in the photographs in Katsumi and Joyce’s albums, but they are different in their overall presentation. In addition to making the physical book, she also made a digital slideshow presentation of the photographs that include the names of people that she knew or was able to research. Joyce has a couple copies of the book and gave a copy of both the book and the digital presentation to Manzanar NHS. She also lent a copy of the book to an acquaintance she met at a class at the Oshure Institute who was interested in knowing more about this time in history. Both the book and the digital presentation are housed on site at Manzanar NHS, but neither are readily accessible to the public.
Since Katsumi Taniguchi passed away in the early 2000s and I was not able to speak with him, I know very little about his photo album in the context of his life. While Katsumi’s photo album contains photographs of Manzanar during World War II, this album is particularly unique because he was a soldier in the US military at the time and was not incarcerated. Katsumi took the photographs of Manzanar while on military leave visiting his father and other friends who were incarcerated at Manzanar. His father Tosuke Taniguichi was *Issei* born in Japan in 1885 and was living in Los Angeles, CA at the time of the incarceration. According to his birth records, Katsumi was born to parents Tosuke Taniguichi and Emiko Ito in Delta, Utah in 1919. Katsumi’s mother is not in any of the photographs in the album. Joyce thought that his mother and sister were in Japan at the time (Seippel 2017).

*Figure 5: A photograph of Katsumi Taniguchi and his father at Manzanar.*
Part of Katsumi’s life is documented in the book *Soldiers of Confinement*, because Katsumi was one of 21 Japanese American *Kibei* soldiers at Fort McClellan to be dishonorably discharged from the U.S. military in 1944. In protest of the Japanese American incarceration, the reinstatement of the draft for Japanese Americans in World War II, and their impending transfer to a combat zone, a small group of Japanese Americans at Fort McClellan chose to disobey military orders (Castelnuovo 2008, 42). Decades of fighting the dishonorable discharge culminated in a favorable court ruling in 1983. Katsumi was given an honorable discharge, veterans benefits, and backpay (Seippel 2017).

Katsumi was an artist and professional photographer after the war, but I know little of his later life. He married Hideko Okamoto in 1949 in Los Angeles, CA. Hideko’s portrait can be found in Katsumi’s photo album of Manzanar, but I am unsure to what degree they knew each other before and during the war. Hideko is also the reason Joyce Seippel met Katsumi Taniguchi, because Hideko is Joyce’s direct cousin. No one knows exactly when Katsumi made the photo album. Based on the discoloration of the pages and deterioration of the album, it is possible that it was made during World War II or during the decade after.

Joyce did not have any specifics about the life of the photo album until she found photographs of Manzanar in Katsumi’s house. Joyce along with her sister and brother-in-law helped Hideko clean out Katsumi and Hideko’s place after Katsumi passed away. Since Katsumi was a professional photographer, he had many photographs, but Joyce told me that “there was no time to look through it.” She does not recall finding the actual
photo album but remembers finding the negatives. They were “piled with other stuff” in the dining room.

Joyce does not remember what other things were there but recalls seeing something labeled “Manzanar pictures” and everything she eventually donated was in one place. “I’m surprised it was all cut and separated and you know in a page protector” (Seippel 2017). Joyce kept the materials related to Manzanar, because Joyce was also incarcerated at Manzanar as a young girl and thought she “could do something with it” (Seippel 2017). She thought they were valuable because people “could see what life was kind of like” in the photographs. Joyce hung on to the photographs for about a year before coming across a class that taught her how to scan negatives. She does not recall if she did this after talking to people who worked at Manzanar NHS or not.

Joyce was in the Eastern Sierra when Manzanar became a National Historic Site, and she became connected with people who worked at the site when she filled in for a friend at a local pharmacy. Richard Potashin, a former park ranger and oral historian at Manzanar helped her collect information about the photographs (Seippel 2017). Manzanar NHS Chief of Interpretation Alisa Lynch recalled that Katsumi Taniguchi’s album is the only item that the site acquired through a purchase. Alisa recalls that the Taniguchi Estate contacted Manzanar NHS about the site potentially purchasing the images. Since the National Park Service was not able to handle the costs, their partner group Friends of Manzanar purchased the materials from the Katsumi Taniguchi Estate and subsequently donated them to Manzanar National Historic Site (Lynch 2017).

Along with the photo album of images of Manzanar, Friends of Manzanar purchased a photograph portfolio titled “the Designs of Nature” created November 1941,
an 8x10 inch black and white photograph of Manzanar, and a 25-page scrapbook titled “Life in These States.” According to the official accession receiving report the Manzanar photo album is titled “The Sceneries of Manzanar,” but I did not see that written on the album anywhere when I researched it at the Manzanar museum facility. While not listed on this specific accession receiving report, Chief of Interpretation Alisa Lynch stated that the site also purchased roughly 134 negatives of Katumi’s photographs of Manzanar and his time as a soldier during World War II.

Katumi Taniguchi’s photo album and photographs have gone through many material and contextual transformations throughout their lives. From personal photographs and albums, they now reside in a public institution. People have reassembled his photographs in many digital and physical forms, some available to the public like the images available on Densho, while other assemblages of the images exist in more limited personal and professional spaces such as in Manzanar’s photograph database and Joyce’s book and digital presentation.
Hatsume Akaki’s Photo Album

Hatsume Akaki’s album is currently housed in Amache Museum’s collections facility located in the town of Granada, about half a mile away from the museum. It is kept in an archival box and shelved along with other donated items. The photographs in the Akaki album have also been digitized, likely by someone in the University of Denver’s Amache Research Project. Like the digitized images of Katsumi Taniguchi’s album, the digital images do not include the context of the photo album or photo album pages and instead are of cropped to each individual photograph in the album. The album is catalogued in the Amache Museum’s Past Perfect database, but the individual photographs are not categorized or catalogued in any formal system. While the Amache Museum has duplicates of many of the photo albums on display and available for people to look through, Hatsume Akaki’s album has not been incorporated in their exhibits. The album is available to the public at their facility upon request.
Like Katsumi Taniguchi’s album, I know little about Hatsume Akaki’s album in the context of her life since she has passed away. Bob Akaki, Hatsume’s nephew who donated the album, speculates that it would have been something she had in camp (Akaki 2017). Some of the photographs at the end of the album appear to be from outside camp, so it is possible she either made it after leaving Amache or added to it later. Deterioration of the photo album indicates that it could have been created at Amache or in the following decade. I found a bag containing left over adhesive corners used to attach photographs to the album. Although I was not able to date it, the paper packaging is discolored, demonstrating they have likely been in the photo album for a long time.

Bob explained that Hatsume was “the family scout” when they decided they would not be going back to California from Amache. Based on letters between Hatsume and her brother that Bob saved, she first went to Cleveland, Ohio. She then moved to Chicago and Milwaukee before finally deciding that St. Paul, Minnesota was the place...
for the family to resettle from the camp (Akaki 2017). The entire Akaki family moved to the Twin Cities in Minnesota in 1945. They were one of the last families to leave Amache. Hatsume and her brother lived with their parents, Bob’s grandparents. Hatsume remained in that house until the 1990s when she moved to Hawaii to be with her older sister. She remained there until she passed away.

The album, along with many of Hatsume’s possessions remained in their family house in the Twin Cities until Bob’s cousin Jack, cleaned out the house after everyone in the older generation of their family had passed away. Bob states, “And a lot of them were pack rats. So... a lot of the people that were in camp kinda got to be that way cause they lost everything once, and they weren’t going to go through that again.” Jack saved “things that looked like they might be worth saving, and it was in some of the stuff he saved from camp.” For about 20 years Jack saved a number of items that he had gathered from the house including a suitcase that says Akaki on it that they likely used in camp, an Amache yearbook, and a number of copies of the Granada Pioneer tied in a ribbon.

Jack was trying to clean out a number of the belongings he had saved and contacted Bob to see if he wanted the items. There was a suitcase of things that the family saved from before the war. Bob thinks they put many of these belongings in storage while they were incarcerated at Amache and then sent for it after the war. The album remained in storage for decades. Bob does not recall ever seeing the photo album until he was going through the materials that Jack had decided to keep. He decided to donate the photo album along with a suitcase to the Amache Museum, while he kept many of the family documents including a series of letters between his father, Hatsume’s brother, and
Hatsume, during World War II while he was in the Army. Bob sent them to the Go For Broke Foundation to have them scanned, but he kept the originals.

Of all the albums that I have researched, Hatsume Akaki’s album has remained the most physically static. The album’s transition from being a personal photo album to its new status as a museum artifact is nonetheless a major change. Compared to most personal and family photo albums, few find themselves in museums, let alone throughout the course of a lifetime.

**Rosie Kakuuchi’s Photo Album**

While I have had the benefit of interviewing Rosie Maruki Kakuuchi about her photo album and looking at it with her, the life of the album is perhaps the most difficult to trace. I first got in contact with Rosie at Manzanar NHS through my former supervisor, Alisa Lynch. Alisa told me that employees at Manzanar had scanned a number of photographs belonging to Rosie and her sister Grace, and Rosie had instructed her children to donate the albums in the future. Based on my interview with her and conducting analysis of the albums that she showed me, it seems that Rosie’s albums of Manzanar have undergone a series of transformations. She is currently in the process of rearranging her and her sibling’s albums and photographs into family history albums with sections devoted to each of the siblings in her immediate family. More than any of the albums I researched, Rosie’s album has changed over time and incorporates many other people’s photographs, captions, and writing.

Rosie is the youngest of the siblings in her family. Currently, she lives with her older sister, Grace. Both her sister Ruby and brother George passed away. Her sister Ruby died while incarcerated at Manzanar while giving birth to twins who also died
within a day of Ruby. Despite the hardships that Rosie’s family experienced, they tried to make the best of their life in forced confinement. Rosie was a teenager at the time and was very active in social groups and sports in the camp. She also remembers her parents having leisure time for perhaps the first time in their lives. Rosie graduated from high school in Manzanar in 1944 and then worked for the Personnel Department. Rosie’s brother George left Manzanar early to work in Los Angeles, and the rest of Rosie’s family left Manzanar in June or July of 1945, not long before the camp closed.

While trying to establish their lives outside Manzanar, they stayed in a hostel in downtown Los Angeles set up to house Japanese Americans leaving the camps. Rosie and her sister Grace found jobs with LA city schools and her parents eventually found jobs working at a hotel. Rosie got married to her husband in 1949. He had been incarcerated with his family at Heart Mountain in Wyoming. She maintained her career working in administration for various school districts in the Los Angeles area.

Rosie has made photo albums throughout her life. When she was a young girl she would write to celebrities asking for a photograph. She made a photo album with all of her celebrity photographs and took it to Manzanar, but in the camp, someone borrowed it and never gave it back (Manzanar National Historic Site 2006). Rosie told me that she tries to make a photo album every year and keeps them in her garage and cabinet in her living room. She continues to do work on the photo albums and keeps the ones she is working on in the house that she shares with her sister Grace. She plans on passing down the family albums she is currently making to her children.

At the time that employees at Manzanar NHS scanned Rosie and Grace’s photographs of Manzanar, I suspect there were separate albums devoted to their lives at
Manzanar, but throughout my interviews, I was not able to get a clear picture of exactly how the albums have changed over time. Currently, there is not just one album that documents Rosie’s time at Manzanar. Instead, she has taken photographs from other albums, mostly from her own album and her sister’s, and put them together in these new albums that are separated into sections devoted to each of her siblings. Since Manzanar NHS scanned Rosie’s photographs, she has incorporated these images into albums representative of family life histories.

While she was rearranging the albums and creating new ones, she made a point of saving all photographs related to Manzanar. Rosie states, “But Manzanar, I try to keep all of them without getting rid of them, because there’s no way we can get those pictures again, so anything with Manzanar, I kept all of them.” In addition to making these family albums, Rosie made scrapbooks devoted to two prominent people who were at Manzanar that she was close with: Ralph Lazo and Louis Frizzell. She also put together an album with photographs and documents about a prominent Manzanar baseball team called the Manzaknights that her brother George was part of.

The albums devoted to people are mostly comprised of documents such as letters, bulletins, and newspaper clippings, while the album about the Manzaknights is mostly comprised of historic photographs. Rosie did not think her family would be interested in keeping the albums of Ralph Lazo, Louis Frizzell, and the Manzaknights because Grace and Rosie were not in the photographs. Rosie explains,

“The binders with the family history they want but it’s the Manzaknights and Louis Frizzell and Ralph Lazo that they won’t want them. And you know, if Louis
Frizzell was in a picture with me it would be in the family [album]” (Kakuuchi 2017).

While she did not think her family would want these albums, she still felt it was important to make the albums for other people who would be interested in knowing about their lives. In response to how Rosie acquired the photographs in the album and if other people she knows made photo albums, she states:

“I can speak for the Modernaires, we used to get together after the war, have lunch, and they would bring pictures out and the others would bring pictures from their home and we would share and give to each other what we had and make copies. But uh, yeah, I’m sure they did because Mary Nomura she, uh, sent all of us a sheets of pictures of the Modernaires, what we did, and so all of us have a copy of that particular picture.”

Many of the photographs in the pages of Rosie’s album look as if she pulled them from other albums. When I asked her she stated,

“These were all in another album, but I decided since I am going to make a history of the family, I thought I would put them into another category, like my sister’s. These are all my sister’s pictures...These are pictures that I had and that she had that we put together to get her side of the story.”
Similarly, I noticed that a number of the photographs had different writing on them. I asked her about the writing below photographs in a portion of the album devoted to her sister Ruby from before the war. She said, “Those, my oldest sister [Ruby]...She recorded everything.” The albums include not only her siblings’ photographs, but she has made sure to also include their writing.

The photographs in the albums document life until relatively recently. The section devoted to her brother George ends with a program from his funeral in 2006. Even though George and Ruby are now gone, their stories still continue as Rosie works on the album. While attending her cousin’s funeral the day before I met with her, she had spoken to another relative who had photographs of Ruby that Rosie did not have. Her cousin agreed to send her the photographs so she could add them to the album.

Like Katsumi Taniguchi’s album, Manzanar NHS keeps the photographs they scanned of Rosie’s family in their FileMaker database. The site has used a number of
these photographs in museum exhibits as well as the site’s brochure. Rosie and her sister Grace labeled scanned copies of their photographs with names of people in the images and gave them to Manzanar NHS. Employees at Manzanar have scanned these annotated copies and they are available on the site’s hard drive. Manzanar NHS has also shared the digital scans with Densho. There are 181 “objects” or digital photographs in their collection of Rosie’s images. They do not include the context of the album or the album pages. Unlike albums that are currently preserved in museum collections, Rosie’s physical album is subject to active change as she continually adds photographs, rearranges them, and annotates it.

**Rose Tanaka’s Photo Album**

The exact history of Rose Tanaka’s album is also difficult to trace. Currently the album, or rather album pages, reside at Manzanar National Historic Site’s museum collection storage facility in Death Valley National Park. The accession receiving paperwork reads “Seven photo album pages with 52 pictures.” Based on these notes, it seems that Rose Tanaka did not donate the album in entirety, but just part of it. On the
left-hand side of all the pages, there are small holes that have been worn on one side, indicating that the pages were at one time kept in some kind of album or binder by rings that would have gone through the holes. When I showed Rose the photographs of the photo album, she did not remember the specifics of the album or the donation, but as we talked about the photographs in the albums, she had memories associated with the people in them and the groups she was part of.

Rose Tanaka was born in San Luis Obispo, California and was the youngest of the five Nisei children. Before World War II, Rose’s family lived in Cayucos, California, working in agriculture. Rose’s father was arrested shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and Rose’s mother volunteered for their family to go to Manzanar since she felt they could be reunited with Rose’s father sooner if they went into a camp early. Rose, her parents, and four of her siblings went to Manzanar, while one of her brothers remained outside the camps because he was in the military.

A large portion of the people the government incarcerated at Manzanar were from the LA area, so Rose had to makes friends. She recalls, “I was not part of their community, so I just had to sort of work my way in” (Tanaka 2017). Rose’s photo album documents many of the people she became friends with in the camp. Through help from the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, Rose was able to leave Manzanar before it closed to go to college at the University of Denver. She had two brothers who had already settled in Denver, and her parents later came to Denver as part of the camp’s resettlement program. In Denver, Rose met her future husband, and permanently settled in Colorado.
Rose does not recall exactly when she made the photo album. Deterioration of some of the tape in the album indicates that she likely made it many years ago, but exactly when is difficult to say. It is clear that the photographs in the album are from the 1940s and exchanged at Manzanar, because almost all of the photographs are signed by people who were her friends in camp. Rose’s handwriting is on the bottom of the photographs as well as on the black album paper. The writing on the photographs is more faded than the writing on the album paper, perhaps indicating that it is older.

When doing preliminary research on the albums, Manzanar NHS discovered that they had not yet digitized the album like they usually do with donations of photographs. I wonder if this is because Rose may have brought them to the Manzanar Reunion in Las Vegas, and Manzanar staff stopped at the museum facility on the way back to Manzanar NHS with the donation. When I visited their museum facility in Death Valley NP I signed up as a volunteer and transported the album back to Manzanar NHS to digitize. While I conducted my research at Manzanar, I volunteered to digitize the album. I was not able to finish the work while I was there, but another park ranger continued the digitization and completed the project over the next couple months. The digital photographs are on a hard drive accessible to employees.
My analysis of Tami Kasamatsu’s album is unique, because I never actually got to see the original album. Records at Manzanar NHS indicate there was some confusion about the location of the photo album after the site borrowed it to scan the photographs with the intention of eventually returning it. A letter addressed to Tami indicates that it was eventually sent back to her. When I visited her, I had expected her to have the album at her house, but she told me that the site still had the photo album. The current place of the album is unknown. In order to discuss the album with Tami, I utilized printed copies of the digital scans of her album that the site had.

Tami Kasamatsu grew up in Glendale and North Hollywood, California. Her family was involved in agriculture before the war. Tami graduated high school in 1937 and was working on her parents’ farm during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. At Manzanar, Tami, her parents, and her three brothers all shared a barracks room, and she worked as a statistician at the Manzanar hospital. Tami left Manzanar on a six month
temporary leave to Chicago, and after returning to Manzanar she left permanently for Denver where her cousins and brother were already living. Tami met her husband in Denver while sharecropping with her family and soon married. After giving birth to their first child, they drove back to California where they remained.

Tami says that she did not have a camera in camp, so all of the photographs in her album came from other people. She told me that many of them came from the camp photographer Toyo Miyatake and his son Archie, including a number of images taken of her friends who worked in the Manzanar hospital when she was not at Manzanar. While Tami’s husband was often in charge of the camera and put most of the photo albums in their house together, Tami made the Manzanar photo album. She said she did this because her husband would not have known the people in the photographs.

Tami estimates that they have about 100 photo albums in their garage that they have made over the years. A number of the albums document trips that they took with their friends. She says that they would occasionally pull them down and look at them with other people. Recently, Tami went through the albums and put them in order. She sent a number of the albums in their entirety to her friends in the mail. She also wanted to send family pictures to her son and daughter, intending to separate all of the photographs related to them and put them in a box. She has yet to complete these projects due to difficulties in getting all the albums down from the shelves (Kasamatsu 2017).

The current status and state of the physical album is unknown. It is possible that the album was misplaced by someone in Tami’s family or by employees at Manzanar NHS. Digital copies exist on a hard drive at Manzanar NHS. In addition to these digital copies, there is also a recording of Tami looking at her album and talking about it that
was filmed by a Manzanar oral historian who interviewed her. After Manzanar NHS originally scanned the album, they sent Tami copies of the digital scans, so she could label the images with the names of people that she knew. She later returned the copies to Manzanar with names written on the paper copies. These copies are available at the museum at Manzanar but are not readily available to the public without requesting them.

While all of the photo albums have unique individual histories, they all maintain similarities in the context of the broader classification of photo albums. While some of the albums remain in the possession of the people who made them, all of them have in some way, either digitally or physically entered the more public spaces of museums that tell the history of Japanese American WWII incarceration. Japanese Americans’ engagement with museums that preserve and interpret World War II incarceration marks significant contextual and material transitions in the lives of the photo albums. During World War II these photo albums documented people’s personal lives as they tried to make the best of their situations. Today, they also document a historical event widely accepted as a violation of American democracy.
Chapter 5: Material Traces in Photo Albums of Japanese American WWII

Incarceration

My analysis of photo albums of Japanese American WWII incarceration is based in their materiality. Researching the albums and photographs as objects has allowed me to create a fuller picture of their role in the everyday lives of people in the past and today. When I began my research, I intended on choosing photo albums in museum collections, so that I could focus part of my analysis on studying the physical albums and photographs. As I worked with museum personnel and Japanese American community members, it became clear that in order to have opportunities to also interview people, particularly some people that created the albums, focusing strictly on albums physically preserved in museum collections would limit my access to interviews.

I broadened the criteria for selection to include people who had also digitally donated photographs from their albums. Of the five album donors I interviewed, two of the donors donated digital scans and three donated the physical albums. With this broadened criteria, I was able to interview people who created the albums documenting their time incarcerated in the camps during World War II. I felt this was particularly important, because many people of this generation have passed away, and understanding their perspectives is crucial to the work of preserving and educating people about this history.
My prioritization of collecting perspectives of people who the government incarcerated during World War II complicated my research regarding the materiality of images. While I was able to look at the majority of photo albums in person, my research time and access was limited. Much of my in-depth analysis of the physical albums relied on high resolutions digital scans, photographs of the albums, and low-resolution screenshots from my interviews with album donors. I was able to spend the most time with Hatsume Akaki’s photo album that is currently housed at the Amache Museum. I also worked extensively with the Rose Tanaka’s photo album since I volunteered to scan it while I was conducting research at Manzanar National Historic Site.

While I was able to analyze Katsumi Taniguchi’s album at the museum collection facility in Death Valley National Park, my time with the album was limited. Similarly, my research of Rosie Kakuuchi’s albums was limited to the time I spent with her at her home and the screen captures from the video I took of our conversation. Lastly, I was never able to see Tami Kasamatsu’s photo album in person, because its current location is unknown. Given challenges with time and access to the physical albums, my analysis is more robust with certain albums and less with others. In the following chapter, I provide a summary of my observations of each photo album. I further analyze these observations in Chapter 7, exploring what the materiality of photographs can tell us about life at sites of Japanese American World War II confinement and how these experiences are remembered today.
Katsumi Taniguchi’s Photo Album

Katsumi Taniguchi’s album is in a black plastic booklet with wire binding made by the Eastman Kodak Company. There are 31 pages that contain photographs behind clear plastic page protectors. The photographs vary significantly in size. The image on the first page is the largest, covering the entirety of the page. Of all the photographs, it is also the one that had been most obviously modified. There is both Japanese and English writing on the front. The Japanese writing is written vertically on the top right corner of the photograph. On the bottom right corner, the words “Photos by K. Tani” are written in white capital letters. There is also a border surrounding the image with double lines. Unlike any other photographs in the album, the sleeve also contains a cutout image of a young woman wearing ice skates. It reminds me of an image that could have come from the Sears catalogue, but it is difficult to know its provenance or its intended purpose in the photo sleeve.

Figure 11: Photograph on the first page of Katsumi Taniguchi’s photo album
Of all the photo albums I researched the arrangement of photographs and the ways Katsumi wrote captions are the most unique. One caption accompanying photographs of a young girl is framed by two angular lines that extend from the page to

*Figure 12: Pages from Katsumi Taniguchi's photo album showing his creative arrangement of photographs and captions*

*Figure 13: Page in Katsumi Taniguchi's album showing captions on the bottom of the photograph*
the photograph itself. Another unique page contains small photographs arranged in a
circular pattern. This page has the most captions in the album.

While writing is not on every photograph, captions are prevalent throughout the
album, both directly on the images as well as below them on the album paper. Some of
these captions mark location, while other captions refer to people’s names. Overall, there
are ten captions that list people’s names, five places, two event descriptions, and two that
were other types of commentary. An example of other commentary is a caption that reads
“under the stars” written on a photograph of the outdoor movie theater at Manzanar. The
captions and writing throughout the album are mostly in English, but there is also some in
Japanese.

Unlike some of the other albums, I was unable to see the backs of the photographs
to observe markings, stamps, or other writing. It was also difficult to see the photographs
in great detail because of the sheen of the plastic covering. The images that the
organization Densho scanned are not the same as the photographs in the album. Instead,
they appear to be direct scans of the negatives. Consequently, they do not provide details
about how Katsumi modified the photographs or arranged them in his photo album.
Rose Tanaka’s photo album is the only one that is not bound in some kind of book. The pages appear to have come out of some kind of album book that would have bound them through two small holes in each page. The pages look similar to the size and shape of those in Hatsume Akaki’s album, which resembles an album for sale in the Sears catalog. An invitation for the class of 1944 with Rose’s name “Rosie Hanawa” hand written on the front along with a group photograph of young women sit on top of the album pages in their box at the museum collection facility. It is possible that these items were once attached to the photo album pages but have since fallen off. The photographs are held in the album with adhesive photo corners, so I was able to safely remove the photographs from the corners and scan and research the backs of the images.

Figure 14: Page from Rose Tanaka's photo album
The majority of the photo album is comprised of portrait photographs of individual people, perhaps taken for the yearbook. Most of the photographs have writing on the front of the images addressed to Rose and are signed on the bottom. The color of the writing varies in each picture. Many people signed their names with what appear to be nicknames. One young man signed his name “Rabbit.” In addition to signatures, some of the photographs have short messages on the front or back. The longer messages tend to be on the back.

Figure 15: Photograph in Rose Tanaka’s album showing a photograph signed "Rabbit"
For example, a photograph signed “Reggie” reads on the back, “Now that the annual is out, I can give a sigh of relief, and thank you for your excellent help. You were swell. Reggie”. The photograph that rests on top of the album pages in the archival box has the most extensive writing on the back. There are thirteen different signatures and notes on the back, likely signed by the women in the photograph. One of the signatures simply reads “’Koby’ 30-11-4.” The series of numbers refers to the person’s address in the camp, which were numbered first with a person’s block number, then barracks, and lastly, apartment number. Other writing on the photographs is not as straightforward, and
perhaps allude to inside jokes between Rose and the people in the images. Two photographs of young men in cap and gowns that look like they were taken around the same moment both have blue writing on the back. One reads “Property of the Manzanar Zoo. Where’s Rosie?” and the other reads “Oh Rosies [sic] in this pic?” While the handwritten numbers on the back are different, the stamped numbers are the same.
The majority of portrait photographs that have signatures on the front also have writing on the backs of the photographs. Most of this consists of a person’s name with the year ’44 written in pencil. They appear to all be written by the same person, perhaps Rose’s way of noting the name and graduation year of each person.

In addition to writing on the photographs themselves, there are captions written in white on the album pages. Many of the captions are people’s names, often including nicknames. Other captions refer to places, events, and dates. There is one title on the eleventh page that reads “The War Years – 1942 - ?”. This perhaps indicates that Rose made the album in camp, since she did not know exactly when the war would end. Of all the captions, ten refer to people’s names, seven identify specific places, one describes an
event, and there is one date. Three captions do not fit those categories. One photograph is a description of Rose’s friend, “A best pal 1942-44.” Another caption under a photograph of a garden reads “but of desert sands – the work of a land of man.” The last caption in the album is under a picture of Rose in her cap and gown. It reads, “With the burden of the world on my shoulders.”

Stamps on the back of photographs are prevalent throughout the album. While a number of them are standard numbers, perhaps related to the place or system used for developing and distributing the photographs, other stamps have a date. Many of the photographs that look like they were taken at Merritt Park, the most prominent garden at Manzanar, are all stamped with March 3. The majority of the photographs are cropped with a small white border, but a couple are cut with a pattern. Most of Rose’s photo
album is comprised of photographs, but there are also a couple documents related to her graduation ceremony at Manzanar in 1944 as well as her graduation cap tassel. One photograph of a young woman has a small hole in the top indicating that it was likely hung up with a tack before being added to the album. The printing and cropping of this photograph are also different than the other photographs with a stylized border.

Hatsume Akaki’s Photo Album

Hatsume Akaki’s photo album is bound in a brown plastic cover embossed with a gold motif. The binding is comprised of a brown string that holds the book together. The photo book looks very similar to one available in the 1943 Sears catalog, and it is possible it came from the catalog but in different year’s publication. All of the pages in the album are on black construction paper, and most of the photographs are held in place using black adhesive photo corners. Most of the photographs are not secured with other adhesive, so I was able to carefully remove the photographs to observe the backs.
Many of the photographs have some kind of writing or stamp on the back, perhaps related to organizational systems used to keep track of them during their development. It is difficult to know where the photographs were developed and if this at all correlates with the process of ordering them from the War Relocation Authority at Amache.

Some of the images have words printed directly on the paper. For example, a professional-looking photograph in the beginning of the album, has “Nakako Studio” printed on the front, indicating that it was taken and developed at Nakako Studio in Los Angeles, most likely before the war. There are other photographs in Hatsume’s album that also have dates printed directly on the photograph paper.
People’s names are signed on the front and backs of throughout the entirety of the album. The majority of signatures on the front of photographs are addressed to Hatsume. Writing on the front of the professional photographs taken at Nakako Studio reads “To my dear friend, Hatsume.” On the bottom right corner of the photograph, it reads “With seasons greetings, -usaye Ueno.” This type of writing appears most often on portraits.
Some of the photographs are more formal, taken in studios, while others are more informal snapshots. While most of the writing on the photographs is in English, one of them has Japanese written on the front. According to a Cally Steussy, a graduate student at Indiana University who participated in the 2018 Amache Field School, the Japanese characters are people’s names, like the captions written in English. One group photograph has multiple signatures on the back, appearing to correlate with the people that are in the photograph. In addition to the signed names, it also has a stamp, date, and location. The image was taken at the Merced Assembly Center in August 1942. In addition to photographs, Hatsume Akaki’s album contains other archival materials. Of all the albums I have researched, her album has the most. They mostly consist of invitations

*Figure 27: Document in Hatsume Akaki’s album make in the Amache silk screen shop with a stamp from the “Granada WRA Police Dept.”*

and programs for various events at Amache. Much of the printing is slightly raised off of the paper, indicating that they were likely made at Amache’s silk screen shop. Like the writing on the photographs, the writing on the documents and invitations are written in both English and Japanese. A number of the documents include stamps of approval from
the “Granada WRA Police Department.” A very unique item in the album is a hat that on
the inside reads “made in Japan.”

There is one larger document written completely in Japanese. During her work in
the museum at the 2018 Amache Project Field School, Cally Steussy translated the
document. The translation reveals that it is a “Co-op March” or song about the Amache
Co-op. The march is meant to be played to the music of a well-known Japanese military
song.

Tami Kasamatsu’s Photo Album

While I suspect that Tami Kasamatsu’s album is contained in some kind of book,
I am not positive since I was unable to see the original album and only have scans of the
images and pages for my research. Since Manzanar NHS did not scan the backs of the

Figure 28: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu’s album taken both outside and in a studio

photographs or the entire album page for most of the album, that information is not
adequately represented in my research.
The photographs in the album appear to be mostly held in place on black paper with black adhesive photo corners. Most of the images are cropped with thin white borders, but some are tapered or ripped around the edges.

*Figure 29: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu’s album showing different border styles*

While I do not know if there is writing on the backs of photographs, there is a considerable amount of writing on the front. Often, these are also accompanied by a date or other note. Many of these photographs are more formal portraits, but some are images of people posed more informally, typically in an outdoor space. Interspersed through the scanned album pages are notes taken on scrap paper with names of people in the photographs as well as additional historical context. Some of the notes indicate exactly when people in the photographs not only left Manzanar, but if they came back and where they moved to after leaving the camp. A number of the notes also refer to when people got married and who they married. These notes could be related to Manzanar NHS’s interest in the history of Tami Kasamatsu’s life or it is possible Tami made these notes before giving it to Manzanar NHS to scan and put them in the album for added information. Given my experience as a previous employee of Manzanar NHS, it is likely that Manzanar was looking for additional information about the people in the photographs and Tami provided this for them.
Rosie Kakuuchi’s Photo Album

Since I conducted my research at Manzanar NHS after interviewing Rosie Kakuuchi and I had not seen exactly what images of Rosie’s that they had scanned, I was not sure what her album would look like. What I had not anticipated was that her photo album, or rather photo albums, had changed since Manzanar National Historic Site scanned them. Manzanar Chief of Interpretation Alisa Lynch recalls taking a photo album to scan but based on the limited amount of images I found at Manzanar NHS, it is unclear exactly which photographs were scanned and in what form they were organized at the time. Since my research of Rosie’s photographs is based on the conversation we had and scans of the photographs at Manzanar NHS, my research of her albums do not include an analysis of the backs of the photographs.

Currently, Rosie has multiple albums that contain photographs of Manzanar. She organized photographs that she thought best visually represented the lives of her two sisters and one brother, in one large binder. The binder is separated into three sections devoted to each sibling. She also made a separate binder that is all about her life. The photographs in each of the binders have come from multiple locations, often from other albums that she had taken apart and repurposed to more concisely represent her family member’s stories. Rosie’s album about her own life and the lives of her siblings all contains images of Manzanar. In addition to these albums, she also organized an album that covers her family’s history before her generation, mostly comprised of images of her parents and grandparents.
While there is no binder that is a comprehensive visual history of her and her family’s time at Manzanar, she created three binders that are specific to people and experiences while confined there. Two of the albums cover the lives of people she was friends with at Manzanar and who are historically well known for their unique stories and support of the Japanese American communities incarcerated in the camp. She made one binder for Ralph Lazo, a young Mexican American man who decided to join his Japanese American friends during their forced evacuation and another for Louis Frizzell, a popular music teacher at Manzanar who later acted in a number of Hollywood movies. These albums are mostly comprised of documents and newspaper clippings about their lives and contain far fewer photographs than the family albums. The other album she made about Manzanar is titled “Manzaknights.” Rosie’s brother who everyone refers to as Kow, was part of the baseball team the Manzaknights. From my experience looking at this album with Rosie, it appears that Rosie and her sister, Grace, were also very involved with the
team and good friends with many of the people who played on it. This album is mostly comprised of photographs.

While my intent was to focus a single photo album for each donor, my analysis to some degree now encompasses all of the photo albums that Rosie has made with a focus on the specific sections related to Manzanar. While ideally research of the photo albums for each of her siblings would include all of the photographs and not just their time at Manzanar, I was not able to spend a significant amount of time talking with Rosie about every photograph in each of the albums. This was due to time constraints and the sheer quantity of the photographic record that she has organized.

The albums with photographs of her siblings and her life are in large, plastic, white binders. The album titled “Manzaknights” is in a large three ring binder that has floral print cloth on the outside. Within the binders there are clear plastic sheet protectors that contains photographs. Some of the photographs have been attached to white pieces of paper, while others remain on paper that was taken out of other albums. Many of the album pages that have been relocated to the binders are on black paper with white writing, very similar to the other photo albums I have researched that were likely made around the time or during World War II. Rosie notes that these album pages came not only from her albums, but also her sibling’s albums. The writing and captions under and
on many of the photographs therefore are not all Rosie’s, but also the writing of her sisters Grace and Ruby. Perhaps reflecting the diversity of trajectories that the photographs in Rosie’s album have taken, the type and style of captions vary. The writing written on the white paper seems to belong to Rosie as it often refers to Rosie as “me.”

Rosie told me about one caption that is particularly meaningful. After her sister Ruby died in childbirth while confined at Manzanar, Rosie’s father mailed a copy of the photograph taken at Ruby’s funeral to Ruby’s former high school teacher, Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith was also taking care of a number of their belongings while their family was incarcerated. When she received the photograph, she wrote a description on the bottom. Many years later, Mrs. Smith decided that the Maruki family should have the photograph
back, and it now resides in the section of Rosie’s album devoted to the life of her sister, Ruby. This photograph of Ruby’s funeral is also the only one in the album that I know has been modified. Rosie’s father cut out a picture of Ruby’s face from her wedding picture and glued it to the top of the photograph from her funeral. Rosie said he did this so that people could see what she looked like.

Figure 32: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi’s album showing a caption written by her sister Ruby's former high school teacher

I was not able to capture an image of every single photograph in the Rosie’s albums, but my estimation of the different kinds of captions represent a majority of the photographs of Manzanar in her albums. Of the one hundred and twenty-nine captions I counted in the video of my conversation with Rosie, seventy-seven, the vast majority are referencing people’s names. Twenty captions refer to the date, eleven to a specific event, ten to a place, nine to an organized group of people, and two captions do not fit these categories. One of the captions that does not fit these categories appears to be a side note regarding fashion trends of the time. The other is a narrative description of Rosie’s
involvement in a play. The caption under the photograph of Rosie in a play at Manzanar is also the only caption I came across that has Japanese writing.

While some of the photographs were in other albums previous to being incorporated in Rosie’s, some were also used for other purposes. Small holes in the tops of two photographs indicate that at one point they were likely on display secured by a tack. The majority of photographs in the album appear to be original in the sense that they were printed during World War II. In contrast to the newer white paper that holds
the photographs in place, the images are significantly faded and are a yellowish cream color. While the idea of a photograph being original is complicated by the fact that they are highly reproducible, I am able to trace some of them to the people that took the

*Figure 36: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi’s album that is a copy of an official government photograph*

photograph. Particularly interesting is one image in Rosie’s album that I recognized as an official photograph taken by Francis Stewart, a War Relocation Authority photographer. According to Rosie and my memory of the Toyo Miyatake collection, many photographs in the album were also taken by camp photographer Toyo Miyatake or his son, Archie.

Exploring material traces of photographs and their context in photo albums is useful in order to understand object biographies and how people have repurposed and reused photographs over time. Through close analysis of the photo albums, I have been able to identify personalized modifications as well as patterns in how people have used images of their experiences of Japanese American WWII incarceration. I will further discuss these patterns and particularities in relation to their social use and exchange in Chapter 7.
Chapter 6: Album Conversations

The following analysis is an investigation of each of the photo albums through my conversations with album donors. Each section consists of a summary of each conversation and identification of common narrative themes. While talking with album donors, the photographs revealed patterns about people’s experiences of incarceration during World War II, but they also illuminated stories that transcend the time the photographs were taken. My analysis also highlights how these photographs are part of people’s present-day worlds and how they remember, negotiate, and narrate the past.

While each conversation was unique, there were a number of thematic patterns including narratives about community, change and movement, and injustice.

While I have organized my analysis by theme, it is important to note that the ways people talk about photographs do not always fit into bounded categories. Often my conversations about a specific photo were tied to multiple themes. Similarly, these stories are not discrete or tied only to what is visually represented in an image. My conversations and analysis demonstrate the complexities in how people interact with photographs, how these experiences are communicated to other people, and furthermore, how they are interpreted by an anthropologist. In addition to discussing certain themes, I identified a number of common practices during our conversations. These include the acts of identifying or attempting to identify people, places, and events. While the images capture observable details from a moment in time, our conversations about the photographs
sometimes went beyond an attempt to understand what was visually depicted and elicited emotional responses and personal narratives about other times and places.

I refer to what anthropologists would call an unstructured interview as a conversation throughout this chapter, because it more accurately represents my interactions with people while looking at the photo albums. The themes I have identified are influenced by multiple factors including my pre-existing knowledge of the history of Japanese American World War II incarceration and my relationships with the album donors. These conversations were highly contextual. If another researcher carried out my same methods, it would produce different conversations. Furthermore, the following analysis adds another layer of representation since it is my interpretation of these conversations. While my analysis is interpretive, it is also empirical. To the best of my ability, I have attempted to represent the experiences I had with album donors in a way that reflects our time together discussing the photo albums.

**Rosie Kakuuchi**

Since Rosie intended her albums to represent the lives of her and her family, much of our conversation was about around family, the activities her family members participated in, and the relationships they established in camp. The major themes covered during our conversation were experiences tied to community, place, and movement or change. Although the majority of the photographs we looked at were of Rosie and her family’s experiences of incarceration, our conversation also included stories tied to both before and after the war. The following summary and examples are organized by theme.
The most prominent topic of conversation was about community. For example, Rosie’s discussion of family often tied her siblings to other people or groups of people that they interacted with at Manzanar. The most common aspects of community that Rosie talked about as we looked at her photo albums were sports, social groups, neighbors, and reunions. An important part of Rosie and her siblings’ experiences at Manzanar was their involvement with baseball in camp. Her brother was on a prominent baseball team called the Manzaknights. Rosie has an entire album devoted to the Manzaknights, but photographs related to this baseball team are also present in Rosie and Grace’s sections. Rosie associated many of these photographs with feelings of fun and the good times that people had at Manzanar.

*Figure 37*: Photographs in Rosie Kakuuchi’s album showing different social groups in camp including baseball teams and co-workers (6 images)

R: And then his was their hardball team. The two guys knew how to play hardball. And then this, Min, where is he? Well this guy Min, he taught them everything, and they almost won the championship. There he is. And he taught them how to play hardball. They went from nothing. They had never played together, and yet he taught them, and they almost won the championship. But the
championship was won by San Fernando Aces, and they had been together since before the war. They were really, I mean they gave them a real good fight. 

*Figure 37b*

![Image of old photographs](image)

R: Yes, these are all young kids.

W: All the Manzaknights?

R: All the Manzaknights. Yeah, they really had a good time.

Rosie and her sister Grace were involved in sports at Manzanar as well. Grace helped manage a girls’ sports team in camp, and Rosie played for the championship girl’s baseball team called the Dusty Chicks. She recalls how sports were a way for people to have a good time in camp.
R: And she and Aikiko were adviser to this young group of girls who were sports like baseball, basketball, and just having a good time.

W: Oh, is that you?

R: Yeah.

W: Oh, look at you go.

R: Yeah, this was a championship team, the Dusty Chicks.
W: You were part of the Dusty Chicks.

R: Yeah, I was a pitcher.

In addition to being part of sports teams, Rosie and her sister Grace belonged to other social groups in camp. The social spheres and connections that they had reflect common practices of their age groups. For Rosie who was in high school, these associations were often tied to school and extra curriculars, while Grace, who was in her early twenties, was involved in social groups tied to work and other interests. Grace was part of a club called the Calico Cats, which was mostly comprised of journalists who worked for the camp newspaper, the *Manzanar Free Press*.

*Figure 37e*

R: And this is our club. This is our Modernaires club.

W: So, you were part of a lot of clubs it looks like?

R: Modernaires was the main one.
R: Now this is the Calico Cats that my sister belonged to. And some of them were journalists, and that’s why they more or less got together.

W: Oh, so the women were journalists?

R: Yeah, they worked for the Free Press.

W: And what was the club, was it like a social club?

R: Well, she really doesn’t know what they were. They didn’t go for sports. Well when you were four years older, that’s pretty old for us we thought. But um, they were uh, they weren’t even social, they were just journalists. She said that she doesn’t know what they really did. But in the newspaper article they read that they were going to have a dance or have a party or something.

Another prominent aspect of community that Rosie and I talked about was related to where people lived in camp. People who lived in her block or spent time with her family in her barracks became part of her family’s social network. Rosie also describes how establishing relationships with people was a positive aspect of her time at Manzanar.
R: These are all Manzaknights. There were a bunch. Like this Harry Kakuna. They asked him, ‘What block were you in?’ He said, ‘I really don’t know cause the minute I woke up I spent in Block 21 until it was time to go to sleep.’…He spent the whole day with us.

W: But he wasn’t living there, just with you all the time?

R: No, he just goes just to sleep. He was so funny.

W: So, are most of these people friends?

R: Oh yeah, these are my dear friends. All friends and neighbors. Yeah, see these are the Manzaknights pictures that you have already seen.

W: So, a lot of these people did you know them before you went into Manzanar?
R: Most of them, no. Most of them we met in camp. So, this is why I say one of the good parts of the camp was that we met people that we never would meet, and we are still good friends.

While our conversation about many of the photographs related to the relationships people established in camp were based on where people lived or spent time, the photographs also led Rosie to tell stories about how the landscape shaped people’s experiences.

*Figure 39: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi’s album where the landscape shaped her narratives of life at Manzanar (2 images)*

*Figure 39a*

R: Oh, and this is an outdoor picture of the Calico Cats. But that mountain was so beautiful.
R: And this is in front of our apartment.

W: At Manzanar? What, where did you live?

R: Block 21, barrack 8, apartment 3.

W: Wasn’t that not too far from block 14, right?

R: Well 21 is here and 15 is here and a firebreak and then 14. And then 20.

W: And if I remember, wasn’t the photo studio?

R: Right between 20, ours. Right between 21 and 20 firebreak. So, we got the best seats. We always put a blanket on right away. Yeah between 21 and 20 was the theater.

W: Oh, the movie theater.

R: Yeah, the movie projector. Yeah, we would put our blanket right away on the bench, cause there was one bench.

While the visual aspect of photographs is seemingly static, the photographs often elicited stories of movement, transition, and change. Sometimes these stories surrounded single photographs, while other times Rosie’s arrangement of a progression of
photographs framed her narrative of change over time. Common themes of movement and transition are related to people moving in and out of camp as well as people passing away, the latter often associated with feelings of sadness and loss.

When looking at a photograph of Rosie participating in a Japanese play, she told me that she got a part in the play, because people in camp who typically acted in the Japanese performances had left camp. The photograph illuminates experiences of constant change and instability as people moved in and out of the camps and people attempted to prepare for eventually relocating permanently. This photograph also shows experiences aligned with Japanese cultural practices and how people of different generations related to these practices.

*Figure 40: Photographs in Rosie Kakuuchi’s album that relate to narratives of change over time (3 images)*

*Figure 40a*

R: …All the Japanese actors and actresses left camp and they had to put a show on, so this director asked my dad, ‘Do you know anyone of this age that could play this one small role?’ ‘Oh, my daughter will.’ I said, ‘I will not, I will not.’ I said, ‘This is ridiculous, I don’t know anything.’ So, I was forced to play.

W: That’s you? I’ve seen this picture before. Oh my gosh, that’s amazing.
R: I said, ‘Oh.’ They said, ‘All you have to do is say one sentence, that’s all.’ So, okay then. Cause for the Issei, for parents to see. I said okay…

A couple of Rosie’s photographs depict her and her sister Grace’s departure from camp. After years of being incarcerated at Manzanar and finally being able to return to their home in Los Angeles, they had to reestablish their lives and find a means to support their family. This was likely a major point of transition for Rosie and her family.

*Figure 40b*

R: And this is Grace and me when we were ready to leave camp before it closed so we could find a place for our parents.

W: How old were you?

R: Nineteen. I was nineteen.

W: When you were leaving?

R: We were allowed to leave camp. They were going to close camp soon, and so this was about July I guess. Or August we decided we were going to go ahead and help my parents find a place to stay, because we had no place to stay. No place,
nothing. So, we decided, we both got dressed and they took a picture for us, and we came to LA and stayed at the one Buddhist church hostel.

*Figure 40c*

R: And this is when we were leaving to, from camp. And that’s a picture she [Grace] picked up too.

Many of the memories and stories that Rosie shared related to how her relationships to people or places in the photographs have changed over time. This happened most often when Rosie mentioned how people in the photographs had passed away.

*Figure 41: Photographs in Rosie Kakuuchi's album of people who have passed away (7 images)*

*Figure 41a*
R: And this was my brother’s best friend, Nob. Isn’t it sad. They are all gone now.

*Figure 41b*

R: I had it blown up, so I could see their face better.

W: Yeah. That’s a good picture.

R: But isn’t it sad? They are all gone.

W: Yeah, they all must have been probably in their 20s or?

R: Well, no the youngest one would be my brother and Jim. But the rest of them would be 2 maybe 3 years older. Isn’t that sad. They are all gone.

*Figure 41c*
R: Yeah. These are Manzaknights and other people. See they are all photos by Toyo Miyatake.

W: And are you in contact with people who are in these albums, still or?

R: Well I was before I moved here because they used to arrange for and gather them together for a reunion. But then after I moved here, so many of them passed away. It’s just too hard. Or they couldn’t travel. These are all. It is hard to see, because they are all.

Rosie’s arrangement of photographs of her sister, Ruby, who passed away at Manzanar while giving birth to twins shows the emotional impact a specific assemblage of photographs and its corresponding narrative. This combination of images is particularly impactful as the photographs depict significant events of Ruby’s life that people typically experience at a young age followed by a photograph taken at her funeral.

*Figure 41d*

R: Here is her graduation picture.
R: Now, see this is her wedding.

R: And this is her honeymoon.
R: And this is her funeral.

W: And that’s at Manzanar.

R: This is Manzanar.

Another reoccurring theme was about the Manzanar reunions. In more recent years, the reunions have been a central meeting place where Rosie and others who were incarcerated at Manzanar have been able to connect with many of the people in her photo albums. The reunions have also been the impetus for creating photo albums, such as Rosie’s albums about her friends Ralph Lazo and Louis Frizzell.

*Figure 42: Photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi’s album related to Manzanar reunions*

R: And Ralph Lazo’s album that I have, I don’t know how many people have used it. It just got returned to me. I don’t know what made me make an album for Louis Frizzell, but so many people are asking about him, I decided, he was our music teacher. And he was in *Farewell to Manzanar* as himself. He was a real good friend in camp. We became real good friends. And after camp closed, we were still friends. I would still contact him…And I wrote him a letter and he, I got
no reply. Then his father who lived in Bakersfield, said he passed away. So, I let my Manzanar committee, reunion committee know and said he passed away, and I think we should honor him. So, in 1980 we had a reunion and we honored Louis Frizzell, and on the screen, they showed a lot of his [movie] pictures. And we had a, we made an album for him, but no one knows where it is.

W: So, you made that when he passed?
R: Well after that more and more people asked me about him and heck, it’s easier just to have it all in one book.

Tami Kasamatsu

Like Rosie Kakuuchi’s album, many of Tami’s photographs elicited stories about experiences of community, place, and movement or change over time. The most prominent kinds of relationships she talked about are those that she established while working at the Manzanar hospital and the relationships she established with neighbors. These narratives are not strictly about experiences while incarcerated at Manzanar during World War II, but the photographs are also about the site today and the lives of the people in the photographs since World War II.

The most common aspect of community life at Manzanar that Tami talked about during our conversation was the group of people she worked with at the Manzanar Hospital. Many of the images depict Tami and her co-workers at the hospital, which sparked stories about the relationships she maintained with this group of people after the war.
Figure 43: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu’s album related to social groups in camp including her coworkers at the hospital and pre-war communities (4 images)

Figure 43a

W: Oh, okay. And that’s when you were at the hospital?

T: Mhm. And this is Doctor, I forgot his name. These are all hospital workers.

W: Was it a close group of people? Like all of the people who worked at the hospital?

T: Um, the public health group. We were pretty close. Even after camp, we stayed together…Gee, from the very beginning they used to come to my place. And even after we moved here, gee, about 40 years.

Tami also talked about how certain groups associated with the hospital were also related to geographic communities that existed before the war, such as a photograph of people who were all from North Hollywood.
T: Yeah these are North Hollywood group.

W: At the Hospital? Or just the block?

T: This is taken at the hospital. But it’s the North Hollywood group...But you know, they all became doctors. There’s Obo, Ochi, Sam, Bobo, Ochiko. There’s seven. Seven in the family.

Tami was also part of a social group called the Coronets. She does not recall what factors contributed to their formation as a group, but she does remember that they traveled to different mess halls to try out new food and ate together in their barracks.
W: What else did you do besides play bridge?

T: There were five of us. Every Friday we used to [laughs] go to a different kitchen until, let’s see where is she, one of the mothers, she said instead of going to a kitchen, come to my house. She’ll feed us, you know. Cause sometimes we didn’t like the food.

W: Yeah. So, people made things in their barracks?

T: Well we only had a potbelly stove. And the only thing I remember is Lipton chicken noodle soup. Boy, that was so good [laughs]. Yeah, we, this was the Coronets. We called ourselves the Coronets. I don’t know where we got all these white shirts and [laughs].

W: Yeah, I imagine it wasn’t the easiest to keep white at Manzanar with all the dust.

T: Yeah. And they all have heels on.
W: Did a lot of these people know each other before Manzanar?

T: I don’t think so. Because, I come, see I was from North Hollywood, and there weren’t too many North Hollywood people working there.

While the circumstances of being incarcerated at Manzanar were difficult, the photographs of the friends and groups she was part of sparked memories of having fun and how people made the best it.

Figure 43d

T: Yeah. We used to have fun, you know.

While Tami expressed that she did not spend a significant amount of time with her neighbors in camp, the photographs in her album show that block organization still shaped her camp experiences. Photographs of some of her neighbors in camp who had resettled elsewhere also demonstrate how these relationships were maintained after the camp was closed.
T: Karl Nakamura, I think.

W: He was a friend?

T: He lived opposite our barrack.

W: Okay. In block 16.
T: This family too. There’s nobody left in that family. Oh, these are all the young boys that were in Block 16.

W: So, it seems like not only was the hospital community close, but maybe the block communities?

T: Mhm. When the bus came in, like my sister, they had small children, so they were let off first. Block 13 I think it was. And we had to walk to Block 16.

W: Mhm. Cause you didn’t have small children or?

T: No, we were all grown, so.

*Figure 44c*

T: That’s the girl that John Taka married.

W: Anna?

T: Mhm. Yeah, he lived across from our barrack.

The photographs of neighbors or people that lived in her block not only reveal relationships between people, but also how the landscape of the camp and layout of the block influenced the experiences Tami had while incarcerated at Manzanar. Tami recalls
that since her barrack was next to the latrines, she had the unfortunate experience of hearing what people did in the bathrooms. The photographs also sparked memories of the constant lack of privacy and how this was particularly difficult as a woman.

*Figure 45: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu’s album of landscapes that influenced her experiences at Manzanar during the war and today (5 images)*

*Figure 45a*

T: Oh, these were our neighbors in camp. But I don’t remember their names.

W: Did you hang out with your neighbors?

T: Not too much. I was always with the hospital group.

W: So, did you live with your parents in the barracks?

T: Mhm. Yeah, we all had to live with our parents.

W: Unless you had a family of your own or something, yeah.

T: In one room. The first night, it was really hard, because it was just one open space and there were five cots. So, the hardest was when I went to the restroom. The toilets were all open. There were no partitions. That was a big surprise, you know…Sitting next to someone that’s, yeah.

W: Yeah, and showers too.
T: And then like us, when we had our periods. We all had pads. So, it was kinda [laughs].

W: Yeah, everyone knew everyone’s business, I guess [laughs]. Yeah, I can’t imagine that.

*Figure 45b*

T: And then we were 16-4-1 so our bungalow was here, and the restroom was right here.

W: Mmm.

T: So, whenever anyone had diarrhea or something we could hear it [laughs].

W: Oh no. That’s the worst.

A number of the photographs in Tami’s album are centered on specific places at Manzanar. Some of these places are more well-known or were widely shared spaces in camp such as the cemetery, while other places have more specific associations, such as a tree that was outside the fence where Tami and her friends would go to play bridge. Our
conversation about places in the photographs demonstrate how historic images have the power to initiate memories not only of what these places were like at the time, but also more recent experiences associated with the site today.

*Figure 45c*

T: This was the cemetery.

W: Mhm.

T: This is the only thing standing.

W: Mhm. Have you been back to Manzanar?

T: We went uh, we went in June. July, or around there.

W: This year?

T: Mhm. When my brother, well. Just before the Manzanar High School Reunion.
T: Yeah, when I think about it. The garden was pretty. Yeah, these are all the hospital people.

W: Oh, that sounds real nice.

T: The ambulance driver used to take us out of camp. It was a big tree, and so, he took us there, and we used to play bridge there.

W: Oh, that sounds real nice.

T: On the ground. These are all the hospital group. This is taken at the hospital grounds.
In addition to photographs of social groups and block relationships, a number of the photographs also depict community events that took place. These events include activities that were influenced by both Japanese and American traditions of the time. Tami mentioned that one of the photographs might be of Ondo practice, which is Japanese style of folk music. Given the size of the event in the photograph, Ondo could have been part of an Obon festival, a Japanese celebration that honors people’s ancestors.

Figure 46: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu’s album showing American and Japanese cultural practices (2 images)

Figure 46a

T: Yeah and this is when they had the Ondo practice or? Ondo, or something.

W: Mhm.

T: This is. I can’t read it. 1943. August the 15th. I could read that, but I can’t read that.

W: That’s pretty good.
T: And then they used to have dances.

W: Was it just for the hospital people?

T: No, it’s, I think for the block people, or maybe some club group. Or, I can’t think of who they were.

A number of the photographs in Tami’s album relate to change and movement in and out of camp. Many of the photographs sparked memories about when Tami went on temporary leave to Chicago, or when other family members or friends left camp temporarily or indefinitely. Many of the images also elicited memories that many of the people in the photographs are no longer living.
Figure 47: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu's album related to change over time and people leaving and coming back to camp (6 images)

Figure 47a

T: Yeah, this is our group. I’m not in here.

W: You aren’t?

T: I think I left.

W: That you left Manzanar or?

T: Yeah.

W: What year did you go? Was it?

T: Gee, I stayed six months then in Chicago. It was a six-month temporary leave. And then I came back. And then when I left, it was soon after that the camp was going to close. So, it was about 1944, around there. But these are the girls that I was with all the time. We used to play bridge.

W: Was it hard to leave in some ways? Like the group of friends you had made there?

T: Not really because everybody was leaving.

153
W: Yeah. Mhm.

T: And it was just a group of girls. You know. We left.

*Figure 47b*

T: These were the boys that left camp to work on the farms.

W: Did you stay in touch with any of them afterwards?

T: Oh yeah. George Izumi. He called me yesterday.

W: Oh.

T: He’s about the only one left. Yeah, they all went to work on the farm.

W: Like a furlough.
T: Mhm. Yeah these are all that went on furloughs. They went on furloughs and then they, uh, went into the Army.

W: What’s his name? George?

T: Yes. George. And us three there. He came back from working some place. And I guess I came back too, huh?

W: Um, it might be before you left. It looks like it’s 1943.
T: Yeah, it must be.

The photographs not only initiate narratives of people moving in and out of camp but also demonstrate connections to people outside of camp, such as soldiers or people who had resettled elsewhere. The narratives also draw connections to Japan and the complicated experiences for people who answered no to questions twenty-seven and twenty-eight on the “loyalty questionnaire.”

*Figure 47e*

T: This is a soldier. His last name was Saruatari (inaudible) or something real long. What was there oh, Tommy (inaudible).

W: Oh, he did write something down here. Is it Jack maybe? That’s what it kind of looks like, but it’s hard to read, cause it’s so dark.

T: Yeah, and I can’t remember his name. Gosh, except his last name.
T: Her family was a no-no and so they had to go to Tule Lake. She went back to Japan, and she said, ‘I cried every day because, like my mother said, even though we go back, there’s no place for us to stay.’ And that’s just how it was. The family wouldn’t accept them, so they had a hard time.

W: Their family in Japan wouldn’t accept them?

T: Well there’s no place for them to stay. A lot of them are struggling anyway.

So. Yeah, she married a Caucasian in camp. In fact, a soldier.

W: Oh?

T: A lot of them did that.

Similar to a number of the conversations I had with people of the generation who were young adults in camp, many of the photographs sparked comments and emotions related to loss of people in the photographs. These examples demonstrate how for the
people who directly experienced the incarceration, the period of World War II is just part of a lifetime of experiences and their life story. The relationships established in camp go beyond the years they were incarcerated.

Figure 48: Photographs in Tami Kasamatsu’s album of people who have since passed away (5 images)

Figure 48a

T: Oh, she’s a friend. She died early, but before she died, she came up to me and said, ‘You know, we came and went through your house every Saturday.’ They were always over, the family. Our place, there were always people over, you know.

W: That’s good.

T: Yeah.
T: Oh, Kosh Ando. There were three boys that used to come over all the time. They were called the Three Musketeers.

W: Mhm.

T: But they went into the Army. Just one is left.

T: Our hospital group. Gee, from the very beginning they used to come to my place. And even after we moved here, gee, about 40 years. And then everybody started to get sick or they passed away. And so, uh, this one girl close to West LA, she said let’s have it at her place cause almost all the people were living in that
area. So, we’ve been there for fifteen, twenty years. And then gradually, everybody, nobody’s left.

W: Yeah, so most of these people.

T: I think there’s three or four of us left.

W: From the public health?

T: Mmhm.

*Figure 48d*

T: Well the only one that’s left is one girl in, close to West LA. Aimee Ioki.

W: Okay. And did they work in public health after?

T: Well Aimee was just going to school, so she worked just a short time, but her sisters were working there.

W: Oh, okay. Interesting.
Figure 48e

T: And I think all of these, they’re all gone except her. Except her, but she’s a little old. Dementia.

Joyce Seippel

While I conducted a material analysis of Katsumi Taniguchi’s original album that is in Manzanar’s museum collection, my analysis of the stories that the photographs correlate with focus on the book that Joyce Seippel made from Katsumi’s negatives. Different than the conversations I had with donors who made albums about their own experiences in camp, many of the relationships that Joyce had with the people and places in the photographs became more prominent after camp. While our conversation was mostly related to trying to understand Katsumi’s experiences through the photographs, we also talked about Joyce’s personal experiences, relationships, and memories. This shows how photographs from the camps can reveal and mediate previously unknown
relationships while also stimulate memories from others who do not have direct connections with the photographs.

The album that Joyce put together is different than Katsumi’s photo album, particularly since it only includes photographs of Manzanar and not Katsumi’s photographs of other travels that were likely taken on his journey to and from visiting Manzanar. The photographs Joyce included and our conversation about them are tied to communities at Manzanar in various forms including work, block organization, and other social groups.

Figure 49: Photographs in Joyce Seippel’s book related to social groups in Katsumi Taniguchi’s album and Joyce’s relationship to the groups (5 images)

Figure 49a

J: This, I don’t know what group that is. And this – it looks like the kitchen crew.

W: Oh yeah. That’s the mess hall.

Joyce speculated that some of the photographs were taken based on people’s location in camp, and that Katsumi might have walked around camp and taken pictures of various groups of people.
J: These are kinda the same people… It looks like they maybe walked around Manzanar and took different pictures.

Part of our conversation was also about relationships between specific individuals, such as Ralph Lazo, a person who came up in multiple conversations that I had. A surprising realization that Joyce had while organizing the photo album was that her mother happened to be in one of the photographs. To Joyce’s knowledge, her mother and Katsumi did not know each other at the time. The caption that Joyce created indicates that it is a photograph of a tailoring class.

J: That’s my mom [laughs]
W: Oh really? Her name is um…

J: Fusaye. No these. Maybe he just gathered up all his friends to take pictures that um, I don’t know. And this guy here. Don’t know who he is.

Like in Rosie Kakuuchi and Rose Tanaka’s albums, Katumi and Joyce’s albums have a photograph of Ralph Lazo. Joyce mentions his story but does not elaborate on it. Her writing in the photograph draws a circle around Ralph Lazo and another person in the photograph, demonstrating their proximity.

*Figure 49d*

J: This kind of. The rock gardens, no although I was close. Mess hall line – that’s a mess hall line. Ralph, that’s another old story.

Relationships tied to family was a common theme in our conversation about the photographs. Joyce told me that two families are prominently featured. She mentioned that she only knows the families through the photographs and their names and had never met them.
J: No. I only know them by these pictures and their name. You see like here, I don’t know their last name.

Much of our conversation was about Katsumi’s family, but rather than family togetherness, the photographs from Manzanar highlight the degree of family dislocation during World War II. Like themes in other conversations I had, the photographs elicited change over time and connections to other places. While all the photographs are of Manzanar, the narratives that the photographs initiated were also tied to Japan.

Figure 50: Photographs in Joyce Seippel’s book related to family relationships (2 images)

W: So, Katsumi’s family then, was in Manzanar when he was in the military or?

J: Yes. This is his father.
W: Okay.

J: His mom, I think was in Japan. She wasn’t out here.

*Figure 50b*

J: So, um. You know. This is his father.

W: And then the young woman who is in some of these photos. Is that his sister?

J: No, no sister. His sister was in Japan.

W: Oh, okay.

J: He did have a sister. I have no idea how they happened to be over there.

Particularly since Katsumi was just visiting Manzanar while on military leave, the narratives surrounding his photographs are perhaps more tied to change and connections between people outside and inside Manzanar more than other albums.

Joyce’s research of people in the albums was more about Katsumi’s experiences and relationships with people incarcerated at Manzanar, but these photographs also initiated memories about Joyce’s personal experiences since she was also confined there as a young girl. A number of landscape shots that capture significant places in camp reminded Joyce of experiences she had while incarcerated there as a child.
J: And there, sleek – creek. I remember our block was right next to this. I remember there. I remember as a kid jumping off of the landing here [laughs].

W: Oh really [laughs]?

J: It was off the – it doesn’t look as high.

W: Mhm.

J: At that time, it felt high. But I just felt like jumping off of it.

A photograph of Joyce’s cousin, Hideko, who at the time the photograph was taken was not yet Katsumi’s wife, prompted discussion of Katsumi’s life beyond his trip to Manzanar. This narrative follows the theme of injustice as Joyce told me about the “loyalty questionnaire” and Katsumi’s act of protest against the practices of the US government.
J: Cause it’s years and years. So, I do have some of the old photos. I was going to write about his experience of the no-no boys group, but I looked at the information. That was too overwhelming for me.

W: It’s very. It’s a lot. So, he was a no-no answer on the questionnaire?

J: Well. Kind of. He refused to do what the army wanted him to do, so they got thrown in jail. Twelve of them in that one group. So after that they gave all those guys a dishonorable discharge. And somehow, Paul who was the attorney, I think he was son-in-law to one of the guys, he worked on it for years to get them an honorable discharge, which that was good.

Another example of narrative that alludes to the hardships faced by incarceration in the camps is a photograph of one of the guard towers. While Joyce did not talk about it in our conversation, she did write a caption below the photograph stating, “One of the four guard towers.” Given the photograph’s existence and Joyce’s incorporation of it in her book, it is clear that both Joyce and Katsumi felt it was important to show this aspect of life at Manzanar.
Bob Akaki

I spoke with Hatsume Akaki’s nephew, Bob Akaki, about the photo album that he donated to the Amache Museum. Bob is the only person I spoke with who did not create the photo album or book that we talked about. Also, since he was not alive during World War II, his knowledge about life in the camps comes more from secondary sources than the other people that I talked with. For Bob Akaki, the photo album is a reference for some of the stories he heard from his family about their lives during World War II as well as evidence of experiences his family never told him about. Much of our conversation involved uncertainty and trying to construct stories about the Hatsume’s experiences during World War II through identifying people, places, and events in the photographs, as well as the relationships between them. The themes of these stories were often related to change or movement over time, in and out of camp, and after the war.

A significant portion of our conversation involved trying to identify and name people in the photographs. Bob relied on looking at people’s facial features in order to identify people he might know. In Figure 56, Bob tried to identify his aunt Tsugi by her smile.
Figure 54: Photographs in Hatsume Akaki’s album where Bob tried to identify people (2 images)

Figure 54a

B: Tsugi had a much better. That looks kind of like her smile.

In another instance, Bob stated that he didn’t recognize any of the faces in the photographs.

Figure 54b

B: I don’t recognize any faces there.

When he was not able to name people he saw in the images, he often tried to piece together a narrative through other parts of the photographs such as where it was taken or
what events were taking place in the visual image. For example, Bob speculated about the identity of the people in the photograph as well as the place where the photograph was taken.

Figure 55: Photographs in Hatsume Akaki’s album in which he tried to identify places in the photographs (2 images)

B: Let’s see. It’s hard to tell. I don’t see anybody that looks like them. And she almost, she almost doesn’t look Asian. The nose is too big. It’s hard to tell though.

W: Mhm. Yeah it could be the same group of women or.

B: It looks like they are leaning on grass though. And how much grass is there at Amache?

W: I guess at the end, the administration.

B: Maybe the administration grass planted, that could be.

While Bob did not know the specifics of many of the photographs in the album, he had conducted extensive historical research about the camps and utilized this
knowledge to tell me about certain aspects of camp life. For example, in a photograph depicting a number of women that he had difficulty identifying, he told me a story about agriculture in the camps.

*Figure 55b*

B: Yeah, I don’t know anything about these. That almost looks like her but I don’t know if that’s. These people look like they’re off to work. Here. That’s not this group though. No, cause they’re all wearing pants. So, it’s not these other five or six here. Cause she’s pretty tiny even for, compared to other women at the time, she would have been tiny. That almost looks like her.

W: Yeah, I thought that this woman kind of looked like her.

B: I think you’re right, yeah. I don’t know. She might be one of those too. But they look like they’re headed off to work. They’ve got their head covered. Cause I know that uh, men and women worked in the surrounding area. Well, and there were thousands of acres around Amache that were farmland because the WRA
wanted them to be self-sufficient, so they raised livestock and they raised crops to feed the livestock and also to feed themselves so.

Many of Hatsume’s photographs appear to be of the people she worked with at Amache Co-op. Bob did not know the details about her work there, but the photographs as well as the documents at the end of the photo album indicate that Hatsume spent a significant amount of time with people who worked at the co-op. Much of what Bob shared with me about the co-op was from his research about the camp by looking at historic camp newspapers and particularly related to his interest the history of the postal service.

Figure 56: Photograph in Hatsume Akaki’s album showing her coworkers at the Amache Co-op

B: I don’t recognize anybody here. I wonder why these, I wonder why these men are together.

W: Yeah, maybe people that she worked with.

B: These must be co-op.

W: Mhm.

B: Well, cause you know, the co-op had maybe a barber shop, they probably had a beauty salon, that’s what they called them back then for the women. I know they had shoe repair cause I’ve seen. I’ve seen notice about shoe repair. They had, they
had a window there where they sold money orders. Because at, it’s interesting, the post office sold money orders and the co-op sold money orders, and there is actually an article in the one of the papers I read that said hey, if you buy them from the co-op, we get the money. If you buy it from the post office, the money from the money order goes to the post office but you buy them from the co-op the co-op gets the fee, so they’re trying to encourage the uh, internees to buy their money orders from the co-op. And I think one of the other advantages was, the other article I read, said that the post office only sold money orders in the afternoon. From 1 to 4:45 which was the closing time. So, you could only buy a money order from the post office in the afternoon. But the co-op sold them whatever their open hours were. Plus, the co-op might have been open on Saturday. Whereas, well no, the post office was open on Saturday, but I don’t think the money order window was open on Saturday. See, cause the money order was a big deal cause…the co-op is the only retail store establishment that could get. But at Amache, they did have the ability to leave camp and go into town, so they could buy stuff there, but they still process, they still buy an awful lot of stuff from Ward and Sears. A lot of stuff.

The Japanese Kanji on a couple of photographs also initiated conversation about cultural practices associated with Japan, particularly about how his family spoke or did not speak Japanese or English. Bob does not know Japanese, but his parents’ and grandparents’ generation understood and spoke a mixture of English and Japanese.
B: This has got to be in camp. Must be the co-op. And it’s all in Kanji. That’s probably their names, I betchya.

W: Did she speak Japanese? Or does your father?

B: My dad in order to serve, my dad reenlisted in 47 to serve in the occupation. He knew a little bit of Japanese because his parents did not speak much English. And all the kids spoke a little, my dad called it pidgin. So, I think they could speak just enough to get by. Um, but whether they could read or write it I don’t know. I don’t think he could very well. Now my mom, my aunt, she’s born here, goes back to Japan with her family at age 8 and then comes back to the United States after she graduates high school. So, from the years of 8 to 18 she grows up basically in Japan. She speaks and writes Japanese. But I don’t think. I don’t think my dad’s family, for the most part, did. At least the brother. The kids didn’t. The parents did. And actually, I think what they did was, when it came time to register and stuff like that for the evacuation, my dad did that for the family. He was the oldest son, but I mean we were talking, he’s like 20 years old when they’re doing that. So, he’s got two older sisters. Um, but he’s the number one son. He’s the one
that my grandfather designates you know you’re the one who is going to do this for us. Um I think that, that all that kinda stuff had to be done in English, that my dad did that. Because I don’t think that my grandfather spoke English well enough to do that. So yeah somebody would have to. Yeah, I would bet that’s their names. Oh no, is it written? Oh no, that’s not Kanji. It’s just written sideways. No. Those look like Japanese characters, don’t they?

W: I think it is, yeah. That was my first impression.

Instead of strictly talking about Hatsume’s photographs in the photo album, Bob also took the opportunity to tell me a story related to a photograph of his aunts Tsugi and Hatsume taken of them at the Granada train station that was published in the Denver Post. He told me about how Hatsume was the family scout, leaving camp early to try out different locations for the family to move when the camp closed. This photograph initiated a story about relationships between people in and outside of Amache as well as movement in and out of camp and throughout the country.

*Figure 58: Photograph that Bob Akaki found published in a Denver Post article showing his aunts at the Granada train station*
Rose Tanaka

Instead of having a focused conversation about the photo album that Rose Tanaka donated to Manzanar NHS, much of our conversation was about other photographs that she had kept and had in her apartment. Many of these are more well-known images that the government or other professional photographers took during World War II. Throughout the years, Rose has utilized these photographs when she talks to students and other people about her experiences and the history of World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans. More than the other people I talked with, the photographs and other visual displays in her house initiated a more linear narrative about Rose and her family’s experiences during World War II. Some of this might be because of her experience presenting formal talks about the incarceration. Our conversation utilizing the images in her house related to civil rights or injustice, family, community, as well as change over time. Overall, our conversation was mostly about Rose and her peers’ experiences while incarcerated at Manzanar. Since the majority of our conversation utilized these other photographs, I will focus my analysis on that part of our conversation after providing a short description of our discussion about the photo album pages that she donated.

The conversation Rose and I had about the photographs she donated was about friendship in camp, and particularly the story of her friend, Ralph Lazo. Rose identified him in one of the photographs and proceeded to tell me his story and how he became a leader and well-known person in the camp.
R: Yeah, so I took a, it was in my photo album, I guess. Yeah, all these people from the LA area. And uh, I was not part of their community, so I just had to sort of work my way in. This is Ralph Lazo. Have you heard about Ralph Lazo?
W: I have, yeah. I did an interview with Rosie Kakuuchi and she was talking, and they were good friends.
R: See, all of his friends, all of his friends. He lived in the community, and all his buddies were people like this. And um, when, well his father, his parents were Irish and Mexican American. And uh he went to see them off at the train station and he climbed on the train and went to Manzanar. Didn’t tell his parents he was doing this. When they went there on the train to go to Manzanar, he got on the train and they went. And the Manzanar administration let him stay. They put him in bachelor’s quarters because he had no family with him. And uh, the administration didn’t say okay get out of here, you don’t belong here. They let
him stay, and he became quite a leader. He’s uh, a very interesting person. So, yeah. It’s interesting that you have those.

Other than briefly discussing Rose and her friends, most of our conversation was about other photographs she had. During our conversation she showed me a poster with a number of different photographs depicting the initial forced evacuation and life in the camps. She also showed me her sister-in-law’s copy of her yearbook, an original as well as later publication of Ansel Adams’ book *Born Free and Equal*, a book of Dorothea Lange’s photographs, and a number of loose photographs that she kept in a cabinet with other photo albums.

A prominent theme that came through when talking about the images was about civil liberties and social justice.

*Figure 60: Rose Tanaka’s books and photographs she uses to talk to people about her experiences during World War II and the injustices perpetuated by the US government*

R: And they decided, oh well, we were all enemy aliens and even the children and people who were born in this country, cause that was what the biggest problem was. Seventy percent of us were American born citizens, but we were all treated
like enemy aliens, because well it was prejudice mainly. They decided that all along the West Coast where I read somewhere about 126,000 individuals are of Japanese descent. Seventy percent of us were American born citizens. That didn’t matter.

Similarly, when showing me a photograph that Dorothea Lange took of the incarceration, she told me about her experiences associated with patriotism in the camp.

*Figure 61: Photographs in books that remind Rose Tanaka of the injustices people experienced during World War II (4 images)*

_R: Okay here was a picture that she took. She came. This is Dorothea Lange. And this is a picture that reminds me, we said our pledge of allegiance every day in the camp._

_Rose also talked about injustice when showing me Ansel Adams’ book *Born Free and Equal*. For Rose, the book represented an effort to make the public aware of what the US government was doing to Japanese Americans._
R: When we were there, Ansel Adams came. You know about him. He published this and gave everyone a copy in the camp. Ansel Adams produced a whole stack of these. The camp people all received a copy. And then he wanted to distribute them to, uh outside of camp. The federal government wasn’t very happy about the situation. They were embarrassed that it happened. They knew there were questions about the legality of the executive order and the whole process. This book, when it got into bookstores, all of a sudden disappeared. I think they were taken away by the government, because they didn’t want it distributed. But this is an original book and it’s a mess…

Rose also brought up the theme of injustice when showing me her high school yearbook that was her sister-in-law’s copy. She talked about how her high school class was aware of the significance of their situation. She also mentioned the unfortunate circumstances that her father faced, because he was not able to become a naturalized citizen.
R: Oh, I know, there was my class, my class that I graduated from, and I graduated in the class of ‘44 from Manzanar, and we thought we were pretty special. We knew that we were part of history, because by then it was obvious that the, uh, US was going to win the war. And this was a feeling that pervaded people like my father. My father came to this country incidentally when he was 15 years old in the year 1900; 1942 he was incarcerated as an enemy alien prisoner, but he felt American unable to become naturalized.

Towards the end of our conversation, Rose showed me a book that had recently been published about Fred Korematsu, a Japanese American man who opposed the forced evacuation and incarceration during World War II by taking his case to the US Supreme Court. The book titled *Fighting For Justice* includes a photograph of Rose that she happened to come across one day not knowing it was there. Through the act of showing me the photograph, Rose drew a connection between the photograph and her lifelong passion for activism and social justice.
W: Yeah, I haven’t seen that. I’ll have to read it too.

R: Alright, here’s the story of Ralph Lazo… And uh, “Ralph was an ally to Japanese Americans by remaining loyal to his friends and took care of…” and there’s a picture at Manzanar, and there he is, and there I am.

W: Mhm.

R: So, I made it into Fred Korematsu’s book [laughs].

W: Oh, look at that, yeah [laughs].

R: Well, I have to tell people about it, but it doesn’t make any difference [laughs]. But these are all my, these are pictures from you know, the yearbook. Cause these are all my classmates who were working on the book.

Another major theme that Rose talked about when showing me the photographs in books or photographs she kept were related to family and friendship. Many of the images Ansel Adams and other professional photographers took were of her family and peers. A well-known photograph taken by Dorothea Lange shows a relative of hers, Walter.
R: When this picture was taken, it was just called grandfather and grandson. They didn’t take any names or anything down. This became a very well-copied picture and displayed. I went to the, what do you call that, Statue of Liberty at New York City, and if you ever go there and there’s in the lower section there’s one on immigrants. And I went in there, and I said, “There’s Walter and his grandpa.” But that picture was such a well-liked picture. So, it’s called grandfather and grandson. It wasn’t till much later that uh, his name, that they ever attached his name.

W: Is that the first time that you had seen the picture when you were at the?

R: I had seen the in the, in the magazine. Somewhere else. But I didn’t realize that it was that well known, because it was done by Dorothea Lange, and she got that. So anyhow, that’s Walter and his grandpa.
Rose also mentioned how so many of Ansel Adams’ photographs are related to her own personal experiences and the people she knew in camp. One page of his book shows a friend in one photograph and her brother in the other.

*Figure 62b*

R: And uh there’s a picture of Henry working on a caterpillar that needed attention. Here’s a boy that lived in my block. So many people in this book are from my experience and I knew.

Rosie’s stories about the pictures add an extra layer of personal detail that most people could not get from the original photographs. The pictures are not only of her friends and family, but also about how she relates to them.
R: This was uh, a journalist who came who became a very good friend of mine, and he married a person who lived in the same block as I did in an arranged marriage. Cause everyone at that time, or the proper thing to do was to have arranged marriages. So, a girl who was from Florin, California married Roy, and they moved to Denver.

The photographs in Rose’s yearbook titled *Our World* prompted the most conversation about various experiences of being incarcerated at Manzanar and how the
R: …But anyhow, this is the original book, and you will see that instead of just talking about our class, we wanted to have pictures of what life was like in Manzanar. And that’s why it’s called *Our World*. Most of Rose’s discussion of camp experiences were related to various community organizations and activities, which Rose described as being run democratically.
R: And they tried to run the community in a democratic way. We had a block; we elected people to represent us from each block. So, we became quite a community in this desert area that had snow in the winter and sandstorms in the summer.

*Figure 63c*

R: And uh, this is, we had musicians, uh, what do you call that Jazz group? Anyhow, that’s so many of my classmates.

Another aspect of community life at Manzanar that Rose talked about was the Children’s Village, which housed orphaned children. A photograph of the Manzanar cemetery monument sparked this memory. Like other photographs, Rose’s description about the Children’s Village also alludes to the themes of injustice and community resilience.
R: Cemetery. Another thing that I find touching is that there was one in this camp, and it was called Children’s Village. Have you heard of Children’s Village?
W: I have, yeah.
R: They went to all the orphanages and foster homes, and took any children who had any, up to 1/8th Japanese blood in them and brought them into the camp, and we had assembled them in the camp. And uh, here are these innocent kids, babies. Many of them were just babies. And they were. They had to be incarcerated. So, I’ve always thought that was always a touching thing about the camp, even children who had no parents. But uh, they were taken care of in the camp by a minister and his wife actually, a Christian minister and his wife and a nun, Japanese American nuns too. And they were there to help take care of the children. So, it was a matter of a community that had to get together and help each other out.
Another theme related to community that Rose and I talked about was music. One photograph in particular elicited a story about Rose’s personal experiences participating in band while incarcerated at Manzanar.

*Figure 64: Rose Tanaka’s photograph that she keeps in her apartment showing the brass band she was part of at Manzanar*

R: Well, this is kind of funny. This is a community band. We had a musician. Somebody started uh, people who can play musical instruments. Something to do, you know. Cause after all, you can’t get out of camp. And you might see a female in there, besides this person who is an official. That’s me [laughs].

W: Oh my gosh [laughs].

R: It was a brass band, and uh, I played the trombone [laughs].

W: Were you the only female who played a brass instrument?

R: I didn’t realize that. Then I looked at that one day, and I said there’s only one girl in there, and it’s me [laughs].

W: That is amazing.

R: So, I had hung onto that picture, because I thought that was kind of funny.
While looking at Rose’s other albums, we came across a number of photographs and documents related to her Manzanar experiences interspersed throughout. Like many of my other conversations with people, Manzanar reunions came up as a common theme, particularly when looking at more recent photographs. Rose talked about seeing people in the photographs at reunions and utilizing these experiences to inform her children and grandchildren about her life during World War II.

*Figure 65: Rose Tanaka's photograph of her grandchildren visiting Manzanar NHS*

W: Oh. There’s a Manzanar photograph.

R: This. Oh yeah. That’s the Soul Consoling Tower. It’s Consoling Tower. I took uh, Kai and Anda on a trip. We took them on a trip…But I don’t think any of the other kids have been to Manzanar. This last reunion they had this last year. Finally, one of my kids went. Susan went with me.

W: Oh, okay.
Conclusion

My conversations with album donors contribute to a better understanding of the role of photographs and photo albums in the present-day negotiation of the past. They illuminate patterns in how people relate to and form narratives from photography of Japanese American World War II incarceration. These conversations also demonstrate the agencies of historic photographs in remembering as well as mediating relationships between people, places, and experiences.
Chapter 7: The Social Lives of Photographs

My research of people’s photo albums of Japanese American World War II incarceration demonstrates that although photographs are pieces of paper and not living or breathing things, they are integral to how people carry out their humanity. I began this research because of the tenuous position of photographs in understanding the history of Japanese American World War II incarceration. They are a major part of how people learn about this history, but given the fluidity of visual interpretation, people fear that the problematic power dynamics involved in their creation will be lost on viewers.

To address this uncertainty, the research I conducted and data I presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 place these photographs in the context of the lives of Japanese Americans who donated the albums to better understand their place in negotiating this history. In this chapter, I discuss how patterns in my data reveal that photographs are not simply static images displaying evidence of a past event, but they are part of the social fabric of how people understand themselves and connect with the world. While interactions with photographs reveal these relationships, they simultaneously provide a platform for creating new ones. In the following pages, I discuss the social role of photographs and how this relates to photographic representation.

Photographs, Connection, and Group Formation

While the photographs of Japanese American World War II incarceration provide information about historical experiences of this time, my primary concern is the
sociocultural role of photographs in people’s lives at the time and today. What my research has revealed is that photographs are part of processes of group formation. Following Latour’s theories of social networks, a social analysis does not record these groups but rather traces their ever-changing processes of formation. He writes, “Relating to one group or another is an ongoing process made up of uncertain, fragile, controversial, and ever-shifting ties” (Latour 2005, 28). Latour begins with the assumption that the idea of a group is inherently meaningless and could “be applied to a planet as well as an individual” (Latour 2005, 28). By following the controversies and material traces that contribute to group formation, groups, however abstract and fleeting, are observable. My analysis demonstrates that the photographs and photo albums have been continually resituated in contexts and assemblages that maintain or reinvigorate the mediation of and potential for social connection. In this section I discuss how photographs are part of the formation of groups connecting people with their family and identities, people who have passed away, camp communities, heritage, and lastly, history.

**Family and Identity**

Throughout all aspects of my research of the photo albums, I have continually observed how they mediate relationships among family as well as understandings of self. These relationships between family and self are connected in how identity and a person’s connection to family are mutually reinforcing ways of understanding and being in the world.

While many of the visual images in my research reference family relationships, they also initiate interactions among family. Joyce’s efforts to name people in the photographs when making her photo book of Katsumi’s photographs led her to go
through the photographs with her cousin, Hideko. Similarly, Rose Tanaka explained to me that her family looks at the books full of photographs when they visit her apartment. “My kids they come, and they like to go through and browse through the books that I have here. And so, anyhow, I think they might profit from knowledge about the background, and they are all good kids” (Tanaka 2017).

Photographs have also initiated interactions among family as they have changed hands over time. My research of photograph exchange during World War II shows that these relationships were mostly tied to friend groups, but exchanges of photographs and albums after World War II indicate that these processes are also part of mediating family relationships. Bob Akaki’s cousin was the first person to come across Hatsume’s photo album among a collection of his parent’s things, initiating the exchange of the album and interactions between Bob and his cousin, Jack.

Similarly, after Rosie Kakuuchi is finished compiling her photo albums, she intends to give them to her children. She articulated that while these albums contain photographs of Manzanar, their relationship to family is what makes them most significant in the context of her family albums. Talking about her experiences at Manzanar, she stated, “It meant a lot to me but not to them” (Kakuuchi 2017). During her process of assembling the photo albums, she put all Manzanar photographs depicting a specific family member in their corresponding album section. When describing this process, she stated, “Well, we did go into camp, so I need to insert that. So, I looked for my Manzanar pictures to insert” (Kakuuchi 2017). This demonstrates how in new contexts, the photographs are part of different processes of group formation. For Rosie,
the photographs of her family members taken at Manzanar are about understanding family and representing her individual family members.

Rosie’s discussion of the importance of photographs with family members in them highlights how understanding family and their histories are related to the formation of individual identities. Her use of whole pages from her siblings’ albums that include their writing and captions presents further personalized aspects of her siblings’ stories and perhaps Rosie’s relationship with them. Her rearrangement of the albums creates a new context for her family to connect with the photographs, but perhaps also provides a means for Rosie to connect to her own past in new ways.

My interview with Rose Tanaka demonstrates the degree to which photographs are connected to people’s personal identities. During our conversation, the photographs and books that she decided to keep played a more significant role in telling me stories of incarceration and her life. Towards the end of our conversation she stated, “Well, I feel like I’m just going in all directions and everything, but I’m pretty much immersed in what happened to me, and who I am today is what happened to me in my lifetime and the feelings I have” (Tanaka 2017). Regarding what she hopes Manzanar NHS will do with the photographs, she said, “It always brings back memories about my days there, because it was a fascinating time when I look back on it. To think, I was just a teenager, but it was the basis for my whole lifetime.” These statements show how photographs are not only a means of sharing information, but the stories they elicit and relationships they mediate are also ways of understanding oneself. Exemplifying this idea, Ochs and Capps state, “We come to know ourselves as we use narrative to apprehend experiences and navigate relationships with others” (Ochs and Capps 1996, 21).
For Rosie and Tami, providing digital copies of their images allowed them to keep their photographs and photo albums, indicating that the albums are important to them personally. When I asked Rose if other people she knows from the camps have also made photo albums documenting their lives during World War II, she stated, “I’m sure. Anybody who has photo albums, you know, hangs on to them because that is their life story” (Tanaka 2017). This statement demonstrates the importance of keeping photo albums and photographs. They are not only points of connection to people and places, they also mediate memories of people’s personal life experiences. As I looked at the photographs with the album donors, they evoked stories that transcended the time and place captured in the image. The photographs enriched not only the complexity of historical narratives but their personal life stories and how they contribute to one another.

**People Who have Passed Away**

In all of the photo albums I researched, photographs played a role in connecting the living with those who have passed away. Everyone I spoke with told me about people in the photographs who are no longer living, but this was more common with people who created the albums and knew most of the people in the images. In the 75 years since World War II, many people in the photographs have passed away, making the images particularly powerful in how they mediate present-day connections to the past. Edwards has similarly observed the mnemonic impact of photographs. Quoting Macdonald she writes, “Photos are stories about connections through time, affirming the existence and significance of the past in the present” (Edwards 2005, 30).

The ways people have interacted with and modified photographs illuminates photographs’ abilities to mediate relationships with people no longer living both during
World War II and today. Rosie’s father’s modifications of her photograph of Ruby’s 
funeral shown in Figure 34 demonstrates the immediacy of this connection after someone 
passes away. His addition of Ruby’s wedding portrait to the photograph makes a more 
direct connection to Ruby’s life and not just the event of her death. Rosie explained to me 
that her father did this so people could know what she looked like.

People’s present-day donations of photo albums also illuminate these connections 
to those who have passed away. Of the albums I researched, the only two donated to the 
museums in their entirety belonged to people who are no longer living. Bob and Joyce’s 
donations of photo albums suggest a desire to keep the stories of the people in the 
photographs alive through their donation. Both Bob and Joyce expressed that they felt the 
albums would carry more meaning in the context of the museums where other people 
could access them (Akaki 2017). While Joyce knows people in the photographs, she 
hoped that in the museum, others might recognize people she was not able to identify. 
Both Bob and Joyce saw a limit to the possibilities for the albums to generate new kinds 
of knowledge and personal connections if the albums stayed in their possession. Instead, 
they chose to donate them to the museums where new connections would be more likely. 
Joyce’s reasons for donating the album also indicate that naming people in the 
photographs is not only a personal project, but a means to stimulate further relationships 
and community networks for visitors to the museum.

Rosie Kakuuchi’s continued work on her photo album demonstrates how 
engaging with photographs of people who have passed away can initiate new forms of 
connection and understanding. Rosie told me how she plans to add photographs to 
Ruby’s photo album section.
“And then, like yesterday at the funeral for my cousin...The daughter [of my cousin] has pictures from her album...And I said, ‘Oh my gosh. I don’t have those pictures of my sister Ruby.’ So, I said, ‘Could you send me all the pictures of Ruby with her mother? Cause I need to put it in her book, cause I only have what we have.’...I then realized she would have pictures...taken where we know nothing about where Ruby was.” (Kakuuchi 2017).

Roland Barthes extrapolates on this power of previously unseen photographs of people in his book *Camera Lucida*. In the book, he reflects on his experience looking at photographs of his mother who had recently passed away. He struggled to connect with photographs of her showing her as an adult, because they seemed to only partially resemble his memory of her. Instead, he was most compelled by a photograph of his mother as a young girl, part of her life he had never known or experienced.

“According to these photographs, sometimes I recognized a region of her face, a certain relation of nose and forehead, the movement of her arms, her hands. I never recognized her except in fragments...which is to say that I missed her being and that therefore I missed her altogether. It was not she, and yet it was no one else...There I was, alone in the apartment where she had died, looking at these pictures of my mother, one by one, under the lamp, gradually moving back in time with her, looking for the truth of the face I had loved. And I found it...These same photographs, which phenomenology would call 'ordinary' objects, were merely analogical, provoking only her identity, not her truth; but the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, the impossible science of the unique being” (Barthes 1980).
Barthes’ experience shows how even after someone’s death, unseen photographs can provide a new means of connection to those who are no longer living.

In my interview with Manzanar National Historic Site Chief of Interpretation Alisa Lynch, she describes the ability of photographs in the museum space to mediate relationships between people, revealing previously unknown aspects of people’s lives. She told me a story about how Hikoji Takeuchi, a man who the government incarcerated at Manzanar and who military guards shot while he was trying to collect wood, visited Manzanar with his wife and daughter on the opening day of the visitor center. The Manzanar NHS exhibit team was able to track down a photograph of Hikoji Takeuchi from Archie Miyatake, the son of prominent camp photographer Toyo Miyatake and put it in their exhibit. She explains Hikoji’s daughter’s reaction when she saw the photograph of him on display in the museum:

“When his daughter and wife came with him grand opening day and he saw that. Well, first of all the daughter, the daughter sobbed, cause she had never seen a picture of her father as a young man. And so sometimes there is a really deeply emotional connection that is exponential to what most of us encounter in our lives, because here is a situation where somebody has no pictures, because the government forced them from their home. They lost everything. They were sent to Japan. You know this whole thing. And it’s a simple picture, but it brings someone to life. And he’s since passed away, but um, I think there are interactions like that, that are pretty amazing” (Lynch 2017).

This story demonstrates photographs’ abilities to generate new connections and insight about people’s lives. Similarly, Bob told me that his involvement with the
Amache and Topaz museums are a ways of honoring his parents who both have passed away. For Bob, engaging and preserving the stories of Japanese American World War II incarceration, which the photo albums in my research are part of, is a way of connecting and honoring people who are no longer living (Akaki 2017).

**Camp Communities**

As the photographs are part of processes of group formation related to family, identity, and people who have passed away, they also mediate relationships among camp communities. Through analysis of photo album biographies, materiality, and conversations, the photo albums that people compiled mediate community formation both during World War II but also remain central to how people engage with these communities today.

This is particularly evident when looking at practices of signing, annotating, and naming people in the photographs. As demonstrated in my material analysis of the images, it was a common practice to write a note to a friend on a photograph and give it to them. Similarly, multiple photographs in separate photo albums had signatures of different people on the back. For example, Hatsume Akaki’s photograph in Figure 26 taken at Merced Assembly Center has numerous signatures on the back. Another example is Figure 17, Rose Tanaka’s photograph of a group of young women who signed the back of the image. Not only do these photographs reveal people’s social relationships through the visual image and names but the photographs also initiated physical interactions between people as they wrote notes and exchanged them in the camps. Tami recalled requesting and receiving photographs from others. Whenever people would take photos she would ask for a copy (Kasamatsu 2017).
These practices of exchange continued even after the camps closed. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Rosie Kakuuchi told me that she would get together with women who part of a social group called the Modernaires, and they would exchange photographs.

“I can speak for the Modernaires, we used to get together after the war, have lunch, and they would bring pictures out, and the others would bring pictures from their home, and we would share and give to each other what we had and make copies...Mary Nomura, she sent all of us a sheet of pictures of the Modernaires, what we did, and so all of us have a copy of that particular picture” (Kakuuchi 2017).

The process of physically naming and annotating photographs continues today. As Rosie has continued to work on her family album, she has added names either on the photographs or next to them. Similarly, in all instances where people donated digital copies of their photographs, they also provided the museum with names, captions, comments, and other contextual information as shown in Figure 30. Rose Tanaka’s donation also includes pieces of paper with people’s names that correspond with different album pages. Lastly, Joyce provided this kind of information to Manzanar NHS through making her own book with her additional research of the people in the photographs. These acts of naming not only document relationships between the album donors and the people in the photographs, but also establish the potential for creating new relationships as other people view and interact with the photo albums in museum spaces.

In addition to the act of writing out people’s names on or around the photographs, all of my conversations with album donors involved verbally naming people, often providing context about their relation to other people, places, and events. These
relationships make up different processes of community formation, the most common theme in my conversations. While the types of community groups discussed were different from person to person, there were general trends that include family, work, neighbors, sports, social and peer groups, as well as camp reunions. These themes provide a glimpse into camp experiences of community both during World War II and today.

Tami Kasamatsu’s album and the stories she told me are good examples of how her social connections in camp were tied to her work relationships at the Manzanar hospital. As demonstrated in Figure 45, she established lifelong friendships with her co-workers that she maintained after Manzanar closed and she moved back to coastal California. Similarly, Rosie Kakuuchi’s albums depict people in her and her family’s social spheres at Manzanar. As shown in Figure 39, these are mostly related to their participation in baseball as well as other groups such as the Modernaires and the Calico Cats. The photographs provide an opportunity for people to tell me about important relationships they established in the camps, but they also mediate connections to people that are clearly important to them and their life experiences beyond camp.

The themes of change and movement in my conversations with people illuminate dynamic aspects of community relationships during the time, but also in negotiating group formations over time and in the present. While some might assume that people’s lives while incarcerated were rather stagnant since they were confined in camps, the stories that the photographs initiate present alternative narratives. Throughout World War II, Japanese Americans forcibly evacuated from their homes and confined in camps experienced constant change, disruption, and uncertainty. People were often transferred
from one camp to another and while in the camps, populations fluctuated as people left permanently or temporarily. People’s narratives of the photographs mark these transitory periods. For example, some of Tami’s stories discussed in Figure 49 centered on the fact that she was absent in many of the group photographs of hospital workers, because she was on temporary leave in Chicago. While Tami was not there when these photographs were taken, her acquisition of the images as well as incorporation of the photographs in her album establishes a connection to the groups of people in the photographs.

Similarly, the exchange of photographs between people confined in and outside of the camps also shows how photographs mediated relationships with people that they could not see in person. The entirety of Katsumi Taniguchi’s album can be seen from this perspective since he was not incarcerated at Manzanar but visiting his father who was in the camp. Tami and Rosie’s albums both contain photographs of people who were living outside the camps when the pictures were taken. One example of the exchange of photographs with people outside of camp as demonstrated in Figure 43 is Rosie’s photograph of her sister’s funeral that her father sent to Ruby’s high school teacher while confined at Manzanar. The caption and her story show how photographs were a means of staying connected to people they were physically separated from throughout World War II.

In addition to the relational power of photographs to connect people with those outside the camps, they also draw a connection to their lives before being incarcerated. In Figure 57, the photograph in Hatsume Akaki’s album with “Nakako Studio” printed on the bottom indicates that it was taken and printed before going to Amache. It ties the woman in the photograph to Nakako Studio that operated in the Los Angeles area before
the war. Another example is a photograph in Tami Kasamatsu’s album of a group of people at the Manzanar hospital who all came from North Hollywood. This demonstrates that although people formed new networks of relationships in the camp, people also maintained close ties with their pre-war communities. This photograph mediates connections to both pre-war and camp communities.

The continued significance of photographs in mediating relationships between people in camp communities was particularly evident when talking with Tami Kasamatsu. When I was getting ready to leave her house, I asked her if she would like to keep the copies of photographs that I had brought. She said she would, because she planned on getting together with her a couple of her friends that she had pointed out to me in the images. The photographs provided an opportunity not only to connect with memories and stories related to people in the images, but they also initiated Tami to invite people who were part of her social sphere at Manzanar to her house and look at the photographs together.

Lastly, the camp reunions are a significant part of the narratives that photographs initiated as well as gatherings where camp communities have interacted with the photographs and one another. When Joyce was doing research about the people in Katsumi’s photo album, she brought copies of the photographs to the Manzanar Reunion to see if people had information to share. When I asked her about this experience of acquiring names, Joyce said, “Yeah, I think it was Rosie. Rosie and Grace just naturally knew all the names” (Seippel 2017). The Rosie that Joyce was talking about was Rosie Kakuuchi, one of the other participants in my research. Before conducting my interviews, I had no knowledge of relationships between the album donors that had agreed to talk
with me. Rosie Kakuuchi and her sister Grace actively contributed to Joyce’s assemblage of Katsumi’s photographs.

The photographs revealed other social connections between participants, particularly in the reoccurring appearance of Ralph Lazo in people’s album. These examples demonstrate the extent to which photographs are part of the networks of relationships in camp communities but also their role in mobilizing new relationships and narratives. The examples of the themes related to reunions outlined in Chapter 6 also demonstrate the importance of these events as places where these photographs do work.

The acts of creating photo albums documenting this period as well as modifying, preserving, donating, and naming people in the photographs can also be seen as a means of representing the people who never told their stories, reestablishing connections that for a period of time were perhaps lost or stagnant. As prominent narratives about this history have shifted to focus on the resilience of the communities who the government incarcerated, these processes also contribute to revitalizing these connections. Rose Tanaka’s stories about experiences at Manzanar highlight narratives of community resilience. She stated, “So, it was a matter of a community that had to get together and help each other out...So we became quite a community in this desert area that had snow in the winter and sandstorms in the summer” (Tanaka 2017).

The patterns I observed while recording album biographies, conducting a material analysis, and engaging in conversations about the albums reveal a degree of shared experience and collective memory that connect people incarcerated in the camps. These include thematic patterns from our conversations such as work, family, and the formation of community social groups. These patterns are particularly striking when looking at
what people decided to take pictures of or which pictures they acquired. The vast majority of photographs are of people, prominent places where people tended to gather, and more personal spaces outside where people lived. Patterns also exist when looking at the album biographies and what people have done with the photographs over time including collecting and exchanging photographs, naming people in the images, arranging them in albums, and donating them. The commonality of conversations about community and changing relationships over time shows the highly social role of photographs.

The ways in which the photographs simultaneously connect people with experiences before and after the war as well as beyond the confines of the barbed wire fences also demonstrates that these relationships are not discrete or bounded. They move beyond the instantaneous time captured in the image. They also rupture the arbitrary racial lines designated by the US government during World War II through their connection to a multiplicity of local and global communities and cultural expressions.

**National Heritage**

In addition to identity, family, and camp communities, photo albums are also involved in the formation of heritage. Richard Handler describes official heritage as places designated as “an embodiment of regional, national or international values,” and unofficial heritage as composed of relationships between “people, objects, places and memories” (Harrison 2010, 8). My material analysis as well as conversations with album donors highlight how photographs of Japanese American World War II incarceration contribute to the negotiation of both official and unofficial kinds of heritage, particularly in relation to national and transnational identities and experiences.
Observing and discussing the photo albums in the context of their material assemblage challenges concepts that place national identities into discrete categories. Many of the photo albums demonstrate the simultaneous lived experiences associated with both Japanese and American practices. While the US government positioned American citizens and life-long “residents” as foreign enemies of the Japanese nation, the photographs and corresponding narratives show that people incarcerated in the camps continued to live out their lives, maintaining aspects associated with Japanese practices.

Photographs such as Figure 48 in Tami Kasamatsu’s album that shows people participating in a type of Japanese festival exemplify how people lived out their Japanese heritage in the camps. Tami’s incorporation of this photograph in her album also demonstrates that this event was something she wanted to remember or perhaps show other people. While the photograph references and preserves a form of evidence of this event, it is also part of processes of group formation that are tied to a shared heritage and experience. When looking at the photograph with Tami, she read part of the Japanese writing on the front of the photograph that she could decipher. The photograph not only references Japan, but also initiated Tami to carry out practices associated with Japanese heritage. All of the albums had at least some kind of Japanese writing on or below the photographs. This material association with Japan indicates that Japanese cultural practices were part of peoples lived experiences in the camps.

The ways in which these photographs mediate connection to Japan highlight the complexity of how people live out their heritage. For example, Rose Tanaka expressed to me how her experiences as a Japanese American at Manzanar were different from many of her friends in the camp. She stated,
“They were all from Japanese dominated communities, so I felt like I went to a foreign country, because despite the fact that I looked like all the people – the residence there – it was just obvious all people had come from that background. So, there I was at Manzanar. I was 15 years old” (Tanaka 2017).

A photograph shown in both Figures 35 and 42 in Rosie Kakuuchi’s album initiated a similar story about the complexities of being Japanese American in the camp. In the photograph, she is shown participating in a Japanese play. Her father and those of the Issei generation pushed her to participate, but at the time she said, “This is ridiculous, I don’t know anything” indicating that she was not knowledgeable about being in a Japanese play. Rosie agreed to do the play because it was “for the Issei, the parents to see.” Rosie’s narrative of the photograph demonstrates the unique experiences in how people live out their heritage, particularly those transnational in nature. It also shows how heritage is tied to family and generational experiences.

Practices associated with ancestry and heritage in the camps presented complications as US citizens were directly faced with the contradiction of what they learned in school about the US constitution and the personal loss of their basic freedoms. A number of photographs that Rose Tanaka had in her house and the stories she told me in reference to them were tied to her national heritage as an American. These often alluded to the contradictory nature of her World War II experiences as an American citizen incarcerated without due process. One example is in Figure 63. While showing me the Dorothea Lange photograph of children saying the pledge of allegiance, Rose recalled saying the pledge of allegiance every day in Manzanar. The photograph and her
memories associated with it are tied not only to her personal experiences as a Japanese American, but also the negotiation of American values and patriotism.

Tami’s photograph in Figure 48 of a young woman who answered no to questions 27 and 28 and was sent to Tule Lake and eventually Japan draws a connection not only to the transnational experiences of Japanese practices in the United States, but the physical transnational migration of people. Tami’s story about the woman and her family’s experiences in Japan exemplifies the difficulties in living out heritage simultaneously tied to localized cultural practices and national values of two nations at war. These examples illuminate how people’s photographs are involved in the intersection in how people practice both official and unofficial forms of heritage, mediating understandings of national identities and everyday lived experiences within national borders.

**History**

My research demonstrates the role of photographs in contributing not only to personal stories and identities, but also public narratives of the history of Japanese American World War II incarceration. While processes involved in the formation of history can take place in many spaces, the photo albums play a unique role in these processes through their place in history museums. Museums are places where the processes of group formation that I have discussed come into contact with one another. They are places where the formation of camp communities, heritage, and identities are contested and negotiated, contributing to the presentation and preservation of Japanese American World War II history. Throughout my research, I came across numerous examples of how photographs mediated people’s participation in and understanding of history both during World War II and today.
As Rose Tanaka showed me photographs in her sister-in-law’s yearbook she stated, “We knew that we were part of history” (Tanaka 2017). Rose and her classmates named their yearbook *Our World* in part to document and show what their life was like. Others also spoke about the power of photographs of this time to preserve and communicate historical knowledge. In particular, people mentioned Toyo Miyatake’s photographs that he took while incarcerated at Manzanar. They were instrumental to the community but also seen as an important part of documenting experiences of incarceration. As previous noted in Chapter 4 during my conversation with Rosie Kakuuchi, she stated, “So this is why it was so wonderful that Toyo Miyatake had the hindsight to know what to do.” Rosie quoted Toyo as saying, “You know I need to take pictures for historical reasons because this day, no one’s going to know about it unless we have pictures to show” (Kakuuchi 2017).

Conversations with different people also illuminated their relationship to the historical narratives of Japanese American World War II incarceration and the role of different generations in contributing to the knowledge of and formation of this history. Much of what Bob Akaki shared with me related to the photographs he had learned from doing his own historical research, while both Rosie Kakuuchi and Rose Tanaka utilize photographs in talking about their experiences when speaking with public audiences.

Through my analysis of photographs in museum collections, it is clear that personal relationships between museum staff and people in Japanese American communities are instrumental to the formation of these histories that are preserved and interpreted to the public. These connections demonstrate the more “official” histories discussed and presented in museums are simultaneously composed of themes and values
tied to universal experiences such as injustice, hardship, and resilience and people’s individual stories of these experiences.

I observed the role of photographs in negotiating this history when I worked at both Manzanar NHS and the Amache Museum. One day when I was working at the front desk at Manzanar NHS, a visitor came up to me and told me that her uncle was in the block photograph in the first exhibit panel. I utilized this experience when speaking to other visitors, demonstrating to people that this history is more than something someone wrote down in a history book. It is made up of people’s personal experiences who come and visit the museum every day.

I had a similar situation when working in the Amache Museum one afternoon. A woman came in with her family carrying a number of photographs of her and her family incarcerated at Amache. I scanned the photographs, so the museum would have digital copies, and using the photographs, she told me about her family’s experiences. In the museum space, the photographs mediated my understanding of this history through the knowledge I had gained during my research but also her stories of personal experiences in the camp. The digital preservation of these photographs at the Amache Museum create the potential for similar means of understanding this history in the future.

My conversation with Rose Tanaka demonstrates how the formation of this history is tied up in other kinds of group formation related to family, identity, and heritage. She also stated:

“I said, ‘Well maybe I’ll take my grandchildren [to the reunion], so they know what’s going on.’ You know all my children; my four children were out marriages. So, all my grandchildren are half, only half Japanese. And so, they’re,
you know I never talked about it very much, well just because you know, our lives are separated…For me it was a historical time. And I didn’t make people go to the reunions. But I wanted my children to know about it.” (Tanaka 2017).

Rose’s desire for her family to know about Japanese American incarceration through looking at her photographs, visiting Manzanar NHS, and attending Manzanar events and reunions demonstrates how photographs can simultaneously mediate multiple processes of group formation and ways of knowing. For her, the fact that “it was a historical time” is important, and her connection to this history contributes to her family’s ability to learn about it. Similarly, Bob Akaki expressed that one of the reasons he donated his aunt’s photo album was so that researchers would have better access to it. His donation places the photographs in the context of the history of Japanese American WWII incarceration preserved and interpreted at the Amache Museum. In an email Bob wrote me about why he donated the photo album, he wrote, “If I were to keep it, who would know about those things?” (Akaki 2017).

These photographs are particularly important in the formation of this history today, because for many decades following World War II, people rarely talked about it. In her article about collaborative archaeology at the Amache site, archaeologist Bonnie Clark writes about the legacy of this collaborative project related to Japanese American incarceration. She writes, “Silence about internment is not so much a tear in the family narrative as it is a black hole, a force that bends the fields of memory while itself remaining invisible” (Clark 2017, 90). Photo albums and people’s exchange, preservation, manipulation, narration, and donation of them, bring voice to these family and historical silences. One aspect that Latour designates as always present in processes
of group formation is that “groups are made to talk” (Latour 2005, 31). Through their preservation and presentation in museums, photo albums provide new opportunities for negotiation of what this history means and how it is interpreted. People’s interactions with the photo albums and the existence of albums themselves are part of the active networks of negotiation that make the social aggregate of Japanese American World War II incarceration a publicly acknowledged history.

The different processes involved in the formation of family and identity, people who have passed away, camp communities, heritage, and history that the photographs are part of relate to Richard Handler’s concept of heritage as social action. He describes this process as “involved in the production of both collective and individual memory and performs ‘social work’ which helps to build community and identity” (Harrison 2010, 39). These processes that Handler describes and that I have outlined in this section are not discrete. Rather, my research demonstrates how photographs mediate different processes of group formation that are often fleeting and change over time in different contexts. Some of these categories might seem to constitute more abstract or intangible realizations of a group such as identity or history, but I have demonstrated that material objects, particularly photographs, are part of processes that mediate people’s participation in these groups.

**Photographic Representations**

While photographs are part of how people define themselves and the social groups they are part of, how does this address the problematic history of photographic representation? My research of photographs in the albums and my conversations with the album donors challenge assumptions about the power dynamics invested in photographs
from this time. The extensive exchange of photographs in the camps demonstrate their social significance during World War II, but also people’s agencies. Rather than preserve and communicate one historical moment, these photographs, including those taken by government officials, are embedded in an ongoing negotiation of a multitude of histories. People are continually reappropriating and recontextualizing photographs of Japanese American World War II incarceration, forming new narratives that mediate present day discourse.

While it is important to understand the problematic power dynamics in the creation of photographs from this time, it is also crucial to continually reevaluate how these power dynamics change. None of the people I interviewed told me that photographs from this time were or are problematic. Throughout the past 75 years and perhaps increasingly today, many of these photographs have been part of identity forming processes tied not only to people’s personal narratives but also more public and political discourse. This was particularly poignant in my conversation with Rose Tanaka. While I had intended on talking about the photo album that she donated to Manzanar, we spent much more time discussing and looking at photographs that she had in her apartment. Most of these photographs were taken by Ansel Adams and government officials but seemed to encapsulate and elicit narratives more closely aligned with the personal experiences of incarceration that she wished to share with me.

As we looked through her original copy of Born Free and Equal, Rose told me stories about all the people she knew in the photographs. While looking at a photograph of her brother Henry and another picture of a young man standing in front of an agricultural field (Figure 64), she stated, “There’s a picture of Henry working on a
caterpillar that needed attention. Here’s a boy that lived in my block…So many of the people in this book are from my experience and I knew.” The photographs in Ansel Adams’ book elicited narratives about her family being forced to leave everything behind, but also how people at Manzanar managed to transform the landscape and make it livable. The stories she told me about her friend who was a journalist featured in some of Ansel Adams’ photographs reveal something about that historical moment, but they are also personal. The photograph depicts her friend, Roy, standing in front of a barracks building of the Manzanar Free Press, indicating his relationship to the newspaper at camp. While looking at the photograph, Rose told me a story about how he later married a woman who lived in the same block as her.

While observing these photographs strictly in the context of Ansel Adams’ book, they perhaps most directly communicate the agency of the photographer; when looking at the photographs with Rose, the images take on new agencies. They illuminate the agency of Rose and her personal experiences of incarceration. They also highlight the agencies of the people in the photographs. Through Rose’s stories, they become more than people that Ansel Adams’ photographed, but people with rich and full lives. They are people who also got married, supported families, and maintained friendships beyond the years they spent incarcerated during World War II.

Another example of how Japanese Americans have appropriated government-produced photography is Rosie Kakuuchi’s incorporation of a photograph in her album of her and her friend playing softball at Manzanar. The original photograph was taken by government photographer, Francis Stewart. Figure 68 shows digitized versions of the
official government photograph with the caption. Figure 69 shows Rosie’s captioned copy that is in the photo album about her life.

*Figure 66: Government photograph showing Rosie Kakuuchi playing baseball with the photographer’s caption*

*Figure 67: Government-produced photograph in Rosie Kakuuchi’s photo album with her own captions*

Rosie’s verbal narrative and caption present a slightly different perspective than the government photograph. Rosie is the narrator of the photograph’s story both when speaking to me as well as in the caption that reads, “Me sliding into base.” The name of the other woman in the photograph takes on a slightly different identity than in Francis Stewart’s caption. Instead of “Misao Sugimoto” Rosie’s caption reads “Misao Iwada.”
This is perhaps the woman’s name after later getting married, indicating that Rosie maintained some kind of relationship with her beyond the moment that the photograph was taken.

It is crucial not to downplay or forget the disproportionate power relations that exist in the government-sponsored creation and use of Japanese American WWII incarceration photography, but to attribute this problematic power dynamic as the only lens for making meaning of the images too wholeheartedly undermines the agencies of Japanese Americans who experienced it. In *Tracing Photography*, Elizabeth Edwards discusses the concept of “photographic sovereignty.” Edwards references studies that demonstrate how photographs are part of acts of reclaiming histories and narratives originally created for hegemonic colonial or scientific purposes. For example, in Binney and Chaplin’s (1991) research with a Maori community, colonial histories of images are suppressed and instead prioritize the personal and community historical legacy of the photographs. Brown and Peers write that community members instead can utilize photographs to “articulate to themselves their experiences of the past and, ultimately, to speak to their children about the strength of their community” (Edwards 2011, 181).

My research of primary documents demonstrating the demand of government-produced photographs in the camps indicates that for many people, photography was a crucial part of their everyday lives that they wished to maintain. Throughout my research, people continually reframed photographic narratives within the context of their own lives and shared histories. Photographs combined with the acts of identifying people’s names and telling their stories provide an opportunity to reclaim histories that once relegated
individuals to numbers. In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes explains photography’s tenuous role in the objectification of people. He writes:

> “Photography transformed subject into object, and even, one might say, into a museum object: in order to take the first portraits the subject had to assume long poses under a glass roof in bright sunlight; to become an object made one suffer as much as surgical operation; then a device was invented, a kind of prosthesis invisible to the lens, which supported and maintained the body in its passage to immobility: this headrest was the pedestal of the statue I would become, the corset of my imaginary essence” (Barthes 1981, 13).

While photographs present the possibility of objectifying those captured in the images, when they are observed in the context of people’s everyday interactions, people’s stories have the power to contextualize a more nuanced position and relationship. In *Objects of Affect*, Edwards states, “photographs, especially in their global consumption, are often of people, thus blurring the distinction between person and thing, subject and object, photography and referent in significant ways.” As evident in the reuse of government produced photographs, what is object and what is subject is very much dependent on the context in which people engage with a photograph.

While individual images hint at a story captured in the moment the photograph was taken, people’s assemblage of multiple photographs in a photo album present a more curated narrative of the person who made it. Rosie Kakuuchi described her process of assembling photographs of her sister stating, “These are pictures that she had, and I had, that we put together to give her side of the story.” For Rosie, these photographs narrate her sister’s story. As Ochs and Capp point out narrative “can transport narrators and audiences to more authentic feelings, beliefs, and actions and ultimately to a more authentic sense of life” (Ochs and Capp 1996, 23). In this way, the photographic narratives in the photo albums I researched tell a story about an event or time period, but
also through their crafted narratives create a sense of knowing a person and representing their experiences.

Processes of naming people in photographs and telling their stories can create a heightened sense of knowing the person in the image. When I asked Joyce Seippel if she knew most of the people in the photographs, she stated, “No. I only know them by these pictures and their name.” While Joyce had never met most of the people in the photographs, her familiarity with the images and the processes of naming people, even with nicknames or initials, was a way of coming to know a person, however partial or limited.

Manzanar NHS Chief of interpretation, Alisa Lynch, described the power of a visual image and personal narrative to restore a sense of humanity, and how Manzanar NHS has utilized images and stories in the site’s introductory film.

“Pictures are pretty special. You don’t just run around snapping them like we do today. The ability for people to see photos of themselves that they didn’t know existed. One of my favorite things, and we’ve tried to do this in the interp and especially the movie, is having the opportunity to look other people in the eye. I think it’s very hard to look at somebody eye to eye, even if it’s over seven decades, like in the movie, to look at somebody in the eye and not really care and disregard their humanity. I think that’s an opportunity to, you know, encounter people who are no longer here, to be encountered physically. But to get a sense of, wow, this person is a fellow human being” (Lynch 2017).

While a material analysis alone would have proved insightful for understanding the social role of photographs in the camps, my research has attempted to address
problematic histories of representation through connecting images with people who have the most at stake in how they are interpreted. To once again reference Judith Butler, “Those who gain representation, especially self-representation, have a better chance of being humanized, and those who have no chance to represent themselves run a greater risk of being treated as less than human, or indeed, not regarded at all” (Foster 2008, 88).
Chapter 8: Conclusion

The perspectives I present in this thesis are my own and based on my conversations with a handful of people. For each of the over 120,000 people that the US government incarcerated during World War II, there are a multitude of everchanging perspectives and stories. The sites of Japanese American World War II incarceration, including Manzanar and Amache, are places where these histories and personal experiences are negotiated. Since my research is focused on objects that exist in museum collections, the people I spoke with are all associated with these museums and support their efforts. Because of this, my research does not incorporate the perspectives of Japanese Americans who are not part of these communities and whose connections to these histories are negotiated and understood in different contexts. While my research provides insight into the role of photographs of Japanese American World War II incarceration and how people remember this history, it is very focused in scope. My research demonstrates the importance of context when understanding the use and interpretation of photographs, and my hope is that people will utilize this perspective to ask more nuanced questions, rather than formulate generalized explanations.

Digitization and Context

Some of the most pertinent questions relating to photographs of Japanese American World War II incarceration have to do with their digitization. As discussed in Chapter 3, the general public’s access to these photographs has significantly increased in
recent decades as digital worlds and digital images have become central to how many people live out their lives. While digitization can provide access to people who otherwise would not be able to see these photographs, they also present challenges. As images are removed from contexts that frame them within problematic power dynamics that existed at the time, many fear that people will not understand the true injustices of these experiences.

My research shows that people often keep the objects, specifically photographs, that are most important to understanding and narrating their life and historical experiences. As museums continue to look for innovative ways to collaborate with communities and address difficult power dynamics in telling other people’s stories, incorporating more formalized practices of digital collection could be advantageous. Currently, a common museum practice is to focus strictly on acquiring physical and original materials. This practice makes sense in terms of ownership and preservation, because copies of original materials can present complications related to copyright.

Based on my experience in museums, people have not found adequate ways to manage collections of digital materials, perhaps because of the sticky legal issues involved and also likely due to the work required to manage the vastness of the digital world. I advocate that collecting digital representations of the objects that elicit these stories and their corresponding narratives could help address issues of context and representation related to photographs of this history. Funding and staff limitations often present challenges in museums, and it is difficult enough to keep up with the abundance of incoming donations. Taking these challenges into consideration, shifting attention to the items that connect most to the lives of those living today and their stories of the past
could provide a means to better mediate relationships with present day communities. It could also provide further public access through digital platforms of contextualized materials.

Furthermore, my hope is that this research sheds light on the existence of people’s personal photographs documenting their lives in the camps. Currently, the digital landscape of photographs of this history are dominated by government-produced images, which are not always contextualized. Having access to photographs that position Japanese Americans as the narrators of these photographic histories is crucial to understanding it. While photographs and the narratives of these images are always partial, my research demonstrates that they are also potent. Photographs are highly social objects, meaning they have the potential to connect with people in powerful ways. When these images are contextualized in terms of their production and use, they are an important means of learning about experiences of Japanese American World War II incarceration as well as a means of connection for families and communities.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

While my research covers a significant amount of ground regarding images of Japanese American World War II incarceration, it also reveals the extensive research potential of work yet to be done. When I began my work, I intended on framing my research in the contexts of both the more personal perspectives of Japanese Americans in addition to the context and use of photographs in more public spaces of museums. After conducting my research, I realized my original proposal was too all-encompassing, and instead, I focused on the significant amount of information I was able to gather about perspectives of Japanese American album donors. While I contextualized the
photographs in the museum and how they relate to donor’s perspectives, doing more comprehensive research about photographs in the museum is an important next step. Particularly fruitful would be observing how these images are preserved and further incorporated into exhibits and other forms of public interpretation. Another aspect of this research could incorporate visitor studies. This would provide perspectives of how the public engages with these photographs, which would be an important contribution in fully contextualizing anxieties surrounding their interpretation.

Additionally, each of the processes of group formation that I discussed in Chapter 7 could be research projects on their own. The examples of how the photographs connect to the formation and understanding of family and identity, people who have passed, camp communities, heritage, and history are numerous. The ways in which these processes intersect is also of interest, particularly how they simultaneously contribute to the formation of identities as well as collective memory and knowledge.

**Conclusion**

As people have exchanged, annotated, arranged, and donated personal photographs of Japanese American World War II incarceration, it is clear that the role of vernacular photography is far from static. Some fear that people will misinterpret the real injustices of this history when seeing photographs of smiling faces and seemingly everyday activities from the camps, but my research presents different perspectives for addressing this issue. When observing how people have used and understood these photographs over time and in different contexts, my research shows that they are involved in a more complex set of processes than simply transmitting information. They are mediators in how people understand themselves, their communities, their heritage,
and their place in history, mobilizing people’s participation in these processes of group formation. These active social processes demonstrate that history is made of people anchored in the material worlds they encounter and create. When observed in their material context, snapshots reveal more than what might be a joyous or fleeting smile. They provide new opportunities for people to learn, remember, and connect.
Bibliography


Granada Pioneer

1942, December 2. “Cameras Okayed”
1943, April 14. “Appointments for Photos May be Made.”

1943, April 14. “Short Takes.”


1943, May 5. “All Must Have Pictures Taken.”

1943, May 22. “May Apply for Seized Articles.”

1943, June 23. “Short-wave Sets to be Turned In.”

1943, October 27. “Radios, Cameras Arrive Here.”

1943, February 2. “500 Photographs Depicting Center Life Available Soon.”


1944, April 19. “Just Incidentally by Suzo Sako.”

Granada Relocation enter Reports Office. 1944. “Summer School Activities” War Relocation Authority.


Hayashi, Masumi. ”The Family Album.”


*Manzanar Free Press*

1943, April 10. Identification Will Require Picture, Print.”

1943. April 10. “Photo Studio to Hold Grand Opening Monday.”

1943, April 21. “Local Studio Presents Status and Personnel.”

1943, April 28. “Photo Studio.”


