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Engineering Internment: Anthropologists and the War Relocation Authority

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# engineering internment: anthropologists and the War Relocation Authority

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On 19 February 1942, Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which gave the army authority to establish zones from which citizens and aliens alike might be removed by military command. On 16 March, Western Defense Commander General John DeWitt declared the entire West Coast a restricted area for all Japanese Americans, and the next day Roosevelt established the War Relocation Authority (WRA) to supervise removal and relocation. By June, 110,000 Japanese Americans—two-thirds of them American citizens—had been resettled in ten camps administered by the WRA.

A photograph taken by Ansel Adams in the fall of 1943 shows a scene from the Manzanar Relocation Center (Figure 1). Appearing in a book on Manzanar published in 1944, the picture seems a generic image of semisuburban or rural America during wartime. Students carrying books walk to an undepicted school. The sky is bright; the students are smiling and neatly dressed; and the low buildings in the background look like tract houses, fronted by a baseball field and backstop. Trees and telephone poles rise just above the buildings, backed by low mountains. The caption reads: “Manzanar is only a detour on the road of American citizenship.”

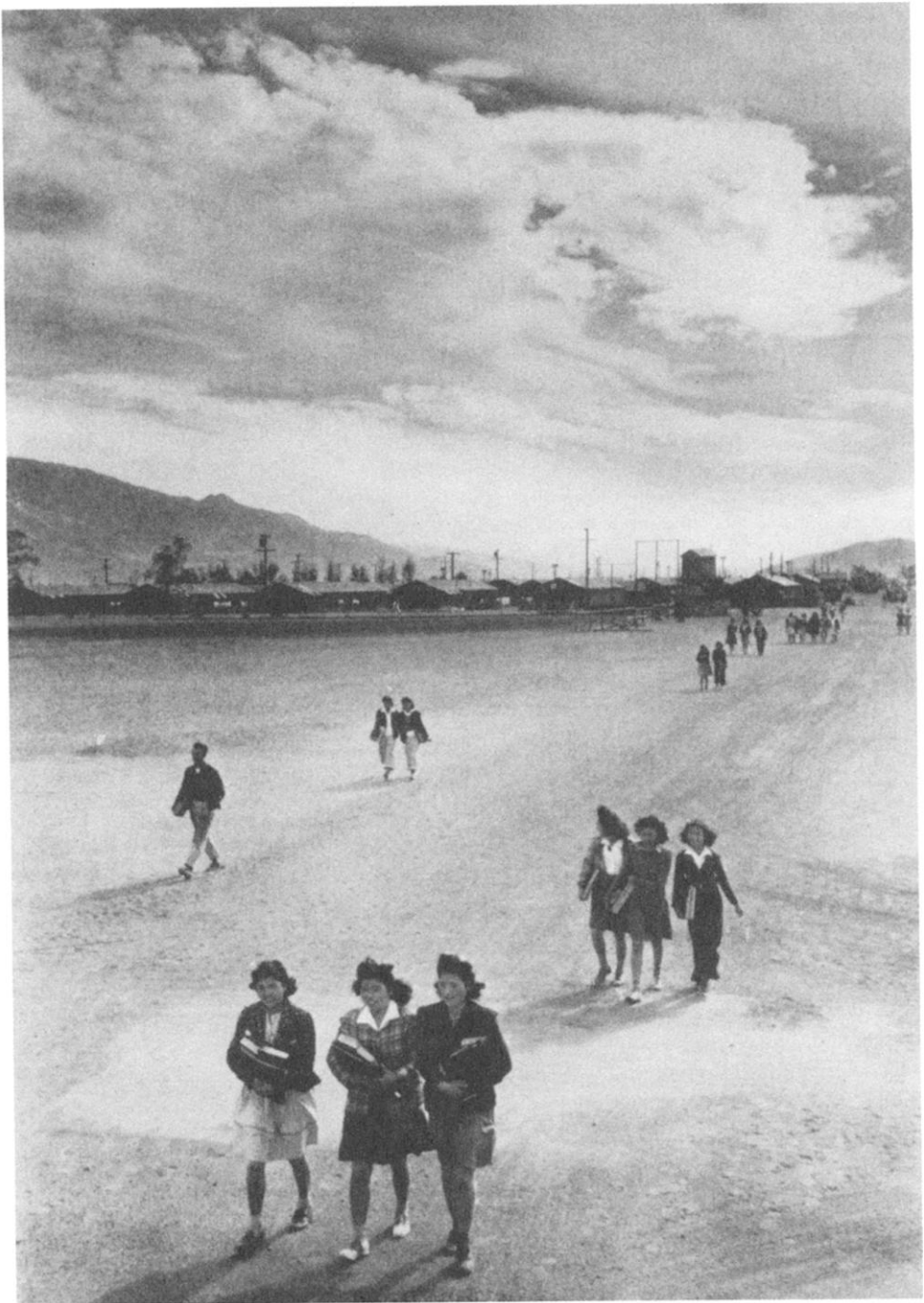
Manzanar photographed as a normal American community typifies the dominant way relocation was represented in America during World War II. Shaped in a context where support for the government was deemed imperative, these representations repeatedly stressed the success of the internment program. The common denominator was portrayal of the relocation camps as developing communities, with the 110,000 internees happily adjusting to their new lives. In professional journals, distinguished educators wrote of the high quality of camp schools (Kehoe 1944), and public health experts praised hygiene programs at the centers (Gerken 1943), and social workers attested to the social benefits of relocation (Pickett 1943). In more general circulation were pictures by famous photographers like Adams and Dorothea Lange showing smilingly industrious Japanese Americans and countless radio and newspaper human interest stories on life at the centers.

Many of the people taking the pictures, writing the reports, and authoring the journal articles were seriously concerned about the plight of the internees. Their views were by no means either monolithic or conspiratorial. The Adams photograph does not conceal Manzanar’s dirt streets or the guard box behind the baseball backstop, and Adams himself had been deeply disturbed

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*This paper reexamines a neglected chapter in the history of anthropology, the involvement of ethnographers in the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Anthropologists worked in the ten internment centers with the good intentions of improving camp conditions and defusing anti-Japanese public opinion. But the present study argues that their writings had a series of largely unintended effects, including restriction of discourse about removal, legitimization of relocation, and promotion of racial stereotypes about the Japanese. [Japanese Americans, World War II, internment, history of anthropology]*

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Ansel Adams

Figure 1. "Manzanar is only a detour on the road of American citizenship."

by "Yellow Peril" hysteria on the West Coast. Some writers mentioned problems at the centers; a few came close to protesting the relocation decision. Yet depictions of the camps remained

consistently positive, as questions about the morality of the whole enterprise were either ignored or dismissed. Together, these representations constituted a cultural discourse that preempted criticism of removal and legitimized the internment. Anthropologists, I will argue, were integral contributors to this discourse.

## **the problem of anthropologists and relocation**

Shortly after the establishment of the WRA, its new director Dillon Myer hired the anthropologist John Provine as Chief of Community Management in the Washington office. Provine was the first of 21 anthropologists employed by the WRA to research camp life and advise administrators. Among them were some of the most renowned ethnographers of the time: Robert Redfield, Edward Spicer, Weston LaBarre, Conrad Arensberg, Morris Opler, Marvin Opler, Rachel Sady, John Embree, and Solon Kimball.<sup>1</sup> The first three WRA anthropologists—Provine, Redfield, and Embree—all worked in Washington. Redfield was brought in by Provine as a consultant for several months. Embree went to work on a more long-term basis as head of the Community Analysis Section of the Community Management Division. The first ethnographer to work outside Washington was anthropologist-psychologist Alexander Leighton. In May 1942, he opened the Bureau of Sociological Research (BSR) at Poston, the largest of the camps with a peak population of 20,000 in 1943. The BSR was soon expanded to include two more anthropologists and about 15 internee research assistants.

After a series of strikes and riots at Manzanar, Poston, Tule Lake, and other camps in the fall of 1942, the WRA decided to send a social scientist to each of the ten relocation centers. The majority of these “community analysts,” as they were officially designated, were anthropologists. Morris Opler filled the position at Manzanar, Marvin Opler at Tule Lake, John DeYoung at Minidoka, and Asael Hansen (1946) at Heart Mountain. Some anthropologists, among them Katherine Luomala, also worked as community analysts outside the centers, monitoring people released from the camps. When the WRA was officially disbanded on 1 July 1946, both the field analysts and the anthropologists in the Community Management Division in Washington returned to civilian life. A small group remained in the so-called Liquidation Unit, to study the readjustment of the internees. A year later this follow-up work was complete and anthropological involvement in relocation ended.

Trying to make sense of the role of anthropologists in relocation is a troubling and sensitive task. One explanation downplays the broad ethical issues and political implications of their participation, asserting that anthropologists eased the relocation process for both Japanese Americans and WRA administrators. This is the standard view of ethnographers who worked for the WRA (cf. Leighton 1945; Spicer 1946). Opposed is the radical position that ethnographers were essentially accomplices of the government in relocation. Evolving from public criticism of internment that has mounted steadily since the 1960s, this perspective has been only partially articulated in the anthropology literature (cf. Suzuki 1980, 1981).

Neither interpretation is entirely satisfying. The standard view minimizes the fact that WRA ethnographers were part of the administrative apparatus that enforced an executive order publicly denounced even at the time as racist and unconstitutional;<sup>2</sup> it does not adequately address the questions about science, power, and politics that the internment episode so sharply poses. The radical perspective, on the other hand, fails to consider the good intentions of WRA anthropologists or their reasons for involvement. The result is an unproductive stand-off. No serious attempt is made by either side to combine close analysis of the circumstances surrounding anthropological participation, the intentions of the ethnographers, and the outcomes of their work. Context, intention, and consequence are artificially separated.

I bring them back together in what follows. This essay introduces the two broad aims of community analysts: advising administrators and undermining racism toward Japanese Americans.

It moves on to situate these aims in the professional discourse, institutional framework, and public setting within which the analysts were operating. This historical and interpretive perspective gives us deeper insight into the motives that brought anthropologists to the WRA. But it at the same time reveals how the attempt of ethnographers to realize their positive intentions inadvertently incorporated notions of social control with repressive implications, worked implicitly to justify relocation, restated stereotypes, and left unexamined the essentially racist assumptions behind internment. The story that emerges is about an event 45 years past. The camps are now abandoned to the desert and the writings of anthropologists about them gather dust on library shelves. It is, however, a story worth telling, for the issues it raises are very much with us today.<sup>3</sup>

## **the anthropologist as adviser**

On the first page of a retrospective account titled “Anthropologists and the War Relocation Authority,” Edward Spicer (1979:217) acknowledges the violation of civil rights in relocation. He paraphrases a 1945 denunciation of internment by a well-known law professor as “a serious threat to fundamental citizenship rights” and “America’s worst war-time mistake.” Concern about this mistake, Spicer (1979:218) continues, is understandable, but should not draw too much attention from the immediate human “problems of the 110,000 men, women, and children suddenly made homeless and excluded from the coastal states.” Both as anthropologists committed to the welfare of Japanese Americans and as citizens dedicated to the Allied struggle, ethnographers had a duty to help the WRA solve these problems and “reintegrate the evacuees into normal American life” (Spicer 1979:220). Spicer goes on to discuss anthropologists’ specific contributions to the WRA and the administration of the camps.

Spicer’s position sums up the basic perception of WRA anthropologists both during the war and, with the benefit of hindsight, about their own role in relocation.<sup>4</sup> The argument is that while the decision to remove Japanese Americans was unfortunate and perhaps unjustified, anthropologists made an important contribution toward transforming relocation itself into a democratic process. For WRA ethnographers—guided by the Weberian premise that science and politics do not belong together—the task was not to question Executive Order 9066, but rather to help see that it was carried out fairly and efficiently.

Accepting this assignment, anthropologists defined one of their two central functions as advising administrators on policy. As Gordon Brown wrote,

the task of the Community Analyst . . . may be summarized as follows: to present such facts of social organization, attitudes and reactions of the resident community as will assist in efficient administration, and be of use in the formulation, modification, and execution of both national and project policies [1945:7].

Luomala put the same idea in less bureaucratic language in 1947 (p. 25): “research was to assist administrators in the centers and in Washington to understand the social organization of the residents and their reactions to WRA programs.” Leighton (1945:vii) concurred that anthropologists should take as a key duty “advising the administrative officers concerning current situations in the Center . . . making observations and analyses that would have bearing on the general problems of administration.”

An important dimension of this advisory role was reviewing the impact of current WRA policies. Community analysts at each of the relocation centers prepared regular reports on administration and camp life, as well as Weekly Summaries (30 issues), Community Analyst Notes (15 issues), a Project Analysis Series (24 issues), and a general newsletter (14 issues). Read by both camp administrators and WRA authorities in Washington, this literature discussed the relevance of everything from religious beliefs to recreational activities for administrative strategy; it also included analyses of individual administrative programs. The 1943 registration, in which

all internees, including Japanese citizens, were asked to respond yes or no to a loyalty oath, was one object of particular study; another was the continuing WRA effort to institute a restricted form of self-government in the centers. The work of the camp analysts on these topics was supplemented by occasional reports from visiting anthropologists, among them Arensberg's (1942) "Report on a Developing Community, Poston, Arizona" and Provinse and Kimball's (1946) "Building New Communities During War Time."

Besides general evaluation of policy, anthropologists spent considerable time researching the specific question of how to reduce unrest in the camps. The catalyst for this research was the outbreak of serious strikes and riots in late 1942 and early 1943. At Poston, the arrest of two men accused of assaulting an internee many camp residents considered a WRA informer led to a one-day general work stoppage. At Manzanar, the detainment of a kitchen worker similarly charged triggered a full-scale riot. The WRA called in the military police; one fired into the crowd, killing two protesters. At Topaz, the shooting by a sentry of an elderly man who had strayed a few feet beyond the barbed-wire camp boundary led to a massive protest demonstration at the funeral. At Tule Lake, a revolt over poor work conditions ended with tear gas and occupation of the camp by the army.

Community analysts "were instructed to study the causes of resistance" (Spicer 1946:25). The findings, summarized in a general report called "Evacuee Resistances to Relocation," blamed unrest on "deep-seated feelings of insecurity" caused by removal and "resistance(s) due to a newly developed social organization within the centers" (Embree 1943:2). These feelings of insecurity and resistance, argued anthropologists, were exploited by a few malcontents. As Leighton (1945:165) asserted of the Poston strike in a dubious generalization, "the movement, like almost all other social movements that have ever been carefully examined, was not truly spontaneous, but was whipped up by a small group playing on a responsive instrument." The general conclusion for administrators was that the disturbances would subside as the internees adjusted to camp life.

Along with this study of resistance and policy evaluation came the third element of anthropological advice to administrators—forecasting responses to alternative future programs. As Spicer (1946:18) put it, WRA ethnographers "attempted to predict the reactions of the various groups in the community to contemplated actions of the administration." These efforts ranged from detailing the expected results of reorganization of the WRA administrative hierarchy to assessing costs and benefits of proposed centralization of records on internees. The underlying assumption throughout was that anthropologists could formulate scientific laws about individual and social behavior in the camps, enabling them to anticipate the outcome of different administrative policies. Some ethnographers were even more ambitious, believing that observation of the relocation centers could provide general laws of human interaction. Leighton's (1945:247) *The Governing of Men*, for example, describes 17 administrative principles thought to have "validity which is independent of any political theory or design for living." All 17 were based on Leighton's research at Poston.

Evaluation, analysis of unrest, and prediction, then, were the three major aims composing the wider end of giving counsel to administrators. The main idea repeated again and again was that anthropologists have useful skills to put at the disposal of administrative authority. The ethnographers saw their role as making problems more intelligible, giving WRA authorities the information needed to maintain equilibrium and avoid resistance in the camps. In effect, anthropology was set up as a science of social control. When protest over poor wages broke out, anthropologists advised administrators how to control it (Wax 1953). When internees refused to get involved in camp self-government, anthropologists suggested ways to increase the level of participation (Spicer 1946). When residents opposed the WRA plan for dispersed resettlement in the Midwest and on the East Coast, ethnographers came up with suggestions for defusing opposition (Embree 1943).

In short, WRA anthropologists reformulated the classic Boasian axiom: instead of confronting power with truth, anthropology was to supply information to power. A fusion of administration and social science was the consequence. The people studied became objects of control and manipulation, and scientific methodology a means to the ends of government policy. The problem was not simply that anthropologists broke disciplinary taboos about mixing science and politics. In fact, WRA ethnographers were unequivocal in claiming neutrality and objectivity, as if their work had no political content. To understand the roots of anthropology's alignment with power in the WRA, one has to go back to the historical and disciplinary context.

A good starting point is the experience of the Depression and World War II. During the Indian New Deal, anthropologists had been hired for advice by the Soil Conservation Service in the wake of the disastrous Navajo stock reduction program.<sup>5</sup> In wartime, they helped form the Committee for National Morale and were called to serve the Office of Strategic Studies, Army Specialized Training Program, and the Committee on Food Habits.<sup>6</sup> These varied forms of involvement were part of a general push to prove the relevance of anthropology, first to economic recovery and then to the fight against fascism. Ralph Linton conveyed a sense of this project in *The Science of Man in World Crisis* (1945), which brought together the writing of anthropologists from Clyde Kluckhohn to Julian Steward in a wartime collection aimed at showing the practical uses of social theory. The findings of social science, Linton wrote, "are of the utmost importance both for the intelligent planning of the new world order which now appears inevitable and for the implementation of any plans which may be made" (1945:vii). Anthropologists, he continued (p. 11), "are attempting to arrive at certain generalizations, 'laws' in common parlance, which will make it possible to predict the course of events and ultimately to control it." Linton's faith in the progress of science—powerfully charged by a desire to create a structured and rational society out of the Depression and war—culminated in the vision of a "new social order . . . a conscious rebuilding of civilization in the face of new conditions" (1945:220–221).

Early applied anthropology, including WRA research, incorporated this same idea of science as the basis for a new order and shaped it into what retrospectively appears an unhappy union of power, knowledge, and social control. The regnant paradigm was summed up in a review article by Chapple entitled "Anthropological Engineering: Its Uses to Administrators" (1943). Chapple's initial premise, which was probably derived from Radcliffe-Brown and shared by ethnographers at the camps, was that "anthropology is a natural science, which gives every promise of becoming an exact one" (1943:24). The applied anthropologist puts this science at the disposal of authority, to allow administrators "to carry out . . . routines and through them to control the relations of people" (1943:28); anthropology was thus not simply an objective science, but a tool for managers. Anthropologists, Chapple believed, should find ways for those in authority to avoid changes in the structure of the system: the ethnographer "must anticipate disturbances and eliminate them before they cause serious repercussions in his organization" (1943:28). Resistance to the status quo is undesirable, and should be repressed with the help of the anthropologist qua technician:

If our society is to move more completely towards a democratic system, the engineers of human relations will have to devise methods by which all our institutions are made more efficient [1943:32].

Chapple's ideas make it clear that the notion of anthropologists as technicians at the service of authority was not the independent invention of WRA ethnographers, but was borrowed and adapted from applied work begun in the 1930s. The parallels between the role of ethnographers in the WRA and the major early applied project, Lloyd Warner's 1931 study of the Hawthorne Plant of the Western Electric Company in Chicago, are very strong.<sup>7</sup> In both, anthropologists were employed by management to study the managed; in both, anthropologists did predictions, evaluations, and research on causes of conflict with the ultimate goal of keeping the system running smoothly. Just as Warner "demonstrated that fatigue could be reduced through manipulation of interactional variables" (Eddy and Partridge 1978:17), WRA fieldworkers re-

searched ways to “control stress” through “proper attention to the dissemination of the right facts to the right people at the right time” (Leighton 1945:281).

The connections between the applied project for Western Electric and relocation research ten years later were by no means coincidental. Several WRA anthropologists—among them Arensberg and Kimball—were students of Warner at Harvard. Fieldwork for the WRA in fact closely followed the founding of the Society for Applied Anthropology in 1940. Almost all WRA anthropologists were early and active members of the SAA; John Provinse was its first president, Chapple the first editor. Many of these ethnographers published articles and reports on the camps in the society’s journal, *Applied Anthropology* (which became *Human Organization* in 1948).

As the Chapple article suggests, these early applied anthropologists saw one of their basic goals as supplying administrators with technical services and information. In fact, a constant theme in ethnographic writings on relocation was the ultimate accountability of anthropologists to the WRA. Ethnographers saw no contradiction between this allegiance and their responsibility to their internee informants because they assumed that the interests of the WRA and of the Japanese Americans were the same. “The objectives of administrators and evacuees in center management were, in main outline, nearly parallel; both wanted harmony and were willing generally to make the basic adjustments once the sources of disharmony were understood” (Spicer 1946:28). As in Chapple’s model, disturbances were regarded as pathological to administrative efficiency and the well-being of the camp residents. Strikes, riots, and protests became “sudden diseases of society” (Leighton 1945:6), threats to the morality and structure of the larger corporate organization.

The view of resistance as a pathology points to the heavy influence of functionalism, particularly structural functionalism, on WRA research and the general development of applied anthropology. Both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown taught Warner, the pioneer of the applied subfield. Malinowski’s more biological model—in which society is the medium through which basic human needs are met—never gained a wide following in the United States, but his work training colonial administrators at the London School of Economics provided an early example of anthropology’s practical uses. The impact of Radcliffe-Brown, who lectured at the University of Chicago from 1931 to 1937, was more direct. His Durkheimian notions of social integration and structure had an enormous influence on the prewar generation of graduate students and young professors. Structural functionalism became the cutting theoretical edge for this generation, from which the majority of WRA ethnographers was drawn.

WRA anthropologists directly applied structural-functionalist principles to analysis of the camps. Compare Provinse and Kimball’s description of camp life as “systems of stabilized relationships sanctioned by widely held beliefs” (1946:466) with Radcliffe-Brown’s classic definition of society as a stable “system of relationships of . . . people with one another . . . maintained and kept going by . . . [a] body of particular beliefs and ideas (1948:121). Application of structural functionalism to the camps meant working from the same set of assumptions about systemic isomorphism and integration of the internment camps that contemporary anthropologists were making about simple societies in the Third World. Through these distorting lenses, the barrack block, the single roof covering the rooms of 250 internees, was taken as the base unit in camp society, rather like the segmentary lineage in Evans-Pritchard’s *The Nuer* (1963). “The Blocks: Foundations of Community Life” was the title of a section in an analysis of Poston by Spicer (1969:102), who like Warner and Leighton was a student of Radcliffe-Brown. The blocks, Spicer and other anthropologists believed, were “the effective social units through which the evacuees met the immediate issues of practical living” (Spicer et al. 1969:14).

WRA ethnographers viewed the blocks, headed by block leaders, as the integrated components of a complete functional system—the relocation center. Even before relocation was complete, anthropologists in all seriousness termed the camps “communities,” or at least “devel-



oping communities.” Like Mexican villages or New Guinea tribes, the centers were thus thought to constitute the appropriate unit of ethnographic investigation. They were further assumed to have a cohesive social structure, based on the blocks, and corresponding cultural norms. In the camp communities, argued Provinse and Kimball (1946:402), “sentiments of right and wrong, of the acceptable and the rejected appeared and were woven into a pattern of customs and beliefs that gave support to . . . [the] structure.” Anthropologists wrote extensively on culture in the camps, from tea ceremonies and *sumo* wrestling to architectural styles and garden arrangement. All these cultural developments were interpreted as “sure signs . . . [of] evolution toward a community” (Arensberg 1942:8).

Representation of the relocation centers as functionally integrated social systems explains the pervasive “scientific” view of resistance. The idea of disturbances as pathological threats to the common interest flowed naturally from the initial premise that the camps had developed into harmoniously cohesive communities. Leighton summarized the common view of resistance and nonconformism in Principle 6 from his Poston observations:

Aggression arising from disturbed emotions and thoughts may: Stimulate the individual to take decisive actions that will free him from the forces causing the disturbed emotions and thoughts; Lead to confused and violent action wholly inappropriate to the circumstances of the individual [1945:265–266].

The suggestion here and in other WRA writings was that challenge to authority represented “confused” and “disturbed” behavior detrimental to the interests of an otherwise contented collective.

Through the testimony of the internees and the work of later scholars, we now know the grave problems with the picture of the camps anthropologists presented. Before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians formed in 1980 (1982:169, 176), many witnesses powerfully and pointedly challenged the idea that the camps were integrated communities. While generally proud of their ability to keep families and lives in order through the hardships of internment, these Japanese Americans described the harsh conditions, fear, uncertainty, and conflict with the WRA that characterized life in the camps. As George Takei put it:

I was too young to understand, but I do remember the barbed wire fence from which my parents warned me to stay away. I remember the sight of high guard towers. I remember soldiers carrying rifles, and I remember being afraid [p. 169].

Kaya Noguchi continued:

Camp life was highly regimented and it was rushing to the wash basin to beat the other groups, rushing to the mess hall for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. When a human being is placed in captivity survival is the key. We develop[ed] a very negative attitude toward authority. We spent countless hours to defy or beat the system [p. 176].

Recent research by Yanagisako (1985:72–75) has similarly cast doubt on representations of the camps as harmonious. She focuses in particular on the severe generational divisions between *issei* (first-generation immigrants who had come to this country before the exclusionist Immigration Act of 1924) and *nisei* (Japanese Americans born in the United States), showing how they were exacerbated by a pro-*nisei* WRA policy that included the loyalty oath and the initial barring of *issei* from positions in camp government.

The notion that outbreaks of protest were dysfunctional deviations has also been rigorously questioned. In its place, an understanding of the unrest as a clear response to WRA policy has emerged. At Tule Lake, for instance, retrospective investigations have revealed that the strike in October 1942 grew out of WRA failure to meet demands for improved living conditions (barracks were overcrowded, running water was scarce, and open pit toilets were shared by the whole block), more self-government (the WRA had not fulfilled its promise of internee autonomy in much of camp administration), and clarification of the internees’ legal status (most Tule Lake residents had not answered yes to the loyalty question).<sup>8</sup> As James (1984) shows, overcrowding, unhygienic conditions, and poor food were major causes of strikes and riots at

almost all the camps; another was the WRA pay scale, under which internees could make a maximum monthly wage of \$19 as compared with the \$30 stipend of Army privates.

In brief, the view that the centers were integrated communities with only “pathological” outbreaks of discontent says much more about the influence of structural functionalism on anthropologists of the 1940s than it does about the realities of relocation. But however poorly adapted to accurate analysis of the camps, functionalist theory was eminently well suited to presenting a picture of the centers as democratic and contented communities. Together with other contributions to the discourse about removal, the reports, articles, and books anthropologists produced describing the camps as communities helped justify relocation to the international community and to a domestic community eager to find that Executive Order 9066 was not inconsistent with the American way. In their published writings, WRA ethnographers told Americans what they wanted to hear—that far from being an ugly irrational racist enterprise, relocation was fair and democratic. The notions of structural balance, need fulfillment, and social harmony conveyed in anthropologists’ reports were taken as confirmation that the democratic ideals for which the Allies were fighting had not been misplaced in relocation. Disturbances reported in the newspapers were not, according to anthropological analysis, signs of broader injustice but aberrational “trouble patterns” (Spicer et al. 1969:20) in the successful and stable social systems of the camps.

The largely implicit and unintended validation of removal by analyses showing the structured harmony of the camps was not the only contribution of anthropologists to the legitimization of relocation. Ethnographers also directly endorsed the process. While sometimes coming close to acknowledging the unfairness of the Executive Order itself, anthropologists were full of praise for what they believed was the democratic way in which it was implemented. Robert Redfield summed up the prevailing view: “It is a strikingly un-American thing we have done. It may be added that we have done it in a strikingly American way” (1943:153). The message was that although relocation might have been a mistake, the manner in which it was carried out was democratic and humane. Spicer et al. wrote a revealingly multivocal sentence that at the same time invokes the imagery of anthropology as a science of control, embodies a strange vision of national guilt and national progress, and validates relocation while comparing it to the latest technology of war:

The engineering exhibited in the evacuation was a magnificent *tour de force*, as different and superior in technique and administrative management from the transfer of the Indians as the oxcart differs from the latest bomber [1969:43].

Anthropologists singled out the WRA for special praise. From the first, argued Leighton in 1945 (p. vii), the authority had adopted a “policy of protecting [the] welfare” of Japanese Americans. Spicer concurred more than two decades later. He commended the

courage of the men and women who undertook the War Relocation Authority. What they did under these circumstances resulted in a new chapter in American culture . . . for the process in which they participated is of great importance for understanding the foundations of American freedom [1969:2–3].

No trace is disclosed of the ironic distance from authority that Clifford (1983a) terms “ethnographic liberalism.”

The only ethnographer clearly critical of the WRA was Rosalie Wax. As a graduate researcher for the University of California Japanese Evacuation and Resettlement Project directed by the sociologist Dorothy Swaine Thomas, Wax was uniquely and self-consciously situated outside the official administrative system that incorporated other camp anthropologists.<sup>9</sup> Her almost two years at the Gila and Tule Lake centers became the basis for a series of writings—beginning with a University of Chicago dissertation (1950) and culminating in the personal reflections of *Doing Fieldwork* (1971)—in which she consistently characterized government relocation policy as at once incompetent and authoritarian.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately removed from her position after WRA accusations of pro-Japanese agitation, subversion, and general troublemaking, Wax (1971:169) conveys a fine sense of her own ambiguous position, complicated by her German

background, and of the intricately shifting patterns of schism and conflict at Tule Lake. She is insistently skeptical about the morality and management of internment.

Though none of the regular WRA ethnographers went as far as Wax, a few at least pointed out the diversity of attitudes within the relocation authority. Provinse and Kimball, for instance, described a range "from the few who were passionate believers in the development of democratic self-expression to the few who thought of themselves as autocratic guards of a prison camp" (1946:404). But the general perspective was that the WRA was doing a good job in difficult conditions, fostering enterprise and self-government among Japanese Americans. "The officers of the Authority," wrote Redfield, "try earnestly to put responsibility for making and carrying out decisions upon the evacuees . . . the forms of government are emphatically democratic" (1943:153). The specific imagery here, suggesting beneficent parental authority granting gradual independence to its dependents, ran through all the writings of WRA ethnographers. The broader reassurance was that under the generally democratic direction of the WRA the internees preserved their freedom, dignity, and self-determination.

The Roosevelt Administration was, in fact, eager to hear and to show that relocation bore no resemblance to the mass internments of the Nazis. The work of anthropologists on social integration in the relocation centers became ironic testimony to the value of American democracy and the moral superiority of the Allies.<sup>11</sup> Anthropological writings were taken as evidence that America had progressed in suppressing xenophobic backlash against immigrants from enemy countries. Many Americans had been distressed by the sometimes violent antipathy directed against German Americans during World War I, and the cultural and culinary revisionism in which "sauerkraut" turned to "Liberty Cabbage," "Schmidt" to "Smith" and "frankfurters" to "hotdogs." Along with the nonconfinement of German and Italian Americans, the supposed successes of relocation were interpreted as signs that the irrational phobias of the earlier war had finally been dispelled.

It should again be emphasized that anthropological validation of internment was not the product of malice or sinister collusion with the government. I am not myself making the classic functionalist argument that effect explains cause, that the legitimizing dimension of ethnographic writing for the WRA is the reason it was produced. Nor am I contending that validation of relocation was the only result of ethnographic analyses. Among many other consequences, the work of WRA ethnographers helped institutionalize the applied subfield, diffuse structural functionalism, and set an early precedent for government-contract anthropology. The point, rather, is that anthropologists produced a body of literature that legitimized relocation while reflecting and promoting a conception of anthropology as a science of social control. Powerful pressures for this outcome were operating at a number of different levels. In applied anthropology, they included the nascent tradition of alignment with administrative authority and the vision of the ethnographer as social engineer. In anthropology at large, there was the dominance of the single society in a synchronic equilibrium model. In Washington, the WRA and administration wanted writing that supported its internment policy. And in general, strong popular anti-Japanese sentiments and the atmosphere of wartime patriotism were clearly conducive to an anthropology that supported relocation.

For all these forces favoring an ethnography sanctioning internment, it is important to remember that anthropological work for the WRA resulted from personal choices by ethnographers. After all, as a number of contemporary theorists aptly if somewhat tautologically remind us, all social production is mediated by individual thought and action (Giddens 1976; Bourdieu 1977). More than semantics, the recognition of individual agency allows for the possibility that ethnographers might have written more critically about internment, keeping clear the crucial point that hegemonic ideas and structures shape but never determine what people do and think. Replaying the history of anthropologists and the WRA from 1941, one can at least imagine the development of an ethnography that seriously challenged the relocation decision. This would have required a broad paradigm shift—a theory locating the camps in the wider context of war

hysteria, economic interest, and racism; a practice advocating for the dispossessed instead of advising the authorities.

But the shift did not occur. Instead, the writings of the WRA ethnographers expressed and elaborated the dominant position about the success of internment under a mantle of scientific authority. A few community analysts were privately strongly opposed to Executive Order 9066. Morris Opler deserves special mention. Under the names of the lawyers for the plaintiff, he wrote the eloquent brief challenging the constitutionality of internment in *Korematsu vs. U.S.* (1942); he also privately criticized the loyalty question internees were forced to answer in 1943 (Opler, personal communication). Yet even Opler, despite his behind-the-scenes advocacy, never published his oppositional views. His silence exemplified the public role anthropologists defined for themselves as advisers to the WRA, a role that responded compliantly to pressure for an ethnography validating the internment centers in functionalist form.

## the anthropologist as spokesperson against racism

Besides giving advice to administrators, the second broad goal of WRA ethnographers was to combat racism against Japanese Americans. Many anthropologists and liberal New Dealers in the WRA were disturbed by the vehement West Coast anti-Japanese feelings that had been stirred up by Pearl Harbor. Ethnographers and WRA administrators saw these sentiments not only as morally wrong, but as practical obstacles to the successful postwar assimilation of the internees. As a consequence, WRA anthropologists assumed the twin tasks of speaking against racism and of using the presumed successful and uncomplaining adjustment of the internees to internment as evidence for the loyal patriotism of Japanese Americans.

The importance of neutralizing bad feeling toward the internees to achieve the ultimate goal of reassimilation was made very clear by WRA anthropologists. As John Embree (1943:11)—who had studied Japanese communities in Hawaii—wrote, “assimilation . . . cannot be developed in the isolation of a relocation center or in an atmosphere of hate, suspicion, and fear.” Luomala, who was assigned the task of studying public reactions to Japanese-American resettlement, expressed the same idea:

[the] goal was to get the people out of the confining, unnatural life of the centers into the stream of normal American life . . . to foresee and prevent unpleasant experiences which would retard evacuee adjustment and disrupt the community [1947:26].

Like other WRA ethnographers, Embree and Luomala saw lessening of prejudice against Japanese Americans as a precondition to smooth resettlement.

The most direct approach of WRA anthropologists to undercutting stereotypes was to criticize them as racist and un-American. In so doing, they were self-consciously working in the Boasian tradition of scientific attack on racialist thinking. WRA researchers, however, generally avoided the forceful tone of Boas’ influential and emotional polemics. In a move that seems understandable if not praiseworthy, given the demands of wartime patriotism, anthropologists tended to represent internment as a process independent of federal control. The last line from Spicer’s introduction to *Impounded People* is a good example. The book, he says, seeks “an understanding of what happens to people when democratic processes go wrong and a Government seeks to set them right” (Spicer et al. 1969:24). Blame for removal is kept vague, unspecified, beyond human agency; the state enters only to correct the problem. The question of responsibility is effectively avoided.

Anthropologists at the same time largely evaded direct censure of the racism behind removal. Note, for instance, Spicer’s awkward use of the euphemism “mental block”: “Though westerners had known many Japanese for some thirty or forty years, they had a mental block which made them think of Japanese as mysterious, inscrutable, and latently dangerous” (1969:38). While sidestepping straightforward statements about the prejudicial nature of removal, anthro-

pologists frequently quoted or paraphrased the views of others to make their point about discrimination. The use of the word “interpreted” in a sentence from a Bureau of Sociological Research article (1943:151) on “The Japanese Family in America” typifies this qualified approach: “The special adjustment problem of the Japanese . . . is due to the fact that their relocation was a forced one which they interpreted as discrimination and rejection.”

To supplement these often mediated critiques, anthropologists referred to the evidence of the camps themselves. The presumed model efficiency of the centers was presented as proof of the patriotism of the internees. The structural-functionalist representations of camp life that had such a strong legitimizing effect at the same time became signs to Americans that the internees were making a loyal contribution to the war effort. The evidence of camp harmony, anthropologists believed, helped combat “intensifying demand for repressive measures against the evacuees” (Spicer 1979:219). In this attempt to defuse prejudice, the writings of WRA ethnographers operated in much the same way as the thousands of photographs released by the WRA depicting internees happily at work practicing dentistry, making furniture, housecleaning, or working in the fields (see Figure 2). The message in the pictures and in the work of ethnographers was that the internees were normal Americans, doing whatever was necessary to support the Allied cause.

These efforts by anthropologists to undermine racist thinking were made with largely good intentions. While certainly coinciding with the WRA’s interest in smooth postwar reassimilation, they were nevertheless genuine attempts both to show the irrationality of “Yellow Peril”



Ansel Adams

Figure 2. “Our President has said that every loyal American citizen, regardless of his ancestry, should be given the opportunity to serve his country wherever his skills will make the greatest contribution, whether it be in industry or agriculture.”

thinking and to construct an image of national unity in the face of fascism. The problem, however, is that the specific form in which the analytical attacks were made had a series of unintended effects. First, they drew on culture and personality theory in a form that reflected and propagated public stereotypes about Japanese Americans while helping defuse controversy about internment; second, they used acculturationist analysis of the camps in a way that supported the government's presentation of removal as a positive step in the assimilation of Japanese Americans; third, they restricted description of time and space to delimit a discourse on removal rigidly circumscribed by refusal to criticize relocation.

Growing directly out of Freud's influence, culture and personality theory developed from the efforts of Benedict, Kardiner, Mead, Radin, Sapir, and others in the 1930s to join principles of psychiatry and ethnography. From psychoanalysis, the new work drew an interest in the individual and the formative role of childhood experience. From anthropology, it took a concern for cultural variation in behavior and patterning of meaning. The resulting approach emphasized the interdependence of personality and culture, positing that particular cognitive and behavioral complexes are paired with distinctive cultural types. As a contribution to the war effort, anthropologists in the 1940s extended the theory from culture to country to analyze national character. Gorer (1949), for instance, studied the Russians, focusing on the relation between their practice of infant swaddling and alternating feelings of rage and guilt. Bateson (1945), as part of his work for the Office of Strategic Services, used Nazi propaganda films to suggest a split between the "over-pure" and the "over-dirty" in German personality. The most famous of these culture-at-a-distance reports, Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), analyzed Japanese character as bound by a personal and national sense of hierarchy, obligation, and order originating in childhood privilege.

Along with structural functionalism, culture and personality theory became a guiding paradigm for WRA research. Reflecting its influence was the direct application of national character analysis to the camps. Most notable was an article by Weston LaBarre (1945), the title of which—"Some Observations on Character Structure in the Orient: The Japanese"—betrays the fact that it was based entirely on the author's 44-day stint as community analyst at Topaz.<sup>12</sup> Drawing heavily on Freudian terminology and the accompanying emphasis on childrearing practice characteristic of culture and personality research, LaBarre (1945:326) described the Japanese as "probably the most compulsive people in the world ethnological museum." Rigid toilet training, he argued, was the root of the problem:

the crucial trauma is at the anal level of development, with possible traumata at the oral level, so conspicuous in the schizophrenic picture, of distinctly minor importance. The compulsive character is thus largely the product of severity or cruelty in treatment during the period of cleanliness [1945:326].

The compulsive personality of the Japanese, continued LaBarre, has 19 traits:

secretiveness, hiding of emotions and attitudes; perseveration and persistency; conscientiousness, self-righteousness; a tendency to project attitudes; fanaticism; arrogance; "touchiness;" precision and perfectionism; neatness and ritualistic cleanliness; ceremoniousness; conformity to rule; sadomasochistic behavior; hypochondriasis; suspiciousness; jealousy and enviousness; pedantry; sentimentality; love of scatological obscenity and anal sexuality [1945:326–327].

No other WRA anthropologist so starkly confused character and caricature. But LaBarre's rhetoric exemplified the general tendency of ethnographers to do "cultural" analyses that reformulated popular perceptions about the intrinsic difference, inscrutability, and cruel conformism of Japanese Americans in scientific jargon. A good example is this passage from Arensberg:

For a 'Caucasian' group much of this [cooperation in the camps] might perhaps be extraordinary. But the Japanese both rural and urban have a long history of living in crowded communities and subjecting one another to conventional controls [1942:8].

Another is the assertion of Provinse and Kimball that without WRA leadership, internees would have formed "a subversive underground in open conflict with authority which would have

maintained its control through a system of terrorism” (1946:409). As in other WRA writing, the images here clearly drew from convoluted common notions about Japanese regimentation and conspiracy— notions that generally tended to confuse Japanese and Chinese in the category of “Oriental” so heavily diffused in popular culture and more concretely promoted by exclusionist anti-Asian immigration leagues.

Applied to the camps, then, the culture and personality approach tended to lead to “scientific” restatement of conventional stereotypes. In conjunction with structural functionalism, it at the same time helped produce extraordinarily ahistorical analyses of camp society and culture. Typical was an article by Marvin Opler (1945) in the *American Anthropologist*, “A ‘Sumo’ Tournament at Tule Lake.” After a passing reference to the fact that the tournament was held in a “segregation center,” Opler went on to describe it as a timeless manifestation of Japanese character and culture. The analysis overflows with native terminology—*gyujis*, *gunpai*, and *ozeki*—and does not consider the possibility that *sumo* might have changed under the harsh conditions at Tule Lake, where all allegedly disloyal Japanese Americans were held. That the *sumo* tournament itself was viewed by many internees as a symbolically laden gesture of nationalist resistance to domination was an interpretation entirely missed or suppressed in this account. Spicer et al. (1969:219–225) gave the same dehistoricized treatment to camp culture at Poston. Traditions revived in the enforced idleness of internment—from *go*, *kabuki*, and *haiku* poetry to tea ceremonies, *shibai* theatre, and *koto* playing—were all regarded as pure ethnic expressions, the same under the WRA as under the Tokugawa. Anthropologists even identified camp organization with traditional social structure, seeing, for example, Poston as directly comparable to *buraku* local groups in Japan (Arensberg 1942:8).

The camps were decontextualized not only in time but also in space. Like contemporary ethnographers writing about communities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, WRA researchers tended to treat the camps as self-contained systems. They consistently avoided extending their frame of analysis beyond the barbed-wire bounds of the compound. In effect, if not necessarily in intention, this restricted focus directly paralleled government censorship of aerial photographs showing the depopulated desert surroundings of the centers and their concentration-camplike layout (Figure 3). It would not be difficult, reading some of the ethnographic literature, to come away with the impression that the centers were located in fertile farmland. Equally obscured were connections between the camps and the broader national scene, particularly in Washington. Decisions by the WRA in the capital determined everything from food allotments and wages to the personnel in camp administration. But, as with the barren surroundings, these connections were glossed over in heavy anthropological attention on Japanese character and functional systemics.

The bounding of space and time in anthropological analyses was central to a process of political restriction. By spatially and temporally decontextualizing the camps, WRA ethnographers were effectively deactivating a whole series of explosive questions about internment. The preoccupation with the limited areas of national character and intracamp functional dynamics turned attention away from wide-ranging, politically sensitive issues of civil rights and discriminatory government action; it simultaneously passed over the many levels of conflict and contradiction both between the WRA and the internees and among the internees themselves. When time or space did enter into ethnographic writings—as in the acculturationist analyses of the camps we will discuss in a moment—it was usually in a context that minimized the damage of removal and supported the actions of the government.

The spatial and temporal constriction resulting in the deployment of culture and personality and structural functionalism signals the influence on WRA ethnography of a third major model in the anthropology of the time—acculturationism. Like the Boasian historical diffusionism out of which it grew, acculturation research of the prewar and war years—represented in the work of Herskovits, Linton, Mead, and many others—broadly aimed to document culture change through time. But, reflecting the turn to more integrated theory, anthropologists moved away

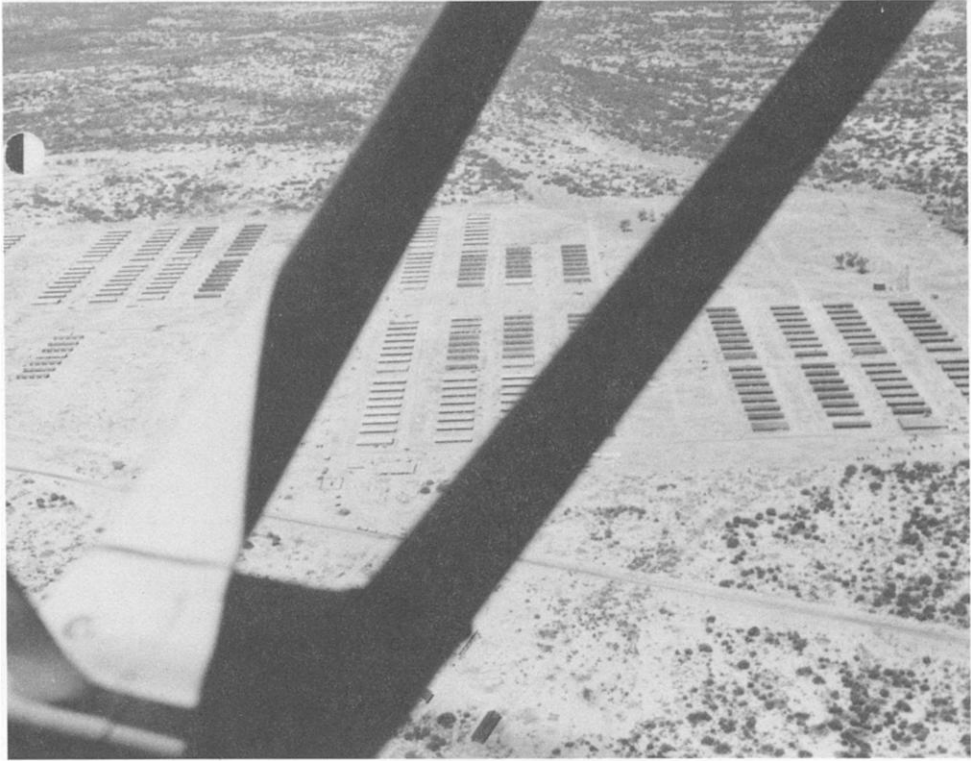


Figure 3. Aerial view of internment center. Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library.

from tracing individual trait distribution and toward a holistic concentration on the consequences of contact on social structure and patterns of culture. In the new approach, all societies were viewed as falling somewhere between the poles of tradition and modernity; implicit was a progressive movement of non-Western peoples from the former to the latter. Fieldworkers attempted to locate different cultures in the traditional/modern spectrum, and looked for evidence of continuity and change.

Since many WRA ethnographers were contributors to acculturation studies—among them Redfield (1930), whose folk-urban continuum was a central model for the new research, and Marvin Opler (1940)—it is not surprising that the approach was directly adapted to study of the camps. The history of the Japanese in America was presented accordingly in three successively more modern and implicitly more desirable horizons: unassimilated prewar ethnic communities, wartime relocation centers, and postwar complete assimilation. In discussing the prewar phase, anthropologists underlined the corporate isolation and nationalistic traditionality of Japanese-American immigrants. Ethnographers repeatedly reenforced popular idiom by referring to predominantly Japanese-American neighborhoods as “Little Tokyos” (Stonequist 1942:156; Redfield 1943:143; Luomala 1946:26), a label that certainly had sinister connotations during the war. Most anthropologists recognized that Japanese Americans had constructed their close-knit communities in response to a history of West Coast discrimination. But their use of such referents as “cultural encystment(s)” (Luomala 1946:26) and “highly organized colony” (Spicer et al. 1969:50) at the same time implied that Japanese immigrants had not thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the American melting pot and retained unnaturally strong ties to their country of origin. These feelings were summed up in the perception that Japanese Americans had what Redfield (1943:146) termed “divided loyalty.”

The second stage in anthropologists’ application of acculturationism was the relocation center. WRA ethnographers made clear that the centers represented a new stage in the moderni-



zation of Japanese Americans—communities which, while preserving many aspects of Japanese culture in other respects, exemplified a “democratic, more or less American way of life” (1943:154). Despite their considered view of the camps as in some ways “ideal cities” (Spicer et al. 1969:11), as places where the Japanese-American “minority is to make a new start in America” (Redfield 1943:152), both the WRA and participating anthropologists emphasized that internment was only a transitional period preceding the release and complete absorption of the camp residents into American life. While ethnographers tended to regard the centers as an improvement on the Little Tokyos, they felt Japanese Americans had to be completely assimilated into the mainstream. The emphasis on the ultimate disbanding of the camps and dispersion of the internees became particularly strong when it became clear that some camp residents, mostly *issei*, had become so disillusioned by life on the outside that they wanted to settle permanently in the dusty Army barracks of the centers. As the inevitability of American victory in the Pacific became clear in 1944, the WRA mounted a campaign to show the benefits of dispersed resettlement and set a fixed closure date for the centers of 1 January 1946. In their designated roles as advisers to administrators, anthropologists studied the reasons for resistance to reentry and helped the WRA “[work] out procedures for getting the evacuees out of relocation centers and back into American life” (Embree 1943:10).

The third and at the time hypothetical phase envisioned by anthropologists was the complete assimilation of the internees into modern America. The policy of the WRA, endorsed by a report of the Community Analysis Section in June of 1943, was that resettlement should be widespread geographically. Beginning as early as April of 1943, the WRA began releasing some *nisei* who had signed the loyalty oath to areas in the Midwest and East. Many of them went to small towns in the Great Plains where no established Japanese-American communities existed. The hope was that the example of the *nisei* would encourage other internees to settle in new areas and, implicitly, avoid formation of new Little Tokyos. In the end, this assimilationist goal of the WRA and WRA ethnographers was only partially realized. Many internees did move to places without a history of Japanese settlement. Many more, however, moved back to reestablish Japanese neighborhoods in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, while others helped form thriving new communities in Denver, Cleveland, Chicago, and New York.

The anthropological vision underlying the analysis of the three stages was that the process of settlement, relocation, and resettlement represented the ultimately positive Americanization and modernization of Japanese Americans. Everett Stonequist, a professor of anthropology and sociology at Skidmore College who was not directly involved with the WRA, summed up the prevalent view:

A farsighted and just handling [of resettlement] may turn what is now a great national problem into some kind of asset . . . with a wise and skillfully executed policy of resettlement, the Japanese-Americans, instead of continuing as an isolated collection of “Little Tokyos” in one section of the country, might be more thoroughly woven into the texture of American life on a national scale [1942:155–156].

Relocation, in these terms, was seen as the desirable acceleration of the acculturation of an ethnic minority. What appeared to be a mass violation of civil rights, suggested Stonequist and WRA anthropologists, was really a prelude to the full incorporation of camp residents into national society. Through the mediation of internment, Japanese would become Americans.

In fairness to the ethnographers, we should remember that their intention was to combat racism. Acculturationist interpretation was presented to a suspicious public as evidence for the normality of the internees, testimony that Japanese immigrants were on a trajectory of integration into American life. Yet, these depictions, in what I have contended is a recurrent theme in WRA anthropology, also had unforeseen consequences. The depictions provided support for the WRA’s vision of itself as champion of assimilation and contributor to a new society. Representations of removal as progress meshed perfectly with broader New Deal and wartime semiotics of America rising out of the Depression with brawn, industry, and technology, and fed

the WRA's aspiration of contributing—along with the WPA, CWA, TVA and other great 1930s agencies whose names it invoked—to the massive project of national reconstruction.<sup>13</sup>

In more complicated ways, the use of acculturationism exemplified a process operating in all anthropological writings on the camps—the recasting of relations of power and dominance into purely cultural terms. Significant here was the choice of ethnographers—rather than penal authorities, military experts, or political scientists—as principal camp chroniclers. Anthropologists provided an interpretation drawn in terms of oppositions in style and custom: foreign and American, East and West, archaic and modern. Their approach helped preempt reporting on relocation as a measure championed by powerful Central Valley growers who gained the land of dispossessed internees, as an exercise of state power intended to break Japanese-American ethnic identity, and as the largest single violation of civil rights in 20th-century American history.<sup>14</sup> In leaving so much unsaid, the accounts of community analysts were hauntingly similar to the anthropology being produced in other parts of the world. One of the central criticisms to emerge from the growing literature on ethnographic representations of the era—from British social anthropology during colonialism (Asad 1973; Lewis 1973; Rosaldo 1986)<sup>15</sup> to American ethnography in the South Pacific (Denning 1980) to *indigenismo* in Mesoamerica (Warman 1970; Rus 1976)—is that anthropologists abstracted human experience from basic patterns of time and power.<sup>16</sup> The charge applies perhaps most forcefully to the anthropology of internment.

In the end, the voice of ethnographers as spokespeople against racism was at best equivocal. The anthropologists began from the contradictory position of trying to aid Japanese Americans while at the same time directly serving the administrative machinery of the WRA. Ultimately, their unquestioning adoption of contemporary anthropological interpretive strategies and their unwillingness to take a public stand against internment metamorphized the aim of advocacy into legitimation of domination.

## conclusion

Looking back now, differences between the wartime and current configurations of anthropology make the WRA episode seem too distant to hold much meaning. Structural functionalism, culture and personality, and acculturationism have lost their status as dominant theoretical paradigms and now compete in various forms with other analytical perspectives. Likewise, as the main alternative for those interested in doing work with direct practical value, applied anthropology is being challenged by the related but more advocacy and explicitly political approach of what has been termed “activist anthropology.” The cast of characters has also changed since relocation with the retirement of the generation of the WRA ethnographers.

Yet for all the changes, it is striking in the end how the history of anthropological involvement with the WRA speaks directly to many current dilemmas in the discipline. In the applied subfield, the same issues of legitimation and control are reintroduced in new forms by the expanding presence of anthropologists in AID and the World Bank, organizations that, particularly under the present administration, are often agents of American foreign policy. Anthropologists in these institutions continue as “scientific” advisors to authority, as do those who work for large companies interested in industrial management. In more mainstream academic anthropology, the traditional Weberian separation of science and politics that provided WRA ethnographers with a formal professional principle for not criticizing internment remains in force as a source of contradiction. In general, the issue perhaps most central to the WRA cohort—the utility of anthropological theory in social practice—is still very much unresolved. How to avoid ethnography that serves power, how to reconcile the professional and the political, how to do anthropology with value beyond academia: all these questions resonate as deeply in the present as in a reexamination of the past.

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<sup>1</sup>Here is a complete list with individual assignments, taken from Suzuki (1981:4): Conrad Arensberg (Consultant, Poston), Gordon Armbruster (Minidoka), G. Gordon Brown (Gila), Elizabeth Colson (Poston), John de Young (Minidoka and Manzanar), John Embree (Director, Community Analysis Section, Washington, D.C.), David H. French (Poston), Asael T. Hansen (Heart Mountain), E. Adamson Hoebel (Granada), Solon T. Kimball (Head, Community Government Section, Community Management Division, Washington, D.C.), Weston LaBarre (Topaz), Margaret Lantis (Rohwer and West Coast locations), Marvin K. Opler (Tule Lake), Morris E. Opler (Manzanar), John Provinse (Chief, Community Management Section, Washington, D.C.), Robert Redfield (General Consultant), Rachel R. Sady (Jerome and Washington, D.C.), Elmer R. Smith (Minidoka), Edward H. Spicer (Poston, Assistant Director, Community Analysis Section; Director, Community Analysis Section, Washington, D.C.), Laura Thompson (Consultant, Poston), and Rosalie H. Wax (Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study, Gila and Tule Lake).

<sup>2</sup>It should be emphasized that opposition to relocation as unjust and unconstitutional was already clearly stated and diffused by 1941, a year before anthropologists began research in the camps. Though a very definite minority, prominent people both in and outside government—among them Attorney General Francis Biddle, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Dean of Yale Law School Eugene Rostow, and Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson—publicly argued that internment was discriminatory racism. The constitutionality of Executive Order 9066 was also challenged in the court cases of *Korematsu vs. U.S.* (1942) and the recently reopened *Hirabayashi vs. U.S.* (1942). The point is that the ethnographers who took jobs with the WRA did so well aware of the controversiality of the issue.

<sup>3</sup>Though I interviewed several anthropologists who worked for the WRA, this account is based primarily on the many publications by ethnographers about the camps. For a thorough analysis of the voluminous records of the Community Analysis Section in the National Archives see Suzuki (1981).

<sup>4</sup>Through personal communications with Elizabeth Colson and Morris Opler, conversations with people who knew the WRA researchers, and close reading of the most recent personal retrospectives on anthropological involvement in internment (Spicer et al. 1969:1–21; Spicer 1979), it continually struck me how little the basic views of WRA ethnographers about their role in relocation have altered over the years. Historical changes have not inspired the kind of public self-examination found in, for example, the discussions of British anthropologists about their relation to colonialism (*Anthropological Forum* 14(2), 1977). Detailed investigation of why perspectives have remained so constant is beyond the scope of this paper. But continuing convictions of having contributed to Japanese-American well-being in troubled times and to the war effort more generally would have to be central starting points for such an analysis.

<sup>5</sup>See Kimball (1979) and Kelly (1985) for the role of anthropologists in the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Two of the principal SCS ethnographers—Solon Kimball and John Provinse—went on to work for the WRA.

<sup>6</sup>The involvement of anthropologists in wartime agencies is discussed in Eddy and Partridge (1978) and the articles by Mead and Cowan in Goldschmidt (1979); for a more personal view of an anthropologist's participation in the war effort, see Theodora Kroeber's (1970:179–185) account of her husband's work in the Army Specialized Training Program at Berkeley.

<sup>7</sup>See Holzberg and Giovannini (1981) for more on early industrial anthropology, a topic that raises many of the same questions about the connection between power, authority, and social science as the ethnography of internment.

<sup>8</sup>Wax (1953, 1971) provides the best of these investigations.

<sup>9</sup>Major publications of the study are Thomas and Nishimoto (1946) and Thomas (1952). An interesting sidelight is that Robert Lowie was very briefly involved in the initial stages of the project (tenBroek, Barnhart, Matson 1954:v).

<sup>10</sup>See the bibliography of *Doing Fieldwork* for a complete list of Wax's publications on relocation.

<sup>11</sup>A direct example of the invocation of anthropological writing to show the difference between the relocation centers and Nazi concentration camps can be found in McWilliams (1944:158).

<sup>12</sup>My analysis here of LaBarre draws heavily on Suzuki's (1980) work.

<sup>13</sup>An excellent analysis of the relation between the WRA and Rooseveltian symbology and policy is the recent dissertation by Thomas James (1984) on education in the camps.

<sup>14</sup>For the economics of internment see Daniels (1975), for the attempt to Americanize Japanese Americans see James (1984), and for the civil rights issue see tenBroek, Barnhart, and Matson (1954).

<sup>15</sup>For an interesting response to the criticism by seven social anthropologists who worked in the British colonies, among them Raymond Firth and Edmund Leach, see *Anthropological Forum* 14(2), 1977.

<sup>16</sup>Marcus and Cushman (1982), Fabian (1983), and Clifford (1983b) analyze ways in which standard ethnographic conventions have operated to constitute and at the same time dehistoricize and decontext-

tualize objects of study in situations much less repressive than the camps or colonialism. For the latest discussions of issues involving time, power, and interpretation in ethnography, see Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Marcus and Fischer (1986).

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