Diversity in Anthropological Theory

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If anthropology is about anything, it is about cultural diversity. Yet anthropol-
ogy has been at best a marginal player in the discussions of multiculturalism in
the United States. Addressing this contradiction in a course about the history
of anthropological theory can provide an opportunity to understand how it
came about and can suggest ways to make anthropological perspectives a more
important part of the current American conversation. How have the discipline’s
core ideas helped — and hindered — anthropology’s participation in contempo-
rary discussions of racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual diversity? Who are the
anthropologists excluded from the canon but whose work is important in order
to understand this diversity? What can we learn about the discipline’s current
marginal contributions to today’s debates by asking why such anthropologists
have been “lost” from the history of the discipline’s main lineage? Are there
particular moments or issues in the history of anthropology that shed parti-
cular light on anthropology’s relationship to racial and ethnic diversity in the
United States?

Current discussions of cultural diversity in the United States focus on racial
and ethnic diversity. But they also deal with their relationship to diversity in
gender, class, and sexual orientation. This literature is large, growing ex-
ponentially, and spans the disciplines from critical race theory in law to studies
of popular and high culture, from literature to history, from science studies
to sociology and anthropology. The literature shares a theoretical framework
that rests upon several points. (1) An understanding that race, gender, class,
and sexual orientation are constructed institutionally and culturally, and that
they are changeable. (2) Each of these dimensions of social organization is
constructed dichotomously — white and not-white, women and men, and so on.
(3) Each is also constituted of the others. That is, there is no such thing,
for example, as an ungendered white person; the nature of racial whiteness
depends on the gender, class, and sexual orientation of the individual. These
points become clear in studies that examine the ethnoracial constructions un-
derlying cultural constructions of national belonging, of being a citizen of
the nation state. (4) These ideas and the rules by which social identity is
constructed in the United States are part of a larger Western Enlightenment
pattern of organization and thought.
Although much of this scholarship comes from outside anthropology, it shares a fundamental mission with anthropology in seeking to understand the cultural patterns and organizational forms which are at the heart of the culture. They try to make visible those things which most natives take for granted, those practices that seem natural and commonsensical to insiders. Although anthropology has a great deal of practice in analyzing non-Western societies, it has only recently begun to take seriously the sociocultural tradition of which it is part. This is why any efforts to discuss cultural diversity in the United States (within or beyond an anthropological theory course) need to be familiar with the multidisciplinary scholarship that seeks to do just that.

The first part of this chapter discusses three major themes in contemporary analyses of diversity in the United States. The second part looks at 19th-century evolutionary theories and the history of anthropology through that analytic lens.

Three Themes in Multidisciplinary Scholarship on Diversity in the United States

Cultural construction of raceethnicity, gender, and sexuality

Anthropology's antiracist efforts have focused on showing that race is not a biological category. These discussions are not always well connected with multidisciplinary work that dissect the ways in which American social institutions and cultural practices create race both as phenotypic patterns and systems of social meaning. The latter efforts show how race matters greatly for allocating unequal and often invisible social privileges and how it is used to make forms of exclusion and oppression seem natural and commonsensical, the product of a group's culture, or an individual's actions, rather than outcomes that are institutionally and discursively structured.

There is a great deal of popular and scholarly confusion about the meanings of race and ethnicity. In some popular understandings, ethnicity is what whites have, while race is what non-whites have. Others—particularly Joan Vincent (1974), Leith Mullings (1984), and Robert Blauner (1991)—argue that race is externally imposed, while ethnicity applies to a cultural identity one embraces, so that people racialized as non-white, or "of color" are likely to be both, racial and ethnic. Building on this insight, I find it useful to conceptually distinguish racial assignment from ethnoracial identity (Broadkin 1999). Thus all Americans are assigned a race, but not all embrace an ethnoracial identity. Indeed, as Ruth Frankenberk (1993) has found, part of America's racial problem is that white Americans tend not to regard themselves as having a race, but rather see themselves as the color of water, or "normal."

Some anthropologists define ethnicity as partly an inherited category and partly a relationship of opposition to other groups. They argue that what gives ethnicity enduring force is its utility for organizing people to pursue shared socioeconomic interests. Rakette Williams (1989, 1996) has argued that such approaches disregard the ways in which the modern world of nation states shapes ethnicities and makes them matter in terms of economic and social privileges. In this perspective, the difference between race and ethnicity, both of which are nationally constructed categories, recedes. Her view is given force by the current confusion in U.S. census categories, where Americans are asked whether they belong to one of four "races," or one ethnic group (Hispanic). Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) have coined the term "racial state" to refer to the ways in which law and public policy make raceethnicity matter as a basis for unequal treatment in the United States.

Many recent studies of ethnoracial categories in the United States describe the ways both race and ethnicity are fluid and changeable (Gregory and Sanjek 1994). For example, before about 1880 and after World War II, southern and eastern European immigrants and their children were treated as fully white. But between the 1880s and the 1940s, they were not quite white in that they lacked the freedom of whites to live, go to school, and work where they wanted (Broadkin 1999). The Irish also began their history in the United States as racial non-whites, suffering discrimination and social marginalization, but gained the privileges of racial whiteness at about the time southern and eastern Europeans were losing them (Ignatius 1993). Likewise, Alagna (1994) has shown how Mexicans were declared legally white when California became annexed to the United States. However, by the end of the 19th century, the state increasingly treated them as Indians, a racial category denied citizenship, and subject to forced labor under California vagrancy laws.

Feminist scholars use the term gender to refer to the ways cultures construct womanhood and manhood and to distinguish these from sex as a biological concept. Margaret Mead's Sex and Temperament was an early demonstration of three different ways in which cultures constructed maleness and femaleness. Each of the three New Guinea societies Mead described believed that their way was "natural." Feminist anthropologists in the 1970s and early 1980s played a key role in analyzing the organizational and cultural underpinnings of gender diversity and gender relations (Morgen 1989).

The practices of key social institutions in the United States also help construct gender. Scholars across the disciplines have attended to the ways in which constructions of American womanhood have been shaped by public and corporate policies and by the notions of masculinity and femininity that undergird them. Central to these have been studies of the ways that work and motherhood have been deployed in defining masculinity and femininity. For example, Alice Kessler-Harris (1990) has shown how early 20th-century minimum wage laws and discussions surrounding them have constructed white women as dependants of white men, the former as mothers and the latter as breadwinners. Others have demonstrated that similar assumptions shaped protective labor legislation and welfare policies (Abramovitz 1988; Gordon 1994; Mink 1995; Brooks and Bardaglio 1991; Rose 1995). Other studies highlight the institutional as well as the cultural constructions of what is presented as "natural" or "appropriate" work for women. Thus, in the 19th century, office work was deemed appropriate for men and was the first step up the corporate ladder. Beginning slowly during the Civil War as government clerks, and then in far larger numbers in the 1920s, women entered clerical work; so that since the 1950s, office work has appeared to be the quintessential women's work. The image of "Rosie the Riveter" during World War II is another well-known
example of how federal policies briefly made heavy industrial labor (and decent wages) compatible with femininity.

Notions of motherhood as women’s “natural” calling have also been culturally constructed and – as Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1994) and many others have shown – been reserved for white women. The policies and practices of child support, welfare, and workfare have consistently distinguished between good and bad women, fit and unfit mothers, with white women (especially widows) deemed worthy of support, and women of color deemed unworthy. They have been forced to work (allegedly to improve their character) and have only conditional rights to raise their children. Nancy Naples (1997) has analyzed recent congressional rhetoric justifying the policies that force mothers into the labor force. Their key tropes, really stereotypes, are that women on welfare are African American, hence unfit for motherhood unless taught responsibility through workfare.

Not only is gender culturally constructed, but so too is sexuality or sexual orientation, as anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1975) first argued theoretically, and Esther Newton (1972) and Elizabeth Kennedy and Madelyn Davis (1993) demonstrated ethnographically. Anthropologists have been central in analyzing the organizational structures within which contemporary lesbians and gay men construct their cultures and identities through marriage, kinship and motherhood (Levin 1993; Wexen 1991), and claims to public cultural space (Kennedy and Davis 1993). Anthropologists and historians have also demonstrated the cultural construction of sexuality by showing its fluidity.

American women and men have constructed their attractions to and behavior with those of the same or the opposite sex in different ways at different times (D’Emilio and Freedman 1988). Historians have documented the ways that homosexual attraction, the notion of a sexual identity, and the construction of gay and lesbian space began to develop in the early decades of the 20th century, and bloomed during World War II. George Chauncey (1994), Alix Kates Shulman (1990), and Elizabeth Kennedy and Madelyn Davis (1993) have documented the ways in which men and women created their own notions of homosexual identities and the institutions and changing norms governing those identities. They document historically cultural shifts, first from heterosexual behavior to homosexual identity, and then in constructions of who is regarded as homosexual, both within the community and in the wider society. Early constructions of lesbians and gay men included only butches and effeminate men. Femmes were regarded as not quite lesbians, while active/masculine men were regarded and regarded themselves as heterosexual. Scholars have also demonstrated the importance of butch/femme and active/passive roles in the making of gay and lesbian identity and in claiming public recognition and legitimacy. Not until relatively recently has the word homosexual applied to all those attracted to the same sex, regardless of sexual role. That construction has not been static either.

Queer studies scholars have come to see gender as performance and have analyzed the many varieties of bisexual, transgender, and transsexual performances of identities and the complex ways in which they interact with constructions of desire as well as the variability and fluidity of individual constructions of sexual desire (Newton 1972; Katz 1990).

Diversity in anthropological theory

Dichotomous constructions of race and gender

Where the current emphasis in studies of sexuality has been to confound dichotomous categories, studies of gender, race, and, to a lesser extent, of class have attempted to understand reasons for the enduring strength of dichotomous constructions. Anthropological studies as well as feminist perspectives have long understood gender as constructed dichotomously. Conventional notions of temporal complementarity, companionate marriage, and a division of labor give the appearance of naturalism to this culturally constructed maleness and femaleness. Each is constructed as the opposite of the other temporally and in social roles.

Although the United States, like most nation states, has always been a multi-territorial nation with a complex class structure, it has become clear that labor force practices, law, public policy, and everyday social practices have constructed parallel dichotomies for race and class – white and non-white; mental and manual laborers.

As Toni Morrison (1990) argued, the construction of whiteness has depended upon the invention of a blackness that is the negation of the ideal, the evil twin upon whose evil the goodness of whiteness depends. Morrison, and the historians Noel Ignatiev and David Roediger have all demonstrated how European immigrants and workers have claimed whiteness and its attendant privileges of belonging, of Americaness, by inventing and using racist imagery and racist violence to distinguish themselves from black Americans. Such 19th-century practices, of becoming white “on the backs of blacks” as Morrison (1993) put it, are part of a longer historical tradition that Haney Lopez (1996: 27–28) chronicles through court decisions about naturalized citizenship which “constructed the bounds of Whiteness by deciding on a case-by-case basis who was not White.” Race in America – no matter how many races there may be in any given period – is a relationship, of black and white or non-white and white, whereby the white pole is defined as the opposite of the invented and inferior non-white pole. Neither races nor ethnicities have been independent and discrete categories. Rather they must be understood as being part of a wider dichotomous relationship.

Mutual construction of race, class, and gender in the U.S. nation state

A third important theme in constructivist studies of diversity is the way that race, class, and gender construct each other. Interest in the relationship of race, class, and gender developed initially from attempts to understand the role of class and racial consciousness in social movements since World War II. The great wave of anticolonial and national liberation movements as well as the North American Civil Rights, feminist, and gay liberation movements were animated more by ethnic/racial, gender, and sexual consciousnesses than by class identities. Earlier white Marxist class essentialism came to be challenged with racial and gender counter-essentials, as activists and scholars argued about which basis of organizational allegiance was most likely to produce an effective democratic movement. Such arguments soon gave way to understandings that
people engaged as members of all categories, but in situation-specific ways. The question then became more sophisticated, to understand how different facets of political identities, or consciousnesses, fit together in people's constructions of themselves as social actors, and how these were connected to the hegemonic constructions of race, ethnicity, class, and gender themselves.

Although the impetus came from the ways in which subordinated groups construct themselves as political actors, the bulk of scholarly work has focused on understanding the ways that dominant groups have used race, class, and gender in naturalizing social subordination and cultural hegemony. I have suggested that this can be seen as the "metaorganization" of the American nation (Brodkin 1999). That is, if race, gender, and class are each key forms of organizing the nation's society and culture, then the organization of these organizations—the ways they constitute each other—is the metaorganization of the nation.

One way to understand the metaorganization of this national hegemony is to focus on the racial and gender organization of the American labor force and the policies and discourses that have sustained it. A long tradition of African American scholarship has connected the invention of race, specifically the cultural construction of blackness as subhuman and the civil state of blackness as property, with the immense profit that planters made from the inhuman treatment of Africans (e.g., Williams 1944; Bennett 1970; Fields 1982, 1995; Smedley 1993). This literature suggests that labor was organized one way when done by free whites, and quite another way on plantations where it was done by African bondsmen and -women. The word servile came to be attached simultaneously to African Americans and to the work they did such that planters and legislators early on in policing the separation as a way of maintaining their own freedom and respectability (DuBois 1935; Saxon 1990; Roediger 1991).

Verne Green's study of the Bell System is one useful contemporary case study of the way a large employer continued to reproduce that segregation. Until forced to do so in the 1970s, Bell refused to hire African Americans. When they ultimately did hire them, it was for specific jobs that the company had slotted for deskilling and speed-up. In particular, the job of operator, which had previously been a white women's occupational niche, came to be one for African American women. According to an AT&T vice president in 1969:

The kind of people we need are going to be in very short supply... Most of our new hires go into entry level jobs which means we must have access to an ample supply of people who will work at comparatively low rates of pay. That means city people more so than suburbanites. That means lots of black people... We need them because we have so many jobs to fill and they will take them.

It is just a plain fact that in today's world telephone company wages are more in line with black expectations—and the tighter the labor market the more this is true. (Green 1995:120-121)

Green reminds us that there was nothing natural in Bell's decision to structure the operator job this way in the face of white flight. "Instead of raising wages and creating less stressful work environments to attract people of all races, the
and Southwest. Here the labor force of the new factories in the fields became predominantly Mexican. When California became a state, it legally categorized Mexicans as white. Racism against working-class Mexicans remained sporadic until the 1880s. This changed with the growth of agribusiness, such that by 1930 Mexicans nationally came to be classified as members of a non-white "Mexican" race, unless the census taker knew the individual to be "white."

An examination of the relationship between a group's racial assignment and its place in the labor force suggests that the cure of America's working class, those who have been concentrated in the industries which generate the vast bulk of the nation's wealth in any given period, have been assigned to a non-white race. Agriculture, whether by bondpeople or by free people working under the industrial conditions of agribusiness, has been a preserve of non-whites. The labor force of the U.S. industrial revolution, between the 1880s and the 1930s, was overwhelmingly made up of southern and eastern European immigrants. Indeed, as late as 1920, immigrants and non-European people were the majority of the entire American labor force. By contrast, while native-born workers were concentrated far from the industrial centers and were in marginal industries such as farming (but not agribusiness), ranching, and timber. This was also the period of U.S. history when those southern and eastern European immigrants were treated as racially other than fully white, and were denied the civil and political privileges of whiteness.

That the U.S. labor force is also structured along lines of gender is no secret. Women have always been clustered in a relatively small number of occupations and at the bottom of the wage and salary hierarchy. However, understanding the racial places of women in the labor force lets us understand how race, gender, and class organizations come together as key parts of a single system of national organization.

Important pioneering work by Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1985) showed that historically women of color, and not-white Euro-ancestry women have worked in the waged labor force in greater numbers, often far greater than their fully white counterparts. Women of color have worked side by side with men, in the fields, in factories, and as live-in domestic workers. Although white women have had to work for wages since colonial times, until the last few decades, they have worked in far fewer numbers. White women entered the workforce in significant numbers only with the rise of white and clerical work as clean, genteel, and protected white women's niches. About the same time, white women entered professional occupations in specifically "women's professions" of social work, nursing, and teaching.

Alice Kessler-Harris' (1982) important study of women in the U.S. labor force argues that as late as the 1930s a woman worker was understood to be a woman out of place. In a culture that defined women's place as in the home and under the protection of a man, women's participation in the labor force constituted a potential threat to their virtue. Indeed, much of the evidence of non-white women's lack of virtue was deduced from their mingling with men in the "coarse" conditions of the workforce. Sexual harassment was understood as something women asked for, a sign of such women's immorality, which in turn confirmed that presumption.

I have argued (Brodkin 1999) that white women's respectability and racial purity in the workforce have been historically supported by jobs organized in a manner that segregated them into specifically white female clerical, sales, and professional niches. If racial and gender segregation protected white women's virtue, their whiteness was also marked by the organization of their work. Compared to the jobs of women of color and non-white men, white women's jobs had a meddium of the autonomy and freedom from supervision that has historically characterized the jobs of white men.

The racial and gendered organization of the labor force has also been a place that confirms ethnoracial stereotypes of whites as morally superior, as civilized in contrast to everyone else as animal-like or savage. As will be discussed in more detail below, work in cultural studies has shown that a key part of this construction is the notion that non-white women and men are more like each other in temperament and physique than are their white counterparts. Thus for example, Irish, African American, and Polish women and men both have been negatively stereotyped as strong of back and weak of mind, while Chinese and Jewish men have both been represented as effeminate, and, along with their women, as devious and manipulative. In contrast, white womanhood and white manhood have been positively stereotyped as opposite and complementary, with white women as domestic, maternal, and virtuous, and white men as chivalrous family men, protectors and citizens. Gender and racial separation of white women and men, each in their separate and racially white niches, then confirms the naturalness of whiteness and its attributes. Likewise, gender mingling, of other than white men and women, underscores the commonnessenseness of the negative stereotypes of their ethnoracial non-whiteness.

The ways that ethnoracial, class, and gender organizations come together into a single system emerges from work dealing with the interplay of race, gender, and nationalism. Their focus has been to analyze the ways that conventional norms and discourses of belonging and political citizenship have worked to create real Americans as white (Morrison 1993; Frankenberg 1993; B. Williams 1996). These studies incorporate the understandings just discussed of whiteness as constituted from protective masculinity and domestic femininity as well as from a range of privileges that include the right to respectable work, families, social respectability, and residential freedom. Real Americans then become constituted as a white artisan and business class of responsible family and women devoted to domesticity, not unlike the colonial notion of citizen-soldiers and mothers of the nation, the population to which democracy applies. The wider construct of "America," then, is of a white nation. However, as a nation, the United States has always been dependent upon the labor of a diverse but non-white, manual working class to produce the nation's wealth, but has historically constructed this class as alien, dangerous, and unfit for inclusion in the national fabric.

The United States is far from unique in its constructions of national belonging. Many studies elaborate similar themes for other nations, for European colonial society and culture and for postcolonial nations (Gitroy 1991; Medina
relationships between women and men, between individuals, and between ethnic groups.

Spencer's story of social evolution chronicled humanity's rise from a condition of savage warfare and brutal treatment of women as the private property of men to a condition of peaceful industrial existence where women were well treated and taken care of by men. Engels described humanity's original condition as primitive communism, marked by egalitarian relations among men and between women and men. His evolutionary trajectory is downhill to class society where most men and all women are exploited and oppressed by a small ruling class, and where women are subordinated to and economically dependent upon men. Where Spencer writes a story of human betterment and progress that celebrates the social order of laissez-faire capitalism, Engels' story of decline and degradation critiques that same social order from the perspective of those at the bottom.

For Spencer, competition, the survival of the fittest, whether in the struggle between people and the environment, between societies, or between individuals, shaped the capacities and temperaments of women and men, and of different races. Competition selected for certain biological and psychological traits, and these have had lasting impacts on future social forms. Thus Spencer believed that the different natures of women and men were forged in savage times and have continued to shape gender relations in modern society. Spencer believed that women's physical and mental development have been stunted by their reproductive functions, and that their emotional character has likewise been shaped by reproduction. His portrait of gender relations in "savagery" was one of brutality—women and men were equally brutal—but because women were disadvantaged in size and strength, they became prey, and ultimately property of men, destined to face a life of violence, incest, and rape, as well as a short lifespan after their childbearing years. In order to survive in such a hostile environment women developed character traits of guile, manipulation, flattery, and an attraction to men of power. These traits together with a stunning of intellectual functions and development of nurturance have persisted into civilized times and explained for Spencer why women are not suited to participate in government or the economy, and why men must govern and serve as chivalrous protectors. As Marvin Harris (1968) observed 30 years ago, social Darwinism, with respect to race, class, and gender, is more accurately described as Spencerism. In Spencer one finds the most fully developed argument that the way things are, is as they must always be for the future of the species.

Engels' rejoinder was that "natural" human relationships in general and gender relationships in particular have been perverted by the rise of private property and by monogamy (which he sees as the ownership of women by men). Engels has less to say about race than Spencer. Instead, what is crucial is the relationship of people to natural resources and ownership of the means of production. Communal ownership supported gender equality in primitive communism and early kinship-based society. Private property, first in livestock cared for by men, gave men economic dominance and allowed them to turn women and many men into economic dependants. For Engels, humans seem to be infinitely plastic in their attributes, shaped only by forms of economic organiza-
tion. In this view gender has been socially constructed along a continuum from identical and egalitarian to unequal and contrastive.

This evolutionary framework shaped the theories of early feminist anthropology (Morgen 1989). Although the neo-evolution of the 1960s jettisoned Spencerian political baggage, the idea that there was a direction to human cultural evolution in general—from simple to complex, from egalitarian to hierarchial—persisted. Anthropologists continued to interpret the past by reference to the diversity of then-extant societies and sought to understand the forces for movement from one evolutionary stage to the next. Among early feminists, debates centered on whether or not gender-egalitarian societies had ever existed. One stream of feminist thought argued that it did, among some early foraging and horticultural societies, but that the rise of state societies and colonialism brought about an inequalities in gender relations (Reiter 1975). Another stream argued that previously universal ways of organizing culture—women doing the child rearing, and association of women with things natural and men with things cultural—meant that full gender equality never existed, but that equality was possible under current conditions (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974).

We can step back from the differences between Engels and Spencer to ask what they have in common. This will allow us to connect early evolutionists' concerns with forms of social organization, specifically with the ways class, race, and gender are and should be organized, to the broader stream of modernist thought, and to current analyses of its biases, assumptions, and limitations. From this perspective, Spencer and Engels shared an Enlightenment, Western view of the world. They both believed that human history was a working out of natural law and that the diversity of contemporary non-Western societies provided a window on the past by which one could develop scientific ways of predicting the future. Natural law replaced divine will as a model of argument for both of them as it did for other 19th-century anthropologists.

Anthropology has continued to engage with this paradigm. Studies of foraging peoples have continued to be loci of covert and overt battles about “natural,” “original,” and possible class and gender relationships among people. Marvin Harris (1968:249) has argued that much of the early 20th-century history of anthropology was an attempt to refute Engels' view of evolution. Thus, reigning views of hunters and gatherers emphasized private property and patrilineal/patriarchal band society. From a Marxist point of view, Eleanor Leacock (1980, 1985) explicitly challenged these biases in her critical and ethnographic work on egalitarian relations among Naskapi peoples of Labrador and their transformation under the influence of fur trading and missions. Some early feminist anthropologists saw gender equality in accounts of foraging peoples by way of arguing that such relationships were “natural,” possible, and desirable in the present. Other feminist anthropologists also focused on such groups to show that egalitarian relations had never existed, by way of arguing that patriarchy was deeply ingrained in the human condition and that it would take a great deal to change it. In opposition, Spencerian positions about the naturalness and necessity of hierarchy and patriarchy (separately and together) were also developed by a few anthropologists (Tiger 1969; Tiger and Fox 1977), and by E. O. Wilson (1975) in establishing the field of sociobiology.

In the last 40 years there have been several waves of social Darwinist racism in popular and scientific literature. In the 1960s, Daniel Moynihan (1965) explained African American poverty as a product of a “deficient” matriarchal culture in much the same way as Edward Banfield (before he became Nixon’s urban advisor) explained the poverty of southern Italians as a product of “amoral familialism” (Banfield 1958). Theories of cultural deficiency were complemented by renewed theories of biological deficiency. Arthur Jensen, William Shockley, and Richard Herrnstein all advanced well-publicized theories that argued that African Americans were not as intelligent as whites. Herrnstein went further and argued that the racial and class hierarchy of the United States was a product of natural selection, with the richest and most powerful also being the best and the brightest. More recently the idea of biological racial inequality has surfaced again and been given still wider credibility in a climate of political conservatism and heightened monopolization of print and electronic media. Publicity of Charles Murray’s and Richard Herrnstein’s warmed-over racist interpretations of IQ in The Bell Curve (1994); as bold a new ideas is one case in point. Notions of cultural inferiority have again become popular, for example, in the ways in which sociologist William J. Wilson’s (1980, 1987) notion of a black underclass has been taken up in social science circles as well as been popularized in policy circles. Each of these efforts has had no shortage of critics (see, for example, Ladner 1973; Steinberg 1995; Crenshaw and Morrison 1992).

Anthropology has been peripheral to this debate because until very recently it has largely avoided the issue of race. Anthropological understandings that race is not a valid concept for describing human biological variability could be useful in combating the inevitable outbreaks of biological racist explanations. However, anthropologists renewed interest has sometimes also carried an unstated assumption that if race is not biological, then it is not “real.” This does not address the more prevalent forms of racism, that the cultures of peoples of color are somehow “deficient,” in contrast to those of whites. It matters little in terms of outcome whether a racist theory argues that the status quo is natural by reference to genes or by reference to racially transmitted cultures. This means that anthropology needs to critique race as a biological concept and simultaneously attend to the ways in which race is culturally constructed and deployed in the United States. Doing the former without the latter is insufficient in a context where patterns of job, school, and residential segregation, police, science, and mass media discourse all conspire to make race self-evidently real.

Case 2: Boasian Anthropology and Its Legacy Regarding Race in the United States

In the early decades of the 20th century, Spencerianism had much more influence in U.S. scientific circles outside anthropology than it had within it. Universities became important sites for generating the social Darwinist racial theories that naturalized and legitimized prevailing power relations by denigrating and stig-
Boasians were not race-averse, and they were activist: Boas taught undergraduate courses on race and racism at Columbia; he urged Columbia to adopt a black studies curriculum to teach about African culture and history. He trained anthropologists like Herskovits, Benedict, Klimek, Hurston, Dunham, Poundmaker, and Montagu who dealt with race and racism. He gave public lectures in New York City and wrote popular articles. He was involved in the founding conference of, and continued to work with, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and to speak out against segregation (Baker 1958; Harrison 1992; Hyatt 1990).

But Boas was not a radical, and he was a less than perfect antiracist. As Harrison (1992) has suggested, he may have worked with DuBois, but he didn’t publicize or cite DuBois’ work, and as Hyatt (1990) suggests, he had some rather strange ideas about race and intermarriage, and wasn’t sure black folks were fully equal to whites. Also, as Lee Baker (1994a, 1998) has argued, Boas really did not understand the political forces that sustained racist thinking. He was naive about dynamics of African American politics: he tried to get funding from Booker T. Washington while allied with W. E. B. DuBois. Moreover, he failed to understand why he was turned down by “the Tuskegee Machine” and why his idea for a museum of African culture was ignored by its patron, Andrew Carnegie. He didn’t understand the connection between political economy and racism. Boas racism was a product of ignorance, and not part of the fabric of U.S. institutions (Baker 1994a; Hyatt 1990; Stocking 1968).

There is an ultimate irony to Boasian anthropology’s antiracist legacy. Although it played a major role in undermining the hegemony of biologically based theories of racism, it has also left anthropology in a theoretically weak position to combat the rise of culturally-based racist theories, which are the most widespread form of racist beliefs today. Boasian notions of culture were themselves underdeveloped, tending toward the realm of belief and value, with little attention to the ways in which race is institutionalized in political and economic relationships. Nor did Boasians do much in the way of analyzing contemporary American society and culture.

The Boasian attack on racism did not challenge popular notions of nature and nurture, biology and culture as opposed and mutually exclusive. Thus, Boas misunderstood biology, or nature (here race) as something determined by heredity. In contrast, culture, or “nurture” was interpreted as being chosen freely and without structural constraints. The current idea that nature (here race) is socially constructed and can be changed (as a phenotypical phenomenon and as a category of cultural meaning) by the same culture that constructed it was not part of the Boasian paradigm. Nor was the broader idea that nature and nurture are mutually constituted rather than mutually exclusive.

In a similar vein, the Boasian celebration of cultural diversity was part of a larger cultural relativist mission that offered an alternative to the ethnocentrism of social Darwinism. They worked with an implicitly voluntarist model of culture. Each culture was one choice among many possible along the “great arc” of culture, as Ruth Benedict put it. This “possibilist,” or open-ended orientation contrasted with the determinism of unilinear evolutionary thinking. As with a mutually exclusive nature/nurture model, this one had no place for the con-
plexities of structurally constrained choices, whether those choices were constrained by ecology, political economy, or other aspects of an interrelated field. This lack greatly limited the power of Soviet analyses of race and racism.

**African American anthropology and the road not taken**

However, there were important African American contemporaries and colleagues whose work did all that their white counterparts did not. Not only did Boas ignore their work, but they are still excluded from the anthropological canon. Attention to the work of W. E. B. DuBois, Allison Davis, St. Clair Drake, and Horace Cayton on the political economy and culture of race and class in American society can still provide students in anthropology with a sophisticated perspective on contemporary issues of diversity and discrimination in the United States. *Deep South* (Davis et al. 1941) is an ethnography of race, class, and gender relations in a southern town, and *Black Metropolis* (Drake and Cayton 1945) is an ethnography of Chicago's African American community. Both works understand race as culturally constructed and very real. They also analyze racism as a social system rather than as aggregated ignorance. They demonstrate the economic and social stakes of white racism, and show that more than individual enlightenment is needed to change it. Both deal with the relationship of race and class as key to understanding American social structure. *Deep South* analyzes the social system as linked systems of caste and class, brought together around the enforcement of separation between white women and black men. Drake and Cayton also analyze the class diversity within the African American community and show how the racism of the larger American capitalist political economy has been the constraining context within which African Americans created the black metropolis and African American culture. Both discuss the ways in which racism is also a cultural system which manifests itself in stereotypes, symbols/rituals of subordination, and in blackness as master symbol. Emerging clearly in both works, too, is the use of coercion to maintain segregation and racism, and to keep black people subordinated. The models of society and culture these works create are much more robust than those of their white contemporaries. They are holistic in that there are clear links between political economy, institutions, beliefs, and values. They are also complex, recognizing that American society and culture has more than one culture and system of values, and that each of these is also full of contradiction. Drake and Cayton also foreshadow an important current view that African Americans are necessarily bicultural, that they have to learn the master's culture as well as master their own, and that they are thus likely to know white America better than white Americans know black America.

**Anthropology's relationship to American racial policy: The Japanese American internment during World War II**

Early in 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which uprooted, dispossessed, and dispersed all Japanese and Japanese Americans living on the west coast. Some 120,000 Issei and Nisei were housed for the duration of the war in ten hastily built detention camps in inhospitable and isolated areas of the West. Peter Suzuki's (1980, 1981, 1985, 1986) work provides the fullest documentation of the significant role played by anthropologists in a program of federally employed ethnography in these camps, especially in the Community Analysis Section (CAS) of the War Relocation Authority (WRA), and to a lesser extent in the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study (JERS) housed at the University of California at Berkeley. Gordon Chang (1993) has documented Phileo Nash's efforts (and their limits) as a media analyst in the Office of War Information to counter media racism against Japanese Americans. The Internment and the anthropologists' role can be studied as part of the larger history of governmental constructions of Asians as permanent aliens. While it is common to discuss the wartime efforts of American anthropologists – especially Ruth Benedict's work on Japanese national character – in history of theory courses, a study of anthropologists' role in the Internment can shed light on the theoretical underpinnings of anthropological work and of the camp ethnographies themselves. It has become commonplace to analyze the work of British functionalists as colonial anthropologists. But a parallel argument can be made for their American contemporaries' work for the WRA and JERS. Reading Peter Suzuki, Yuchi Ichioka (1989), as well as Rosalie Wax's (1957, 1971) candid recollections of her work as a graduate student ethnographer at the Tule Lake internment center allows students to explore these questions in a complex manner.

With hindsight, it is hard to imagine that most Americans including anthropologists, who were aware that Germans and German Americans, Italians and Italian Americans were not locked up as potential traitors, would accept incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans. But they did, especially in the West, and apparently across the political spectrum, from the Communist Party to California's then attorney general, Earl Warren, to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. There was resistance from the American Civil Liberties Union, the Quakers, and by mid-1943, from a larger swath of liberal public opinion largely outside the western states (Chang 1993:46-48). Yet World War II was popularly perceived as a "just" war, and anthropologists were eager to contribute their expertise. They accepted the political context within which they worked, and it shaped their work in significant ways.

Many anthropologists who were committed to undoing the racism of U.S. culture seem not to have noticed that they participated in a set of institutionalized racist practices. Some, like Phileo Nash, fought the cultural manifestations of anti-Japanese racism while ignoring the institutionalized racism of the Internment itself. Nash and others spoke out against wartime racist stereotyping, but they did so by portraying Japanese as good Americans willing to cooperate and disperse if allowed to leave the camps on an individual basis. Indeed, they feared that a rise in anti-Japanese racism would work against government policies of resetting internees in the East and Midwest (Chang 1993).

Inability or unwillingness to confront the racism inherent in the institutional framework within which they worked shaped the questions ethnographers framed and the range of possible answers they proposed in three ways. First,
given the cultural (as distinct from social structural) bent of American anthropology, national character studies were one way anthropologists sought to understand Japanese culture. At one extreme, Weston LaBarre's (1945) characterization of Japanese culture as compulsive and neurotic was racist. Others, most notably Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) were respectful and insightful (Suzuki 1985). Second, Suzuki argues that anthropologists who worked as camp ethnographers for the most part accepted the rightness of the government's mid-war policy switch toward evacuating the camps and relocating internes to other parts of the United States. Consequently, they tended to interpret any behavior that worked against the way the policy was to be implemented as resistance to the policy, rather than examining the policy and its implementation. The result was a trend toward blaming-the-victim analyses. Third, although ethnographers, especially those working for the CAS, were not supposed to inform on internes, some did. Most useful here is then student Rosalie Wax's candid confession of how becoming embroiled in factionalism at Tule Lake led to her informing to the FBI on someone who was subsequently stripped of his citizenship and deported to Japan. Ironically, Wax was among the very few anthropologists who were opposed to the Internment. Studying her action helps students to deal with the complexities of fieldwork and political engagement.

Suzuki (1981:40-41) argues that Marvin Opler's work provides a model of what anthropologists could have done. As the CAS analyst at Tule Lake, Opler made the political and social field within which he worked part of his analysis. He criticized the policy of segregating so-called disloyal and loyal internes, and was able to predict the factionalizing and unrest caused by government policy. In addition, by publishing in academic journals “in announced to his colleagues and his readers that, in effect, the culture patterns of these Japanese Americans were worthy of note and respect” (1981:40). However, anthropologists did not deal with the wider field of U.S. politics that produced the Internment in the first place, nor, later, of efforts by internes and the ACLU to seek legal redress and end the incarceration as unconstitutional. Raising these issues through a study of the Internment allows students to grapple with the ways implicit theoretical perspectives shape what anthropologists do and do not see, do and do not do, and despite as well as because of one's intent. Equally important is consciousness and analysis of the political field within which anthropologists work.

**Summary**

This chapter has examined the ways that anthropology's theoretical legacy has helped and hindered the discipline's participation in dealing with issues of cultural diversity in the United States. I have argued that diversity issues are being most effectively addressed in multidisciplinary conversations that are looking critically at race, ethnicity, and related core concepts of Western Enlightenment culture. Anthropological approaches to diversity often embrace these cultural concepts unconsciously even as they try to challenge racism and its cultural justifications. I reexamined three areas of anthropological theory—theories of cul-

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