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their biases into policy formation. In addition, if the professional bureaucracy that developed during the early twentieth century continues to wield the power to inhibit or expand welfare activities, then the efficient allocation of resources may take precedence over legitimate social need.

Poverty and Policy in American History is an important and appealing book. Katz challenges historians to redirect their efforts in writing welfare history. He questions some of the conclusions previously drawn from quantitative data and calls for their reanalysis. Effectively utilizing a broad survey of primary and secondary materials, he creates a framework upon which additional research can be based. He combines the case study method with quantitative analysis (from elementary statistics to multivariate analysis) to provide a mixture that is productive. At times, Katz makes inferences about relationships when little or no data are available, and then transforms those inferences into bold statements of fact.

Despite this one problem, anyone interested in the study of public policy, poverty, or welfare in the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries will find this book enlightening. The extensive historiographical discussion along provides justification for pouring over its pages. In addition, students of history will find it a good example of the application of quantitative methods in the development of new hypotheses and in the testing of existing ones.

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Sylvia Junko Yanagisako. *Transforming the Past: Tradition and Kinship Among Japanese Americans*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985. xii + 289 pp. Preface, tables, appendix, bibliography, and index. \$39.50 (cloth).

Scholars have long debated the extent to which the Japanese American family has facilitated cultural assimilation. About two decades ago, social scientists applied the assimilation model to Japanese Americans and concluded that while the *Issei* (first-generation) retained some of their Japanese heritage, the *Nisei* (second-generation) had already assimilated into mainstream America. In recent years, however, some scholars have challenged the assimilationist position. Maintaining that American society is culturally pluralistic these scholars point to readily observable forms of behavior among the *Nisei* and *Sansei* (third-generation) identifiable as traditional Japanese and argue that the *Issei* were remarkably successful in passing on a significant portion of their pre-World War II Japanese culture to their descendants. One work that adds significantly to this debate is Yanagisako's *Transforming the Past*.

Yanagisako's approach to cultural change in the Japanese American family differs from the assimilationist and cultural pluralist perspectives. In the first place, she rejects the practice of identifying and labeling parts of Japanese American kinship as either "Japanese" or "American" because such an approach "subverts cultural analysis by leading us away from systematic investigation of what elements mean and how they relate to each other" (pp. 18-19). For Yanagisako, one must uncover the meaning of a particular element of a culture since two difficult cultures can have the same element in their respective cultures but attach different meanings to that element. To label, therefore, a particular form of behavior among the *Nisei* as "Japanese" without analyzing the meaning behind such behavior is to misinterpret that particular element. Secondly, Yanagisako views the process of cultural change as a "dialectic of reinterpretation" (p. 243). What she means is this: The *Nisei* constructed their own selective version of American culture ("'American' present") by extrapolating cultural values from the American mass media and educational system. They then extrapolated values of Japanese culture learned from their *Issei* parents, to create their own version of Japanese culture ("'Japanese' past"). The *Nisei* placed these two versions in symbolic opposition to one another. By charting a middle course between these two polar opposites, the *Nisei* were able to construct a new Japanese American tradition.

To demonstrate the utility of her approach, Yanagisako systematically analyzes Japanese American kinship in three areas—marriage, filial relations, and siblinghood. From 1973 to 1975 Yanagisako conducted oral interviews with twenty-four *Issei* and forty-eight *Nisei* couples in the Seattle, Washington, area. Through a careful analysis of her informants' revelations of their pre-World War II past and their definitions of key terms such as *kazoku* (family) and *shinrui* (relatives), Yanagisako reconstructs Japanese American kinship and what she believes to be the meaning underlying their kinship system.

What Yanagisako uncovered was important differences between the two generations. In terms of marriage, the two generations had similar forms of male dominance, yet they differed in their rationale of greater male control. Greater *Issei* male authority was justified in terms of "their location in a hierarchy of sociospatial domains" whereas for the *Nisei* it was because of the greater "material resources they acquire through their income-producing work" (p. 244). In terms of filial relations, the two generations differed over inheritance. In keeping with their Japanese tradition, the *Issei*, whenever possible, sought to pass on their material wealth to their successor (first-born) sons. The *Nisei*, adhering to the American value of equal distribution of family "love," resisted such demonstrations of favoritism and effectively forced the *Issei* to temper such practices. As for siblinghood, the two generations differed dramatically. For the *Issei*, relations among siblings, when the practice of favoritism toward first sons prevailed, were expected

to grow distant over time since the non-successor sons would move off to another location and start stem families. The *Nisei*, by contrast, saw sibling relations as intimate. *Nisei* women in particular kept close touch with other siblings. Hence, the picture of the Japanese American family that Yanagisako presents is one that does not wholly fit either the assimilationist or the cultural pluralist models.

Yanagisako's *Transforming the Past* will probably exert considerable influence on future studies of Japanese Americans. Some of her findings will cause historians to reassess their claims. More importantly, Yanagisako's model of cultural change and her method of uncovering the meaning behind behavior will raise the debate over the Japanese American family to a higher level of sophistication.

Nevertheless, Yanagisako's work is not without faults. Her claims that the oral interviews she conducted were "accounts with a good degree of historical veracity" (p. 2) will raise more than a few skeptical eyebrows among historians when they discover that her findings on the meaning behind the Japanese American kinship system are based on reminiscences of events that occurred a half century or more ago. In future studies, more rigorous recourse to verifying findings obtained through oral interviews with the existing primary (archival) historical record will have to be pursued wherever possible. Furthermore, her model of cultural change as applied to Japanese Americans needs some revising. In the first place, Yanagisako writes as if the *Nisei* were influenced only by the "'American' present" and "'Japanese' past." Yet, the *Nisei* were equally influenced by other factors—the Japanese American mass media, the Japanese language schools, trips to Japan, and (most importantly) the Japanese American community. Secondly, Yanagisako assumes that the *Nisei* chose the middle ground between the "'Japanese' past" and "'American' present," lest their identities as Japanese Americans be threatened by becoming either "indistinguishable from a *hakujin* (white) or "too 'Japanesy' and 'old fashioned'" (p. 249). While this may be true with respect to kinship, one should be cautious in applying the thesis to other aspects of Japanese American culture where the *Nisei* alternated accepting and rejecting whole parts of "American" and "Japanese" culture. To assume the *Nisei* always chose the middle ground is to understate the complexity of the Japanese American experience.

Despite these oversights, Yanagisako's *Transforming the Past* stands as one of the most important books on Japanese Americans to appear in print in recent years. Unfortunately, its high price and difficult reading will discourage many from reading this important book.

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