

DISPERSION OF THE JAPANESE POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES AFTER INTERNMENT

MOTIVATING QUESTION

In May of 1941, when my great-grandfather and his family were forcibly moved from their home in Alhambra, California to an internment camp in Cody, Wyoming, he had been living in America for almost 27 years. His wife, Chiyo, had been here since she was two. Their three kids—Tom (my grandfather), Diane and Maureen—had been born and raised in the United States.

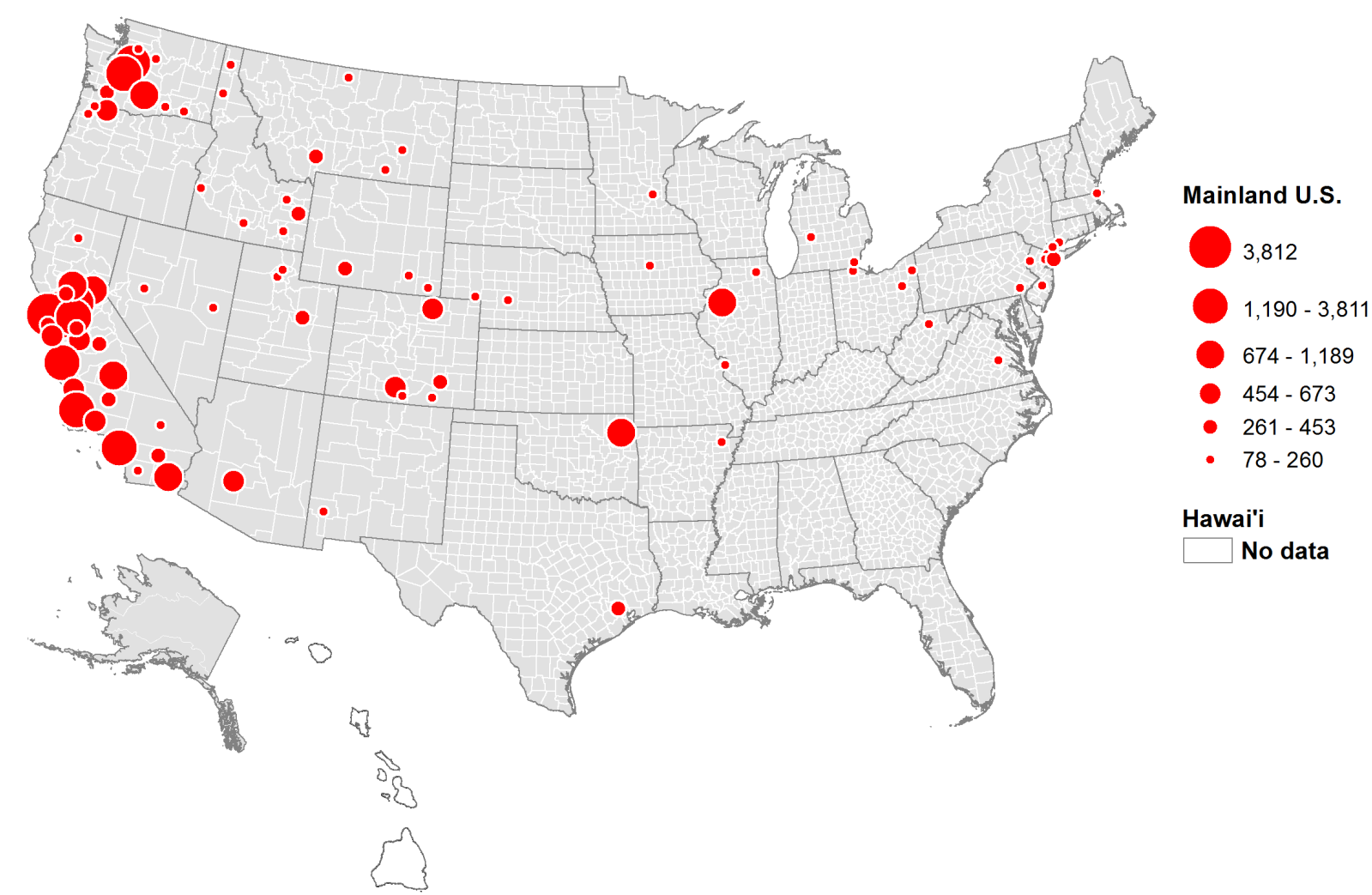
After bombs fell on Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II, America undertook what has been called the largest controlled migration in history and confined roughly 85% of its Japanese population in internment camps. The motive for internment, as described by lead architect Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt, was the following: “military necessity required... that the Japanese population be removed from the coastal area and dispersed in the interior, where the danger of action in concert during any attempted enemy raids along the coast, or in advance thereof as preparation for a full scale attack, would be eliminated.” President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, authorizing the Secretary of War to designate military zones and decide who should be extracted from those zones for the purpose of national security. Eleven days later, a line marking the exclusion zone was drawn through Washington, Oregon, California and Arizona. Since the Japanese population was heavily concentrated in the west coast, this forced an overwhelming majority to sell their possessions and leave their homes.

Internment camps across the U.S. held roughly 40,000 first generation Japanese (Issei), all of whom held alien status because immigrant legislation still didn't allow them to become naturalized, and 70,000 second generation (Nisei) for whom citizenship was a birthright. Because the 1924 Immigration Act dramatically reduced new Japanese entrants into the United States, most of the Issei had been residents for decades. The Nisei were very young, with a majority under the age of 21.

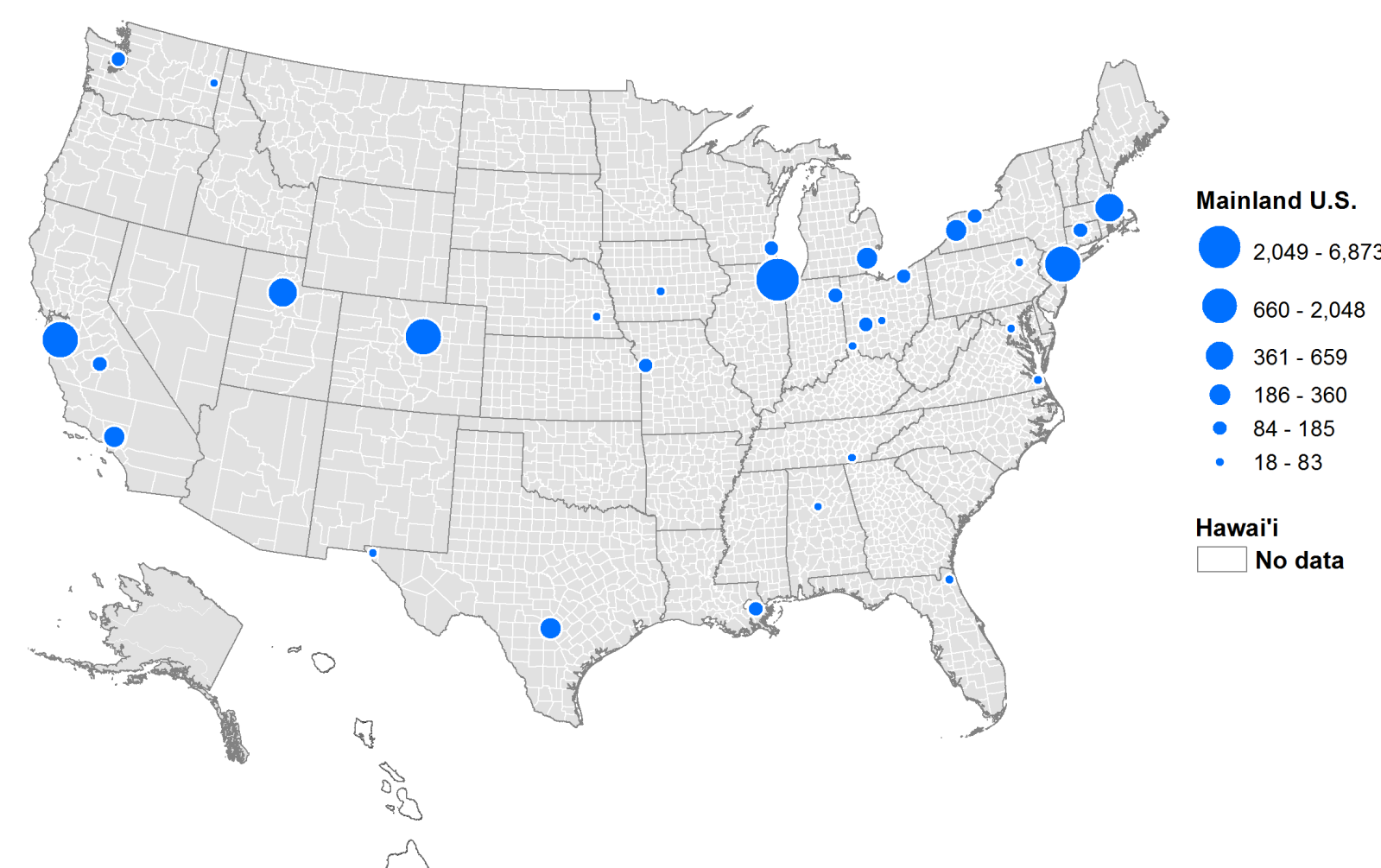
Resettlement out of the camps began as early as 1942. Because the exclusion zone lasted until 1945, early evacuees had to start rebuilding their lives in new locations. Many of those who resettled after the exclusion zone was lifted also chose to move elsewhere. Interviews with internees reveal that some wanted to escape the prejudices they feared lingered on the west coast and search for new beginnings. The internment camps also had structures in place to channel internees away from the west coast. Relocation officers that were intended to help find housing and employment were placed strategically throughout the Midwest. My great-grandfather ended up moving his family to Cleveland, Ohio, where one such relocation officer was located, and never returned to California.

This project was motivated by the question of how many others shared similar trajectories and ended up in entirely new locations. I wanted to know how the dispersion of Japanese population in America changed throughout the period of internment, and whether emerging trends held years later once those who had previously resided on the west coast had the opportunity to return.

Decreases in Japanese Population, 1940 to 1950
(number of residents)



Increases in Japanese Population, 1940 to 1950
(number of residents)



Japanese Population Change by County
1940-1950

Top ten biggest decreases

County	People
San Francisco, CA	3,812
Alameda, CA	1,856
Sacramento, CA	1,654
Orange, CA	1,561
Monterey, CA	1,474
Pierce, WA	1,300
Santa Barbara, CA	1,300
King, WA	1,228
San Joaquin, CA	1,190
Sutter, CA	910

Top ten biggest increases

County	People
Cook, IL	6,875
Denver, CO	2,048
New York, NY	1,573
Santa Clara, CA	1,501
Hudson, NJ	659
Suffolk, MA	569
Salt Lake, UT	526
Los Angeles, CA	360
Wayne, MI	257
Erie, NY	230

METHODOLOGY

I constructed datasets of the Japanese population in the U.S. in 1940 and 1950 by combining census questions asking about the respondent's country of birth and the respondent's parents' countries of birth. Any respondent that was born in Japan, or had at least one parent born in Japan, was included in the dataset. I then conducted a population change detection analysis to determine which geographies saw increases and decreases in Japanese population between 1940 and 1950. I also combined 1940 census data with data from the War Relocation Authority showing first destinations for internees upon resettlement to compare population dispersions directly after internment with 1940 levels.

LIMITATIONS

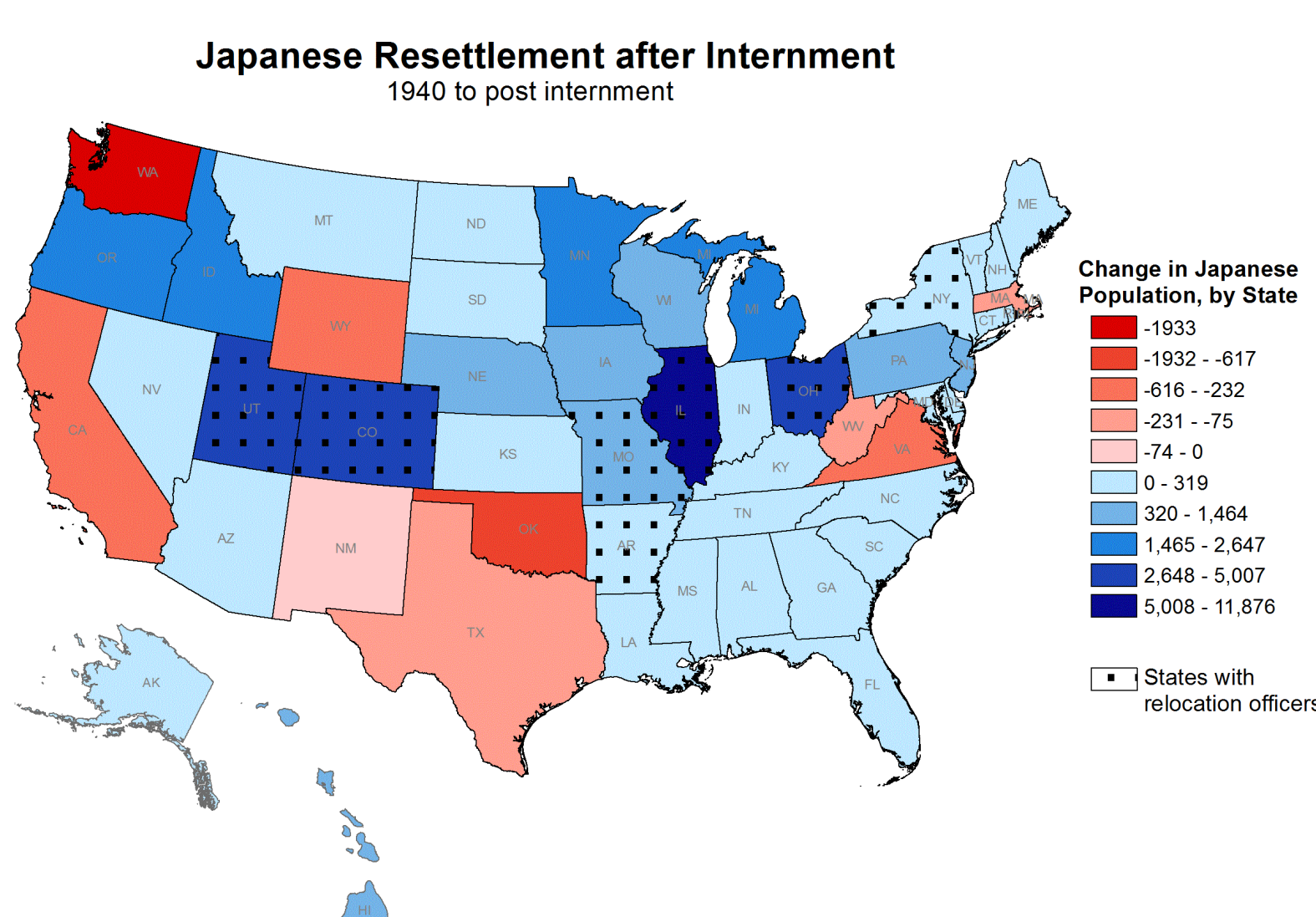
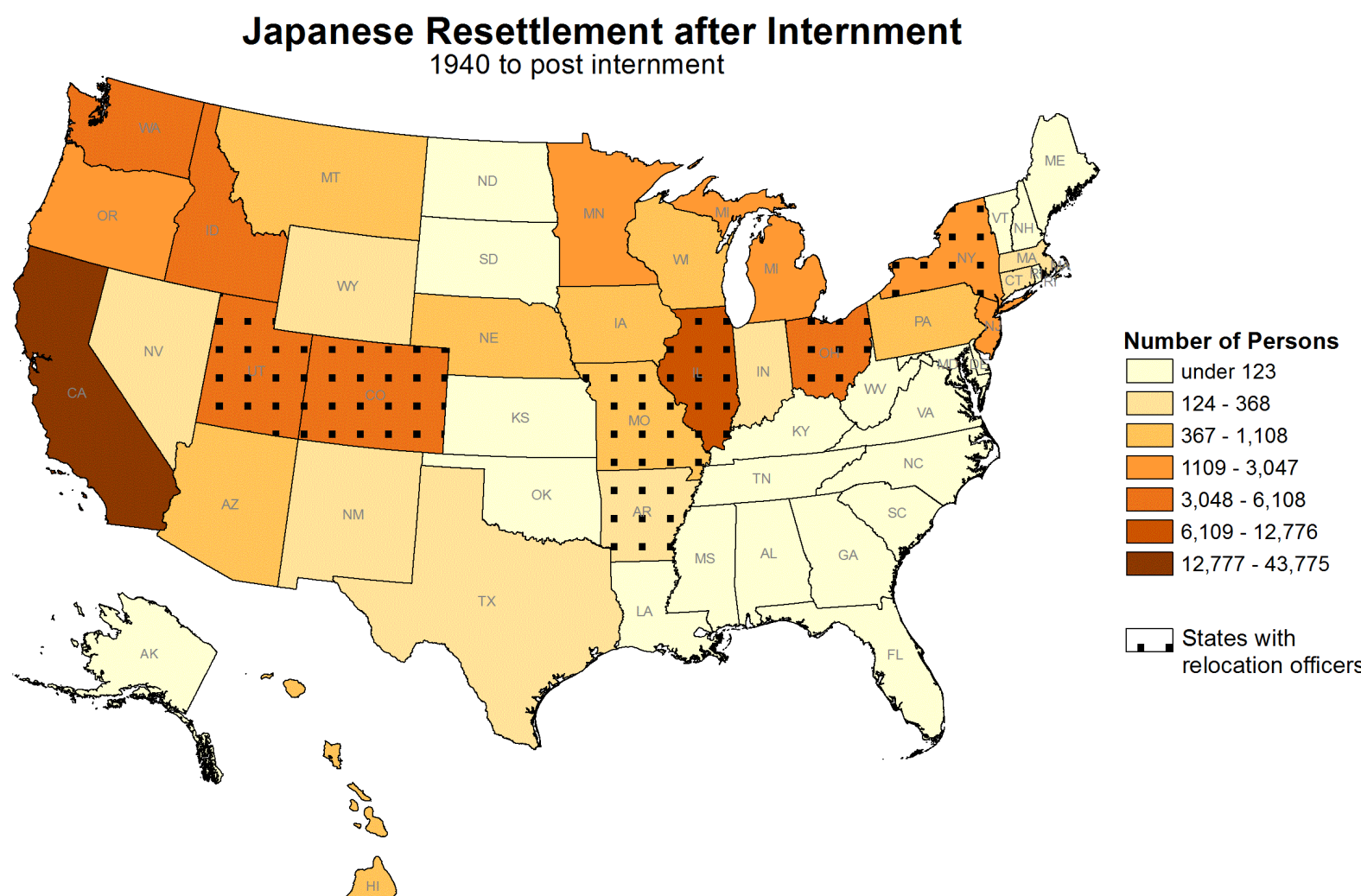
The New York Times' Immigration Explorer shows trends in immigration to the United States by nationality using census data from 1880 to 2000. Part of the motivation for this project was the conspicuous lack of data for Japanese populations in 1940 and 1950. This data proved difficult to find. The dataset constructed for this project shows only first generation and second generation Japanese. This is sufficient for analysis of the Japanese internees, since they were almost entirely first and second generation. However, it limits a broader analysis of Japanese dispersion in the U.S. Ideally, this analysis would have been conducted using a dataset at the individual level with original locations, post-internment addresses and addresses from subsequent decades. Unfortunately, this was not available. Furthermore, the dataset did not allow for spatial analysis of dispersion of populations from specific internment camps, which would have been useful in exploring the shift in distributions.

“With a map of the United States spread before me, I had to pick one spot in the vast expanse of the continent to call my future home”

Tozaburo Sashihara



L to R: Maureen, Chiyo, Diane, Tozaburo, Tom

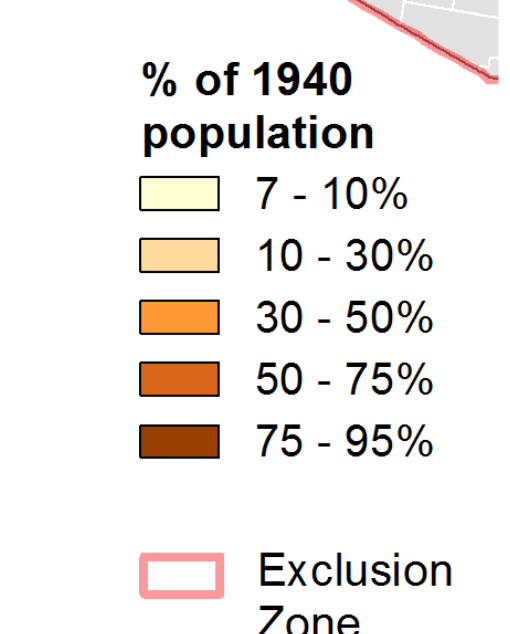
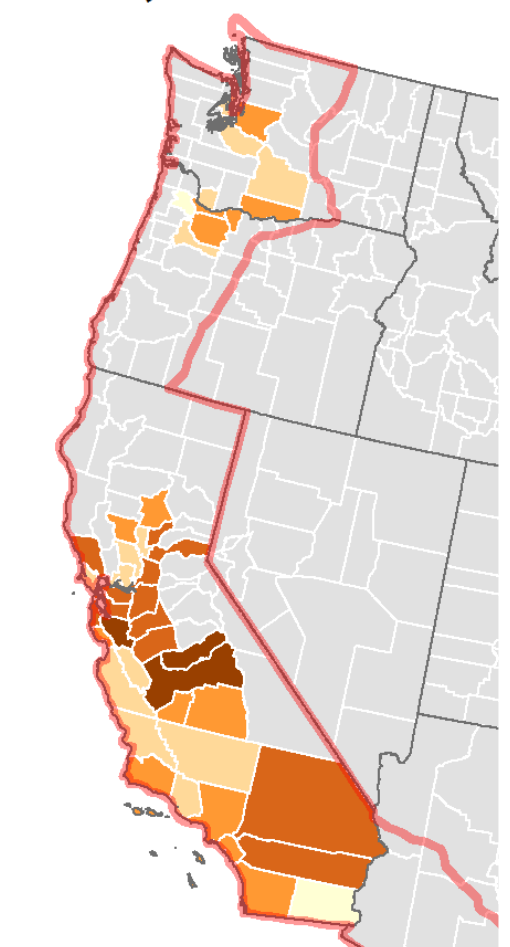


	% of Japanese population living in the area designated	Mean return rate of Japanese residents in west coast counties
1940	79.28%	41.48%
1950	60.83%	

RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

Spatial analysis shows that the Japanese population in America shifted away from the west coast and spread across the country after the period of internment. This is true when looking at immediate resettlement, as well as a few years later after those that had been relocated had time to return to their original residencies. In 1940, 79.3% of the first and second generation Japanese in the U.S. lived within the area along the coast designated the exclusion zone. By 1950, the portion living within that area dropped to 60.8%. Furthermore, the ten counties that saw the biggest drop in number of Issei and Nisei residents from 1940 to 1950 were all on the west coast (eight were in California, two were in Washington). California also contained two counties among the ten with the greatest population increases (Los Angeles and Santa Clara), but the other eight were spread widely among the east coast and central part of the country. These included: Cook, IL, Denver, CO, New York, NY, Hudson, NJ, Suffolk, MA, Salt Lake, UT, Wayne, MI, and Erie, NY. State level analysis confirms these patterns. The three states with the greatest decreases in absolute numbers of Japanese across this period are California, Washington and Arizona. Those with the greatest increases are Illinois, Oregon and New York.

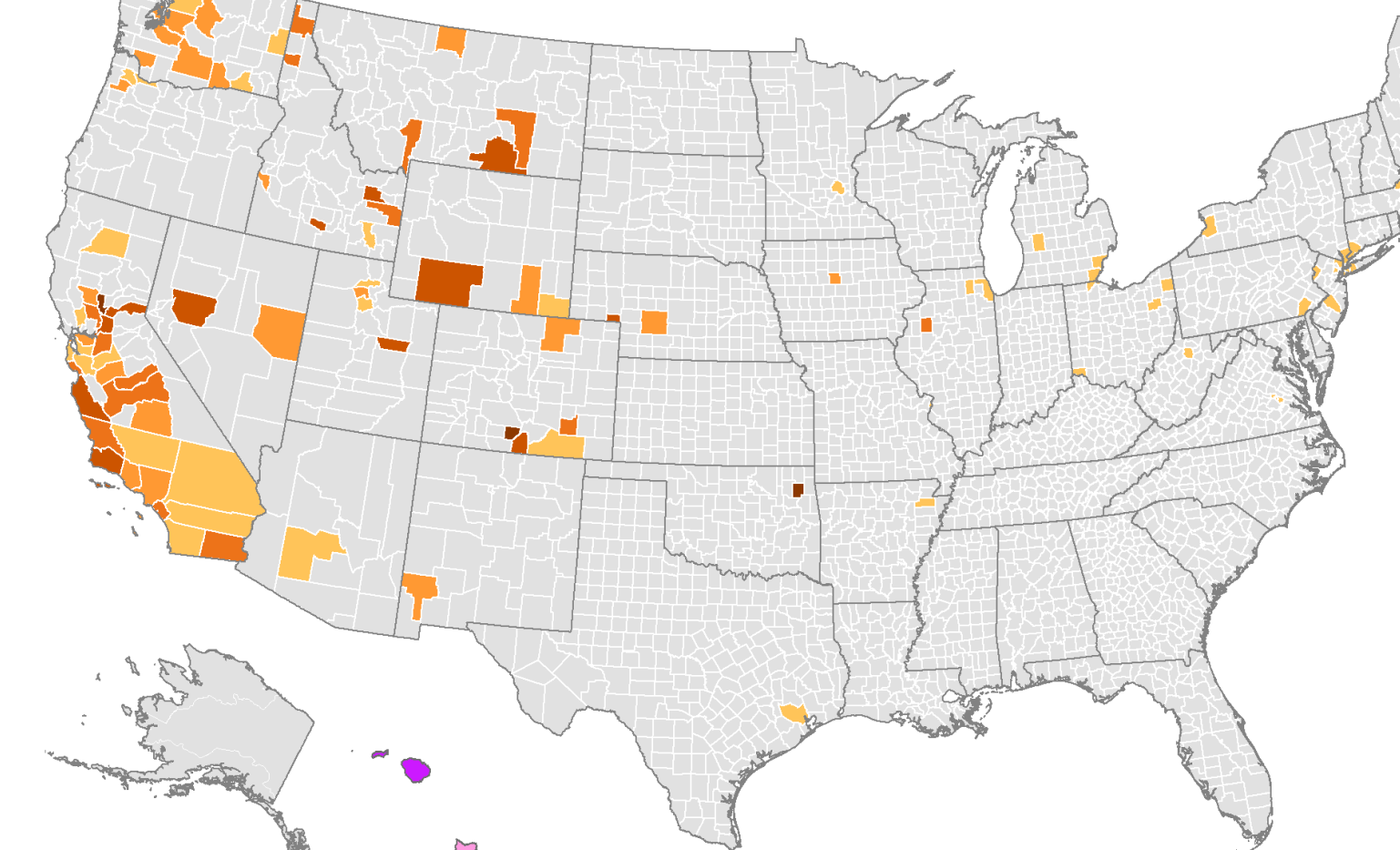
Evacuees that Returned to the West Coast: CA, WA & OR



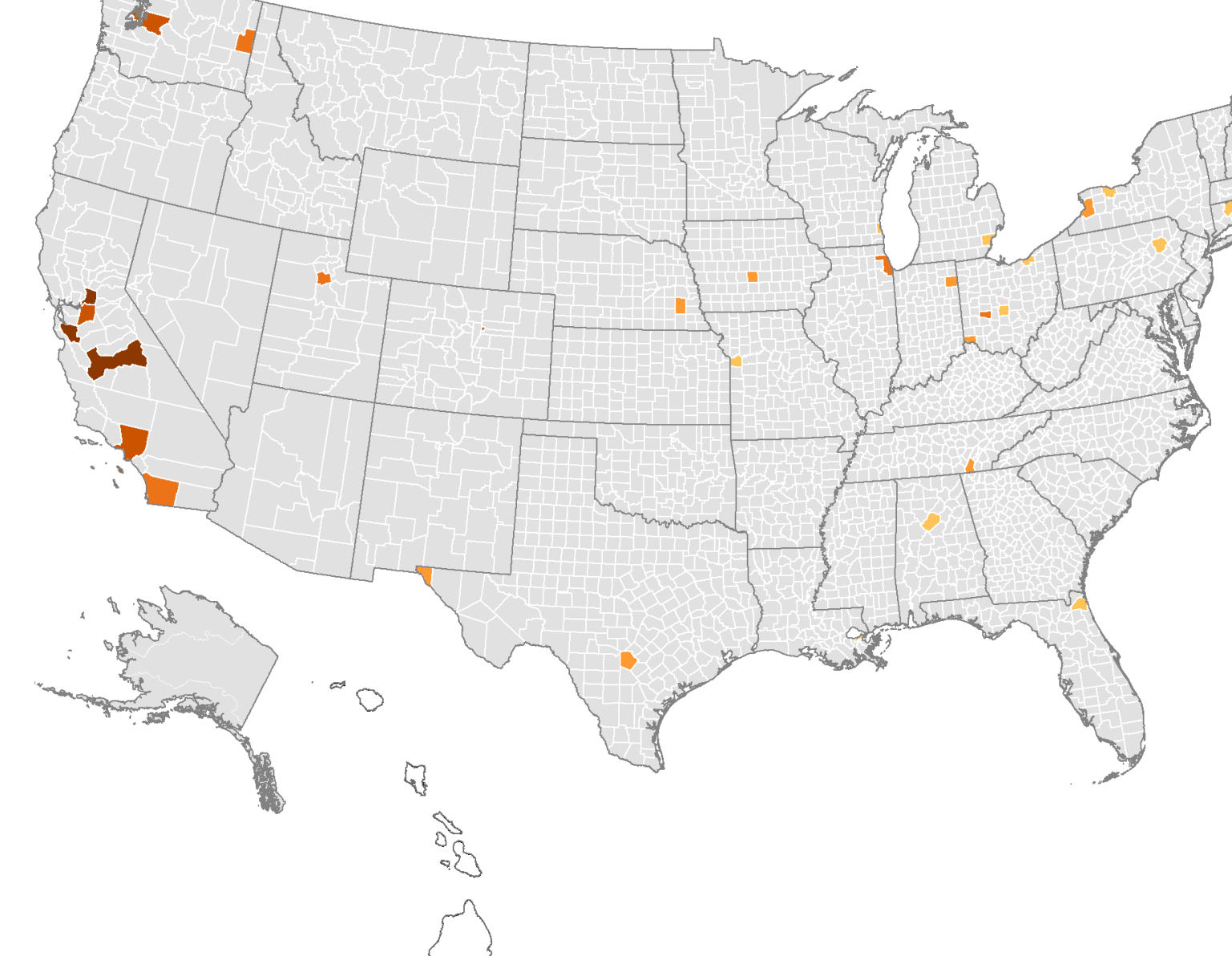
This aligns with changes in populations of Japanese residents directly after release from internment as compared with 1940 levels. Washington, Oklahoma and California saw the greatest declines, while Illinois, Utah and Colorado had the greatest increases. Among the west coast counties in California, Washington and Oregon, the mean return rate of Japanese residents after internment was 41.5%.

It should be noted that geospatial analysis through GIS cannot prove causation and data limitations do not allow for examination of population movement on the individual level. Nevertheless, this study shows that directly after internment and in following years the dispersion of first and second generation Japanese in America shifted from an initial concentration along the west coast to a broader positionality throughout the country.

Japanese Population by County, 1940
(% of county population)



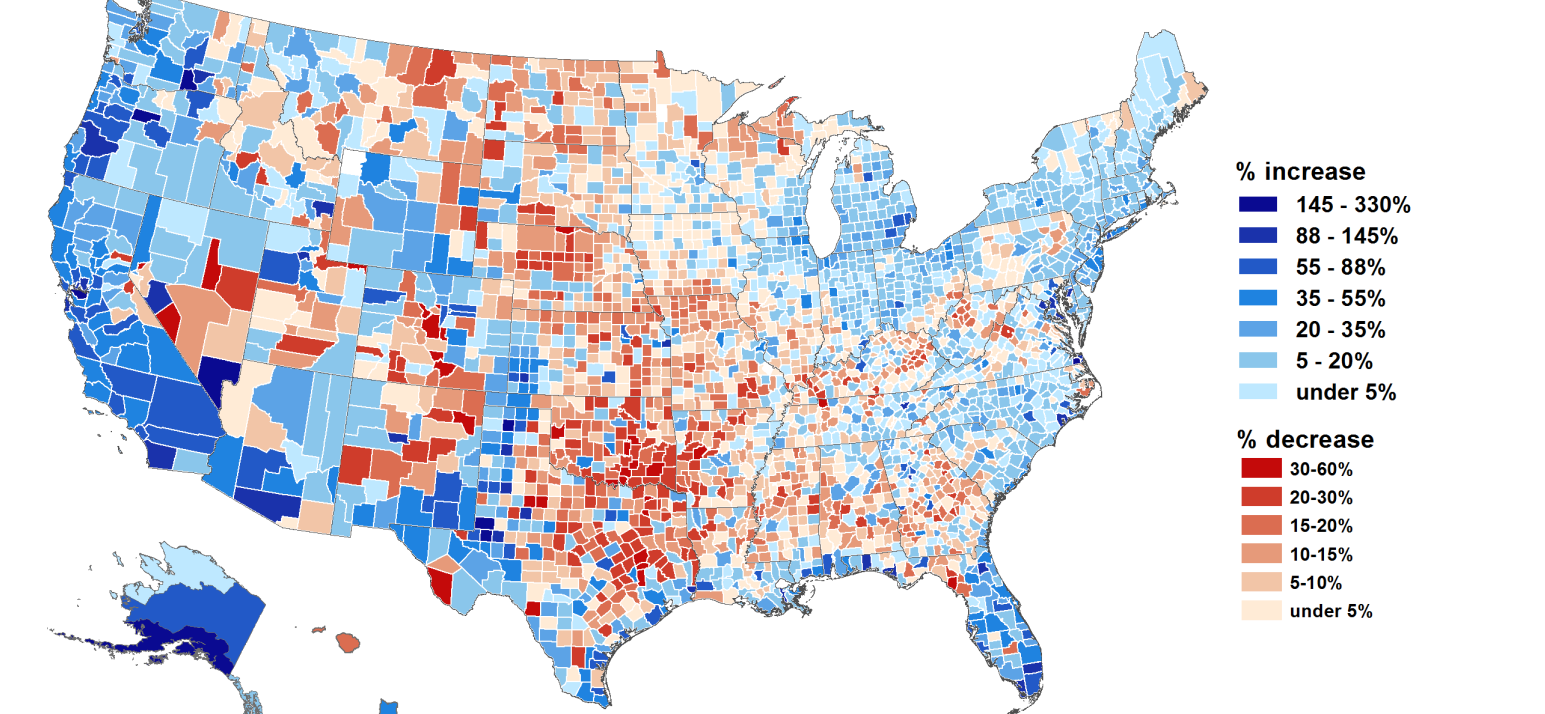
Japanese Population by County, 1950
(% of county population)



Mainland U.S.
0.002 - 0.401%
0.401 - 1.022%
1.022 - 1.642%
1.642 - 2.793%
2.793 - 4.872%

Hawai'i
32.4%
43.2%
47.8%

Trends in the General Population, 1940 to 1950
(population change by county)



Internment Camps and Assembly Centers

