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## Introduction

**A**t a 2005 University of Hawai'i (UH) Board of Regents meeting in Honolulu, I presented testimony in opposition to proposed tuition increases throughout the UH system. My argument was based on knowledge of how disastrous the consequences had been for Hawai'i students, especially ethnic minorities, when tuition was raised substantially in 1996 and 1997. In the three minutes I was allowed to speak before the Regents, I pointed out that after those tuition hikes, enrollment in the UH system plummeted from 50,000 to 45,000 students within three years. At our flagship UH Manoa campus, it declined from 19,800 to 17,000 students and took eight years to recover to the previous level. While all ethnic groups in Hawai'i were adversely impacted by the tuition increases, underrepresented minorities—such as Filipino Americans and Native Hawaiians, the two largest groups in the public school system—suffered much greater losses. I emphasized to the Regents that Filipino American enrollment in the UH system had decreased from 7,500 to 6,000 students within three years and was still more than 1,000 students lower than in 1995.

Spring commencement ceremonies at UH Manoa had been held the previous Sunday, so I told the Regents about an interview I had seen on the evening news with a Native Hawaiian female graduate and her parents. Surrounded by many of her relatives and friends, the lei-bedecked young woman said she was the first member of her family to attend college and

that she planned to continue on to graduate school. Her parents spoke about how proud they were of her and how they wished she would be a role model for her younger siblings who would be encouraged by her example also to attend college. They mentioned how “expensive” they found it to send their daughter to UH Manoa, and I noted that this was the case even though as a Native Hawaiian student she had access to federal financial assistance provided by the Native Hawaiian Higher Education Act. If this family found the tuition costly now, I asked, how much more expensive would it be for them with annual increases of \$816 for six consecutive years?

My allotted time was rapidly expiring, so I concluded my testimony by asking the Regents to review their own policy on “Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action” before voting on the tuition increase. Since I would not have been surprised if most of them had never read or even heard of this policy, I quoted it as stating: “The University of Hawai‘i is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution and is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination on the bases of race, sex, age, religion, color . . .” I told the Regents that if they approved the tuition increases, they would be contradicting their own policy to provide equal access to the university, since massive tuition hikes would inevitably result in significantly decreased minority student admission and enrollment.<sup>1</sup>

My arguments, and those of others who expressed their opposition to raising tuition, fell on deaf ears and minds that were very likely already decided. I was not very surprised when, after nearly three hours of testimony, the Regents voted unanimously in favor of the proposed higher tuition. In their comments during a short discussion before voting, most of them noted their concern for the financial stability of the university and maintained that the tuition increases would generate funds needed to replace stagnating appropriations from the state government. Although many of the Regents are corporate executives or have business backgrounds, none of them asked the UH vice president, who presented the administration’s tuition proposal, the basic question of whether students would continue to enroll at their current level if tuition was raised substantially.<sup>2</sup> Or in terms of operating a business, the Regents probably did not ask themselves if customers would continue to buy a product if its price increased 140 percent in six years.

The decision of the UH Board of Regents to approve a hefty tuition hike is yet another example of how and why ethnic inequality is maintained in Hawai‘i. As a publicly supported institution, the University of Hawai‘i should be one of the primary means by which socioeconomically disadvantaged minorities—such as Native Hawaiians, Filipino Americans, and Samoans—can advance themselves. Already substantially underrepresented in the UH system and together constituting a majority of public school students, these groups were further excluded after tuition was raised beginning in fall 2006.

As discussed in Chapter 4, “Educational Inequality and Ethnicity,” I consider policy decisions such as that by the UH Board of Regents to be manifestations of institutional discrimination against ethnic minorities insofar as these groups are subject to unequal or unfair treatment through these policies. It might be argued that all Hawai‘i residents must pay the higher tuition if they wish to attend UH, so how can the Regents’ decision to increase tuition be considered discriminatory, especially if we assume that they did not intend to discriminate against any ethnic group? The reason is that not all ethnic groups have the financial means to meet the higher cost of tuition; consequently, ethnic minorities are impacted much more adversely compared to the more socioeconomically privileged groups such as Chinese Americans, Whites, and Japanese Americans. These groups have the financial resources to pay the increased tuition or to send their children to universities in the continental United States and thus to maintain their dominant social status in Hawai‘i.

In this book, I discuss other ways by which ethnic inequality and hierarchy are perpetuated in Hawai‘i. While ethnic relations clearly have improved since World War II, they have not progressed sufficiently for a substantial proportion of Hawai‘i’s people who continue to be denied the privileges, benefits, and resources that are enjoyed by the more socioeconomically advantaged ethnic groups. I do not disagree that ethnic inequality in Hawai‘i has become less severe during the past sixty years and that opportunities (for example, in higher education) have been created for ethnic minorities that were extremely restricted—and, for some groups, virtually nonexistent—prior to the war. However, ethnic inequality has not been sufficiently reduced and, since the 1970s, has become further entrenched due to the state’s overdependence on tourism and the ongoing globalization of Hawai‘i’s economy. Socioeconomic mobility into the middle class that was very possible during the two decades after World War II for Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Korean Americans, all of whom started life in Hawai‘i on the plantations, has become much more difficult for other ethnic minorities to attain.

My purpose in writing this book is both personal and academic. Personally, I am concerned about social equality and social justice for aggrieved ethnic minorities in Hawai‘i. Their continuing subjugation is not being adequately addressed by government, the private sector, and the larger society and, in fact, is being obscured by academic analyses, journalistic descriptions, and cultural representations that glorify Hawai‘i as a unique model of ethnic amity and equality. As someone whose family has had the good fortune to live in Hawai‘i since 1885, I am personally committed to fostering equality, justice, and opportunity for all the people who consider the islands their home. While clearly an academic work, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai‘i* also expresses my personal advocacy and concern for a qualitatively better society in Hawai‘i where ethnicity is not a restrictive barrier to individual dreams and collective goals.

My scholarly reason for writing this book is to provide an analysis of how ethnic inequality is maintained in Hawai'i. I argue that ethnicity, as the dominant organizing principle of social relations in Hawai'i society, structures inequality among ethnic groups in various institutional domains, such as education and the economy. Following sociologists Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro in *Black Wealth/White Wealth* (2006: 23), I view inequality in its "material aspects" as consisting of "disparities in life chances and command over economic resources," such as income and education, among ethnic groups. Through their concept of the "sedimentation of racial inequality," Oliver and Shapiro (5) emphasize how disparities, particularly in wealth between African Americans and Whites, have accumulated over time and thus persisted "generation after generation." As the authors observe, "The cumulative effect of such a process has been to sediment blacks at the bottom of the social hierarchy," while "[w]hites in general . . . were able to amass assets and use their secure economic status to pass their wealth from generation to generation" (53). Similarly, the effects of ethnic inequality in Hawai'i are also cumulative and transmitted from one generation to the next, although with markedly different consequences for dominant and subordinate groups.<sup>3</sup> In addition to differences in wealth, ethnic inequality is evident in the lack of collective social mobility by minority groups and thus the persistence of the socioeconomic status hierarchy among ethnic groups in Hawai'i since the 1970s. Besides operating as a structural principle, ethnicity contributes to the maintenance of ethnic inequality by serving as a cultural representation of ethnic groups; these representations include the ethnic identities that are ascribed to groups, such as through denigrating stereotypes.

I discuss ethnic identity construction as a potential means that ethnic groups can employ to alleviate their unequal social status in Hawai'i. Some groups, particularly those that are politically or economically disadvantaged such as Native Hawaiians, create and articulate distinct identities for themselves in order to advance their political or economic interests. In contrast, other ethnic minorities—such as Filipino Americans and Samoans—encounter great difficulty in employing ethnic identity formation as a way to promote their collective concerns because of the stigmatizing stereotypes and other representations that tend to dominate their identity in Hawai'i. Furthermore, the privileged ethnic groups—such as Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans—do not have to resort to constructing particular ethnic identities for themselves since they have other means and resources to maintain their dominant economic and political status in society.

With regard to theoretical perspectives that inform my analysis of ethnic inequality in Hawai'i, race theorist Howard Winant in *The New Politics of Race* (2004: ix) contends that, "Race is situated at the crossroads of identity and social structure, where difference frames inequality." Winant's provocative argu-

ment derives from his and race relations scholar Michael Omi's concept of racial project insofar as such projects perform the "ideological work" of establishing links between representation (of which identity is a major form) and structure (Omi and Winant 1994: 56). The second part of Winant's 2004 argument is also based on the distinction and linkage between representation and structure, since difference can be culturally represented and inequality is socially structured. Along these lines, Omi and Winant (1994: 57) have maintained that "race continues to signify difference and structure inequality." If ethnicity is substituted for race, this latter assertion has much relevance for my argument concerning the relation between ethnicity and inequality in Hawai'i. Ethnicity certainly signifies difference in Hawai'i, particularly cultural differences that are evident in the diverse and changing ethnic identities of island groups that can be considered cultural representations, either by the ethnic groups themselves (as asserted identities) or by other groups (as assigned identities). Ethnicity also structures inequality in regulating differential access to resources, rewards, and privileges among ethnic groups.

Adapting Winant's argument (2004: ix) to the Hawai'i situation, I contend that ethnicity is situated at the intersection of ethnic identity and social structure where ethnic difference frames inequality. Ethnicity is operative at this conjuncture since it serves as both cultural representation and structural principle. As a form of cultural representation, ethnicity—particularly ethnic identity—signifies difference among ethnic groups that hold unequal status in the social structure of Hawai'i society. In this sense, ethnic difference demarcates or frames inequality; that is, socioeconomic inequality in Hawai'i is understood predominantly as ethnic inequality because ethnicity is the primary structural principle of social relations. In a society in which race or class is the dominant organizing principle, racial or class difference frames the inequality among its constituent groups (that is, races or classes) and socioeconomic inequality is viewed as either racial or class inequality.

The intersection of ethnic identity and social structure reinforces each other, and thus ethnic inequality, by enhancing the framing of inequality based on ethnic difference. However, this conjunction has differential consequences for different ethnic groups, depending on their relative social status in society. It serves to maintain the socioeconomically advantaged groups in their privileged position, while sustaining the subjugation of the socioeconomically subordinate groups. Ethnic identity construction provides a means for the latter ethnic groups to contest their disadvantaged social status by seeking to disrupt the intersection of ethnic identity and social structure by representing themselves with identities of their own making. Ethnic identity formation thus can be employed by at least some groups to subvert the maintenance of ethnic inequality in society.

My analyses concerning the nature of ethnicity and ethnic relations differ

substantially from those of other scholars who contend that Hawai‘i is truly the “Aloha State,” distinguished by its egalitarian, tolerant, and harmonious ethnic relations. Such arguments only perpetuate the ethnic status order and thus the power and privilege of the dominant groups—Chinese Americans, Whites, and Japanese Americans—and conversely the subjugation of Native Hawaiians, Filipino Americans, Samoans, and other ethnic minorities. In advancing my understanding of ethnic inequality in Hawai‘i, one of the major obstacles I have encountered is the prevalent view of the islands as a virtual paradise of ethnic relations and as a multicultural model for other racially and ethnically diverse societies. But before discussing the “Hawai‘i multicultural model,” I need to explain my emphasis on ethnicity rather than race in analyzing inequality in Hawai‘i.

### Why Ethnicity, Not Race?

My concern is with ethnicity and ethnic relations in Hawai‘i rather than with race and race relations. In focusing on ethnicity, I do not argue for the declining significance of race in the United States, nor do I support the ethnicity paradigm that seeks to reduce race to an element of ethnicity (see Omi and Winant 1994: 20). Instead, I emphasize that in Hawai‘i, ethnicity, as opposed to race (or class), is the primary structural principle of social relations. This is because the groups that comprise island society—for example, Filipino Americans, Samoans, Whites, and Puerto Ricans—are socially constructed as ethnic rather than racial groups. In other words, people in Hawai‘i attribute greater social significance to the presumed cultural differences that distinguish groups from one another than to their phenotypic differences such as skin color. As ethnic groups, they are believed to differ culturally in terms of their respective values, practices, beliefs, and customs, although these differences have diminished markedly over the generations.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, much of the traditional culture, particularly language, that was practiced by Native Hawaiians or brought by immigrant groups during the period of plantation labor recruitment (1852–1946) has been lost by their descendants, and assimilation into “local” and a generalized American culture has occurred.

In contrast, phenotypic differences, including skin and hair color, are not considered by Hawaii’s people to be as socially significant as cultural differences in distinguishing groups from each other.<sup>5</sup> This is probably because there is a considerable overlap in skin color and hair color among most of the non-White ethnic groups that makes using such physical indicators problematic as defining criteria, even if those phenotypic differences are subjectively perceived rather than objectively defined. Even Haoles or Whites, the largest “racial” group in Hawai‘i, are believed to differ from non-White groups primarily because of cultural differences more than because of their skin color.

This understanding is evident in the long-term distinction made between Haoles and locals insofar as the former are perceived as nonlocal to some extent because they do not practice local culture, and particularly because they do not speak “pidgin” or Hawai‘i Creole English.

Another reason for the comparative nonsignificance of race in Hawai‘i is that its constituent groups—Japanese Americans (25 percent), Filipino Americans (23 percent), Native Hawaiians (20 percent), and Chinese Americans (15 percent)—are major segments of island society compared to their counterparts in the continental United States (Hawai‘i Department of Business and Economic Development and Tourism 2003b). In California, these four groups constitute 1.2, 3.2, 0.2, and 3.5 percent, respectively, of the population (Lai and Arguelles 2003: 124). In Hawai‘i, the much larger proportion of the state population that is represented by Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, and Chinese Americans is the primary reason why Asian American is not commonly used as a racial category. As major political and economic groups with differing interests, power, and resources, they have less of a need and desire than their continental counterparts to establish alliances with each other specifically as Asian Americans. This argument is not to deny that historically these ethnic groups did form coalitions among themselves (and with other ethnic groups), such as in the rise to power of the Democratic Party in the 1950s, but they did not do so consciously as people of Asian descent. Similarly, the substantial percentage of Hawaii’s population that is represented by Native Hawaiians (20 percent) and to some extent by Samoans is also a factor that explains why those and other groups are not racialized collectively as Pacific Islanders and are viewed as culturally distinct.

My contention that ethnicity rather than race is the dominant organizing principle of social relations in Hawai‘i is also supported by my discussion and analysis of socioeconomic and educational inequality (Chapters 3 and 4) which demonstrate that ethnicity structures unequal access to opportunities and benefits. Ethnic inequality, rather than racial inequality, thus prevails in Hawai‘i, as evidenced by the widely differing social status of ethnic groups that ostensibly belong to the same racial category, such as Japanese Americans and Filipino Americans. Furthermore, other ethnic groups—such as Chinese Americans and Whites—share a similarly high socioeconomic status, despite belonging to different racial groups.

## Multiculturalism and the Hawai‘i Multicultural Model

Both academics and the general public primarily perceive ethnic relations in Hawai‘i as distinguished by their tolerance, equality, and harmony. This longstanding, widespread view was first advanced in the 1920s by Romanzo C.

Adams, the first scholar of island race relations, in his arguments concerning the “unorthodox race doctrine” of Hawai‘i that was based on “mores of racial equality” (1936: 56). Adams also characterized Hawai‘i as a “racial melting pot” because of its high intermarriage rate that he accounted for thusly: “Because there is no denial of political rights and economic or educational privilege on grounds of race, because racial equality is symbolized, the social code permits of marriage across race lines” (1937: 62).

I have long wondered how Adams, who had lived in Hawai‘i since 1919 and thus presumably was aware of the highly unequal social status held by the different “races,” nevertheless maintained that political, economic, and educational status was not allocated according to race. In his zeal to establish racial equality, despite its nonexistence, Adams privileged intermarriage as the most significant dimension of Hawai‘i race relations because, in comparison to the rest of the United States, it was by far the most distinctive feature. While a majority of states had passed antimiscegenation laws, no such laws or strong public opinion against interracial marriage existed in Hawai‘i. Furthermore, like other sociologists during the pre–World War II period, Adams was a committed assimilationist, which is evident from the very first paragraph of his *The Peoples of Hawaii* (1933: 5): “There is abundant evidence that the peoples of Hawaii are in process of becoming one people. After a time the terms now commonly used to designate the various groups according to the country of birth or ancestry will be forgotten. There will be no Portuguese, no Chinese, no Japanese—only American.” Like his proclamations of racial equality, Adams obviously was very much mistaken that ethnic groups would eventually lose their distinct identities.

During the post–World War II period, the sanguine view of race relations in Hawai‘i continued to be advanced by the two leading race relations scholars at the University of Hawai‘i, Andrew W. Lind and Bernhard L. Hormann. In books such as *Hawaii: The Last of the Magic Isles*, Lind (1969: 9) followed Adams in emphasizing the egalitarian nature of race relations: “The important and distinctive fact about Hawaiian race relations is, of course, the existence of a code of equalitarian relations which is deeply rooted in and has developed out of customary conduct of a similar nature, and the code does then exercise a coercive influence upon all who might be disposed to violate it.” Hormann (1952: 142), who had lived in Hawai‘i since the age of nine, also paid sociological homage to Adams in his perspective of island race relations: “The continued absence of open violence therefore bespeaks of a certain restraint, a tolerance which has become traditional in the islands. Dr. Romanzo Adams called this Hawaii’s ‘unorthodox race doctrine.’ The general acceptance of racial tolerance, friendliness, mutual cooperation, and intermingling as a ‘principle’ transforms it into a continuous force in the direction of further unification.”

During the poststatehood period (1959), Lind and Hormann were joined by other academics who offered similar viewpoints concerning the positive nature of race relations in the islands, despite the obviously changing structure of those relations and the significantly changed political economy. Perhaps one of the earliest arguments that Hawai'i could serve as an exemplary model for other racially divided societies throughout the world was advanced by Lawrence Fuchs in his classic social history, *Hawaii Pono* (1961: 449): "Hawaii illustrates the nation's revolutionary message of equality of opportunity for all, regardless of background, color, or religion. This is the promise of Hawaii, a promise for the entire nation and indeed, the world, that peoples of different races and creeds can live together, enriching each other, in harmony and democracy." Given the brutal violence encountered by the leaders and participants in the civil rights movement as they courageously challenged racial segregation in the South beginning in the mid-1950s, the "promise of Hawaii" may indeed have seemed like a "revolutionary message of equality of opportunity." However, that promise has yet to be fulfilled for most of Hawai'i's people, let alone the nation and the rest of the world.

Under the influence of the multiculturalism discourses beginning in the 1980s, the "Hawai'i multicultural model" emerged; that is, the notion that Hawai'i represents a model for emulation by other ethnically and racially diverse societies in managing their conflicts and other diversity-related problems. Journalist Susan Yim (1992a: B1, B3) proposed: "If America's mushrooming minority populations are to live together in harmony, perhaps they should take a close look at our multicultural test tube." In his edited book, *Multicultural Hawai'i: The Fabric of a Multiethnic Society*, former UH political scientist Michael Haas (1998: 306) contended that "scholars who either decry multiculturalism or advance multiculturalism in theoretical terms usually do so without drawing upon the wisdom of an actual model," and that "those on the mainland who favor or oppose multiculturalism must now take the Hawai'i model into account."<sup>6</sup>

Another advocate of Hawai'i as a multicultural model for other societies is former ethnic studies professor Ronald Takaki, who was born and raised in the islands. In an essay, "Look to Hawaii for Answers on Race" (1998: 5), he maintained that: "In the coming century, the rest of the nation will experience expanding ethnic diversity. Will we be able to work it out? To paraphrase Rodney King, 'Can we all get along?' A century ago, immigrant plantation workers decided that their answer was 'yes.' More and more Americans on the mainland must now confront that same question. Hopefully, we will be guided by Hawaii's plantation past." For Takaki, the "plantation past" was notable for, among other things, the "power of inter-group cooperation" between Japanese and Filipino workers in the 1920 strike, although that strike was unsuccessful. He also noted how in the plantation camps, "families were sharing their various

ethnic foods” with one another and that over time “a common language” (Hawai‘i Creole English) developed as part of a larger cultural and social process of the “blending of languages, of cultures and of interests” among immigrant groups (Takaki 1998: 5). Like other proponents of the Hawai‘i multicultural model, Takaki has a very selective view of Hawai‘i history and tends to ignore the many prevalent examples of intergroup conflict, such as the blatant racism of both Whites and non-Whites against Filipino Americans and Japanese Americans prior to World War II. His emphasis on the role of “immigrant plantation workers” in the emergence of “Hawaii’s multiculturalism” completely erases the historical experiences and contributions of Native Hawaiians as the indigenous people whose lands were seized for the development of the plantation industry.

If, as Takaki hopes, we can be “guided by Hawaii’s plantation past,” the primary “lesson our country can draw from it” would be not to institutionalize the racism and discrimination against immigrants and Native Hawaiians that was such a dominant condition of that historical period and certainly not to romanticize that era lest we forget what its history really indicates. It also must be emphasized that eliminating racism and discrimination toward the establishment of racial equality requires far more than just getting along with others. In other words, what is needed goes well beyond individual members of society accepting others, intermarrying with them, and sharing a common culture.

Besides academics, journalists in Hawai‘i are also regular contributors to what Lisa Lowe (1996: 85) has referred to more generally as “the production of multiculturalism.” Former editor of the *Honolulu Advertiser* John Griffin (2004: B1, B4) wrote an essay, “Hawai‘i’s Ethnic Rainbow,” that focused on the intermarriage dimension of the multicultural model. He noted “Hawai‘i’s special situation” with more than 20 percent of its residents being of multiracial descent, compared to only 2.4 percent for the nation as a whole, and with about half of its marriages ethnically or racially “mixed.” Continuing to privilege island ethnic relations, Griffin maintained that “Hawai‘i may be so far ahead of most other places in the nation that we are considered more of a unique society than an example.” Nonetheless, he “remains glad our racial-ethnic front is, on balance, such a positive example.”

Griffin’s commentary (and that of others by journalists with similar views) is significant not so much about what he contends because his ideas concerning multiculturalism in Hawai‘i have been stated previously. Its publication in the news media, however, enables the essay to be read by potentially hundreds of thousands of island residents and countless others throughout the world on the Internet, far more than will ever read any of my articles expressing contrary arguments published in an academic journal or book. By including oft-repeated tropes of Hawai‘i as the “ethnic rainbow,” “positive example,” and

“melting pot,” the essay confirms and reinforces readers’ beliefs of the “special” and “unique” nature of island ethnic relations in which “cultural variations are a positive factor.” It is not even necessary to read the article to get its general message of ethnic harmony and tolerance since its title and the accompanying photograph—numerous and closely seated Hawai‘i residents of differing ethnicity in the shape of a rainbow—are common symbols regularly used to convey that idea.<sup>7</sup>

Based on arguments by advocates of the Hawai‘i multicultural model, I have discussed elsewhere (Okamura 1998a: 267) that its principal dimensions include: (1) a tradition of tolerance and peaceful coexistence; (2) harmonious ethnic relations evident in cordial relationships and a high rate of intermarriage; (3) equality of opportunity and status; and (4) a shared local culture and identity. Of these four dimensions, the most valid is the first, concerning tolerant ethnic relations, because Hawaii’s people do believe and endorse as a behavioral norm that they should treat others of differing ethnicity than their own with tolerance and cordiality. There is much to be valued in having such a norm of interethnic relations that is certainly not the case in other ethnically or racially divided communities, for example, Los Angeles during the 1992 race riot. If there is anything exceptional about island ethnic relations, it may very well be this normative emphasis on getting along with and accepting others. However, this cultural norm, popularized as the “aloha spirit,” is more significant in interpersonal relationships than in ethnic group relations. Its emphasis in face-to-face interactions, and because it can be experienced directly in those interactions, may well obscure the many ways that ethnic groups relate to one another in unfair and intolerant ways, such as the differential distribution of higher education, employment, and wealth among them.

The analytical distinction made by Christine Inglis (1996) among three perspectives of multiculturalism is very useful in understanding how the concept has been applied by its Hawai‘i advocates in developing their multicultural model.<sup>8</sup> The “demographic and descriptive usage” of multiculturalism is primarily concerned with the “way in which the cultural differences within [a multicultural society] are produced, received or reproduced” (cited in Wiewiorka 1998: 883). This “sociological approach” views multiculturalism as “the problem, rather than the response” and thus “the starting point for proposing political orientations.” In contrast, the “ideology and norms usage” of multiculturalism refers to a “political philosophy approach” that “question[s] in what way [multiculturalism] is desirable or undesirable, what it contributes, and what it costs society, in the light of criteria which may be moral or ethical, but also economic.” From this perspective, multiculturalism is a “possible response” instead of a problem to be addressed. Lastly, in the “programme and policy usage,” multiculturalism is a “principle of political action which materially underpins the institutions, the basic law of a state . . . with the intention of

articulating the right of individuals and groups to maintain a specific culture,” together with the possibility for individuals to participate fully in civic, economic, and legal affairs (cited in Wieviorka 1998: 883).

The second of Inglis’s three usages of multiculturalism, regarding ideology and norms, is most commonly employed by supporters of the Hawai‘i multicultural model since they certainly view multiculturalism as a response, if not “the answer” as they claim, rather than a problem to be solved.<sup>9</sup> Model proponents perceive cultural diversity in the islands as highly desirable given that it has contributed to the blending and sharing of the cultures of Native Hawaiians and the immigrant plantation groups that have resulted in a common local culture and identity shared by Hawai‘i’s people. They further claim that the islands have not experienced the same racial and ethnic conflict as other societies because of the normative emphasis on tolerance and harmony, evident in the high intermarriage rate, and because of ideological support for equal opportunity. From an ethical perspective, model advocates maintain that multiculturalism has been for the ultimate good of Hawai‘i and its people—including ethnic minorities—since it has brought positive benefits for all, such as socioeconomic mobility. Furthermore, these supporters contend that Hawai‘i’s multiculturalism can serve as a response not only for the state but also for other racially or ethnically divided societies in which multiculturalism is perceived as a problem to be solved, as in the demographic and descriptive usage. Differentiating among Inglis’s three usages of multiculturalism enables one to comprehend the grandiose, if not false, claims made by proponents of the Hawai‘i multicultural model that it constitutes a solution for other societies, no matter how racially, ethnically, or otherwise different they may be from Hawai‘i.

A general problem with multicultural approaches is their emphasis on culture and cultural differences, rather than race and racial differences, to distinguish groups in a common society. If the differences among such groups are viewed as primarily due to their respective cultures and since culture can be learned, multicultural perspectives, much like assimilation theory, can minimize the difficulty that racialized minorities encounter in seeking to participate equally in society. Lowe (1996: 86) observes how, in its zeal for equal inclusion, multiculturalism obscures the power and status differences among ethnic and racial groups: “Multiculturalism levels the important differences and contradictions within and among racial and ethnic minority groups according to the discourse of pluralism, which asserts that American culture is a democratic terrain to which every variety of constituency has equal access and in which all are represented, while simultaneously masking the existence of exclusions.” In this regard, Stuart Hall (2000: 211) has noted how particularly “commercial” multiculturalism “celebrate[s] difference without making a difference” in resolving disparities in power and privilege among racial and ethnic groups.

Insofar as it reduces the salience of racial barriers and racial differences, multiculturalism can be viewed as a form of “postracialism,” evident in assertions that America has gone beyond race and is a “postracial” society. As observed by Winant (2004: xviii–xix): “Contemporary racial hegemony fosters the widespread claim—articulated at both the ‘highbrow’ and ‘grassroots’ cultural levels—that the world has entered a stage of ‘postracialism’ after all the conflicts and reforms of recent years. As if to say, ‘At last! At last! We have progressed beyond those backward and benighted notions of race!’” By proclaiming that the United States is a “color-blind” society, postracialism serves to obscure persisting racial hierarchy and inequality rather than provide a means to address those problems.

Given the supposed declining significance of race in American society, multiculturalism also can be understood as part of the larger sociological movement to maintain the “ethnicity paradigm” as the dominant theoretical approach in the sociology of race (see Omi and Winant 1994: 14). This initiative is evident in arguments that seek to eliminate the analytical distinction between racial and ethnic group and, by extension, race and ethnicity. In *Postethnic America*, historian David Hollinger (2000: 39) advanced the term “ethno-racial bloc” to refer to groups commonly considered races because, among other reasons, it “acknowledges that the groups traditionally called racial exist on a blurred continuum with those traditionally called ethnic.” In society at large, there is undoubtedly a considerable blurring of the difference between races and ethnic groups, but social scientists and historians should not contribute further to this confusion by abandoning the analytical distinction between these two concepts. Hollinger himself acknowledges the greater significance of race than ethnicity in structuring inequality in the United States: “When we caution ourselves not to ignore race by conflating race and ethnicity, we generally mean to remind ourselves of the sharpest inequalities of treatment within the American nation-state” (38). These “sharpest inequalities” suffered by aggrieved races, as races and not as ethnic groups, provide the rationale for maintaining the conceptual difference between racial and ethnic group and between race and ethnicity.<sup>10</sup>

From another perspective, Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 32) contend that “[d]efinitionally, . . . there is nothing that says that a race cannot be an ethnic group, or vice versa.” As an example of such definitional boundary crossing, they note one of the most distinctive races in American history—African Americans (33):

American Blacks also fit both definitions [of race and ethnic group]. They are held by others and often by themselves to be members of a distinct race, identified primarily by skin color and other bodily features. At the same time, they also have become an ethnic group, a

self-conscious population that defines itself in part in terms of common descent (Africa as homeland), a distinctive history (slavery in particular), and a broad set of cultural symbols (from language to expressive culture).

This argument highlights the “They All Look Alike” problem of the ethnicity approach to race identified by Omi and Winant (1994: 22). This perspective considers African Americans as a single ethnic group while ignoring the significant ethnic differences among them based on culture, national origin, and language, for example, between Haitian immigrants and Black Americans descended from slaves taken to the South. Cornell and Hartmann’s reduction of race to ethnicity can be applied to other groups that are generally viewed as races in the United States, such as Latinos and Asian Americans. If the latter constitute an ethnic group, then should Korean Americans, Vietnamese Americans, and Asian Indians be considered ethnic categories instead of ethnic groups? Do all Asian Americans, including post-1965 immigrants, really share a “distinctive history” and a “broad set of cultural symbols,” including language and religion?

If racial groups can be considered simultaneously as races and ethnic groups, there would seem to be no sociological reason for maintaining an analytical distinction between these two concepts. However, as social anthropologist M. G. Smith (1982: 10) observed more than twenty years ago in his critique of the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Thernstrom, Orlov, and Handlin 1980), the latter “clearly prefers to equate race with ethnicity and so to eliminate those fundamental differences within America between its major racial stocks on one hand and the multitudes of ethnic groups on the other which have exercised and continue to exercise such profound influences on the development and structure of the society from its earliest beginnings.” Obscuring or eliminating the differences between racial and ethnic groups is very related to the initiative to advance ethnicity as of greater social significance than race in U.S. society. If, in fact, that is the case, then societal institutions and America in general can be made to seem more open to and inclusive of “ethnic” minorities, including African Americans, than as limiting their access and participation through racial barriers that are far more difficult to overcome than ethnic barriers. As Winant (2004: 43) states, “Such an approach reduce[s] race to ethnicity and almost entirely neglect[s] the continuing organization of social inequality and oppression along racial lines.” African American studies scholar Michael Eric Dyson (2004 40–41) refers to this reductionist approach as “the liberal theory of race” that “conceives of race as merely a part of one’s broader ethnic identity,” which is supposedly “more crucial than race in explaining the condition of black people.” However, Dyson contends that this theory “cannot explain why blacks have failed to ‘assimi-

late’” like ethnic minorities because it does not acknowledge the “unique structural character of racism [and] historical content of racial oppression—slavery, Jim Crow laws, structural unemployment, gentrification of black living space, [and] deeply ingrained institutional racism.”

In arguing against the assertions of the Hawai‘i multicultural model, I have maintained that it is, in Omi and Winant’s (1994: 56) terms, a “racial project,” since it provides an overly positive representation and interpretation (but not an explanation) of ethnic relations (Okamura 2000: 125). As a representation, the model emphasizes the amicable and tolerant nature of island ethnic relations, while ignoring or obscuring the highly unequal structure of these relations that contradict what the model claims them to be.<sup>11</sup> While Omi and Winant (1994: 56) contend that a racial project also consists of an “effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines,” the Hawai‘i model instead serves to maintain the ethnic status quo and thus the political and economic dominance of Chinese Americans, Haoles, and Japanese Americans. Thus, it is not surprising that the leading advocates of the model are representatives of these ethnic groups. In their emphasis on societal inclusiveness and cultural diversity, model proponents do not acknowledge the salience of power and status disparities among ethnic groups. I am especially concerned with the dimension of the multicultural model that contends equality of opportunity is available to all ethnic groups in Hawai‘i, although I also discuss in the following chapters the significance of intermarriage and of local identity and culture for ethnic relations.

In *Interracial Justice: Conflict and Reconciliation in Post-Civil Rights America*, law professor Eric Yamamoto (1999: 77) also challenges the “race relations model” of Hawai‘i. He argues that “it falsely essentializes the complex interplay of location, institutions, cultures, and people, glossing over myriad subtle and overt racial conflicts” and “unduly valorizes Hawai‘i, in effect saying ‘be like Hawai‘i,’ without carefully teasing out the complexities of race relations and explaining the relevance of one locale’s experiences to another’s.” Hawai‘i will always appear superficially to have “better” ethnic relations than most major cities in the continental United States where collective racial violence has occurred with much greater frequency. Furthermore, in valorizing island ethnic relations and claiming that other societies can look to Hawai‘i for *the* answer—as though there is only one solution to problems of racial inequality and conflict throughout the world—the notion that ethnic inequality may be a persisting problem in Hawai‘i does not get raised. In other words, if Hawai‘i ain’t broken ethnically, why fix it?

Another major factor in the perpetuation of ethnic inequality is that the great majority of island residents supports the Hawai‘i multicultural model or the general belief in the positive nature of island ethnic relations. A statewide survey in 1996, published in the *Honolulu Advertiser*, found that 83 percent of

its 800 respondents thought that islanders from different ethnic groups “get along better than in other places” and 87 percent agreed that the aloha spirit is “important in how people live” (cited in Pratt 2000: 244). As a racial project, the multicultural model is disseminated widely through various means, including the news media, the public school system, and popular culture. Government and community leaders exhort residents to express the aloha spirit in their daily interactions with one another, including driving on the freeway. Schoolteachers provide a simplistic version of Hawai‘i history that emphasizes the cultural contributions of Native Hawaiians and the immigrant plantation groups, such as food and games, but that omits the racism and discrimination that long excluded them from fully participating in society. While local comedians and disc jockeys dispense jokes that ridicule the language, culture, and practices of ethnic groups, particularly Filipino Americans, they maintain that such “ethnic humor” is directed at all groups, and therefore no one should take offense. They remind us that we are fortunate to live in a society where we can all laugh at ourselves—as if that is really what is occurring when we are actually laughing at others who are the targets of the jokes.

### Why Hawai‘i?

What can a book on ethnicity and ethnic relations in Hawai‘i contribute to comparative scholarship on race and ethnicity in the United States and elsewhere? Hawaii’s relatively small population of 1.2 million includes limited percentages of African Americans and Latinos and a plurality proportion of Asian Americans, and it is physically separated from the continental United States—differentiating it as a setting of race and ethnic relations from the rest of the nation. However, until the 1960s, Hawai‘i was certainly viewed as a significant if not major site in the comparative study of race, a veritable “laboratory of race relations.” Some of the leading race relations scholars, such as Robert Park, Herbert G. Blumer, and E. B. Reuter, took sabbatical leaves to conduct research or taught as visiting professors at the University of Hawai‘i. Attracted by its research opportunities, Park and other Chicago sociologists went to Hawai‘i “as if it was a pilgrimage site” (Yu 2001: 82).

Through their research and publications on Hawai‘i, Adams, Lind, Hormann, Clarence Glick, and others established the UH Department of Sociology as a highly regarded center for the study of race and race relations. In 1954, during the academic heyday of the department, Honolulu was the setting of an international “Conference on Race Relations in World Perspective,” attended by forty eminent researchers invited from throughout the world, such as Blumer, E. Franklin Frazier, J. S. Furnivall, and Everett C. Hughes (Lind 1955). Through the 1960s, Hawai‘i was often included in comparative studies on race relations and discussed, together with Brazil, as an example of a society with

especially tolerant and egalitarian race relations (see Banton 1998: 130). In *Caste, Class and Race*, Oliver Cromwell Cox (1948) described “The Ruling-Class Situation” in various racial settings: “The small white ruling class, already limited in its power to segregate, now finds it practically impossible to identify any one group for racial discrimination. ‘Equality among all peoples’ tends to become the social philosophy. Instances of this are found in the island of Trinidad and in Hawaii especially.”

Since the 1970s, however, the Hawai‘i experience has not been included as prominently in theoretical and comparative discussions of race and ethnicity in the United States. If Hawai‘i is discussed, it is generally by academics who are based in the islands or were raised there, for example, Ronald Takaki in *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (1993) and Eric Yamamoto in *Interracial Justice* (1999).<sup>12</sup>

What accounts, then, for this omission of the Hawai‘i situation from comparative scholarship on race and ethnicity in the United States? I believe it is due to the historical and contemporary exaggerated, if not false, claims about the egalitarian, harmonious, and tolerant nature of island ethnic relations. These arguments have resulted in the view of the Hawai‘i experience as exceptional and unique and thus not comparable to other more problematic sites of race relations. Why include the Hawai‘i case if, as some scholars maintain, its ethnic relations are not a problem? Or is such a conclusion itself an indication of the questionable research and analyses being conducted on race and ethnicity issues in the state?

Nonetheless, I maintain that a study of ethnicity and ethnic relations in Hawai‘i can contribute to the comparative analysis of race and ethnicity, particularly in Asian American studies. Hawai‘i consists of a variety of Asian American groups—including Japanese Americans, Okinawan Americans, Filipino Americans, Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, and Vietnamese Americans—that constitute major or at least significant segments of island society. It thus provides a research setting that demonstrates the complexity of their differential experiences and relations with one another that cannot be explained by reference to an overall “Asian American experience.” Furthermore, in Hawai‘i some Asian American groups are major political and economic constituents of island society, unlike the situation for the most part in the continental United States. A few of them, such as Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans, hold dominant socioeconomic and political status together with Whites, while others, including Filipino Americans, continue to occupy subordinate positions that they attribute to the discrimination they encounter from the former groups. A study focused on the ethnic relations and ethnic identity of Asian American and other ethnic groups can highlight the social and cultural differences among them and the significance of ethnicity as an organizing principle in maintaining those differences.

In Asian American studies, the term “Asian Pacific American” (APA) is commonly and inappropriately employed (Okamura 2003: 186–187), and there are several Asian Pacific American studies programs at universities in various parts of the country. With its majority population of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Hawai‘i provides a more valid site for research and analysis on their respective status and experiences, especially their relations with one another. In marked contrast to the continental United States, Pacific Islanders—including Native Hawaiians, Samoans, Tongans, Chamorros, and Marshallese—comprise one-fourth of the state population. Research on these and Asian American groups in the islands can lead to far more significant insights and analyses than those based on the presumed “APA experience” that follows from the unwarranted assumption that the highly differential experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander groups can easily be generalized. Furthermore, a study of these groups in Hawai‘i can result in problematizing the Asian Pacific American racial category and questioning its analytical significance. The Hawaiian sovereignty movement that represents Native Hawaiians as the indigenous people of Hawai‘i is a clear example of why the historical and contemporary experiences and status of Pacific Islanders cannot readily be assimilated into an overall Asian Pacific American categorical construct.

Rather than viewing the Hawai‘i case of race and ethnicity as exceptional, in some ways it is very comparable to the situation in the continental United States. Despite being one of the most geographically separated places in the world, Hawai‘i also experienced the post–World War II “break” in the long-standing “global racial system” as discussed by Winant (2001: 133–134; 2004: xiii). He attributes this “global shift” toward racial equality and justice throughout the world to the convergence of various political movements, including those against colonialism, apartheid, and fascism and the U.S. civil rights movement. In Hawai‘i, the movement against racial exclusion and inequality was led by the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union, which organized plantation workers into their first multiracial labor union in 1945, and by the Democratic Party, which gained control of the Territorial Legislature in 1954 for the first time in the islands’ history. Furthermore, Winant’s (2004: xiii) description of the eventual consequences of the postwar break on the global racial order also applies to some extent to Hawai‘i: “[D]espite the real amelioration of the most degrading features of the old world racial system, the centuries-old and deeply entrenched system of racial inequality and injustice was not eliminated.”

## Outline of the Book

My contention that ethnicity is situated at the intersection of ethnic identity and social structure where ethnic difference frames inequality is developed

through the organization of the chapters in this book. Chapter 2 provides demographic information on Hawaii's ethnic groups and on some of their internal social and cultural differences. Chapters 3 and 4 review the scope and nature of ethnic inequality in Hawai'i through an analysis of the educational and larger socioeconomic status orders in which ethnicity is the primary structural principle. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are concerned with ethnic identity construction (or its relative absence) among several groups, including Native Hawaiians, Okinawan Americans, Japanese Americans, and Filipino Americans. These three chapters demonstrate how ethnic identity can be viewed as a cultural representation of groups, either by the groups themselves or by others through denigrating stereotypes assigned to an ethnic group.

Chapter 2, "Changing Ethnic Differences," seeks to demonstrate the increasing social and cultural complexity of ethnic identity and ethnic relations in Hawai'i as a result of various ongoing social processes. These processes include the relatively high intermarriage rate among island residents and their consequent multiethnicity and multiraciality, immigration from Asia and the Pacific, and out-migration to and in-migration from the continental United States, all of which contribute to social and cultural changes in ethnic relations and identities, cultural norms and values, and political beliefs.

Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Inequality and Ethnicity," analyzes the role of ethnicity as the dominant organizing principle of the socioeconomic status system. Based on 2000 U.S. census data, it compares the occupational status and income rank of eight major ethnic groups in Hawai'i. The chapter shows that the stratification order is "racialized" insofar as ethnicity regulates the highly unequal distribution of socioeconomic rewards, privileges, and resources among ethnic groups.

Toward further analysis of the persistence of ethnic inequality in Hawai'i, Chapter 4, "Educational Inequality and Ethnicity," discusses the significance of ethnicity as a structural principle in the Hawai'i public education system at both the kindergarten through high school (K–12) and postsecondary levels. It contends that ethnic minorities—including Filipino Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Samoans—are subject to institutional discrimination in the public school system, particularly through its long-term underfunding. Thus, rather than serving as a means of socioeconomic mobility for ethnic minority groups, public education is a site of institutionalized inequality that maintains the ethnic stratification order of unequal Hawai'i.

Chapter 5, "Constructing Ethnic Identities, Constructing Differences," discusses three examples of identity formation by groups in Hawai'i: Native Hawaiians, 1.5-generation Korean Americans, and locals. In applying the constructionist approach to these case studies, I argue that these groups have created and expressed distinct identities for themselves in order to foster their social, political, or economic interests, including contesting their unequal status in Hawai'i.

In contrast to those groups that actively engage in identity construction, Chapter 6, “Japanese Americans: Toward Symbolic Identity,” reviews Japanese Americans as an ethnic group that does not have to articulate a particular ethnic identity for themselves to advance their collective concerns because they already hold relatively high political and economic status and have other means (such as financial resources) to maintain that status. Although I do not discuss Chinese Americans and Whites, they are two other ethnic groups that do not have to create and assert a specific identity to ensure their dominant social position. Chapter 6 also discusses how Okinawan Americans or *Uchinanchu* (overseas Okinawans) construct a distinct ethnic identity to differentiate themselves from Japanese Americans given the fluid boundary between these two groups.

Chapter 7, “Filipino Americans: Model Minority or Dog Eaters?” is concerned with Filipino Americans as a subordinate ethnic minority that clearly could benefit from using identity formation (as well as other strategies) as a collective means to advance themselves socioeconomically and politically. However, the primary obstacle they encounter is the widespread prevalence of racist stereotypes that restrict their ability to construct a positive ethnic identity and contribute to their subjugated status.

Chapter 8 concludes the book by bringing together some of the major results and generalizations from the previous chapters toward an overall analysis of how ethnic inequality is perpetuated in Hawai‘i. It also discusses possible strategies for reducing, if not eliminating, ethnic inequality by fostering collective socioeconomic mobility among disadvantaged ethnic minorities. These strategies focus on mitigating the cultural and structural barriers that restrict minority advancement—such as racist stereotyping and institutional discrimination—and on providing these groups with greater educational and employment access and opportunities.