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**Pacific Islander Americans and Multiethnicity:**

**A Vision of America's Future?[[1]](#endnote-1)**

At a basketball game in a schoolyard in Kaneohe, Hawai'i, two players began to argue. As basketball players will, they started talking about each other's families. One, who prided himself on his pure Samoan ancestry, said, "You got a Hawaiian grandmother, a Pake [Chinese] grandfather. Your other grandfather's Portegee [Portuguese], and you mom's Filipino. You got Haole [White] brother-in-law and Korean cousins. Who da heck are you?" The person with the bouquet of ethnic possibilities smiled (his team was winning) and said, simply, "I all da kine [I'm all of those things]. Le's play." This chapter attempts to explain that interaction. Specifically, it seeks to understand how ethnicity works for Pacific Islander Americans, and what that might mean for other kinds of people.

**Ethnicity in America**

Throughout most of American history, the rhetoric of race and ethnicity presumed a hegemonic role for American identity. Until the last quarter century, nearly all analytical public discourse, scholarly and popular, pictured ethnicity as something primordial that people brought with them from some other place, which they then lost progressively as they lived in America for decades and generations. In this new country they became, as the ideas were enunciated in the generation of the American Revolution by Hector St. John de Crèvecouer: "the American, this new man…. that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country…. *He* is an American who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones…. Here individuals are melted into a new race of men."[[2]](#endnote-2) These words, and the melting pot ideology to which they gave voice, have echoed throughout the history of Americans' thinking about racial and ethnic matters. In recent generations, America has indeed finally become a place where people from all over the world mix and mate, but Crevecouer may not be quite right about the outcome of that mixing for ethnic identity.

Scholars have conceived ethnicity in various ways—as biology, as culture, as economic or political interests, as networks of social connectedness.[[3]](#endnote-3) But, however American observers have conceived it and measured it, most of them have regarded ethnicity as a doomed commodity. In short order or long, they have believed, a more general American identity would obliterate it. Italian immigrants would become Italian Americans and then just Americans. It may be unnecessary to add that this vision of an inevitable shift to an American identity was advanced mainly by those people of northwest European descent who ran the country and defined the terms of the rhetoric of race and ethnicity. This, the dominant discourse, was the assimilationist view.[[4]](#endnote-4)

In the last several decades, another vision of a multicultural America has come to the front. People of color and others who were denied determinative roles in the former rhetoric of race and ethnicity have begun to describe a different pattern of understanding. They have prescribed an America of many more or less permanent cultural islands, to be honored and preserved in their diversity. African Americans, Chinese, Puerto Ricans, Anglos, and many others would all maintain separate identities—whether in harmony or in conflict— far into the future. This, the subdominant discourse, is the pluralist view.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Both these descriptions assume that an individual or group possesses only one ethnic identity. It is a very Cartesian enterprise, this assigning people to ethnic boxes and measuring the shapes and contents of the boxes. In the assimilationist view, nearly every person who comes to America (as well as those native peoples who preceded northwest European Americans on the continent) at first possesses an identity different from what the assimilationists regard as the American norm. Over time and perhaps generations of contact with northwest European American people and culture, that separate identity gradually fades into insignificance as the person takes on an amorphously American identity. In the pluralist view, each person retains more or less the identity with which she began, or some descendant of that identity, separately evolved.

**Multiethnicity**

Both the assimilationists and the pluralists recognize that most people in fact are descended from multiple, not single ethnic sources. They know that most African Americans are in fact part European American and Native American, most Jews have some Gentile ancestry, most Swedish Americans have some German or Norwegian relatives, and so forth. But the dominant and subdominant paradigms treat ethnicity as if each person had only one ethnic identity. They say (along with census takers and school forms, until quite recently), "choose one box." Thus, a person of African, Native American, and European ancestry has long been regarded—and has regarded himself—as an African American. Even as he may have acknowledged privately that he was descended from multiple roots, nonetheless he identified with only one. Reginald Daniel refers to this as the "rule of hypodescent"—the one-drop rule, whereby Whites and Blacks agree that one drop of Black blood makes one Black.[[6]](#endnote-6) The system was not so clear-cut for other groups; some measure of mixture was acknowledged in the cases of people whose ancestry came from several European sources, for instance. But even then, people tended to see themselves as predominantly one sort of person, ethnically speaking.

In the last third of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, two things have happened that have caused this to begin to change. In the first place, for nearly half a century, intermarriage across racial as well as religious and national lines has increased steadily. Almost no White American extended family exists today without at least one member who has married across what a few generations ago would have been thought an unbridgeable gap. Anglo-American has married Irish, Lutheran has married Baptist; such marriages would have scandalized many families in the early twentieth century, but they scarcely are noticed any more. Formerly endogamous groups like Japanese Americans and Jews now experience a fifty-plus percent outmarriage rate. Intermarriage is on the rise, although the rate of the increase seems to be declining: according to US Census figures, the number of interracial marriages rose 65 percent between 1990 and 2000, plus another 20 percent between 2000 and 2010.[[7]](#endnote-7) Because of the increase in intermarriage, there has appeared a larger number of mixed people than ever before. In the 1980 census and again in 1990, the fastest-growing ethnic category was "Other," and most such people were probably mixed[[8]](#endnote-8) The cover of a famous 1993 special issue of *Time* magazine proclaimed mixed people to be "The New Face of America."[[9]](#endnote-9) Now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, mixture is so common that if does not attract all that much attention.

The second thing that has happened to change the discourse of American ethnicity is that, over the past three decades, people of mixed ancestry have begun to claim both or all parts of their ancestry. They claim multiethnicity; they refuse to choose just one box. Scores of organizations of multiethnic persons dot the landscape. In the 1990s, some of those organizations lobbied for changes in the census (hence, school forms, etc.) to allow people to check more than one box.[[10]](#endnote-10) In 1997, the Office of Management and Budget, which decides the categories for the US Census, held hearings and decided to allow people to check more than one racial box. The subsequent censuses in 2000 and 2010 showed increasing numbers of people exercising this option.[[11]](#endnote-11) The situation of Pacific Islander Americans can provide some clues to what may lie in store for other American ethnic groups in this ever-more mixed situation.

**Pacific Islander American Multiethnicity**

The term "Pacific Islander Americans" is a bit problematic, for, like Asian Americans and Latinos, Pacific Islander Americans are not a single ethnic group, but rather an artificial collection of groups. They appear as a subcategory of the human species in the United States census, on affirmative action forms, and the like, often mixed with Asian Americans, and paralleled by Native, African, Hispanic, and White Americans. Yet almost no person arises in the morning thinking of herself as a Pacific Islander American. Most think of themselves as Tongans (or Tongan Americans), Samoans, Fijians, and so on. A few would recognize the terms "Polynesian," "Melanesian," and "Micronesian" as somewhat larger categories which they have been told apply to them. But those are not indigenous categories, either. They are constructs of northwest European imaginations.[[12]](#endnote-12)

As it happens, nearly all the Pacific Islanders surveyed, interviewed, and read for this project were Polynesians of various sorts: Hawaiians, Tongans, Samoans, and Maori in about that order of frequency, with a few Fijians (who are more or less Melanesians) thrown in for good measure. The observations made in this chapter, therefore, may not represent the experiences of other sorts of Pacific Islander Americans as well as they do these groups.[[13]](#endnote-13) The chapter treats Pacific Islander Americans more or less as if they were a single group despite their obvious multiplicity. That is, it does not try to differentiate systematically between, for instance, Samoan American ethnicity and Maori American ethnicity. That is due both to the eclectic nature of the research and to the problem at hand: multiethnicity by its nature cuts across neat ethnic boundaries. It is important to note as well that the chapter does not attempt to prescribe what ought to be; rather, it describes what seems to be, and then muses about what may be becoming.

Pacific Islanders historically have constructed their ethnic identities rather more complexly than have many other peoples. Pacific Islanders have long had a greater consciousness than other American groups of being mixed peoples, of having multiple ethnic identities—Samoan and Tongan, Marquesan and Tahitian, Maori and European, and so forth. They seem more comfortable than other Americans with holding in tension two or more ethnic identities, with being deeply involved in more than one at the same time.[[14]](#endnote-14) This consciousness of multiplicity is borne out by 2010 US Census data: 55.9 percent of people who listed Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander as their race, also listed a second or third racial identity, compared to 7.4 percent for Blacks and 3.2 percent for Whites.[[15]](#endnote-15)

Take the case of the late William Kauaiwiulaokalani Wallace.[[16]](#endnote-16) Bill was a Hawaiian rights activist, lawyer, and director of Hawaiian studies at BYU – Hawai‘i. When he spoke in public he would begin by chanting his genealogy for five minutes and playing his nose flute and drum. As a child on the island of Moloka'i, his parents were Hawaiian and his first language was Hawaiian. He dug taro and talked story and knew himself to be completely Hawaiian.

Then at the age of ten or eleven Bill went to live with his grandmother in La'ie on the island of O'ahu. There he found out—much to his dismay, at first—that he was Samoan. He hung out with his Samoan cousins and their friends. He learned some Samoan words, ate Samoan food, and began to feel *fa'a samoa*--the Samoan way. So he was half Hawaiian and half Samoan. But then, on questioning his elders, he found that his Samoan side had relatives in Tonga. And he found that his Hawaiian family went back to Tahiti. So he was Hawaiian and Samoan and Tongan and Tahitian.

Then, as he emerged into adulthood, Bill married a Maori woman from New Zealand. In time, he visited her family and was accorded a position of honor. And he began to discover other pieces of himself. He worked for a couple of years in Samoa, and discovered that his Samoan side included a fair amount of British and some German ancestry, that some of his relatives were members of what some call the *afakasi* class, part-Samoan and part-European. Back in Hawai'i Bill learned that the name Wallace stemmed from a Scottish ancestor. And he found that among his plantation ancestors on Moloka'i was a Chinese man, back some three or four generations. Bill had a pretty clear hierarchy among these identities. The Hawaiian side organized his life's activities, shaped his values, and determined his identity more than the others. Next came the Samoan, although the Maori connection was not far behind. The other ethnic connections were quite dim. He confessed to feeling an occasional twinge of fellow-feeling for each of the peoples that contributed smaller portions to his genealogy, but only the three—Hawaiian, Samoan, and Maori—organized much of his life.

Bill Wallace was not at all unusual. In the mid-1990s, the Pacific Islander American Research Project surveyed people in three rural villages on the windward coast of the island of O'ahu, Hawai'i.[[17]](#endnote-17) We surveyed 406 people, of whom 289 said they had at least some Pacific Islander ancestry. Of those, 91 said they were purely one or another sort of Pacific Islander, and 198—more than two thirds—said they were biologically mixed (see Table 1).

**[Table 1 about here]**

Many mixed people interviewed chose to identify with all parts of their ancestry: 42 out of 115 people who had part-Hawaiian ancestry; 32 out of 86 part-Samoans; 13 out of 38 part-Tongans (see Table 2).

**[Table 2 about here]**

One suspects that even some people who said they were unmixed actually possessed some mixed ancestry. Ao Pauga wrote after a class discussion on ethnic mixing: "I went home and tried to [find] my genealogy…. [I]t really hit me because … there is a possibility that I am not a full blood Samoan. I always thought that I am a pure Samoan and I am proud for that…. In Samoa, we (full-blood Samoan) always make fun of the 'Afakasi' half-caste…. I started to wonder…. So far I have found that there [is] some Tongan blood in me. My research also revealed one White (Palagi) name. As I continue my research, I am … coming to realize that I am not a pure Samoan."

Many Polynesians tell stories like the story of Bill Wallace. Kookie Soliai has five names to represent the four ethnicities she feels. Her full name is Shazzelma Reiko Reremai Ku'uipo Soliai. The first name is a family concoction, but the others bespeak, in turn, Japanese, Maori, Hawaiian, and Samoan ethnicity. Her biological inheritance is equal parts Japanese (maternal grandfather), Hawaiian (maternal grandmother), English (paternal grandfather), and Maori (paternal grandmother), but the English person was adopted and raised in Aotearoa/New Zealand, so she does not feel the English connection. Kookie says that her names make her "feel the relationship" to each of her inherited identities, as well as to the Samoan group into which she married. She says she feels completely at home in a room filled entirely with Japanese Americans, and also in a room made up entirely of Maori, as well as in a roomful of Hawaiians, perhaps not in a room full of Haoles.

**Features of Pacific Islander American Multiethnicity**

Pacific Islander ethnicity is perhaps not unique in the way it is constructed and operates, but it has several features that mark it as unusual. In the first place, Pacific Islander American ethnicity seems to be **situational**.[[18]](#endnote-18) Dorri Nautu has Hawaiian, Filipino, Portuguese, and several other ancestries. She lives in a mixed community of part-Hawaiians, Hawaiians, and several other ethnic groups, and she qualified to attend university on an ethnic Hawaiian scholarship. She identifies herself more than anything else as Hawaiian. But, she says, "If I'm with my grandmother I'm Portuguese. If I'm with some of my aunts on my dad's side I'm Filipino. If I'm hanging around I'm just local. If I'm on the mainland I'm Hawaiian."

Dorri reports that her Filipino relatives accept her as a Filipina. But they see her (and she sees herself) as a little less completely Filipina than other family members. This is primarily, she says, because she has less cultural knowledge (about food, language, and so forth) than do other family members. Secondarily, it is because she has a smaller historic quantum of Filipino ancestry. Dorri says that her relatives excuse her lack of cultural knowledge because she is not purely Filipina in ancestry or upbringing, whereas they would be critical if a pure Filipina exhibited a similar cultural deficiency. Her Hawaiian relatives, on the other hand, do not seem to make any distinction regarding purity of ancestry. So how Dorri identifies herself depends on which of her groups she is with—she feels significantly connected with each of her major ethnic derivations, and she is accepted in each of the groups as an insider.

Dorri seems to feel like whichever set of relatives of friends she is with. Lori Atoa reports the opposite situation—being treated as a Samoan by her mother's Idaho Haole family and as *palagi* by her relatives and schoolmates at home in Samoa. Alexis Siteine reports a more complex dynamic:

[M]y high school friend … asked me, "What do you tell people that you are?" My answer was, "It depends on who's doing the asking." I do not choose to sometimes be one thing and at other times another, but I have learned to identify what I think people are really asking. Sometimes they are actually asking, "What makes you the same as me?" Yet, more often it is, "What makes you different?" If asked this question in New Zealand by a non-Samoan, I identify myself as Samoan. If the asker is Samoan, I acknowledge my heritage: My mother is palagi and my father is Samoan." When I am out of New Zealand and am asked by a non-Samoan, I identify myself as a New Zealander; if a Samoan asks, my answer is the same, but I qualify it with "but my father is Samoan." These replies are generally satisfactory.

These various testimonies also point to some geographical differences. How one thinks about one's ethnicity seems to vary depending on where one is. Dorri Nautu feels "local"—mixed, polyglot, native to Hawai'i but not specifically ethnically Hawaiian—most of the time when she is in Hawai'i. On the mainland she feels Hawaiian, not just placed in that box by others but actively, primarily, ethnically Hawaiian in her own imagination. Some of that may be due to the difference between active and latent ethnicity. When one is with one's ethnic fellows, one seldom thinks about one's ethnicity except on ritual occasions. One just *is* ethnic—behaves in ways that embody the ethnic culture, associates with other ethnic people, and so forth. The time when one feels one's ethnicity more vividly is when one is confronted by a large group of outsiders. Thus, many White people in America imagine they have no ethnicity; yet if they spend an afternoon in Harlem or Tokyo they are bound to feel their ethnicity quite strongly. So, too, the half-Samoan woman noted above may not feel that identity very strongly while in the company of other Samoans (although an outsider is bound to see them all as being Samoan together); yet her Samoan identity comes to the fore when she is among non-Samoans in Idaho.

The greater recognition of one's Pacific Islander identity when in a contrast situation also may be related to a phenomenon one may observe among Tongans and Samoans in California, Washington, or Utah. Pacific Islanders are more willing to express their multiplicity in an overtly multiple place like Hawaii than they are in the continental US. The same person who, in Hau'ula or on the multicultural campus of BYU–åHawai'i, is primarily a Samoan but also admits to some *palagi* and Asian Indian ancestors, in Los Angeles sees herself and is treated only as a Samoan, without the multiethnic consciousness.

Even farther afield from centers of Pacific Islander American population, one's Pacific Islander identity may become fuzzier, not necessarily in one's own mind but in the minds of the people around. In several western metropolitan areas, most non-Pacific people know that there are Samoans and Hawaiians, and they may know that there are Tongans, although other groups such as Fijians, Marshall Islanders, and I-Kiribati are beyond their ken.[[19]](#endnote-19) But elsewhere in the US, Pacific Islanders are frequently mistaken for someone else. On a plane from the West Coast to Illinois, a curious passenger leaned across the aisle and asked Debbie Hippolite Wright, "What tribe are you from?" assuming she was a Native American. When she told him she was not a Native American, he replied, "Oh, you must be Mexican." When she told him she was flattered, but she was not that, either, he said, "Well, what *are* you?" He had never heard of Maori, but ultimately he was comfortable with the label "Polynesian." Hawaiians are Polynesians and he knew about Hawaiians.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Another feature of Pacific Islander American multiethnicity is the common practice of **choosing one** from among the available identities for emphasis, at the same time holding onto other identities. Thus, Bill Wallace and Dorri Nautu were many things, but they chose to be mainly Hawaiian most of the time. Debbie Hippolite Wright is English and French in part, but chooses to be Maori in her primary identity. Jon Jonassen is Rarotongan and Norwegian and several other things, but is vociferously a Cook Islander.[[21]](#endnote-21) Lori Atoa is Samoan and *palagi*, but chooses Samoan, because she grew up in Western Samoa and because she feels she looks more Samoan. Tupou Hopoate has ancestors from Germany, Portugal, England, Fiji, and Samoa, but she is militantly Tongan even as she acknowledges the others.[[22]](#endnote-22)

The survey showed people choosing to simplify their ancestry (see Table 2). Fifteen out of 115 part-Hawaiians, sixteen out of 86 part-Samoans, and eleven out of 38 part-Tongans simplified their ancestry, but still expressed more than one identity—they simplified from as many as eight or nine biological branches down to just two or three. Others chose a single identity: 49 part-Hawaiians identified simply as Hawaiians; 28 part-Samoans simply as Samoans. There were discernible patterns in these simplifyings. Since the survey was taken in Hawai'i, and since in recent decades there has been a resurgence of the prestige of Hawaiian identity, it should surprise no one that many people who knew of mixed ancestry chose to identify with the Hawaiian branch of their family tree more than with any other. Generally speaking, the ancestry most likely to be left out in the simplifyings was European. Second most likely to be left out were Asian ancestries. Only very seldom did any of the people interviewed choose to ignore a Pacific Islander ancestry; in most cases where they did that, it was when a person chose to embrace a single Hawaiian identity.

The choice of which identity to emphasize can shift in the course of one's life. Kookie Soliai says she feels more strongly Maori than anything else in her heart. But when she lived in the continental United States she identified herself as Hawaiian because that was easier for a lot of people to figure out, and because it gave her a bond of sisterhood with other islanders far from home. Back in Hawai'i, she identifies publicly as part-Hawaiian despite her greater psychic affiliation with her Maori heritage, for reasons both political and financial (in Hawai'i there are tangible benefits to being Hawaiian).

The pattern of simplifying one's ethnicity, and of choosing one heritage to emphasize while still acknowledging some others, is a bit like the pattern among White Catholics that Mary Waters found in a study called *Ethnic Options*. In both situations, the people in question acknowledge more than one possible identity; many simplify their ethnicity in practice; and many emphasize just one ethnic identity. The difference between Waters' White Catholics and the Pacific Islander Americans interviewed for this study has to do with the **importance** of ethnicity. For the people Waters studied: "ethnicity is increasingly a personal choice of whether to be ethnic at all, and, for an increasing majority of [such] people, of which ethnicity to be. An ethnic identity is something that does not affect much in everyday life."[[23]](#endnote-23) For Waters's Catholics, ethnicity does not have much content; it is merely "symbolic ethnicity."[[24]](#endnote-24) For Pacific Islander Americans, on the other hand, ethnicity is much more important. As for White Catholics, Pacific Islander Americans' ethnicity is multiple, but theirs is no mere symbolic ethnicity. It is not something to be put on and taken off, not something to be trotted out only for ceremonial occasions. In the case of all the Pacific Islander Americans interviewed, the ethnicity is powerful, it is deeply felt, and it organizes quite a lot of the person's life. The fact of multiplicity and the act of choosing do not imply lack of content to ethnicity, and they in no way diminish ethnicity's importance.

A final feature of Pacific Islander American multiethnicity is that the group tends to admit individuals who have mixed ancestry on more or less the same basis as people who have pure ancestry. That is not always the case in the Pacific, as indicated by the ridicule heaped on *afakasis* in Samoa.[[25]](#endnote-25) But it seems to be true of Pacific Islanders in America. There is little residue of the Samoan pure-blood/half-blood split in the US, either in Hawai'i or on the continent. The same is true for other Pacific Islander groups in the US. Dorri Nautu is accepted by both Filipinos and Hawaiians, although she is treated a bit more specially by the Filipinos on account of her mixture than by the Hawaiians. The difference in her reception is probably partly because Hawaiians and other Pacific peoples see themselves as fundamentally mixed peoples, whereas Filipinos and other Asians see themselves each as more purely one thing. It may also be because Pacific Islander American ethnicity focuses not on the boundaries between groups but on the centers of group ethnicity and the glue that holds the group together—not on who is out but on who is in, and on what they do together.

Defining features, then, of Pacific Islander American multiethnicity include the following: It is situational, depending on whom one is with and where one is located geographically. People are conscious of and affiliate with multiple identities, but they commonly choose one for primary emphasis. And Pacific Islander Americans, perhaps more than other groups, seem to receive mixed people on more or less the same basis as they do unmixed people.

**Bases of Pacific Islander American Multiethnicity**

The identity choices of Pacific Islanders who possess multiple inheritances are based on several factors. A person's ethnicity may proceed from any of several bases, and the group seems willing to admit people to membership on the basis of any of several items. One such basis is consciousness of **ancestry**—bloodline, as many would call it. Samoans, especially, talk a lot about the importance of "blood," but all the Pacific Islanders interviewed stressed ancestry as an essential basis of ethnic identity.

In order to identify yourself as a Hawaiian, you must possess at least one Hawaiian ancestor. Being able to trace that ancestor gives you location. As Haunani-Kay Trask writes:

In Polynesian cultures, genealogy is paramount. Who we are is determined by our connection to our lands and to our families. Therefore, our bloodlines and birthplace tell our identity. When I meet another Hawaiian, I say I am descended of two genealogical lines: the Pi'ilani line through my mother who is from Hana, Maui, and the Kahakumakaliua line through my father's family from Kaua'i. I came of age on the Ko'olau side of the island of O'ahu. This is who I am and who my people are and where we come from."[[26]](#endnote-26)

Most Hawaiians do not begin their conversations in Pizza Hut by reciting their entire genealogies. But if one is meeting someone in an only slightly more formal way—if one, say, is being introduced to the aunt of one's friend—then the conversation is likely to begin with each person telling the other about who their relatives are and where they are from, until the two people arrive at a point of recognition, where each can place where the other is located among the Hawaiian people. And reciting the genealogy is something that the *ali'i*, the Hawaiian nobility, are said to have done of old; the memory of that act anciently performed resonates for many modern Hawaiians. Like Hawaiians, Maori in Aotearoa/ New Zealand are likely to introduce themselves on formal occasions by means of a genealogical chant.

It is probably true that the idea of blood as the carrier of identity is not native to the Pacific; in fact, it seems to have come quite late—as late as the 1870s in Hawai'i.[[27]](#endnote-27) And the idea of blood quantum, of calculating percentages, is found only in Hawai'i, and can be traced to American government impositions from the 1920s onward.[[28]](#endnote-28) But genealogy is nonetheless a very old Pacific imperative. *The Kumulipo*  and other ancient chants recite long genealogies that give location and substance to the Hawaiian people.[[29]](#endnote-29) Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa expounds upon the importance of genealogies to Hawaiian identity:

The genealogies *are* the Hawaiian concept of time, and they order the space around us. Hawaiian genealogies are the histories of our people. Through them we learn of the exploits and identities of our ancestors—their great deeds and their follies, their loves and their accomplishments, and their errors and defeats. Even though the great genealogies are of the *Ali'i Nui* and not of the commoners, these *Ali'i Nui* are the collective ancestors, and their *mo'olelo*  (histories) are histories of all Hawaiians, too…. Genealogies anchor Hawaiians to our place in the universe…. Genealogies also brought Hawaiians psychological comfort in times of acute distress…. [T]heir genealogy … is comprised of the character of their ancestors. This is the sum total of their identity. From the Hawaiian view, it is pointless to discuss the actions of any character in Hawaiian history without a careful examination of his or her genealogy…. without their identities the account would be unintelligible…. Ancestral identity is revealed in the names that Hawaiians carry, for the names of our ancestors continue as our names also…. Names of the *Ali'i Nui* are repeated for successive generations to enhance and share the honor of the original ancestor. In this process, the name collects it own *mana* [power, spirit, authority, identity] and endows the successor who carries it. It is said that the name molds the character of the child…. It is as if the Hawaiian stands firmly in the present, with his back to the future, and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present-day dilemmas.[[30]](#endnote-30)

This celebration of the mystic chords of memory is perhaps as important as the actual content of the genealogical account in gluing together Hawaiians as a people.

There is something incantatory about certain ethnic political speech. It is as invigoratng to ethnicity when a Pacific Islander American politician recites the history of abuse that her people have suffered, as when an island spiritual leader chants a genealogy. The ground of ethnicity in this case is almost rhetorical. It is publicly remembering. Like Thomas Jefferson's recitation in the US *Declaration of Independence*  of the dastardly deeds done by King George, such a catalogue of wrongs galvanizes the slumbering feeling of a people. Thus, for example, it is essential to the reawakening of Hawaiian political identity that Haunani-Kay Trask begin her book on Hawaiian nationalism by recounting the wrongs done Hawaiians by Americans and others.[[31]](#endnote-31) It is true history, but it is more than that: it is the act of rhetorically, publicly remembering, and thus it serves to strengthen the ethnic bond.

On a more prosaic level, who one's relatives are constitutes an essential ingredient in one's identifying with and being accepted by a Pacific Islander American group. If you have relatives in a particular Pacific Islander American people, then you are a legitimate member of that group. As a mixed New Zealander, Alexis Siteine, puts it: "Maoris seem to have adopted the 'one drop' rule about themselves: If you can claim any Maori ancestor, then you are part of the *tangata whenua* (people of the land). The members of the Maori club [in school] then, ranged in appearance from the blonde, blue-eyed, freckled variety to dark-haired, darkeyed brownness."[[32]](#endnote-32)

Much of what happens that is ethnic happens within the extended family. Almost all community ceremonies and obligations are organized on a family basis. The place, above all others, where Tongan or Fijian or Samoan culture is passed on is in the **family**. As Lori Atoa put it: "In the Samoan way of life, the extended family is first priority. Anytime there is a crisis in the family, we are always ready to give whatever is needed…. the aunts and cousins on the Samoan side were always around to follow through on straightening us out. There again, we were totally exposed to the Samoan way of doing things." Among Maori, both in New Zealand and in the United States, it is not just ancestry or phenotype, but ties to the *marae* that give one ethnic location. Nikki Mozo ended a student paper with the following declaration of her identity, based on genealogy and family tie:

I am of the proud Ngati Kahununu tribe, who sailed the mighty Takitimu canoe and arrived on the islands of Aotearoa which is commonly known today as New Zealand. My marae was built at Nuhaka during the second world war in memory of our proud warriors of Ngati Kahununu. The river my people lived from is called Nuhaka. The mountain that my people lived on is called Momokai, which stands to the west of my dad's my grandfather's, and his father's village tucked in the quiet peaceful valleys of the hills. My name is Nicolette Roimatta Mozo and I am a Maori.

The family tie does not necessarily have to be genetic in order to be powerful. Ricky Soliai (Kookie's husband) is biologically Hawaiian-Tongan-Irish, but his father was adopted and raised by a Samoan family. Ricky regards himself as full Samoan, his family and other people (Samoans and non-Samoans) treat him as a Samoan without qualification, and he insists on raising the couple's children as Samoans only, despite their strongly Maori-Hawaiian-Japanese mother. Contrast that to the situation of a lot of other interethnic adoptees—African Americans raised by White families, we call some of them, or Korean babies in Swedish American families. Growing up, everyone thinks of them as interracial adoptees, not as natural members of the racial group of their adopted parents. On reaching their teen years, many such people go searching for their ancestral roots (there is in fact a thriving industry that puts Korean youths from the American Midwest in touch with the land and culture of their biological ancestors).[[33]](#endnote-33) There seems to be less of this in the Pacific Islander case. One's adoption into a particular Pacific Islander ethnic group seems to entitle one to a more complete membership in that group than is the case with other American groups.

Bill Wallace's experience suggests that you may be able to marry into another ethnic group, although Dorri Nautu's and Kookie Soliai's experiences suggest that perhaps identity acquired through marriage is less strong than identity that comes from the home of your childhood. There is also a possibility that Hawaiians may be more accepting of outside infusions than other peoples for identifiable historical reasons. Bill Wallace pointed out that, in the middle of the nineteenth century, "With the Hawaiian people dying out, the kings brought in people from the Pacific Rim—Chinese, Japanese, Koreans—to try to restock the Hawaiian blood." Whatever the case in specific historical situations, and whether or not people may marry into or be adopted into specific ethnic groups, it remains clear that the family is one of the primary bases of Pacific Islander American ethnicity.

Equally important with bloodlines and family connections in determining Pacific Islander American ethnicity is **cultural** **practice**.[[34]](#endnote-34) One is Tongan because one behaves like a Tongan, speaks the Tongan language, has a Tongan heart. Inoke Funaki, in a moving personal exploration of "Culture and Identity in the Pacific," finds Tongan identity in "*fe'ofo'ofani* (brotherly love)," in "family spirit," in "willingness to help each other," in “kindness and neighborly generosity," in the "art of living together in harmony and peace."[[35]](#endnote-35) One is Samoan because one speaks Samoan and one understands and lives *fa'a samoa*. Many Pacific Islander Americans would argue, indeed, that language is the *sine qua non* of ethnicity, the essential variety of cultural practice, because so much that is powerful is shared through language. Cy Bridges, keeper of things Hawaiian at the Polynesian Cultural Center, can talk long and movingly about the cultural bases of the Hawaiian way—about the daily practices, the heart qualities, which if one exemplifies them, declare that one is a Hawaiian.

Another basis of Pacific Islander American ethnic connectedness is one's relationship to **place**. In Hawaiian, it is the *aina*, the land, and one must *malama aina*—care for the land. The caring is reciprocal, for the land also cares for the people, and the relationship is a deep, family bond.[[36]](#endnote-36) Leaders of the Hawaiian cultural and political renaissance of the past three decades have stressed the importance of reclaiming the *aina* above almost everything else.[[37]](#endnote-37) But it is not only ethnic nationalist politicians who revere the land. Elderly Hawaiians of no particular political convictions speak of feeling roots reaching down through their feet, deep into the earth of their islands. The stories of Auntie Harriet Ne, which resonate for Hawaiians of many political persuasions, speak intimately of the land and its inhabitants, animals and *menehune* as well as humans.[[38]](#endnote-38)

Pacific Islanders of other derivations also celebrate their ethnicity by reference to place. Tupou Hopoate, a Tongan raised in Australia who now lives in California, fled her Tongan ethnicity until her mother forced her to return to Tonga. She now speaks in hushed tones of her first encounter with the village and the hut where she was born, and the intense love for her people and her culture that grew from that encounter to become one of the central forces of her life.[[39]](#endnote-39) She later wrote a poem to express the depth of her commitment. It read in part:

When I speak of Tonga,

I speak of Me.

A person made up of multiple identities

Through my veins flow the blood of various cultures

But I only identify myself as one from Tonga.

There, my heart will always stay true,

For Tonga is my home; My island and My taboo.

Hopoate's subsequent life choices—to work as a missionary in Tonga, to attend a university made up mainly of Pacific Islander students, to marry a Tongan American, to live in a Tongan community in Southern California—have all stemmed from her experience of that intensely Tongan place.

Not all Pacific Islander Americans have had personal contact with places that symbolize their ethnicity. But nearly all have heard about such places from their relatives, and the collective memory of those ethnic places is a powerful reinforcer of their ethnic identity.

At least these bases, then—ancestry, family, practice, and place—seem important determinants of Pacific Islander American ethnicity. Jocelyn Linnekin, Lin Poyer, and several colleagues have asserted that cultural identites in the Pacific are mainly "Lamarckian": that is, they proceed from the notions that "acquired characteristics are heritable" and "shared identity comes from sharing." They would differentiate between such Pacific identities, based, they say, in practice, and what they call "Mendelian" models of ethnicity based in kinship or bloodline. Linnekin and Poyer may be right about ethnic identities in some parts of the Pacific. But as far as ethnicity constructed among Pacific Islander Americans in Hawai‘i and in the continental US, Linnekin, Poyer, and their colleagues go too far. Yes, group identities among Pacific Islander Americans are based on place and practice. But they are also based profoundly on ancestry and family connection. Linnekin, Poyer, and their colleagues argue that blood is not the issue; in the crassest meaning of that term they may be right.[[40]](#endnote-40) But while it may be argued that the blood-quantum approach of some Hawaiians, for example, to participation in Hawaiian sovereignty was picked up from White American cultural definitions, nonetheless, every Pacific Islander American people of whom we have much knowledge has a strong sense of blood, of lineage, of clan connectedness, of history as a basis for identity and group membership.

**Conclusion: Multiple Ethnic Centers**

Nearly all American and European ethnic thinking is about boundaries. Perhaps no writer on ethnic theory has been so frequently and reverently quoted as Fredrik Barth; his very influential book on the subject, called *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, says in part, "The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses."[[41]](#endnote-41) Since Barth wrote that in 1969, few people seem to have doubted that boundaries are the important things about ethnic groups. Barth may be right about ethnicity in some other contexts, but his ideas will not work for Pacific Islander American ethnicity. The boundaries surrounding Pacific Islander American ethnic groups are not very important at all. Pacific Islander Americans have inclusive, not exclusive, ethnic identities. What is important for Pacific Islander American ethnicity is not boundaries but centers: ancestry, family, practice, place. If one qualifies for acceptance at the centers of ethnicity, then one is of that ethnic group, no matter to what other ethnic groups one may also belong.

In a multicultural age, maybe this is a better model of ethnicity than any other. Pacific Islander Americans are in some ways a model of what is happening to America at large.[[42]](#endnote-42) The American people are becoming a people of multiple identities. We are, at last, biologically fulfilling Crevecouer's vision of a mixed America, but we are not melting. Instead, we are becoming vividly multiethnic within each person. Some other American ethnic groups are beginning to face up to this multiethnic reality. It used to be (and still is for the Orthodox) that to be a Jew one had to be either a convert or the child of a Jewish mother. In recent decades, mindful of dwindling numbers in an era of forty per cent outmarriage or more, not a small number of Reform Jewish synagogues have been holding "Get to Know Your Jewish Roots" classes and encouraging anyone who can identify a Jewish ancestor to consider joining the faith. In similar fashion, where a half-century ago the small number of mixed offspring of Japanese American intermarriages were shunned by Japanese American community institutions, now they are among the leaders of Japanese American communities, and their numbers are quite large.[[43]](#endnote-43) In an age of emerging multiplicity, Pacific Islander American formulations of multiethnicity are especially fruitful for understanding ethnicity as it is coming to be in the United States.[[44]](#endnote-44)

Nearly a century ago, W. E. B. Du Bois expressed a tension of duality. He was not referring to racial duality, to feeling his White ancestry at the same time he felt his Black ancestry. The tension Du Bois expressed was between race and nation. But his words provide a picture of an earlier era's torment when struggling to come to terms with multiple identities: "One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."[[45]](#endnote-45) Now, for Pacific Islander Americans at least, it seems possible to reconcile two or more ethnic identities in one person, without torment, and without one being subordinated to the other. Perhaps what is needed in our era is an understanding of ethnicity that does not presume that a person must check just one box. Perhaps, by focusing as Pacific Islander Americans do on the centers of ethnicity, and not on boundaries between groups, we can better prepare ourselves for an age when most if not all of us will be biologically and functionally multiethnic.

**Table 1**

**Ancestry**

**Report Single Ancestry Report Multiple Ancestries**

Total 91 Total 198

Hawaiian 19 Including Hawaiian 115

Samoan 41 Including Samoan 86

Tongan 28 Including Tongan 38

Maori 1 Including Maori 11

Cook Islander 1 Including Other Pacific Islander 10

Fijian 1

**Table 2**

**Identity Choices of People Who**

**Report Multiple Ancestries**

**Identify with Simplify Simplify to Simplify to**

**all parts of to multiple identify with identify with**

**Ancestry ancestry identity this single another single**

**ancestry ancestry**

Mixed people with

some Hawaiian 42 15 49 10

ancestry

Mixed people with

some Samoan 32 16 28 8

ancestry

Mixed people with

some Tongan 13 11 4 9

ancestry

Mixed people with

some Maori 2 1 5 2

ancestry

Mixed people with

some Other 2 3 1 4

Polynesian ancestry

1. A version of this chapter originally appeared in *Social Forces,* 73.4 (June 1995), 1365-83. I have updated some language and provided a few more references, but I have not made a systematic attempt to bring the references completely up to date. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Hector St. John [Michel-Guilliame Jean] de Crèvecouer, *Letter from an American Farmer*, quoted in William Petersen, et al. *Concepts of Ethnicity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982, orig. 1782). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Stephen Cornell, “The Variable Ties that Bind: Content and Circumstance in Ethnic Processes.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 19.2 (1996); Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Richard D. Alba, *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984); Oscar Handlin, *Race and Nationality in American Life* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1954); Robert Ezra Park, *Race and Culture* (New York: Free Press, 1950); Philip Perlmutter, *Divided We Fall: A History of Ethnic, Religious, and Racial Prejudice in America* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1992). Richard Alba and Vicgor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). For my quite different take on their proposition, see *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), especially 4-25. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); Joe. R. Feagin and Clairece Booher Feagin. *Racial and Ethnic Relations*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1993); Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1963). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. G. Reginald Daniel, “Passers and Pluralists: Subverting the Racial Divide,” in *Racially Mixed People in America* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1992), 91-107. See also F. James Davis, *Who Is Black? One Nation's Definition* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991); Winthrop D. Jordan, "Historical Origins of the One-Drop Racial Rule in the United States," edited by Paul Spickard, *Journal of Critical Mixed-Race Studies*, 1 (2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Paul Spickard, *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth-Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); “Interracial Marriage Rising but Not as Fast,” Associated Press story in CBS News Online (June 4, 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. US Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population. 1B. General Population Characteristics. United States Summary* (PC80-1-B1) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983); US Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population. General Population Characteristics. United States* (CP-1-1) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. *Time*, "Special Issue: The New Face of America" (1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Multiracial Americans of Southern California, *Spectrum*, 7.4 (Oct.-Dec., 1993); Teresa Williams-León and Cynthia L. Nakashima, eds., *The Sum of Our Parts: Mixed Heritage Asian Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Kim M. Williams, *Mark One or More: Civil Rights in Multiracial America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Joel Perlmann and Mary C. Waters, eds., *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Although many anthropologists, at least, would assert that these labels do assort languages into meaningful divisions; Ron G. Crocombe, "The Pan-Pacific Person: Staffing the Regional Organizations," *Pacific Perspective* 12 (1984), 51-60; Ron G. Crocombe, "Ethnicity, Identity and Power in Oceania," in *Islands and Enclaves: Nationalisms and Separatist Pressures in Island and Littoral Contexts*, ed. Gary Trompf \*New Delhi: Sterling, 1993), 195-223. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. It may be worth noting, however, that three of the four largest Pacific Islander American groups are represented here: Hawaiians, Samoans, and Tongans. Only Chamorros (Guamanians) are missing. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. This multiple ethnic consciousness has something in common with *mestizaje*, mestiza consciousness, which Gloria Anzaldua talks about in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, and more generally with the Mexican consciousness of being a mixed people, even *la raza cósmica*; see Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Press, 1987); Stan Steiner, *La Raza* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); José Vasconcellos, *La Raza Cósmica*, trans. D. T. Jaen (Los Angeles: California State University, Centro de Publicaciones, 1979, orig. 1925). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. United States Census Bureau, *The Two or More Races Population: 2010*, 2010 Census Briefs (C2010BR-13, September 2012), 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. When Bill died in 2009, many in Hawai‘i wept. I miss him so. More of his story appears in an oral history interview at http://onlyinlaie.com/view\_featured\_story.php?story=43; retrieved December 19, 2011. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. The survey was conducted by the Pacific Islander Americans Research Project, of which I was then director. Sponsoring institutions were the Institute for Polynesian Studies and Brigham Young University – Hawai‘i. The interviewers were Blossom Fonoimoana, Inoke Funaki, David Hall, Debbie Hippolite Wright, Tupou Hopoate, Karina Kahananui, Dorri Nautu, and Ina Nautu. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Judith Nagata, "What Is a Malay? Situational Selection of Ethnic Identity in a Plural Society," *American Ethnologist*, 1 (1974), 331-50; Orlando Patterson, "Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance: A Theoretical Framework and Caribbean Case Study," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, ed. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 305-49 [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. For reasons probably deriving from Gaugin's legacy, most non-Pacific Islanders have a category for Tahitians—indeed, a sexualized stereotype of Tahitians—although almost none has ever met a Tahitian; Paul Spickard and Dorri Nautu, "Ethnic Images and Social Distance Among Pacific Islander Americans." *Social Process in Hawai'i*, 36 (1994), 69-85. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Sometimes the mistake is mystifyingly, perhaps willfully obtuse. Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Lucy* is about a young woman from the Caribbean who comes to New York and works as a nanny for an American couple. Yet the publisher put on the cover a reproduction of Paul Gauguin's *Young Girl with Fan* (1902, in the Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany). The young woman in the painting has brown skin, but is not a West Indian at all, as anyone who has even a rudimentary knowledge of Impressionism knows. She is Tohotaua, Gauguin's Tahitian mistress. But for the publisher, and perhaps for the reading public, it was enough that she be brown and an islander—a Pacific Islander made to stand for a West Indian. See Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990). [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. In Jon's case, he has ancestry in several of the Cook Islands, and he emphasizes the national Cook Island identity over any specific island tie. His secondary allegiance is to a pan-Pacific Islander identity, rather than to any of his ancestral European stocks. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. An extreme—in fact an unusual—case is that of a student in a course on Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic issues. When the class went around the room sharing the multiplicities of their backgrounds, her answer was an emphatic, "I'm half Hawaiian!" and she would say no more. Throughout the whole semester she would not budge, would not admit any significance attaching to anything that might be in the other half, although she admitted the other half existed. For reasons social, ideological, and perhaps political, she would speak only of her Hawaiian side. But this student was an extreme case; most Pacific Islander Americans will admit their multiethnicity even as they choose to emphasize one aspect of their ancestry. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 147. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Herbert Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2 (1979), 1-20; Waters, *Ethnic Options*, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Paul Shankman, "Race, Class, and Ethnicity in Western Samoa," in *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in the Pacific*, ed. Michael C. Howard (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1990). [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter* (Monroe, Me.: Common Courage Press, 1993), 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 1992); Jon Jonassen, former Executive Secretary of the South Pacific Commission, interviewed by the author (La'ie, Hawai'i, 1993); William Kauaiwiulaokalani Wallace, III, Director of Pacific Islands Studies, BYU–Hawai'i, interviewed by the author (La'ie, Hawai'i, 1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. The blood quantum idea entered Hawai'i formally in the 1920s as part of the US government plan to return certain lands to people of substantial Hawaiian ancestry through the Office of Hawaiian Home Lands. See J. Kehaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Martha Warren Beckwith, *The Kumulipo* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1972; orig. 1951). [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land*, 19-22. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 4-25. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. John Harré makes much the same point in *Maori and Pakeha* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1966). I am indebted to Nikki Mozo for the insight. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Joyce A. Ladner, *Mixed Families: Adopting Across Racial Boundaries* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977); Jane Jeong Trenka, et al., eds., *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption* (Boston: South End Press, 2006); Eleana J. Kim, *Adopted Territory: Transnational Korean Adoptees and the Politics of Belonging* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. G. Carter Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 29 (1987), 24-55. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Inoke Funaki, "Culture and Identity in the Pacific: A Personal Expression," convocation address, Brigham Young University–Hawai'i, October 1993. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land*, 25-33. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 87-110. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Harriet Ne, with Gloria L. Cronin, *Tales of Molokai* (La'ie, Hawai'i: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Tupou Hopoate, “My Life in Four Cultures,” *Social Process in Hawai‘i*, 36 (1994), 5-15. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Jocelyn Linnekin and Lin Poyer, eds., *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 9-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Some may argue that Pacific Islander Americans are not a model for much of anything; a critic of an earlier version of this chapter did just that. That person observed that most of the data for this paper came from Hawai'i and asserted that Hawai'i is so different from other places that it is a lousy example of anything except exceptions. The critic contended that ethnic relations in other places are much more conflictual, more categorical, more hostile than those in Hawai'i. I must disagree. Hawai'i is far from an interracial paradise. Every interpersonal encounter in Hawai'i is carefully calibrated in ethnic terms. A conversation between two Haoles is different from a conversation between a Haole and a Korean on the same subject, and very different again from a conversation between two Samoans. There is quite a bit of interethnic stereotyping and hostility in Hawai'i, between Haole and Hawaiian, between Japanese and Samoan, between Filipino and Korean, and so on. What is different about Hawai'i—and what makes it not a bad model but a particularly *good* model for America's apparent future—are two things: (1) it is multicultural in the extreme, as America is becoming; and (2) in Hawai'i, as among Pacific Islander Americans generally, the consciousness of individuals and groups that they are multiethnic is very strong.

    There is no room here to summarize, much less sort through, the right- and left-wing critiques of multiculturalism. Readers with an interest in that debate might start by consulting: Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2007); Charles Taylor, *et al*., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Susan Moler Okin, *et al*., *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Will Kymlicka, *Multiculturalism: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Alvin J. Schmidt, *The Menace of Multiculturalism: Trojan Horse in America* (New York: Praeger, 1997); David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994); Dennis McCallum, ed., *The Death of Truth: What's Wrong with Multiculturalism, the Rejection of Reason, and the New Postmodern Diversity* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996); Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield, eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); James Kyung-jin Lee, *Urban Triage: Race and the Fictions of Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Spickard, *Mixed Blood*; Paul Spickard, *Japanese Americans: The Formation and Transformations of an Ethnic Group*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009). [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. There is, of course, the possibility that politics may intrude and current trends toward multiethnicity will be reversed. Sarajevo was long thought by some to be a happily multicultural place, and then in the 1990s it became an interethnic war zone. But despite the power of continuing racial oppression in America, and despite the strength of regional political trends such as the sovereignty movement among Native Hawaiians, the United States is in my judgment quite far from the sort of ethnic division and warfare that occurred in the former Yugoslavia or the former Soviet Union. See, for example: Victor Roudometof, *Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy: The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans* (New York: Praeger, 2001); Christopher Zürcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus* (New York: NYU Press, 2009); Jonathan Y. Okamura, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai‘i* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. W.E.B. Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," *Atlantic Monthly*, 80 (August, 1897). [↑](#endnote-ref-45)