CONTRADICTIONS IN MEANING:
The Many Narratives on Local Identity and Culture in Hawai`i

Brittany Curtis

Submitted to the Faculty of Bennington College, Bennington Vermont, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor Arts.

June 2013
Recommended to the Faculty of Bennington College for acceptance by:
Mirka Prazak (faculty advisor)
Noah Coburn (reader)

June 1, 2013
# Table of Contents

- **Introduction** ................................................................. 4  
  - Methodology................................................................. 7  
  - Nomenclature............................................................... 10  

- **Narratives of Local Culture and Identity**.............................. 13  
  - Plantation Genesis Narrative............................................ 15  
  - The Myth of the Mixed race idyll...................................... 26  
  - The Defining Moment of Local Identity............................... 36  
  - Narrative of Local in Print and Media............................... 43  

- **Literature v Reality**.......................................................... 52  
  - Haole Go Home: Are Locals Racist? ..................................... 53  
  - Defending Local, Denying Local........................................ 59  
  - The Asian American/Honolulu Point of View....................... 62  

- **Conclusion: Local in opposition**......................................... 69  

- **Appendices**........................................................................ 73  
  - Appendix 1: Glossary of Hawaiian Terms.............................. 73  
  - Appendix 2: Timeline of Key Events................................... 75  
  - Appendix 3: Bibliography.................................................. 76
Introduction

In January 2012, the first time I went to the island of Hawai`i (nicknamed the Big Island), the East Hawai`i Cultural Center (EHCC) was holding an exhibit honoring the volcano in which only members could submit art; while I was working in the office organizing the submitted work, I witnessed one of the artists coming in to complain to the center’s organizer. The middle-aged Asian woman claimed that most of the artists did not have a right to be in this show because they were not Local; they were not a part of the community because they either had not lived in Hawai`i long enough or had not given back to the community. This was my first introduction into what being Local meant.

After that trip, I used printed resources to explore more into this idea of Local; since most of the books and articles I found discuss “Local” culture and identity as a side note in essays on either Hawaiian history or ethnicity politics in Hawai`i. In order to find a more detailed picture the reality of Local culture, I read short stories published by a self-proclaimed Local publishing company. From this material, I came to a very specific idea of what Local meant; I believed that Local was an important, partially political identity that indicated a belonging to the islands and to a tolerant, multicultural society protecting its culture from the negative impact of globalization.

I expected to find that “Local” is a particularly multiracial identity proudly used in response to outsiders, such as the military, tourists, or even those from the mainland who decide to settle on the island. I also expected people to be excited to tell me about this identity and culture because they were proud to be Local to Hawai`i. Instead, the people most willing to sit down for an interview with me were Caucasians who felt they were not Local, and in fact felt that Local people excluded Caucasians from participating in a Local identity due to their skin color and background. Even the mixed-race individuals I interviewed did not feel as much a part
Brittany Curtis

of the Local culture as I had expected. I realized that the idea of Local is not as important in daily life as the writing on it indicated.

From the differences between the established writing on Local and the interviews I conducted, I have come to the conclusion that “Local” as it is discussed in academic articles comes from older definitions of Local that are no longer accurate or relevant to Local culture and identity as it exists today. Okamura’s widely accepted theory that Local identity is in reaction to globalizing forces within the islands seems only accurate to the manifestation of Local during the late 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, but no longer seems to apply to more recent generations; even the politicized expression of Local identity in the 1970s idealized the retroactively coined “Local” unifying creole culture of the mostly non-white plantation workers during the plantation era (roughly late 1800s, early 1900s).

While these ideas of Local culture hold kernels of truth, the term “Local” holds different meanings, depending on the point of view through which one looks at the concept. In this paper I am isolating the distinctive narratives of Local culture and identity as I encountered them during my research, and the contradictions that I found between the idea and the reality. While I cannot explain some of the contradictions I encountered, it is clear to me that much of the variation within the many concepts of Local stem from the tension in Hawai‘i between the notion of what the culture should be and what it is.

The first narrative I discuss is the belief that Local culture has its roots in the history of immigration to Hawai‘i and the culture immigrant laborers formed on the plantations; this narrative disregards, however, the discrimination each ethnic group experienced as they first arrived on the plantations. From the 1920s onward, the much higher rate of intermarriage between ethnicities in the islands than on the mainland has fascinated sociologists and
anthropologists, and their research created the widely accepted concept that Local culture is defined by this very mixed-ness, although the idea has gone by many names: “melting pot,” “salad bowl,” “stew pot,” assimilation, pluralism, multiculturalism.

The narratives of plantation genesis and of the mixed race idyll both contribute to the first proper manifestation of identity specifically labeled “Local”; in the late 1960s and early 1970s individuals calling themselves Local protested the evictions of Local families from farmland and houses in favor of development for tourism. Individuals of different backgrounds and ethnicities rallied behind these protests, emphasizing their shared history in the islands; however, between this point when Local had a very clear definition and the beginning of my research, I found many different definitions of what “Local” means and many contradictions between them. Academic sources\(^1\) predominantly still promote the narrative that people born in Hawai`i will proudly claim a Local identity, yet in my interviews I found only one such person. In the writing that most people read, Hawaiian newspapers, magazines, and self proclaimed “Local” literature, Local culture is simplified to its superficial trappings, and some ethnicities have a stronger voice than others. And finally in my interviews, both my Caucasian and mixed race informants revealed that Local is associated with racism and backwardness, although many felt that this is a remnant of earlier generations.

When I spoke to Okamura, he explained to me that “Local” in Hawai`i represents the sociocultural norm, just like “whiteness” does on the mainland, and while Locals may not have power, they have the prestige of being from Hawai`i; he said its always better to be Local than non-Local. His concepts of Local matched up perfectly with what I had read elsewhere, but what I found in the course of my interviews was a contradiction and confirmation of this idea; yes this feeling that Local was the dominant culture must have been true at some point, or the Caucasians

\(^1\) Many of which are published by the University of Hawai`i Press
I interviewed would not have felt excluded from Local. However, I did not find any signs that the younger generations have felt the same pressure to be Local, or exclusion for not being Local.

Between the literature and my interviews I have identified a plethora of definitions of Local, and I think the differences in the narratives emanate from the variety in the uses intended for these narratives. First agriculture then tourism has played strong roles in the shaping of the Hawaiian Islands and the ideas of Local. Since the 1950s, ethnic and political groups have also altered the definition of Local to fit their agendas; Local is always defined in opposition to something else, and is used to create boundaries between groups that claim belonging to Hawai`i and those they assert are outsiders.

**Methodology**

During the first term I worked on this paper, the information that was available to me via inter-library loan and Internet databases portrayed an almost unanimous school of thought in regards to what Local means. From this research, I believed that Local indicates belonging to Hawai`i, specifically having been born there as well as being of an ethnicity that has a significant history in the islands, usually derived from having worked on the plantations. The immigrant laborers formed a mixed, creole culture in which the many ethnicities formed a harmonious “melting pot,” although all agreed that this all-inclusive identity only occasionally included “haoles” (Caucasians). Even the dissenters, such as Okamura, who argue that the tourist-aimed media tries to gloss over ethnic inequality, also accept and even promote that “Local” is still a valid and dominant identity (Okamura 1994 and 2008). I also read a few short stories and books that the publishers advertised as “Local literature,” in the hopes of gaining a better idea of how
Local identity functions in the day-to-day, especially since the publishers of Local literature claim they want to make their writing more widespread; within these stories, I found an idea of Local that corresponded to the academic writings I encountered.

In preparing to do my fieldwork, I constructed a research project based on the conclusions from this preliminary research. Since most writers (e.g. Hormann 1972, Okamura 2008) claimed that Local identity is a point of pride for people born on the islands when talking to an outsider, I believed that finding interviewees would be easy. Before leaving for Hawai`i I contacted the people I had worked for a year earlier. The EHCC is an art gallery and community center run mostly by volunteers who work there to meet their requisite Welfare or probation hours. Most of the workers there spoke with Pidgin (Hawaiian Creole English) accents and a few even claimed Hawaiian ancestry, and the artists seemed to exhibit strong sometimes political ties to Hawai`i. I believed many would be willing to sit down for an interview. I also contacted a woman who ran an art gallery in downtown Hilo; although she was not born in the islands, she had lived there a long time and lived with a man of Hawaiian ancestry. During my first trip, she had told me many stories about the prejudice she faced when she first moved to Hawai`i; I believed that between these two sources I would find a well-balanced depiction of Local identity and culture that fit within the narratives I had found in my previous research.

Yet, when I arrived on the Big Island in January 2013, no one who worked at the EHCC was readily willing to sit down for an interview; instead, the head of the center would tell me to stop by and directed me to interview whatever members that happened to wander by the gallery, who on my first trip were two Caucasians who were not born in Hawai`i and believed that being Local merely meant living in Hawai`i for more than two years. Unlike last year, the exhibit this time around was not about Hawai`i and therefore did not attract the same enthusiastic and vocal

---

2 Interview with “John”
artists as the exhibit the year before had. Since I knew that my other contact would mostly be able to arrange to have me meet her Caucasian friends, I attempted to draw more people who identified as Local by putting up posters around the EHCC, some of the downtown stores, and the library. I especially had high hopes for the Hilo Public Library, because I realized quickly that the library acted as the main internet provider for many of the people who lived in the area; people lined up to wait for the doors to open in the morning and children waited for their parents there after school. I thought it the best place to find people who identified as Local. Yet, I never received any responses to any of my posters.

The people I found to interview through the art gallery in Hilo did not feel they shared in the Local identity, even though some of them were not entirely white. I had expected from my sources (e.g. Spickard 2001, Hormann 1987) to find that mixed race individuals were more likely to think of themselves as Local; instead, I found that the two college-aged girls I interviewed that described themselves as “hapa” (mixed) or “a little bit of everything” did not feel Local, although they both admitted that others would categorize them as Local. Seeking someone who did feel Local, I asked around the bus terminal (another hub of socializing) if there was any “Local people” I could talk to. The people who run the depot directed me towards a group of people who I had noticed before, a group of men and women who went to the bus depot early in the morning and stayed there all day. The man who agreed to speak to me made it clear that they did not work for a living and instead “lived off the land.”

Between my difficulty in finding people to interview and the lack of interviewees that felt strongly they were Local I began to doubt the significance of Local in Hawai`i today. In total I formally interviewed ten people, held a phone interview with another, and had a few informal interviews. Of them all, only one man firmly called himself Local, and that was the man at the
bus stop. After realizing this disjunction between what Local meant in the initial research I did and what Local meant to the people I spoke to, I decided to go back and look at who actually wrote about “Local.” The academic writers who spoke about Local, even peripherally, tended to be at least part Asian American, more often Japanese American, which in Hawai`i represents the dominant ethnic group both economically and politically. Most of the books were also published by the University of Hawai`i Press, which is located on O`ahu, which is a very different island than Hawai`i, due to its much higher presence of tourists and the presence of the largest city in the state, Honolulu. Even “Local literature” focused mainly on Asian American writers. I decided to organize my data into a comparison of the different meanings of “Local” against the point of view provided by my informants.

Nomenclature

Because of the strong presence of an indigenous group of people, understanding proper terminology becomes a matter of manners in Hawai`i. I found people correcting me frequently in order to conform to Hawaii’s particular form of political correctness. Due to the difficulty in using the term “Hawaiian” to mean anyone from the state, I will use the sociologist Andrew W. Lind’s term, “Hawaii’s People,” instead. “Hawaiian” is meant to only indicate someone who is of native Hawaiian ancestry. However, according to the US government’s definition “Native Hawaiian” means anyone with 50% or more Native Hawaiian blood. In response, politicized Hawaiians use the title “Kāna ka Maoli” (“the true people”, meaning indigenous Hawaiians) in order to make a clear delineation between “Hawaiian” the ethnicity and “Hawaiian” as pertaining to the state.
While native Hawaiians are very particular about how to navigate vocabulary, the non-white people in Hawai`i, and many Caucasians too, predominantly call Caucasians “haole,” to the extent that I found myself using this term freely, also. Hawaiians called the first Caucasian newcomers haole, meaning literally “one who cannot speak;” later it came to mean any Caucasian. While many Caucasians feel this term is racist, there has been no sign of the phrase becoming taboo. For example, a Caucasian woman sued her employer for calling her a “fucking haole.” She took the case before the Civil Rights Commission, which decided that the term “haole” is not by itself racist, but that using it in conjunction with the word “fucking” did make it racist – essentially sanctioning the use of the term in everyday conversation.³

Also, while people within Hawai`i call the creole language formed on the plantations “Pidgin,” linguistically speaking this language is called “Hawaiian Creole English” or abbreviated to “HCE”. Where pidgin is a simplified form of speech used for communication between people with different languages,⁴ Hawaiian Creole English is a native language.⁵ While the earlier workers on the plantation spoke pidgin, by 1920, HCE had become the prevalent, native language of most children.⁶ The term “creole,” however, is never actually used among those who speak the language. In order to avoid confusion, I will use the linguistic term “Hawaiian Creole English” or HCE in order to discuss the language itself, only using “Pidgin” when quoting the way in which residents discuss the language.

I will also capitalize “Local” when discussing the identity or culture as it is understood as describing a culture or identity that belongs uniquely to Hawai`i, and simply “local” when

meaning simply from a particular place.
Narratives Of Local Culture and Identity

In Hawai`i, there are multiple definitions of what “Local” means, each a narrative explaining the reality of Local culture while overlooking the inconsistencies. In both re-examining my original research and within my interviews, I found two popular portrayals of Local that people in Hawai`i accept readily: the plantation genesis narrative and the melting pot narrative. The primary explanation for the creation of a Local culture and identity, the plantation genesis narrative, describes Local as a multi-ethnic culture that grew from the camaraderie and shared oppression among the different immigrant groups living on the plantation camps. Then from the 1920s onward, sociologists have been fascinated by the significantly high rate of intermarriage and multiethnic individuals within Hawaii’s population, which many believe is caused by the beneficial ethnic relations on the plantations; while they may change the name of the theory – melting pot, stew pot, salad bowl, multiculturalism – the writers who focus on the mixed-nature of Hawaii’s population argue that Hawai`i is a positive example of race and ethnic relations.

The idea that “Local” is an identity that people in Hawai`i actively portray has its roots in the political movements of the 1970s; this is the time period during which most writers, as well as my older interviewees, formed their preconceptions of what being Local means. In early 1970, a small community in Kalama Valley, O`ahu protested the Bishop Estate’s attempt to evict them from their farms in favor of developing the land for tourists and newcomers from the mainland. These residents identified themselves as Locals and united despite different ethnic backgrounds in order to defend their homes and their way of life, farming, fishing, and living off the land. Eventually this movement attracted more attention, as people who had been born in the islands
wanted to regain control of Hawai`i. In this time period, the idea of Local most embodied the previous narratives, and became most visible and politicized. This was the defining moment for how “Local” is discussed today.

A few academic writers create the majority of the discussion on Local identity and culture, usually as a side note in analyzing ethnicity in Hawai`i; writers such as Bernhard Hormann, Andrew Lind, and Jonathan Okamura have been discussing Local from the point of view of people who have witnessed the Local movement of the 1970s and specifically looking at the culture of O`ahu. I found that other writers cited these three men frequently, as well as Eric Yamamoto’s 1979 thesis on “The Significance of Local.” Hormann and Lind have been the editors for the journal “Social Process in Hawai`i” since the early 1980s, the main anthropological and sociological publication coming out of the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

While the academic portrayal of Local is very one sided it at least has some depth to their analysis, the narrative of Local that new residents first encounter, the only one that tourists ever see, and that students encounter in schools, comes mainly from the media. In both online and print media generated from Honolulu there are frequently articles about what it means to be Local. The same narrative is predominant in the body of literature self-named “Local,” particularly a publishing company called Bamboo Ridge; this company has been working towards their goal to put more of this Local writing into school programs. This idea of Local also draws from the plantation genesis narrative and idea of the melting pot, but focuses instead on stereotyped and sometimes meaningless details of life in Hawai`i, such as calling flip-flops “slippers.”

In the following sections, I will outline in more detail the characteristics of each of these narratives, as well as the contradictions inherent within their details. I do not wish to undermine
the validity of any of these ideas of Local, for to some people in some time they are accurate; I want to point out that these narratives cannot be accepted as universal truths, for the expression or lack there of Local identity is very situational. I will look more into this when I discuss the results of my interviews.

The Plantation Genesis Narrative

The plantation camps are universally accepted as the birthplace of “Local;” going along with the food metaphor frequently employed to describe Local culture, the plantation is the pressure cooker combining the different cultures into a new, united identity while still allowing individuals to retain their separate ethnic identities. Most of the people I interviewed used this view of plantation history in order to describe who is Local and why. Their portrayals depicted an idealized relationship between the immigrant groups within the camps, erasing instances of racial inequality or prejudice.

A note on the use of the words “race” and “ethnicity” when discussing Hawai`i; race in Hawai`i means something more akin to ethnicity. Few people identify as “Asian American,” instead there are Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino Americans. Since “ethnicity” is more accurate, I have used this term as much as possible, however, it is difficult, when dealing with statistics from the census, to refrain from using the term “race.”

People in Hawai`i widely believe that Local culture and identity started in the daily interactions between plantation laborers: men and women working on the fields shared their lunches, each trying food from a different culture, and while they ate they tried to talk, using broken bits of their own language, Hawaiian, English, and anything they had picked up from the

---

other immigrants. Working side by side, these disparate people learned racial tolerance by practical necessity and the adoption of a Hawaiian “aloha” attitude. People in Hawai‘i call this language “Pidgin”, which according to one interviewee:

started out where people were working in the cane fields, everybody had a different language so they kind of homogenized the words they were using. It started for sure with words like food words and things you used and gradually they just kind of became the way Locals talk – *talked* – and then eventually it was a way Locals identified as Local.9

These shared lunches became the quintessentially Local “mixed plate;” this hybrid dish is frequently used as a metaphor for the multiethnic idea of Local. The most common representation of this symbol was told to me in conversation with an middle aged Asian man who moved to Hawai‘i from California ten years ago: you look on the average lunch plate and there is rice from Japan, with a mac salad which is an American thing, kim chee from Korea, Chinese manapua, and so the plate kind of shows all the different cultures.10

During the early plantation years, however, the term “Local” was not yet used to describe culture or identity. The term originated in 1931 with the infamous Massie trial; the press used the term “Local” to distinguish between the Massies, a white military couple, and the alleged perpetrators of the attack on Mrs. Massie, a group of Japanese, Chinese, and Hawaiian boys. “Subsequently, local was used to refer to any non-white resident born and raised in Hawai‘i,” and, at the time this term was coined, most of the non-white residents were plantation workers and their children.11

[...] a ramification of the islands’ plantation past has appeared in the notion of ‘local’ – a person born and raised in Hawai‘i, usually having a casual, friendly, family-oriented life style. Caucasians

9 Interview with “Stan”
10 Paraphrased using my notes from the conversation.
11 Danico, Mary Yu.. *The 1.5 generation: becoming Korean American in Hawaii*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press; 2004. 44
A culture of shared oppression formed in opposition to the dominant “haole” group during the plantation era. Since then, the idea of Local has come to describe darker skinned people of certain ethnicities that can trace their histories in Hawai`i back to the plantations.

This “proto-Local,” a central culture of cooperation between the immigrant groups, occurred within the plantations because of the oppression the workers experienced from the plantation companies. Yamamoto (whose thesis is frequently cited by other writers, such as Okamura) argued that the low compatibility between the “superordinate” plantation owners and “subordinate” immigrant laborers helped to form Local. Essentially isolated, the subordinate group formed a subculture characterized by a blending of the disparate aspects of the immigrant ethnic cultures. While this is a very academic viewpoint, I did find that my informants believed “Local” formed in a very similar way:

The people who were immigrants during the plantation times, so Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, um … any other kinds of Asians but that’s the main groups were also oppressed, because they came here as semi-slaves, indentured, something like that. And so the highest race were the Caucasian that owned all these lands and plantations […] so [Local identity] had something to do with shared oppression.

The plantations in Hawai`i functioned in a way that Andrew Lind described as “military agriculture” – due to the scarcity of labor, the plantation owner ran the plantation like a semi-independent state. The laborers worked within a semi-feudal structure with the plantation owner as a pseudo chief, organizing and controlling all of the people on the estate.

The companies that owned the plantations in Hawai`i organized into a system of interlocking directorates under the main five companies (nicknamed the Big Five) in order to

---

12 Tamura 453
14 Interview with “Eden”
15 Lind (1982)133
concentrate power and influence and work together as one unit; united and essentially in control of Hawaii’s economy, the Big Five essentially controlled first the Kingdom of Hawai‘i and then the territorial government after the US annexed the islands.\textsuperscript{16} Working through Caucasian politicians, from 1898 onwards the Big Five passed legislation suppressing Hawaiian culture, by banning the language and censoring the practice of the hula, and attempted to find ways to keep laborers from leaving the plantation. For example, when the plantation owners saw that many of the Asian laborers were leaving the plantation in order to find work elsewhere, the legislature passed a law excluding “Asians” from non-agricultural occupations, and another law later prohibiting “Asiatic” labor from being employed on public works.\textsuperscript{17}

The public school system also served to successfully oppress the non-white population. Coming into the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the territorial government set up a Standard English school system; the students that could pass the Standard English test would go to one school while those who failed – those who couldn’t speak English or those who had heavy HCE accents – went to a separate school. The standard English schools were overwhelmingly filled with white and affluent students and generally provided a better education, while the schools for HCE speakers, predominantly ethnic minority and working class children, were underfunded; although this succeeded in isolating Standard English speakers from HCE speakers and enforcing the idea that the latter were a second-class citizen, it also served to strengthen HCE by giving it a space within which it was not challenged.\textsuperscript{18} It was in these non-standard schools that children from highly diverse cultures did not have one dominant culture to assimilate into (as in other parts of the US), but instead learn to \textit{accommodate} – learning not to be too haole, too Hawaiian, too Japanese and

\textsuperscript{16} Tamura 433
\textsuperscript{17} Buck, Elizabeth Bentzel. \textit{Paradise remade: the politics of culture and history in Hawai‘i}. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993. 169
\textsuperscript{18} Romaine 531 and Tamura 436
instead set aside some parts of their ethnic identity that did not gel with the other children’s
etnicities. In the HCE schools a Local identity could be construed as a form of self-preservation – bonding together in spite of exclusion by the dominant group.

Neither the government nor plantation owners in Hawai`i encouraged assimilation among the immigrant groups, unlike the United States during the same time period. During the beginning of the 20th century, policy makers in the US government tended to be assimilationists; they believed that “latecoming ethnic groups [should] adapt to the dominant ethnic group as the price of belonging to a single political and social system.”19 However, the US largely left policy making to the territorial government, which was controlled by the Big Five. The plantation heads allowed and even encouraged the immigrant groups to retain their own religions and holidays, most likely hoping that it would prevent widespread unionization; they went as far as allowing days off for individual ethnic groups’ traditional holidays.20 After a Japanese strike, the owners of the affected plantations actively and monetarily supported Buddhist temples, hoping that religion would bring an ideology of order and obedience.21 These small concessions couldn’t entirely make up for the grueling workdays and the small pay, but the plantation owners’ efforts did mean that the ethnic groups were free to continue practicing their own culture.

Despite this “shared oppression,” each ethnic group had their own neighborhood called “camps,” not because of the plantation owners’ planning, but because of the immigrants’ own preferences.22 Ethnic identity has always been an important organizing factor in Hawai`i, for even as the different immigrant groups have ceased to be anchored in ethnic-based social

21 Takaki 108-109
structures, ethnicity is still an important as a symbolic and organization entity. In Hawai`i, ethnicity works as both a cultural representation (of identity and heritage) and a structural principle (in that it signifies difference over the idea of “race”); since ethnicity is the primary organizing standard of social relations, it is also the way in which socioeconomic inequality is understood. When describing this idea of plantation life, people seem to omit that each ethnic group immigrated to Hawai`i at different times; every group had their moment as the outsider, the other.

The demand for labor from the sugar and fruit plantations in the 19th century led to the importation of a large and diverse immigrant population from Puerto Rico, Japan, China, Samoa, Portugal, Korea, the Philippines, and various European countries. In looking for immigrants to recruit, the Kingdom of Hawai`i was deeply concerned both with the need for laborers and with increasing their population, and recruiters made distinctions between which ethnicities were more suited for settling in Hawai`i. While the government brought many Chinese laborers into the islands for the purpose of working on the plantations, the newly formed Department of Immigration wanted to “the importance of bringing in people who were of the same racial stock as the Hawaiians.” The “cognate races” that the government’s agents sought out were generally peoples of Polynesian, Malaysian, or Japanese descent. The Department of Immigration believed they would amalgamate easily into the rest of the population, who at this time was still mostly

24 Okamura (2008) 5
27 Kuykendall 181
native Hawaiian.\textsuperscript{28} However, the labor recruiters largely unsuccessful, and in the end attempts to recruit from other islands was more expensive than was practical.\textsuperscript{29}

On one hand, the lower class native Hawaiians accepted these first Chinese immigrants; the number of part-Hawaiians increased as more and more Hawaiians intermarried with the immigrant groups, especially the Chinese.\textsuperscript{30} However, the upper class native Hawaiians were against using Chinese labor, mostly because they thought of Chinese immigrants as unfavorable immigrants since they arrived in bachelor groups with a penchant for gambling and drinking, not as settled families.\textsuperscript{31} In the late 1800s, the Department of Immigration instead turned its attention towards Portuguese laborers from the islands Madeira and Azore.\textsuperscript{32} They believed that these Portuguese laborers were the ideal immigrants; on the plantation, they acted as the go-between for the white owners and non-white workers, since people in Hawai`i thought the Portuguese themselves were more non-white (like the workers) than like the rich “haoles.”\textsuperscript{33} The Portuguese also came as family units to settle and become productive members of the population, and they tended to accept any jobs they were given.\textsuperscript{34}

At the close of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the Hawaiian government realized that Japanese immigration would be the best solution to both their labor and population problem; the Department of Immigration felt that the Japanese were an ideal “cognate race” and they believed, correctly, that Japanese laborers would be willing to come over in large numbers.\textsuperscript{35} By the 1930s, when use of the term “Local” began, ethnically Japanese constituted half of Hawai`i’s
Between 1880 and 1930, 27,000 Chinese, 67,000 Japanese, and 336,800 Asian, Portuguese, and Puerto Rican immigrants settled the islands.

During these waves of immigration, the established population of laborers would sporadically strike for better conditions on the plantations; in order to break these strikes, the plantation owners encouraged immigration of Korean and Filipino workers. There was tension between these newer immigrants and the established laborers. Koreans immigrated in the early 20th century, until Japan took control of Korea in 1905. The Koreans living in Hawai‘i resented their fellow Japanese workers; Korean immigrants formed ethnic associations in order to raise money for freedom movements in their homeland. Filipinos on the other hand came to Hawai‘i in un-restricted numbers once the US annexed Hawai‘i, since the Philippines were also a territory of the US. Compared to the previous immigrants, Filipinos were more visibly different and darker, and they faced prejudice and discrimination. The other laborers, especially the Japanese, stereotyped Filipinos as “prone to violence, emotionally volatile, […] criminally inclined […] [and] sexually threatening.” The segregation on plantations contributed to the creation of long-lasting ethnic stereotypes. According to Sanders in his paper on ethnic identity within plural societies:

when interaction between groups is limited and otherwise conditioned by territorial segregation intergroup differences gain emphasis – constraints on cross-group interaction contribute to the respective groups ignorance of one another, this in turn encourages stereotyping.

---

36 Kuykendall 165
41 Okamura 156
While these stereotypes are now frequently framed as “ethnic humor,” one of my informants described the relationship between ethnicities in Hawai`i as one of “mutual intolerance.” No group is the clear numerical majority and “each group has a set of stereotypes about each of the other groups,” and each group accepts the stereotypes about themselves.

It is easier to see the way in which “Locals” react to the introduction of new immigrant groups when looking at immigration in more recent years – better documented and less romanticized. With the military, a significant number of working and middle class Caucasians moved to the islands, and this was the first time a significant number of Caucasians came to Hawai`i who were different from the rich Anglo-American plantation owners; these middle class haoles “rubbed shoulders with the islanders”, working in the same low-paying jobs as the Locals. Before then, “haoles” were thoroughly separate from “Local,” since most of the Caucasians in Hawai`i were upper class landowners and kept themselves separate from the laborers. The debate as to whether a haole can be a Local still runs today, as I will describe later.

Since 1965, Filipinos have constituted the largest currently immigrating group, and initially there was a sharp distinction between “local” and “immigrant” Filipinos. Local Filipinos wanted to avoid association with the immigrant groups, and blamed the immigrant Filipinos for the strengthening of the negative stereotypes. During the 1970s, in the midst of the conflicts between local people and the threat of foreign companies controlling local

45 Grant 152
46 Okamura 26
47 Okamura 181-182
resources, there were violent clashes between local and immigrant students, especially among Philippine born and Hawaiian born Filipinos.48

The most recent ethnicity to immigrate to Hawai‘i in large, visible numbers has been the group people in Hawai‘i call “the Micronesians,” from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands because these Micronesian states have compacts with the United States that allow them to come and go freely.49 As the latest immigrant group, they have been experiencing exclusion and racism from the larger community in Hawai‘i.50 Both the people of Hawai‘i and the state government feel that Micronesians are a drain on resources.51 Micronesians are visible in social aid institutions, since many end up in homeless shelters and even more come here with the sole intention of taking advantage of medical care.52 Under the treaty that governs the relationship between the US and Micronesian states, however the past two governors of Hawai‘i have tried to remove the state’s fiscal duty to Micronesians.53

This institutionalized resistance to helping Micronesians assimilate and settle is just as evident among the “Local” population. Eden, who teaches English as a Second Language, told me that both her Micronesian and Filipino students are stigmatized for being immigrants, for being foreign. I was told that Micronesian students are being discriminated against, now, just because they are the newest. Sarah, who attended college in the early 2000s, said that the Micronesians kept themselves separate from the rest of the school population. The consensus,

48 Okamura 35
50 Blair
51 Blair
53 Blair
however, was that Micronesians were not considered Local, a repetition of the treatment of Filipino immigrants in the 1970s.

When I spoke with Jonathon Okamura, who lives on O’ahu, he claimed he had seen in the news that there were conflicts between “Locals” and Micronesians in high schools on the Big Island. The news articles from the Honolulu Star Advertiser never used the term “Local,” and instead focused on discussing Micronesian students inability to assimilate. Due to cultural differences, one article claimed, Micronesians found it difficult to adjust to a Western style of education.\textsuperscript{54} In Kealakehe High School December 2012, on the Kona side of the Big Island, a series of small fights; the article doesn’t say the fights were between Locals and immigrants, but instead attribute them to “stress between cultural differences” and an increase in “bullying and harassment between races as Kealakehe High School has turned into a melting pot of native Hawaiians and immigrants from the Federated States of Micronesia.”\textsuperscript{55} These fights resulted in a brawl between twenty to thirty students, which seems to indicate a larger problem than just tensions between Hawaiians and Micronesians. It seems much more like a repetition of the patterns from the 1970s with Filipino immigrant students; in the general atmosphere of economic fear, especially with the state government trying to relinquish economic responsibility for the Micronesians, it makes sense that the students would also resent the increasing presence of foreigners in public schools.

The years in which the plantation was the center of Hawaii’s economy and politics created a very specific environment – many different ethnicities living in a close environment under harsh and repressive conditions. The ethnic groups did form a cooperative “proto-Local”

\textsuperscript{54} Viotti
culture, much like the plantation genesis narrative presents, however the ingredients of this
“mixed plate” were not added simultaneously. Each group arrived over time and some groups
initially faced prejudice and exclusion; it took years to form a shared language and culture, and it
is undeniable that this sharing did occur. As I will discuss in the next section, Hawai`i has a large
percentage of multiethnic individuals, much higher than on the mainland.

The Myth of a Mixed Race Idyll

The most popular discourse according to early sociologists and the media in Honolulu
describing Hawai`i’s people paints the picture of a melting pot or multicultural idyll, sometimes
using these words interchangeably; not only do many academics write that Hawai`i’s inevitable
fate is to become one harmonious population of mixed race individuals, but the tourist industry
also helps portray Hawai`i as a beautiful, pluralistic society:

Thanks to its convenient position in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, not to mention its tropical
beauty, Hawaii has attracted people from a vast array of ethnic backgrounds. This has earned its
moniker as "the melting pot of the Pacific," merging the kama`aina into their own unique
culture.56

While it is true that Hawai`i is highly diverse and has a long history of people freely inter-
marrying despite ethnicity, this image disregards the political and socioeconomic inequality and
the social stratification running along distinctly ethnic lines.

For decades, writers have fixated on the idea of Hawai`i as a melting pot of races, a
productive example to follow in the wake of the heated and violent race relations of the past
century. In the 1920s and 30s, the Chicago School of Sociology formed complicated theories
regarding the multiracial nature of Hawai`i’s population, seeing the islands as a “racial
laboratory;” one of these scholars, Gulick, believed that “the races are actually growing together
– fusing biologically […] a new race is in the making […] The physiological characteristics of

the new race will be a mixture of Hawaiian, Caucasian and Asiatic, while its psychological, social, and moral characteristics will be distinctly American.”57 Influenced by the ideology of Eugenics, Gulick wrote about Hawaii in an “effort to describe the various factors that are ‘weaving the polyracial elements of the population of Hawaii into a single unified people – the Neo-Hawaiian American race.” These scholars believed the blending of these races would lead to the creation of a Hawaiian superman, all the best of the different ethnicities but full of American values.

In the 1970s, the sociology department of University of Hawai`i at Manoa was still drawn to the old story of the “melting pot.” Writers like Hormann claimed that these groups did not assimilate but amalgamated; instead of assimilating into a dominant culture, immigrants to Hawai`i “melted” their best cultural aspects into one single “Local” culture: “Thus, all groups will eventually become one group with one culture, and physical difference will be difficult to identify due to mass melting among the people.”58 These writers believe that the large number of mixed race individuals, one quarter of Hawai`i’s population, indicate the inevitable melting away of race and ethnicity. 59

In more recent years, academics have put forth alternative “melting pot” metaphors in order to describe how the many different cultures could form one united, harmonious culture while still retaining distinct ethnic identities. Phenice, writing about family and education in Hawai`i during the 1990s, describes the “Hawaiian Salad Bowl,” in which all of the different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds exist next to each other, sharing values and histories but not

58 Danico 47
“melting” into one homogenous whole – retaining individual ethnic identity.\textsuperscript{60} Writing as recently as 2011, psychologist John McDermott used the “Stew Pot” model as an organizing theme for his book \textit{People and Cultures of Hawaii\textsuperscript{\textvisiblespace}i: each ethnicity is a unique ingredient covered by a unifying gravy.\textsuperscript{61} They describe Hawaii\textsuperscript{i} as a “cross cultural laboratory” and a multicultural model for the rest of the US to look at as an example. Glen Grant and Dennis Ogawa, believed that Hawaii\textsuperscript{i} was a positive exemplar of many ethnicities coexisting peacefully; writing in the 1990s shortly after the ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, they wanted to address “the recent interest in the unmeltable aspects of ethnicity [that] has raised certain concerns about the prospects of the United States’ being able to survive balkanization along racial, ethnic, and other minority group lines.”\textsuperscript{62}

I believe that a better theoretical models to use when looking at Hawaii\textsuperscript{i} are pluralism and multiculturalism. “Bifurcated pluralism” shares some similarity with the idea of the “stew pot;” according to Michael Haas it is “when ethnic groups adapt to a monocultural mainstream in public, yet maintain a strong ethnic identification in private life.”\textsuperscript{63} A facet of bifurcated pluralism is that the ethnic groups do not challenge “mainstream politicoeconomic control;”\textsuperscript{64} however, in Hawaii\textsuperscript{i} there are some ethnic groups that do challenge the norm. Native Hawaiians have been fighting for more socio-political power since the 1970s, and recent Micronesian immigrants are trying to hold on to their rights to medical care. Multiculturalism may hold a complement to this idea of pluralism: “In a multicultural society, various ethnic groups recognize

\begin{itemize}
\item Phenice 107-108
\item Grant 138
\item Haas 9
\item Haas 9
\end{itemize}
that they are integral parts of a more encompassing whole yet insist that the contributions of their cultures to the larger society must be recognized.”

Kottak and Kozaitis describe multiculturalism as a political manifestation of diversity; they add to the above definition that it holds the practice of seeking economic, political, and cultural parity for minority groups. I believe that the Hawai`i is somewhere in between these two models; whiles some ethnic groups such as the native Hawaiians believe in seeking the ideals of multiculturalism, however, the ethnic groups that have higher socioeconomic status such as Japanese-Americans are much less interested in challenging ethnic stratification because they do not feel inequality from their positions. While there is a “normative emphasis on getting along with and accepting others” and the idea of tolerance and peaceful existence, this attitude is generally only between groups that have a long history in the islands. An interviewee told me that being Local means respecting others; knowing something of other cultures and showing respect in advance; however, understanding doesn’t always indicate respect.

All of the models situated above are used frequently in attempts to analyze the population data of Hawai`i. Many social scientists who choose to look at Hawai`i do so because they are fascinated by the amount of multiethnic or “hapa” individuals. Recent generations, the descendants of plantation workers who take part in what Grant and Ogawa coined a “multicultural lifestyle,” found ethnic group boundaries more flexible than their parents and

---

65 Haas 10
67 Okamura 21
68 Interview with “Diana”
began to marry more frequently outside of their own ethnic group, creating a large population of multiethnic individuals.\textsuperscript{69}

![Population of Hawaii 1900-2000](image)

In this chart, one can see one of the biggest difficulties in assigning labels to ethnic groups; I believe that the sharp increase in the “other” category is due to the large mixed race individuals in Hawaii. The 1990 census requires one to fill out only one race or ethnicity, however the 2000 census allows individuals to select one or more race.\textsuperscript{71} These individuals are then registered under a multiracial category, and therefore the “Other” category. Given the option to assert multiple races, 21.4 percent of Hawaii residents claimed membership in two or more races, which is nine times greater than for the United States as a whole (2.4 percent). About one-third of these individuals claimed three or more races.\textsuperscript{72}

By 1991, 45.9\% of all marriages were between people of different ethnicities.\textsuperscript{73} These marriages led to a rise in the number of mixed individuals; the data from censuses only records

\textsuperscript{69} Grant 148-149 and Johnson 242


\textsuperscript{72} Okamura (2008)

\textsuperscript{73} Grant 151 – The number of temporary residents skews this number. While state records include records of tourists who travel to Hawaii to get married then leave, and military personnel who marry during a short tour, it is harder to see the data for just permanent residents. Grant believes that tourists and military personnel are more likely to be marrying within their own ethnic group.
mixed-ness along racial lines, however in Hawai‘i people are more likely to identify as multiethnic rather than multiracial. In my interview with Eden, she told me that students in her class are never just called “Asian,” instead they are Japanese-Okinawan, or Japanese-Filipino. The name that seems to be most used to indicate mixed ethnicity is “hapa,” which initially meant “half” in Hawaiian. One of my interviewees proudly identified herself, “I’m hapa and I know it.” I found in my research that this term is most often used by people with at least some quantum of Hawaiian ancestry, although both in Hawai‘i and in California more people are using it to also identify people of mixed Asian ancestry, much to the distaste of many Kanaka Maoli who feel only Hawaiians have a right to this word.

To some extent, “the grounds on which a person may claim membership in one group or another consists of practice, place, and family connection” and in this sense, mixed race individuals can live within the ethnic groups of either parent. However, some hapa individuals tend to identify with some ethnicities more than others. Half-Asian and half-Caucasian individuals tend to be regarded by both themselves and others as hapa haole (half-white), rather than half-Asian. This comes from the legacy of World War II when the Japanese felt the need to over-emphasize their American-ness in order to visibly align their loyalties with their new country, not their ancestral homeland. Being hapa haole became associated with being Americanized, a status that Asian immigrants associated with greater success. According to my initial research, part Hawaiians are least likely to omit their native identity, while they are most likely to exclude their Asian and European backgrounds, most likely due to both the upsurge in

74 Interview with “Eden”
76 Johnson 242-243
78 Danico 47
native pride and institutionalized benefits that stem from the Hawaiian Movement of the 1970s. The comedian Bu La`ia captures this tendency in his joke: “How much Hawaiian am I. OK, one mo’ time: Bu La`ia is 100 percent Hawaiian, 10 percent Chinese, 5 percent Haole, an’ 3 percent Samoan.” In the course of my interviews, a multiethnic woman told me she didn’t really identify as any ethnicity, but that her mom was part Hawaiian so she is too; however I also met a man with a Hawaiian grandmother who identified as Caucasian.

Individual ethnicity is still a pertinent marker of identity among the people of Hawaii, even among those of mixed ancestry. More political and opinionated writers argue that this “discourse of Hawai`i as a multiethnic plurality, a ‘rainbow’ of people coexisting in social harmony” is a hegemonic tool so that “[h]istory and continuing social inequities are rendered harmless, transformed into exhibits, entertainment, and spectacles of ethnic food and customs.” Such ideas that “Hawai`i is the one state where no ethnic group dominates” ignore the deep and inherent economic and social ills that statistics prove are linked to ethnicity.

In terms of income alone, inequalities follow ethnic lines; Japanese and Chinese Americans have been able to attain higher levels of economic security and higher occupational status, while the Filipino, whole and part-Hawaiian communities have been disproportionately over-represented in the lower income ranges. According to the median income for each group in the 1990 census, Chinese families rank highest economically, Japanese second, Caucasians third, Filipinos fourth, and Hawaiians fifth.

---

79 Price
80 Price
81 Interview with “Natalie”
82 Buck
83 Danico 44 - In saying that no group has a majority, as many other sources do as well, Danico is separating the Census’ “Asian American” category into its constituent ethnic groups. Otherwise, this Asian American category would be the largest ethnic group.
84 Grant 153-154
85 Hitch 243
Writing in 1972, sociologist Bernhard Hormann identified the three main socioeconomic groups in Hawai`i by ethnicity, which would prove true until today:

[…] a pool of low academic achievers, the semi-skilled, unskilled, and unemployed who tend to be from the Hawaiian, Samoan, Filipino, and Puerto Rican groups. A second pool mixes those more successful in school: skilled workers, retailers, service workers, again from all ethnic groups, but so far mainly Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, part-Hawaiians, and Portuguese. In the third pool are the businessmen and professional people, ethnically Caucasian, Japanese, and Chinese, with some participation, but on a smaller scale, of all the other ethnic groups.86

Since then, the nature of Hawaii’s social stratification has hardly changed; according to Okamura, writing based on the 2000 census, Japanese Americans, Caucasians, and Chinese Americans hold higher status in the occupational scale, working mostly in the management/business, professional, and sales and office categories and are underrepresented in blue collar work. Korean Americans were in the intermediate range of the occupational status, and at the lower end of the occupational status scale are Samoans, Filipino Americans and native Hawaiians, who are excessively employed in production/transportation and in service work.87

A significant number of the more highly educated individuals (predominantly Japanese, Chinese, and white) are leaving Hawaii in order to pursue higher education or find work on the mainland, knowing that it would be difficult to find employment back home. This creates an

---

86 Hormann 234
87 Okamura 49
artificially low unemployment rate in Hawaii; this brain drain “serves as a safety valve that reduces the pressure on the job market,” for if those in the brain drain did choose to return home for work, they would take up many of the available jobs and in fact increase unemployment. For the more affluent ethnic groups – Japanese, Chinese, and white – ethnicity actually provides greater benefits, because:

[… ] these groups, or at least a significant number of their members, control the stratification order by occupying positions of authority and power. From their positions in various institutional sectors of society, such as government, education, economy, and law, they are able to make decisions and take actions that benefit members of their own ethnic groups to a greater extent than members of other groups.

Okamura argued that this inequality is due to the inaction of institutions such as the University of Hawai`i system. Because institutions such as this do have representation of Asian American groups, they do not seek further implementation of equal opportunity and affirmative action policies for underrepresented Hawaiians and Filipinos. This might go towards explaining why over eighty percent of Chinese, Japanese, and Caucasians finish high school, while less than sixty percent of Filipinos and Hawaiians graduate.

I think the better way to describe the culture of Hawai`i, which to some means “Local,” is as Yamamoto describes it in his oft referenced thesis “The Significance of Local”: Local is polycultural, which means the ability to live and participate in the mixed culture comfortably, understanding and sharing some cultural aspects with other groups. While this indicates the familiarity between the ethnicities, and the closeness with which they coexist, it does not immediately imply perfect harmony. I think a good way of seeing an example of this is in the idea of ethnic communities in Hawai`i. Many sources claim that “racial” communities in Hawai`i

88 Okamura 40
89 Okamura 56
90 Okamura 58 and 61
91 Hitch 245-6
92 Yamamoto 103
may be used by immigrants as they transition into the culture, but they categorically deny the
continued presence of ethnic communities, specifically by citing the lack of any true.93

However, I asked all of my informants whether or not they thought there were ethnic
communities in Hawai`i. Every single person said that yes, there definitely were ethnic
communities, although they had never thought of them that way before. They claimed that while
different neighborhoods had the reputation of being for this or that ethnicity, this was mostly
because they are either remnants of plantation camps or were just because people tended towards
family members or friends.94 However, one hapa girl admitted that her parents would not let her
go to Puna, a neighborhood with a reputation for being for Hawaiians and Filipinos, without her
friend who lived there. I think this contradiction within depictions of ethnic neighborhoods can
be used to understand Hawai`i as a whole: the people who write about Hawai`i have one
somewhat idealized viewpoint that supports harmonious ethnic relations, while the people you
talk to in the everyday will admit that there are visible lines between ethnicities, and sometimes
people will hint that there is much more ethnic stereotyping and prejudice than the visitor will
find among the rainbow descriptions of Hawai`i.

The Defining Moment of Local Identity

The same series of land-related issues that the budding Native Hawaiian Rights
movement organized around were originally framed as specifically Local struggles.95 In 1970,
the Bishop Estate evicted farmers from Kalama Valley, a residential and rural area, in favor of a
development project. Not just the Hawaiians, but also the other local people that had been living

93 Lind (1982) 137
94 Interviews with “Stan” and “Rachel”
on these lands protested against these actions. The best way of framing these land rights movements is as a reaction to globalization; Okamura (2008) and Kent (1999) theorize that in the face of rapid globalization, localism reacts and becomes stronger. Outside forces such as foreign investment and land development for tourism had a visibly increased presence in Hawai`i during the sixties and the seventies, and these signs of globalization made the poorer citizens feel more hopeless and bitter.

The evictions came during a time when a variety of other situations occurred nationally and internationally, such as the Civil Rights movement and the protests against the Vietnam War, and only a decade after Hawai`i officially became a state. When the evictions occurred, the evicted residents and political activists created grassroots organizations to protest the development of the land, the most prominent was Kōkua Kalama (help Kalama), whose methods and organization was inspired largely by the Black Panthers. The leadership of this group held close times to the struggle for ethnic studies in the University of Hawai`i system. Larry Kamakawiwo’ole was a leader of the Ethnic Studies program and Kōkua Hawai`i. Much like the Asian American movement on the West Coast and the concurrent push for Asian American studies program, the Local movements, marked by its multiethnic character, occurred alongside this fight for ethnic studies.

97 Kent 281-282
98 Okamura (2008) 97
101 Niheu 45
Many of the members of Kōkua were students in the fledgling ethnic studies program. The group was originally Local in flavor; according to a member of the group’s original leadership, Soli Kihei Niheu:

We had them all: Korean, Gwen Kim, Mary Choy, Linton and Dana Park; Japanese, Ko Hayashi and Lucy Witeck; Filipino, Ray Catania and Joy Ibarra, I think; Pake [Chinese], Carl Young; Kānaka Maoli, Roy Santana. Many Kānaka Maoli but mixed blood, Locals, also participated103

The people involved initially were just attempting to protect their homes and livelihoods; however a Bishop Estate official made a comment that “In the modern world, the Hawaiian lifestyle is and ought to be illegal,” indicating the lifestyle of those who live off the land.104 This made the people involved, both Hawaiian and Local, feel as if they were now fighting racism as well as a threat to their land, drawing more attention to their movement. In 1971, Kōkua Kalama changed its name to Kōkua Hawai`i, in order to indicate its support of other concurrent land struggles as well as to generate “global understanding.”105 Indeed, articles about these struggles appeared in two different journals focused on other social movements: Black Panther and Roots: an Asian American Reader.

103 Niheu 45
105 Niheu 47
Published in the same section of *Roots* as the above picture, an article on the Kalama Valley protests clearly defines the goals of the group and the concerns of the Local people:

1. We must stop the rezoning of agricultural land for urban use and halt tourist and urban development.
2. We must control immigration. Our local people must come first.
3. We must guard the ecology of our islands.
4. We must free our people from the land monopolies.
5. We must work towards economic self-sufficiency for our islands.
6. We demand that the development planned for Kalama Valley by the Hawaii-Kai Development Corporation with the cooperation of the Bishop estate be brought to a complete and permanent halt.\(^{106}\)

In this decade, Local came to symbolize people who belong to Hawai`i and were struggling to regain control the land and future of Hawai`i.\(^{107}\) Some groups described these efforts in the 1970s to fight against external forces as “Palaka Power,” referring to the durable cloth used to make clothing for plantation laborers and others of Hawai`i’s working class.\(^{108}\) While this never became an organized political movement, a few politicians and political activists worked under this slogan during the 1978 State Constitutional Convention to protest the interests and values of the Local people.\(^{109}\) In an article written on Palaka Power, written in the time leading up to the convention, it is clear that the author felt that neither the Democratic nor Republican parties would adequately represent Local needs.\(^{110}\) David Hagino (State Representative and “principal theorist of the Palaka Power initiative) claimed that the failure of the initiative was “the Yuppie generation of political leaders.”\(^{111}\)

Throughout the seventies, locals and Hawaiians alike protested similar abuses of land, however the frame of the protests began to shift towards specifically native Hawaiian rights over Local rights. Native Hawaiians held the majority of the leadership roles for Kōkua Kalama/Hawai`i, but later in the 1970s, these leaders became involved in a multitude of organizations.\(^{112}\) After those early fights for land rights, I have found no reference to any more Local movements, instead focused turned towards protesting the abuse of the land, not its sale to developers. While there is not much focus on how or why these specifically Local movements


\(^{107}\) Yamamoto 106


\(^{109}\) Okamura (1994) 174-5

\(^{110}\) This came from a PDF source through ILL that had no author, however written on the original scan of the document was “Lind,” which may mean the Professor of Sociology at University of Hawai, Andrew Lind

\(^{111}\) Okamura (1994) 175

\(^{112}\) Niheu 48
ended, I believe that over the course of these movements, the struggles of the Hawaiians have
drawn more focus. The Hawaiians within Kōkua Hawai`i were uncomfortable being associated
with the Kalama Struggles because too many haole protesters were allied with it; in order to keep
native Hawaiian support, Kōkua Hawai`i decided that only Kānaka Maole and Locals could be a
part of the leadership, “[a]nd by local [he] mean[s] those peoples who were oppressed by the
plantations system.”113 The group also asked some white activists and environmentalists to leave
in order to “ensure that the flavor was local”; these concessions to native Hawaiian interests
marks, in my opinion, the shift in these organizations’ interests toward native Hawaiian goals.
Later specifically Hawaiian movements also resisted aid from mainland activists, believing that
as soon as their “haole” goals are achieved, they would cease to support their indigenous
goals.114

In the end, resistance to evictions and development failed in Kalama Valley, and the
group eventually disbanded. Hawaiians had a stronger collective identity as well as stronger
ideology. Theirs was a nativist movement, which Linton defines as “any conscious organized
attempt on the part of a society’s members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture”
(Linton 1943: 230).115 The Native Hawaiian people united around the loss of their sovereignty,
their kingdom, their land, and the erosion of their culture. Their shared identity stretched back
centuries. However, the Local people may have had the years under the oppressive plantation
system to bond, but historically it took until the mass Longshoremen unionization in the 1940s
for the different ethnicities to put aside their own political agendas and focus instead on uniting
despite ethnic lines. The reality of the land struggles was that farmers lost their land and found

113 Niheu 46
114 Niheu 55
115 Quoted in Boulanger, Lori A.. “Resisting coercive assimilation”: identity, empowerment, and activism in the native Hawaiian
movement on Hawai‘i Island. Albany: State University of New York at Albany, 1999. 23
support from excited students enthused by the recent success in creating an ethnic studies program, however the Hawaiians were organizing around a renewed ethnic pride and identity and a strong and ancient shared culture.

The native Hawaiian population had been effectively silenced during the years of the provisional and territorial governments that feared a rebellion, and therefore repressed expression of Hawaiian culture by banning their language, their dance, and even their ability to define themselves as Native Hawaiian. Following the land movements, Hawaiians began to seek socioeconomic, political, and cultural recognition, through protests and the resurgence of their native traditions and religion. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Hawaiians experienced a “Hawaiian Renaissance,” revitalizing, reconstructing, and de-colonizing native Hawaiian identity.

By 1976, one can see how the prominent land struggles are focusing on native Hawaiian political concerns, specifically over Kahoʻolawe Island, a small island which the military had been using as a bombing target since 1941. Due to some archaeological evidence of pre-contact habitation, the Hawaiians believed the island was sacred and an important part of their ancient religion. Since 1971 environmentalist groups had been petitioning the Navy to stop bombing and clean up the island, but the protests were most heated by the late seventies.

The Protect Kahoʻolawe Association (later Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana) staged a series of landings and occupations of the island, inspired by the American Indian Movement’s occupation of Alcatraz; a large group of activists would swim over to the island, and while many

---

116 Trask 68
117 Laenui 50
119 Ohana means family in Hawaiian
were waylaid by the Coast Guard, some would reach the island and stay a night or two.\textsuperscript{120} The protests gained in force after two young activists were lost in their attempt to occupy the island.\textsuperscript{121} The movement evolved from these “various demonstrations and occupations to dramatize the exploitative conditions of Hawaiians” in opposition to land abuse to “assertions of Native forms of sovereignty based on indigenous birthrights to land and sea.”\textsuperscript{122} Moving into the 1980s, political activism focusing on Local control of the land had lost all cohesion or organization; instead the native Hawaiian demands for restitution broadened into a demand for native sovereignty.\textsuperscript{123}

Despite the shift of focus onto the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, I found the legacy of the 1970s land struggles during my interviews in Hawai`i. People during the 1970s and 1980s asserted Local identity because they were acutely aware of globalization’s threat to their way of life and livelihood. They felt threatened by the development for tourism that encroached on their land use, the increasing number of foreign investment pouring into the islands, and the increasing number of white working class people moving in from the mainland. The manifestation of this fear was in the way these newcomers and other Caucasians by association were treated during the 1980s.

Sarah, who moved from Chicago to Honolulu during this time, told me many stories about trying to find work in the hotels and being told to “go home;” she continued to be harassed even when she moved to the Big Island and provided potential employers with her work history in the islands.\textsuperscript{124} Once she had worked for long enough in Hawai`i, Sarah stopped adding her work history in Chicago. Stan also told me that his coworkers would harass him when he first

\begin{footnotes}
\item[120] Kajihiro 179
\item[121] Kajihiro 180-181
\item[122] Trask 66
\item[123] Trask 69
\item[124] Interview with “Sarah”
\end{footnotes}
moved back to Hawai`i from O`ahu, because he looked white. The fight against the big businesses failed, and in their powerlessness Locals instead lashed out against all signs of outsiders in the islands. However, as I will demonstrate when I discuss my interviews more in depth, I did not find continued signs of this resentment in the generations that did not experience the movements of the 1970s or their aftermath. I spoke to Tina, a woman a little older than Sarah, who moved to Hawai`i only eight years ago; Tina did not feel that she was excluded from finding work. She did not express feeling that she discriminated against for being Caucasian.

Narrative of Local in Print and Media

Almost every form of media in Hawai`i promotes the romanticized multicultural idea of Hawai`i, however, the image of “a warm body of people, peacefully coexisting” is predominantly an idea, not a reality. The Honolulu-based newspapers and magazines focus on the trivial aspects of Local culture like food and clothing, while also placing a disproportionately strong emphasis on the role of native Hawaiian culture. The so-called “Local” literature, while also trivializing the values and components of what it means to be Local, predominantly represents Asian Americans while claiming to speak on behalf of a “local community.”

Magazines and fiction are much more accessible and appeal to a wider audience, than sociological studies and academic discourses which are isolated in classrooms or conferences.

During their interviews, both Diana and Rachel described meeting people from the mainland and being asked, “Do you live in straw huts and wear grass skirts?” My own understanding of Local was from the materials I could find from the mainland, especially the Local literature; they portray a vastly different idea of Hawai`i than the reality I found in my

interviews. Following Diana and Rachel’s interviews, I looked into what websites aimed and tourists said about Hawai`i. Travel websites describe Hawai`i primarily in terms of the native Hawaiian culture. Under “Hawaiian Islands: Hawaiian Culture” the website Pacific Island Travel described stereotyped aspects of traditional Hawaiian culture (as in, predominantly aspects of the pre-contact culture that have been revived since the 1970s). The article describes the traditional art, hula, the steel guitar, and the idea of Aloha Aina, and the Hawaiian language and its relationship to pidgin — “a lively, ever-changing local slang.” The only times aspects of the wider culture of Hawai`i is to depict the “melting pot”:

Traditional Hawaiian culture and the customs of Hawai`i’s ethnically diverse immigrants are an integral part of the social fabric. This is not simply a place where East meets West, but a place where the cultures merge in a manner which seems to bring out the best in all of them.

The image created by sites like this is one of an island paradise populated by mostly by the “exotic.” Even when discussing “Local” specifically, magazines and newspapers put emphasis on trivial aspects of Local culture and gear their articles towards newcomers, not Locals themselves.

Two relatively recent articles have appeared in Honolulu based media focused on Locals: one in the Honolulu Star Advertiser in 2007 and another in the Honolulu Magazine in 2011. Both articles are similar in the aspects of “Local” on which they choose to focus. The 2007 article described local culture for the newcomer to Hawai`i; it focused mostly on the widespread use of Pidgin, and encouraged anyone new to Hawai`i to buy *Pidgin to Da Max* in order to learn the language.¹²⁶ This strong emphasis disregards the fact that Pidgin has now come to be associated with being poor, working class, and uneducated. A woman told me, in a Pidgin accent, that speaking Pidgin makes you sound ignorant. The only other parts of Local that the article described were superficial: driving with Aloha, removing footwear when entering a house,

wearing rubber “slippers,” and telling ghost stories. At the end, the article claimed “[t]he most important thing to remember: relax, you’re in Hawaii.”

The more recent article, “43 Things Every Local Must Do,” was published both in print and online by Honolulu Magazine.\(^{127}\) It hit upon the same points as the other article, but read much more like a series of advertisements. The first “thing to do” is go to Long’s drugs, a drug store that used to be locally owned but is now a part of CVS. Like the previous article, this claims everyone in Hawai`i owns a copy of *Pidgin to Da Max* and *Da Kine Dictionary*. In this article, it used the custom of taking your shoes off before entering a house to advertise for shoe racks. Connecting the article to the magazine’s cover that issue, it claimed that every local must get a cameo on Hawaii Five-O. When the article wasn’t an advertisement, it focused on superficial features of Local: playing the ukulele, being able to string a lei, making a shaka hand-sign, eating shave ice, liking musubi, and craving raw seafood.

Articles like these undermine the fact that Local is more than just learning to speak right or eat the right things; for many people in Hawai`i, being Local means growing up in the islands and participating in a very specific experience. On the other hand, even those who *have* been born and raised in Hawai`i describe what it means to be a part of the Local identity on a surface level. A generation of writers who identify specifically as “Local” have generated a body of work that calls itself Local literature; their work tends to include Pidgin and deals with themes surrounding the diverse nature of Hawai`i’s population.

In 1978, at the tail end of the Local movements, non-white writers in Hawai`i organized “Talk Story, Our Voices in Literature and Song: Hawai`i’s ethnic American Writers’

Conference,” aimed at writers of Local heritage.\textsuperscript{128} The goal was to “confront the plantation owner aesthetic of haole arbiters in the University of Hawai`i’s Department of English.”\textsuperscript{129} After the conference, there was a boom in the amount of “Local” literature that was published, however the most successful group to come out of this moment was Bamboo Ridge: The Hawai`i Writer’s Quarterly. It is the most successful literary journal in Hawai`i, receiving funding from the state foundation on Culture and the Arts; it is run by the Bamboo Ridge Study Group, a tight knit group of “Asian Americans” who prefer to be identified as Local.\textsuperscript{130} Because of the group’s success and visibility, it appears on the surface that these writers are producing all of the worthwhile literature in Hawai`i right now.

I looked specifically at the anthology entitled Growing Up Local, because the author of the afterward, a high school teacher in Hawai`i, identified four “important” facets of Local culture that are not only the unifying themes of the whole anthology, but are also similar to the characteristics that the two articles agree are important: Love of the Land, Grinding, Diversity, and The Voice.\textsuperscript{131} The samples of Local literature that I read put a lot of importance on these values, but sometimes it was difficult to find examples of these values during my field work.

“Love of the Land. The sea, the mountains, everything in between. There is a sense that local people actively cherish the land, enjoying what it has to offer and being concerned about its preservation.”\textsuperscript{132} Love and respect for the land, Aloha ʻĀina and Malama ʻĀina respectively, were ancient Hawaiian values that many Local writers feel are important to them, but in writing this way, they are inadvertently appropriating aspects of Hawaiian culture as their own.\textsuperscript{133} I think

\textsuperscript{128} Morales 109
\textsuperscript{129} Morales 110
\textsuperscript{130} Morales 109
\textsuperscript{132} Teter 348
\textsuperscript{133} Phenice 113
the “Local” connection to land originally stems from the resistance to the land evictions in the 1970s. Just as native Hawaiians branched off into their own specific movement, Hawaiian writers push for Kanaka Maoli literature to be considered separate from the broader Local identity. Kanaka Maoli writers and activists feel that “Local” literature is an “erasure of centuries of native literary tradition;” American ideas of literature don’t easily recognize the collective (no one author) or oral stories. Kanaka writers also think that combining non-Native and Native writing is detrimental to the Kanaka literature because each group has different relationships to the land; the native Hawaiians are working on nation building and restitution, and feel their ties are stronger. This difference is reflected in the writing: haole and Local literature represents the land as a beautiful and beloved backdrop, while Kanaka Maoli make the land a character in and of itself.

“Grinding. Local people love to eat, love variety in what they eat, and love to talk about what they love to eat.” The writers for Bamboo Ridge repeatedly use the metaphor of food to describe Local culture and an individual’s relationship to it. The idea that the “mixed plate” nature of Local cuisine represents the diversity of its people is pervasive throughout the stories in this anthology. These authors also use a character’s taste buds to shed light on how Local they are; anyone who dislikes stereotypically Local food is therefore not Local. There is one short story about a Japanese mother who keeps trying to make her daughter’s hapa-haole boyfriend eat Asian food he does not like:

```
"He doesn’t want to eat it, Mom,’ my voice cracked. ‘Don’t force him to eat it, all right?’ ‘Nah that’s okay. I’ll take it,’ Jeremy said uneasily. ‘See now, Mariko. Jeremy not only haole boy, ah?’ […] ‘Does it make him a good boyfriend just because he eats local food?’"
```

134 Ho’omanawanui, Ku’ualoha. Ed. Candace Fujikane, and Jonathan Y. Okamura. “‘This Land Is Your Land, This Land Was My Land’: Kanaka Maoli versus Settler Representations of ‘Āina in Contemporary Literature of Hawai’i.” Asian settler colonialism from local governance to the habits of everyday life in Hawai’i. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008. 119-120
135 Ho’omanawanui 119
136 Ho’omanawanui 120
137 Teter 348
Demonstrating a love for Local food is used as proof of the character’s loyalty to Local culture. In a book by a half-Chinese, half-Hawaiian girl, sharing a distinctly Local food (in this case crackseed, a seasoned and dried plum) is a way of creating a bond between both sides of her family:

Crackseed sisters, that’s what we are. Lucy, you, Nona, me. Aunty, daughter, mother, niece. We are sisters all the same. Talking story, eating crackseed, crying […] Our tongues grow raw from sucking seeds. We laugh until we cannot feel the pain.138

Also in this book, the author describes how her father taught her to mix poi in order to teach her about her Hawaiian side. These authors portray food as a way of transmitting the Local culture, as well as proving one’s affinity with it; while within the literature food acts as a metaphor, the author’s portrayal of its importance is too overemphasized to be an accurate depiction. Local food works nicely as a metaphor, and it is a point of family bonding, as Rachel told me, however, “Local kine food” is not something that Local identity rallies around.

“Diversity. You can’t just tolerate difference. You have to celebrate them [different ethnicities], revel in them, know what’s going on.”139 In Local literature, multiethnic people are generally considered Local: “I wuzn’t sure wot she wuz really. Maybe little bit Japanese, Hawaiian, Filipino, and maybe little bit haole too. Woteveah she wuz she looked full on Local.”140 Multiethnic writers frequently present the “Pidgin” and “mixed plate” idea of Local:

“People will say/ eyes are big enough to see out of;/ at least got height; lucky/ get haole blood // No matter too tall to see/ people underneath, at least/ never have to feel/ to much of any kine:/ she’s so … oriental.// And pidgin can be Pidgin/ without question.”141 These writings make it seem like mixed race or hapa people find their own cultural space within this idea of Local,

139 Teter 349
however my interviews painted a different picture. Two college-aged girls, both of mixed ancestry that included both Hawaiian and Asian backgrounds, made it clear that while their families and outsiders might consider them “Local,” they didn’t feel “Local.”

“The Voice. The debate over pidgin may rage in educational or academic circles, but there’s no uncertainty among [his] students: Pidgin is fo’ real. Don’t talk it if you can’t talk it, they say – but don’t dismiss it either. Even as pidgin evolves, it remains central to their understanding of what local is. Even kids who don’t speak it enjoy it, understand it, recognize it as the sound of “home.” If you wanna be local, gotta at least appreciate da kine.” I found more “Pidgin” or HCE from the short stories I read than from walking down the street in Hilo. Authors of Local literature choose to use HCE in opposition to colonial legacy and power.

“The use of HCE in local literature displaces the more powerful colonial language, standard English, from its privileged place at the center of mainstream as well as literary discourse […] [and is] a challenge to a key feature of colonial practice: the use of language policy as a means of social control and discrimination.”

Using Pidgin challenges the primacy of Standard English and attempts to emphasize that the language is still pertinent and important in local culture. In an interview with Honolulu Weekly, the prolific writer and editor for Bamboo Ridge Darrell Lum observed, “We continue to deny the value of our language. Local literature is about validating a people. When you acknowledge a language, you acknowledge a people.” These “Local” writers use HCE in their writing in protest to the “colonial” language, English. With pride they use HCE as a marker of their unique Local culture within Hawai`i and solidarity against the “haole.” However, within this use of “Pidgin” one can see the important disconnect between this Local literature, and what Local identity has become.

142 Interviews with “Rachel” and “Diana”
143 Teter 349
144 Romaine 531-532
145 Romaine 533
146 Romaine 533
The type of English one speaks in Hawaii can be a strong immediate indicator of ethnicity, as well as class difference. Traditionally, people in Hawai`i have associated speaking Standard English with being “haolefied” and with either lacking or intentionally leaving behind Local affinities.\(^\text{147}\) Especially during the plantation years, those in power were the only people who used Standard English, later it was only those who passed the test for Standard English schools, usually white or Japanese.\(^\text{148}\) It was only in 1960 that the last class of Standard students graduated high school; anyone who grew up in Hawai`i before then would have experienced segregation by language, and those who spoke HCE or had HCE accents would have been considered Local, however those who attended the non-standard schools either felt or were made to feel that they were less educated than those who attended standard schools.\(^\text{149}\) My interviewee Stan, despite having Hawaiian ancestry, identifies as Caucasian primarily because he attended the Punahou high school – the notoriously upper/middle class Caucasian high school famous for being Obama’s alma mater. “For the haoles I was Local, and for the Locals I was haole.”\(^\text{150}\)

The main writers for Bamboo Ridge, however, would not have gone through the non-Standard English program for very long, for when they began writing in the 1970s the main writers were in their twenties. These writers for Bamboo Ridge are overwhelmingly of specifically Asian ancestry, usually privileged middle class Chinese, Japanese, and Korean descendants of plantation immigrants.\(^\text{151}\) Looking at their own list of published, it is immediately apparent that there are no titles focused on Filipinos or native Hawaiians; on the other hand, the


\(^\text{148}\) Tamura 433

\(^\text{149}\) Tamura 437

\(^\text{150}\) Interview with “Stan”

\(^\text{151}\) Morales 113
titles show multiple anthologies dedicated to Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and one for hapa writers. This Local literature therefore only shows a very specific view of Local.

According to Darrell Lum, the part Chinese editor of many of the Bamboo Ridge anthologies, Local identity in Local literature is written in opposition to the “Asian American” label, which they feel is a specifically mainland term; for these writers, Hawaiian literature is specifically native Hawaiian and different from Local, explaining why native Hawaiian voices are missing from this body of literature.152 Many non-Asian writers feel as if the dominant role of middle class Asians as “spokespersons” has other-ized native Hawaiians and more recent working class immigrants, primarily Filipinos.153 “Local” literature presents Filipinos and Hawaiians in the background as “bookies, bullies, bums and criminals.”154 Instead of breaking stereotypes, many argue that Local literature encourages and strengthens them, in favor of the middle class Asian American groups.

However, these writers that contradict the mainstream idea of Local literature, the writers who argue that this literature is neo-colonialist, are all carrying out this discourse in the academic world of conferences, colloquiums, and classrooms.155 When people read this literature without knowledge of these debates, they see ethnicities as they are depicted, often stereotyped, in the writings of these Asian Americans. This literature supports rather than contradicts the use of the term “Local” in the news, where predominantly reporters use the term to refer to the “Local Criminal.” This phrase evokes not the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans writers, but instead it conjures the image of Polynesians, Filipinos, or decidedly dark-skinned people.156

**Literature v Reality: the contrasting realities of Local identity**

---

152 Morales 115  
153 Morales 115  
154 Morales 122  
155 Morales 122  
156 Morales 125
When I began searching for people to interview, I was very surprised to find that the only people interested in participating in my interviews were Caucasians. I thought, from both my research and from my experiences last time, that much more people would be interested to talk to me about Local culture because they were proud to call themselves Local. Yet when asked to sit down and formally speak to me, the only ones to agree were Caucasians who did not feel Local.

In the state of Hawai`i, especially on the Big Island, Caucasians are not a numerical majority. In the county of Hawai`i (which constitutes only the Island of Hawai`i) Caucasians constituted one third of the entire population according to the 2010 Census, and in the Hilo area specifically they represent only eighteen percent. The Caucasians I spoke to were very frank about feeling stigmatized by the people they considered “Locals,” and generally excluded from a larger “Local” identity. “Haoles” in Hawai`i have a long history of being the dominant ethnicity, which has led to resentment from the subjugated groups that contribute the to the accepted idea of a Local. The Caucasians I interviewed gave me the impression that the stereotypical Local is racist and backwards, however even after they hinted at this idea of Local, my interviewees frequently contradicted themselves by falling back on the same tropes as the above narratives of Local.

On the other hand, the younger people I spoke to emphasized the non-racist nature of “Local” to such an extent that it was clear they were trying to counter a negative stereotype. Even though they did not identify personally as Local, their families were Local. The tourist friendly media, Local literature, and even academic literature focus on the idea of Local created by those who use a more politicized Local identity, much like Local was used during the 1970s. The established literature on Local culture focused too much on this version of Local identity particular to upper/middle class Asian Americans on O`ahu, an identity that focuses on being
different from Asian American identity on the mainland and emphasizing their connection to Hawai`i.

**Haole Go Home: Are Locals Racist?**

On one of the many bus rides I experienced during my first trip to Hawai`i, a new bus driver (white) repeatedly over-charged people for fares, particularly students, in spite of both official and unofficial bus policy. The half-hour journey turned into nearly two, with the passengers growing increasingly angry and verbally abusive to the bus driver, culminating with a fairly large Hawaiian man calling the driver a “fuckin’ haole.”

Judy Rohrer (who literally wrote the book on *Haoles in Hawai`i*) argues that there are three kinds of “haole” or white person: a haole, a dumb haole, and a dumb fucking haole.¹⁵⁷ She explains that the first is just a descriptive word, and while it carries the implication of the colonial and oppressively privileged role white people have historically played in Hawai`i, is not inherently used in a racist manner. She argues that Locals use the second, “dumb haole,” to describe white people who tend to be new to Hawai`i and do not understand how to behave in a culturally appropriate way, although she believes this to be predominantly neutral – merely a way ofexcusing the newcomer for his/her actions. The third, “dumb fucking haole,” is a much more directly aggressive phrase. This is used against white people, again generally from the mainland, who are more forcefully acting “haole” – arrogant, aggressive, ignorant of the islands’ cultures and histories, greedy, loud, and rude.¹⁵⁸

Despite these attempts to justify the use of the term “hoale,” many Caucasians in Hawai`i still feel discriminated against. While I was interviewing an 18-year-old hapa girl,

---

¹⁵⁷ Rohrer 54
¹⁵⁸ Rohrer 54
Rachel, in the art gallery where she works part time at, a student, a 40-year old Caucasian woman, Eden, began to interject her own sarcastic comments, pertaining in particular to the way “haoles” and Locals and Hawaiians treat newcomers.\textsuperscript{159} When I asked Rachel what attributes makes a person Local, Eden interjected, “There are some people who have lived their life here and are still not considered Local – depends on how you speak.” Eden’s comments were clearly making Rachel feel uncomfortable, so I made it clear that I was going to bring the interview to a close, Eden apologized saying that it was so interesting because she’s haole.\textsuperscript{160} Considering how vocal she was on the subject, I arranged to interview Eden on her own. Of the Caucasian people I had interviewed or met, she was clearly the most upset by her status of “haole.”

Eden was born and raised in Hawai`i, and married to a Japanese American man and works as a teacher at both the Kamehameha schools and ESL courses.\textsuperscript{161} Her initial definition of Local was that it was something she has never been able to call herself; it meant being a part of an accepted culture, and while in comparison to others she could be considered Local because she was born here, other times she wouldn’t be as Local as other people. However, very quickly she began describing a racial and ethnic component to Local. Eden believed that Locals are “decidedly non-white” and she also expressed skepticism that anyone of “purely Caucasian descent” could call him or herself Local, because she doesn’t believe anyone who was truly local would buy that: “It doesn’t matter if you’re born here, you’re still haole.”

Eden repeatedly emphasized the importance of skin color over culture in defining who could be Local. I asked what makes someone Local, and her response was that anyone who was not white or African American could eventually be considered Local. When I asked Anna, a hapa woman the same question, her response was “Can’t say skin color that’s for sure.” When I

---

\textsuperscript{159} Second Interview with “Rachel”
\textsuperscript{160} Pronounced the proper Hawaiian way: [how-leh] as opposed to [how-lee]
\textsuperscript{161} Interview with “Eden”
asked can you become Local if you were not born here, she responded, yes, if you are non-white and not African American, change the way you talk and act and assimilate with the culture. When I asked her what attributes make someone not Local, she claimed that pure Caucasian and pure African American are not Local ever “as far as I am concerned” and as far as her history. Growing up, she felt excluded for being white, however in her experience non-white people were more easily accepted. Eden explained that when her grandchildren moved to Hawai`i from California, they were more accepted because they weren’t entirely white. The children are both part Japanese and had a little bit of Filipino, and according to Eden, even though they didn’t know how to swim and spoke Standard English they looked just right.

Despite her assertion that white people could not be Local, when asked why Local is so non-white Eden gave me a very balanced historically based explanation that mirrored the plantation genesis narrative. Traditionally, white people have been the oppressors, because of the “terrible history of what white people have done to people on the islands.” Her position as a teacher in the Kamehameha schools places her between bitterness over the way she has been treated due to her race, and the pride in Hawaiian heritage she is meant to teach her Hawaiian students. While on the on hand she feels discriminated against, she understands and empathizes that Local identity was formed among people with shared oppression. Later in the interview, Eden stated that she was proudly non-Local, because “so many people have lived out their lives as a minority on the mainland, why should I cry about it here?” In her place as teacher, she hopes that the next generation is more open to accepting others’ ethnicities.

While Eden strongly believes that haole is outside of the Local identity, some interviewees felt that there were exceptions to the haole/Local dichotomy. I interviewed Stan, a
multiethnic man in his late 40s identified more with his mother’s Caucasian side, but still felt he could call himself Local. He explained:

To some people local means not haole. But I don’t agree with that because there are very much local haoles. You know, their families have been here for generations – or even some who haven’t been here for that long, totally just sort of got into the thing, the culture thing, and been here long enough to know what’s going on.162

I don’t believe his point of view completely contradicts Eden’s; unlike Eden, Stan is not purely white, but he did go to Punahou high school on O’ahu, which was opened as a school for missionary children and had remained notoriously white and expensive. Because of his history at a privileged high school, Stan felt he was a Local to the haoles and a haole to the Locals. While his time at Punahou marked him as a privileged haole, his ethnic background and to a larger extent his way of life marks him more as a Local. He lives on farmland left to him by his Hawaiian grandmother, drives a beat up pick up truck, and works as a cook.

Stan’s long-term girlfriend, Sarah, on the other hand is a Caucasian woman in her late 40s from the mainland, who moved to Hawai`i in her twenties. Sarah moved initially to O’ahu, and lived very close to Honolulu.163 She said she didn’t see “Local” that much, but heard about it happening in more out skirt areas, where “people judged you for not being Local.” For her, Local was not something associated with the city, but with rural areas. When she moved to the Big Island, Sarah found it much more difficult to find a new job, because she didn’t know the right people or have the right connections; when she finally found a job working on a farm owned by people who had “lived here their whole life but looked like haoles.” Outside of the interview, she told me of times when she and Stan had recently moved to the Big Island and were frequently called “fuckin’ haoles” by fellow employees at a hotel.

---

162 Interview with “Stan”
163 Interview with “Sarah”
Eden and other interviewees also believed that being able to speak HCE (they called it Pidgin) was another important marker of Local identity. Eden claimed, “somebody who is not white can become local if they start speaking Pidgin and assimilating and skin diving and fishing and eating the same foods and hanging out would be accepted rather quickly.” However, the language in which the interviewees spoke of the use of Pidgin made it clear that many believe the use of this language is largely considered backwards. Sarah believed that although Pidgin is “fun” to use within your own social group, it is good that many people can turn it off and on, because it can frequently be hard for people to understand HCE, and some people might look at the language as ignorant. Rachel, whose family is very Local and speaks HCE, believes that Pidgin is fine to speak at home, but people are “still expected to learn English properly,” and that you need to “learn to speak properly” or you will be considered illiterate. She explained that it is seen as academic success if you don’t speak Pidgin, while others would say the language is important because of its roots. This point of view must be the prevalent one, for while I definitely heard traces of the HCE accent and a few well-known Pidgin words, I never heard proficient use of HCE in day-to-day interactions. Stan used a few Pidgin phrases with his Filipino gardener, and Rachel slipped easily into a Pidgin way of speaking when quoting her family, but overall the language was not as dominant as I expected.

Between the recurrent theme that Locals are prejudiced and that HCE/Pidgin is a mark of ignorance, as well as the general vocabulary used by many of my interviewees, I believe that there is an underlying stereotype that Locals are racist. Stan explained that one reason people are considered not Local is when they are incapable of seeing things from a solely Local point of view, but that “if you’ve been out in the real world you realize how backwards things are here sometimes,” and that “Local” in Honolulu is more “urban and sophisticated,” inherently
implying that Locals in Hilo are rural and ignorant. Stan claimed that Local people present themselves as “more cosmopolitan than it really is.” This term “cosmopolitan” came up more than once; in a study on mixed race people in Hawai`i, Johnson and Root claimed that multiethnic people called themselves cosmopolitan, however I never came across this use of the word. Instead, it describes the difference between the city culture, in Honolulu, and the smaller town mentality of Hilo; the dictionary definition of cosmopolitan means being familiar with and at ease with many different cultures, which doesn’t seem like a problem for Hilo, which has a diverse population. I believe that by using this word they mean that Local people aren’t quite as accepting of other ethnic groups as they depict themselves.

Chris, a Caucasian high school counselor who moved to Hawai`i in the 1980s and is married a Hawaiian woman, most directly portrayed Local as an outdated, low class identity.164 He said that among the “lower echelon” Locals think they are better than haoles, and that he considered this a form of “provincialism.” He said that among the “lower classes” there is a sense of anti-intellectualism; they don’t want to listen to the Haole or the Japanese (here he imitated a Pidgin accent). On the other side of the coin, Caucasians in Hawai`i may unfairly limit the definition of Local to those of the “lower echelon” who fit the stereotype of the “fat, lazy Local” that comes up in Local literature or the news. I asked at the main bus terminal in Hilo if they knew of anyone who would talk about what it means to be Local, and the two Caucasian women running the terminal introduced me to a group of people who sat outside the bus station every day. I could never figure out exactly what they did, but the largely mixed race, Hawaiian and Filipino, group arrived around the same time my bus came into town in the morning, and one man, Mark, took the same bus into Pepeekeo I took in the evening. Some whittled walking sticks, but mostly the group just sat around the large sign between the bus depot and the park.

164 Phone interview with “Chris”
When I explained my project, a white man who was in the group told me I wouldn’t find anyone more Local than Mark. However, as I listened to Mark explain Local culture to me, I realized he was describing traditional Hawaiian culture, more. He said that Local means knowing how to live off the land: to fish, hunt, gather. Local means knowing how to work with your hands and make traditional crafts, such as carved walking sticks.

Over the course of my interviews, I began to doubt the validity of the use of this term Local as an active identity. Chris also told me that he hadn’t heard the phrase “Local” since he first came to the islands, shortly after the movements of the 1970s. Considering he is a high school counselor, and deals with the younger generation on a daily basis, I could only assume that having a “Local” identity is not as important anymore. From my interviews with hapa women in their late teens/early twenties, I believe that the current generations are losing their attachment to their parents and grandparents’ idea of a Local identity, because for so much of the population Local is seen as backwards and prejudiced.

**Defending Local, Denying Local**

While it is clear to me that Caucasians of Eden’s age, 30-50, have definitely experienced exclusion from the insider “Local” culture, the younger generations appear to have a different relationship to their parents’ idea of Local. Rachel, the young hapa girl, told me that “haole” is only a way of describing skin color, and the color of your skin has nothing to do with if you are Local or not. She was not taught that “haole” was a derogatory word growing up, but that “ha” meant breath and “Aole” meant no or none. Put together the words are meant to describe the paleness of the first foreigners to Hawai`i. However, while Rachel defended the word initially,
she did admit that she learned not to use that word in school, because “it can be racist sometimes.”

I also think that the younger generation doesn’t feel as much of an affinity with this idea of a “Local” identity as I came to expect from the literature on the subject. From the many articles and books that reference Local use the term to symbolize the people who belong to Hawai`i, their struggle to retain or regain control of Hawai`i, and the way in which the people of Hawai`i appreciate the goodness of the land, people, and cultures of Hawai`i. Hormann, an oft quoted and early academic focusing on Hawai`i’s people, defined the word “local” as referring to people who are clearly of Hawai`i, “preferably by birth, by upbringing, and by a fundamental loyalty to and identification with Hawaii.” These writers claim that the “Local” identity is one in which everyone born in Hawai`i is proud of:

> When an islander is asked, ‘What are you?’ by another islander […] it is not uncommon for the respondent to list all of his or her racial ancestral roots. When asked the same question by a tourist, however, the simple, proud response is, ‘Local.’

However, three of the mixed-ethnicity young women I spoke to defined their identity by how they felt their family would want them to define themselves. They admitted to being somewhat Local, however they made it clear that to some extent it is an identity placed upon them. Rachel explained how her family members defined herself and her hapa cousins by imitating one of her relatives, saying in a Pidgin accent: “Eh, well you white anyway but you know you’re Local.” Her relatives gave her and her cousins the nickname “hapa” because, being mixed race and at least a little bit Caucasian, they are “easy to pick out in the dark crowd.”

I believe that the distance they put between themselves and a Local identity is in order to distance themselves from the stereotype that Locals are racist. In my interviews, these young

---

165 Yamamoto 106
166 Hormann 232
167 Grant 151
168 First interview with “Rachel”
women, especially Rachel, seemed frequently defensive or guarded. For every comment that could seem negative to the idea of Local, these girls would follow them up with the assertion that Local people are friendly and welcoming and accepting. Towards the end of our first interview, Rachel outright questioned the motives of my project. She asked me why I was asking about Local, why was I interested in it; I explained that I was intrigued by this sense of a shared, interethnic culture, that I experienced on my last visit. This response seemed to set her at ease. I believe she was worried that I was conducting this research to look at the negative side of Local. She asked me if I could “relate” to what she was saying, if I could understand that if you try to become a part of a community they will accept you. Rachel explained that some people have the mentality that Hawai`i is full of “loud, lazy, fat, Local people,” but that the reality is that people do not judge as much – that people here have been learning about and accepting other cultures for years.

When I asked Diana if she identified herself as Local, she responded “sorta, kinda, not really”; she felt that many of the “local things” she sees around Hilo are heavily based on the Hawaiian influence, meaning that you have to be very friendly with other people. Diana did not feel as comfortable with the affection she described as very “Hawaiian,” such as kissing people on the cheeks when you first meet them. While, she consistently told me that Local was defined by being “nice” and accepting of all different people, when I asked her if the idea of Local was changing, Diana responded:

I would think so, for my small group of friends that I know we’re all pretty accepting […] so long as you’re respectful and friendly you’re fine, you’re Local, it’s all good. And then there are some other people who are maybe from the older generation, they don’t consider you Local just maybe because how you look or how you act around certain things. I would like to think that it’s changing to that we’re more open […] I think it’s getting better.\(^{169}\)

\(^{169}\) Interview with “Diana”
Diana is directly claiming that the older generations were not as accepting as the later
generations are. She thinks the attitude is “getting better” – but other than the above comment
that older generations may be prejudiced, she was very vague about specifically how and why
the older generations treated people they didn’t consider Local. Instead, Diana consistently
emphasized that Local was friendly, welcoming, and inclusive, which indicated to me that Diana
was defending “Local” against what she expected me to believe “Local” was.

When I asked the same question of Rachel – “do you think the idea of Local is
changing?” – she cast her answer in terms of the Americanization of Hawaii’s culture. As more
ideas are integrated into the culture, she explained, more things change, and peoples’ tastes
change. Rachel cited how people in Hawai`i like rock music, use MySpace, and wear name
brands from the mainland. She said that “Local” will change as the community “grows and
learns more,” and that this is how “progress” is made. She implies that Local used to be
somehow backwards.

The Asian American/Honolulu Point of View

Although the academic and creative literature discussing Local culture and identity
emphasizes positive aspects of Local, the pride people found within this identity, I
overwhelmingly found these three things in my interviews: 1) the popular stereotype of the idea
Local on the Big Island is understood as pertaining to working class, ignorant, and frequently
racist individuals of primarily Filipino and Hawaiian background; 2) the most important
qualification in order to be considered Local is to have a long history in the islands, either
through schooling or birth; and 3) Local isn’t as important to the younger generations as it used
to be even a few decades ago, or as it is portrayed in literature.
In order to situate this discrepancy between an apparent lack of Local feeling and the assertion in the literature that people are proud to be Local, I contacted Jonathan Okamura, professor of anthropology at University of Hawai`i at Manoa. During my conversation with him, I realized that this disconnect could very well be because most of the academic writers who discuss Local culture and identity are based out of the U of H Manoa campus on O`ahu (near Honolulu), this perspective is specific to O`ahu and inaccurate for describing the culture on the island of Hawai`i. The demographic and socioeconomic differences between Hilo and Honolulu are reflected in the different ideas of Local.

While the college students I spoke to felt they weren’t “Local”, Okamura said that his students (at the University of Hawai`i at Manoa, which has a reputation of being better and more expensive than the University of Hawai`i at Hilo) all feel that they are very Local. He said that earlier the same day he and I spoke, a Caucasian student was talking in class about how he felt that he was a Local haole. Okamura’s work solely frames Local identity in terms of the local versus globalization, the frame frequently used to frame the Local movement in the 1970s. While in our conversation, he told me to look skeptically at the way Local is in media, in his book on Hawai`i, Okamura argues that:

\[\text{The frequency of articles published on local identity and culture by the print media raises the question of why there is such a concern with these issues among Hawai`i’s people. I contend that the reason for this interest is because of the ongoing cultural and economic globalization of Hawai`i that threatens the persistence of local culture and identity.}^{170}\]

He cites, both in his book and in conversation with me, the presence of “big box” retail outlets as the visible presence of globalization that “Locals” feel is threatening their culture. However, Rachel used the presence of mainland name brands such as Fox and Roxy, or stores like Walmart as proof that Hawai`i isn’t completely disjointed from mainland culture, and to defend Hawai`i

\[\text{170 Okamura 117}\]
against the stereotype that everyone here “wears grass skirts and lives in huts.” Perhaps his view is accurate to O’ahu, but I did not find any sense that Local people today oppose global.

On the other hand, this “local” versus “global” conflict was mentioned in a few interviews, but not as Local *culture* versus globalization. Sarah, the small business owner, talked about the recent movement among stores on the bay front the main tourist attraction in Hilo, to encourage people to “buy local,” a slogan I have heard frequently even here in rural Vermont. Anna, a volunteer at the East Hawaii Cultural Center, also predominantly talked about “local” in relation to this phenomenon as well; when I asked her how the idea of “local” was changing, her response was that local was different now because the small business owners were being destroyed by bigger chain stores. Anna never really talked about “Local” as an identity.

Portrayals of “Local” from the frequent “You know you’re Local if …” discussions on the internet spur and articles such as “43 Things all Locals Must Do” more from a romanticized sense of nostalgia from upper/middle class Asian Americans and Caucasians who grew up in Hawai’i. I discussed this with Okamura, and he told me that Local no longer has much to do with class, and that upper/middle class Japanese and Chinese Americans are still considered Local; however, his point of view contrasts with the descriptions of Local from my informants. In almost every interview I was told that “Locals” are generally Filipino, Hawaiian, or mixed. Sarah even went as far as to say that in order to be considered Local one needed at least a little bit of Hawaiian blood.

I think that on the Big Island, “Local” is still thought of in terms of class; however there is also a distinction between how “Locals” are defined and how “being Local” is defined. All of my informers, even Eden whose opinion was more polarized, believed that if one behaved the right way, you could act in a local way. At the end of her interview, Sarah decided that the better
way of explaining the situation was that there are “Locals” and “local kind of people,” meaning people who are committed to living in Hawai`i. Yet, an outsider would only find a skewed idea of what “Local” culture means; most of the stereotypes in the media, even the tourist geared articles, draw from the shallow, romanticized, and nostalgic idea of “Local culture” exemplified by the now very large body of self proclaimed “Local” literature. I think that this body of work is important to look at, for not only does it form the dominant narrative of what “Local” means, it is also dominated by the specifically Asian American point of view.

In Hawai`i, Asian Americans are in the center of power; Japanese Americans especially are overrepresented in politics, in the upper income brackets, and in higher education; at first glance it doesn’t make much sense why these writers would want to align themselves with an identity that on the ground is stereotyped as being primarily darker-skinned, working class, and anti-intellectual. This is precisely the stereotype that individuals like Rachel and Diana do not want to be associated with, however they come from a very different background than writers like Darrell Lum or Eric Yamamoto. Okamura, another Japanese American, argued that Asian Americans in Hawai`i do not identify as “Asian American,” unlike in California and the mainland where this is a political identity, because Asians in Hawai`i can feel group belonging by identifying as “Local.” However, the reason “Asian American” was never the preferred nomenclature most likely has its roots in the extreme prejudice against those of Japanese ethnicity during World War II and the subsequent socioeconomic status rise of Japanese American.

The war brought anti-Japanese sentiment after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the wartime government put many “AJAs” – Americans of Japanese Ancestry – into camps. The

---

171 Okamura 1994: 161
172 Kim 195
military instituted special curfews limiting AJAs’ movements in the islands, however these policies also included Koreans.\textsuperscript{173} Because Japan controlled Korea, Koreans in Hawai`i experienced the same discrimination and fear AJAs did. In response, both AJAs and Koreans intensely embraced Americanization, and embraced an identity that established them firmly as from Hawai`i and from the US.\textsuperscript{174} Many joined the war effort in large numbers in order to prove their loyalty, “paving the way for their entrance into what previously had been haole-dominated businesses and social organizations.”\textsuperscript{175}

Many AJAs joined the US military, and were then able to use the GI Bill to gain higher education than many could previously attain.\textsuperscript{176} In the 1950s, the young Japanese American war veterans rose to political power within the newly reformed Democratic Party.\textsuperscript{177} Shortly after the war, American-born, second generation islanders began a “bloodless revolution;” a coalition of Japanese American war veterans and young politicians of mixed ethnicity reorganized the Democratic Party and won the majority in both houses of legislature. Since then, Japanese-Americans have represented the majority in both the Senate and House of Representatives, even though proportionately they represent a much smaller percentage of the population than they once did.\textsuperscript{178}

However, Japanese American success has led to the stereotype that they dominate Hawaii’s politics and economy.\textsuperscript{179} Underrepresented groups, such as Filipino Americans and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{174} Kim 210
\item \textsuperscript{175} Hitch 144-145
\item \textsuperscript{177} Danico 29
\item \textsuperscript{179} Okamura (2008) 172
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Native Hawaiians, resented the higher percentage of Japanese Americans in state government.\textsuperscript{180}

In response to this tension, Japanese Americans, reacted by emphasizing their Local identity even more, and Japanese American historians have published a body of literature focusing on the long history of the Japanese in Hawai`i, such as \textit{Pau Hana: plantation life and labor in Hawaii} and its more child friendly version \textit{Raising Cane} both by Ronald Takaki and published in the 1980s. Then I remembered back to the reason I first became interested in “Local” identity in Hawai`i: an Asian woman ranting about how those other artists were not as “Local” as her.

When I spoke to Okamura directly, asking advise on the ways in which my research contradicted the established literature, he contradicted himself in a few key places; I asked him why a hapa girl would not identify as “Local,” and initially he said that made complete sense. However, he quickly told me a story about his students discussing how they feel local only just that same day. This sharp difference in Local feeling between university students in Hilo and university students in Honolulu was the most discernible indication that the ideas of Local coming out of O`ahu could not be directly applied to the island of Hawai`i. In the islands, O`ahu and its city of Honolulu represent the “center” while the outer islands are the “periphery” — academics and writers in Honolulu are the dominant culture because they own and control the means and relations of cultural production.\textsuperscript{181} Writers like Darrell Lum are the voices that are heard most often because they are directly involved in the publication, and academics from the University of Hawai`i at Manoa like Okamura have the last word on studies of Local culture because they are the ones getting most published. Another way of thinking of this center/periphery relationship in Hawai`i, is that O`ahu is like New York City, and the neighbor

\textsuperscript{180} Okamura (2008) 171

\textsuperscript{181} Kottak and Kozaitis 55
islands are the counties further upstate. All of the attention is focused on O’ahu, which leads outsiders to think that the Honolulu point of view is the only point of view.
Conclusion: Local in Opposition

It was impossible to reconcile the many definitions of Local in Hawai`i, and hard to understand fully the significance of Local to the different groups who live there. The depictions of Local identity in established academic and creative literature portray it as an active, political identity inherent to the multicultural and harmonious society of the islands. However, none of the people involved in my study actively identified as “Local;” instead my informants would describe it as an identity they were outside of, or a culture they were peripherally attached to. Each time I encountered a definition of Local, either in writing or in the interviews, it was described in opposition to something else – Local versus globalization, Local not haole, Local not military, Local not tourist, Local not immigrant. Definitions of Local identity are mainly structural, based on this categorical opposition between groups; however, there is a sense of a shared culture in Hawai`i, one based on mutual understanding and, depending on who you ask, either a mutual tolerance or mutual intolerance.

Everyone agrees that Local began in the plantations, in the culture of the camps and the camaraderie among the immigrants; however, this tolerance, or mutual intolerance, only occurred after the different ethnic groups had coexisted for decades. Just as each immigrant group initially felt discrimination during the plantation years, each subsequent immigrant group has faced intolerance. People local to Hawai`i initially resisted the presence of Filipino immigrants during the 1970s expressed especially through the fights at school; now the Micronesians that have been arriving since the late 1990s face this same exclusion. However, hand in hand with this history of intolerance, Hawai`i has a history of ethnic and racial intermarriage that came from the close ties between many of the ethnic groups over a long period of time. Over time the outsider groups, and the new immigrant groups, became a part of the
insider culture, which some have called Local. While I did not come across any instance of people actively asserting a Local identity, the individuals I interviewed insisted that people in Hawai`i do feel they share a culture of understanding and respect.

The defining moment for the definition of Local identity was during the social movements of the 1970s. In the face of the increased visible presence of foreigners in Hawai`i, the military, tourists, and Japanese investment, the people of Hawai`i banded together under the flag of an identity they called “Local.” Since then, analysts of Local identity describe it as one in opposition to the outsider, in opposition to globalization; since then, however, “Locals” have not banded together under one identity and one cause, and as such politicized Local identity has lost salience.

Only within “Local” literature did I find examples of people describing Local as an identity asserted in the face of outside forces. The writers who call themselves Local do not properly portray Local as it exists today; they are not only speaking of Local as it existed in their childhoods, but they also represent a very specific portion of the population. The writers who get representation in the Bamboo Press are primarily from O`ahu, and are overwhelmingly Asian American. This point of view does not match the facet of Local I found in Hilo, because the writing makes Local seem much more important to daily life than my interviews indicated. Even when I spoke to Okamura directly, he gave me the same explanation of Local I found in all of the academic writings; that Local identity is in opposition to global forces and in the face of the increased presence of “big box” chains people are even more likely to feel Local, and that even his Caucasian students feel distinctly Local. Yet this image contradicted the ideas of Local I encountered.
Local identity was not important to the Caucasian and hapa individuals I spoke to, but for vastly different reasons. The Caucasians I interviewed were in their 40s, and their experience was very different than the much younger hapa girls. Stan, Sarah, and Eden frequently felt that non-white individuals excluded them from a “Local” identity solely for being Caucasian. They felt the backlash of anti-foreign and anti-haole feeling that came part and parcel with the Local movement of the 1970s and the frustration over its failure. As Caucasians, they represented something foreign to the islands, foreign to the idea of Local, and therefore represented a threat to Local people’s jobs and livelihoods.

The younger hapa girls on the other hand came from families they described as Local, yet still the girls themselves did not feel Local, and they also felt that Locals were no longer exclusionary. They come from a younger generation that is becoming increasingly Americanized. Since the forces of globalization won in the 1970s, with the increased presence of big business and increased development for tourism, the islands have been opened up to much more cultural influences, especially with the presence of the internet.

Rachel and Diane are a good litmus test for what the culture of Hawai`i is heading towards. Whether or not you are “Local” is not as important an issue as it was in the 1970s, but they still feel distinctly “from Hawai`i.” Rachel and Diane both expressed offense whenever people from the mainland trivialized their culture as all grass huts and hula skirts, yet they also emphasized that Hawai`i has access to all of the same cultural points as the mainland. Even though they do not feel that Local is exclusionary anymore, from their strong defense it is clear that this stereotype of Local still exists but that the younger generations resist being associated with it. Exposure to mainstream American culture has lessened, not increased the importance placed on belonging to Local.
The point of view I found in my interviews is specific to the island of Hawai`i, around the town of Hilo, but the perspectives on Local that are easily accessible come from O`ahu, which is a vastly different island than Hawai`i. The city of Honolulu is the socioeconomic and political center of the state, and is a much larger city than Hilo. The academics that discuss Local are predominantly from the University of Hawai`i at Manoa, and their ideas of Local are focused on the most vocal groups, such as the Asian Americans who write short stories about their Local identity. Many are also working off of a dated model for understanding Local, based on the expression of Local identity during the seventies. There is not enough research focusing on the reality of Local in the neighbor islands, nor is there enough attention paid to the younger generations’ perspective and how the idea of Local is changing. I hope that my work can contribute something to the gap in the literature.
Appendix 1: Glossary of Hawaiian Terms

Native Hawaiian:

Ahupua`a - basic land divisions which contained access to both the mountain and its farm land and the sea for its fishing – these were usually organized like wedges radiating from the center of the island, so that each segment had access to the different geographical sections from mountain to sea

Akua – a god

Ali`i – a chief, anyone who holds control over an area of land, usually through strength of arms and claims to genealogical connection to high chiefs/gods

Ali`i aimoku – a district chief, underneath the ali`i kapu

Ali`i kapu – the “king” chief, or the chief of highest nobility (therefore closest to the gods and holds the highest mana) and reigns over all the other chiefs

Ali`i nui – a chief of high nobility

Aloha `aina – a more recent ideal of love for the land, it has become an integral value for the Native Hawaiian Rights Movement, as well as the Sovereignty Movement

Haole – literally: “one who cannot speak;” when the ancient Hawaiians first met foreigners, they were Caucasian, and the name stuck (see below for the HCE usage of the word)

Hapa – of mixed blood, indicating someone of mixed ancestry

Heiau – sacred temple

Kahuna – priest

Kanaka Maoli – “the true people,” meaning the native Hawaiians (kanaka meaning man)

Kapa – bark cloth, called “tapa” in other Polynesian cultures

Kapu – it means something similar to “taboo,” but also refers to the system of religious laws governing relationships between people and the land

Kōkua – help, aid

Kū – the ancient Hawaiian war god

Kuhina Nui – female co-ruling chief, a status invented by Ka`ahumanu in order to rule alongside her husband’s heir

Mahele – division, as in the Great Mahele in 1848
Maka ʻāina – “people of the land,” commoners

Malama ʻaina – care/respect for the land

Mana - Mana is a very difficult word to define – it is spiritual power, spiritual force that comes straight from the gods. Those with a lot of it – chiefs – are closer to the gods. Yet it is transferable, if someone of low mana touches or even walks in the shadow of an aliʻi, they can steal his mana.

Meles – songs or poems that are usually a part of hula celebrations

ʻOhana – extended family groups, literally “shoots from the taro root”

ʻOkina – the apostrophe that is used in Hawaiian grammar

ʻOli – religious songs or chants

Papa – ancient Hawaiian Earth Mother, co-creator of the universe

Pele – the goddess of volcanoes, she is believed to be most present on the island of Hawaiʻi, for it has the only island still volcanically active. On this island, many still honor her and consider her a very present force.

Wakea – ancient Hawaiian Sky God, co-creator of the universe

**Hawaiian Creole English**

Buddha Head – someone of Japanese descent

Kanaka – short for Kanaka Maoli, someone with native Hawaiian blood

Haole – it can used to mean any Caucasian, however, when used to indicate someone from the mainland it is distinctly a derogatory term

Pake – someone of Chinese descent

Pidgin – the Local term for the language linguists call Hawaiian Creole English

Portagee – someone of Portuguese descent

Sole – someone of Korean descent
Appendix 2: Timeline of Key Events

300AD – Polynesians first settle Hawaii

1100AD – a second wave of Polynesians (most likely from Tahiti) come to Hawaii

1778AD – Captain Cook comes across Honolulu

1812AD – Kamehameha unites the islands and forms the Kingdom of Hawaii

1819AD – King Liholiho’s mother breaks kapu and he supports her

1820AD – the first missionaries arrive

1848AD – the Great Mahele, leads to foreigners being able to buy land

1876AD – the Reciprocity Treaty gives sugar planters tariff free access to the mainland sugar market

1893AD – the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy

1898AD – the US officially Annexes Hawaii

1920AD – The Hawaiian Homestead Act, intended to hold in trust 180,000 acres of land for the native Hawaiian people

1930AD – the Massie Trial occurs; first use of the term “Local”

1959AD – Hawaii becomes a State; jet plan is commercialized and air travel becomes easier

1971AD – the Kalama Valley conflict begins, giving rise to a series of movements that compose the beginning of the Native Hawaiian Rights Movement, which later births the Sovereignty Movement

1976AD – the Native Hawaiian protests over military control of Kaho`olawe Island.

1987AD – Hawaii’s Board of Education attempts to ban Hawaiian Creole English from the school system

2000AD – the US Census allows for people to pick more than one race

2010AD – The Akaka Bill, attempting to set up the native Hawaiian people as a “nation within a nation” fails to pass through Congress
Appendix 3: Works Cited


