Race and racism in Hawai'i

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Introduction

The state of Hawaii comprises of a group of islands situated in the northernmost area of Polynesia, occupying most of an archipelago in central Pacific Ocean and is home to one of the world's most ethnically diverse populations. Due to its unique racial demography, the island state has long been the subject of sociological interest in the field of racial studies, leading to the development of two contradictory and sometimes problematic academic discourses of racial politics in Hawaii. This paper seeks to develop critical literature on these two discourses and expand upon ideas proposed by contemporary sociologists that call for an understanding of racial politics based on the processes of racialization themselves. While acknowledging that racialization processes can take many forms such as physical differences, political discourses and media representations, this paper examines the significance that material and economic conditions play in the construction of race in Hawaii and argues that an increased recognition of such factors is beneficial towards a more comprehensive understanding of race relations.

Historical Context

Hawaii was first inhabited by early Polynesians believed to have been descended from an Austronesian people that had migrated from Southeast Asia. Initially comprising of several independent chiefdoms, they were first united under Kamehameha the Great for the first time in 1810 to form the Kingdom of Hawaii. Discovered by British explorer James Cook in 1778, the colonization of Hawaii began as early as the 1820s with the arrival of white missionaries, many of whom eventually established sugar and pineapple plantations which dominated the industry and formed the backbone of Hawaii's cash economy at that time. At the same time, Euro-American contact brought foreign diseases which, combined with plummeting birthrates, led to a drastic decline in the numerical dominance of the indigenous population. By the 1860s, the local islanders had been reduced to a minority in their own homeland, comprising of only 49.1% of the total population (Lind, 1967).

A growing demand for sweeteners back in mainland America led to an explosion of growth in the sugar industry in the 1860s, with Hawaii becoming its chief exporter. Growing commercial interests from American businesses led to the signing of a Treaty of Reprocity in 1875, opening the doors to an influx of American investment. Attempts by the Hawaiian monarchy to increase its political power in the 1890s were met with a premeditated coup by American business interests who ultimately ousted the reigning monarch from power. This led to the formation of a republic in 1894 controlled by American businessmen who eventually persuaded the United States government to illegally annex Hawaii in 1898 (Liliuokalani, 1898). The rapid demographic decline of the native population led the Anglo-American oligarchy to import cheap labour to Hawaii to bolster the workforce, leading to an influx of foreign labourers from many parts of Asia, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. As the likelihood of returning to their homeland became increasingly unlikely as the years passed, the majority of these immigrants eventually settled down in Hawaii, many marrying native women and establishing their own permanent ethnic communities (Parkman and Sawyer, 1967).

The Anglo-American minority that possessed political and economic hegemony over the sugar plantation society maintained their control through a divide-and-rule management policy that encouraged ethnic separateness and prevented a united labour force. This power was finally broken when the Hawaii Republican Party, strongly supported by plantation owners, was voted out of office by descendants of immigrant labourers, who, having been

born in the United States, were legally citizens and therefore permitted to vote. Following a referendum 1959, Hawaii was admitted as the 50th state of the Union with a 93% approval vote from its citizens (Hawaiian Admission Act, 1959).

The advent of statehood led to a decline in the sugar plantation industry in Hawaii following rapid modernization via construction and a growing tourism economy. In spite of attempts towards economic diversification in sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing, tourism still remains the islands' chief employer, revenue and growth sector in Hawaii today (State of Hawaii, 2003).

Demography and Racial Categories

As a result of colonization and its openness to immigration, Hawaii's racial composition is one of the most ethnically diverse in the world. Its first immigrants were white missionaries from Europe and America, many of whom eventually settled down in Hawaii and became agricultural business owners, mostly in pineapple and sugar. The decline in the indigenous population combined with an increasing demand for agricultural labour led to the importing of a vast number of immigrant labourers mostly from Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific, many of which eventually settled down and intermarried among the local populace. Today, indigenous Hawaiians, referred to as the *kanaka*, comprise of 5.9% of the population, while Asian Americans make up nearly 40% of the population, which mainly comprises of Filipino Americans, Japanese Americans, and a smaller Chinese and Korean American population. Hawaii is also home to a substantial Hispanic and Latino American population, as well as a non-Hispanic White ethnic community which makes up a fifth of Hawaii's population. High rates of inter-racial marriages have brought about an even greater diversity in Hawaii's demographic makeup, with almost one quarter of the population being of mixed ancestry (2010 United States Census).

The amalgamation of diverse ethnicities in Hawaii has led to complexities in organising and dividing Hawaiians into separate racial or ethnic categories. In general, however, races are organized under two overarching general categories— the 'local', which consists of indigenous Hawaiians and naturalized descendants of immigrant labourers, and the 'haole' (white people and whiteness), which refers to ethnic groups of Caucasian origin (Geschwinder et al., 1988). Such a classification does not simply designate ethnic or cultural origins, but also has important definitions and meanings attached to it which are tied to social positioning, status and perceptions. These complexities will be discussed where relevant later in this paper.

Literature Review

The unique ethnic diversity of Hawaii has long been a subject of interest in the study of the sociology of race relations. Essentially, discussions among academics have been based on either side of two contradictory discourses which view Hawaii alternately as a racial paradise or a site of racial discrimination and contestation. Understanding these discourses are important because they have significantly influenced the way in which race has been conceptualized in Hawaii. In my examination of existing literature pertaining to the subject, I attempt to outline the main points of either discourse, present their limitations and argue for a different approach in understanding race relations in Hawaii.

The first dominant academic discourse constructs Hawaii as an idyllic paradise, a peaceful and multicultural island where different ethnic groups are said to live together in perfect harmony. The development of such a discourse can be traced back to the work of the Chicago School in the 1920s pioneered by Robert E. Park, whose ecological theory of race subsequently influenced a substantial amount of academic literature on the subject. In his theory of race relations, Park argued that immigrant groups would eventually be integrated into their new society through the 'four great phases on interaction': competition, conflict, accommodation and finally assimilation. He considered the Hawaiian Islands as the perfect

'laboratory' for testing his theory, with the history of contestation and convergence of various racial groups creating conditions 'favourable' towards the success of the proverbial 'melting pot' of racial integration and assimilation (Park 1926). These views were advanced by a number of sociologists such as Adams, Linds and Hormann who were either taught or influenced by Park's ideas (Grant and Ogawa, 1993). Consequently, their writings helped to construct a model of race relations where Hawaii was considered exceptional for its lack of racial prejudice, egalitarian relations and a high level of racial integration. The appeal of this highly positive, 'feel-good' account of Hawaiian society unsurprisingly led to its adoption into local and political discourse, literature and tourist propaganda. These narratives frequently wax lyrical about the 'welcoming' nature of the indigenous culture and repeatedly stress Hawaii's 'aloha spirit' of sharing, exchange and reciprocity which forms a powerful metaphor for integration and assimilation (Rohrer, 2008).

The 'racial paradise' discourse that characterized early sociological literature on Hawaii has come into sharp criticism, particularly in recent years. The popular conception of multiculturalism and racial harmony in Hawaii has been questioned by a number of sociologists, with Park's 'race relations cycle' seen has having severe limitations in theorizing race relations in Hawaii. Scholars point towards the strength of white racism, inter-ethnic tensions during the plantation era and institutional racial discrimination as evidence that the reality of race relations in Hawaii is not as rosy as the picture painted by Park and his contemporaries (Law, 2010). An additional flaw of the 'racial paradise' discourse is that it attributes the occasional outbreaks of racial conflict and violence in Hawaii as anomalies – deviant behaviour of individuals rather than products of existing racial and ethnic tensions. This was certainly true of one such outbreak, the Thailia Massie incident in 1931, where official state reports attempted to downplay elements of racism involved, blanketing it under platitudes about racial harmony (Rohrer, 2008). Thus, the 'racial paradise' discourse of Hawaii is problematic because it prevents such incidents of ethnic and racial violence from being analysed in their appropriate social and historical contexts.

Though less prevalent, a second, more critical discourse does exist and runs counter to notions of Hawaii as an idyllic racial paradise. It contends that harmonious relations between different racial and ethnic groups in Hawaii have been largely exaggerated for political and economic purposes; white political and economic power has been normalized and perpetuated as a legacy of Hawaii's colonial history, while the advent of modernization and the breakdown in Hawaii's plantation society has resulted in an increased contestation of the white monopoly on power, leading incidents of reverse racism. This backlash in modern-day Hawaii is characterised by the targeting of whites as subjects of discrimination and violence from ethnic groups that perceive themselves as indigenous to Hawaii. Greater political representation of non-white groups in the Hawaiian political apparatus has also resulted in institutional discrimination of whites in sectors such as housing, social services and employment. Instances of rudeness and harassment, in particular towards White American tourists, have also emerged as manifestations of the local response towards white hegemony. A number of scholars have used these evidences as a challenge to the peaceful and egalitarian social relations that are supposedly said to exist in Hawaii. Although overt racial violence and conflict is comparatively rare in Hawaii, the existence of such a discourse does point towards the possible problems and tensions that may exist beneath the surface of a supposedly calm veneer and indicates that popular notions of an idealized, racially harmonious society cannot be taken for granted.

Contemporary sociological literature, however, has recognized the complexities of racial categories and experiences in Hawaii and the limitations of viewing race relations in the island state from either spectrum of a polarizing set of racist/non-racist discourses. Increasingly, scholars have called for a different approach that focuses on the processes of racialization and how racial hierarchies may have been constructed and perpetuated in Hawaiian society. This allows us to move beyond the simplistic attempts of the first two

discourses which merely attempt to explain Hawaiian society either as racist or as a multicultural paradise towards a more nuanced and complex understanding of race in Hawaii. Such an explanation would involve an examination of the role of power and how it can provide meaning to racial categories and shape racial relations in society. Additionally, this approach would allow us to understand the contexts in which discriminatory racial practices occur and how these mechanisms operate. As such, our investigation in this paper is guided by this new, third approach in hopes of reaching a more comprehensive understanding of race relations in Hawaii.

Theoretical approach
The understanding of the processes of racialization to make sense of race relations in Hawaii is a relatively new approach adapted by a number of scholars. Explicitly conceptualized and advocated by Judy Rohrer in a paper examining racial discourses in Hawaii (Rohrer, 2008), its strength lies in its ability to provide an understanding of race that is unencumbered by tendencies to view Hawaii as either full of harmony or full of conflict. Because it is capable of breaking free of this racist/nonracist dyad, such an approach allows us to reconcile the relative lack of overt racial conflict in Hawaii with patterns of racial exclusion and discrimination that exist beneath the façade of racial harmony. Additionally, I argue that understanding of the processes of racialization allows us to gain an insight into how such complex racial categories came to be constructed and the social functions they serve. It also permits us to consider how racial groups that occupy positions of power in society may have at certain points of Hawaii's history imposed racial definitions and hierarchies onto other groups. Through this, we will be able to fuller understand the complexities and nuances that characterize race relations in Hawaii as well as understand how mechanisms of racial discrimination and exclusion operate. As colonialism and racialization come hand in hand, it is crucial to examine the history, economics and racial politics of Hawaii. This paper uses the arrival of Euro-American colonists as a starting point and chronicles the evolution of race relations up to modern Hawaii as we know of today.

Race relations in the island state are rooted in the two-tiered racial classification system of 'local' and '*haole*' that exists within Hawaiian society. This system has its legacies in the plantation economy of Hawaii's colonial era and serves not just as a classification system but also an important marker for identity and privileges in both colonial and contemporary Hawaii. The establishing of a historical narrative on the racialization processes of Hawaii allows us to discover the circumstances under which such a classification system has come to be constructed and its implications for race and racial hierarchies in Hawaiian society.

Racialization Processes in Hawaii
Recent theoretical developments in the sociology of race have indicated a rethinking of the concepts of race and ethnicity as social constructs that are closely related to material factors and the relations of production (Geschwender, 1987). This would suggest the possibility that an economic basis may be present in the construction of race and ethnicity. Ethnic groups are formed not simply because of their physical and/or cultural characteristics, but also as a result of their economic opportunities. As Europeans gradually colonised other parts of the world, they encountered societies and people that differed greatly from them. Race and ethnicity emerged as social constructs that provided a rationale that justified European rule over these colonised groups in the form of racist ideology, allowing them to be exploited for economic labour (Geschwender et al., 1988).

The arrival of Euro-American colonists to Hawaii in the 1820s saw the establishment of a plantation society that was to dominate the face of Hawaii's political, social and economic structure for more than a hundred years. Racialization processes in Hawaii were closely linked to the structure and organization of its plantation economy. While the word 'haole' was initially used by native Hawaiians to refer to the physical differences of white colonials, this term came to take on greater class connotations as European and American immigrants

came to own and dominate the political and economic apparatuses of Hawaiian society. As the sugar and pineapple plantations that formed the backbone of Hawaii's economy were completely owned by Euro-American colonials, 'haole' eventually came to signify not just whiteness but also property ownership and membership in the ruling class (Geschwender et al., 1988).

The decline of the indigenous population brought about concerns over a shortage of labour for the plantation economy. This prompted American plantation owners to turn to immigrant labour to bolster the faltering workforce. Sugar plantation owners were largely concerned with importing cheap labour as much as possible, which resulted in the arrival of large numbers of Chinese and Japanese contract labourers that came to work in the sugar fields. Eventually, many other immigrant groups from Asia, Portugal, the South Pacific and the Caribbean also settled in the islands, and by the 1930s could be found working at various levels of the plantation society.

It is argued that immigrants do not automatically comprise an ethnic group simply because of differences in physical and/or cultural characteristics but more so as a function of opportunity structures (Portes and Bach, 1985). Often, material factors and economic opportunities work to steer immigrants into certain regions, industries and occupations. Social conflict may arise if native workers or earlier immigrants perceive the new arrivals as an economic threat which in turn may stimulate ethnic consciousness and mobilization (Nagel and Olzak, 1982). Earlier groups may resort to racial prejudice as an instrument for reducing competition and maintaining control over social territory (Park and Burgess, 1921). Thus, the construction of an ethnic group may not require a previously shared common culture, sense of identity or similar physical characteristics; instead, immigrant groups can be shaped by socioeconomic factors and organizational structures (Geschwender et al., 1988). I would argue that this was certainly true for the ethnic construction of immigrant labour in Hawaii. Economic concerns facilitated the divide-and-rule policy adopted by white plantation owners – ethnic separateness was encouraged and emphasized not for the sake of cultural integrity, but rather to prevent a united labour force. This allowed the white plantation oligarchy to preserve their racial superiority within the Hawaiian society (Grant and Ogawa, 1993). Spatial segregation was instrumental in fostering divisions; the haole owners emphasized their superiority through large residences and camps located on the cool higher elevations of the plantation. Access to these beautifully landscaped areas was often restricted by race. Additionally, immigrant labourers were spatially segregated into camps according to their country of origin. Hence, the disparate racial groups were able to develop a distinct and separate ethnic identity that differentiated them from one another, instead of gradually fusing into a culturally homogenous ethnic group over time. I consider this to have important implications for the conception of the identity of the 'local' in contemporary Hawaii. Despite the fact that the category of 'local' is distinguished by the shared agricultural history of these ethnic groups, it does not refer to a homogeneous ethnic entity but is instead further divided into different subcategories based on country of origin. Hence, within the category of 'local' a further distinction is made between Japanese-Hawaiians, Chinese-Hawaiians, Filipino-Hawaiians and so on. White plantation owners further encouraged ethnic separatism by creating racial hierarchies based on wage structures. A staggered wage based on ethnic seniority meant that earlier immigrant groups who had worked on the plantation longer received higher pay, fostering jealousies and animosities among different ethnic groups. The success of these measures can be evidenced from the Japanese labour strikes of 1909 and 1920 where their failure was partially attributed to the unwillingness of Japanese labour leaders to solicit support from Filipino workers (Grant and Ogawa, 1993). From the evidence, I contend that opportunity structures and material factors of the plantation economy such as spatial segregation and the division of labour appear to have a strong influence in the construction of ethnic differentiation and racial hierarchies in Hawaiian society.

The socioeconomic changes caused by World War II and its aftermath brought about shifts in economic and political power that significantly altered race relations in Hawaiian society. Conditions of the war had resulted in the arrival of a substantial number middle class Anglo-Americans. This new breed of haole did not possess the wealth or prestige of the landed plantation owners and worked in service and blue collar professions. The introduction of haoles in these professions served to alter the perceptions of local islanders who had previously viewed Caucasians as the elites of society (Grant and Ogawa, 1993). More changes were to come in the years that followed the war as the advent of modernisation resulted in the dismantling of the plantation society and weakened white political and economic hegemony. As a consequence, 'local' ethnic subgroups were able to make substantial progress towards improving their socioeconomic status. Despite this, advances made by different ethnic subgroups were not uniform. Although Chinese- and Japanese-Hawaiians made significant gains in the years that followed, other minorities such as the indigenous and Filipino communities still remained disproportionately represented in the lower income ranges (Grant and Ogawa, 1993). Scholars have attributed this unequal progress to a number of structural and economic factors such as the disparity in the quality of education (Wilcox, 1974) and preferential hiring practices of the upwardly mobile Chinese- and Japanese-Hawaiian ethnic groups (Geschwender et. al, 1988). This has created new levels of racial hierarchy among the various 'local' subgroups with Chinese- and Japanese-Hawaiians positioned at the top of the pyramid.

Despite the challenges, white haoles still wield considerable political and economic power in Hawaii. However, the replacement of the plantation society with tourism as the dominant economic industry has resulted in a change in the way haole power is perpetuated and maintained – namely though normalization and subversion (Rohrer, 2008). This has often come in forms of glass ceilings and institutional barriers to economic advancement for some groups. For instance, the majority of businesses in the tourism industry are still owned by Caucasians, with locals occupying positions in middle management and frontline service jobs performed by part-Hawaiians or Filipino immigrants. In this manner, ethnic stratification has been subtly perpetuated on the basis of the division of labour in modern day Hawaii (Grant and Ogawa, 1993).

By establishing a historical narrative of how race has come to be constructed in Hawaii, it becomes evident that there is a significant economic and material basis in the processes of racialization. This shows that there is a real possibility that race and racial hierarches can be created as a result of socioeconomic conditions that are linked to a particular group's economic and mobility opportunities. This implies a certain level of fluidity exists in Hawaiian society in regards to the defining of racial categories as well as potential for mobility within racial hierarchies. Recognizing this is important because it demonstrates that racial construction and positioning is not determined by physical and cultural characteristics alone. This allows us to reach a more comprehensive understanding of race relations in Hawaii which moves beyond a limited explanation of racism that is predicated upon a set of biological or cultural characteristics deemed superior by a particular social group. This has important implications for the way in which we understand incidents of racial tension as well as mechanisms of discrimination in contemporary Hawaii.

Discussion
Considering race relations in Hawaii in terms of the process of racialization represents a conceptual advancement beyond previously established sociological discourses which were limited in their understanding of racial politics. As discussed in previous sections, there was a tendency for earlier sociological literature often relied on focusing on a set of evidences which portrayed Hawaii either as full of harmony or full of conflict. Instead of gathering evidence to attempt to 'prove' the 'truthfulness' of either discourse, examining the problem with respect to the racialization processes themselves allows us to understand how racial categories came to be created and how they interact with each other. This leads to an

understanding of race in Hawaii that is nuanced and complex, allowing us to view incidents of racial discrimination and prejudice with a more balanced perspective.

Identifying the significance of economic and material factors in the construction of race has been particularly insightful in our study of racial politics in Hawaii. It has led to the realization that the racial categories of 'local' and 'haole' are not determined simply by physical or cultural characteristics but also have to do with social class and power. A case study of the construction of Portuguese-Hawaiian identity and ethnicity conducted by Geschwender, Carroll-Segun and Brill provides a fascinating example of this (Geschwender et. al, 1988). Despite their physical and cultural similarities to other white communities in Hawaii, Portuguese-Hawaiians are regarded as a 'local' ethnic subgroup. This was attributed to their historical entry into the Hawaiian plantation society as labourers rather than contributors of capital. Because of this, ceilings were placed on their mobility opportunities and they found themselves unable to rise beyond the position of middle management, hence perpetually remaining subordinate to their haole plantation owners. The breakdown of the plantation society following the war caused their socioeconomic position to suffer further and increased the economic disparity between them and the propertied haole upper class. As such, Portuguese-Hawaiians considered themselves to have little in common with other haoles; instead, resurgence in group pride and interest in Portuguese culture led them to develop a separate identity which they proudly considered as 'local'. This unique positioning of Portuguese ethnicity in Hawaii demonstrates that class position and ethnicity are intrinsically linked. For the Portuguese-Hawaiians, being white was insufficient for being regarded as haole, economic factors such as the ownership of capital and property proved to be the crucial determinant. Indeed, I would argue the case of the Portuguese-Hawaiian community presents strong evidence that contemporary racial definitions of local and haole are significantly linked to the historical processes of production in the plantation economy.

It is because of this understanding of the links between class and ethnicity that we can recognize the racial classifications of 'local' (as well as its subgroups) and 'haole' also have implications for social positioning. Racial hierarchies in Hawaii are inextricably linked to social and economic power. This is especially true for the racial categorization of the 'haole', where such a label does not merely signify the possession of biological and cultural characteristics of a Caucasian but is also associated with property ownership and wealth. At the same time, the historical experience of the haoles as plantation owners and colonial masters also means that whiteness in contemporary Hawaii also entails social exclusion and hostility. It also allows us to understand the nuances of being recognized as a 'local' ethnic subgroup in Hawaii. While on one hand being local is accompanied by certain social privileges such as the right to social support and housing, the differential economic positioning of the discrete ethnic subgroups mean that there are differential levels of power within this categorization, with the Chinese- and Japanese-Hawaiians located at the top of the pyramid while other groups such as the Portuguese, Filipino and indigenous communities occupying the lower rungs of the 'local' hierarchy. Consequently, this provides us with fresh insights in regards to the interplay of racial politics and how mechanisms of discrimination and racism operate. Even at its most micro-level form, ethnic prejudices and stereotypes are tied to wider dynamics of the political economy. For instance, in Hawaiian society where overt discrimination and hostility are submerged through covert instances of rudeness, gossiping and derision (Grant and Ogawa, 1983), ethnic slurs such as the 'uppity Jap' or the 'lazy *kanaka*' are arguably loaded with class connotations and are reflective of the tensions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

This depiction of race relations in Hawaii is certainly lends weight to classical Marxist ideas of base and superstructure, where the material conditions of life such as the forces and relations of production determine wider social relations such as political structure, ideology and more significantly, racial categories and hierarchies (Marx, 1859). It also ties in with more contemporary, leading-edge debates of race and ethnicity which concern notions of

racial neoliberalism. Racial categories and racism arise from the socioeconomic processes of neoliberal capitalism and ethnic divisions are constructed in regards to their position and function within the wider economy (Roberts and Mahtani, 2010). The recognition of the significance material and economy factors play in racialization processes, therefore, allow us to reconcile the two contradictory discourses of racial harmony and conflict in Hawaii. The apparent existence of two entirely opposite conceptions of Hawaiian society is not simply based on physical differences, culture and ideology but also rooted in economic, practical and rational needs. The lack of overt racial violence and the downplaying of ethnic tensions can be understood in the context of a Hawaiian economy highly dependent on the tourist industry; indeed, it can be argued that incidents of discrimination and harassment towards white tourists in contemporary Hawaii are often ignored in wider political and media discourse simply because such narratives are 'bad for business' (Keller, 2009).

On the flipside, discrimination and discrimination and hostility to haoles by native Hawaiian and 'local' ethnic subgroups may also be heavily influenced by attempts to address socioeconomic inequalities. This view is best summed up by an examination of the emerging ethnic nationalist movement in Hawaii can also be conceptualized in terms of utilitarian and material factors. Within this movement, native Hawaiians are constructed as victims of colonialism not unlike the various Native Indian tribes of mainland America. A piece of congressional legislation known as the Akaka Bill, if approved, would recognize the supposed history of oppression suffered by native Hawaiians and entitle them to huge reparations for the aforementioned historical 'grievances' (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2010). While not wishing to debate the moral justifications of such a movement, it is worth noting in this essay that due to the high rate of inter-ethnic mixing in Hawaii through generations of intermarriage, the identification of a 'native' Hawaiian ethnic subgroup as somewhat ambiguous. As such, such a strong case can be made that this subgroup is to a large extent an imagined construction (Conklin, 2007). Additionally, if passed, the Akaka Bill would grant a massive amount of state funding towards racially-exclusive social institutions and programmes. The case of the Hawaiian ethnic nationalist movement draws to our attention several points compatible with the theoretical premise of this paper; firstly, it indicates fluidity in the construction and definition of racial and ethnic identities, and secondly, that this construction can be heavily influenced by instrumentalist factors such as material and economic gain. This again resonates with concepts of racial neoliberalism where ethnic categories and identities are being constructed in relation to wider processes of the neoliberal economy.

Conclusion
While a strong case has been made for the significance of economic and material factors in the construction of race, it must also be recognized that a number of other logics such as physical features, cultural identity and ideological discourse can and do also play a part in racialization processes. While the focus of this paper has been on the material conditions of life and how it influences the creation of ethnic identities, it does not profess to be a universally applicable to all contexts and societies. Indeed, there are numerous cases such as the oppression of the Roma in Italy or anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany where it would be simplistic and certainly naïve to reduce mechanisms of racism and discrimination to economic processes alone. Rather, what is argued is how the unique example of Hawaii and the utilising of a historical materialist perspective in analysing racialization processes can provide fresh insights into understanding racial politics in the island state and the possibility of applying this framework in other contexts in order to gain a more nuanced and complex understanding of race that moves beyond physical and cultural features. In the case of Hawaii, this perspective has certainly proved useful in moving beyond traditional discourses of race relations and arrived at a more comprehensive explanation of how racial identities and hierarchies have been constructed in the island state.

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