This Land Is My Land: The Role of Place in Native Hawaiian Identity

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Native Hawaiians are genealogically connected to ka pae 'āina Hawai'i as both the ancestral homeland and the elder sibling of Hawaiian aboriginals in traditional belief systems. This relationship is integral to Native Hawaiian identity and is distinctive from that of other groups who live and work in the Hawaiian Islands. This article examines the significance of place to Native Hawaiian identity and cultural survival. It discusses the physical, spiritual, genealogical, and sociopolitical/historical ties to land and sea that nourish Hawaiian well-being and are evident in Hawaiian epistemologies. Despite the strain on these ties and challenges to identity from population decimation and displacement, multicultural mixing, and migration, place is still the key connection linking Native Hawaiians to each other and to an indigenous heritage. As current consumptive patterns continue to destroy the ecological and natural balance of Hawai'i, critical questions emerge about Hawai'i's future and the rightful place of Native Hawaiians in our homeland.

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Some critiques of contemporary geographic growth patterns point out the rise of placelessness across U.S. landscapes. Relph (1976), in a provocative analysis of this phenomenon, argues that place has been a critical foundation of human cognition and identity throughout history. He shows how contemporary urban and suburban (and most recently, exurban) growth patterns have diminished the unique, historical, and cultural meanings of place to human society today. This point may bring no argument from most Americans who may not feel any overwhelming ties to a particular place, who are quite mobile in today's global society, and who, in fact, may be quite accustomed to the increasing standardization of places, such as strip malls, retail, food, and service chains. Add to this the relative homogeneity of most suburban architectures and the constantly shifting topography of metropolitan landscapes. The objective of this article is to expand our understanding of the significance of place to race and ethnic diversity and to demonstrate how place continues to be an unequivocal focal point in the identity processes of some social groups and individuals today. Specifically, we examine these processes in the context of the *pae ʻāina* (archipelago) of Hawaiʻi and Native Hawaiian identity.[1]

Our study builds on prior studies indicating that place—the consciousness of land, sea, and all that place entails—is fundamental to indigenous identity processes (Allen, 1999; Battiste, 2000; Kamakau, 1992; Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992; Kanaʻiaupuni & Liebler, 2005; Memmott & Long, 2002; Meyer, 2003; Mihesuah, 2003). Although this analysis of the relationship between place and identity centers on Hawaiians, it offers important insights that may extend to other indigenous groups or cultures whose members are highly intermarried and mobile, whose language is endangered, and whose culture is known more widely in its commercial tourist, rather than authentic, form. Under these conditions, place is critical to the cultural survival and identity of a people, as we illustrate in the case of Native Hawaiians.

Place is intertwined with identity and self-determination of today's Native Hawaiians in complex and intimate ways. At once the binding glue that holds Native Hawaiians together and links them to a shared past, place is also a primary agent that has been used against them to fragment and alienate. Yet, place, in all of its multiple levels of meaning, is one light that many Hawaiians share in their spiritual way-finding to a Hawaiian identity, one that is greatly significant to their existence as a people and culture, both past and present. And so begins our exploration into the various meanings of place to Hawaiian identity today.

In addition to indigenous theories of place, this study is informed by other perspectives on the role of place in racial identity and ethnicity. For example, certain geographers view place as the context within which racial partnering, residential choices, and family identification processes are differentially distributed across spatial categories (e.g., neighborhoods, cities, metropolises; Peach, 1980; Wong, 1999). By "spatializing" household patterns of family formation, mobility, and other behavioral characteristics, we can understand where (and why) they survive and flourish. Research shows that Hawai'i, for instance, is one of those places in the United States that is spatially significant for its flourishing intermarriage rates (Lee & Fernandez, 1998; Root, 2001).

Perspectives in anthropology add to our understanding of the concept of identity as it relates to place. Saltman (2002) defines the relationship between land and identity as the dynamic area within which social realities are acted out in individual cognition and perception. For example, identity may be the shared understandings between persons of the same culture that enable them to rally together for a political cause. In relation to place, Saltman (2002) argues, "identity achieves its strongest expression within the political context of conflicting rights over land and territory" (p. 6); evidence of the latter is certainly found in the story we tell here.

Our study draws on indigenous perspectives of place and identity that interweave the spiritual and the physical with sociocultural traditions and practices. As Memmott and Long (2002) explain, whereas Western explanations view places purely in terms of their geomorphology (with little human influence), indigenous models view people and the environment as overlapping and interacting. For example, unlike the way "Western thought classifies people and their technology apart from nature," indigenous knowledge and beliefs may include ancestral heroes with special powers who helped to shape land and marine systems (Memmott & Long, 2002, p. 43). Likewise, both weather and agricultural or other natural events may be influenced through human rituals, song, dance, or other actions performed in specific places. And, between places and people occurs a sharing of being: Places carry the energies of people, history, and cultural significance; in turn, people carry the energy of places as some part of their being (Memmott & Long, 2002).

The concept of place in Hawaiian perspective reflects understandings found throughout Pacific voyaging societies and shares certain similarities with other Native American and aboriginal cultures (Lindstrom, 1999; Martin, 2001; Memmott & Long, 2002; Schnell, 2000). "Place, in this case the home of the Kānaka Maoli

or indigenous people of Hawai'i, transcends physical realities of land. It is the *honua* (whenua, henua, fonua, fanua, fenua—the words meaning "earth" in Māori, Marshallese, Tongan, Samoan, and Tahitian languages, respectively); it signifies relationships, spanning spiritual and kinship bonds between people, nature, and the supernatural world (Kanahele, 1986)" (Kana'iaupuni & Liebler, 2005, p. 689). The understanding conveyed by indigenous writings spanning the Pacific is that place breathes life, people, culture, and spirit (Oliveira, 2005; Stillman, 2002; Tusitala Marsh, 1999).

Place is, we argue, a key force in the interplay of internal and external influences on contemporary Hawaiian identity processes. In the discussion that follows, we demonstrate how the strength of ties to the land influences Native Hawaiian identity processes through physical, spiritual, genealogical, and historical forces. We examine some of the challenges to identity stemming from displacement, separation from the land, and migration away from Hawai'i. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of place to identity processes for Hawaiian children and describe ongoing efforts in education that draw on the relationships to places as a tool for cultural survival.

Setting the Historical Context of Place

Native Hawaiians were the first discoverers of the 1,500-mile long Hawaiian archipelago in the Pacific Ocean. They migrated to Hawai'i by sea using advanced navigation skills, where they survived and flourished for thousands of years prior to Western contact (Bushnell, 1993). Native Hawaiians evolved a complex system of resource management, developing sophisticated knowledge bases and skills to survive on these remote islands with limited resources.

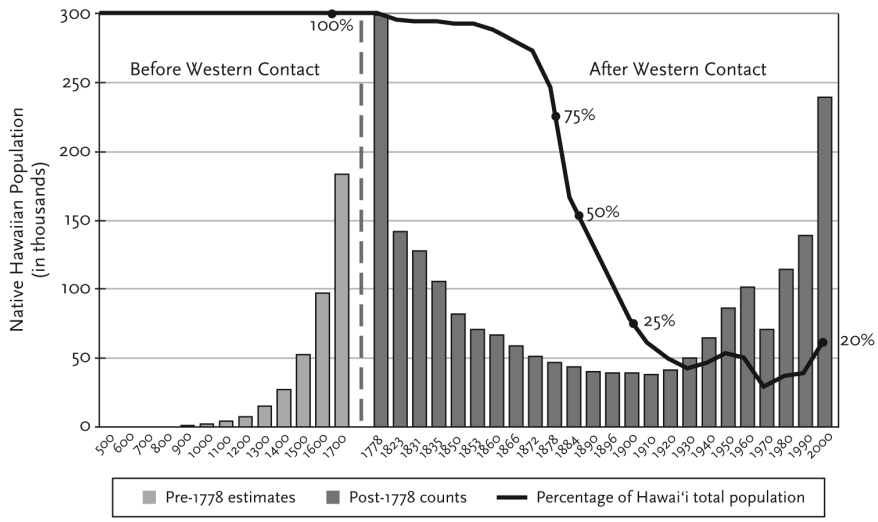
Cosmogonic and religious beliefs of Native Hawaiians tie the Hawaiian Islands to Kānaka Maoli beginning with creation, or *pō* (darkness, obscurity). The islands were born from Papahānaumoku, earth mother, and Wākea, sky father, who also gave birth to *kalo*, the taro plant and main staple crop of traditional Hawaiians, and, ultimately, to people. As such, "the genealogy of the Land, the Gods, Chiefs, and people intertwine with one another, and with all the myriad aspects of the universe"

(Kame'eleihiwa, 1992, p. 2). In these beginnings, the Hawaiian archipelago is intimately connected to Kānaka Maoli through genealogy, culture, history, and spirituality. The natural elements (land, wind, rain) and creatures of the islands are considered primordial ancestors; they are the older relatives of living Kānaka Maoli. Both share an interdependent, familial relationship that requires *mālama* (care) and *kia'i* (guardianship) for the older siblings who, in turn, provide for the well-being of the younger siblings (Kame'eleihiwa, 1992; Kanahele, 1986).

Historically, the Hawaiian Islands were divided into four chiefdoms until the late 18th century, when King Kamehameha I consolidated them through conquest.[2] United under single rule, the archipelago then modernized rapidly through economic commerce in sugar, pineapple, shipping, and related industries. By the late 19th century, Hawai'i was a fully recognized nation-state with multiple international treaties, including with the United States (Daws, 1968; Perkins, 2005).

During the same century, however, two things were occurring that devastated Native Hawaiian ties to the land. First, Native Hawaiians were progressively becoming a minority in their own homeland (see Figure 1). Estimates suggest that the native population, deeply afflicted by Western disease and to a much lesser extent, warfare, dropped by at least 90% in the 100 years following Captain Cook's arrival. Figure 1 shows a conservative starting estimate. Other estimates range as high as 800,000 to 1 million pre-Western contact (Stannard, 1989). Regardless, by the end of the century only about 40,000 aboriginal Hawaiians remained alive. Meanwhile the immigrant population gained steadily in number, including Whites who outnumbered Hawaiians by the early 1900s (Nordyke, 1989). Today, Native Hawaiians comprise about one-fifth of the state population.

FIGURE 1 The Hawaiian population in Hawai'i



Note: From *Ka Huaka'i: 2005 Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment*, by S. M. Kana'iaupuni, N. Malone, and K. Ishibashi, 2005, p. 26.

Second was the gradual and systematic erosion of indigenous control over the land primarily through the insertion of Western legal tactics, government, and religion. John Kelly described "while we looked to the heavens for their gods, they stole the land beneath our feet" (Kame'eleihiwa, 1994, p. 108). Gradually, foreigners took more and more control, exploiting fully Hawaiian cultural beliefs in land as collective property (Kame'eleihiwa, 1992; Osorio, 2001). The eventual privatization of land played an important role in the displacement of Native Hawaiians. In Kanaka Maoli perspective, it was unfathomable that someone else could deny their rights to place, a precious ancestor, the same land that a family had worked and lived for generations and generations. As Kanahele (1986) describes, Hawaiians

> belonged to the land. How could you ever own a place, let alone sell it as a commodity, if its true value is found in the sum of the lives, memories, achievements, and mana (spiritual power) of the generations who once dwelled upon it? (p. 208)

In the failure of most aboriginals to recognize that they had to formally claim the private ownership of their land, White foreigners, mostly missionaries and businessmen, rapidly bought up the property where Native Hawaiians lived and worked, forcing them to move elsewhere in most cases (Parker, 1989).

These displacing events culminated in 1893, when a small oligopoly of American businessmen and missionary descendents staged a coup d'état, capturing the Hawaiian Queen Lili'uokalani and imprisoning her in the royal palace with the help of U.S. Marines (Coffman, 1998). Although the overthrow violated existing treaties and established procedures for annexation, Hawai'i was proclaimed a U.S. territory by Congress via the Newlands Resolution in 1898 (Trask, 2002).

What many do not know is that annexation occurred despite a petition signed by nearly every living Native Hawaiian at the time (an estimated 38,000 of 40,000) in protest of losing their sovereign nation (Coffman, 1998; Silva, 2004). In recognition and formal apology by the U.S. government for these actions, U.S. Public Law 103-150, signed in 1993, cites that indigenous Hawaiians never relinquished claims to their inherent sovereignty as a people or over their lands to the United States. Hawai'i became a state in 1959.

Fast forward to the present where land struggles still occupy center focus. In September 2004, more than 10,000 Native and non-Native supporters marched for Kū i ka Pono (Justice for Hawaiians) through the heart of Waikīkī. Their purpose: to demonstrate against continued abuses of Native Hawaiian rights, specifically raised by three cases, all directly or indirectly concerning land issues. The first was to protest a Hawai'i state law that has been used to systematically take leased land holdings from the Hawaiian monarchy (ali'i) trusts, among others, to sell off to individuals.[3]

The second and third cases were to support Hawaiian rights in two legal cases heard by the 9th circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in early 2005. The second case challenged Kamehameha Schools, a private trust holding the legacy land assets of the Kamehameha monarchy in endowment explicitly to fund the education of Hawaiian children (see www.ksbe.edu). Established by the will of Bernice Pauahi Bishop, great-granddaughter of Kamehameha I, this institution combats the enduring effects of decades of poor educational outcomes for Hawaiians in U.S. public schools with its 125-year-old mission to improve the educational well-being of Native Hawaiians (Kana'iaupuni, Malone, & Ishibashi, 2005). It is responsible for educating nearly 24,000 Native Hawaiian children since opening its doors in

1887. Ironically, Kamehameha Schools is being sued for providing educational services to Native Hawaiians under constitutional amendments that were designed to protect the rights of disenfranchised minorities.

The third case challenged the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL), which holds for Native Hawaiian homesteaders a small fraction of the original lands belonging to the Hawaiian Kingdom that were taken by the U.S. government after the overthrow. In a state troubled by inadequate housing, especially for Native Hawaiians, the wait to be selected for DHHL lands can take decades—sometimes even occurring postmortem. All three cases concern land, aboriginal rights, and the Native Hawaiian quest for self-determination. For many, they are evidence of the continued struggle over land and continued attempts of colonizing entities to displace Native Hawaiians from their homeland and rightful place in the world (see Figure 2).

Culture, Identity, and Place of Native Hawaiians

Recent research by Kana'iaupuni and Liebler (2005) examines the role of place in identity processes of Native Hawaiians. As they point out:

> [T]he diverse ethnic mix that comprises the state of Hawai'i, and the resulting multiracial mix of today's Hawaiians in the state and on the U.S. Continent, complicate questions of identity for Hawai'i's host culture. For people of any racial or ethnic group, the characteristics of place—its location, social and ethnic composition, physical features, and historical significance to a people—can have profound symbolic and practical effects on identity and identification processes.... Living or growing up in Hawai'i is certainly a notable experience that affects the identity processes of all its diverse residents.... But one unique characteristic that Hawaiians will always have is their genealogical connection to Hawai'i as the ancestral homeland. No other group holds this claim. (p. 691)

FIGURE 2 A nation in distress: Kū i ka Pono supporters marching with the Hawaiian flag upside down

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In questions of identity, Kana'iaupuni and Liebler (2005) argue, place plays a critical role through Hawaiian traditions and customs that weave together (a) physical and spiritual, (b) genealogical, and (c) sociopolitical ties to the land and sea, which we discuss next.

Physical and Spiritual Ties to Place

The physical bond between Hawaiians and the land is reaffirmed at birth and at death. Oliveira (2005) discusses the symbolic acts of planting the afterbirth and umbilical cord of newborns as recognition of that relationship. She writes, "This relationship is further reinforced when a person's physical body dies and is *kanu 'ia* or planted. At death, burying a deceased person in the land brings this relationship full circle" (p. 116). Thus, Hawaiian identity is rooted firmly in ties to the land and sea, expressed in the proverb "ka mauli o ka 'āina a he mauli kānaka, the life of the land is the life of the people" (Oneha, 2001). As a subsistence society, living off the natural resources of the land was fundamental to the social identities

of Native Hawaiians, specific to the island or region where they lived (Kanahele, 1986). The interconnections of place and people were influenced by traditional practices of collective ownership, where, unlike Western land tenure systems, rights to land/sea access were negotiated by generation and family lineage as well as personal, family, and community need (Rapaport, 1999). *ʻĀina*, the Hawaiian word for land most commonly used today, also relates to ʻaina, "meal," and ʻai, "to eat," signifying the physical relationship between people and the earth that they tended (Pukui & Elbert, 1986). Hawaiians to this day see a dynamic, intimate relationship in the reciprocal nature of caring for the land (mālama ʻāina) as it cares for the people, much like a family bond (Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992).

These symbolic connections of places to the ancestry and cultural values of people are made explicit through various cultural customs; one example is found in the extensive naming practices of places associated with land, sea, and heavens. No place with any significance went without a name in Hawaiian tradition (Kanahele, 1986; Stillman, 2002), and today, considerable scholarship goes into documenting thousands of place, wind, and rain names in Hawaiʻi to preserve the rich legendary and historical significance of places to Hawaiian cultural identity (e.g., Nakuina, 1990; Pukui, Elbert, & Moʻokini, 1974). Place names span past and present, and through their meanings, the significance of place is transmitted socially and across generations. These types of practices underscore the inseparability of physical and spiritual interconnections between place and people in the Hawaiian worldview.

Genealogical Ties to Place

Another example of this inseparability is found in genealogical traditions. Across the Pacific, identity is borne of establishing one's genealogical ties to ancestral beginnings. Ancestral ties include not only people but also the spiritual and natural worlds, since all things were birthed by the same beginnings. Kameʻeleihiwa (1992) argued that genealogical chants "reveal the Hawaiian orientation to the world about us, in particular, to Land and control of the Land" (p. 3).

In Hawaiian tradition, genealogical chants identify the lines of trust and social connection in addition to telling family histories. These traditions are still important to many in contemporary Hawaiʻi. Formal introductions at public events commonly include reciting a lineage of people and places, including connections to

a specific mountain, valley, wind, rain, ocean, and water. Culture-based leadership training, schools, and education programs continue to instill these practices in today's young Hawaiians (see Figure 3). Central to identity processes, articulating these connections in social interactions provides important context for social relationships and negotiations between individuals and groups.

Sociopolitical/Historical Ties to Place

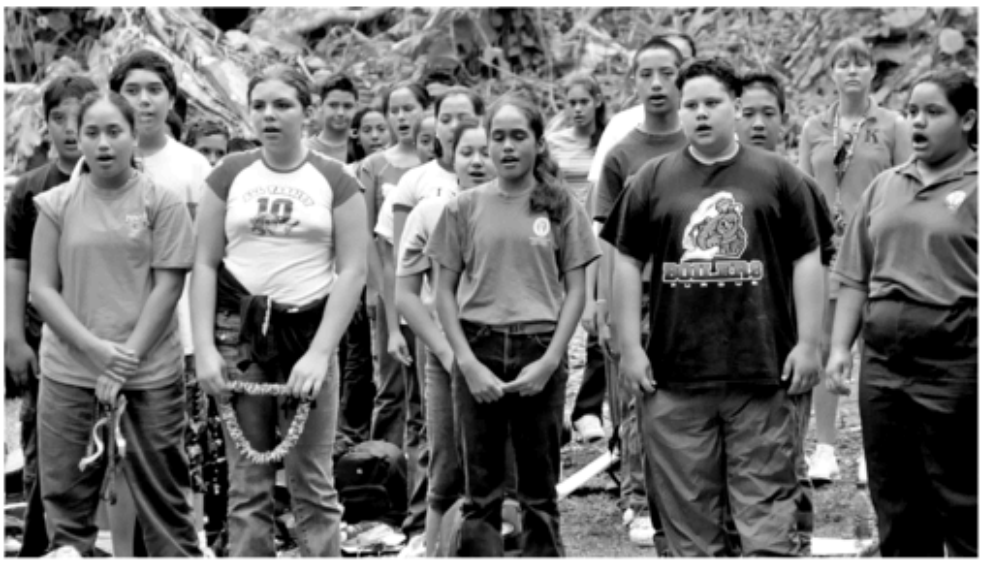
The third set of place–people identity relationships that Kana'iaupuni and Liebler (2005) discussed is very critical to many Native Hawaiians today as it accompanies the struggle for self-determination. They stated,

> The importance of place to Hawaiian identity is powered not only by ancestral genealogy, but also by the collective memory of a shared history. Hawai'i, the place, connects the Hawaiian diaspora through "social relations and a historical memory of cultural beginnings, meanings and practices, as well as crises, upheavals and unjust subjections as a dispossessed and (mis)recognized people" (Halualani, 2002, p. xxvi). (Kana'iaupuni & Liebler, 2005, p. 693)

As a catalyst for strengthened identity, Spickard and Fong (1995) pointed out in agreement that

> It is as invigorating to ethnicity when a Pacific Islander American politician recites the history of abuse that her people have suffered, as when an island spiritual leader chants a genealogy.... It is true history, but it is more than that: it is the act of rhetorically, publicly remembering, and thus it serves to strengthen the ethnic bond. (p. 1375)

FIGURE 3 Students offer a traditional Hawaiian chant.



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In this fashion, the history of colonization and cultural oppression creates a context for shared cognitive understandings that relate identity to place (Halualani, 2002; Kana'iaupuni & Liebler, 2005). For example, calling on this understanding, Kame'eleihiwa (1992) wrote,

> Hawaiians have been in Hawai'i for at least two thousand years. As harsh as the past two hundred years have been, there is yet hope; we still exist on this earth. After all the horror that has rained down upon us, we are alive. We are a nation of survivors! (p. 321)

Thus, specific images of history and place fuel Hawaiian identity in the growing context of political self-determination.

Together, these cultural practices and social relations illustrate how place serves as a key connection linking Native Hawaiian families and children to their indigenous heritage, despite the extensive and long-standing multicultural and multiethnic mixing in the state of Hawai'i and beyond.

The Hawaiian Diaspora: Migration, Intermarriage, and Identity

Although values about place and culture are shared by Hawaiians living outside of Hawai'i (Kauanui, 1998; Oneha, 2001), questions about identity, and even culture and ethnicity, all may be affected by the context of place. For example, studies show that multiracial Hawaiians living in Hawai'i are especially likely to racially identify as Hawaiian (and not as another race), compared with their counterparts in the continental United States (e.g., Kana'iaupuni & Liebler, 2005). What this means is that the relationship between place and identity is fluid. In the context of shifting cultural and geographic landscapes, population diversity, and the effects of colonization, place serves a pivotal role in Native Hawaiian identity processes today. Ka pae 'āina Hawai'i—the cultural home—becomes a beacon, vital to the survival and vibrancy of the Hawaiian culture, language, and native people today.

Through the economic and racial transformation of the islands, Native Hawaiian migration and intermarriage have created the Hawaiian diaspora, spread across the nation and into others since the 1700s (Halualani, 2002; Kauanui, in press). The diaspora presents a modern challenge to Native Hawaiian identity and culture, bringing separation of people from each other, from the land, and from the ancestral home. U.S. Census 2000 statistics show that fewer Native Hawaiian people moved to Hawai'i between 1995 and 2000 than those who moved away. About 40% of self-reported Native Hawaiians live in the continental United States, whereas 60% continue to reside in Hawai'i. Some Hawaiian scholars argue that the mobility of Hawaiians, the diaspora, undermines native identity. Yet, others describe how place is the powerful mobilizing force to off-island Hawaiians urging them to "come home" to struggle (see Kauanui, 1998). The voices call to the spirit, to the body, to the memory of cells and DNA—for the undeniable link is genealogical: "Our mother is our land, Papahānaumoku, she who births the islands" (Trask, 1993, p. 94).

Recent migrations of Native Hawaiians respond to "push" and "pull" factors described by migration and economic theories (Massey et al., 1993). These theories find support in the modern Hawaiian experience of low wages, high rents, and limited educational opportunities that drive Native Hawaiians to various destinations in the continental United States. The cost of living in Hawai'i continues to average about 30% higher than the rest of the nation; with some of the highest home prices in the country, the median price of a single-family home was $550,000

in 2005. For the indigenous population, which statistically has lower education and higher poverty rates (even when fully employed) than other groups in the state, it has become increasingly difficult to survive (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2005). Thus, the search for education, jobs, and lower home prices mean that many Hawaiians must head northeast to the 48 states. The result of these economic changes in Hawaiʻi is that Native Hawaiians are increasingly unable to thrive in their homeland.

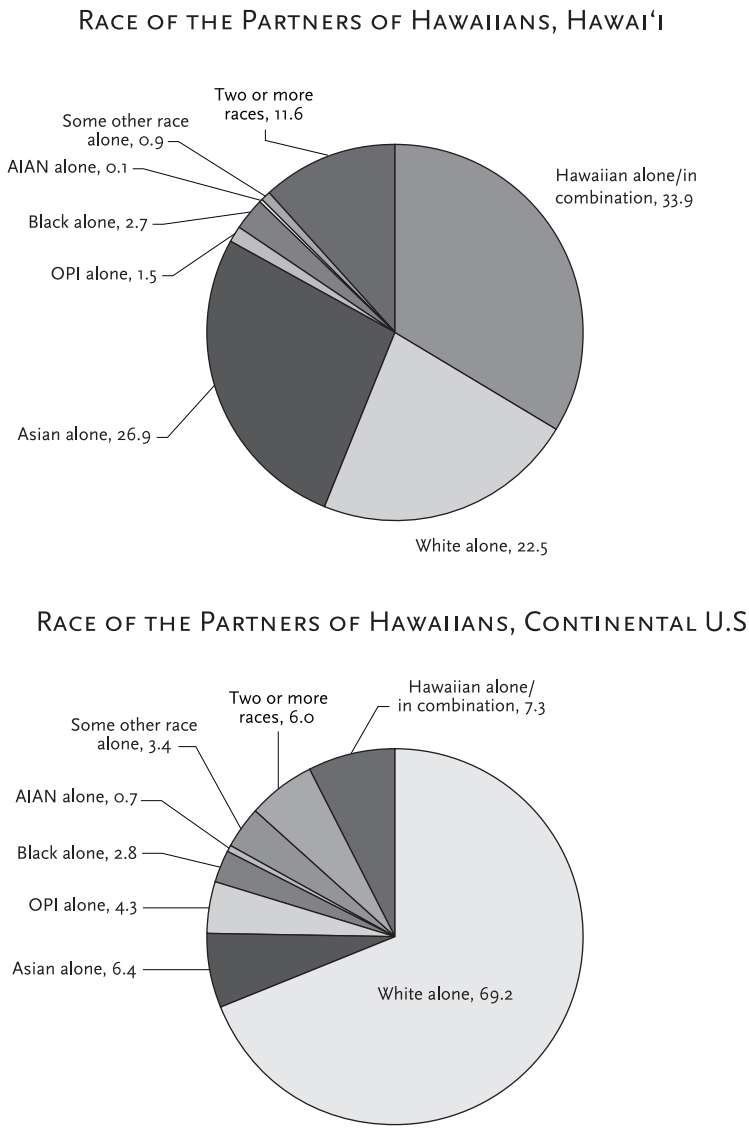
Population diversity is another threat to Native Hawaiian identity (Kanaʻiaupuni & Malone, 2004). Like other Native American groups in the United States, Native Hawaiians are predominantly multiracial. They claim the highest rates of multiracial status, next to Alaska Natives: about two-thirds of Native Hawaiians are of mixed-race.[4] Census 2000 data show that among all married Native Hawaiians, only 19% were married to other Hawaiians. Yet, the effects of increasing geographic diversity are immediately apparent in the intermarriage rates of those living in the 48 continental states compared with those still in Hawaiʻi (see Figure 4). The data in Figure 4 show that whereas 34% of married Native Hawaiians in their homeland are married to other Hawaiians, the percentage drops to only 7% among those residing elsewhere. Because the vast majority involves White partners, this marriage trend has been described by some scholars as a "whitening of the Hawaiian race." So, place becomes a critical linchpin to the continuity of Hawaiian identity.

For all groups, interracial mixing complicates questions of identity (see Liebler, 2001; Root, 2001; Xie & Goyette, 1997). The real question for the perpetuation of ethnic or cultural groups is, what happens to the children? What we find is that the chances of identifying children as Hawaiian in Hawaiian couple families are quite high, as might be expected. But, for Hawaiians who marry out, the likelihood that children are identified as Hawaiian diminishes. Thus, rather than creating greater potential for Hawaiian population growth through intermarriage, the data show diminishing returns to Hawaiian identification in mixed-race households.

Place affects not only who people marry but also their identity choices. In some cases, multiracial identity may permit greater ethnic options for Native Hawaiians on the continent, depending on where they live. For instance, a Native Hawaiian, Chinese, Puerto Rican individual in Northern California may opt to adopt a Chinese ethnic affiliation, whereas the same individual may find greater expression in her or his Puerto Rican ethnicity in New York. In other cases, individuals may adopt

different situational identities, depending on the circumstances. Certainly not unique to Native Hawaiians, these individual decisions are complicated by both geographic and racial/ethnic diversity, and, for many, can be difficult to resolve (see Franklin, 2003; Spickard & Fong, 1995).

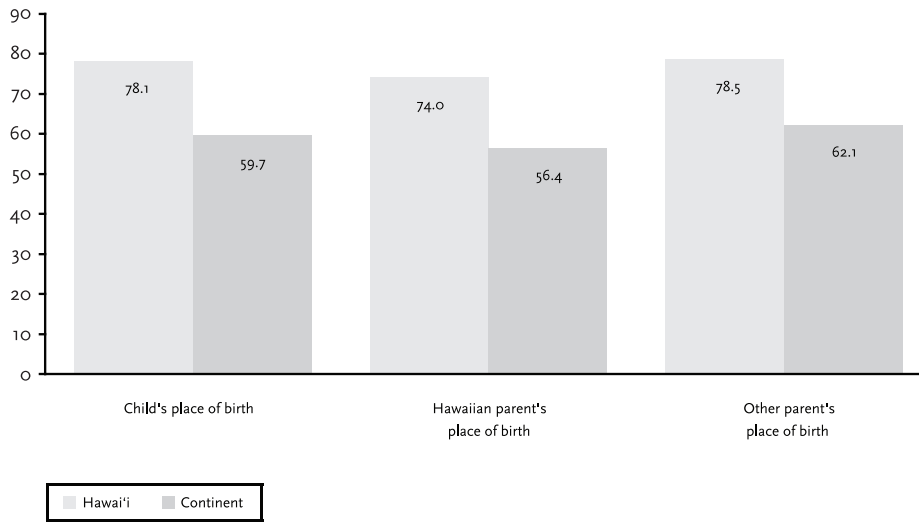
FIGURE 4 Intermarriage of Native Hawaiians, Census 2000



Kana'iaupuni and Liebler (2005) found that, compared with those in the continental United States, mixed-race families are much more likely to report their children as Native Hawaiian if the children were born in Hawai'i, if the family resides in Hawai'i, or if the Hawaiian parent was born in Hawai'i, net of other explanatory factors. Moreover, suggesting that returning home is a profound event, the highest odds ratio of reporting Native Hawaiian occurred in mixed-race families that had lived outside Hawai'i and returned home, compared with other families.

Recent data from Census 2000 are consistent, confirming the deep significance of place to racial identification. As shown in Figure 5, Kana'iaupuni and Malone (2004) found that mixed-race children living in Hawai'i were significantly more likely to be identified as Native Hawaiian than were other children. Still, only about half of children in interracial families with one Native Hawaiian parent were identified as Hawaiian in Census 2000 (Kana'iaupuni & Malone, 2004).

FIGURE 5 Percentage of children of mixed-Hawaiian marriages who are identified as Hawaiian, by selected place-based characteristics: 2000



For displaced Native Hawaiians who seek to sustain their culture and identity, other mechanisms in foreign locations help perpetuate cultural identity through the continuation of traditional practices or the reinforcement of cultural values and ideals. In many of the 48 states, Native Hawaiians regularly come together for cultural gatherings involving music, art, language, and recreation. They have formed Hawaiian-based organizations and groups to assist continental Hawaiians with life away from their ancestral home. A number of Hawaiian civic clubs exist throughout the United States, especially in regions in which large numbers of Hawaiians reside (e.g., on the West Coast). Alumni associations, such as that of the Kamehameha Schools, also maintain regional districts to help keep the network of families and friends informed and connected. Smaller groups that practice traditional Hawaiian arts, such as hula and canoe paddling, exist across the continent, thereby offering practical outlets for Hawaiians living far from home. Kauanui (1998) noted a few in California: Hui Hawai'i o San Diego, E Ola Mau Ka 'Ōlelo Makuahine in Huntington Beach, Nā Kōlea (aptly named after the golden plover birds that fly between Hawai'i and Alaska) of San Jose, and others.

Building the Future of Place

It is difficult for many 21st-century Native Hawaiians to share the same degree of involvement and connection with ancestral lands as Native Hawaiians could in former times. Increasing urbanization, commodification, and skyrocketing property expenses have forever changed the Hawaiian pae 'āina and its younger siblings. But recognition of the pivotal role that place plays in identity and learning processes has begun to transform the service and delivery of many educational and social programs for Native Hawaiians. The reforms integrate the rich history, stories, and knowledge about the land and sea, and at the same time reinforce the integral link between the 'āina and identity.

Primarily fueled by the concern and passion of Hawaiian community members, parents, and advocates, these efforts are an organic solution to the chilling negative statistics that plague Native Hawaiian children: high rates of poverty, substance abuse, juvenile deviance and criminal activity, teenage pregnancies, poor educational outcomes, domestic abuse, depression, and suicide. For example, place-based learning is a pillar of educational reform through the Hawaiian charter school

movement. Typical of this approach, these innovative schools (e.g., Kanu o ka ʻĀina New Century Public Charter School and others) boast academically rigorous project-based and place-based curricula for children, integrating community, culture, language, and the natural environment. Students engage in authentic experiences at particular *wahi pana* (sacred places) that serve as outdoor learning laboratories. They conduct science experiments to assess the relative successes of various methods to revive endangered endemic species. Their curricula include learning about lifestyles, knowledge, and values of Native Hawaiians. In this way, connections to the land create the space for Native Hawaiians to maintain traditional practices that nourish spiritual, physical, and educational well-being.

From a sense of place grows a sense of *kuleana* (responsibility). Various programs in schools and other organizations encourage responsibility toward the land and sea as part of a broader educational strategy. These range from post-secondary leadership training (e.g., Na Ala Hele i ke Ao at Chaminade University) to agricultural, resource management, substance abuse rehabilitation (e.g., Hoʻomau ke Ola offering adult outpatient and residential services), and multiple other programs. Programs teaching stewardship of the oceans stress Native Hawaiian beliefs that the sea works in partnership with the land, providing sustenance and serving as a pathway and communication link with other lands and peoples (Amona, 2004). As such, maritime programs, fishpond restoration, and voyaging and ocean learning (e.g., Polynesian Voyaging Society) are all examples of promising directions in Native Hawaiian communities today (see Figure 6).

The results indicate progress. Studies show that best practices among successful teachers of Native Hawaiian students include experience-based, authentic activities (e.g., Kawakami & Aton, 2001). Data from Hawaiian charter schools evidence higher attendance and achievement scores than exhibited by Native Hawaiian students in conventional public schools (Kanaʻiaupuni & Ishibashi, 2005). Evaluation research finds higher levels of engagement (attendance, timely completion, postsecondary aspirations) among Native Hawaiian students enrolled in public school-within-school models that offer hands-on experiences at significant places within students' communities such as streams, freshwater ecosystems, and ancient burial grounds (Yamauchi, 2003). The findings are consistent with research on other indigenous groups. For example, studies have found that Native American students exhibit

greater preference for tactile and concrete learning experiences than do their peers (Rhodes, 1990). Many studies indicate the positive effects of rigorous place-based forms of education in a wide variety of settings (Becket, 2003; Gruenewald, 2003; Kawakami, 1999; Smith, 2002).

FIGURE 6 Students learn ancient and modern lessons at Kahuwai Village on Hawai'i Island.

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Discussion

This essay has traced some of the place–people connections that influence identity. We have documented the spatial linkages between the place of indigenous Hawaiians today and their identity by locating the present in the historical locations and subjugations of place; by tracing the genealogical, cultural, and ancestral relations of Native Hawaiians and place; and by mapping how place serves a pivotal purpose for the progress of Native Hawaiians.

In some ways, Hawaiian identity has been "conceived, manufactured, and fabricated" by external forces that do not share the interests of the indigenous peoples that they mold and shape to fit their own reality (Halualani, 2002). Identity is not simply a subjective cognitive process, but one subjected to external biases, intentional misrepresentation, and political tactics. Countless examples exist where Western powers convince the world of their right to oppress indigenous peoples by recreating them as the other—from the distorted hula girl images of the Hawaiians to the purposeful portrayal of American Indians as primitive savages. Indigenous theory focuses on returning the gaze to expose the ulterior motives behind such tactics, which careful documentation reveals are influenced by Western imperialism, power, and capitalism. Even defining indigenous peoples by blood quantum, as is the case for Hawaiians and many American Indian peoples, is an explicit legal maneuver to ensure that they eventually disappear into oblivion.

In the Hawaiian case, the purpose—perhaps not explicit, but definitely systematic—was to dismember *lāhui*, the Hawaiian nation, to dehistoricize place from its people, and to justify taking the land from its indigenous people (Osorio, 2002). In the end, the place itself may have been the motivating factor, a precious land that still captures the hearts of many visitors. As Mark Twain fondly recalled—in the same speech in which he betrayed the indigenous Hawaiians, calling them stupid, dishonest, immoral cowards,

> no alien land in all the world has any deep strong charm for me but that one, no other land could so longingly and so beseechingly haunt me, sleeping and walking, through half a lifetime, as that one has done. (Sandwich Island Speeches; see Wood, 1999, p. 94)

It is crucial to understand that these forces did not occur without constant resistance. Although never with violence, Native Hawaiians successfully fought to have the island of Kaho'olawe, however sick or devastated by bombing, returned by the military. We have regained and are now actively sustaining and even expanding place-based knowledge systems that had lapsed into disuse, including traditional navigation systems via ocean and constellations; revived ancient agricultural and aquacultural technologies that once sustained hundreds of thousands of islanders

in environmentally healthy ways; and recovered Hawaiian martial arts, ancient chant, hula forms, and traditional healing practices and medicinal plant knowledge. We have struggled to revitalize the Hawaiian language from just a few thousand speakers 20 years ago to many more today. In fact, Census 2000 estimates there are possibly as many as 25,000 Hawaiian-language speakers, making Hawaiian one of the only indigenous languages to have grown between 1990 and 2000 (Staton, 2005). The vast majority reside in the cultural home of Hawai'i. We fight hard for self-determination, exploring multiple models of a potential future as a sovereign people. We are national leaders in the battle against environmental destruction and for protection of endangered species. A powerful driving force in these efforts is the intensity of feeling for place. The mobilizing energy comes from the land itself, from the sea, from the children (see Figure 7), and from the compelling vision of a future in which indigenous Hawaiians are in our rightful place as a vibrant, thriving people.

FIGURE 7 A young marcher

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Perhaps the most critical question that lies before us now is, what is Hawai'i's future, and where are its Native people in those plans? As Hawai'i suffers ever-increasing challenges of overdevelopment and environmental degradation, we all, whether indigenous or not, must work together to protect this place. And yet, for whom is Hawai'i being developed, when more and more of its indigenous population cannot afford to live on and care for our precious 'āina? These questions require answers that account for our place as a people not only now, but also in another 50, 100, or even 1,000 years.

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Notes

1 We use Native Hawaiian, Hawaiian, and *Kanaka Maoli* to refer to those descended from the aboriginal people who inhabited the Hawaiian archipelago prior to 1778, when Captain James Cook arrived in Hawai'i.

2 Kamehameha I did not conquer Kaua'i, but instead, Kaumuali'i, the king of Kaua'i, chose to cede the island to Kamehameha to avoid a future invasion. Kaumuali'i continued to rule Kaua'i while pledging allegiance to Kamehameha.

3 The law was repealed successfully in the following spring, 2005.

4 According to Census 2000, 64.9% of Native Hawaiians report more than one race. Alaska Natives most often reported multiple races (92%), followed by Native Hawaiians, and then American Indians (53%).