

AMERICAN MIXED RACE

The Culture of Microdiversity

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The Hawaiian Alternative to the One-Drop Rule

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The Contrast: The Mainland versus Hawaii

In colonial America and later in the United States, the dominant rule that developed during slavery for black-white miscegenation was the hypodescent or "one-drop" rule. In accordance with this rule, a mixed child and all his or her descendants were defined as black and assigned the slave status. Thus "whiteness is nothing more than the absence of any black forbears, and blackness is nothing more than the presence of one black forbear."¹ Whites applied the same rule to the mixed children of blacks and Native Americans and to those with triracial ancestry. One black ancestor (or "one drop of black blood") made the person black, regardless of the proportion of black ancestry or the person's physical appearance.²

The hypodescent rule did not die with slavery but rather was strengthened by the Civil War and subsequent developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The rule has received legislative support in many states and has been legitimized by state and federal courts. In 1986, in a case involving a woman who looks white, who said she had always thought she was white, and whose ancestry is apparently 3/32 African black,³ neither the Louisiana Supreme Court nor the United States Supreme Court saw any reason to disturb the application of the one-drop rule.⁴

The Hawaiian Islands became subject to the laws of the United States in 1900, when Hawaii was annexed as a territory, long before Hawaii became a state in 1959. However, the history of race relations since Haoles (non-Polynesians) first arrived in the islands

has been very different from that of the mainland. Interracial and interethnic marriages have been common in Hawaii, whereas most of the black-white miscegenation on the mainland has been coercive and outside of marriage. Racially mixed people in Hawaii, rather than being assigned membership in any parent group, are perceived and respected as persons with roots in two or more ancestral groups.⁵ The implicit rule has been that mixed-race persons are to be accepted as such and treated as equals by all racial and ethnic groups.⁶ The practice has been the same for the small proportion of persons with African forbears as it has for those with other ancestries.⁷

Since abandoning the effort to count mulattoes in 1920, the U.S. Bureau of the Census has required each individual to be identified as a member of a single race, with no provision for mixed-race ancestries. When Hawaii became a state, this bureau system of monoracial classification replaced the island practice of recording racial mixtures.⁸ There was no mixed-raced or multiracial category to select in the 1980 census enumeration and, apparently for several reasons, two-thirds of the people of Hawaii designated "other" as their racial identity. By 1989, racially and ethnically mixed people were the largest segment of the Hawaiian population, at least one-third. The current rate of intermarriage among the ethnic groups is 45 percent, suggesting that unmixed persons, ethnically and racially, will be rare in a few more generations.⁹

Other Patterns, Other Rules

Before probing further into the contrast between the Hawaiian and one-drop rules, we need some additional cross-cultural perspective. With the exception of the one-drop rule, racially mixed progeny are identified everywhere in the world as mixed people rather than as members of either (or any) parent group. However, there are great variations in the statuses to which mixed-race people are assigned. Let us note five other rules for mixed-race populations in addition to the Hawaiian and hypodescent rules, one of the five for non-black groups in the United States.¹⁰

A third rule decrees that a mixed-race population is a separate people with a lower status than that of either parent group. For example, this is the case with mixed children fathered by American soldiers, white or black, in Vietnam.¹¹ The children of American soldiers in Korea also have been subjected to contempt and

severe discrimination. A child's identity and citizenship derive from the father in Korea and Vietnam. Except in rare cases where a valid marriage can be proven, the mixed children have no citizenship either in their native countries or in the United States. The Ganda peoples of Uganda in East Africa provide a similar example. They regard mulattoes with contempt and, during the British colonial occupation, both parent groups seriously considered removing all the mixed-race people to an island in Lake Victoria.¹²

The métis of Canada (progeny of whites and Canadian Indians) further illustrate the bottom-of-the-ladder outcome; although for a time they had an in-between status, the métis were despised and rejected by the Indian tribes and also by the British and French. In 1884, after their second rebellion, the métis were crushed by British troops and scattered throughout the wilderness of the Canadian West. Today there are more métis than full Indians in Canada. Many still live as isolated outcasts; those who have moved to the cities are a poor, demoralized underclass. Although "mixed-bloods" in the United States have generally been perceived by the tribes as less worthy than full Indians, they have fared far better than have the métis in Canada. In the United States, tribal definitions of eligibility for membership vary from extremely small fractions of tribal ancestry to one-half, whereas the federal government's position generally has been that a person must have one-fourth Indian ancestry to be classed as "Indian."¹³

Following a fourth rule, a mixed-race population is defined as a separate people but accorded a status higher than that of either parent group. This occurred in Haiti after a long rebellion ended French control in 1804. The mulattoes, who had been an in-between group before independence, became dominant over the far larger population of unmixed blacks. They became political and economic elites who looked down on whites as well as blacks and prevented intermarriage with both parent groups.¹⁴ The mulattoes' political monopoly ended in 1957 with the coming of the first Duvalier regime, although they still vie for power. Mulattoes also became dominant elites in the African societies of Liberia and Namibia.

The political ascendance of the mestizos in Mexico since 1821 further illustrates the fourth rule. During the three centuries of Spanish rule, there was large-scale miscegenation between the Spanish and the Indian peoples. During this period the mixed-race people, the mestizos, had an in-between status. After the success of the revolution against the Spanish in 1821, the mestizos became politically

dominant over the Spanish and Indian (and small black) populations. Although the Spanish and other presumably unmixed whites continue to have considerable wealth and influence, mestizos—by far the largest population group—hold the balance of political power.

The fifth rule defines racially mixed progeny as a separate people who occupy an in-between status position. Some such people identify more with one of the parent groups than the other, although this allegiance may shift with changing circumstances. Some develop a firm identity of their own, such as the mixed children living on military bases in Japan—half Japanese and half American white or black.¹⁵ In-between groups provide a buffer between the parent groups and are often liaison agents between the two. Sometimes they develop specialized economic tasks, doing necessary work the dominant group does not want to do, in which case they become middlemen or simply middle minorities.

Politically, whether racially mixed or not, middle minorities are relatively powerless and their status is uncertain and volatile. In crisis situations the dominant group does not protect the middle minority from resentful lower status groups.¹⁶ For a long time, the métis of Canada had a strong group identity and were proud of their special occupations—transporting goods by canoe and a special cart, hunting buffalo, and acting as interpreters for Indians and whites. The building of railroads and the rapid settlement of the Canadian frontier brought an end to the special occupations of the métis and precipitated their rebellion and disastrous fall from the middle status.

In the Republic of South Africa, the Coloureds and the Asians have been buffer groups between the whites and blacks. The rule for the Coloureds, particularly explicit during the apartheid era, has been that they shall have a separate identity and a status between that of unmixed blacks and whites. The Coloureds would be defined as blacks in the United States. Clearly there has been no one-drop rule in the Republic of South Africa.

The fourfold system of segregation under the apartheid laws was designed to keep what are called the “four races” apart to prevent further black–white miscegenation, to maintain the two buffer groups between whites and blacks, and thus to perpetuate white control of blacks. Passing as white has occurred but it has been open, following official administrative procedures for changing one’s identity from Coloured to white. By contrast, passing has had to be secret in the United States to get around the one-drop rule. The establish-

ment of the Apartheid system in 1948 forced large numbers of Coloureds to move to designated areas and imposed other hardships and status losses on them. As a result, the Coloureds have identified less and less with the whites and have increasingly supported the black protests.

A sixth rule is followed in lowland Latin America south of Mexico and in the Caribbean. The rule says that the status of all mixed-race persons may vary all the way from quite low to quite high, depending on the individual’s lifestyle, mainly on economic and educational achievements. Whites are at the top of these class structures and unmixed blacks and Indians on the bottom. Blacks are defined as only those of unmixed African descent. Although the many rungs on the long status ladder are indicated by terms that describe the highly variable physical appearance of mulatto and mestizo individuals, this racial terminology can be quite misleading. These are actually class systems in which lifestyle is much more important than racial ancestry or physical traits.¹⁷ “Money whitens,” as the phrase goes, and a person who rises in educational and economic status is identified by whiter racial designations.¹⁸ Persons with some obvious African or Indian traits may even be accepted as white, if they are quite prosperous and well educated.¹⁹

The above pattern pertains in the Iberian or Spanish-speaking islands in the Caribbean, where high status enables light mulattoes and mestizos with visible African or Indian traits to marry whites. On the British and other Northwest European islands in the Caribbean, persons with known African or Indian ancestry are also accepted for marriage with whites but only if they appear white.²⁰ Secret passing is unnecessary because there is no one-drop rule on either the Iberian or the northwest European islands. The rule for the latter islands seems to be followed generally in Northern Europe, whereas the Iberian variant is generally followed in Southern Europe.

In Puerto Rico, as in lowland Latin America and elsewhere in the Caribbean, racial terms of reference for mixed-race people have uncertain meanings, class criteria outweigh physical traits, and racial identity is a negotiable entity.²¹ Approximately three-fifths of all Puerto Rican migrants to the United States have had some visible African ancestry and have therefore been perceived on the mainland as blacks. However, most of these migrants were known on the island by one of the many designations for mixed-race people,

not as blacks, and many of them were classed as whites. Some migrants who do not look too black or Indian succeed in emphasizing their Spanish heritage and in becoming known as Hispanics or Latinos, cultural rather than racial designations. The darker migrants tend to pressure their youth to marry light mulattoes or whites to “whiten” the family and promote upward social mobility.²² This strategy creates cultural misunderstanding and antagonizes the American black community, which sees it as disloyalty—as “denying their color.”

The seventh rule assigns the status of an assimilating minority to mixed-race people. This rule is implicit in the treatment of all racial minorities other than African blacks in the United States—of East Asians, Native Americans, and others. Persons who are half white and half Chinese or Filipino, for instance, are usually considered marginal to both parent groups and they have an ambiguous status. In some situations the hypodescent tendency predominates—to treat such persons as members of the lower status group—but no one-drop rule is invoked. When further miscegenation occurs, however, children whose ancestry is one-fourth or less from such a group are generally able to marry whites if they wish to and become fully assimilated into Anglo-American life. These assimilating individuals, like European immigrants, may be proud of being one-fourth or less Japanese or Korean, three-eighths Irish, and so on, and do not have to pass secretly into the dominant community to receive full acceptance and equal opportunity. This largely one-way assimilation in the United States contrasts with what is more nearly a melting-pot process in the Hawaiian Islands. Also, despite some similarities, it differs from the process in Latin America and with both variants in the Caribbean.

The History of the One-Drop Rule

Black-white miscegenation began in Colonial America when slaves from Africa were introduced more than 350 years ago. The first widespread mixing occurred in the Chesapeake Bay area.²³ Despite legal uncertainties, the one-drop rule had become the social or customary definition of who was black in the upper South by the early 1700s. Virginia drew a genetic line by statute in 1785, defining a Negro as anyone with one-fourth or more African ancestry, a legal rule adopted generally in the upper South at that time.²⁴ Such

laws defined as white a large number of persons with known, and often visible, black ancestry. This conflict between the social and legal definitions persisted for decades.

The one-drop rule was initially neither the legal nor the social rule in parts of the lower South. Especially in areas around New Orleans and Charleston, South Carolina, many of the early mulattoes were freed and became a class with their own identity and a middle minority status between that of blacks and whites. South Carolina's courts rejected the one-drop rule explicitly.²⁵ Until the 1840s in South Carolina, known and visible mulattoes could marry into white families. The early Black Creoles in southern Louisiana were prevented by law from marrying either blacks or whites, although some did so,²⁶ and they successfully avoided the one-drop rule until the 1850s.²⁷

During the plantation era, white males often obtained sexual access to slave girls and women by threats of violence or other punishments.²⁸ The all-pervasive master-slave “etiquette” allowed white males to gain this physical intimacy but still to remain in total control of the slaves. Sexual contact between black men and white women, however, was absolutely forbidden. Another mixed child in the slave quarters was an economic asset, but a mulatto child in the big house would threaten the system. White men thus enslaved their own children and grandchildren.²⁹ Mulatto-unmixed black sexual contacts accelerated the “whitening” of the slave population and mulatto-mulatto unions continued the interracial mixing of the genes.

By 1850 the discrepancy between the social and legal definitions of who was black became a bitter conflict. White fears of slave rebellions and of the end of slavery fanned hostility toward mulattoes throughout the South.³⁰ Support for the rule that mulattoes were an in-between group rather than blacks declined rapidly, even in South Carolina and Louisiana.³¹ The more the whites rejected the tie with mulattoes, the more the latter were compelled to see themselves as Negroes rather than as “almost whites.” As the South braced itself to defend slavery, the one-drop rule became more nearly universal.

The net effect of the Civil War and its aftermath was to strengthen support for the one-drop rule among whites and blacks, including mulattoes. During the Reconstruction years in the devastated South, the legislatures and courts of South Carolina, Louisiana, and some other states limited the definition of black persons to those with one-fourth, one-eighth, or some other fraction of black ancestry. In

cases of doubt, however, the one-drop rule increasingly prevailed.³² The war accelerated the alienation of whites from mulattoes and the latter emerged as Negro leaders in the South. Black-white sexual contacts were probably at a low point because of heightened racial animosity and the relative lack of interracial proximity in the new sharecropping system.³³

Developments after Reconstruction in the South further undergirded the one-drop rule. Working-class whites led the passage of segregation statutes, voting restrictions, and other legal devices designed to reduce blacks to a near-slave status. This Restoration movement was legitimized by a United States Supreme Court decision in 1883³⁴ and in the 1896 separate-but-equal precedent case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.³⁵ Homer Plessy, who was one-eighth African black and looked white, challenged the Louisiana statute requiring racially segregated seating on trains. The Supreme Court briefly took judicial notice of the definition of a Negro as a person with any known black ancestry. The case shows how the one-drop rule was used to strengthen white domination of blacks.³⁶

By 1910 the Jim Crow system of segregation was well established. To enforce the antimiscegenation laws that were included in the flood of Jim Crow legislation, the concerned states had to define a Negro. Some states specified small fractions of black ancestry and others explicitly stated the one-drop rule. By 1915 the one-drop rule had become universally backed by whites, in the South and North.³⁷

During the building of the Jim Crow system, white animosity toward mulattoes was strong, and there was much fear of "invisible black blood." The oppression of blacks was notably violent during this period, and lynching reached its peak between 1890 and 1910.³⁸ It was at this time that W. E. B. DuBois and other mulatto leaders began their long struggle for civil rights, especially to bring the Jim Crow system down. Many of the lightest mulattoes took the drastic and painful step of passing as white to escape the racial obstacles to achievement. The peak years of passing were probably from 1880 to 1925.

Black migration to Northern cities was accelerated by World War I. In the 1920s, laws blocking immigration from southern and eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa opened up low-cost housing in the inner cities for large numbers of Southern blacks and Hispanic migrants. Mulattoes in New York's Harlem and other cities led the Black Renaissance of the 1920s, celebrating a black identity and a

black culture rooted both in African and American experiences. By 1925 the American black community, including most mulattoes, firmly supported the one-drop rule.³⁹

Most of the Jim Crow laws required racial segregation in public facilities, including schools, but some pertained to miscegenation and others to political, legal, or economic life.⁴⁰ The primary means of ensuring white control in black-white personal contacts was the master-servant behavior known as the racial etiquette. Blacks had to act out their subordinate position to avoid being accused of getting out of "their place." Black violations of the etiquette or other challenges to the system resulted in warnings, threats of violence, and acts of terrorism, including lynching.⁴¹

The one-drop rule and the symbol of white womanhood, which meant no sexual contacts between white females and black males, were crucial to the perpetuation of the Jim Crow system. Many of the same white males who used strong rhetoric about the dangers of "mongrelization" also used threats of violence or other punishments to gain sexual access to black women and girls. The resulting children, in accordance with the one-drop rule and the expectation that a child stays with its mother, lived in black homes and thus posed no danger to the Jim Crow system. Mixed-race children in white homes were not tolerated because, as under slavery, they threatened the system.

Although not required by law, except for some antimiscegenation statutes, systematic segregation also prevailed in the North in public facilities, jobs, and housing. This northern pattern was widely supported by public opinion, threats, the Ku Klux Klan, and sometimes by violence. Black-white sexual contacts were limited, usually occurred outside of marriage, involved black males more than in the South, and were generally less coercive of black women.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s ended the Jim Crow system and achieved other gains, but the one-drop rule emerged stronger than before. The years of delay and white backlash against desegregation fueled the Soul Movement, a second black renaissance emphasizing black pride and political power. Black pride united lighter mulattoes with blacks in general more closely than ever. However, the intense focus on blackness often put light blacks on the defensive, and they have felt pressure to affirm their African roots, their black pride, their loyalty, and thus the one-drop rule.⁴² The prestige of lightness in the black community had been devalued considerably by the mid-1970s.⁴³

The one-drop rule has become strongly self-perpetuating in the black community, as witnessed by intense black opposition to passing as white and the infrequency of passing by persons who could do so.⁴⁴ Black family and community hostility is often great when a white-appearing "black" marries a white.⁴⁵ The message is that anyone with even the slightest trace of black ancestry who marries across the ethnic line is a traitor to the black community. Similarly, since 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers has led opposition to the adoption by white parents of children with any black ancestry, on the ground that white parents are incapable of teaching the child the firm black identity needed to survive as a black.⁴⁶ By 1976, such adoptions were almost stopped and, by 1987, at least thirty-five states had a policy against "cross-racial" adoption.

From 75 to more than 90 percent of all members of the American black community have some white ancestry⁴⁷ and estimates of those with Native American forbears range from 30 to 70 percent.⁴⁸ Probably between one-fifth and one-fourth of the genes of African Americans have come from white ancestors.⁴⁹ The genes of peoples from Africa, Europe, Native America, and some from Asia have mingled to produce an extremely wide range of racial variation in the American population defined as black—all the way from persons who look African to others who look white, Native American, or even Asian.⁵⁰

The American black community is composed of a "new people" in a sociocultural as well as a biological sense.⁵¹ The one-drop rule has made soul brothers and sisters of people with widely varying physical traits. Sharing a culture based on a long history of oppression and other common experiences, African Americans are an ethnic group with a strong sense of group identity and pride. Although the one-drop rule provided crucial support for slavery and Jim Crow segregation, African Americans have taken it for granted for a very long time and now generally feel they have a vested interest in it. Ironically, the observation that the one-drop rule has been an arbitrary and racist social construction arouses fears that the black community will lose members, black political strength, and some valued leaders and role models.

There have been deviations from the one-drop rule on the mainland.⁵² Those who have rejected or tried to avoid the rule include those who have passed as white, many white adoptive parents and their children, some intermarried couples and their children, many

Puerto Ricans and other Hispanic Americans, 200 or so small communities of American mestizos or Triracial Isolates in the East and South,⁵³ and Marcus Garvey and other proponents of black racial purity.⁵⁴ Such departures seem generally to have provoked affirmations of the rule and have reinforced it more than they have undermined it.

Strong reinforcement of the one-drop rule provides a firm black identity for most African Americans, but the rule has its costs. There are dilemmas and traumas over personal identity,⁵⁵ ambiguities and strains in everyday life, divisive conflicts over color in black families and communities,⁵⁶ collective hysteria about passing and about invisible blackness,⁵⁷ heavy pressure on light mulattoes to prove their blackness, administrative and legal problems of racial classification, misperceptions of the racial identities of huge populations in Asia and the Middle East, and failure to take miscegenation into proper account in scientific studies of African Americans.⁵⁸ These problems stem from the great physical diversity in the African American community, especially from classifying as black those persons whose ancestry is mostly non-African.

Mixed-Race Experience on the Islands

The original settlers in the Hawaiian Islands were Polynesians, a racially mixed people. Some 1,500 years ago they migrated to Hawaii from the Marquesas Islands and others came later from Tahiti.⁵⁹ The survivors of two Spanish ships wrecked in the sixteenth century found the Hawaiians friendly, tolerant, and accepting of sexual relations and marriage with Haoles. Captain Cook and his crew received the same hospitable treatment in 1778. The Hawaiians welcomed the first white settlers as equals and valued them as informants on the ways of outsiders.⁶⁰ The early traders and settlers reciprocated the equal treatment, being few and wanting economic benefits rather than military conquest or political rule.

Many of the early white settlers took Hawaiian wives, often the daughters of chiefs, and the first hapa-Haoles (half-outsiders) were accorded great respect. Still today it is prestigious to be part Hawaiian. The tradition of racial and ethnic tolerance, including treatment of racially mixed progeny as equals, was accepted by later arrivals. White newcomers to the islands, including Southern whites from the mainland, generally have accepted this cultural practice within a few months of their arrival.⁶¹

The native Hawaiians could not meet the rising demand for workers in the sugar cane fields in the 1850s, partly because they disliked field work, but mainly because their numbers had been decimated by diseases brought in from outside. The Haole planters first imported thousands of Chinese workers, next several thousand Portuguese and other Europeans, and then far greater numbers of Japanese. By 1900 the Japanese made up forty percent of the population, the largest ethnic group, while the Hawaiians and part Hawaiians constituted 25 percent.⁶²

Several thousand Koreans and Puerto Ricans came after 1900, followed by more Portuguese, then by Filipinos.⁶³ Some of these Portuguese and probably more than half of the Puerto Ricans had some African ancestry, and they, along with other persons with African forbears, were defined in Hawaii as mixed-race persons and accepted as equals.⁶⁴ Many Pacific Islanders are themselves quite dark, although not because they have African ancestry. Since World War II, and especially since the abolition of the national origins quota laws in 1985, immigrants have come from many places, including the Pacific Islands, the Philippines, East Asia, South Asia, the U.S. mainland, Mexico, European nations, and the Middle East.

One reason mixed-race people in Hawaii have continued to receive egalitarian treatment is that there are so many of them and so many parent groups. Life on the islands has been characterized by the genetic mixing of the many different peoples. It is common to be able to identify ancestry in two or more groups and very bad manners to speak ill of miscegenation.⁶⁵ Except for the Japanese and Portuguese, most immigrants in the early twentieth century were young, single men, many of whom have intermarried with other groups. In the late twentieth century, women exceeded men as migrants to Hawaii.⁶⁶ Although ethnic in-group marriages are preferred, both ethnicity and race are usually less important in marital choice than personal qualities, education, and occupation. Racially mixed "locals" (islanders) are generally viewed as desirable marriage partners.⁶⁷

The number of Hawaiians and part Hawaiians combined had declined to 38,547 by 1910, a disastrous drop from the 300,000 or so when Captain Cook arrived in 1778. There were more part-Hawaiians than unmixed ones by 1910 and almost nine times as many by 1960. By the mid-1970s, a health survey found 191,652 persons with one-eighth or more Hawaiian ancestry, 18.3 percent of the state's residents, the third largest population group after whites and Japa-

nese. Some persons with native ancestry claim the Hawaiian identity while others do not. Many mixed-race islanders, not just part Hawaiians, change their ethnic identification as they move from one situation to another.⁶⁸

The United States outmaneuvered Great Britain and Japan to become the "protector" of the Hawaiian Islands, and Queen Liliuokalani was eased out of power in 1893 by American economic interests. Sanford B. Dole headed the Republic established in 1894 and was the first governor when Hawaii became a U.S. territory in 1900. The native chiefs, who had made land concessions too cheaply and too often, continued to lose more land. As a result, some native and mixed Hawaiians have experienced unemployment, poverty, and disease. A revival of the traditional native culture in the 1970s produced charges that wealthy whites and other groups have been guilty of ethnic prejudice and discrimination against native Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians.

Although Haoles gradually seized economic and political power from the native Hawaiians, and despite the tensions that have often existed among ethnic groups, intergroup relations in Hawaii have not been racist. There has been considerable migration from the mainland in recent decades, but racial prejudice is still generally considered to be contemptible. Race has been unimportant in class competition, and there has been no systematic racial segregation or discrimination. Both individuals and entire ethnic groups, irrespective of racial traits, have moved upward in educational, economic, and political status.

In more theoretical terms, the history of Hawaii has been one of amicable relations among ethnic groups—cultural pluralism. It has also been one of extensive social participation within each ethnic community—structural pluralism. However, there has been a balance between pluralism and assimilation. Different ethnic traditions have merged to a considerable extent—melting-pot type cultural assimilation. Also, members of all ethnic groups interact in small groups and recreational activities as well as at school, work, and other public places—structural assimilation.

Although there are no racial communities as such, the Hawaiian practice is egalitarian pluralism—both cultural and structural—among the racial categories. The cultural pluralism and assimilation involved are that of the ethnic groups represented, and the structural assimilation often involves interracial dating and intermarriage—thus miscegenation. Racial identity by itself is not a significant factor

in marital choice, occupational mobility, the professions, business management, or government. The tolerant, egalitarian balance between pluralism and assimilation applies also to racially mixed persons—including those with African ancestry—who may be found among successful professionals, leaders in education, business executives at all levels, or government officials.⁶⁹

A brief comparison between the status of racially mixed people in Hawaii and in Latin America is instructive. Class placement of such persons hinges on education and economic attainment in both patterns and can range from very low to very high. However, in Hawaii the class position of mixed-race individuals is not affected by color or other racial traits as it is to some extent in Latin America and the Caribbean. The class ladder does not have a preferred color at the top as in Latin America, and the constant rhetoric about racial traits is absent.

If Not the One-Drop Rule, What?

The Hawaiian tradition of egalitarian pluralism for mixed-race people poses the sharpest contrast in the world to the hypodescent or one-drop rule. The histories of these two rules could hardly be more different—one grounded in tolerance and respect for racially mixed persons, the other in racist beliefs and designed to keep mixed progeny in the lower status group so as to perpetuate slavery and Jim Crow segregation. Will increasing discussion of the one-drop rule in the United States result in more pressure on Hawaii to comply with the mainland tradition concerning African ancestry, or might the tail eventually wag the dog?

By the 1970s, as we have seen, support for the one-drop rule had become at least as strong in the American black community as among whites. Until the 1990s, it had seemed unlikely that the rule would be seriously challenged in the foreseeable future. However, the movement to allow mixed-race persons to adopt a biracial or multiracial identity has recently developed considerable momentum and achieved some success. Rather than attacking the one-drop rule frontally, the emphasis in this movement is on the freedom to choose one's own racial identity and to affirm one's whole self by acknowledging all of one's ancestries. The movement helps mixed-race persons to resist the American pressure to identify with only

one distinct racial category and instead to define an identity of their own.⁷⁰ It has been suggested that "this is the next logical step in the progression of civil rights."⁷¹

Multiracial experiences have been included in some multicultural studies programs since the latter 1970s, notably at the Berkeley and Los Angeles campuses of the University of California. More than thirty organizations that affirm a multiracial identity have sprung up since the early 1980s and are nationally coordinated.⁷² In recent years, the *Interrace* and *New People* magazines have publicized personal experiences and supported the general recognition of a multiracial identity. Multiracial experiences have begun to receive considerable attention in articles in newspapers and general magazines, in books, and on radio and television talk shows.

The multiracial identity movement embraces all racial blends, not just those involving African black ancestry. Although neither Asian nor Native American ancestry has been subject to a one-drop rule, the rule for black ancestry has caused the multiracial identity option to be omitted from official lists of racial categories. PROJECT RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally), headquartered in Atlanta, has persuaded several state legislatures to consider requiring the multiracial category on all state forms where racial identity must be checked. Moreover, by June 1993, laws to this effect had been passed in Ohio and Illinois. Such legislation is pending in Georgia and Wisconsin. Also, some school districts in these two states, in North Carolina, and other states have added the multiracial category. If the current drive by Project RACE and other organizations to get the U.S. Congress to add the multiracial category on census forms succeeds, a significant dent will have been made in the one-drop rule. The NAACP has decided neither to endorse nor oppose the use of the multiracial category.

However, the multiracial identity movement will encounter formidable opposition if the strong support for the one-drop rule in the black community becomes effectively mobilized. Many whites who are sympathetic to the movement will probably not support it if there is determined black opposition. We have only to recall how effective the National Association of Black Social Workers was in the 1970s in stopping whites from adopting children with black ancestry. Many African Americans fear that whites who support the multiracial option want to divide the black community, coopt some of its members, weaken black political power, and undermine af-

firmative action and other civil rights remedies.⁷³ There is also fear that persons who want to affirm their European, Native American, or Asian roots are trying to deny their African ancestry.⁷⁴

The one-drop rule has been so settled in state and federal case law that litigation of it has been rare since early in the twentieth century. When statutes mandating the multiracial category on official forms are tested in the courts, judges may invalidate them. Or, if they rule favorably, courts may well be reluctant to extend this precedent to other situations. However, if legislatures and courts eventually support a broader agenda to affirm a multiracial identity, what might replace the one-drop rule?

Neither American history nor current outlooks of both the white and the black communities would support the third and fourth rules as discussed above, whereby mixed-race people would occupy a separate status either below or above that of both (or all) ancestral groups. Might the fifth rule, which decrees a middle status for the racially mixed, reemerge from the decisive defeat it suffered in the South in the 1850s? African Americans in general now abhor such a rule, associating it with using light-colored Uncle Toms as a buffer group to help whites control blacks. The white and the black communities have become so polarized that a middle status for mixed-race persons seems most improbable.

The sixth rule emerged in Latin America where, as in the United States, miscegenation has produced the total range of racial traits from individuals who look black to those who look white or Native American. This rainbow of racial characteristics is found within the population defined as black in the United States, whereas mixed persons with black ancestry are not defined as blacks in Latin America. Fear has been expressed that our one-drop rule might be replaced by Latin American "colorism," a class system in which status is associated at least roughly with the lightness of one's skin.⁷⁵ However, the histories and current social structures of the two Americas are so different that the sixth rule would probably seem too alien to most North Americans, white and black alike. The northwest European Island variant in the Caribbean, which permits persons with known African ancestry to intermarry if they look white, might seem but a small step from the one-drop rule. However, in addition to the fact that all mixed-race people on those islands are defined as many degrees of colored and not as black, many North American whites still hold the irrational fear of "invisible blackness."

There is strong sentiment against applying the seventh rule to persons with black ancestry, in the American white community and the black. This implicit rule enables racial minorities other than blacks to intermarry and be fully accepted by whites if their minority ancestry is one-fourth or less. To most whites, widespread intermarriage with persons who are one-fourth or less black would be an intolerable departure from the ultimate barrier to the total assimilation of blacks, the one-drop rule. Blacks and whites take measures to limit informal contacts with members of the other group, and both are strongly opposed to the total assimilation of blacks by whites.

Perhaps the Hawaiian rule, different as it is from the one-drop rule, is the most feasible alternative after all. We have seen that mainlanders who move to Hawaii can accept the island pattern after a few months. Egalitarian pluralism for mixed-race people would avoid the aspects of the fifth and sixth rules feared by at least some supporters of the multiracial identity movement,⁷⁶ because race is not a factor in class placement in Hawaii. African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans have all moved in the direction of egalitarian pluralism in preference to total assimilation of their groups by Anglo-Americans. The Hawaiian pattern exemplifies a workable balance between egalitarian pluralism and assimilation. It also shows how the pluralistic trend on the mainland might be extended to mixed-race people.

Finally, the Hawaiian rule offers an alternative to the seventh rule for racially mixed persons of nonblack descent on the mainland. Such persons now have an ambiguous status if their ancestry is more than one-fourth Asian or Native American. Those with one-fourth or less such ancestry may prefer to retain a multiracial identity rather than to become fully assimilated Anglo-Americans. Thus the Hawaiian pattern of amicable relations among all ethnic groups would seem a desirable alternative for all mixed-race people on the mainland, not only those with African ancestry.