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Faculty Sponsor: Patricia Fifita, Eirik Saethre



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Abstract

Through sociopolitical history and ethnography, this research examines the influence of Hawai‘i’s historical plantation-based racial-hierarchy on the current social mobility of Filipino migrants and their subsequent cultural adaptations. The sociopolitical history centers on the Filipino experience with systematic oppression under the supremacy of plantation owners between the early- to mid-1900s, the contemporary socioeconomic position of Filipinos, and the formation of the Local identity. Results of the ethnography identified adaptations in areas of cultural assimilation, closed ethnic communities, and Local-Ethnic-Humor (LEH). Modern perpetuations of the racial hierarchy are found to be interconnected, and many simultaneously function as cultural adaptations, which include access to education, seclusion of ethnic communities, cultural assimilation and heritage loss, the reconstruction of ethnic stereotypes in Local ethnic humor, and diasporic immigration.

Keywords

Hawai‘i, race, Local, humor, Filipino American, cultural adaption, ethnography

Peer Review

This work has undergone a double-blind review by a minimum of two faculty members from institutions of higher learning from around the world. The faculty reviewers have expertise in disciplines closely related to those represented by this work. If possible, the work was also reviewed by undergraduates in collaboration with the faculty reviewers.

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“It’s not a stereotype if it’s true,” may be an uncomfortably familiar phrase for those who experience racial profiling. In the vast ethnic diversity of the Hawaiian Islands (Hawai'i), uniquely specific forms of such stereotypes have emerged from a historically divided society rooted as it is in a racial hierarchy that was enforced by an agricultural oligarchy put in place by the United States of America (US). Although the economy has shifted its focus from agriculture to tourism, members belonging to traditionally economically-disempowered classes, like Filipino Americans (FAs), continue to struggle with inequality.

Considering the evolution and markers of racial profiling for FAs living in Hawai'i, in this article I argue that such stigmas limiting FA social mobility originated in the plantation era, to which FA communities have adapted in unique ways. To demonstrate this, the first section, Sociopolitical History, outlines the systematic subjugation of FAs and areas of improvement from the 1920s to post-1965. This includes discussions of pre-colonial history and the plantation era, the plantation racial hierarchy, a background on Filipino recruits, demographics, labor and housing conditions, labor movements, the status of Post-1965 FAs, and the ongoing negotiation of Local identity. The subsequent Ethnography accounts for the FA experience navigating systematic oppression and their resulting cultural adaptations: cultural assimilation, closed ethnic communities, and Local-Ethnic-Humor (LEH). In so doing, I identify some effects of the plantation hierarchy on FAs' socioeconomic position, and explore their resulting cultural adaptations from both a historical and ethnographic perspective.

Sociopolitical History

Pre-colonial History and the Plantation

Era. The first wave of Hawaiian settlement is believed to have occurred before the fifth century, well before initial European contact in 1778.¹ It was not until a series of legal acts collectively known as The Great Māhele in the nineteenth century allowed for the commodification of land that the sugar industry came to dominate the Hawai'i economy.² Most sugar agencies were controlled by four families descended from English missionaries who turned to agriculture.³ By 1909, the industry was consolidated into what would be known as the Five Big Companies.⁴

This legal shift made way for a massive influx of new migrants. As permitted through the Masters and Servants Act of 1850, plantation owners (planters) began importing a massive foreign labor supply.⁵ This included from China 46,000 individuals (1852–1897), from Portugal and the Azores 17,500 (1878–1913), from Japan and Okinawa 180,000 (1885–1924), from Puerto Rico 5,200 (1901), from Korea 7,000 (1903–1905), and from the Philippines 126,000 individuals (1906–1946).⁶ A system of contracts controlled the laborers' conduct, wages, and terms of service that specifically prohibited any political action.⁷ Workers were legally bound to their plantation duties, the refusal of which was punishable by law. Although the statute was meant to protect laborers' rights—by preventing physical mistreatment, the withholding of payment, and the transfer of contracts—workers still had to leave the plantation in order to file a grievance, which would in turn violate their contract in addition to the law.⁸

These labor law evolutions in the wake of mass migration were also deeply linked to

¹ Kirch, *Feathered Gods*, 2.

² Kirch, *Feathered Gods*, 67–68; Churchill and Venne, *Islands in Captivity*, 57–66; Liu, “Race, Ethnicity, and the Sugar Plantation System,” 189.

³ Jung, *Reworking Race*, 16.

⁴ Kent, *Hawai'i*, 38.

⁵ Beechert, *Working in Hawai'i*.

⁶ Matsueda, *Into the Marketplace*.

⁷ Labrador, *Building Filipino Hawai'i*, 41.

⁸ Jung, *Reworking Race*, 16, 21–22.

the annexation of the Kingdom of Hawai'i. The passage of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1876 permitted the duty-free export of sugar to the US, providing a motivating factor to the overthrow in 1893. It was shortly followed by the Organic Act of 1900, which enforced the incorporation of US laws within the territory of Hawai'i, contributing to the end of penal contracts and the Chinese Exclusion acts.⁹ As the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association (HSPA) now enjoyed the tariff protection and privileges of a US territory, an aggressive expansion of production was undertaken that necessitated an increase in labor supply.

Plantation Racial Hierarchy. Despite their shared re-location and economic disadvantages, "the plantation system did little to promote solidarity between different ethnic groups." Jonathan Okamura argues these groups "held differential access to skilled positions and were imported as strikebreakers against one another."¹⁰ For examples, an 1883 issue of *Planter's Monthly* advocated that "by employing different nationalities, there is less danger of collusion."¹¹ Further evidence for intentional disenfranchisement through segregation came from the Hawai'i Labor Commission and specifically its manager, George Fairchild, who put in place systems to separate "a variety of laborers, that is different nationalities, and thus prevent any concerted action in the case of strikes, for there are few, if any cases of Japanese, Chinese, and Portuguese entering into strike as a unit."¹²

As a direct response to such collusion between discriminated groups, Filipino

laborers were imported to break the Japanese strike of 1909, sabotaging the relationship between Japanese and Filipino laborers on the plantations.¹³ Joshua Gastilo Maka'ala argues that the control exercised by Hawai'i's planters was hegemonic in nature because, "with the goal of producing sugar lucratively, [ethnically] white sugar planters emphasized socio-political and economic hierarchies based on race."¹⁴ While Filipinos held a social status below other groups from Asia, as settlers they were considered above indigenous Hawaiians. This offers a dual perspective on the plantations' social hierarchy.

Filipino Recruits. Filipino migrants entering the US were typically soldiers, sailors, students, and farmers. Among those four demographics, farmers were specifically targeted as recruits for Hawai'i plantations due to their specialized training in a similar terrain.¹⁵ Before the 1940s, recruits from the Philippines to Hawai'i were largely from the Ilocos provinces and the Visayan Islands. Both were predominantly rural and densely populated regions where farming was a major occupation and access to formal education was limited.¹⁶

As of the 1920s, the linguistic background of the Filipino population mainly consisted of Tagalogs, Cebuano Visayans, and Ilocanos. Due to their exposure to the local creole, PE, three out of every five FAs could speak English.¹⁷ Since 44% of men and 62% of women from this population were illiterate, most FAs were categorized as "unskilled" workers.¹⁸ For many FA families, educational attainment was the primary means to gain

⁹ Morse and Hamid, "American Annexation of Hawai'i," 110–14.

¹⁰ Okamura, "Aloha Kanaka Me Ke Aloha'aina," 123.

¹¹ Liu, "Race, Ethnicity, and the Sugar Plantation System," 203.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ ILWU Local I 142, 1946, 7.

¹⁴ Gastilo, "Sugary Mixed-Plate," 5.

¹⁵ Vallangca, *Pinoy*, 1.

¹⁶ Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle*, 26; Vallangca, *Pinoy*, 2; Lasman, *Filipino Immigrants*, 1–6; Alcántara, "Filipino History in Hawai'i before 1946," 20.

¹⁷ Reinecke, *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924–1925*, 2.

¹⁸ Ibid.

upward mobility. By 1930, this had helped drive up the literacy rate, but three in every ten FAs were still illiterate, which made advocating for their labor rights—as individuals and a group overall—difficult.¹⁹

FA professionals were unable to continue their careers in the US and forced to seek domestic employment in positions below the status of their previous vocations in the Philippines. According to Okamura “post-1965 immigrants are well aware that as a group they are far better educated than the earlier plantation labour recruits, and do not hesitate to point out this difference.”²⁰ Immigration to the US meant a tradeoff: FAs earned more money yet occupied less prestigious positions, thus relegating them to a lower social class. For example, teachers became “educational assistants” and “bilingual aides,” licensed practical nurses became “nurse’s aides,” and medical doctors became “para-medical assistants.”²¹

Filipino Immigrant Demographics.

Between 1920 and 1929, the HSPA imported 65,618 Filipino laborers, alongside 5,228 women and their 3,091 children.²² Gender distribution was disproportionate, reaching a ratio of nearly fourteen men for every woman.²³ Among those aged 20 to 30 years, there remained a disproportion ratio of seven to one in favor of men.²⁴ Age distribution became problematic by the 1930s, as 65% of FA women were under the age of 20, while 75% of men were over 20.²⁵

In the 1940s, the sex ratio remained disproportionate at around 346 men for every 100 women.²⁶ A year after the Pineapple Growers Association invoked section eight of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, the annual federal immigration quota raised from 50 to 100 persons. As a result, by 1946 nearly 7,000 workers, 450 wives, and 900 children were recruited to Hawai'i.²⁷ After the abolition of the national origin quota system by the 1965 Immigration Act, the Philippine quota rose to 20,000 individuals, excluding nuclear families who were exempt. Resident FAs could then send for their immediate family members or new wives from the Philippines, both of which improved upon the unbalanced sex-ratio.²⁸

Labor and Housing Conditions.

Constituting 41% of the early 1920s labor force, FAs were contractually obligated to endure intense heat and manual labor for 10 hours per day for twenty-six days per month.²⁹ As laborers aged, they became less physically productive and, in turn, earned less. There was a degree of job security because most individuals were unwilling to perform the work.³⁰ There are reports of *lunas* (supervisors) and camp policemen beating laborers in their homes and at work.³¹ Approximately 10% of workers under contract ran away from their plantations, a common punishment for which was beating or flogging.³²

Structuring this kind of migrant labor around camps deeply impacted the nature of living conditions for all groups. John Reinecke

¹⁹ Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle*, 28.

²⁰ Okamura, “Beyond Adaptationism,” 122–24.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle*, 14.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Lind, *Hawai'i's People*.

²⁵ Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle*, 14; Okamura, “Beyond Adaptationism,” 73.

²⁶ Okamura, “Beyond Adaptationism,” 73–74.

²⁷ Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle*, 29.

²⁸ Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle*, 30–31.

²⁹ Okamura, “Beyond Adaptationism,” 78; Nishimoto and Planas, “Interview with Alex Ruiz,” 480–81; Remigio and Knowlton, *Report of the Filipino Commissioner in Hawaii to His Excellency*, 19.

³⁰ Alcántara, “Filipino History in Hawai'i before 1946,” 8.

³¹ Alcántara, “Filipino History in Hawai'i before 1946,” 10.

³² Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle*, 9.

describes Filipino housing as "isolated, bare plantation camps without amenities or recreation."³³ In comparison, Japanese labor camps in this period more frequently had temples, language schools, and neighborhood stores.³⁴ Being mostly single men, Filipinos were usually assigned to barracks.³⁵ According to a 1919 report by the Filipino Historical Society of Hawai'i, many of these barracks or huts were usually made of wood with low hanging metal roofs that did not shield occupants from the sun's heat. In an interview with Filipino immigrants conducted by Warren Nishimoto, Alex Ruiz described his living conditions in the Filipino Camp of the Koloa Sugar Plantation in the 1930s as being

like one warehouse, you know. Divided into rooms [. . .] Maybe ten by ten [. . .] You live on the army cot.³⁶

On the topic of toilets, "they used to have pit. They used to have a box, you know, under the seat, and that being collected every day."³⁷ On multiple plantations, the living conditions were congested, as both bachelors and married men with their families lived together.³⁸

In the 1940s, the HSPA spent thousands of dollars on housing improvements, yet living conditions therein remained the most common complaint.³⁹ Discrimination in employment and housing continued to be an issue for Filipinos in the 1960s, even outside of plantations where advertisements freely stated "Japanese only."⁴⁰

As of 1978, some plantations still had no toilette facilities.⁴¹

Labor Movements. In 1919, representatives of Filipino laborers founded the Filipino Labor Union (FLU) on O'ahu.⁴² Lacking in organization, the FLU often relied on the Federation of Japanese Labor (FJL) to fund its strikes. Together, the two unions demanded the modification of the bonus system, increased pay from \$0.77 to \$1.25 per day, eight-hour workdays, double pay for overtime, maternity leave, and improvements to health and recreational facilities. The HSPA agreed to adjust the bonus system and improve plantation housing but rejected all other requests.⁴³

In January of 1920, Filipino laborers on O'ahu walked out on strike, followed by Japanese, Puerto Rican, and Portuguese workers, bringing the total number of participants to 2,206.⁴⁴ Planters were quick to counterstrike with the vilification of laborers in the press and mass eviction of 12,020 people, including families, but by July, the FJL accepted defeat.⁴⁵ In 1922, associates of the FLU regrouped under the name of the High Wage Movement (HWM) and organized a new petition with a list of demands that the HSPA ignored.⁴⁶ As directed by the HSPA, the new resident labor commissioner worked with a selected group of Filipino workers to draft another list of demands and the HSPA agreed

³³ Reinecke, *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924–1925*, 1-10.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Reinecke, *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924–1925*, 3.

³⁶ Nishimoto and Planas, "Interview with Alex Ruiz," 407–408.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Remigio and Knowlton, *Report of the Filipino Commissioner in Hawaii to His Excellency*.

³⁹ Hernandez, "Sadinno Ti Papanam?" (*Where Are You Going?*), 27.

⁴⁰ Okamura, "Beyond Adaptationism."

⁴¹ Hernandez, "Sadinno Ti Papanam?" (*Where Are You Going?*), 27.

⁴² Jung, *Reworking Race*, 34; Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle*, 20–21; Reinecke, *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924–1925*, 4–8.

⁴³ Jung, *Reworking Race*, 33–35.

⁴⁴ Jung, *Reworking Race*, 35–36; Reinecke, *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924–1925*, 8.

⁴⁵ Jung, *Reworking Race*, 37–38.

⁴⁶ Reinecke, *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924–1925*, 13–14.

to all non-wage related demands.⁴⁷ In 1924, over 2,000 workers struck at twenty-three of the forty-five plantations.⁴⁸ The HSPA employed additional police, antilabor laws, strikebreakers, and other legal instruments to mitigate losses inflicted by this activism.⁴⁹ On Kaua'i, tensions escalated to an exchange of gunfire and knife attacks that caused the deaths of sixteen strikers and four police officers.⁵⁰

The labor movement rekindled in the mid-1930s as the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU).⁵¹ Organizers intended to create a multiethnic strike and urged against unorganized striking. Regardless, in 1937, a major strike broke out at the Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company of Pu'unene, Maui, and planters again refused negotiations. After planters became aware of an investigation into the beating of a strike organizer, they were forced to offer higher wages and made an agreement to meet with organizers over future disagreements—which was not honored.⁵² In 1945, the Hawai'i Employment Relations Act (HERA) was finally passed, extending the rights ensured by the Wagner Act to agricultural workers. The ILWU sought to change the state definition of who qualified as a legitimate worker and, in 1946, signed industry-wide contracts in the sugar, pineapple, and longshoring industries.⁵³

Post-1965 Migrant FAs. Post-1965 FAs have been targeted with discrimination by Local-

born FAs and other ethnic groups in areas of language, education, employment, and housing.⁵⁴ The 1965 Immigration Act enabled families in the Philippines to reunite with their relatives in Hawai'i, both of which were largely multilingual, Ilocano speakers.⁵⁵ By the 1970s, 78% of FAs spoke Standard-English (SE) but struggled to communicate in PE.⁵⁶ FA youth faced criticism for their Filipino accent from peers of different linguistic backgrounds, which directly contributed to high truancy rates. Public educators emphasized bilingualism to promote FA students' preservation of their native language and culture.⁵⁷ Inadept SE skills and differences in job certifications between the US and Philippines left many professionals in service positions.⁵⁸ Homelife consisted of crowded and expensive housing where multiple extended families crammed into single households.⁵⁹ With the mechanization of the plantations, agricultural sector employment became increasingly scarce.⁶⁰

By the late 1990s, Ilocanos were the majority of Hawai'i's FAs. Collectively, FAs were underrepresented in the areas of education—as both students and staff. Across Hawai'i, Filipino youths denied their heritage and identity.⁶¹ Local FAs lacked interest in civic engagement, but the creation of over one hundred civic clubs improved intracultural relations. FA enrollment increased by 32% at local community colleges and by 27% at the University of Hawai'i, the state's four-year

⁴⁷ Beechert, *Working in Hawai'i*, 217; Reinecke, *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924–1925*, 23.

⁴⁸ Beechert, *Working in Hawai'i*, 219.

⁴⁹ Jung, *Reworking Race*, 40.

⁵⁰ Beechert, *Working in Hawai'i*, 221.

⁵¹ Beechert, *Working in Hawai'i*, 227.

⁵² Beechert, *Working in Hawai'i*, 27–37.

⁵³ Jung, *Reworking Race*, 140–43.

⁵⁴ Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle*, 30.

⁵⁵ Teruya and Wong, *The Filipino Immigrant Child*, 6; Lasman, *Filipino Immigrants*, 92.

⁵⁶ Lasman, *Filipino Immigrants*, 92.

⁵⁷ Teruya and Wong, *The Filipino Immigrant Child*, 29; Hernandez, “*Sadinno Ti Papanam?*” (*Where Are You Going?*),” 76.

⁵⁸ Teruya and Wong, *The Filipino Immigrant Child*, 17–21.

⁵⁹ Teruya and Wong, *The Filipino Immigrant Child*, 17–18.

⁶⁰ Lasman, *Filipino Immigrants*, 17–21.

⁶¹ Asuncion, *Present and Future Challenges of Filipino Young Adults*, 9–37.

university.⁶² The diversity of employment options outside of plantations had expanded rapidly within the growing tourism industry in Hawai'i. FAs continued to be relegated to service jobs, however, which offered low-income, low prestige, and minimal advancement opportunities. FA youth resorted to leaving the islands for opportunities elsewhere and the resulting void in the labor force continues to be filled by more migrant workers, including new Filipino immigrants.⁶³

By the 2000s, FA representation in politics had progressed significantly, but the community still did not wield collective political power.⁶⁴ In 2002, FAs accounted for over 15% of Hawai'i's population.⁶⁵ Success pertaining to education, including high school and college, had significantly improved. In the employment sector, however, FAs remained disproportionately overrepresented in service positions and unrepresented in managerial and professional positions. Regardless of these improvements, FAs remain among the lowest members of Hawai'i's social ladder.⁶⁶

Local Identity. To understand the experience of FAs in Hawai'i one must acknowledge the distinct qualities characterizing Hawai'i's society, starting with what it means to be a "Local." In Hawai'i, the term "Local" specifically refers to a pan-ethnic and poly-cultural identity that is distinct from the general term "local." Eric Yamamoto outlines the emergence of the Local identity as "(1) a poly-cultural culture, (2) as a value orientation and (3) as a form of culture creation."⁶⁷ Viewed as poly-cultural, Local identity is a product of the blending of multiple ethnicities sharing a

heritage, cultural background, and lifestyle. Such aspects constituting this identity descended vertically from previous generations and fused horizontally between the ethnic groups to form Local culture.⁶⁸

Yamamoto disputes this perspective, as it fails to recognize ethnic inequality and the possibility of varying degrees of contributions between such groups. The second perspective offers a view of Local as a value-orientation emphasizing commitment to the members of that community for its collective welfare. Based on this perspective, for a Local, social relationships are one's principle aim.⁶⁹

The third perspective of Local as a cultural construct results from substantial oppression of subordinate groups (non-Caucasians) by the superordinate group (Caucasians).⁷⁰ Okamura summarizes Local culture as follows:

Viewed historically, the emergence of local culture and society represents an accommodation of ethnic groups to one another in the context of a social system primarily distinguished by the wide cleavage between the *haole* [Caucasian] planter and merchant oligarchy on the one hand, and the subordinate Hawaiians and immigrant plantation groups on the other.⁷¹

John Rosa complicates this by acknowledging "emotive elements" in the formation of Local identity, arguing "the ties that third-, fourth-, and fifth-generation descendants of immigrants have to their plantation roots are intangible memories that escape

⁶² Alegado, *Sinking Roots*, 17.

⁶³ Okamura and Labrador, *Pagdiriwang 1996*, 21.

⁶⁴ Labrador, *Building Filipino Hawai'i*, 220.

⁶⁵ Labrador, *Building Filipino Hawai'i*, 48.

⁶⁶ Labrador, *Building Filipino Hawai'i*, 116; Alegado, *Sinking Roots*, 9; Okamura and Labrador, *Pagdiriwang 1996*, 21.

⁶⁷ Yamamoto, "From 'Japanee' to Local," 139.

⁶⁸ Yamamoto, "From 'Japanee' to Local," 139–40

⁶⁹ Yamamoto, "From 'Japanee' to Local," 139–41.

⁷⁰ Yamamoto, "From 'Japanee' to Local," 141.

⁷¹ Okamura, "Aloha Kanaka Me Ke Aloha'aina," 122.

quantification.”⁷² While that shared heritage of inequality is evident in the interactions between these ethnic groups, inequality persists.

Ethnography

Despite that heritage, Locals of particular ethnic groups, such as Filipinos, continue to experience inequality more than others, in a pattern that resembles the plantation hierarchy. The intention of this section is to determine how Filipinos have remained as lower-class citizens after Hawai'i's economic shift from agriculture to tourism.

Methods. Data was collected from interviews with elderly members of the Filipino community in central O'ahu. Their relationship to each other was either through marriage or descent. All five subjects self-identified as Locals, two of which arrived in Hawai'i with their family as children in the 1946 wave of Filipino recruits. Interviewees' experiences are interpreted through comparison to various relevant literatures. Readers should note this researcher's (myself) familial relationship to the focus group. His ethnic background as a Filipino-Caucasian American and his relationship to the interviewees, evolved from a hinderance to an advantage in collecting data. Contention between Locals and those not associated with the Local identity was the apparent obstacle. Due to his upbringing, the researcher's language leans considerably more toward SE than PE. Luis V. Teodoro argues that “for many local Filipinos speaking English that is not Pidgin is interpreted as wanting to be considered better than the locals.”⁷³ Interviewees seemed hesitant to comment on topics of race, likely in fear of offending the researcher who is their family member. This obstacle is attributed to Local values of interethnic harmony and familial bonds.⁷⁴ Therefore, group interviews opened with

discussions on LEH to establish a setting where topics of race could be freely discussed.

Formal life-history interviews were conducted with interviewees Felix and Peling, where subjects expressed how they publicized their relationships and interactions with other ethnic groups. To protect the subjects' identities, this researcher's exact relationship to them is withheld, and their names are replaced with pseudonyms. The subsequent informal group-interview with the same subjects provided perspectives on those relationships. The questions were intended to identify where and how subjects have remained in their hierarchal positions relative to other ethnic groups. The results indicate that some topics were no longer relevant to the subjects or not specific enough.

The resulting modifications to question topics in the group-interview with subjects Felix, Maria, Ambo, and Lalaine included plantation-based humor, PE, the military, male-identifying Filipinos, the anti-Japanese movement of World War II, the meaning of Local, the practices of *aloha*, plantation community, Hawaiian sovereignty, and socioeconomic power. Outcomes are discussed in terms of adaptations and resistance to the plantation hierarchy, specifically cultural assimilation, closed ethnic communities, and LEH. In the humor subsection, LEH is discussed as a form of “ethnic-humor” due to the latter term's oversimplification of discourses pertaining to discrimination.

Cultural Assimilation. To adapt to a multicultural environment Local and immigrant Filipinos often accommodate the practices of other ethnic groups, and in many cases, they assimilate the predominant Local culture. In her life-history interview, Peling was asked, “was it all Filipinos in one area, the plantation houses?” She responded:

⁷² Rosa, *Local Story*, 106.

⁷³ Teodoro, *Out of This Struggle*.

⁷⁴ Okamura, “Aloha Kanaka Me Ke Aloha'aina,” 128.

Yeah fo' sum reason it felt like dat. Like wea I grew up, da camp we lived in was all or mostly Filipino, with a few Japanese. And den you had da Japanese camp wit' mostly Japanee. Spanish camp where had mostly Portuguese, Puerto Ricans. (April 15, 2018)

Surprisingly, she added, "living in da plantation I didn't feel discriminated." Edward Beechert explains that segregated housing was not consciously exercised by the HSPA, and that plantation camp residents concentrated as ethnic groups for support and communication.⁷⁵ In the first group-interview, Felix stated that "aftah [. . .] da late 40s we all mixed [. . .] except da *haoles*, had da *haole*-only camp" (April 15, 2018). This transformation is reminiscent of the division between the lower strata and the *haole* elites.

Similarly, Suzanne Romaine argues that Locals adopted PE for solidarity and resistance.⁷⁶ Felix moved to Hawai'i from the Philippines in 1946 as a child, but identifies as a Local. Also, post-1965 migrant FAs assimilated characteristics such as the preference of PE to SE, which helped them avoid discrimination from Local ethnic groups, including other FAs. Multiple subjects expressed that PE was necessary for intercultural communication, thus, qualifying this language as an adaptation to hierarchal subjugation.

Closed Ethnic Communities. Interviewees identified racial discrimination in employment as a limitation to their social mobility. Felix recounted his experience with discrimination,

In jobs [. . .] sometimes you can feel da ol' ol' time Japanese people, dey want nahting [nothing] to do wit' Filipinos, or Hawaiians [. . .] most ah da employers...dey always say dat Chinese preferred, or Japanese preferred. Yah

know? So da Filipino, da Portagee, da Hawaiians, dey outta luck [. . .] Das how dey hol' us back. (April 15, 2018)

Other interviewees were asked, "What do you think limits Filipinos today?" According to them, life in Hawai'i is not about "what you know," but that advancement is predicated on "who you know" (April 21, 2018). In Ambo's words, success is about "cooperation, knowing eachoddah [each other]" (April 21, 2018). Maria elaborated,

I noticed when I was working, people who doesn't have education, because der o' dah same race [. . .] dey always try to put dem up...Even if have more education than that person, if you are not da same one dat da manager is [. . .]. No matter where you work *das* what it is. (April 21, 2018)

Maria and Lalaine declared that this practice was not explicitly discriminatory, rather employers hire those they are familiar with, in their family or ethnic community. FA communities have lost much of their heritage in the process of assimilating to Local identity up to the 2000s. Since Local identity is pan-ethnic, it would be reasonable to infer that other ethnic groups have experienced similar heritage loss and likewise prioritize the wellbeing of their own people. Racial discrimination became a parallel effect, that maintained their relative hierarchal positions established in the plantation era.

Local Ethnic Humor. In modern multiethnic Hawai'i, LEH is a product of multiculturalism and a source of pride for Locals. It also publicizes harmful stereotypes.⁷⁷ Initially, Felix could not recall any Filipino jokes. As Felix's relative, this researcher could remind him, to which Felix responded, "oh yeah! da bolo knife one," which he recited:

⁷⁵ Beechert, *Working in Hawai'i*, 234.

⁷⁶ Romaine, "Orthographic Practices in the Standardization of Pidgins and Creoles," 126.

⁷⁷ Okamura and Labrador, *Pagdiriwang 1996*, 3.

Had tree [3] swordsmen dat bragging deyer da best in da worl' and my knife is moah [more] sharp. Yah know, eh prove um! Had Filipino, Japanese samurai man and da Egyptian [. . .] Da Arabian go ova der take one hair and *choom he cut um in half. Den da Japanese say "agh, das nahting!" He get bamboo. Boom, boom! He cut 'em all up and says "das how sharp my knife." So da Filipino he look aroun'. He catch one fly. So he chrow [throw] da fly [swings his blad] go *shuck and da fly *oi [jolts] and den he fly away, eh? [. . .] Da two guys laughing "hahaha [. . .] you miss!" and da Filipino go "no-no, no can make baby no more." (April 15, 2018)

Superficially this joke reflects the skill of the Filipino with his bolo knife; however, it perpetuates the stereotype of Filipinos as "hotheaded" and "knife-wielding."⁷⁸ The bolo knife was a common tool used in plantations and barrios. News articles such as one titled "Angry Filipino Quick with Knife" publicized this stereotype of aggression and knife violence.⁷⁹ In Felix's joke, this stereotype was reframed to demonstrate one of "skill" and "precision." Furthermore, Felix recalled that the Filipino wielded a bolo knife, the Japanese character was a *samurai* (implying a sword), and the Egyptian's blade was not mentioned. Felix demonstrated a degree of familiarity with some characters' cultures, rather than ridiculing their appearance or practices.

By contrast, members of the Filipino community are also subject to internalizing negative stereotypes displayed in LEH.⁸⁰ Peling's example embodies the "anti-Filipino" joke: "How do Filipinos [. . .] clean or clear

deyer [their] nose?" (April 15, 2018). Delivering her punchline by pantomime, she pinched her nose and extended her tongue to suggest that by blowing their nose onto their tongue, Filipinos consumed their own mucous excretion. This joke perpetuates negative stereotypes that associate FAs with a lack of intelligence, and can contribute to discrimination, especially if in a professional environment.

In contrast, popular comedian Andy Bumatai distinguished "local humor" from "ethnic humor" in his YouTube series, *The Daily Pidgin Show*. Bumatai asserts that Local humor is based on "insight into da culchah [culture]" and that "Locals *knows* about who dey teasin' [. . .] without insight into da culchah, Local humah [humor] is not funny."⁸¹ Interviewees also discussed familiarity stating:

FELIX. Life in the plantation is more compac'

LALAINE. It's community

FELIX. Because da people we kidding aron' wit', we knew dem

MARIA. We all grew up together

AMBO. Dey get to know eachodder, dat way, you can call somebody names, dat guy gone' laugh at chu because he knows you don't mean it, it's just a joke. But I hate to say it but ever since we get all dis free speech deal. You gotta watch wach you say. (April 21, 2018)

Together these cases suggest that when determining the function of these jokes, one must consider historical context, the jokester's familiarity with the cultures of the individuals described, and the jokester's relative position in the racial hierarchy.

⁷⁸ Reinecke, *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924–1925*, 3.

⁷⁹ Alcántara, "Filipino History in Hawai'i before 1946," 40.

⁸⁰ Okamura and Labrador, *Pagdiriwang 1996*; Alegado, *Sinking Roots*; Reinecke, *The Filipino*

Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924–1925; Labrador, *Building Filipino Hawai'i*.

⁸¹ Andy Bumatai, "Pidgin 101: Portuguese People," video, 8:05, "Andy Bumatai," November 29, 2015, <https://youtu.be/-un-LUjRX14>.

Conclusion

Modes perpetuating Hawai'i's historical, racialized hierarchy and its resulting cultural adaptations were found in the interconnected areas of (1) access to education, (2) direct and indirect job discrimination, (3) seclusion of ethnic communities, (4) cultural assimilation and heritage loss, (5) the reconstruction of ethnic stereotypes in LEH, and (6) diasporic immigration. By design or by consequence, many Filipino recruits infrequently had access to formal education. Although education was the primary mode for FA advancement, their main objective in Hawai'i continued to be economic survival rather than education. In the ethnography, the Local-born FA was aware of education as a means of social mobility, while the 1946 FA claimed that his initial ignorance of this advantage was intended by planters to prevent FA advancement. Post-1965 FAs have more diverse backgrounds which more often include formal education that remain unrecognized in the US. For that reason, FAs resort to service work or positions below the prestige of their previous vocations.

Despite discrimination between pre-1945 plantation communities, residents often preferred to live among their own culture for support and communication. Similarly, migrant FAs in urban areas often live where Filipino languages are commonly spoken and where they can rely on familial support, ultimately impeding proficiency in PE or SE. Likewise, interviewees specifically cited indirect job discrimination as a modern hindrance to FA advancement, whereby employers often hire individuals from their family, ethnic community, or general acquaintances.

As FAs also promote the advancement of fellow FAs, indirect discrimination can simultaneously be viewed as an adaptation to subjugation and as culture loss. FA communities have suffered from degrees of

culture loss. Migrant FAs of the focus group identified as Locals alongside Local-born FAs; although these migrant FAs still identified ethnically as Filipinos, their interactions with the researcher suggested the dominance of Local cultural values in the negotiation of their personal identities over specifically Filipino cultural values. Likewise, the youth of migrant and Local FAs of 1946 and post-1965 frequently dismiss their Filipino heritage. Since Romaine deemed Locals as an anti-society and PE as an anti-language, both qualify as adaptations of resistance, to which FAs contributed.⁸² Furthermore, post-1945 FAs adapted by assimilating Local identity in their desegregation of plantation housing.

The perpetual displacement of FAs to and from Hawai'i have become a limitation and an advantage to some degree. FAs are continuously recruited as a supplementary workforce. Between 1906 and 1946, FAs were frequently imported as strikebreakers, which resulted in their racial subjugation. After the HERA of 1965, FAs sent for their family members and new wives, who have also been relegated to lower-level jobs. FA youth frequently leave Hawai'i for opportunities abroad, and their positions left vacant continue to be filled by migrant workers. Displacement appears to be one way that migrant FAs have evaded subjugation, yet life as a diaspora surely affects their overall wellbeing. Hawai'i has been a gateway to US citizenship for many oceanic peoples. Future research should include—but not be confined to—the emigration of Micronesians, and how they have adapted to Hawai'i's sociopolitical landscape, especially in the context of the Trump presidency and its extreme immigration policies.

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⁸² Romaine, "Orthographic Practices in the Standardization of Pidgins and Creoles," 101–40.

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