

A Contemporary Study of Interracial Dating and Relationship  
Practices of College Age Students from Hawaii

by Andrea Siu

## INTRODUCTION

As the predominately Black-White binary in America begins to shift to a multiracial discourse, the importance of studying existing multiracial communities and changing race relations has emerged. As an example of changing demographics in America, Texas, New Mexico, California, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia all hold the title of “majority-minority” states, with Maryland, Mississippi, Georgia, New York, and Arizona next in line (Bernstein 1). This shift in population encourages racial mixing. The ability to check multiple racial boxes on the 2000 Census reflects the nationwide trend toward a multiracial population. Consequently the dilemma of assigning a racial identity to a multiracial person has become a growing problem in recent years. In a country still rife with ethnic enclaves and self-segregation, where does a multiracial person fit? In an effort to answer the questions raised by a multiracial identity, people have turned to Hawaii and its long and visible history of hapa.

The term hapa began in Hawaii and reflects the multiracial demographics of one of the most isolated geographical areas in the world. According to the Hawaiian dictionary hapa means “of mixed blood, person of mixed blood”, establishing a moniker for the infinite number of racial combinations that exist in Hawaii (Pukui and Elbert 58). Interest in hapas has steadily been gaining ground in the continental United States as communities become aware of an increasing number of people who claim a multiracial identity.

The creation of a new multiracial population begins with dating and relationships that often take place in college. Yet ideas of beauty and tolerance typically form many years before college. In this research paper I will focus specifically on the dating and relationship practices of college age students from Hawaii. I will look at the factors that affect interracial sexual relationships in Hawaii, such as history, current demographics, and interethnic relationships. I will then analyze the change or lack of change in opinions towards race that occur when students from Hawaii live in new environments and confront the politicized version of race that exists on many college campuses in the United States. If America wants to learn from Hawaii’s example it will have to understand the value system that has been impressed upon people in Hawaii and how these values affect the dating and relationship choices that lead to the production of the next generation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly works written about Hawaii’s multiracial population and interracial marriages began in the early part of the twentieth century. Well before hapas gained visibility in America, scholars predicted the trend and were fascinated by the meeting of “East and West” in Hawaii. The large Asian and white populations in Hawaii and the subsequent intermarriage between these two groups also contributed to the notion of “East and West”. In 1937 Romanzo Adams published a book entitled Interracial Marriage in Hawaii that analyzed the routine practice of interracial marriage in Hawaii. Adams cites the “special conditions of the past”, such as, abnormal sex ratios,

the size of various racial groups, land distribution, opportunity factors, and the open attitude towards interracial marriage as factors that all contributed to the prevalence and acceptance of interracial marriage in Hawaii (191, 204). Additionally the lack of anti-miscegenation laws in Hawaii facilitated the social acceptance of interracial marriages. Adams writes, "There is no law against such intermarriage. While there may be much opposition within some families there is no general social disapproval" (20). The combination of legal intermarriage, social acceptance, and the high level of interest in Hawaii's multiracial community also created a well of statistical and racial.

Because the amalgamation through intermarriage is open and above-board in Hawaii, a statistical record is possible, and because there has been sufficient interest in the matter for a long time, very valuable statistics are available. This is more valuable to our purpose because it classifies persons according to racial origin, not according to nativity. For example, a child, all of whose great-grandparents came from Portugal, is classified as Portuguese, whereas in other parts of the United States he would be merely "native white" of native parentage (Adams, 20).

Thus many factors contributed and continue to contribute to the study of race in Hawaii. And while the "special conditions of the past" no longer apply in contemporary society, they have nonetheless shaped and continue to shape the value system in place in Hawaii.

The legal history of interracial marriage, or lack thereof, in Hawaii also played an important role in creating a tolerant community. Only eight states and the District of Columbia never enacted antimiscegenation laws (Kennedy 219). The lack of antimiscegenation laws allowed racial communities in Hawaii to out marry without the threat of legal repercussions. In most states marrying out carried severe punishments.

By 1913, when Wyoming became the last state to impose a statutory impediment to marital miscegenation, forty-one others had already enacted similar laws, and in so doing armed public authorities and private persons with the means to create and police racial divisions in matters of sex and matrimony. *Every* state whose black population reached or exceeded 5 percent of the total eventually drafted and enacted anti-miscegenation laws. In 1967, when the federal Supreme Court belatedly invalidated anti-miscegenation statutes, sixteen states still had laws on the books forbidding interracial marriage (Kennedy 219).

Although anti-miscegenation laws mainly targeted black-white marriages they also applied to other minorities. Furthermore, the tardiness of the Supreme Court in invalidating these arcane laws reflects the intolerance of interracial relationships in the continental United States. The laws ordained by the State and Federal governments play a large role in the everyday lives of American citizens; therefore, the legal history of

Hawaii with its lack of anti-miscegenation laws reflects the beliefs and values of the people there.

Historically, the difference in racial classification in Hawaii (prior to statehood) and the United States, brought up by Adams in the preceding paragraph, illustrates the difference in attitudes towards race in the two locations. In an article by Margaret A. Parkman and Jack Sawyer, they mention the fact that only eight different racial groups were counted in Hawaii, suggesting that only certain larger racial groups, for example, Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiian, Filipino, Korean, haole (white), Portuguese, Puerto Rican or hapa, were encouraged to embrace their identity (594). The ethnic humor found in Hawaii deliberately promotes racial stereotypes of these larger minority groups and celebrates the aspects of a multiracial community, but also maintains open social borders and boundaries. In "Multiracial Comedy as a Commodity in Hawaii", Darby Li Po Price quotes Andy Bumatai, a local comedian who on a trip to the California is classified as "non-White" at a film audition, "It's interesting to be categorized by what you're not, because here [in Hawaii] we categorize so strongly by what you are" (124). Scholars have constantly cited this widespread acknowledgement of the many facets of a multiracial identity, as a reason Hawaii is a "multiracial paradise". As Price notes, however, "...Hawaii itself is both a multiethnic paradise *and* an ethnic boiling pot" (129). The difference in racial classifications between Hawaii and mainland America exemplifies the different demographics and way of looking at race in Hawaii. The island's dual identity as both melting and boiling pot and demographic differences, encourages the study of how people from Hawaii maintain or lose their identity and values in a different environment.

In any evaluation of the identity and value system of Hawaii's residents the issue of tolerance must be studied. Adams suggests tolerance in Hawaii stems from the negotiation of contemporary and traditional ideas of race.

There is tolerance toward conduct that conflicts with one's traditional standards. Such tolerance involves a subtle modification of attitude in relation to one's own conduct. He comes to be tolerant of himself. Old standards are not compulsory. One considers them. They are useful under some circumstances but need not be observed in other cases. Decisions tend to be made from the standpoint of interest or advantage. Sacred things become less sacred or even secular. In short, a man is gradually emancipated from the more distinctive part of his ancient mores so that he can reflect about his behavior and choose what to do according to his purpose (Adams 314).

In Hawaii racial and ethnic groups could not afford to hold on as tightly to their traditions. The idea of tolerance of oneself is particularly relevant for multiracial

individuals. In the continental United States multiracial people often find it hard to form an identity that reflects their racial heritage. This consciousness and struggle to exist as multiple races illustrates the intensity and prevalence of racial segregation on the mainland (Moran 178). In contrast, the magnitude of the hapa community in Hawaii creates an almost social unawareness of multiracial individuals. While the community is not indifferent to the social ramifications of interracial relationships, multiracial persons rarely face a daily struggle with their racial heritage.

For hapas already struggling with their identity, dating and relationships can often be tricky to navigate. Even for single race people dating and relationships in our racial conscious society is difficult. Statistics in the United States show that over 93 percent of whites and blacks marry within their race and approximately 70 percent of Asians and Latinos marry within their race (Moran 117). These statistics imply a certain amount of self-segregation that makes crossing racial boundaries through dating even more difficult. The racial mixing that occurs through dating and relationships at college results from a combination of the desire to challenge and expand one's social boundaries and the racial demographics on college campuses.

Dating can be broken down into four categories according to an article by James K. Skipper Jr. and Gilbert Nass in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*; recreation, socialization, status conveyance, and courtship (412-413). Although the article was written in 1966 this framework for dating still provides insight into the social interactions precipitated by dating, especially on college campuses. The increasing importance placed on diversity in the classroom has provided students with greater access to different racial groups making it even more important for college students to be aware of race relations.

For students from Hawaii the diversity provided by mainland college campuses has a distinctly different feel from Hawaii's version of diversity. The predominately Asian character of Hawaii's population in conjunction with the emphasis placed on the differences within the various ethnicities in the Asian community greatly contrast with the still predominately white majority of most college campuses. The large population of Asians in Hawaii also helps to create an environment where interracial sexual relationships are acceptable. Many mixed ethnic Asian marriages happen in Hawaii. Since the Asian community in Hawaii is so large most Asians identify not as Asian Americans, but as specific ethnic groups. Outside of Hawaii and some West Coast states, multiethnic Asians very rarely exist. Overcoming historical tensions between ethnic Asian groups to have an interethnic marriage encourages interracial marriages and racial and ethnic tolerance. The highly politicized version of race found on these

campuses may also be a foreign concept for the Hawaii student. In Hawaii there is an awareness of cultures more than race and the boundaries created by race. By studying the intimate and personal relationships produced by dating we can better understand how the value system imprinted by growing up in Hawaii reacts to changing demographics and racial awareness.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

Primary research was conducted by surveying Hawaii residents currently in college or recently graduated from college and surveying Hawaii residents about to go to college. To qualify as a Hawaii resident for the purposes of this study, participants must have attended high school in Hawaii. Since dating and relationship practices are usually formed during high school, the attendance of high school in Hawaii was determined sufficient to convey the values growing up in Hawaii. In addition to the surveys, three volunteers were selected from the survey participants for personal interviews.

The survey for the current college students or recent graduates was done online using the Internet survey provider my3q.com. Emails containing a link to the online survey were sent to 2002 alumni of Punahou School, a private high school in Honolulu. Participants were asked to answer nine questions that asked about personal background and opinions on interracial dating and relationships. The first question determined the gender of the participant. The gender of the participants was intended to be approximately equal but the voluntary nature of the survey resulted in more female respondents. The second question asked participants to identify their racial heritage. The choices given were Asian, Black, Haole/Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Hapa. In the third question participants were asked to identify the location of their college from East Coast, Midwest, West Coast, Hawaii, or International. Questions four through eight dealt with the participants' opinions on dating and relationships prior to college and in college. The questions were: Would you be willing to date someone of a different race? Prior to college did you ever date/have a relationship with someone of a different race? Has your opinion on interracial dating/relationships changed since attending college? Since attending college have you ever dated/had a relationship with someone of another race? Question nine asked for the participants' consent to be in the survey and informed the participants' of the anonymity of their responses. The researcher had no access to the names or email addresses connected to any of the completed surveys. The survey was also prefaced with information about the research project and the contact information of the researcher in the event questions about the project arose.

The survey provided for the pre-college students was a variation of the college students' survey. However, these surveys were done on paper and handed out and collected by a third party to protect the anonymity of the participants. No names or other identifiers were placed on any of the surveys. Additionally no survey was completed in the presence of the researcher and the surveys received the same preface about the project and contact information in the event of questions as the online survey. Questions one through six and question nine remained the same for the pre-college participants and only

questions seven and eight changed as participants were asked to predict their future behavior.

To maintain the security of the data, all paper surveys were destroyed after the data was correlated and the online surveys were erased from the server. The data from both groups of survey participants for each question was graphed and charted separately and will be presented later in the paper. Comparisons between the two participant groups were also made for questions seven and eight to look for differences in their answers.

In addition to the 31 surveys collected, three personal interviews were conducted with two female and one male volunteer. These participants were chosen to represent the widest variety of Hawaii college students. The interviewees reflected both racial diversity and college location diversity. Contact with the participants was confidential and to preserve anonymity identifiers with no connection to the participants were used to note meeting times and places. Meetings were all conducted at the discretion of the interviewee. Prior to the interview, the interviewees were presented with a consent form that discussed the terms of the interview and their participation in the study. Special attention was paid to alert the participants about the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Once the interview was completed participants received monetary compensation of twenty dollars. All responses were recorded with permission from the interviewee. The researcher transcribed all of recorded conversations using the assigned identifier and then erased the recordings.

An additional interview was conducted with Dr. Christine Yano, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Dr. Yano's research focuses on the cross construction of nation and culture, particularly in the forms of popular culture (University of Hawai'i at Manoa Department of Anthropology). She is also interested in the concept of hapa. Dr. Yano's personal experiences of growing up in Hawaii, going to college on the mainland, and being in an interracial marriage also qualified her as an authority on the research being conducted for this study. Her interview was recorded and transcribed similar to the other interviews. She received a small token of appreciation for her participation in the study. Excerpts from all four interviews will appear in the data section of this paper.

In addition to the researchers collection of primary data, extensive archival work was done. U.S. Census Bureau data was collected on the Internet for current demographic statistics. *JSOTR* was used to collect journal articles on interracial marriage and dating on college campuses. The Hawaii State Public Library also provided archival information in the form of recently published books on interracial relationships and material from the early twentieth century on interracial marriage in Hawaii.

## **DATA AND RESULTS**

First the survey data will be presented in the form of bar graphs. Following the graphical data will be verbal explanations of the results. The comparison tables created

from the U.S. Census Bureau data will follow, along with a verbal description of the tables. Excerpts from the four interviews will then round out the data and results section.

The following eight graphs illustrate the responses given by the participants in college or recently graduated from college.

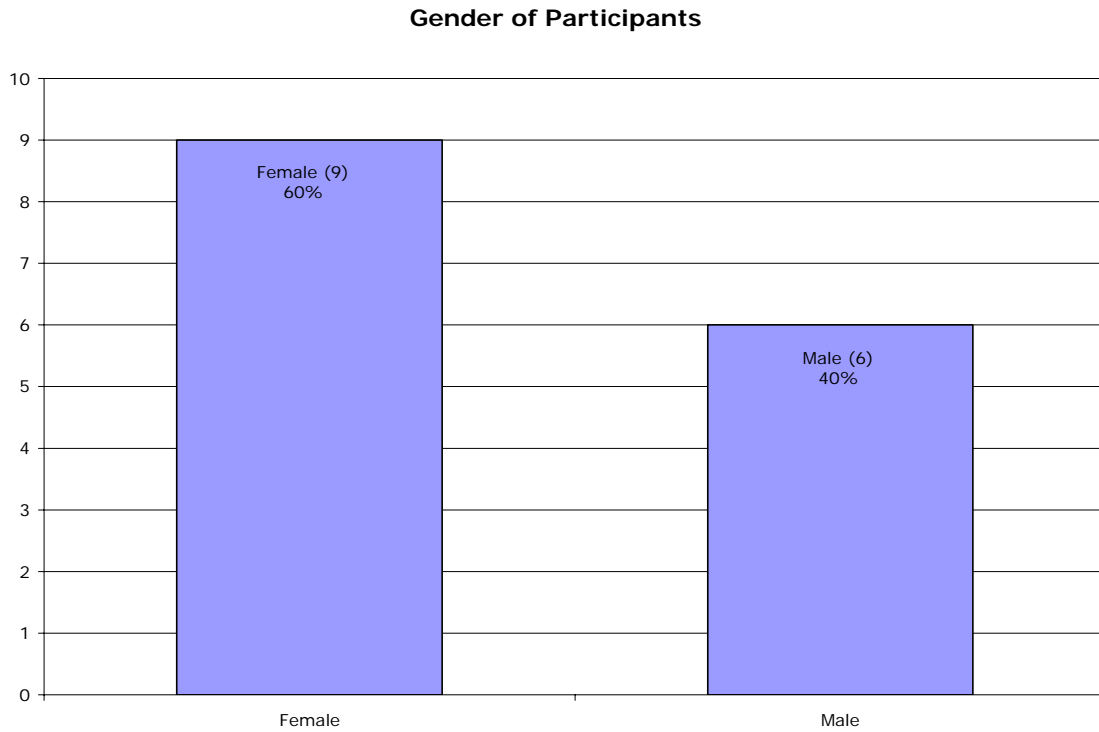


Figure 1 illustrates the ratio of male (6) to female (9) participants who responded to the survey. Overall the gap between the genders was small enough to provide accurate results for the survey. Gender differences did not appear to have an effect on the subject matter being studied. Furthermore, this study did not take into account differences in opinions based on gender. A study on how gender differences influence thoughts on interracial dating and relationships would be a good follow up study.

### Racial Makeup of Participants

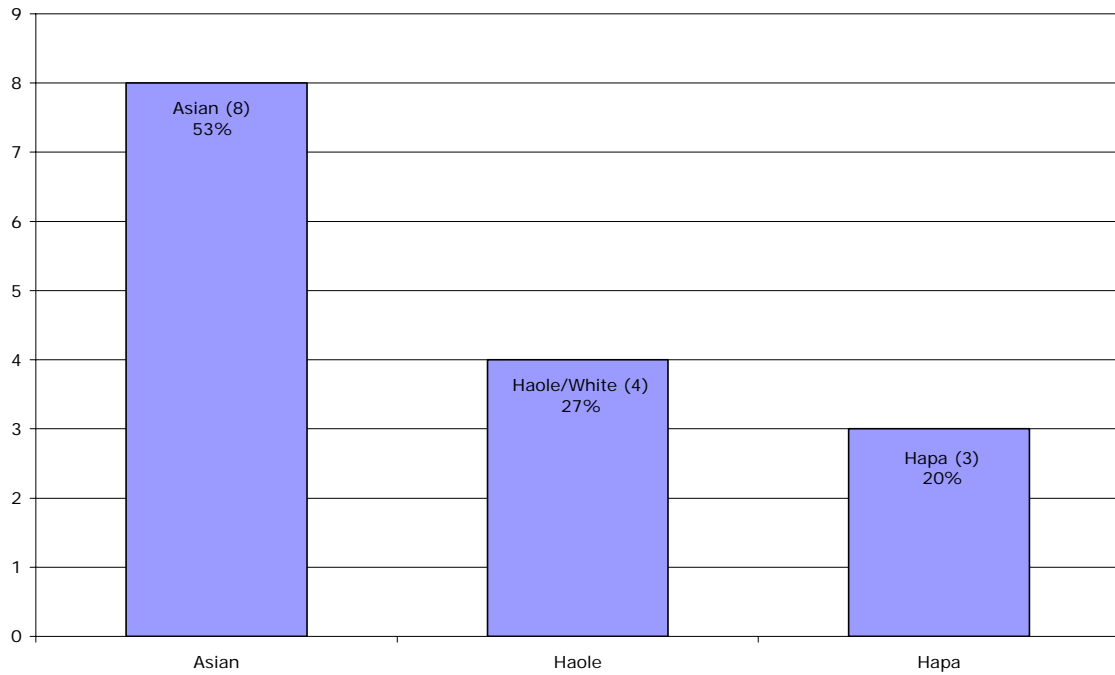


Figure 2 reflects the racial background of the participants. As of the 2003 census data, Asians make up approximately 42 percent of the population, whites 24 percent, and hapa 21 percent in Hawaii (U.S. Census Bureau). These racial statistics, therefore, are representative of the state.

### College Locations

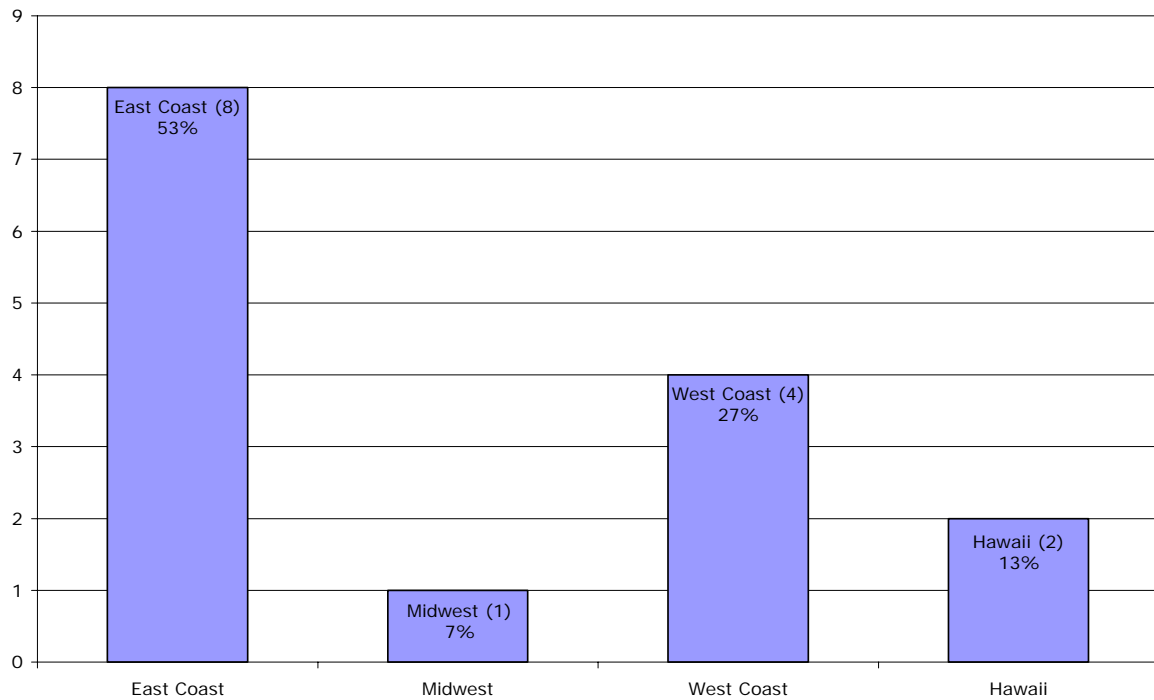


Figure 3 shows the various college locations of the participants. The high percentage of participants on the East Coast is unusual since generally students from Hawaii either remain in Hawaii or attend school on the West Coast. Since this study looks at the effect of attending college on the mainland, the atypically large number of students at school on the East Coast most likely does not affect the results.

**Have you ever been attracted to someone of a different race?**

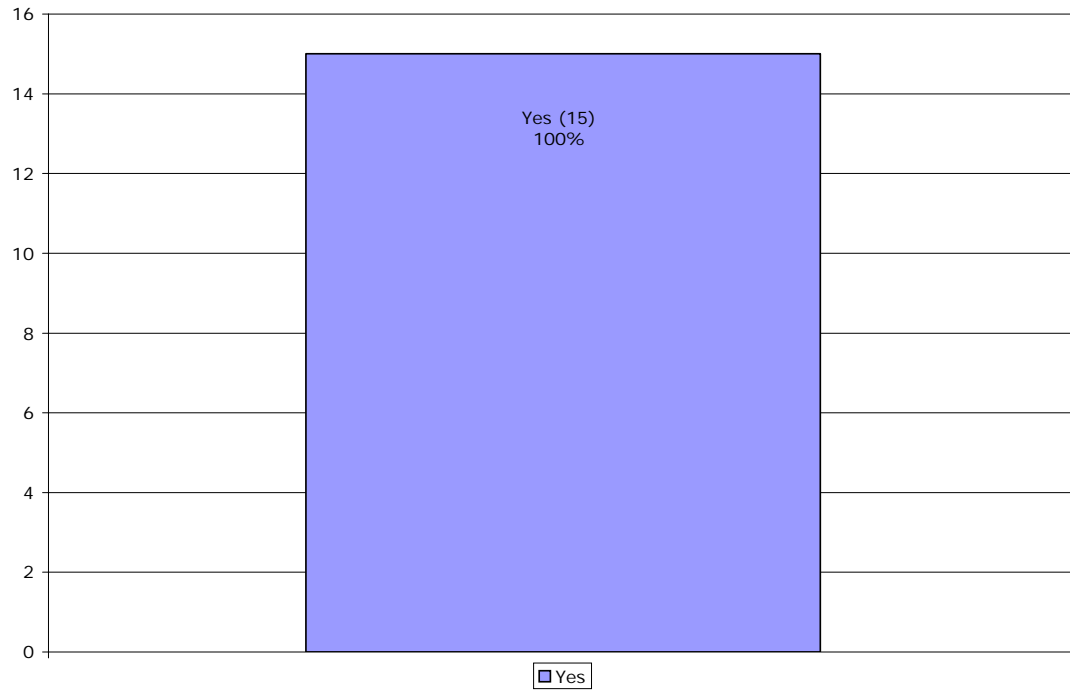


Figure 4's unanimous result of "yes" reflects the multiracial rules of attraction in Hawaii. Generally in Hawaii, people view hapa as the most attractive of all racial groups. However, it would be interesting to see if societal pressures against racism would force mainland subjects of the same group into a similar response.

### Would you be willing to date someone of a different race?

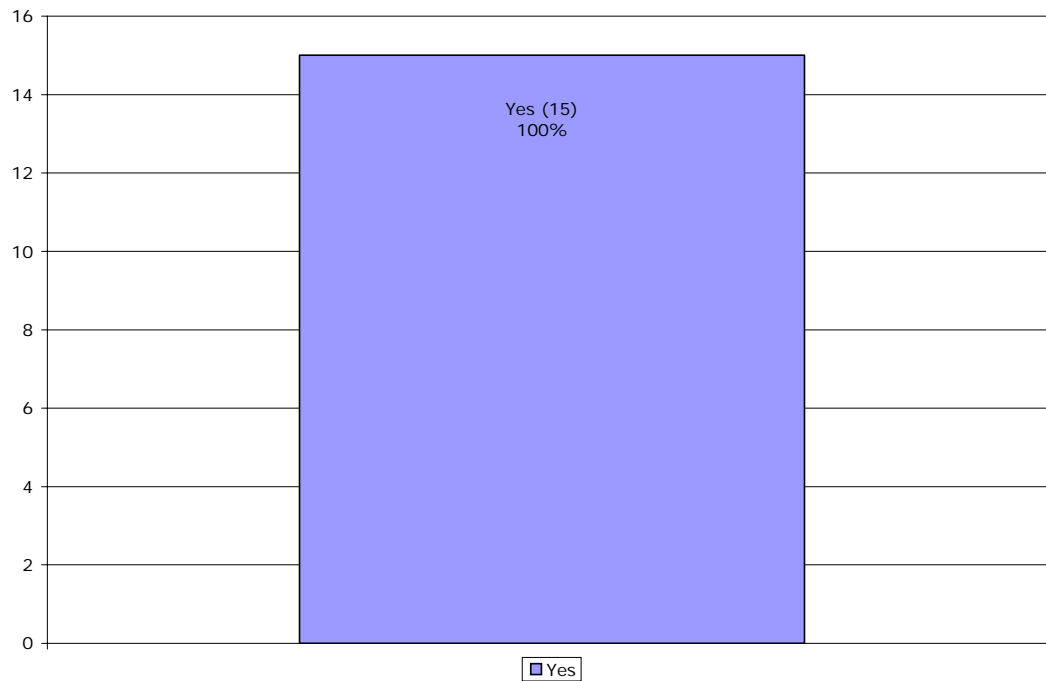


Figure 5 also shows a unanimous yes. The difference between the questions in figure 4 and 5 lies in the idea that being attracted to someone does not automatically make them a suitable dating partner. The 100 percent “yes” result, therefore, implies that race is not a factor when choosing a partner. It would be interesting, however, to know if there are any specific races that people would feel uncomfortable dating, or not find attractive.

**Prior to college did you ever date/have a relationship with someone of a different race?**

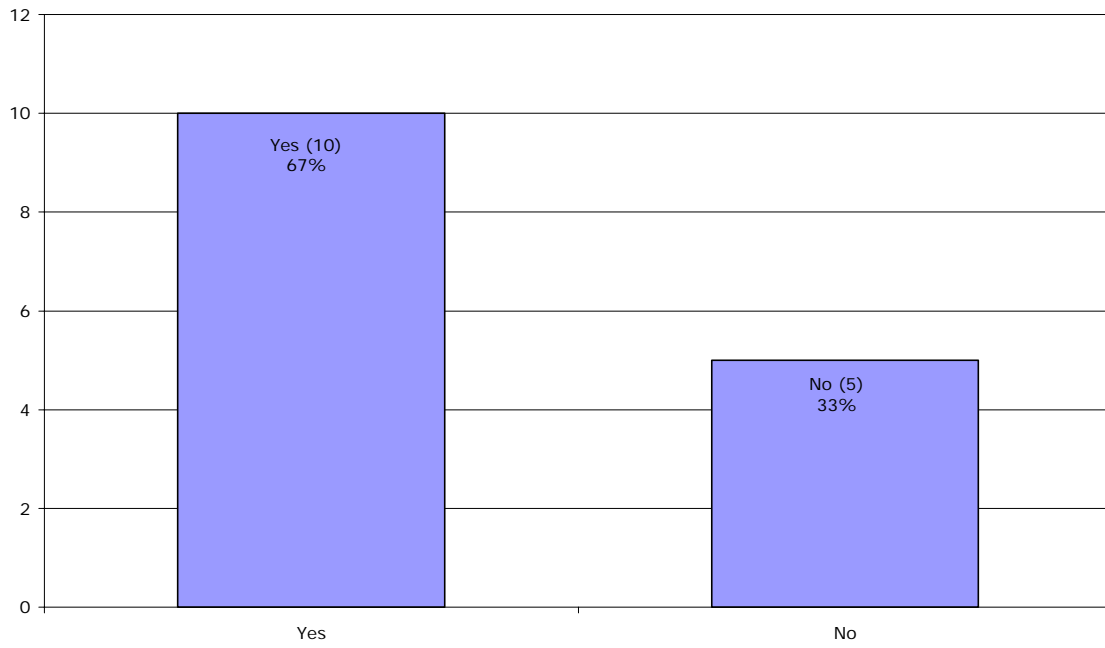


Figure 6 charts the participants' previous dating history, most likely high school dating practices. The high percentage of "yes" answers is expected given the racial history of Hawaii.

**Has your opinion on interracial dating/relationships changed since attending college?**

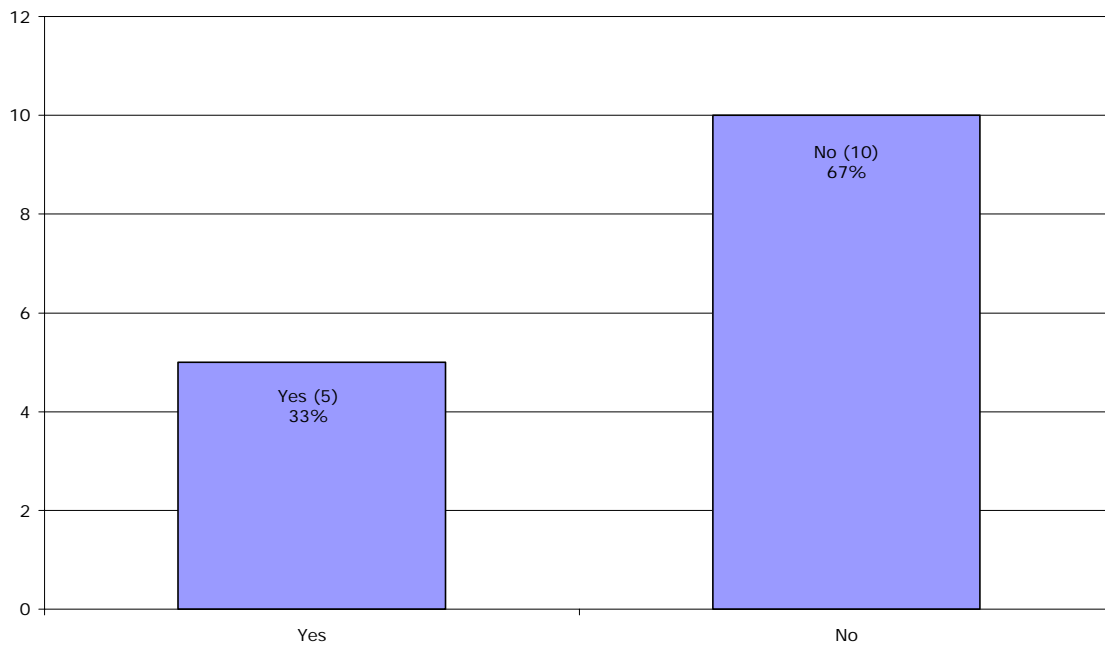


Figure 7 shows that most participants' opinions on interracial dating were not influenced by the external factors at college. Those with a "yes" answer may be in areas where the environment is very demographically different from Hawaii, surrounded by people with very different politics, or/and academia has changed the way they think.

**Since attending college have you dated/had a relationship with someone of a different race?**

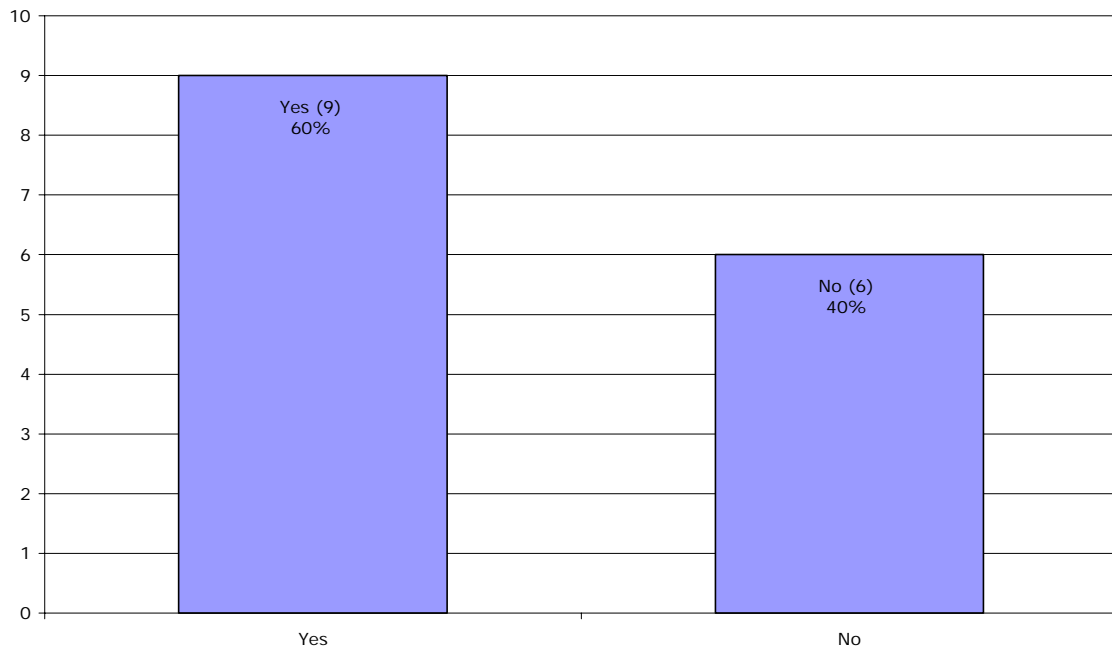


Figure 8 shows a slight decrease in the number of participants who have had an interracial relationship from figure 6. The difference is small enough to be insignificant. Also this result does not take into account the possibility that interracial relationships started in high school may continue in college.

The next set of figures, 9 thru 16, represents the data collected from the pre-college participants.

**Gender of Participants**

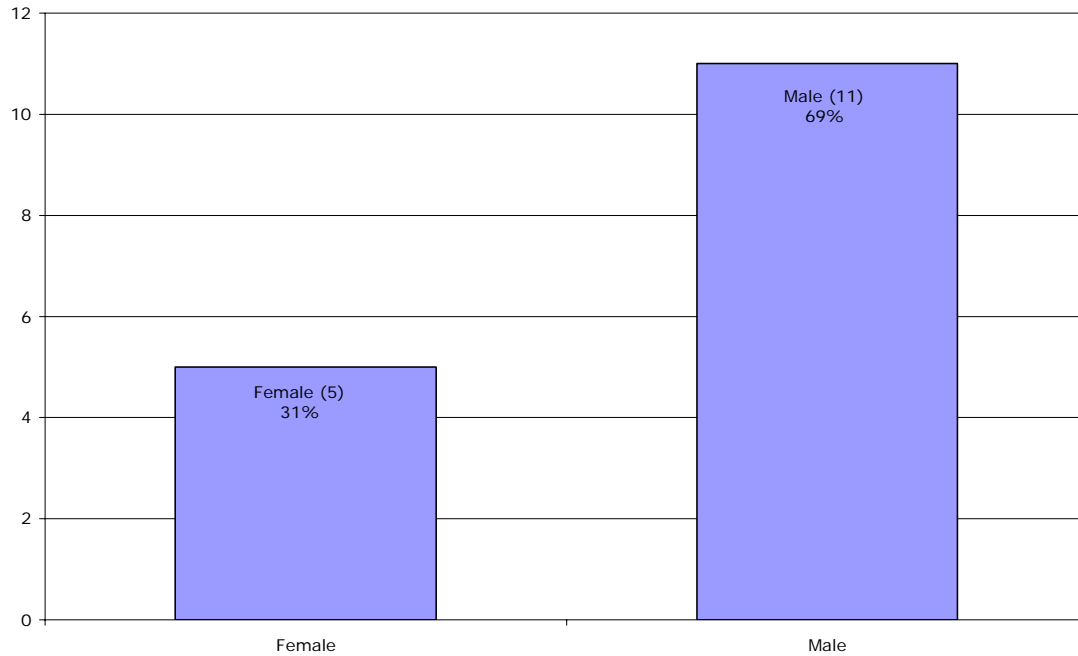


Figure 9 shows the inequality of male and female participants. This may cause some error, but since the study does not focus on the opinion differences between males and females these statistics should have little bearing on the outcome of the data collected. Furthermore, these participants have had little to no experience with the notions of Asian male emasculation and the exoticization of the Asian female that are prevalent in the continental United States (Moran 106). The differences in dating practices for males and females in Hawaii are not affected by racialized gender differences as they are in college so the gender discrepancy in the study should not be important.

**Racial Makeup of Participants**

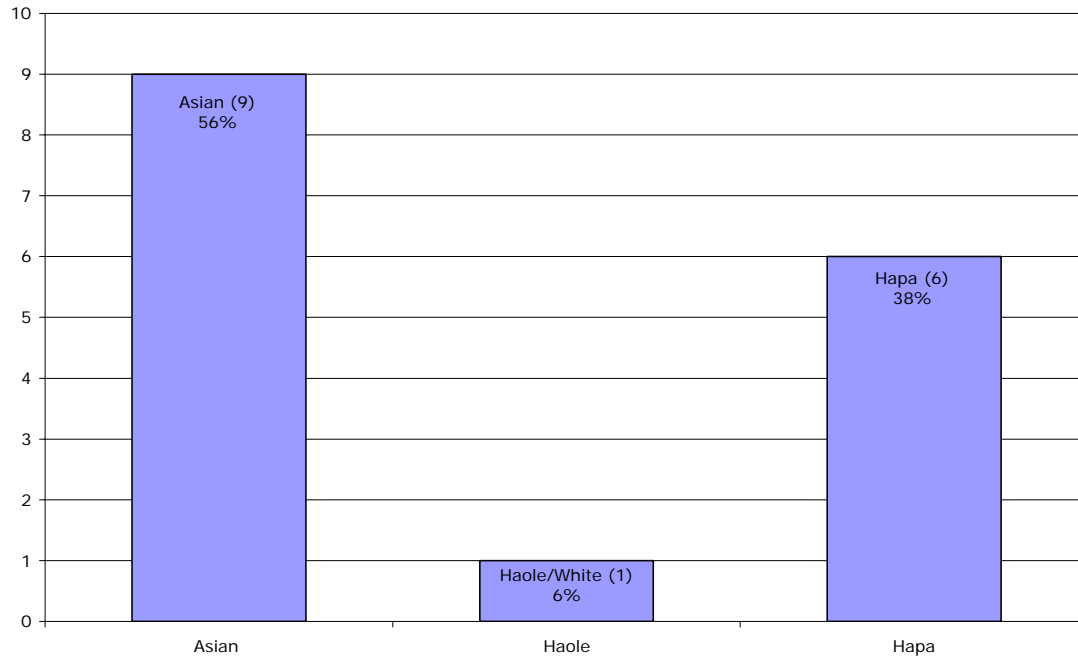


Figure 10 illustrates the racial heritage of the participants. The relatively high percentage of hapas may contribute to the willingness of these participants to date outside of their race. As expected the percentage of Asians is also very high.

### College Location

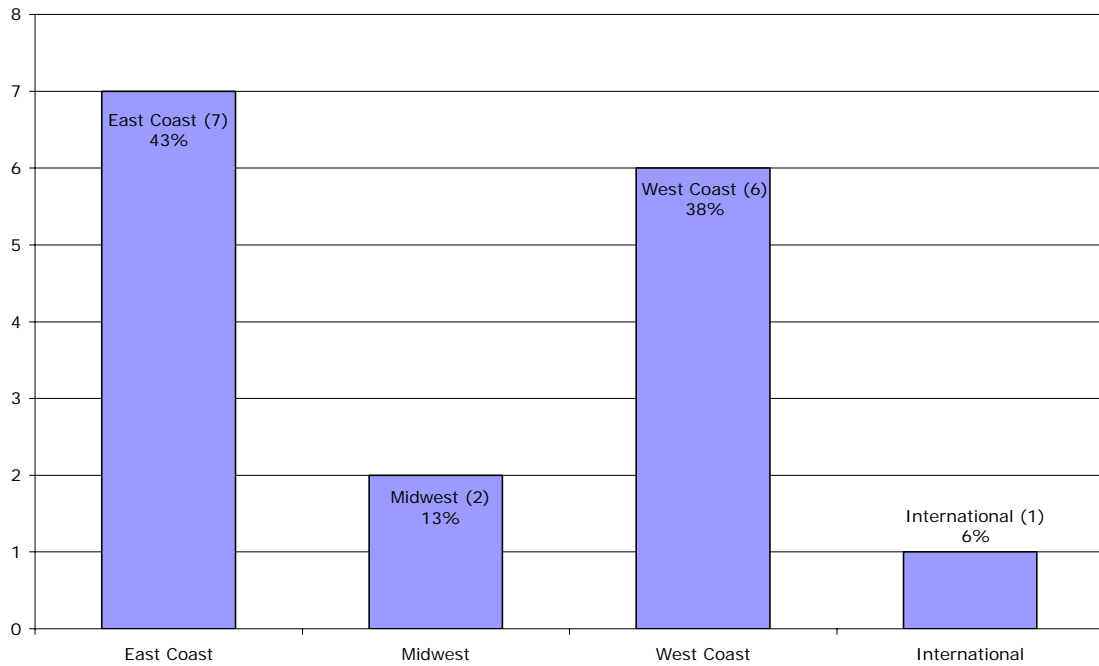


Figure 11 reflects the locations of the colleges these participants will be attending in the fall. Again the high percentage of East Coast colleges is unusual for Hawaii students in general. The complete lack of students remaining in Hawaii must also be noted. However this should have no impact on the results of this study.

**Have you ever been attracted to someone of a different race?**

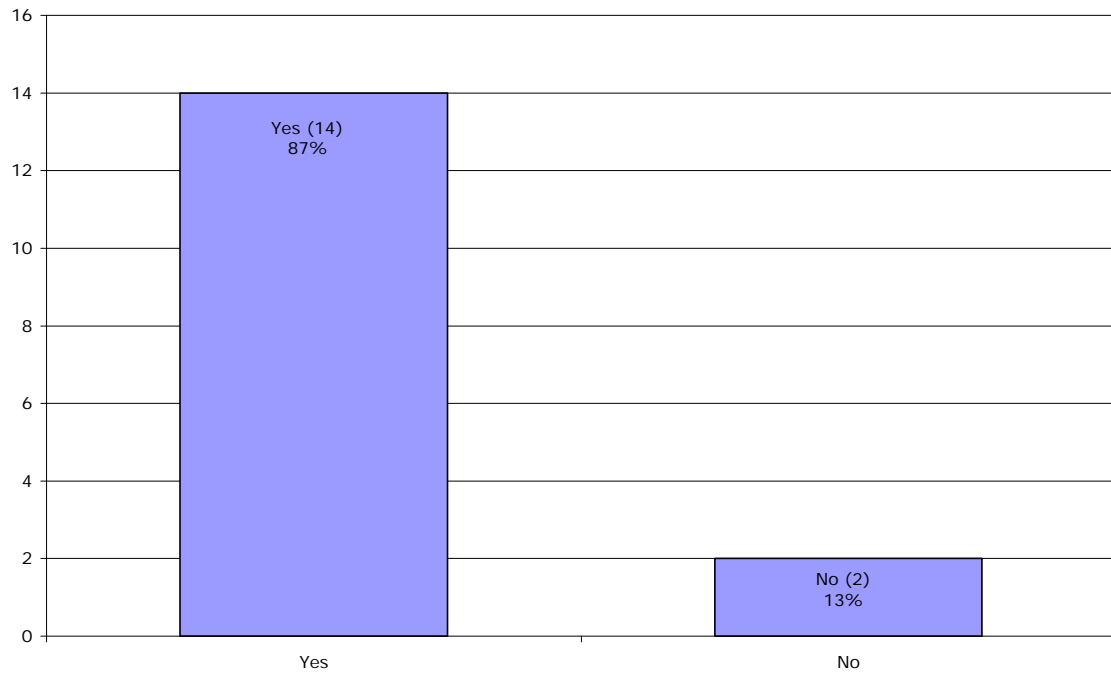


Figure 12's results again reflect expected results. The small "no" percentage may just be personal preference and not correlated with the participants' feelings towards interactions with other races.

**Would you be willing to date someone of a different race?**

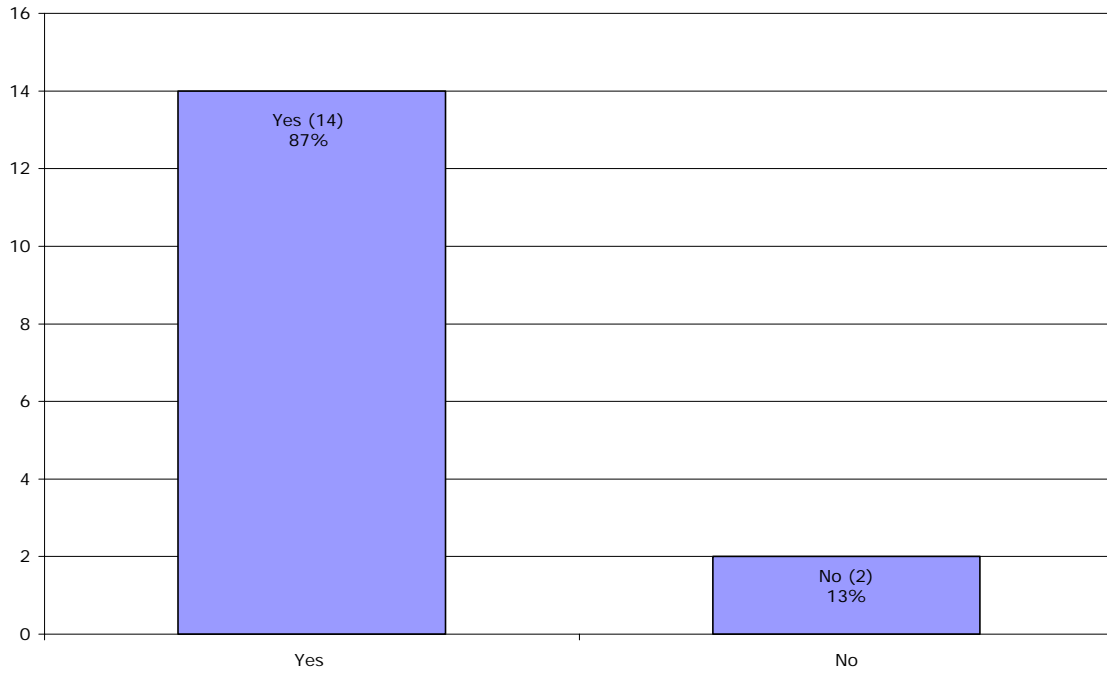


Figure 13 shows the exact same results as figure 12. This correlation could be because at this age the participants may not understand or think about the courtship aspect of dating. The participants could also equate dating with attractiveness. The two “no” answers could be attributed to the idea that a hapa person would want to marry another hapa person so technically they would be of the same race. The “no” answers could also be explained by the generation differences in the participants. For example, a first generation participant may only want to marry within the race.

**Have you ever dated/had a relationship with someone of a different race?**

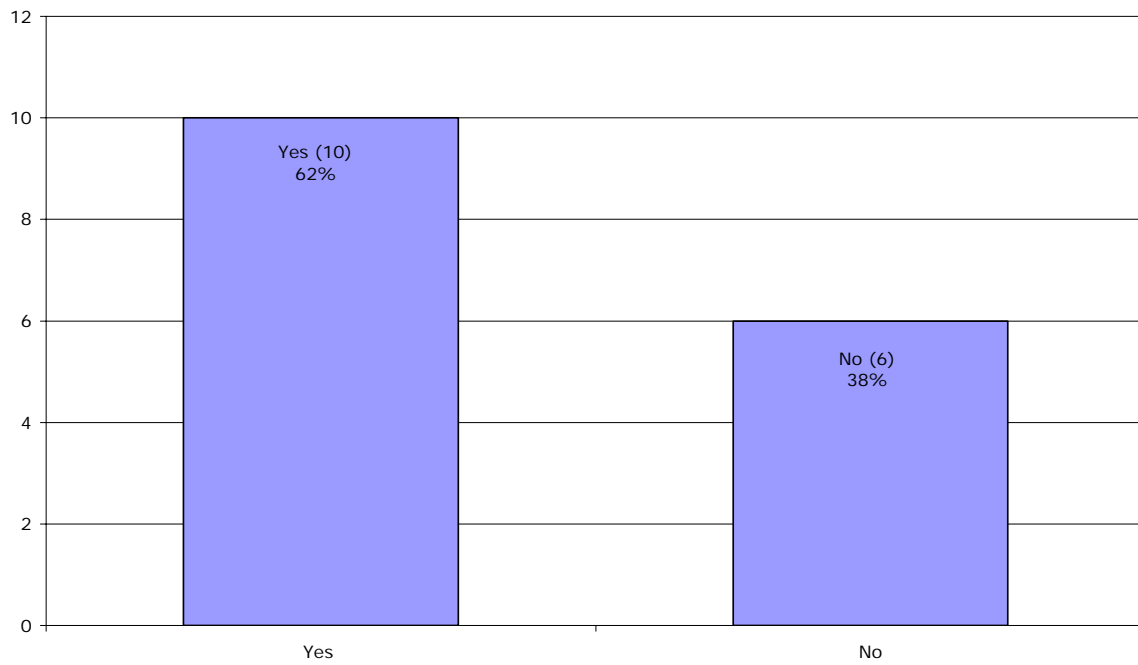


Figure 14's numbers are almost identical to the numbers produced by the college group of participants. These results imply consistency in the attitudes and dating practices of this generation of participants.

**Do you think your opinion on interracial dating/relationships will change in college?**

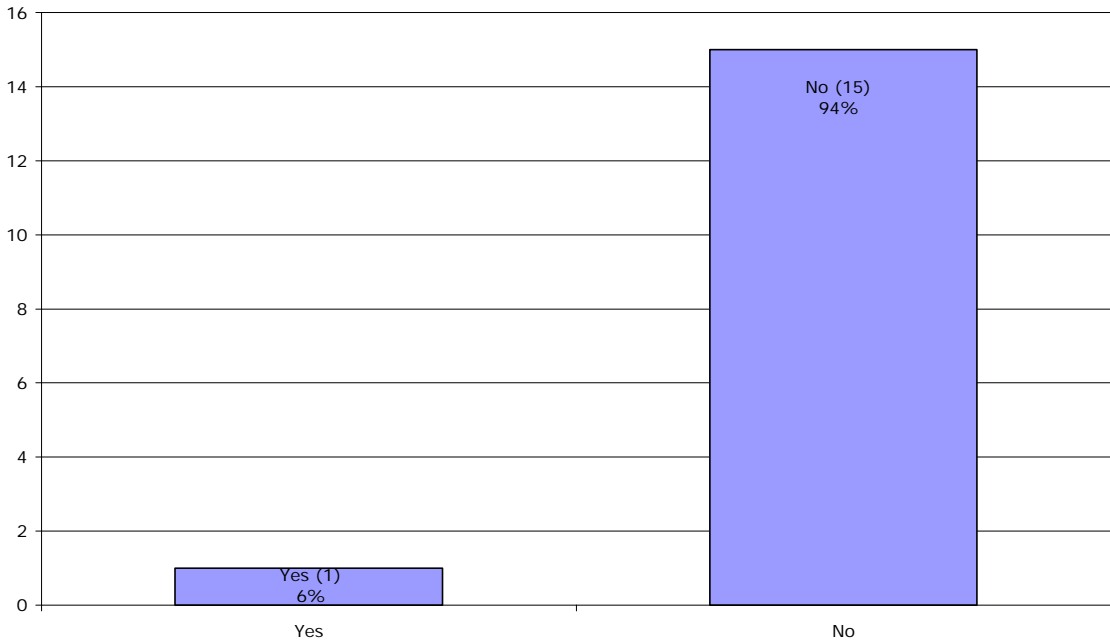


Figure 15 shows that prior to college the participants felt very strongly that their opinions towards interracial relationships would not change. A follow up study done after these subjects had completed a year of college would be very informative in determining if values learned growing up remain static when tested by new environments.

**Do you think you will date/have a relationship with someone of a different race in college?**

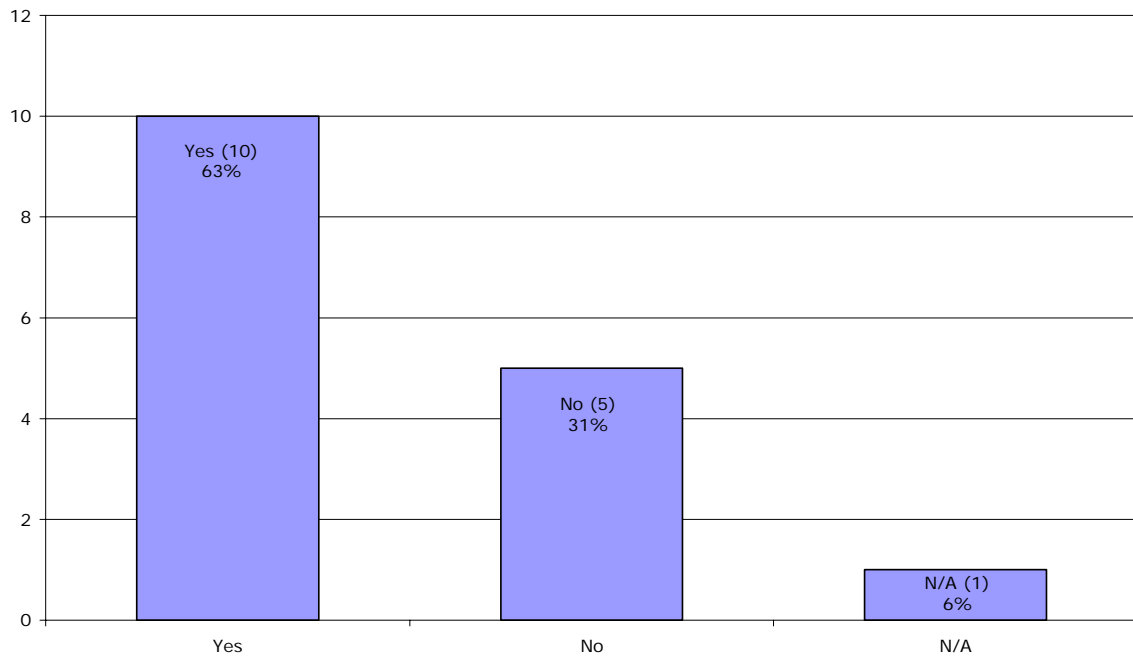


Figure 16 again contains the expected numbers. A follow up study should be done to see if participants did have interracial relationships in college. It would be interesting to see if any of the “no” participants changed their answers to “yes”, or if any of the “yes” participants changed their answers to “no” due to college demographics and self-segregation of minority communities. The N/A response could be for any number of reasons, but since it is only one person it has no effect on the results of this study.

**Change in Opinion on Interracial Dating/Relationships: College v Pre-college**

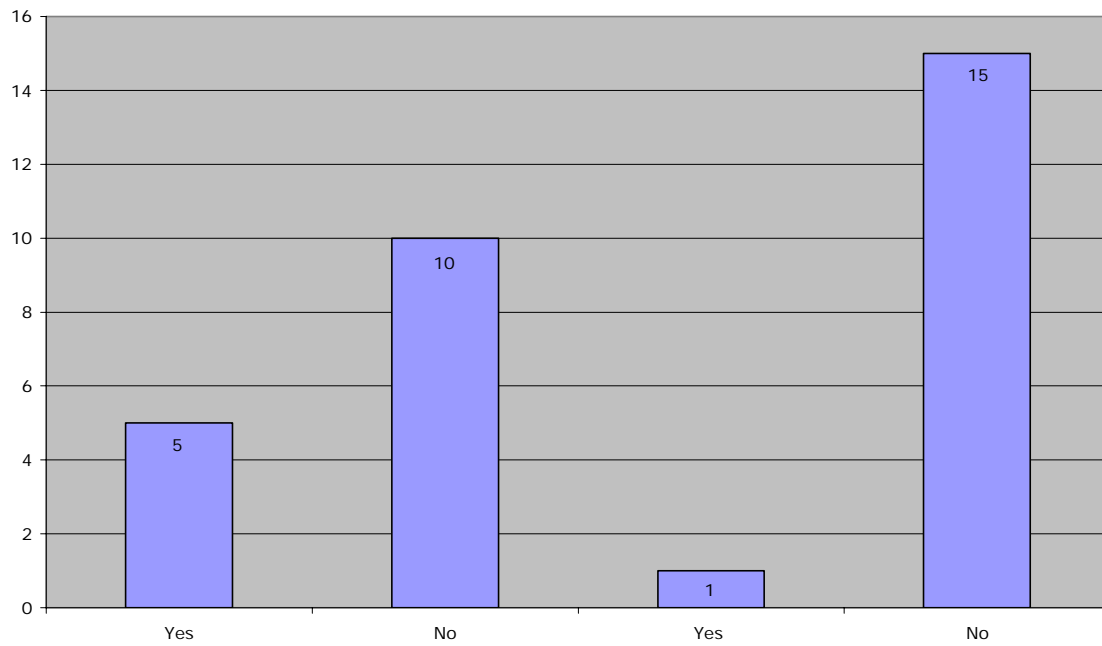


Figure 17 compares the opinions of the college participants and the pre-college participants. These results for college participants show that Hawaii students are not immune to the politics of race on college campuses. The survey, however, did not take into account the degree of opinion change or the direction of the change. The large percentage of pre-college participants who do not anticipate change as compared to the percentage of college participants who experienced no change could be due to a number of factors, such as expected diversity on campus.

**(Predicted) Interracial Relationships in College: College v Pre-college**

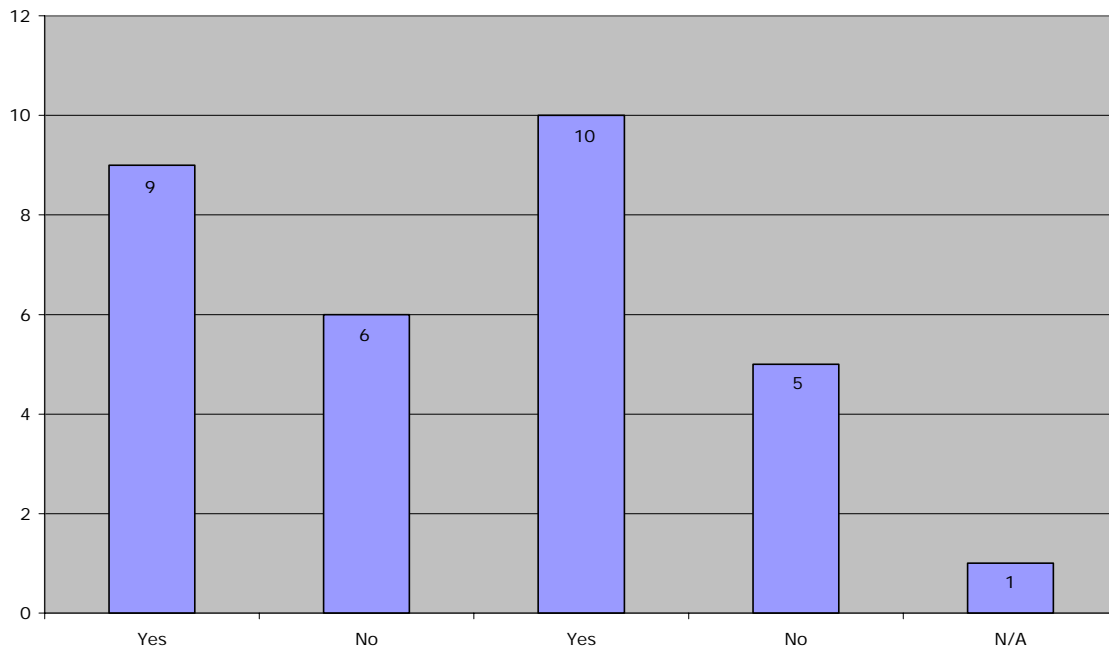


Figure 18 illustrates the opinions of college and pre-college participants on interracial dating in college. Both groups provided similar percentages. The seemingly accurate prediction by the pre-college participants of their future dating practices supports the idea that opinions on race and racial interactions is determined prior to college. The results also may be influenced by the race of the respondent, which was not noted in correlation to their answers.

The following tables contain data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau and illustrate the demographic differences between Hawaii’s population and the population of the United States as a whole.

Race Alone or in Combination for the United States: 2000		(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)
White	Total	216,930,975
	Combination	5,470,349
	Percentage	3%
Black or African American	Total	36,419,434
	Combination	1,761,244
	Percentage	5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	Total	4,119,301
	Combination	1,643,345

	Percentage	40%
Asian	Total	11,898,828
	Combination	1,655,830
	Percentage	14%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	Total	874,414
	Combination	475,579
	Percentage	54%
Some Other Race	Total	18,521,486
	Combination	3,162,413
	Percentage	17%

Table 1 shows the comparison of the total population of a racial group and the number of people in that racial group who are multiracial. The percentage at the bottom of each group represents the amount of the racial group that is mixed in proportion to the total population of that racial group. The percentage was calculated by dividing the number in the combination category by the total racial population number.  $\frac{\text{Combination}}{\text{Total}} = \text{Percentage}$

Total

General Demographics: 2000	(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)	
	United States	Hawaii
Total Population	273,643,273	1,175,755
One Race	97.85%	78.68%
Two or More Races	2.15%	21.32%

General Demographics: 2003	(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)	
	United States	Hawaii
Total Population	282,909,885	1,221,885
One Race	98.11%	78.90%
Two or More Races	1.89%	21.10%

Table 2 compares the demographics of Hawaii and the United States in 2000 and 2003. As expected, Hawaii has a much higher rate of multiracial people, especially in proportion. 2000 was the first year the U.S. Census allowed and 2003 is the most recent Census data available. The slight decline in people that identify as mixed race seems contrary to contemporary notions that the hapa population is increasing. The difference could also not be significant enough to imply anything. Furthermore, the three-year difference is not a large gap for comparison purposes.

The quantitative data collected paints a broad picture of current demographics and the racial opinions of the participants. The data shows that going to college may have an effect on perceptions of race, but essentially opinions on dating and race are formed prior to college and tend to be static. The qualitative data from the personal interviews provides insight about the way race is perceived in Hawaii and the effects of a new environment. For students from Hawaii, who have not grown up with strong racial politics, going to college and becoming aware of racial politics for the first time can be challenging. How do we form opinions on race? How does a person from a multiracial society that embraces ethnicity and encourages miscegenation fare in a different environment? Essentially this study has found that people from Hawaii cope with their new environment by becoming more racially aware, self-segregating, and/or disregarding their own race.

The atmosphere at college campuses now is very different from thirty years ago. Universities try very hard to create diversity and as a result campus contain more visible minority groups. Even in Hawaii high school campuses have become more racially mixed. In an interview with Dr. Christine Yano she describes her experience at Punahou School, a local private high school,

I can just talk from my own personal experience. And I think you know growing up in Hawaii in the 50's and 60's, I graduated from Punahou in '69. And at that time at Punahou my feeling was that the racial barriers were very firm. And umm Asians, or Orientals at that time, Asians stuck pretty much to themselves. Sometimes not by choice, but because we were put there. And outside from the occasional cheerleader who was able to kind of bridge those popularity gaps. It was okay this is an Asian social enclave; this is a haole social enclave (personal interview with Dr. Yano, 8/2/2005).

In contrast with Dr. Yano's experience at Punahou School, the three college age interviewees (who also attended Punahou School) describe their high school experience very differently, regardless of their race. Informant B, who is haole, when asked if she thought about race at Punahou responded, "Not so much" (personal interview with Informant B, 7/29/2005) and Informant A, who is a Chinese and Japanese female, gave a

similar response, “In high school you don’t do too much thinking about it [race]” (personal interview with Informant A, 7/26/2005). It would seem that the greater racial mixing in high school makes students less aware of race. Even Dr. Yano, who was racially segregated in high school, noticed a difference between her view of race and her cousin’s, who was the same age and grew up in Los Angeles, “But for me I think racial relations were politicized, but very much on a personal level. And I never thought of it as politics. And for me, you know, growing up in Hawaii etc. I think I was aware of race, but not to that kind of politicized degree that she was” (personal interview with Dr. Yano, 8/2/2005). Race in Hawaii manifests at a much more personal level, without the national and global politics that surround it on the mainland.

This lack of politicized racial ideas also manifests in the interviewees’ responses to questions about interracial relationships. When asked if she would think anything of seeing a haole-Asian couple Informant A responded “I think the first thing that comes to most people’s mind is that they’re going to have cute babies. That’s all” (personal interview with Informant A, 7/26/2005). This answer ties into Adams observations about the social acceptance of interracial couples in Hawaii, “In Hawaii public sentiment is not opposed to interracial marriage... So far as sentiment is expressed in an open and public way it, in general is not unfavorable to marriage across race lines” (43). For Informant B, who is currently in an interracial relationship with someone of Pakistani descent, comfort level depends on location. When asked if she felt uncomfortable in her relationship on the mainland she responded, “Not in Pittsburgh, but definitely in Indiana” (personal interview with Informant B, 7/29/2005). And when asked if she ever felt uncomfortable in Hawaii she replied, “No, never. Not at all” (personal interview with Informant B, 7/29/2005). She also pointed out the heightened awareness of interracial couples at her school, compared to her experience in Hawaii, “Definitely in Hawaii it’s like easy to think of an interracial couple as just a couple, but you know on the mainland you might actually pick up on that” (personal interview with Informant B, 7/29/2005). The difference in Hawaii students’ approach to race also appears in their active seeking of an out of race relationship. “Yeah college is a big experimental time. I think that’s what it comes down to. Yeah cause I heard that before. They’re [Asian students from Hawaii] like ‘I want to try and date a mainland guy.’ And mainland guy probably means white” (personal interview with Informant A, 7/26/2005). These examples prove that race appears on personal, not a macro level in Hawaii. Furthermore the politics surrounding race in Hawaii are more benign and personal.

The perception on the mainland of who people should date is also interesting to consider. Informant C, who is half Chinese and half white, described his college dating experience as a lot of “setup dates”, “I didn’t really like spontaneously go on a lot of dates. I went on a lot of setup dates. And coincidentally I was setup with a lot of Asian people. But not consistently... People would just suggest ethnic people somehow” (personal interview with Informant C, 8/3/2005). The tendency of people to want to see Informant C with other people of color reflects the social boundaries in place on the mainland. Informants A and B also noticed the lack of interracial couples on the mainland. Informant B, who attends school in Pittsburgh, when asked if she knew any interracial couples at her school replied, “You know I don’t really know any... I guess I

know a couple, yeah” (personal interview with Informant B, 7/29/2005). Similarly Informant A, who goes to school in Southern California, does not see a lot of interracial couples at her school (personal interview with Informant A, 7/26/2005). The lack of racial mixing on these campuses at the very personal level of dating implies the existence of social boundaries that are not being broken down by these educated individuals. The focus on large scale racial politics endorsed by minority groups on college campuses has drawn attention away from the importance of personal racial politics

Self-segregating racial groups generally maintain the social boundaries that exist on college campuses. It is much easier and more comfortable to stay within one’s racial comfort zone. Crossing social and racial boundaries usually entails educating others and opening one up to possible discrimination. “To not get sucked into it [staying within your racial group] takes a lot of fortitude. I mean you have to really try hard not to socialize with the people who you would sort of naturally go towards because you have a lot in common” (personal interview with Dr. Yano, 8/2/2005). When asked about self-segregation on his campus Informant C replied,

Black kids definitely. Umm, but that’s like partly because like self-segregation is institutionalized. Like they have African American cultural house where they do all these activities and mixers and performances for black kids and I don’t think they ever say white people don’t come... I think the whole zeitgeist at [Connecticut college] is so white that if you want to like hang onto your blackness you gotta have friends who are (personal interview with Informant C, 8/3/2005).

He also gave following example of the institutionalized nature of race on his campus.

But when you’re a freshman they throw a big party in the gym and they give out T-shirts and prizes and season tickets to athletic events. And they have contests. And it’s really a good way to meet people and make friends. If you’re white. Because if you’ve been assigned an ethnic counselor you have to go and meet with them during the exact same hour of the orientation week. And you have to line up with other black kids or other Hispanic kids or other Asians. My ethnic counselor was from India and we had nothing in common... And it’s the worst experience ever (personal interview with Informant C, 8/3/2005).

The white majority also faces racial barriers. As a member of the white majority, Informant B said,

I don’t think I would feel uncomfortable [hanging out with non whites], but I feel like people around me would perceive it as strange, which would

make me feel uncomfortable and like, unwelcome.... I honestly know a couple of Asian friends who are like 'Yeah, we'd like hang out with you, but you know it would be weird if we like brought you around our other friends (personal interview with Informant B, 7/29/2005).

This anecdote illustrates the staunch social boundaries minority groups erect. Interestingly when asked if she would feel more of a bond with a white person Informant B replied,

No way. Because I mean it's not like I have a huge cultural identity. Being a white person growing up in Hawaii it's not like I have any cultural identity. My cultural identity is like a lack of cultural identity. So like bonding with a white person just because they were white would be like the stupidest thing ever. I have no idea why I would do that. That wouldn't make any sense (personal interview with Informant B, 7/29/2005).

The strong reaction from Informant B against forming a bond based on race and its accompanying cultural identity implies the prevalent idea in America that to be racist one must be of the majority, white. Yet as the social boundaries around minority groups and the practice of self-segregation has proved, racism exists in minority groups. And more than a friendship with someone of another race is needed to cross racial lines.

Even multiracials practice self-segregation. At Wesleyan multiracial students can bond with other multiracials at Fusion meetings. And on thefacebook.com, Informant C brought up the "Halfies at [Connecticut College]" group, which admits only members who are Asian and white mixed. They have "95 members with two groupies. You know why they only have two groupies with 95 members? Because they all joined and they are only friends with each other" (personal interview with Informant C, 8/3/2005). Yet some would argue that, "Multiracial people and hybrid identities continue to destabilize racial and cultural boundaries and hierarchies as the dominant society struggles to manage these populations and their identities" (Nakashima, p. 46). However, the institutionalized nature of race sometimes forces hapas to choose a single identity. As Informant C said, "I told my freshman residence counselor, 'I'm white too. How come I can't go to the basketball thing with the other white kids?'" (personal interview with Informant C, 8/3/2005). Even people with different ethnicities, but a single race have to choose an identity. "On the mainland it feels like if you wanted to go somewhere [ethnic] you could go there and pick and choose. Here [Hawaii] it's [ethnicities] already fused" (personal interview with Informant A, 7/26/2005). So how does the self-segregation of hapas and different ethnicities fit in with the idea that multiracial persons breakdown borders? One way that hapas are breaking down borders is by forcing people to look at race as more than a single identity. However, the self-segregation of hapas and their

institutionalization provides evidence that America is not yet comfortable with multiracial identities.

## CONCLUSION

Most people will agree that finding a comfortable way to address race and breaking down social borders is the ultimate goal of any discourse on racial politics. Many believe that interracial marriage and hapa children will provide the stepping-stone for a cohesive, unified multiracial community. “The focus on romantic individualism not only suppresses the significance of race in personal decision making but also deflects attention from structural factors like segregation that limit a person’s ability to meet, date, and marry someone of another race” (Moran 119). And since the early twentieth century scholars have looked to the seemingly harmonious multiracial community in Hawaii to provide an example for this model. However, what people often miss in all of the racial blending that occurs is the importance placed on embracing one’s cultural and racial heritage. America places such great importance on being an individual and being special, and racial identity makes a person special. “Instead, race is a fundamental source of social identity and belonging” (Moran 118). The problem with using racial identity to be special on the mainland is that people are blinded by it and fail to see the other aspects that make an individual unique. This preoccupation with race then creates impassable social boundaries. Interracial romance often breaks down these racial barriers by allowing people to see who, rather than what a person is. While attraction may begin with race and its phenotypic expression, when it leads to more social barriers are crossed. “I would say people are first intrigued by race and stuff and then hopefully it’s more than that after” (personal interview with Informant A, 7/26/2005). Therefore, while romantic interracial relationships allow some to break through racial lines, the results of these unions do not necessarily permanently open racial boundaries and lead to a cohesive multiracial community.

Everyone is fundamentally aware of race; whether it is the physical appearance we see in the mirror every morning or the everyday cultural practices and traditions of families. Growing up in the diverse communities of Hawaii, however, provides individuals access to a very culturally focused, benign, non-political form of race. The flip side of this is that “...we’re [people from Hawaii] not aware sometimes of the politics of who we are, how we interact, how we look and how we’re perceived by others... we can walk into traps, we can be eager to sort of facilitate those traps in ways that we have not actually intended” (personal interview with Dr. Yano, 8/2/2005). The experience of going to college and being exposed to racial politics provides Hawaii students the opportunity to raise their awareness.

Before I wasn’t so aware that there were differences kinda in race. Yeah like you didn’t think about it so much. And then you started taking classes on like different cultures and culture collision and studying things like interracial I don’t know, yeah. Just like stuff like that. And then you just become more aware of it and then I found myself trying harder not to stay within my race (personal interview with Informant A, 7/26/2005).

Being placed in a racially charged environment didn't change the opinions on race of the students from Hawaii; it simply made them more aware of race on a political level. This newfound awareness resulted in increased efforts to reach out to break down the social barriers put up by race. Interracial marriage and multiracial communities cannot create the kind of barrier-less society we are looking for. Even in Hawaii where race has taken on benign characteristics, the creation of a multiracial society open to interracial relationships has not been able to create a barrier-less society. The only way to truly break down the social barriers created by race is to raise the awareness level of racial politics and heritage. Society does not have to be colorblind or race-blind to break down social barriers and allow individuals to create their own unique identity.

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