

## HOW MANY HAWAIIANS LIVE IN HAWAII?

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Lately, the size of Hawai'i's precontact population has again become a matter of passionate debate, with estimates ranging from Dye's 110,000-150,000 to Stannard's 8000,000-1.5 million. A less publicized but similarly vexing question has recently surfaced with respect to the *current* Hawaiian population of the state. The 1990 census failed to distinguish between pure and part Hawaiians, and reported different totals by ancestry and by race. Growing numbers of part Hawaiians either misclassify themselves as either pure Hawaiian or non-Hawaiian. The lack of accurate population data makes it almost impossible to calculate meaningful birth, death, crime, unemployment, poverty, and similar rates by race.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, David Stannard revived an old controversy: how many Hawaiians were living on these islands in 1778, when Captain James Cook and his officers reported the first known contact between Europeans and the Islanders? Stannard, in a vigorously argued, take-no-prisoners monograph, *Before the Horror*, asserted that the true figure was at least 800,000, and perhaps as high as 1.5 million (Stannard 1989:31, 37). Previous estimates had ranged from Bucks 100,000-150,000 through King's revised estimate of 400,000 to King's original guess of 500,000. Most clustered between 200,000 and 300,000 (Schmitt 1968:18-22).

A number of interested persons joined the ensuing debate. Many Hawaiian activists, revisionist mainland authorities, and reviewers supported Stannard, some quite enthusiastically. Objections, mostly indirect or muted, came from island demographers, anthropologists, and historians. Dye offered an alternate estimate, based on a sophisticated analysis of radiocarbon dating, of

110,000-150,000 (Dye 1994:1-20). As observed by one critic, Andrew Bushnell, "*Before the Horror* has provided a new orthodoxy for many who are either unable or unwilling to critically evaluate its assumptions" (Bushnell 1993:116). In any event, the question is still unresolved, and will undoubtedly remain so for many years.

Less publicized but equally vexing, a similar controversy exists at the other end of the time scale: how many Hawaiians live in Hawai'i today? Is the true total the U.S. Census count of 138,742 listed as "Hawaiian" in the 1990 *racial* statistics? Or is it the corresponding Bureau of the Census 1990 total of 156,812 persons of Hawaiian *ancestry*? Both of these census totals, moreover, differ radically from the State Health Department's 1990 sample survey finding of 8,711 unmixed Hawaiians and 196,367 part Hawaiians. All of these figures, it should be stressed, exclude ethnic Hawaiians living in other states, numbered at 72,272 in the 1990 census (Hawaii State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism 1994:37, 39-41).

One might well ask: if we can't more accurately establish the number of Hawaiians living in the islands in 1990, when a full census of the population was conducted, how closely can we estimate the number in 1778, more than half a century before any complete headcount was attempted?

The major problem in earlier years seems to have been the misclassification of part Hawaiians as full-blooded. In 1937, pioneer University of Hawai'i demographer Bomanzo Adams estimated from vital statistics that 9,780 persons classified in the 1930 census as pure Hawaiians were actually part Hawaiians. As a consequence, the number of unmixed Hawaiians in the islands in 1930 was actually 12,856 instead of 22,636, and the number of part Hawaiians was 38,004 rather than 28,224 (Adams 1937:15). An unpublished study by W. A. Lessa, who attempted to interview every pure Hawaiian living in the Territory of Hawai'i in 1930-1932, turned up only about 1,700 truly unmixed Hawaiians (Lessa 1964). And a 1967 analysis of population genetics by Newton E. Morton, Chin S. Chung, and Ming-Pi Mi concluded that the avowedly pure Hawaiians registered at the Honolulu Blood Bank between 1948 and 1958 averaged 8.5 percent Caucasian admixture and 13.7 percent Chinese admixture (1967:13, 26, 29, 127).

More recently, many persons of part-Hawaiian ancestry apparently have been classified as non-Hawaiians, certainly in census statistics and less frequently in data from the Hawai'i State Department of Health. This conclusion necessarily follows any comparison of census and Health Department data.

The 1960 decennial census was the last to show separate statistics for "Hawaiians" and "part Hawaiians." Thereafter, no "part Hawaiian" category was provided, and persons of mixed background were asked to mark the

race they most closely identified with. Those who could or would not make such a choice were instructed in 1970 to use the race of their father, and in 1980 and 1990 to indicate mother's race. The number of "Hawaiians" accordingly rose from 11,294 in 1960 (when there were also 91,109 "part Hawaiians") to 71,274 in 1970, 115,500 in 1980, and 138,742 in 1990 (Schmitt 1977: 25-26; Hawai'i State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism 1994:39).

In addition to these "racial" data, the 1980 and 1990 censuses included information on "ancestry." Respondents were asked to indicate either one or two ancestral backgrounds; entries with three or more ancestries were tabulated only for the first two mentioned. The 1990 data showed 156,812 persons who had marked Hawaiian, either alone or in combination with another ancestral group (Hawai'i State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism 1994:41).

The Hawai'i Health Surveillance Program (HHSP), a large ongoing sample survey conducted by the Hawai'i State Department of Health from 1964 to 1994, handled the racial question in a different fashion, by requesting the race of each respondent's four grandparents. Provision was made for "Hawaiian" and "part Hawaiian" as well as other races. Thus, any person who had at least one grandparent classified as part Hawaiian shared that racial classification. Only those with all four grandparents reported as Hawaiian were considered to be unmixed. The 1990 HHSP found 8,711 allegedly pure Hawaiians and 196,367 part Hawaiians (Hawai'i State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism 1994:37).

Although the Health Department's data seem to be more objective than corresponding census figures, neither source appears to be wholly credible. It seems probable, from inspection of the Adams, Lessa, and Morton studies cited earlier, that some part Hawaiians are continuing to claim unmixed ancestry. It is also likely (although less readily proved) that many part Hawaiians are becoming so fractional in ancestry as to ignore or be unaware of their drop of Hawaiian blood.

Birth statistics for Hawai'i provide some evidence regarding these points. In 1991, 6,620 babies were born with at least some known Hawaiian ancestry, but only 21 of them were totally unmixed. More than half, or 3,672, had one non-Hawaiian parent, and 745 others had one parent of unknown race (Hawai'i State Department of Health 1993). The net result was a sharply increased average proportion of non-Hawaiian blood in these part-Hawaiian babies.

Similar evidence comes from the enrollment records of the Kamehameha Schools, which admit only students with at least some documented Hawaiian ancestry. The percentage of pure Hawaiian students dropped from 7.3 in

1929 to 0.1 in 1992-1993. Those with one-eighth or less Hawaiian blood rose during the same sixty-four-year period from 3.4 percent of the total to 36.1 percent (Hawai'i State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism 1994:40).

Careful review of these sources inevitably leads to the following conclusions regarding the state's current Hawaiian population:

1. The 1990 census greatly understates the Hawaiian population, in both its racial and ancestry tabulations. Not only does it fail to distinguish between "pure" and part Hawaiians, but it apparently assigns about one-third of all part Hawaiians (based on HHSP racial data) to a non-Hawaiian category.
2. The Hawaii Health Surveillance Program, although subject to sampling variation not characteristic of the census full-count data, is more forthright about race mixture, and thus a better guide to both pure and part Hawaiian categories. Even so, it probably overstates the number of pure Hawaiians and underreports the part-Hawaiian group.
3. The unmixed Hawaiian population has declined so precipitously as to have reached the edge of extinction. This conclusion stems from consideration of HHSP data, the findings of Adams, Lessa, and Morton cited above, and the minuscule totals for pure-Hawaiian births recorded in recent years.
4. Calculating accurate demographic and social rates for Hawaiians and part Hawaiians is becoming progressively more difficult and perhaps impossible, at least when using census totals as denominators. Precision in comparative birth, death, crime, unemployment, poverty, and similar rates is an unattainable goal, particularly for Hawaiians.
5. Nobody knows exactly how many Hawaiians lived here in 1778. Nobody knows, with satisfactory accuracy, how many live here today.

#### NOTE

The author was formerly State Statistician with the Hawai'i State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism and its predecessor agencies. This paper has been updated and extensively revised from two earlier versions (Schmitt 1967; Hawai'i State Department of Planning and Economic Development 1971).

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