Racial Fault Lines

The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California

With a New Preface

Tomás Almaguer

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Preface to the 2009 Edition

It is very gratifying that *Racial Fault Lines* has found a wide academic and lay audience and continues to make a valuable contribution to our understanding of race and ethnic relations in the United States. This book was initially written with two purposes in mind. First, it was intended as a contribution to our understanding of "race" as a sociohistorical concept whose fundamental meaning varies depending on time, place, and historical context. Second, it is a historically specific examination of the process of "racial formation"—or the way in which racial status is extended or conferred on various nationalities and ethnic groups.

California was chosen to illustrate that racial categories are historically contingent and fluid in their specific meaning and to highlight the important role that the Mexican population played in the process of racial formation. A central focus of this study was the specific racial status and structural placement of Mexicans in California as a result of the U.S.-Mexico War of 1846–48. That monumental imperial enterprise was followed by the rapid displacement of the once powerful Mexican landholding class and its subsequent economic and political subordination in the new political order introduced after California's annexation by the United States. Mexicans' social displacement and initial racialization formed the central problematic and historical question underpinning this book.

I was surprised to learn that the Mexican "Californios" were formally accorded the same rights and privileges initially granted only to

California have provided emotional grounding throughout the preparation of this study; I thank them for their patience, understanding, and affection. Velia Garcia, Patricia Zavella, Ramón Gutiérrez, and David Gutiérrez know only too well the hazards I negotiated in completing this project. They, above all, deserve special acknowledgment for seeing me through the adversities that befell this project before it finally made its way to press.

Introduction

California has experienced a distinct and unique history of race and ethnic relations, one whose fundamental pattern took shape during the last half of the nineteenth century. This pattern departs in many ways from the more familiar nineteenth-century one between European Americans and African and Native Americans in other regions of the country. The conquest of Western America through the U.S.-Mexico War of 1846–48 forged a new pattern of racialized relationships between conquerors, conquered, and the numerous immigrants that settled in the newly acquired territory. While longstanding race relations developed elsewhere were essentially binary in character, the United States' mid-nineteenth-century annexation of what is today the Southwest would incorporate three new cultural groups into existing racial patterns: the Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese populations. The structural position these ethnic groups would occupy was largely unscripted, unfettered by a historical legacy predetermining their "group position" in the new state.[1]

This history unfolded during a period of momentous political upheaval in the United States, one reverberating with intense sectional strife and the catastrophic effects of the Civil War. Moreover, it marked the moment in American history when the slave-based economic system in the southern United States was being successfully subordinated to the ascending capitalist social order of the more industrialized North. The ultimate triumph of modern capitalism was accompanied by a fierce struggle among various racial and ethnic groups for position within the emerging new class struc-

ture. Opportunities for individual and collective advancement were contested bitterly among the native-born and immigrant populations residing in every region of the country. The history of this competition between European-American immigrants and blacks in the northern and southern United States is well known and remains deeply rooted in the national consciousness.[2]

This contestation for group position at the national level was extended into the Far West with the United States' acquisition of over one-third of Mexico through the U.S.-Mexico War. The Gadsden Purchase of 1853 completed the United States' transcontinental expansion to the Pacific coast in the mid-nineteenth century. In the fifty-year period from 1803 to 1853 the United States increased its size tenfold through the acquisition of nearly 2.3 million square miles of land formerly claimed by France, Spain, England, and Mexico.[3] In so doing, it laid the basis for the introduction of a new pattern of group relationships in the California territory during the next fifty years.

Our scholarly understanding of the historicity of "race" and racialized group relationships in the Far West, however, has developed largely in the shadow of the black/white encounter, and we continue to view racial matters in these paradigmatic terms. Further, academics have typically examined these racial patterns on the national level or have focused on parts of the country other than the American Southwest.[4] This has led to three related consequences: (1) we tend to see "race relations" as a binary and bipolar relationship, a perspective that offers little understanding of what happens when more than two racialized groups are competing; (2) we often view race and class hierarchies as neatly corresponding or symmetrical, as in the prototypical slaveowner/slave relationship; and (3) we generally assume that racializing discourses and practices are derived from or mask other, more fundamental underlying structures such as the class relationship between capital and labor.[5] California disproves these simplistic assumptions and provides unique opportunities to study both the evolution of racializing discourses and the hierarchical structuring of racial inequalities in a context where more than two racialized populations contest for group position within the social structure.

At its most fundamental level, this historical-sociological study traces the broad outlines of what Michael Omi and Howard Winant have termed "racial formation" in California during the last half of the nineteenth century. Omi and Winant define racial formation as "the process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turned shaped by racial

meanings."[6] They introduce the term "*racialization* to specify the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group." In so doing, they underscore the fact that "racialization is an ideological process, an historically specific one."[7]

In this regard, Stuart Hall has astutely noted the formative role of the ideological process in structuring hierarchical relations of group inequality. While acknowledging that historically specific "events, relations, [and] structures do have conditions of existence and real effects, outside the sphere of the discursive" he reminds us that "how things are represented and the 'machineries' and regimes of representation in a culture do play a *constitutive*, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation—subjectivity, identity, politics—a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life."[8]

In outlining the contours of this racialization process, I argue that there existed an "elective affinity" between the material interests of whites at different class levels and the racial ideologies that simultaneously structured the new Anglo-dominated society in California. Neither the material interests of class actors alone nor the ideological process pertaining to racial formation ultimately determined the way hierarchies of group inequality were constructed. Rather, it was the simultaneous interaction of both structural and ideological factors that ultimately shaped the trajectory of the historical experiences I explore.

Both the discursive dimensions of this racialization project in California and the material structuring of racialized group relationships there are best understood as unfolding within the context of the capitalist transformation of the region and the ensuing competition between various ethnic populations for group position within the social structure. For various sectors of the European-American population, located at different levels within the emergent class structure, racializing discourses and practices served as mechanisms to create, extend, or preserve their social position in the period during which white supremacy was being systematically institutionalized.

The particular success of European-American men in securing a privileged social status was typically exacted through contentious, racialized struggles with Mexicans, Native Americans, and Asian immigrants over land ownership or labor-market position. These competitive struggles for valued social resources, in turn, had direct consequences for the invidious discourses that inscribed racial difference and provided popular ideological support for California's white supremacist origins. The nineteenth-century transformation of Mexican California, therefore, provides a unique oppor-

tunity for exploring the complex process whereby newly racialized relationships are forged and contested historically. Far from corresponding in any simple way, California's emergent hierarchies of racial and class inequality were mutually constitutive in ways that only historical analysis can explain.[9]

THE VARIETIES OF RACIALIZED EXPERIENCES

I came initially to my reading of racial and ethnic relations in California assuming that the experience of each cultural group would be similar to that of other minorities subjected to white supremacy. However, I was repeatedly struck by major differences. Why, for example, was the indigenous Indian population treated so differently from the indigenous Mexican population after California's annexation in 1848? The California Indians endured unrelenting vilification as "uncivilized savages" and were subjected to violent decimation or ruthless segregation at the extreme margins of European-American society. The Mexican population, on the other hand, was ambiguously deemed "half civilized" and ambivalently integrated into an intermediate status *within* the new society. Yet most Mexicans were dark complexioned *mestizos* with significant Indian ancestry. Why did they escape the harsh fate which befell their full-blooded counterparts?

The answer to these questions, I learned, stemmed from the different social evaluations that European Americans made of the racial status of these two cultural groups. Spanish colonization of the Southwest had conferred upon Mexicans a "white" racial status, Christian ancestry, a romance language, European somatic features, and a formidable ruling elite that contested "Yankee" depredations. Less cultural distance existed between European-American immigrants and "half civilized" Mexicans than between whites and other racialized, non-European ethnic groups. Mexicans, particularly the Californio elite, were as a result generally perceived as worthy of at least partial integration and assimilation into the new social order.

After U.S. annexation of California, the property-owning Mexican *ranchero* class mounted a losing battle against European-American immigrants for political and economic control of California. Mexicans gamely combated Anglo encroachment into California, effectively utilizing the legal rights that U.S. citizenship extended to them. Land was the major point of contention between the upper-class rancheros and white immigrants in the nineteenth century. The "decline of the Californios" and an

increased immigration from Mexico at the turn of the century, however, would dramatically change the nature of Anglo-Mexican relations after 1900. Thereafter, this led to a reconfiguration of internal class divisions among Mexicans and altered the basis of group contention between Mexicans and European Americans from land to labor conflict. The nineteenth-century Mexican experience was in many ways unique and without parallel in the state.

No serious consideration, on the other hand, was ever given to integrating the California Indians into Anglo society, because of their "savage" culture and "heathen" traditions and rituals. Unlike Mexicans, they were categorically deemed nonwhite, politically disenfranchised, and ruthlessly segregated from European Americans in the state. Since they also occupied land that white settlers coveted, Indians in rural backwaters of the state were largely viewed as a troublesome obstacle in the path of Yankee progress and civilization. The California Indians became the metaphoric "devils of the forest" in the white mind, mere extensions of the wilderness Anglos needed to transform. As a consequence, the California state government launched a systematic policy of sanctioned decimation that resulted in the murder of as many as eight thousand Native Americans by white settlers and military units. Ultimately, Indians were either isolated on federal reservations in California's rural hinterland, succumbed to disease and malnutrition, or were violently eliminated through genocidal pogroms. Indians were consigned to marginal roles in the new political economy.

What was to become of the non-European immigrant population that made their way into California during this turbulent period? Would their fate parallel the experience of California's Mexican or Indian populations? Although other minorities migrating to California were also subordinated to European Americans, their histories differed significantly from the indigenous Mexican and Indian. The presence, or threatened presence, of blacks initially weighed heavily on Anglo-Americans after California's annexation. White immigrants intensely debated territorial issues such as slavery, free Negro migration, and the overall status of blacks. The black population was viewed largely as a symbolic threat to California's becoming a "free" state. Their arrival as slave laborers during the Gold Rush led segments within the white population, particularly miners, to virulently oppose their further immigration. Although these efforts ultimately were unsuccessful, blacks remained unwelcome because of their association with a slave system that was antithetical to the society being created in California. Consequently, blacks were relegated to the lower end of the

new class society. They were largely segregated from whites or sought refuge in the creation of autonomous black towns.[10]

Chinese and Japanese male immigrants became yet another concern for European Americans during the late nineteenth century. These laborers were a principal source of cheap manpower that Anglo developers and capitalists required to successfully develop the state's mining, railroad, and agricultural industries. However, the "heathen Chinee," and later the Japanese "Yellow Peril," attracted intense opposition from segments of the white working class and self-employed, petit bourgeois commodity producers. White immigrants in these classes railed against the fundamental threat that these Asian immigrants posed to their rights and entitlements as "free white persons" in the new state.

As a consequence, the Chinese were initially subjected to widespread hostility from the European-American population. They too were categorically deemed nonwhite and therefore ineligible for the same rights held by white citizens. Moreover, anti-Chinese hysteria was punctuated by widespread antipathy to their "pagan idolatry," peculiar customs and attire, non-European features, and purported threat to white women. This virulent ethnocentrism and sexual hysteria over the large Chinese male population facilitated the rapid enactment of discriminatory legislation designed specifically to curb their symbolic or real competition with European Americans at various class levels. This opposition by skilled white workers competing with Chinese laborers in various urban industries culminated in the federal enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. The Chinese immigrant population that arrived in California during the 1860s bears the ignoble distinction of being the first immigrant group to be prohibited from immigration to the United States on the basis of racial status.

Both the dispossession of Indians and Mexicans and the economic restrictions imposed on black, Chinese, and Japanese immigrant workers contributed directly to the realization of European-American class aspirations in the state. Each ethnic group was racialized in unique ways and came to represent a different kind of class-specific obstacle to the life chances that the white population in the territory claimed for themselves. This arrogant sense of entitlement by the European-American population helped propel the racial stigmatization and structural subordination of California's minority populations. In succession, each group bore the stigma of being defined as an inferior race and accorded a subordinate structural position within the new white supremacist society.[11]

Why these cultural groups followed such divergent courses, however, requires more systematic sociological explanation. Why did these histories

unfold in a context where race, rather than class, served as the key organizing principle of hierarchical relations of inequality? What were the specific symbolic and material factors that contributed to the economic mobility of certain groups and the disadvantaged status of others? What were the gendered dimensions of these class-specific, racialized histories? How, for instance, were relations between men and women of different cultural groups structurally mediated by the racialization process and the imposition of a new class system? What specific role did sexuality play in the structuring and imposition of racialized class relations among Californians during this period?

THE MASTER NARRATIVE OF "WHITE SUPREMACY"

The answer to these questions can be found in the way that race and the racialization process in California became the central organizing principle of group life during the state's formative period of development. Although California's ethnic populations were racialized in different ways, and the specific manifestations of racial and ethnic conflict were unique to California, at its most basic level it represented the extension of "white supremacy" into the new American Southwest. Historian George Fredrickson defines white supremacy as "the attitudes, ideologies, and politics associated with blatant forms of white or European dominance over 'nonwhite' populations."[12] The attempt to make race or color a basis for group position within the United States was defined initially during the colonial period when notions of "civility" and "savagery," as well as clear distinctions between "Christians" and "heathens," were used to inscribe racial difference and divide humankind into distinct categories of people. These notions provided the basis upon which European immigrants differentiated themselves from the diverse populations they encountered during their expansion into the Far West.

The cultural division of the world into different categories of humanity led white, European Americans in California to arrogantly privilege themselves as superior to non-European people of color. Although European Americans were situated unambiguously at the top of this social hierarchy, the racialized populations did not share a common structural position. Racialized relations in the state reverberated along a number of racial fault lines; they did not assume a simple binary form or erupt along one principal fault. The allocation of "group position" along these social strata was the outcome of both cultural and material considerations.

California Indians, for example, were singled out as the complete an-

tithesis of white Californians and were summarily relegated to the very bottom of the racial hierarchy. White immigrants believed that the indigenous population was the lowest level of humankind imaginable. The California Indians wore little clothing, were perceived as horrendously ugly and dirty, ate foods "Americans" deemed unpalatable, and practiced tribal rituals and ceremonies that were anathema to European Christian practices. In short, they were cast as the extreme incarnation of all that was both uncivilized and heathen.

Other cultural groups were judged less harshly and placed between the extreme ends of the racial hierarchy. Mexicans, for instance, were perceived as much closer culturally to European-American immigrants than to their Indian counterparts. The Mexicans' mixed European ancestry, romance language, Catholic religious practices, and familiar political-economic institutions elevated them above all other cultural groups in the white man's eyes. Moreover, the continued political influence of the powerful Californio elite during the latter nineteenth century further attenuated more virulent expressions of anti-Mexican sentiment and allowed Mexicans to challenge Anglo-domination for a time.

Black and Asian immigrants, finally, were culturally deemed to be somewhere between the "half civilized" Mexican and "uncivilized" Indian populations. Although antiblack animosity was widespread, blacks who settled in California were at least Christian, spoke English, and had—after years of enslavement—assimilated important European cultural patterns. Most white immigrants grudgingly acknowledged this, a fact that contributed directly to blacks not becoming the major target of racist initiatives in California that they were elsewhere in the country.

Americans perceived Asian immigrants, on the other hand, to have fewer redeeming qualities and group attributes. While they too were unambiguously deemed nonwhite, these immigrants carried the extra burden of being a "peculiar" people who spoke a completely unintelligible Eastern language, had "abhorrent" culinary tastes, dressed "strangely," and practiced a form of "pagan idolatry" clearly at odds with Judeo-Christian religious traditions. In cultural terms, Chinese and Japanese immigrants, therefore, were perceived initially as more like the uncivilized and heathen Indian population than any of the other cultural minorities in the state.

In sum, European-American immigrants in nineteenth-century California inherited and routinely relied on eurocentric cultural criteria to hierarchically evaluate and racialize the various cultural groups they contended with in California. This process clearly privileged and elevated the status of white immigrants in the social structure and placed below them, in

descending order, the Mexican, black, Asian, and Indian populations. This racialization process and conferral of group position in the state had important social consequences for the life chances of all racial and ethnic groups during the last half of the nineteenth century. It was not until the early decades of the twentieth century that this hierarchy of group position underwent major reconfiguration.

RACIALIZATION AND THE CONTESTATION OF RACIAL STATUS

It has become axiomatic in sociological research to view racial categories as sociohistorical constructs whose meanings vary widely over time and space. How people are defined as "white" or "nonwhite" is never a self-evident process. Because race is fundamentally a socially conferred status whose anthropological and biological underpinnings are dubious at best, how and where racial lines are drawn is an open question and the possibility for contestation always exists. Outcomes of struggles to define different ethnic groups in racial terms have been largely contingent on the collective power of the groups involved. Lacking any clear "objective" criteria other than phenotype and ancestry, conflict over the racial designation of groups in California devolved into questions over which group had enough power and influence to enact its interests. Consequently, the racial formation process that codified racial status in California was the result of political struggles contested at the state level.

One key aspect of the racial formation process in California was the differential racialization of the various cultural groups that settled within this geographical region. The very way in which racial lines were defined became an object of intense political struggle. Even before the granting of statehood in 1850, adjudicating the racial status of the indigenous Mexican and Indian population in the territory assumed crucial importance. California's State Constitutional Convention of 1849 fiercely debated how these racial lines were to be drawn and, consequently, who would and would not be extended the franchise and other important citizenship rights. In the final analysis, Mexicans were socially defined as "white" and extended citizenship while the California Indians, like Indians elsewhere, were deemed "nonwhite" and ineligible for citizenship. This question was crucial for groups on both sides of the racial divide, for the way these lines were construed structurally advantaged or disadvantaged collectivities competing for position in the state's new class structure.

The complexities of the racialization process in California between 1850

and 1900 are also vividly reflected in the case of Chinese immigrants. Unable to transcend the traditional binary racial categories utilized in the early nineteenth century, the 1854 case of *People v. Hall* decreed that the Chinese were generically "Indians" and, therefore, nonwhite. Despite this curious determination, there is evidence that some Chinese immigrants were mistakenly granted U.S. citizenship between 1850 and 1882. The naturalization court apparently mistook them for "free white persons."[13] The 1893 case of *Saito v. U.S.* ruled that Japanese immigrants were, like the Chinese, also nonwhite (the Japanese, however, were deemed "Mongolian" instead of "Indian") and, consequently, were equally ineligible for citizenship. There remained some ambiguity as to the status of some Japanese and it is estimated that at least 420 Japanese immigrants were granted citizenship before 1910. Federal restrictions placed on Japanese immigration after that date, plus the unequivocal ruling in *Ozawa v. U.S.* in 1932 legally confirmed the popular belief that the Japanese were, in fact, "aliens ineligible for citizenship."[14]

The social motivation of the political undertaking conferring racial status continued to be apparent in early-twentieth-century California in the case of immigrants from Armenia and India. In 1909, for example, federal authorities classified Armenians as "Asiatics" and consequently denied them naturalized citizenship. The *Halladjian* decision ruled shortly afterwards, however, that Armenian immigrants were indeed Caucasian due to their history, ancestry, and physical appearance.[15] This proved fortuitous for the Armenians as their racial status exempted them from the Alien Land Laws of 1913 and 1920 which prohibited the ownership and lease of California farm land by "aliens ineligible for citizenship," a euphemism for Japanese immigrants.

Another curious turn in American racial thinking occurred in the case of Asian Indians. In the 1910 *U.S. v. Balsara* and 1913 *Ajkoy Kumar Mazumdar* decisions, the federal courts held that Asian Indians were Caucasians and entitled to the same rights as "free white persons" to become naturalized citizens. A few years later, however, in the 1923 case of *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, Asian Indians were suddenly denied the right to naturalized citizenship because they were not "white" according to the "understanding of the common man" and because they were not of northern or western European stock.[16] A year after the *Thind* decision, Congress enacted the 1924 Immigration Act, which effectively denied immigration quotas to people ineligible for citizenship, namely all nonwhites.

The racialization of various non-European groups during the last half of the nineteenth century also facilitated the construction of social boundaries around the white population. Michael Omi and Howard Winant have argued that the racial categorization of European Americans as "white" was forged at the national level during this period. Despite nativistic attempts to classify Southern Europeans, the Irish, and Jews as "nonwhite," these efforts were "effectively curbed by the institutionalization of a racial order that drew the color line *around* rather than *within*, Europe."[17]

The influx into California of a diverse European-American population, both foreign and native born, created a process in which ethnic differences among these groups was overshadowed by the construction of a collective racial designation as "white." European Americans drawn into competition and conflict with the nonwhite populations repeatedly referred to themselves in racial terms, as "white," rather than primarily defining themselves as Irish, French, English, German, or any other ethnicity. While these ethnic designations may have had importance among European Americans themselves, such identities were subsumed by the racialization process. White supremacist practices, in other words, forged a collective identity among European Americans in the state that crystallized around their racial status as a "white population."

In this regard, Omi and Winant have perceptively argued that

> by stopping short of racializing immigrants from Europe after the Civil War, and by subsequently allowing their assimilation, the American racial order was reconstituted in the wake of the tremendous challenge placed before it by the abolition of slavery. With the end of Reconstruction in 1877, an effective program for limiting the emergent class struggles of the later nineteenth century was forged: the definition of the working class in *racial terms*—as 'white.' This was not accomplished by any legislative decree or capitalist maneuvering to divide the working class, but rather by workers themselves. Many of them were recent immigrants, who organized on racial lines as much as on traditionally defined class lines. . . . Thus the very political organization of the working class was in important ways a racial project. The legacy of racial conflicts and arrangements shaped the definition of interests and in turn led to the consolidation of institutionalized patterns (e.g. segregated unions, dual labor markets, exclusionary legislation) which perpetuated the color line *within* the working class.[18]

Although class conflict within the white population had important consequences for the racial antagonism that flared in nineteenth-century California, it did not overshadow or functionally structure the way racial lines were drawn. The nineteenth-century transformation in local class structure was dependent upon the prior question of who was to be granted privileged access to the class structure. This, I will argue, was primarily a racial issue. Contrary to Karl Marx's expectation at the time, the salience of racial

status did not diminish in the face of the expanded nineteenth-century proletarianization of the working class and polarization of class forces. Although class divisions and conflict were manifested openly, these lines were not the primary stratification dividing California's diverse population. The tremendous immigration of European and non-European immigrants into the state after annexation resulted in a hierarchy of group inequality in which race, not class, became the central stratifying variable. The primary racial division of Californians into white and nonwhite categories cut at right angles across the newly emergent class lines that divided capitalists, petit bourgeois commodity producers, and an increasingly segmented working class composed of free wage laborers and individuals held in precapitalist relations of production.

THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN AND ENTITLEMENT IN CALIFORNIA

The imposition of a new racial order and attendant class structure in nineteenth-century California was greatly facilitated by popular ideologies that gave voice to the superordinate political and economic position of European Americans in the state. Two powerful ideas reflecting this white supremacist sentiment were fervently embraced by European-American men during the United States' westward expansion: "Manifest Destiny" and the "free labor ideology."

The United States' usurpation of Mexican territory laid the basis for rapidly transforming what would become the American Southwest along new sociocultural, political, and economic lines. This mission became the "white man's burden"—to extend their dominion over all obstacles placed in their path and to bring civilization and Christianity to the uncivilized heathens they encountered. During this period white Americans widely accepted the idea of populating all of the North American continent with a homogeneous white population. They believed it was their providential destiny to expand to the Pacific coast, bringing with them their superior political institutions, notions of progress and democracy, and their own economic system of production. Public support for extending national boundaries found fertile ground in this tumultuous period of expansion and reached its most explicit political expression in the notion of Manifest Destiny.

During the mid-nineteenth century, white supremacist practices also became intertwined inextricably with economic doctrines concerning the role of "free labor." As historian Eric Foner has shown, a free-labor

ideology was widely embraced by European Americans at all class levels. White men in particular enthusiastically supported the vision of the social world this ideology promoted: an expanding capitalist society based on free wage labor. Those fervently advocating free-labor doctrines accepted the right to private property and economic individualism and fervently believed that free labor created all value. Moreover, they maintained that everyone could aspire to and achieve economic independence in a free society and that "today's laborer would be tomorrow's capitalist."[19]

The free labor ideology associated with the Republican Party during the mid-nineteenth century helped crystallize the beliefs of European-American men about their entitlement to privileged economic mobility in the new territories. It also specifically colored the way Anglo Californians initially assessed the various minority groups they competed with for position in the state's new class structure. Free-labor adherents believed that social mobility and economic independence were only achievable in a capitalist society unthreatened by nonwhite populations and the degrading labor systems associated with them. European Americans repeatedly associated nonwhite people with various unfree labor systems that ostensibly threatened their superordinate social standing and class prerogatives in California.

Like Manifest Destiny, the underlying tenets of the free-labor ideology squarely affirmed the superior position of European-American men and helped delineate the subordinate status that people of color would occupy in the Far West.[20] As a consequence, racial lines in California quickly became linked with class divisions in unexpected and complicated ways. Outward struggles over access and group position within the class system were given concrete form and substance by the underlying racialized struggle among its chief protagonists.

The powerful impact of white supremacist notions like Manifest Destiny and the free-labor ideology had important material consequences for these contesting groups. The competition for access to valued social resources did not result, however, in purely symmetrical hierarchies based on class and race. Far from simply paralleling each other, California's new class hierarchy and racial order were mutually constitutive and intersected in complex and shifting ways that were historically contingent.

How groups were accorded access to the ownership of productive property and proletarianized within the working class was not a random selection process impervious to popular perceptions of racial differences. Who gained access to land, owned businesses, became skilled workers, and, more generally, was subjectively placed in either a "free" wage-labor

market or an "unfree" labor system was fundamentally determined on the basis of race. Access to every level of the capitalist system of production introduced in nineteenth-century California was largely determined by this status. Although this capitalist economy became a highly competitive system by the late nineteenth century, it remained an institution that limited social mobility to white, European-American men.

White Californians repeatedly claimed primary access to privileged positions within the system of production and effectively thwarted attempts by the nonwhite population to compete with them on an equal footing. Nineteenth-century legislation enacted in the interest and at the behest of European Americans cemented the placement of California's nonwhite minorities in various unfree labor situations (such as slavery, indentured servitude, contracted labor, etc.) or guaranteed their exclusion altogether from certain skilled occupations and self-employment opportunities. European Americans jealously sought to protect their privileged group position in California through the use of discriminatory social closures that impeded equal access to social mobility. Racial status clearly shaped each group's life chances and served as the primary basis for determining whether one was granted access to different strata within the new class structure.

The judicial decisions that formally conferred racial status in nineteenth-century California, therefore, had important consequences for the historical trajectories of each of these groups in California. As each of these "nonwhite" groups entered into competition with European Americans at different class levels after 1850, a series of protracted conflicts erupted along a number of racial fault lines. This was registered in white opposition to black, Chinese, and Sonoran miners in the 1850s; to Chinese workers in urban industries in the 1870s and 1880s; and to Japanese small farmers at the turn of the century. Racial enmity and bitter economic struggle with white competitors punctuated minority history in California during the nineteenth century. White antipathy crystallized most intensely in the case of Native Americans, Mexicans, Chinese, and, to a lesser extent, African-American and Japanese immigrants.

There emerged during this period a strong symbolic association between different minority groups, on the one hand, and various precapitalist economic formations on the other. White antipathy toward Mexicans, Native Americans, and Chinese and Japanese immigrants was typically couched within the rubric of this "free white labor"/"unfree nonwhite labor" dichotomy: Mexicans became inimically associated with the "unproductive," semi-feudal rancho economy that European Americans rapidly undermined after statehood; Indians with a "primitive" communal mode of existence that white settlers ruthlessly eradicated through violence and forced segregation; and Asian immigrants with a "degraded" unfree labor system unfairly competing with and fettering white labor. The class-specific nature of contention between these racialized groups and the European-American populations were all cast in terms of these symbolic associations.

White economic mobility and dominance in California required both the subordination of minority populations and the eradication of the precapitalist systems of production associated with them. Anglo entitlement to California's bounty could only be actualized when the symbolic and material threat these minority populations posed was effectively neutralized or overcome. The chapters that follow examine the major features of these historical contestations and specifically explore the sociological factors that shaped the divergent courses of the Mexican, Indian, and Asian immigrant experiences in nineteenth-century Anglo California.

Chapter 1 places the racial contestation in nineteenth-century California in historical-sociological perspective by situating it within the broader backdrop of racial and ethnic relations in the United States. It does so by foregrounding the centrality of "white supremacy" and illustrating how "Manifest Destiny" and "free labor" sentiments influenced the trajectory of racial and class conflict in California after U.S. annexation. These racializing ideologies provided the lens through which the new cultural groups European Americans encountered in California were racially stigmatized and structurally subordinated.

The central body of this study is composed of six historical-sociological essays that assess the major features of the Mexican, Native American, and Asian immigrant experiences. Part 1 focuses on the class-specific nature of the Mexican encounter with European Americans in the new state. Chapter 2 examines, on a statewide basis, the various factors that contributed to the divergent experiences of the Mexican ranchero and working classes. Chapter 3 provides a detailed case study of how this process unfolded in one particular Southern California county. It also provides a window into the complex interplay of class and racial forces that led to the differential placement of Mexicans, Native Americans, and Asians in the new social structure.

Part 2 is devoted to a broad-ranging analysis of the nineteenth-century experience of the California Indians. Chapter 4 assesses the cultural factors and racial discourses used to stigmatize Indians and justify their decimation through state-initiated pogroms. Chapter 5 analyzes factors that con-

tributed to Indians playing a marginal role in the new capitalist economy introduced in California after 1848. It also chronicles the dismal failure of the federal government's policy of forcefully relocating thousands of California Indians onto segregated reservations.

Part 3 assesses the racialized class conflict between European-American working class and Chinese and Japanese immigrants in nineteenth-century California. Chapter 6 surveys the bitter, statewide clash between Chinese workers and European-American entrepreneurs and laborers. Chapter 7 provides a detailed, county-level analysis of the way anti-Chinese sentiment was displaced onto Japanese immigrants at the turn of the century. It does so through a careful examination of the class forces and racial issues that culminated in the first successful, minority-led strike against powerful agribusiness interests in California—the Oxnard Sugar Beet Workers' Strike of 1903.

The epilogue summarizes the major findings of this study and explores their implications for our broader understanding of the complex interplay between class, race, and ethnicity in the United States and for contemporary racial politics. It also briefly raises the autobiographical issues that were so central to the initial development of this comparative historical study.

CHAPTER ONE

"We Desire Only a White Population in California"

The Transformation of Mexican California in Historical-Sociological Perspective

In his comparative study *White Supremacy*, historian George Fredrickson astutely observes that "race relations are not so much a fixed pattern as a changing set of relationships that can only be understood within a broader historical context that is itself constantly evolving and thus altering the terms under which whites and nonwhites interact."[1] California's racial and ethnic patterns give ample support to this understanding of race relations in the United States, and so I want to begin by characterizing both the "historical context" within which California's racialization process evolved as well as the "terms under which white and nonwhite interact[ed]." This requires situating California's various racial histories within the broader history of race relations in the United States and clarifying the underlying social dynamics of the new state. In so doing, I want to argue that California's racial patterns were not monolithic but contained multiple racial histories that were unique in their own terms while also sharing elements with the racial formation process elsewhere in the United States.

For analytical clarity on these matters it is useful to turn to the important early work by sociologist Herbert Blumer. Writing in a period when sociological analysis focused attention on race prejudice as an irrational manifestation of individual pathologies, Blumer recognized that race relations were fundamentally organized at the group level, through a "collective process by which a racial group comes to define and redefine another racial group."[2] He suggested that an analysis of racial matters "should start with a clear recognition that it is an historical product. It is set