Racial Fault Lines

The Historical Origins of
White Supremacy in California

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In memory of my father, with love, for my mother, with pride, for David and Miguel, and, with indebtedness, for Clementina.
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.

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.

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. 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. 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. 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.” 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.”

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.”

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-
unity 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 "Yank" 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 rancho 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.\textsuperscript{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 Chinese," 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.\textsuperscript{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 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?

\textbf{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."\textsuperscript{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-
thesis 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 disadvantaged 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 bounda-
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.”

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. 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. Those who gained access to land, owned businesses, became skilled workers, and, more generally, was subjectively placed in either a “free” wage-labor
marker 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 inextricably associated with the “unproductive,” semi-feudal rancho economy that European Americans rapi-
ttributed 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 ant-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.

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." 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." He suggested that an analysis of racial matters "should start with a clear recognition that it is an historical product. It is set
originally by conditions of initial contact. Prestige, power, possession of skill, numbers, original self-concepts, aims, designs and opportunities are a few factors that may fashion the original sense of group position. Subsequent experience in the relation of the two racial groups, especially in the area of claims, opportunities and advantages, may mold the sense of group position in diverse ways.\textsuperscript{22}

Blumer appreciated the complex relationship between the stigmatization of social groups on the basis of physical characteristics and ancestry and the struggle for "group position" among racial and ethnic populations in this country. In fact, "the sense of social position emerging from this collective process ... provides the basis of race prejudice" and crystallizes "four basic types of feelings" among the superordinate racial group: "(1) a feeling of superiority, (2) a feeling that the subordinate group is intrinsically different and alien, (3) a feeling of proprietary claim to certain areas of privilege and advantage, and (4) a fear and suspicion that the subordinate race harbors designs on the prerogatives of the dominant race."\textsuperscript{23}

In drawing our attention to the relationship between racial ideology and social structure, Blumer made central "the sense of proprietary claim" of the dominant racial group in the structuring of racialized relationships among these ethnic populations. This sense of entitlement, according to Blumer, rested primarily on "either exclusive or prior rights in many important areas of life. The range of such exclusive or prior claims may be wide, covering the ownership of property such as choice lands and sites; the right to certain jobs, occupations, or professions; the claim to certain kinds of industry or lines of business; the claim to certain positions of control and decision-making as in government and law."\textsuperscript{24}

Frank Parkin's insightful work in social stratification theory has also shown how these sentiments of superiority and entitlement to valued social rewards are structured historically. Working in the Weberian tradition, Parkin has argued that stunts monopolies, or "social closures," have historically served as institutional mechanisms that structure and reproduce racial and ethnic hierarchies in this country. According to Parkin, these closures refer to "the process whereby social collectivities seek to maximize rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles.... This monopolization is directed against competitors who share some positive or negative characteristic; its purpose is always the closure of social and economic opportunities to outsiders."\textsuperscript{25} At their most basic sociological level, then, these closures represent attempts by one group of people to secure for themselves a privileged position in the social structure at the expense of stigmatized and subordinated social groups.

Since they typically entail the creation of a group of legally defined inferiors, such actions represent the use of power in a downward direction and "can be thought of as different means of mobilizing power for the purpose of engaging in a distributive struggle" over valued social rewards.\textsuperscript{26}

These important sociological principles allow us to view the racialization process in nineteenth-century California, and the United States more generally, as a contestation over privileged access to either productive property (i.e., physical capital such as land or factories) or positions in a highly stratified labor market. Consequently, the broad historical context in which these racial lines were drawn and class-specific relationships constituted provides the main sociological framework informing this study.

**Racialization and White Supremacy in Historical Perspective**

I have suggested that the racialization process that evolved in nineteenth-century California was primarily an extension into the new territory of what Fredrickson has characterized as "white supremacy": the "attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of white or European dominance over 'nonwhite' populations... making invidious distinctions of a socially crucial kind that are based primarily, if not exclusively, on physical characteristics and ancestry. In its fully developed form, white supremacy means 'color bars,' 'racial segregation,' and the restriction of meaningful citizenship rights to a privileged group characterized by its light pigmentation."\textsuperscript{27}

Furthermore, Fredrickson argues that this systematic and self-conscious attempt to make race or color a basis for group position within American society was initially defined during the colonial period and the years following Independence.\textsuperscript{28} He contends that such action reflects "a long and often violent struggle for territorial supremacy between white invaders and indigenous people" that was part and parcel of the global European colonial expansion inaugurated during the "Age of Discovery."\textsuperscript{29} Starting with the small colonial settlements of the seventeenth century, Anglo-Saxon colonists established dominion over North America by successfully appropriating Indian communal land and transforming it into private property within an emergent capitalist economy. According to Fredrickson, "Land hunger and territorial ambition gave whites a practical incentive to differentiate between the basic rights and privileges they claimed for themselves and what they considered to be just treatment for the 'savages' who stood
in their path, and in the end they mustered the power to impose their will."

The white colonists contesting the native peoples of North America for control of coveted land brought with them well-developed assumptions about themselves and the people they encountered. As Fredrickson has shown, fundamental to these assumptions were the differentiations between Christians and heathens and between civil and savage peoples. These eurocentric binary distinctions provided the cultural standard by which European settlers initially racialized the "nonwhite" black and Indian populations they confronted in America and were later used to differentiate the new cultural groups European Americans encountered during their mid-nineteenth-century expansion into the Southwest.

According to Fredrickson, the notion of "heathenism" initially "reflected the religious militancy nurtured by the long and bitter struggle for supremacy in the Mediterranean between Christian and Islamic civilizations. . . . In the fifteenth century, when Spain and Portugal were in the vanguard of Christian resistance to Islamic power, the Pope authorized the enslavement and seizures of lands and property of 'all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and all other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed.' This harsh and unrelenting attitude . . . was carried by the Spanish and Portuguese empire-builders of the sixteenth century to the New World and parts of Africa and Southeast Asia." As a consequence, through the notion of heathenism religion became pivotal in socially differentiating the diverse populations that encountered one another in the course of European colonial expansion.

What typically differentiated "civilized" human beings from "savages" in the European mind was whether or not "they practiced sedentary agriculture, had political forms that Europeans recognized as regular governments, and lived to some extent in urban concentrations." To these three factors we might add difference in the social organization of kinship, gender, and sexuality. Fredrickson persuasively argues in White Supremacy that Europeans widely believed that civility was the original state of mankind and that "after the dispersal of the progeny of Noah after the flood some branches of the human race lost their awareness of God and degenerated into an uncivilized state. Sometimes this descent into barbarism and savagery was linked directly to the Biblical curse of Ham, which would later be used to justify African slavery." Fredrickson further reminds us that Europeans drew upon classical thought when making their assessments of the newly encountered peoples. Although Aristotle had maintained that even barbarians were social beings, Europeans had believed since the Middle Ages that some men were so wild and uncouth that they wandered in the forests and had no society of any kind. This category of ultra-barbarians or pure savages, who allegedly lived more like beasts than men, seemed to many Europeans of the sixteenth and seventeenth century appropriate for peoples like . . . the North American, Caribbean, and Brazilian Indians, who were commonly thought to be wilderness nomads utterly devoid of any religion or culture.

These were the lines around which Europeans since the Renaissance and Reformation distinguished themselves from the diverse populations they encountered during the Age of Discovery. Notions of civility and savagery and clear distinctions between Christians and heathens provided the ideological basis for a social order that stigmatized the Indian population initially encountered in New England as well as the West Africans imported as slaves. Fredrickson argues, however, that these categories "were not yet racist in the nineteenth-century sense of the term because they were not based on an explicit doctrine of genetic or biological inferiority; but they could provide an equivalent basis for considering some categories of human beings inferior to others in ways that made it legitimate to treat them differently from Europeans."

Beginning in the colonial period, America's English settlers drew upon these value-laden notions to craft a collective identity based upon the categories English, Christian, free, and, above all, white, and specifically defined in opposition to another, nonwhite category of people, initially Native Americans and Africans. According to Winthrop Jordan's study of this period, "White Over Black:

When referring to the Indians the English colonists either used the proper name or called them savages, a term which reflected primarily their view of Indians as uncivilized . . . When they had reference to Indians the colonists occasionally spoke of themselves as Christians, but after the early years almost always as English.

In significant contrast, the colonists referred to Negroes and in the eighteenth century to blacks and to Africans, but almost never to Negro heathens or pagans or savages. Most suggestive of all, there seems to have been something of a shift during the seventeenth century in the terminology Englishmen in the colonies applied to themselves. From the initially most common term Christian, at mid-century there was a marked drift toward English and free. After about 1680, taking the colonies as a whole, a new term appeared—white."

In Iron Cages, his comparative study of race relations in the nineteenth century, historian Ronald Takaki has proposed that these opposing identities increasingly equated European Americans with the mind and non-
whites with the body. All that was rational, civilized, and spiritually pure was set off from that which was irrational, uncivilized, and tied to the body. Anglo-Saxon men became civilized republican men of virtue, devoting their lives to hard work, frugality, sobriety, and the mastery of both their passions and their lives. The nonwhite, in contrast, became the foil for the lofty self-image that white men accorded themselves. They were associated with qualities such as filth or dirtiness, impurity, vice, intoxication, and the lascivious indulgence of carnal "instincts." European Americans projected onto people of color all the qualities of depravity that they had difficulty repressing in themselves. 29

White Americans also believed that they needed to control these evil qualities if they were to prosper economically and achieve salvation. In this context, labor assumed a spiritual dimension; belief in the dignity of labor was pervasive in colonial America and found its clearest expression in the Protestant Ethic, which held that all persons had a divinely appointed calling that expressed their service to God on earth. It was also a way of ascertaining whether they were among those predestined to enter heaven. Individual economic advancement in this world was regarded as a Christian duty to which all aspired. Success in one's calling necessitated strict self-discipline; to this end, the elect were guided by Christian virtues such as honesty, frugality, diligence, punctuality, sobriety, and prudence. There was no Christian value in poverty; in fact, poverty was disdained as a sign of God's disfavor. It was seen as a product of individual shortcomings and vices such as laziness, drunkenness, or extravagance. 30

The initial distinctions Europeans made between themselves and nonwhites had significance for the social organization of the colonial economy. In addition to assuming a divinely appointed, spiritual dimension, individuals' economic positions generally reflected their racial status as well. Access to various economic opportunities was cast largely in racial terms. Questions of who owned property, became property, and entered "free" and "unfree" labor markets were answered in racial terms. These associations were not simply the product of irrational prejudices or ethnic chauvinisms: they had deep material moorings in the social organization of economic life.

The English colonial population, for instance, institutionalized labor status distinctions among themselves through the introduction of indentured servitude. As many as one-half to two-thirds of Anglo-Saxons who emigrated during the colonial period came as indentured servants. In return for passage to America they provided upward of seven years of unremunerated labor. 31 Indentured servants, however, were insufficient in number to meet labor needs and were expensive to retain; moreover, they often negotiated successfully for favorable terms and freely entered the wage labor force upon completion of contractual obligations. Because of these complications, chattel slavery ultimately proved more expedient and profitable than indentured servitude. Economic advantage intersected with racial prejudice to forge the equation associating whites with free and nonwhites with unfree labor. The temporary subordinate labor status of Anglo-Saxon indentured servants and the permanent, inheritable slave status of blacks put these differences into broad relief. Slavery economically subordinated this nation's black population to Anglo-Americans, and their second-class social and political status structurally ensured that blacks could not compete effectively with Anglo-Americans at any level of the social structure.

Unlike blacks, the Indians of North America generally were not seen as a useful laboring population worthy of even a subordinate place in the Anglo-Americans' economy. Although attempts were made during the colonial period to enslave Indians, they proved unsuccessful, because of Indian susceptibility to European-American diseases, their sparse population in the colonial region, their ability to effectively flee enslavement and exact reprisals, and their unwillingness to adapt to the system of production that white Americans had introduced. 32 As a result, in Anglo conceptions of progress, Indians were generally seen as obstacles to civilization. They became extensions of the untamed territory Europeans confronted in America. The traditional hunting and gathering of Indian subsistence, as well as their social-cultural world, were anathema to the society whites were creating in America. Indians remained "savages" and "heathens" in the eyes of the colonial population.

In The Ethnic Myth, sociologist Stephen Steinberg has noted that at its inception the United States was remarkably homogeneous both ethnically and religiously. He reminds us that by Independence the colonial population was overwhelmingly white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant and that in 1790 over three-quarters of the U.S. population had origins in the English-speaking states of the British Isles; 61 percent were of British descent and another 17 percent of Scotch and Irish extraction. A smaller number of Germans, Dutch, and Swedish settlers and a minute proportion of other nationalities accounted for the remaining population. Despite the initial presence of a few Jews and Catholics, nearly 99 percent of the colonial population was Protestant. 33

According to one historian, by the late 1840s most Americans either thought of themselves as the descendants of English immigrants (bound
together by a common culture and a common language) or as part of the superior, "American" race drawn from the very best stock of western and northern Europe. The distinctive cultural values and world view of this population provided the normative standards by which other groups were later judged. The language and dominant customs of America were English, and all non-English groups immigrating to the United States were expected to conform fully to English culture.

Moreover, at a time when its population was still relatively homogeneous, the new nation decreed that only whites were eligible for U.S. citizenship and access to the opportunities generated by economic development. Neither African Americans nor Native Americans were accorded the legal rights and social status of free white men. The explicitness of this color line was captured clearly in one of the first congressional statutes enacted after Independence. Debates over naturalization led to enactment of the Naturalization Act of 1790, which stipulated that only "free white persons" were eligible for citizenship and the rights held by white men in the country. Although this statute imposed restrictions on immigration, its supporters did not want to discourage the immigration of white Europeans. In this regard, Steinberg observes that "long before the onset of mass immigration, there was a deeply rooted consciousness of the nation's Anglo-Saxon and Protestant origins. From the beginning, the nation's political institutions, culture, and people all had an unmistakably English cast, and despite denominational differences, Protestantism was the near-universal creed. The early stirring of nativism clearly signaled the fact that however much the nation might tolerate foreigners in its midst, it was determined to protect its Anglo-Saxon and Protestant legacy." The symbolic significance of this legislation cannot be overstated. Eligibility for citizenship was not meaningfully altered until one hundred and sixty-two years after this statute's enactment, when the Walter-McCarran Act of 1952 eliminated the racial basis for United States naturalization.

The importance of racial status to the colonial and post-Independence economy laid the foundation for its continued centrality during the period of widespread immigration to the United States in the nineteenth century. Rapid economic development and industrialization during this period provided the structural foundations upon which further economic and social opportunities were systematically granted or denied on the basis of race. In this regard, Robert Blauner has argued in *Racial Oppression in America* that white European immigrants historically benefited from a labor market organized along racial and ethnic lines. In addition to advantages gained from voluntary immigration, white immigrants experienced more rapid social and economic mobility due to "the association of free labor with people of white European stock and the association of unfree labor with non-Western people of color." This overriding racial labor principle placed white immigrants in the free, wage-labor sector of the economy while relegating nonwhites to precapitalist labor systems. It had tremendous implications for the initial employment opportunities accorded immigrant groups and also for their collective movement up the occupational hierarchy. From the beginning, European immigrants had a foothold in the most dynamic centers of the economy and rose successfully to semiskilled and skilled positions. Racial minorities, on the other hand, were largely denied access to the industrial jobs that enabled millions of white immigrants to attain a modicum of social and economic mobility.

Thus, the racialization process profoundly affected the social positions immigrants assumed upon entering this country. Beginning in the colonial period and continuing after Independence, race and ethnicity served as the basis upon which access to particular positions in the class structure was largely determined. This was seen most clearly in the Southern slave economy but was also discernible in the capitalist sectors of the Northeast and West. The social organization of the economy mediated the broad allocation of groups into various class positions. This gave the nation's class structure in many regions a decidedly racial and ethnic form—European ethnic groups being disproportionately placed at the upper end of the class system and racial minorities at the bottom.

Historically, differential access to valued social rewards have shaped the course of ethnic and race relations in the United States. Their unequal extension to white and nonwhite groups via social closures led to divergent mobility routes and different "life chances" for these groups. Not every ethnic population that entered into competition with whites equally threatened their mobility aspirations, nor were they equally granted access to important institutional spheres. It is here that each group's collective attributes (such as their internal class stratification, gender composition, population demographics, literacy rates, occupational skills, employment background, physical differences from the white population, collective association with precapitalist labor systems, and explicit cultural factors such as values, religion, and ethnic traditions) were critically important.

This complex of factors explicitly delineated these groups in racial terms and historically conditioned their mobility opportunities and potential conflict with the white population.

These collective attributes primarily served as benchmarks whereby the
white population further differentiated itself from minorities. These perceived differences became the basis for group stigmatization that ultimately fueled racial antagonisms. They also were drawn upon to justify the enactment of discriminatory legislation designed to impede minority economic competition with European Americans. In sum, a complex matrix of attributes have at every historical moment shaped the broad contours of white competition and conflict with the racialized population in the United States. Let us now turn to how this drama unfolded in California after it passed from Mexican control to that of the United States in 1848.

THE PEOPLING OF ANGLO CALIFORNIA, 1848–1900

The United States' annexation of California and the momentous discovery of gold in 1848 sparked the rapid immigration of a diverse population into the newly acquired territory. It transformed California from a sparsely populated Mexican frontier department to a new state in which European-American immigrants quickly provided the mainstay of its population. Population demographers have noted that as late as 1848 the total non-Indian population in California was estimated at approximately fifteen thousand, or scarcely one person to every ten square miles. The majority of these individuals were Mexican Californians, followed by a few thousand European Americans, who had settled in the territory prior to U.S. annexation, and a scattering of individuals from other parts of the world. Although estimates vary considerably, California's Indian population in 1850 is generally thought to have numbered approximately 100,000 men, women, and children.

Between 1848 and 1870, however, the state's population rose to well over half a million people. The vast majority of the new inhabitants who settled in the state were young and male. According to historical demographer Doris Marion Wright, "In 1850, for example, 73 percent of the residents in the state were between the ages of 20 and 40, and 92 percent of them were males. . . . When the census was taken in 1860 the number of females was still less than 30 percent of the total population of the state, and ten years later it had increased to only 37 percent." Aside from this stark gender imbalance, another important demographic feature of the new state's early population was the significant presence of a foreign-born stock. In 1850, the foreign-born population already comprised 24 percent of the state's total population. By 1860 the percentage rose to 39 percent and declined slightly ten years later to 37 percent. Further, the principal source of the foreign-born population in California shifted dramatically during this early period. In 1850, for example, Mexico provided the single largest segment of the foreign-born population (6,454 of 22,338 foreign-born individuals enumerated on the census, as will be discussed in chapter 3; many of the foreign-born Mexican population were Sonoran miners who typically returned to Mexico after the gold rush). The Mexican-born population was followed by European immigrants from England (3,050), Germany (2,926), Ireland (2,452), and France (1,546). By 1860, China had become the source of the largest foreign-born population in the state (34,935 of 146,528 foreign-born individuals). Chinese immigrants were followed numerically by Irish (33,147), German (21,646), English (12,227), and Mexican-born (9,150) immigrants. Ten years later, Chinese immigrants remained the single largest foreign-born population in the state, followed by individuals from the British Isles, Germany, France, and Mexico.

The class background of the European-born population was apparently not as diverse as one might have expected. The Irish immigrants who came to California, for example, had been displaced largely by the introduction of labor-saving devices in the spinning and weaving trades and by the fluctuations in Ireland's agriculture industry. According to Wright, they were "not of the poorest classes but were persons who could get together enough money to pay for their passage." Speaking the same language and sharing the same cultural heritage as Anglo-Americans made Irish immigrants more assimilable than other European and non-European immigrants emigrating at the time.

California's German and French immigrants were also drawn from occupational strata in their native lands that in California were still in the nascent stages of development. Many German immigrants, for example, were from farming backgrounds and were more likely to venture into this industry than to seek their fortunes in the gold mines. They were described in one state report as "mostly all tillers of the soil, and invariably bring money with them to purchase land." Their occupational backgrounds facilitated their dominance in the grape industry and the grocery business, and their overrepresentation as mechanics and skilled laborers. Moreover, being northern European, these immigrants learned English quickly and more readily adapted to the pace of the new Anglo-dominated society.

Similarly, the French immigrants who settled in the state were not generally impoverished or drawn from the peasant class. Instead, the "majority of those who arrived in California from France . . . were largely from the middle class; many of them were skilled mechanics, while others were drawn from the professions. Some came hoping to establish commercial
houses, but most of them, especially during the extensive emigration of the early years, expected to dig for gold. ... \(\text{T}hree\) came confident that the new life would be better than the old.\(^{28}\) Unlike German or Irish immigrants, however, the French were not as rapidly assimilated into the Anglo-American population in California. According to one contemporary, the French were described as adhering "much to their own habits and society, and seem stoutly determined against acquiring the English tongue."\(^{29}\)

The largest segment of California's new population in 1870, however, were native-born Americans: immigrants drawn from various regions of the country and persons born in the state. Unfortunately, Wright has little to say about the class background of this population. She does document, however, their regional origins and notes that they comprised 76 percent of the total state population in 1850, 61 percent in 1860, and 63 percent in 1870. According to Wright, most of the native-born, American immigrants in 1850 were from the northern section of the United States, although the West was a close competitor. Over the next two decades the West was by far the largest contributor to California's population, while the percentage of residents born in the South grew successively smaller. Thus in 1860 the Southerners in the state numbered less than 29,000, whereas there were more than 74,000 persons from the northern section of the country. In 1870 the difference between the contribution of these two sections was even more marked; not quite 28,000 Southerners were reported in that year, while the number of those born in the North approximated 85,000.\(^{43}\)

As we will see, the regional origins of the American immigrant population had tremendous implications for the type of society they sought to create in the state. California's Northern and Western immigrants, who carried with them antislavery and "free labor" sentiments, played a key role in the racial conflict that raged during the last half of the nineteenth century. Wright attests to the pivotal role these immigrants played in nineteenth-century California:

Evidently during this period there was little doubt as to what sort of community California was destined to be. It was fairly obvious that Anglo-American civilization would predominate, and that, although there might be a number of Chinese or Mexicans or French in the region, the social and political and economic institutions were as clay in the hands of Americans from the United States. Foreigners who were not readily absorbed by the dominant society formed their own groups, but these did not seriously threaten the Anglo-American ascendancy. The northern Europeans were most readily assimilated, and in those instances in which a diversity of cultural heritages led to conflict, the newcomers usually accepted the customs of their adopted land.\(^{45}\)

By 1900, California's population had skyrocketed to over one and a half million persons. Although the population was now largely European-American, other cultural minorities comprised a sizable segment of the state's total population. For example, the indigenous Mexican population remained relatively small, numbering 10,000 to 15,000 between 1848 and 1900. California Indians experienced a dramatic decline in their total population during this period. Most sources agree that the estimated 100,000 Indians in 1830 dropped precipitously to about 20,000 in 1870 and reached its nadir of approximately 17,500 in 1900.\(^{44}\)

The number of other nonwhite immigrants in the state also fluctuated greatly during this period. The Chinese immigrant population, for instance, rose to its highest point in California at over 75,000 in 1880. It then declined slightly in 1890 (72,000) before settling at approximately 45,000 at the turn of the century. Japanese immigrants did not comprise a significant part of California's population until 1890 when just over 1,000 were enumerated on the state census. By 1900, the number of Japanese immigrants in the state rose sharply to over 10,000.\(^{45}\) Blacks, on the other hand, remained a very small segment of the state's total population throughout the nineteenth century. Black immigrants numbered around 5,000 in 1860 and 1870 and climbed to just over 6,000 in 1880. The black population in the state would increase steadily after that date to over 11,000 at the turn of the century.\(^{46}\)

THE CAPITALIST TRANSFORMATION OF MEXICAN CALIFORNIA

The diverse population that settled in California during the last half of the nineteenth century quickly entered into a competitive struggle over social resources and group position within the state's new class structure. Unequal access to the mobility opportunities engendered by capitalist development unleashed bitter conflict among the various ethnic populations: Native American, European, Mexican, African, Chinese, and Japanese. Western historian Patricia Limerick has succinctly assessed this racialized contention and social transformation in Legacy of Conquest: "Race relations [in the American Southwest] parallel the distribution of property, the application of labor and capital to make the property productive, and the allocation of profit. Western history has been an ongoing competition for legitimacy—the right to claim for oneself and sometimes for one's group the status of legitimate beneficiary of Western resources. This intersection of ethnic diversity with property allocation unifies Western history.\(^{47}\)
The principal difference between the precapitalist economy of the Mexican period (1821-1848) and that which European Americans introduced after the United States-Mexico War was the predominance of a formal free-wage labor system: the coercive and paternalistic class relations of the Mexican period were quickly replaced by the instrumental and impersonal class relations of capitalism and its apparatus of legal enforcement. It was a period in California's history when once prominent Californios such as Mariano Vallejo, José del Carmen Lugo, Pio y Andres Pico, Pablo and Antonio De la Guerra, Manuel Dominguez, Ygnacio Del Valles, and Juan Bandini were displaced by nineteenth-century European American entrepreneurs and developers with names like Wells, Giannini, Huntington, Stanford, Hollister, Spreckles, Scott, Bard, Teague, and Oxnard.

Beginning quickly in the northern section of the state and expanding more slowly into southern California, white speculators and developers gained private control of land and created the basis for industrial development and the capitalist transformation of the state. Mining became the first major industry organized along a new system of production. The introduction of quartz and hydraulic mining techniques in the early 1850s rapidly transformed gold mining from an individual, labor-intensive undertaking to a corporate, capital-intensive venture. By 1860, there were over 7,000 firms engaged in gold-mining operations employing approximately 46,000 persons. For nearly two decades mining was both the single largest source of employment and the largest capital investment sector in the state.

The mining industry's growth quickly led to the establishment of numerous small-scale businesses in the state. Gold-rush immigration resulted in the opening of merchandise stores, hotels, bank, restaurants, and saloons. Most of these concerns were family-run ventures that European Americans quickly monopolized. These small business ventures typically employed only a few wage workers. By 1860 there were also approximately 1,450 manufacturing firms in the state with a capital investment of $11 million. These firms were comprised of both small and large-scale employers who in 1860 paid wages estimated at $5.5 million.49

Mining's importance for the state's new economy waned after 1859. The annual gold yield reached $50 million in that year. Thereafter, the annual yield declined steadily until it stabilized at approximately $17 million in 1879, where it remained for the next thirty years. The decline in the importance of mining was accompanied by the rapid growth of extensive grain production and the further development of urban manufacturing. The most important new industry in this period, however, was the railroad industry, which dominated the expanding economy in the late 1860s and

By the turn of the century, California's new economy had passed through its formative stages. Most vestiges of the precapitalist, rancho economy of the Mexican period, which relied on Indian peonage and slavery, had vanished irretrievably by the end of the nineteenth century. By the early 1900s, California became a quintessential capitalistic society based on free wage labor. The vision of the early white settlers who immigrated to the state had been realized in less than fifty years, as capitalist replaced European-American settlers replaced Indian villagers and Mexican small landholders and pobladores (town dwellers).

Three major groups composed the new class structure at the turn of the century. At the top were the European-American landholders and businessmen whose names are so prominent in California's history. These entre-
The sanctity of free labor had a long history preceding the widespread immigration of European Americans into California during the mid-nineteenth century. Since the colonial period, white Americans had sought to establish a society unencumbered by the precapitalist feudal ties that had shackled peasants in Europe. They sought to build a society in which free labor was the source of all value as the embodiment of bourgeois ideals. An outgrowth of the Protestant ethic, this commitment found expression in numerous political doctrines, for example, the "producer ethic" of the Jacksonian period. Andrew Jackson viewed the "producing class" as profiting directly from the honest labor of others.48

A significantly different and more influential version of the free labor ideology, however, was formulated by the Radical Republicans in the decades preceding the Civil War. According to Foner, the Republican
Party's antislavery rhetoric represented much more than mere opposition to slavery. It also signified "an affirmation of the superiority of the social system of the North—a dynamic, expanding capitalist society whose achievements and destiny were almost wholly the result of the dignity and opportunities which it offered the laboring man." Unlike the Jacksonian version, Republican ideology did not seek radically to subvert the United States' class structure. On the contrary, free labor thought was entirely consistent with the underlying tenets of competitive capitalism. Its advocates believed that free labor created all value but that "the interest of labor and capital were identical, because equality of opportunity in American society generated a social mobility which insured that today's laborer would be tomorrow's capitalist." This vision deeply influenced the social, political, and above all, economic relations eventually forged between the majority and the minority populations in California.

THE "BANEFUL INFLUENCE" OF NONWHITE LABOR IN CALIFORNIA

The associations made by European Americans between nonwhite labor and unfree labor systems had tremendous import for the racial conflict that erupted in California after 1848. White Americans sought to create a society in which the presence of any labor system that threatened free white labor would be eradicated. Given the historical context in which the free labor ideology flourished, slavery was what initially preoccupied the white population immigrating to California. The introduction of black slavery, or the widespread use of other unfree laborers, threatened the creation of the capitalist society European Americans envisioned in the area. As a result, the status of blacks in California loomed as a question of more than symbolic significance to free labor advocates.

Because of widespread migration of persons from the Northeastern seaboard of the United States into California after 1846, sentiment on this issue crystallized around the entrance of California into the union as a free state. This commitment to a system of free labor was captured vividly in editorials of the first English-language newspapers published in California. On March 15, 1848, nearly two years before statehood was granted, editors of The Californian unequivocally argued against the territory becoming a haven for unfree labor:

We desire only a White population in California; even the Indians among us, as far as we have seen, are more a nuisance than a benefit to the country, we would like to get rid of them. . . . [W]e dearly love the Union, but declare our positive preference for an independent condition of California to the establishment of any degree of slavery, or even the importation of free blacks.

Expression of this free labor sentiment was also echoed by the editor of The California Star a few days later:

We have both the power and the will to maintain California independent of Mexico, but we believe that though slavery could not be generally introduced, that its recognition could blast the prospects of the country. It would make it disreputable for the White man to labor for his bread, and it would thus drive off to other homes the only class of emigrants California wishes to see: the sober and industrious middle class of society.

White male opposition to the introduction of slavery in California was widespread in these early years. Purveyors of the free labor ideology expressed the belief that slavery inevitably led to decadence, laziness, and economic degeneration in the free white population. Their opposition to slavery was not based on lofty abolitionist convictions, but rather on the belief that slavery would inevitably degrade free white labor and undermine white workers' entitlement to economic development in the state. Slavery would effectively discourage white migration and settlement by stunting economic development, crippling society, and making white social mobility virtually impossible. The presence of an exploitable slave labor force would invariably drive enterprising white men from occupations leading up the economic ladder and thus undermine their dreams of becoming rising capitalists. It would lead to an economy headed by slaveholders and others who would profit from the exploitation of an unfree labor force. Thus, from the free labor perspective the recreation of a Southern society in California ran counter to the interests of the majority of the state's earliest white immigrants.

These free labor sentiments were salient during the California State Constitutional Convention debates on slavery and the immigration of free Negroes. Convened in the fall of 1849, forty-eight delegates from districts throughout California met at Monterey to draft the state constitution. Submission of this document to Congress, after its ratification by the people in the territory, was a necessary prerequisite to the admission of California into the Union. The question of slavery was first raised on September 10, 1849. While outlining articles for the proposed "Declaration of Rights" of the new constitution, delegate W. M. Shannon of Sacramento, a lawyer originally from New York, moved to insert a section specifically prohibiting slavery in the territory. Shannon's motion stipulated: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, unless for the punish-
ment of crimes, shall ever be tolerated in this state.” No objections were raised to Mr. Shannon’s motion and the proposed section was adopted unanimously without debate.43

This opposition to the introduction of slavery in California was not a sign of an enlightened social attitude toward black people. It reflected a common belief that the presence of blacks or any nonwhite group associated with unfree labor posed a real or symbolic threat to the status of free white labor in the state. This was vividly demonstrated during the convention debates on whether or not to prohibit free Negro immigration into the state. Although the convention did not approve such an exclusion (largely from political considerations affecting California’s rapid admission into the Union by Congress), debates on the matter illustrated the pervasiveness of free labor sentiment and the delegates’ general antipathy toward the presence of nonwhites.

Perhaps the most explicit proponent of the free labor ideology was Delegate O. M. Wozencraft from San Joaquin. Wozencraft, formerly from Ohio and Louisiana, staunchly supported the prohibition of free Negro immigration:

If there is just reason why slavery should not exist in this land, there is just reason why that part of the family of man, who are so well adapted for servitude, should be excluded from amongst us. It would appear that the all-wise Creator had created the negro to serve the White race. We see evidence of this wherever they are brought in contact; we see the instinctive feeling of the negro is obedience to the White man, and, in all instances, he obeys him, and is ruled by him. If you wish that all mankind should be free, do not bring the two extremes in the scale of organization together; do not bring the lowest in contact with the highest, for be assured the one will rule and the other must serve.44

Wozencraft’s position reflected a belief, shared with other Northern men, that blacks, whether free or slave, would unfairly compete with free white labor. Such competition already existed in the North and would surely flourish in California if blacks were allowed to emigrate freely. During debates on the prohibition of free Negro immigration, Wozencraft implored delegates to consider the evils that such immigration would inflict on the white workingman.

I wish to cast my vote against the admission of blacks into this country, in order that I may thereby protect the citizens of California in one of their most inestimable rights—the right to labor. . . . I wish, so far as my influence extends to make labor honorable; the laboring man is the nobleman in the truest

acceptation of the word; and I would make him worthy of his high prerogative, and not degrade him by placing him upon a level with the lowest in the scale of the family of man. . . .

I desire to protect the people of California against all monopolies—to encourage labor and protect the laboring class. Can this be done by admitting the negro race? Surely not; for if they are permitted to come, they will do so—nay they will be brought here. Yes, Mr President, the capitalists will fill the land with these living laboring machines, with all their attendant evils. Their labor will go to enrich the few, and impoverish the many; it will drive the poor and honest laborer from the field, by degrading him to the level of the negro. . . .

The golden era is before us in all its glittering splendor; here civilization may attain its highest altitude . . . and the Caucasian may attain his highest state of perfections . . . We must throw aside all the weights and clogs that have fettered society elsewhere. We must inculcate moral and industrial habits; we must exclude the low, vicious, and depraved.45

No better statement of the virtue of free labor, and the Northern Republican critique of the South, can be found in the debates that shaped the foundation of California’s entrance into the union as a free state. But Wozencraft was not alone in using free labor arguments to oppose free Negro immigration. During the debates on this issue, Delegate H. A. Tefft, a Northerner representing San Luis Obispo, also argued against the “introduction into this country of negroes, peons of Mexico, or any class of that kind.” Tefft claimed that such immigration would “degrade white labor” and make it impossible for Anglos “to compete with the bands of negroes who would be set to work under the direction of capitalists.” San Francisco delegate W. M. Steuart, a lawyer formerly of Maryland, similarly opposed black immigration because of what he termed “its baneful influence.” In his estimation it was “utterly impossible to unite free and slave labor” in one state. Even those who favored free Negro immigration often did so as a matter of expedience. Delegate Shannon, for example, favored free Negro immigration because “the necessities of the territory require them.” Shannon believed that free Negroes were “required in every department of domestic life (in California)”; it did not matter to him if “they were baboons, or any other class of creatures.”46

Shannon’s belief in the degrading influence of “other class[es] of creatures” was shared by other convention delegates and by the white population in California more generally. These sentiments later provided the lens through which other racialized ethnic groups also were viewed as posing a threat to the white population immigrating into the new state at mid-century.
NEGOTIZING THE PRESENCE OF
BLACKS IN ANGLO CALIFORNIA

Given these sentiments, it is not surprising that the same 1849 California State Constitutional Convention initially relegated blacks to second-class legal status. The first draft of the “Right to Suffrage” emphatically stated that only “white male citizens of the United States” would be entitled to vote.47 No serious thought was given to enfranchising blacks who settled in California. To the contrary, one motion adopted by the Convention stated that “Africans, and descendants of Africans” were to be exempted from the right to suffrage.48 Despite the later deletion of this explicit reference to blacks, there was no ambiguity in the minds of white Californians: blacks were nonwhite and, therefore, not eligible for the citizenship rights reserved exclusively for white men.

The subordinate political status of blacks in California carried tremendous implications for their “life chances” in the state. They were denied the rights to vote, to hold public office, to testify in court against white persons, to serve on juries, to attend public schools, or to homestead public land.49 It was not until 1870, with the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, that blacks were granted the same legal rights as white citizens in California. Furthermore, it was not until 1880 that the segregated school system created for black (and Indian) children in the state was formally abolished.50

Widespread white antipathy toward blacks was also expressed in numerous attempts made to prohibit their immigration. An interdiction against free Negro immigration into California was formally approved at the 1849 Constitutional Convention. This section was deleted later when it became apparent to delegates that it might delay or even threaten congressional approval of statehood. Rather than hazard that possibility, the convention decided to leave the issue to the first state legislature.71

Subsequently, bills prohibiting free Negro immigration were introduced unsuccessfully in the California State Legislature in 1850, 1851, 1855, and 1857. A final attempt to bar blacks from entry into the state was made by Assemblyman J. B. Warfield in 1858.52 The near passage of the Warfield Bill resulted in the large-scale exodus of many blacks in California to Victoria, British Columbia. An estimated four hundred to eight hundred blacks left for Canada in the spring of 1858, over 15 percent of their total population in the state. Life for the more than four thousand who remained was marked by continued discrimination and white hostility.53

Despite opposition to black emigration, hundreds of Northern free Negroes came to California as independent miners during the Gold Rush. Others were brought into the state as slaves from the American South. According to historian Rudolph Lapp, “Coastal city free blacks, many from Massachusetts as well as New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland, came largely by the Panama route and some around the Horn. From the upper Mississippi valley states many earned their way as employees of the overland companies. From the slave states hundreds of blacks came with their gold-hunting masters, some with the promise of freedom in California if rewards of mining were great enough. By 1850 there were 962 Afro-Americans in California, mostly in the Mother Lode counties, probably half of them slaves.”54 The vast majority of these black immigrants settled in the six mining districts of northern California: Sacramento, Mariposa, El Dorado, Calaveras, Yuba, and Tuolumne.55

Despite the constitutional prohibition against slavery of 1849, from 1848 until 1856 slaveholders were granted continued legal possession of black slaves brought into the state. Slaves often were “hired out” to other parties by masters who found it more profitable to do so when returns from mining were scant. Through this arrangement a slaveholder received from $150 to $300 a month for the use of “rented” slaves who toiled as cooks, waiters, domestic servants, or mine workers for their temporary employers.56 Their presence quickly raised the ire of a white population overwhelmingly committed to free labor sentiments; they did not want California to succumb to the “damning influence” of unfree black labor.57 Nevertheless, the power of slaveowners was extended with the passage of the state’s 1852 Fugitive Slave Law. Provisions of this bill affirmed the right of a slaveholder to obtain a warrant for the arrest and return of fugitive slaves or simply to seize such a slave himself. The 1852 law further permitted former slaves to satisfy outstanding claims their owners may have had to their labor by working off their debts in California. This provision notwithstanding, there are numerous instances during this period when fugitive slaves were openly sold in the state. In other cases, blacks brought into California under an agreement with their owners to work for their freedom were often forcibly seized after satisfying their obligations and reenslaved by masters.58

With the decline in mining opportunities in the mid-1850s, most free blacks left the mining region for urban centers such as San Francisco and Sacramento. By 1860, the largest black populations in the state resided in San Francisco (1,176 persons), followed by Sacramento (468 residents). Blacks in these northern California cities, as well as in towns like Stockton and Marysville, were racially segregated into separate communities or
residential enclaves. Blacks in San Francisco during the 1850s also were prohibited from using the city's three public libraries and relegated to sections reserved for “colored” people in other public facilities.

Blacks in San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton, and Marysville overwhelmingly were employed as unskilled day laborers. A few others toiled as bootblacks, porters, waiters, bell-ringers, laundymen, cooks, stewards, and barbers, although a handful successfully established modest businesses such as furniture stores, clothing stores, boardinghouses, and saloons, and a very few even became doctors or engineers.

The overrepresentation of blacks at the bottom of the new occupational structure largely reflected their subordinate legal-political status in the state. Smoldering competition and resentment between black immigrants and the large Irish population in California played a pivotal role in this subordination. According to Lapp, “Rivalry between the Afro-American and Irish working-class communities had arisen out of job competition at the lowest rung of the labor ladder in the early decades of the nineteenth century. This hostility in New England and New York then spread to the West Coast. The attitude of blacks toward unions is easy to understand since the emergence of unionism was so often associated with black exclusion from jobs.”

Thus, the earlier competition between white and black labor elsewhere was partially reenacted in California during the 1860s and 1870s.

Despite the racial hostility they endured in the state, the black population in California grew steadily in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Although blacks accounted for only one percent of the total state population at the time, the number of blacks in the state reached over 11,000 by 1890. Whereas during the gold rush period blacks were heavily concentrated in northern California, this new population settled largely in the southern part of the state. “The near doubling of the state’s black population by 1890 is explained by the real estate and land boom in southern California, which produced a black population gain in Los Angeles County from 188 in 1880 to 1,817 in 1890, a tenfold increase. In the same general area similar sharp increases took place. In 1880 the Fresno County black population was 40 and by 1890 it was 457. Even Kern County went from 4 to 130 in that ten-year period.”

The successful completion of the transcontinental railroad also contributed to this population increase as many black railroad workers (especially sleeping car porters and “redcaps”) settled or retired with their families in southern California. Also important in redirecting their settlement was the continued hostility by white trade unionists toward black labor in the northern part of the state. According to Lapp, “In the turn-of-the-century decades unionism made significant strides in San Francisco but was deterred in Los Angeles by powerful antiunion sentiment among employers led by Harrison Gray Otis, owner of the Los Angeles Times. . . . Blacks planning migration to California were often urged to avoid San Francisco and to go instead to Los Angeles, which was considered a ‘good town for colored folks.’”

The intense animosity toward blacks in San Francisco even caused many blacks to move across the bay to Alameda County and contribute to the significant increase of Oakland’s black population. By 1900, there were over one thousand blacks in that community, an increase that occurred during a decade when the northern California black population either remained steady or numerically declined.

Although antiblack sentiment was widespread, white Californians were never drawn into the same frenzied competition with blacks as they were with the thousands of Chinese immigrants who also immigrated into the state during the gold rush period. California’s black population was never allowed to effectively compete with European-American immigrants in the state and, consequently, were never perceived as the same formidable threat that other racialized groups posed for white men. Repeated attempts to thwart black immigration, to deny blacks important human and civil rights, and to relocate them to the bottom of the new class structure militated against the eruption of widespread economic competition between black and white Californians.

The same, however, can not be said in the case of the indigenous Mexican and Native American populations. Their ruthless subordination was essential to the successful introduction of the new Anglo-American society in California. Its realization required the immediate dispossession of Mexicans and Indians from land needed for the development of the new political economy and class structure. Control of Mexican ranchero estates and Indian tribal lands was a fundamental prerequisite for this economic transformation. The Mexican ranchero class became the first formidable barrier to the realization of Anglo class aspiration in the state.

The next chapter chronicles the process by which Anglos struggled to undermine the superordinate position held by the rancheros during the Mexican period and successfully reorganize the underlying basis of production in the newly acquired territory.
Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. See the classic reframing of U.S. race and ethnic relations as a contention for group position within the social structure in Herbert Blumer, "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position," Pacific Sociological Review 1, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 3-7.

2. In his The Declining Significance of Race (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), sociologist William J. Wilson argues that racial and ethnic relations during the period from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries were principally structured by both the economy and the polity. It was a period of industrial expansion, class conflict, and racial oppression; an era in which the two major actors in the political economy (capital and labor) vigorously asserted their narrowly defined class interests with respect to racialized labor. According to Wilson, the explosive capitalist development of the era was marked by "the overt efforts of whites to solidify economic racial domination (ranging from the manipulation of black labor to the neutralization or elimination of black economic competition) through various forms of juridical, political, and social discrimination" (p. 4).


4. The absence of an explicitly sociological analysis of race relations in the American Southwest is a curious phenomenon. European-American sociologists generally have been unconcerned with the complexities of racial and ethnic patterns in this region. Instead, they have been preoccupied with black/white relations at the national level or with their experience in the Northeast, Midwest, or South. Others, of course, have explored the particular experiences of European ethnic groups in these same geographic terms.

There is still no classic work of comparative analysis in the sociological literature of race relations specifically for this region. It appears that most sociologists
share the general public sentiment that race relations in the United States are primarily a black/white phenomenon and that other racial/ethnic patterns are either of secondary importance (because of their narrow regional nature) or merely reflect extensions of black/white patterns.

Fortunately, the limited scope of the sociological literature has been compensated for by the wealth of recent research by scholars in ethnic studies. This growing body of work has greatly advanced our understanding of the complexities of the experience of African, Asian, Mexican, and Native Americans in California and the Southwest more generally. These works were indispensable to my own comparative study as key sources of historical data.


economic developments that it becomes possible to assess the real dynamics of development. It is only when such abstract theory is linked to specific political and historical conditions that we can understand how the working class are being deepened or eroded in a given capitalist society cannot, however, be derived directly from the abstract theory of capitalist economic development stressed by Marx as well as many non-Marxist theorists is the tendency for capitalism to transform all labor into the commodity labor power, and to obliterate all qualitative distinctions between different categories of labor. In terms of the logic of accumulation developed by Marx in Capital, there will, therefore, be systemic tendencies in capitalism to reduce racial discrimination in the labor market and to treat black labor power as identical with any other labor power (p. 201). Second, “in spite of the divisive character of racism and the material differences between black and white workers that racism generates, workers of all races share a fundamental class situation and thus share fundamental class interests” (p. 205). Finally, “to the extent that the working class is divided along racial and ethnic lines, the collective power of the working class is reduced, and the capacity of workers to win demands from capital will decrease. The result will be an increase in the rate of exploitation of both white and black workers, although the effects may well be more intense for blacks and other minorities than for whites. . . . The analysis of racism as a divide-and-conquer strategy has perhaps been the central theme in Marxist treatments of the subject” (p. 202).

While Wright makes an interesting empirical case for the importance of class position in explaining contemporary differences in black/white income, his operating assumptions provide a questionable point of departure for examining the relationship between class and race historically. His contentions are readily contradicted by the historical experiences of the racialized groups examined in this study. In fairness to Wright, he does acknowledge that it “would be a mistake” to assume that “all racial discrimination is really disguised class oppression” or that “race is an insignificant dimension of inequality in American life” (p. 197). He acknowledges correctly that the “extent to which racial or ethnic divisions within the working class arc being deepened or eroded in a given capitalist society cannot, however, be derived directly from the abstract theory of capitalist economic development. It is only when such abstract theory is linked to specific political and economic developments that it becomes possible to assess the real dynamics of racism in a given society” (p. 203). Consequently, “the most obvious way in which racism intersects with class relations is in the social processes which distribute people into class positions in the first place. . . . To my knowledge, there have been no studies which systematically explore the role of racism in the distribution of individuals into different positions within the social relations of production” (p. 197). This study attempts to do just that. My conclusions, however, contradict the basic assumptions that Wright accepts as the point of departure for his structural Marxist analysis of race and class.


Although the present study utilizes certain analytical categories drawn from Marxist theory, I also draw extensively upon the Weberian tradition within sociological literature. The outstanding work of neo-Weberian sociologist Frank Parkin and historian George Fredrickson has greatly influenced my understanding and theoretical framing of the relationship between class and racial stratification systems. I specifically discuss their contributions to this study below.

7. Ibid., p. 64.
9. This study is fundamentally historical in focus, sociological in approach, and comparative in nature. My primary interest is to give cohesion and sociological meaning to historical facts. My task is to write “history mediated by concepts,” as
one historical sociologist has characterized this method. (See the valuable overview of various approaches to historical-sociological research in Victoria E. Bonnell, "The Uses of Theory, Concepts and Comparison in Historical Sociology," Comparative Studies in Society and History 22, no. 2 [April 1980]: 156–73.)

This study utilizes concepts such as "racial formation," "racialization," and "social closure" to select, organize, and interpret its historical materials. These concepts are the heuristic devices used to give new meaning and resonance to the historical patterns I explore. In attempting to trestle the often irrecconcilable breach between history and sociology, I have especially appreciated George M. Fredrickson's assessment of such an enterprise. In noting the important differences between historical and social-scientific approaches to comparative race relations, Fredrickson has perceptively observed that

one reason why so few historians have actually produced thoroughly comparative works is that the typical aim or inclination of historians tends to differ from that of most social scientists. The latter is quite properly concerned with discovering and testing general hypotheses about human behavior and social organization. The former are more likely to be fascinated by variety and concerned with the special features of individual societies. Hence social scientists usually look at a range of cases to test or demonstrate a general theory or "model" of human action or organization; while historians, if they employ a comparative perspective at all, normally do it to illuminate some special feature of the single society or civilization with which they are primarily concerned. Historians are therefore likely to find that the comparative generalizations of sociologists and political scientists are often too abstract or "macroscopic" to do justice to the messy, complex, and ambiguous reality they confront in their own research and that, to some extent, they positively relish. If they invoke social theories and models, historians are likely to use them as heuristic devices for illuminating the particular rather than as instances illustrating the universal.


10. For interesting examinations of various facets of the black experience in California during the period from 1848 to 1900 see Lapp, Blacks in Gold Rush California; Delilah L. Beasley, The Negro Trail Blazers of California (Los Angeles: Times Mirror Printing and Binding House, 1919); Goode, California's Black Pioneers; Jack D. Forbes, Afro-Americans in the Far West: A Handbook for Educators (Berkeley: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1966); Sherman W. Savage, Blacks in the West (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976); and Heizer and Almquist, The Other Californians.

11. See Fredrickson's White Supremacy.

12. Ibid., p. xi.


15. Takaki, Strangers From a Different Shore, p. 15.

16. Ibid., pp. 298–300.

17. Omi and Winant, Racial Formation, p. 65.

18. Ibid.


20. This summary discussion of the "free labor ideology" is primarily drawn from Foner's Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men. His argument is explicated more fully in chap. 2 below.

1. "WE DESIRE ONLY A WHITE POPULATION IN CALIFORNIA"


3. Ibid., p. 5.

4. Ibid., p. 4.

5. Ibid., p. 4.


7. Ibid., pp. 45–47.


9. Fredrickson argues that the term "white supremacy" is preferable to others, such as racism, because the latter primarily refers to

a mode of thought that offers a particular explanation for the fact that population groups that can be distinguished by ancestry are likely to differ in culture, status, and power. Racists make the claim that such differences are due mainly to immutable genetic factors and not to environmental or historical circumstances. Used in this way, the concept of racism is extremely useful for describing a trend in Western thought between the late
eighteenth century and the twentieth that has provided one kind of rationale for racially repressive social systems. But nonwhites have at times been subjugated or treated as inferiors in both the United States and South Africa without the aid of an explicit racism of this sort. In recent years, racism has commonly been used in a broader sense, as a blanket term for all discriminatory actions or policies directed at groups thought to be physically distinct from a dominant or "majority" element. But this usage leaves us without a separate word for the overt doctrine of biologically inequality and inhibits a sense of the role that this ideology has played in specific historical situations.

10. Ibid., p. 4.
11. Ibid., p. 5.
12. Ibid., pp. 7–13.
13. Ibid., p. 8.
15. I am grateful to historian Ramón Gutiérrez for pointing out the importance that these constructions played as markers of civility during this period. See his brilliant exposition of this point in When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).
17. Ibid., p. 9.
18. Ibid., p. 7.
29. Blauner has succinctly outlined the basic features of this process in Racial Oppression in America as follows:

"Like European overseas colonialism, America has used African, Mexican, and to a lesser degree, Indian workers for the cheapest labor, concentrating people of color in the most unskilled jobs, the least advanced sectors of the economy, and the most industrially backward regions of the nation. In an historical sense, people of color provided much of the hard labor (and the technical skills) that built up the agricultural base and the mineral-transport-communication infrastructure necessary for industrialization and modernization, whereas the European worked primarily within the industrialized, modern sector. The initial position of European ethnic, while low, was therefore strategic for movement up the economic and social pyramid. The placement of nonwhite groups, however, imposed barrier upon barrier on such mobility, freezing them for long periods of time in least favorable segments of the economy.

30. Herbert Blumer was among the first to appreciate that capitalist industrialization was not necessarily a corrosive force eliminating the importance of status distinction in industrial societies. Blumer argued that industrializing nations often utilize racial and ethnic markers as the basis for structuring their labor markets. See his important article, "Industrialization and Race Relations," in Industrialization and Race Relations: A Symposium, ed. Guy Hunter (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 220–53.
32. See chapter 4 for an extended discussion of the decline in the California Indian population and issues pertaining to their population demographics.
35. Ibid., p. 74.
38. Ibid., p. 69.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., p. 72.
43. Wright, "The Making of Cosmopolitan California," part 2, p. 74. I do not mean to imply here that all European American immigrants from the northern and western United States were "free labor" advocates who favored California's entry into the Union as a free state. Differences in political sentiments, as well as racial attitudes, clearly existed among the diverse population. So too did they exist among Southerners; not every immigrant from the South favored the introduction of slavery (or other unfree labor systems) into California. Furthermore, the capitalist transformation of the state that is discussed below in sweeping historical terms was actually wracked by opposition from Mexican rancheros, Southern pro-slavery elements, and other contending class forces. More nuanced detail is presented in the chapters that follow.
44. Heizer and Alquist, The Other Californians, p. 203.
45. Ibid.
46. Rudolph Lapp, Afro-Americans in California (San Francisco: Boyd and Fraser, 1979), pp. 18, 25.
49. Cleland and Hardy, March of Industry, p. 51.
50. Cleland and Hardy, March of Industry, p. 57; Chiu, Chinese Labor, pp. 40, 52.
56. Horsman, Race and Manifest Destiny, p. 298.
57. This discussion of the "free labor ideology" is drawn from Eric Foner's Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
59. Foner, Free Soil, p. 11.
60. Ibid., p. 20.
62. The California Star (San Francisco), Mar. 25, 1848, cited in Eaves, California Labor, pp. 82-83.
64. Ibid., p. 49.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., pp. 139, 143-45, 147.
67. Ibid., p. 61.
68. Ibid., p. 74.
69. Lapp, Afro-Americans in California, p. 6.
73. See Lapp, Blacks in Gold Rush California, chap. 10.
74. Lapp, Afro-Americans in California, p. 4.
76. Lapp, Blacks in Gold Rush California, pp. 132-33.
77. Ibid., pp. 12-48, 116-17, 271.
78. For discussions of the impact that California's Fugitive Slave Law of 1852 had on blacks in the state, see Eaves California Labor, pp. 94-104; Beasley, Negro Trail Blazers, p. 72; Lapp, Blacks in Gold Rush California, pp. 120-21, 126-57;
2. "THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD 'WHITE'"


3. Ibid., p. 10.


