
Replacing Native Hawaiian Kinship with Social Scientific Care

Settler Colonial Transinstitutionalization of Children in the Territory of Hawai‘i

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In 1929, Dorothy Wu, a multiracial Native Hawaiian and Chinese teenager, suddenly found herself a ward of the Salvation Army Girls' Home in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, then a US territory.¹ Until her institutionalization, Dorothy had worked as a maid in the home of Princess Abigail Campbell Kawānanakoa, a member of the ali‘i or ruling, royal class of the formerly independent Hawaiian Kingdom. To Dorothy's bewilderment, the Princess abruptly fired Dorothy for "associating with boys," and recommended her commitment to the Girls' Home, where she could be "better cared for." Dorothy found the Salvation Army matrons mean. She complained that they discriminated against "darker girls" like her. After six months, Dorothy ran away. Her escape soon landed her in juvenile court, which sentenced her to the Kawailoa Training School for Girls, a recently opened juvenile detention facility, where matrons worked to shape "wayward girls," the majority of whom were Native Hawaiian and/or Asian, into "proper" and modern American women.²

Dorothy's narrative is a particularly striking example of what Susan Burch terms "transinstitutionalization," meaning "the process of moving individuals from one variety of institution to another – as part of sustained containment, surveillance, and slow erasure," which she argues is a potent type of "settler colonial removal."³ Dorothy Wu's story gives one example of the path this

¹ Dorothy Wu is a pseudonym. Throughout this essay, I do not use the real names of children who are named in archival records given. I have not (at least not yet) been able to contact descendants or other kin who may have particular desires about sharing these stories.

² This brief version of Dorothy's story is based on the transcript of an interview she did with sociology graduate students, Doris Lorden and Margaret Lam, in 1931. Accessed at the University Archives, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory Records, 2013.

³ Susan Burch, *Committed: Remembering Native Kinship in and Beyond Institutions* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press Books, 2021), 16.

transinstitutionalization could take. Forced to work at a young age due to the financial circumstances of her family, her perceived impropriety of “associating with boys” got her fired and referred to the Salvation Army Girl’s Home; and when she ran away, her court-ordered punishment was to be sent to the government training school.⁴ Though Dorothy’s story ends at the Kawaiiloa Training School in the archival record I have accessed so far, many other children found themselves on even longer paths of transinstitutionalization. Based on intelligence quotient (IQ) testing conducted regularly at the training schools, children deemed “feebleminded” would often be transferred to the Waimano Home for the Feeble-Minded. And especially for young men incarcerated at the government Waiale‘e Industrial School for Boys, their “delinquency” would often get them sent on to O‘ahu Prison. The traffic between these institutions (the training schools, home for the “feebleminded” and the prison) was eased by the fact that, beginning in 1939, they were all administered under the same Territorial Department of Institutions, along with the Territorial Hospital for the Mentally Ill and divisions of parole.⁵ As Burch argues, the frequency of transfers between such institutions alerts us to the “dynamic, interlocking and far-reaching . . . processes, practices, and experiences” that characterize transinstitutionalization as a method of settler colonialism, factors that we might miss if we focus only on histories of particular institutions in isolation.⁶

This essay is about how social scientific knowledge production structured the logic and practices of transinstitutionalization in Territorial Hawai‘i. Specifically, I look at the history of three institutions operated by the Territory of Hawai‘i: the Waiale‘e Industrial School for Boys (opened in 1902), the Kawaiiloa Training School for Girls (opened in 1929), and the Waimano Home for the Feeble-Minded (opened in 1921). The combined rhetorics of correction and care for Hawai‘i’s children at play in these carceral institutions echoed the broader, paternalistic justifications for annexing Hawai‘i as saving the islands both from other colonial empires and a Hawaiian Kingdom that white settlers characterized as uncivilized and childish. In this view, US settler colonialism could be portrayed as a progressive uplift of Native Hawaiians, rather than the structural cause of their increasing losses of land, language, and culture. Social science provided the Territorial government language and “evidence” with which to argue that their practices

⁴ A striking detail of Wu’s story is the complicity of Princess Kawānanakoa in Wu’s institutionalization. This point is too complex to fully explore here, but is perhaps one example of how some settler colonial ideologies about gender and sexuality had, by the 1920s and 1930s, been thoroughly internalized by some Native Hawaiians.

⁵ Hawaii Department of Institutions, *Department of Institutions, Territory of Hawaii, 1942* (Honolulu, 1942).

⁶ Burch, *Committed*, 16–17.

of institutionalization were modern, progressive, and humane, even when the official reports of those institutions suggested otherwise. The Territorial government repeatedly used the scientific imprimatur of work by those like psychologist Stanley Porteus as well as models of training schools and homes for the “feble-minded” in the continental United States as justifications for institutionalizing Native Hawaiians and immigrants of color.⁷

Rather than providing a comprehensive account of the history of any one of the institutions I reference here, or attempting to fully reconstruct what life might have been like for the children incarcerated in these spaces, this essay focuses on pulling two main threads through its analysis of the histories of Waiale‘e, Kawaioloa, and Waimano. The first thread tracks the settler colonial process of pathologizing Native Hawaiian and other non-white forms of kinship and care, and attempts to replace it with institutionalized care, as determined by white American social science and public policy.⁸ Woven into this thread are the broader questions raised by this edited collection in considering how and why we study the history of science in relation to settler colonialism. The second thread examines how a critical history of these institutions offers a different picture of the Territorial period in Hawai‘i. As I detail below, conventional histories of this time in Hawai‘i have largely overlooked Native Hawaiian stories, focusing more on labor histories of immigrant populations, and presented the political shifts from Hawaiian Kingdom to Republic of Hawai‘i to the Territory of Hawai‘i and then to Hawai‘i as the fiftieth state of the union as largely smooth and inevitable. Taking seriously the colonial violence and damage done through institutionalization offers a more complex and troubling picture of the Territorial period. The next two sections provide more context on these two threads, before moving into further analysis of Waiale‘e, Kawaioloa, and Waimano.

A Structural Approach to Histories of Race, Settler Colonialism, and Science

Social sciences have long played crucial roles in disseminating ideas and practices that shore up white supremacy and settler colonialism. This is not especially surprising. How and why, then, should we seek to understand the ways that social scientists have contributed to structuring settler colonialism?

⁷ S. D. Porteus, *The Institutions of the Territory of Hawaii and Their Policies, Plans and Needs for Sound Institutional Practices* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1949).

⁸ I largely reference Native Hawaiian customs of kinship in this essay, in part because even though Asians were also incarcerated at the institutions I discuss here, many of the official reports focus on pathologizing Native Hawaiian culture in particular. However, I make note of “other non-white forms of kinship” to be analytically inclusive of Asian and other non-white cultures in Hawai‘i, many of whom also made kin with Native Hawaiians.

I argue that such histories are most meaningful when they grapple with the ways social scientific research and constructions of so-called scientific truths contributed to building enduring systems of injustice, rather than seeking to ascertain and judge the personal orientations of individual social scientists. Accordingly, the most meaningful historical question is not: “were they racist?” It is not that such judgments are entirely irrelevant but simply that the effects of racism are easily dismissed if recognized only as an individual trait. In the case of Stanley Porteus, one social scientist I consider in this essay as discussed further below, there is little question that he was racist: he published numerous studies claiming that Native Hawaiians and Filipinos had much lower intelligence than white people. My point in studying his work is not to prove his racism but to demonstrate how his research and reasoning created abiding racist ideas about Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, and others in Hawai‘i. These ideas continue to help uphold the structure of settler colonialism, and thus continue to deserve rich historicization and critique far beyond critiquing Porteus as an individual.

In this approach, I depart from historians who worry about being “presentist,” “objective,” or judging historical actors “who were just from a different time” by our contemporary standards (this excuse almost always made in reference to white people, despite the contemporaneous existence of people of color who acted differently).⁹ Some historians of science emphasize, for example, that social scientists who produced racist social scientific theories were not necessarily explicitly “rabble-rousing, hate-mongering” racists themselves.¹⁰ Indeed, many racists were, and are, elite, liberal, and progressive for their times. My point is that it is not particularly useful or interesting to write histories of science in which we see racism as merely an individual trait. Rather, racism is systemic; as Ruth Wilson Gilmore has written, “Racism, specifically, is the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.”¹¹ This definition shifts ideas of racism away from the bigoted ideas of any one person to the devastating generational and structural effects of racial discourses on those who are racialized. One way the history of science might better reckon with racism as a matter of “group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” is to more frequently put the work of scientists in context with the effects of

⁹ James Sweet, “Is History History? Identity Politics and Teleologies of the Present,” August 17, 2022, www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2022/is-history-history-identity-politics-and-teleologies-of-the-present.

¹⁰ Jan E. Goldstein, “Toward an Empirical History of Moral Thinking: The Case of Racial Theory in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France,” *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 1 (February 1, 2015): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/120.1.1>.

¹¹ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 28.

their “science” on the people it impacted, rather than remain with telling the life story, however complex, of a scientist. Then the weight of any moral judgment of past scientists must fall not only on their individual shoulders but also, and perhaps more importantly, on the structures that their work upheld. So too, the complexity often granted to white scientists in historical treatments should be extended just as robustly to those communities impacted by their scientific ideas and practices.

My analysis of Porteus’s work is accordingly motivated by excavating the impact of his work within the settler colonial logics and policies he helped institute in the Territory of Hawai‘i, and telling a complex story about the lives of the youth who were impacted by Porteus’s work and the broader system of carceral institutions he supported. Hawai‘i Territorial officials sought out Porteus’s opinions, and created policies based on his views, precisely because they took him to be an objective, and presumably apolitical, scientist. As I explore further in this essay, Territorial officials valued Porteus’s conclusions about the mental inferiority of Native Hawaiians and Filipinos, among other people of color. Territorial officials institutionalized Native Hawaiians and others based on such “scientific” truths, couching the missions of the training schools as the uplift and civilization of inferior races. Such discourse fit with Progressive-era sentiments that lauded modernization and assimilation of the less fortunate into mainstream American norms. This is another reason why it is not particularly illuminating to assess the personal opinions or “intent” of past social scientists. So-called progressive ideas have been just as violent toward Indigenous peoples as more explicitly racist ones, and as Porteus’s case shows, they often went hand in hand.

To put it another way, academic knowledge production about Indigenous peoples and people of color is far from innocent, no matter the tenor of individual researchers’ intentions. Therefore, in the practice of the history of science, my goal is to historicize how settler colonialism operates, always alongside how Indigeneity has also endured. As Kēhaulani Kauanui argues, through the exegesis of Patrick Wolfe’s work, settler colonialism is an enduring structure, but so is Indigeneity: “indigenous peoples exist, resist, and persist.”¹² The goal of doing history of science scholarship from a critical Indigenous Studies perspective is to not shy away from the damage wrought by science and settler colonialism, but also to not spectacularize that damage such that we lose sight of the complex humanity of Indigenous peoples. One way I do so in this essay is by attending to the desires of the students at the Territorial training schools, who often frustrated the government’s intended “rehabilitation” by running away, staging strikes, or maintaining Hawaiian

¹² J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “‘A Structure, Not an Event’: Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity,” June 1, 2016, <http://csalateral.org/issue/5-1/forum-alt-humanities-settler-colonialism-enduring-indigeneity-kauanui/>.

culture. Such acts remind us that despite the enormous power of the settler colonial Territorial government to restructure Hawaiian life, Native Hawaiians also lived in ways that were never wholly determined by that structure. Indigenous historian Damon Salesa writes that “an ethical and full engagement with an indigenous past is through an indigenous present.”¹³ The politics of seeking desire not just damage, as Indigenous feminist scholar Eve Tuck puts it, is one way to do ethical historical research because it opens up monolithic views of Indigenous peoples today as only tragic.¹⁴ The idea is not to simply switch this idea for one in which Indigenous peoples are monolithically heroic. Rather, the goal is to get at the complexities: at describing the structure of settler colonialism and its violences while also showing how Indigenous peoples’ lives operate both within and beyond that structure.

From “Inevitable” to Contested: Reframing the History of Territorial Hawai‘i

This history of transinstitutionalization must be understood within the broader context of Hawai‘i being annexed as a US territory in 1898. White settlers had made homes in Hawai‘i since American Protestant missionaries arrived in 1820, but for over seventy years, they lived under the Indigenous-led government of the Hawaiian Kingdom. A powerful cadre of white settlers overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893, seizing power away from Queen Lili‘uokalani who had pushed to shore up the rights of Native Hawaiians in the face of the increasing might of American and British sugar plantation owners. The US federal government did not immediately approve of the Hawaiian Kingdom’s overthrow. Under President Grover Cleveland, the US sent a representative to investigate the overthrow, who ultimately declared it an illegal “act of war.” Cleveland nevertheless left any remedial actions up to Congress, which did nothing to restore the Hawaiian Kingdom’s sovereignty, despite the substantial lobbying efforts of Queen Lili‘uokalani and others. The subsequent US president, William McKinley, promoted US expansionism, and allowed Hawai‘i to be annexed under the Newlands Resolution in 1898, which justified the need for annexation in order to secure Hawai‘i as a refueling station for US naval ships on their way to fight in the Philippines.

What did it mean for Hawai‘i to become a US territory? Popular understandings of Hawai‘i often assume the inclusion of Hawai‘i within the United States as a predestined fate, written along a teleology that ends in US statehood. Conventional historiography has similarly often perpetuated simplistic

¹³ Damon Salesa, “The Pacific in Indigenous Time,” in *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*, eds. David Armitage and Alison Bashford (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 40.

¹⁴ Eve Tuck, “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 409–428.

ideas about Territorial Hawaiian history, such as the notion that Native Hawaiians welcomed becoming a US territory and that there was no organized resistance to the annexation of Hawai'i as a territory by the United States. Noenoe Silva and other Hawaiian scholars have roundly disproved such assumptions, documenting widespread, organized efforts that were in fact successful in delaying annexation.¹⁵

Ronald Williams Jr. has also importantly complicated our understandings of the transition between the Republic of Hawai'i (the government formed by those who overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893) and the Territory of Hawai'i, which officially formed a government in 1900.¹⁶ Many of the same white settlers who held power in the Republic of Hawai'i maintained their power in the Territory of Hawai'i (Sanford B. Dole, for example, the president of the Republic of Hawai'i became the first Territorial governor). However, Williams Jr. argues that the formation of a Territorial legislature posed a significant threat to the white oligarchy. In the Republic of Hawai'i, only white men and certain Native Hawaiian men of wealth were allowed to vote. Though Dole and others fought against it, the incorporating documents of the Territorial government re-enfranchised many Native Hawaiians and other non-white residents. When the first Hawai'i Territorial legislature convened in 1901, the independent Home Rule party won majorities in both the Territorial Senate and House of Representatives.

As Williams Jr. points out, these Native Hawaiian, Home Rule representatives proceeded to introduce policies that would restore rights to the people. These efforts were blocked by the Territorial governor's veto and other obstructionist measures, while the press propagated explicitly racist depictions of the Home Rule party, whom they called the "Heathen Party," as monkeys.¹⁷ Conventional historiography of the Territorial period, even when critical of the racism and inequality of the Territorial leaders, downplays the efforts of the Home Rule party as "frivolous."¹⁸ Similarly, while well-known histories like Gavan Daws' *Shoal of Time* (1968), often remark on the injustices of Hawaiian history, Daws and others tend to paint Native Hawaiians' position as a sad, lost cause and the rise to power of the so-called Big Five conglomeration

¹⁵ Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Jon Kamakawi'ole Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Ronald Jr. Williams, "Race, Power, and the Dilemma of Democracy: Hawai'i's First Territorial Legislature, 1901," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 49, no. 1 (2015): 1–45, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hjh.2015.0017>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22, 28–29.

¹⁸ Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1974), 295.

of sugar companies as inevitable.¹⁹ Most Territorial histories are labor histories that focus on the successive waves of immigrant labor from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and more.²⁰ Native Hawaiians are rarely mentioned in such labor histories, even though they did work on plantations during the Territorial period. Here again, the history of the Territory's training schools offers a different picture of this time. The Territorial training school for boys (largely populated by Native Hawaiians) lent out male youth as plantation labor. The management of the Boy's School saw a plantation job as a fitting and proper job for its graduates.

In this context, it is important to move away from understanding the Territorial period as a totally smooth transition from the Republic of Hawai'i or as a relatively benign period where Native Hawaiians faded into the background. The Territorial government's attempts at assimilating Native Hawaiians and other non-white residents of Hawai'i into white American culture during the Territorial period were far from guaranteed to succeed. As Williams Jr. also points out, the white settler elite of the Territory were an incredibly small minority: only about 6 percent of the population.²¹ Further, Dean Saranillio has pointed out how much various and diversely constituted labor movements of plantation and dockworkers in Hawai'i during the Territorial period threatened "white settler hegemony" to such an extent that "white supremacy was no longer capable of governing a heterogeneous nonwhite population, and a liberal multicultural state began to emerge."²² The government training schools thus can be understood as one concerted effort on the part of a threatened white settler elite to eliminate Hawaiian culture and train Native Hawaiian and other non-white children of the Territory to understand themselves as part of a multiracial and multicultural Hawai'i nonetheless structured by white, heteropatriarchal norms.

These institutions can also be understood more broadly as a kind of violence that worked to keep Native Hawaiians from more explicit resistance to American colonization. Gender Studies scholar Laura Briggs, for example, has argued that "child taking" is a time-honored "counterinsurgency tactic" with a deep history in the Americas. "Child taking . . ." she writes, "has been used to respond to demands for rights, refuge, and respect by communities of color and impoverished communities, an effort to induce hopelessness,

¹⁹ Ibid., 312.

²⁰ Ronald T. Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835–1920* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1983).

²¹ Williams, "Race, Power, and the Dilemma of Democracy," 8.

²² Dean Itsuji Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire: Alternative Histories of Hawai'i Statehood* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 14–15.

despair, grief, and shame.”²³ I agree that, as with the contexts of Native American and First Nations children removed by the US and Canadian settler states to boarding or residential schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Hawai‘i Territorial institutions that incarcerated Native Hawaiian and Asian children operated as a way to discipline and terrorize not only those children but their immediate and extended families.²⁴ So too, these practices were not limited to the United States and Canada. Similar institutions existed in other settler colonial contexts such as Australia.²⁵

Such schools also existed across Latin America, as other scholars in this book show. Often Latin America is seen as outside the scope of settler colonial studies, but many scholars have shown that it can be productive to make connections between the colonialisms of Latin America and the rest of the world. For example, boarding schools for Indigenous peoples operated in Mexico from 1926, when the *Casa del Estudiante Indígena* opened in Mexico City. Soon a larger system of such schools, called *internados indígenas*, was established, with institutions across the country. Alexander Dawson argues that like the boarding schools to the north, the ones in Mexico sought to “produce individual subjects who spoke the national lingua franca, dressed and acted in ways that were deemed modern, and contributed to a dynamic national economy as workers or farmers.”²⁶ Nonetheless, the schools in Mexico were also significantly different, Dawson argues, in the sense that they attempted to prove that Indigenous peoples in rural areas could contribute to national development. In doing so, they tended to “cultivate rather than break down ethnic affiliations.”²⁷ Tanalis Padilla further argues that teacher training schools for the rural population of Mexico actually encouraged a sense of social justice in rural schools, based on a “socialist education principle that teachers be advocates for worker and campesino interests.”²⁸ So too, “many found the rural normal [school] to be the path by which they escaped poverty.”²⁹ While at times, then, education of Indigenous

²³ Laura Briggs, *Taking Children: A History of American Terror* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), 12–13.

²⁴ Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

²⁵ Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

²⁶ Alexander S. Dawson, “Histories and Memories of the Indian Boarding Schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States,” *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 5 (2012): 83.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁸ Tanalis Padilla, “Memories of Justice: Rural Normales and the Cardenista Legacy,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 32, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 113, <https://doi.org/10.1525/mex.2016.32.1.111>.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

peoples in Mexico opened up much broader possibilities than was the case with Native American boarding schools, Dawson argues that after 1940, the efforts toward a pluralistic inclusion of Indigenous cultures and communities within the Mexican nation were largely transformed. As he notes: “Indigenismo was . . . divested of its mandate to undertake revolutionary and egalitarian social reforms, and instead became a tool for promoting capitalist accumulation and social control.”³⁰

The schools in Hawai‘i never embraced a revolutionary class consciousness, even temporarily. But the largely white leaders and policymakers who established the schools did, undeniably, see themselves as progressive. The Territory framed the process of forced assimilation and constant threat of child removal as a form of care and rehabilitation. Social science played a key role in undergirding the Territory’s assertion that institutionalization was a modern, progressive, and even caring process for Hawai‘i’s children. Psychologist Stanley Porteus was at the center of producing such social scientific knowledge. A founding member of the Psychological Clinic at the University of Hawai‘i in 1922, Porteus is perhaps most well-known outside of Hawai‘i for the creation of the Porteus Maze Test, a nonverbal, spatial intelligence test designed to measure mental capacity for planning, as I will discuss further below. In Hawai‘i, he was involved not only with the development of psychology as an academic discipline at the University of Hawai‘i, but was also frequently consulted by the Territorial government, particularly in regards to the training schools, Waimano Home, and other public institutions run by the Territorial government.

In justifying why civilized society required such expensive institutions, in a policy recommendation report to the Territorial government, Porteus painted Indigenous societies as necessarily less compassionate. “There are no homes for dependents in primitive life,” wrote Porteus in a report published in 1949. “Also, the native who goes really crazy does not last long. There are no hospitals for the insane, nor for anyone else. Things are different in civilization.”³¹ To Porteus and many white Territorial leaders, this was the necessary burden of civilizing the relatively new US territory of Hawai‘i: the high cost of the responsibility of the state to care for and discipline a seemingly ever-increasing number of “dependents,” “delinquents,” criminals, and disabled people. The cost of the Territorial institutions was a long-standing and ongoing concern, often remarked upon in the annual reports of the schools, along with suggestions about how to lower costs. Porteus’s report was in part a defense of the need to continue funding these institutions. To Porteus, this

³⁰ Alexander S. Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 158.

³¹ Porteus, *The Institutions of the Territory of Hawaii and Their Policies, Plans and Needs for Sound Institutional Practices*, 9.

expensive responsibility was a sign of “civilization” both having higher standards of its citizens and being more compassionate toward them. Porteus portrayed Indigenous peoples as brutal out of necessity, noting, for example, that “among the Australian aborigines, roaming over huge stretches of almost foodless country, there is no room either for the weakling or the rebel.”³² Thus, Porteus reasoned, “the higher the standards of living – and by this, I do not mean more food and more conveniences but also higher standards of work and effort – then the greater number of people who cannot attain to them.”³³ Notably, Porteus believed that “civilization” also required greater intelligence, and that many Indigenous peoples would never be able to attain that intelligence.

The reference to Aboriginal Australians stemmed from Porteus being born in Australia, of “Irish-Scottish stock.”³⁴ This is notable for the purposes of this essay in the sense that Porteus was familiar with institutionalization and settler colonialism in the different but resonant settler colonial contexts of Australia, the continental United States, and Hawai‘i. He started his career as a teacher in 1913 at the Bell Street Special School “for the feeble-minded” in Fitzroy, outside of Melbourne, Victoria.³⁵ It was at Bell Street School that Porteus began developing his own intelligence test, which would be known as the Porteus Maze Test. In 1918, he moved to the United States, where he took up a position as director of Research at the Vineland Training School, an institution also designed for the “feeble-minded,” in New Jersey. Vineland was already a well-known institution for its “research program on mental retardation, clinical psychological testing, and child development” under psychologist Henry Goddard who was director of Research at the school from 1906 to 1918, and whom Porteus replaced.³⁶ At Vineland, Porteus continued to

³² Ibid., 2.

³³ Ibid., 3.

³⁴ Elizabeth Dole Porteus, *Let Us Go Exploring: The Life of Stanley D. Porteus, Hawaii’s Pioneer Psychologist* (Honolulu: Ku Pa‘a, 1991).

³⁵ Bell Street School was also sometimes referred to as Fitzroy School for the Feeble-Minded. It is likely that the students of this school were white and working-class, not Aboriginal. While he appears to have completed some academic coursework at the University of Melbourne, he never received a diploma. As noted in the vanity biography of Porteus written by his daughter-in-law Elizabeth Dole Porteus, without any training beyond his own interest and study, Porteus gradually moved from the role of a teacher to one that focused more on administering intelligence tests to children. His daughter-in-law describes the role he took up at Bell Street School in grand terms: he became “a practicing clinical psychologist” (though again, he had no training or credentials), she argues, “the first and only one in Australia.”

³⁶ Sandra Moss, “Vineland Training School,” in *Encyclopedia of New Jersey*, eds. Maxine N. Lurie and Marc Mappen (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), https://login.ezproxy.lib.utah.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/rutgersnj/vineland_training_school/0?institutionId=6487.

develop and tout his Maze Test and did further research on “cranial capacity and intelligence.”³⁷

Thus, the Hawai‘i Territorial government took Porteus as an expert because he had a long history of being understood as an expert at institutions for the “feeble-minded,” despite no formal education or training in psychology. Dean Saranillio puts it bluntly: “There is no shortage of evidence that he was making things up as he went.”³⁸ Certainly he came to Hawai‘i steeped in settler forms of knowing and “care” from other settler colonial contexts. By framing the Territorial government and its institutions as compassionate to “dependents,” Porteus ignored how “civilization” in fact created “dependents” in Hawai‘i in large part through the settler colonial dispossession of Native Hawaiians from land and ways of life that had sustained them for centuries before white settlement. The common Native Hawaiian adoptive practice of *hānai*, in which children were raised by family or friends who were not the biological parents, was especially targeted as a cause of needy and delinquent children. White reformers argued that *hānai* caused confusion and anxiety in children, though there was little evidence of this.³⁹ In fact, many of the children who wound up in Territorial institutions had not participated in *hānai* practices, but arguably could have benefited from them, given that they were often orphaned or had run away from untenable home situations. Yet, like many other practices of Native Hawaiian culture, *hānai* was discouraged in the Territory and white leaders sought to replace extended families with nuclear families, and communities’ own forms of care with modern institutions run by charities or the Territorial government, where “dependents” would be subject to additional training and “rehabilitation” to conform to white US culture. The “cause” of delinquency and dependency was often attributed to children’s families, whose cultures were pathologized as atavistic and incompatible with modern life.⁴⁰

As Susan Burch writes in the context of the history of Native Americans incarcerated at the Canton Asylum for “Insane Indians” in South Dakota between 1902 and 1934, “the violence of Canton Asylum was *collective* as well as *individual*” and did (and continues to do) much to break a “fundamental tenet” of many Indigenous communities – that of “being a good relative.”⁴¹ The Hawai‘i State Archives records on the training schools, which form the foundation of my research on this topic, are filled with official reports and

³⁷ Porteus, *Let Us Go Exploring*.

³⁸ Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire*, 79.

³⁹ Janine Richardson, “Keiki o Ka ‘Aina: Institutional Care for Hawaii’s Dependent Children,” PhD dissertation, University of Hawai‘i, 2005, 61, 76.

⁴⁰ Patricia McMahon Wallace, “A Study of the Role of the Family in the Lives of Some Honolulu Girl Delinquents,” Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts, no. 179, University of Hawai‘i, Honolulu, 1940.

⁴¹ Burch, *Committed*, 111, 60.

correspondence, but also with letters from parents and other kin asking for their children back. When examined from this angle, the “child taking” of the Territorial-era institutions, and their afterlives, perhaps helps to explain why so many Native Hawaiians in the Territorial period and beyond felt compelled to make sure their children spoke only good English (rather than Hawaiian or pidgin), and to think of themselves as American rather than Hawaiian.⁴² Though these sentiments have often been presented as robust consent to Hawai‘i’s annexation by the United States and eventual statehood, I suggest that they are also evidence of families desperate to keep their children, and terrified of losing them to indeterminate sentences in a government institution. In the following sections on Waiale‘e, Kawaiiloa, and Waimano, I attempt to read parts of each institution’s archive of largely official reports, social scientific studies, and other ephemera, against the grain to reveal the intertwined threads of the settler colonial process of replacing Hawaiian forms of care and kinship with institutional, “scientifically proven” ones, and the ways that critical histories of these institutions offer a more complex and contested history of Territorial Hawai‘i than many recognize.

The dominant discourses at each institution that each of the following sections examines – “delinquency” at Waiale‘e, “immorality” at Kawaiiloa, and “feble-mindedness” at Waimano – were deeply intertwined, and appeared at each institution. Yet social scientific knowledge claimed to be able to precisely identify, isolate, and/or (in some cases) rehabilitate these different categories as distinct pathologies that these different, specialized institutions would help care for or cure. Such knowledge, which in turn structured and justified the Territory of Hawai‘i’s policies of transinstitutionalization, was fundamentally grounded in settler ideas of race, Indigeneity, gender, sexuality, labor, and ableism. The discovery of “feble-mindedness” at Waiale‘e or Kawaiiloa could be the cause for transfer to Waimano, but as I discuss more below, the discourse of “feble-mindedness” also undergirded the particular fears white settlers had about “delinquent” boys and “immoral girls.” In the archives of these institutions, however, the self-assured ability of settler social science and Territorial public policy to effectively care for and “cure” children of delinquency, immorality, and feble-mindedness is shown to be, in practice, deeply contested and constantly challenged by the children incarcerated at these institutions, and their families, as well as the institution’s own administrations and governing boards.

⁴² This references my personal experience of hearing stories of how my mother and her generation of Native Hawaiian people grew up before and shortly after Hawai‘i became a state in 1959. For more on the tensions around statehood, see Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire*.

“Delinquency” at Waiale‘e Industrial School for Boys

Indeed, though the training schools were designed to “cure” delinquency and other bad behavior, many were concerned that the Waiale‘e Industrial School for Boys only further trained boys in crime. “We call this place a ‘training school.’ It is a school and it does provide training but one subject high on the curriculum is vice,” wrote Porteus of the Waiale‘e Industrial School for Boys in his 1949 report.⁴³ Other reports frequently remark on the number of boys incarcerated at Waiale‘e who went on to serve sentences at O‘ahu Prison.⁴⁴ Located on 733 acres on the remote North Shore of O‘ahu, distant from Honolulu, Waiale‘e sought to definitively remove youth from what officials understood to be the ill-effects of urban living. Boys at the school trained and worked largely in agriculture, both producing food to sustain the community of the school and on sugar and pineapple plantations located nearby. Yet, from its earliest days since its opening in 1902, Waiale‘e’s isolation, along with the school being routinely short-staffed (in part because it was difficult to recruit teachers to live so far from town at Waiale‘e), was also a weak point. Boys frequently ran away, and could be difficult to recapture.

The boys incarcerated at Waiale‘e were commonly committed because of charges of “delinquency.” A “delinquent” was defined by Territorial law as “Any minor who violates any law of the Territory or any county or city and county ordinance or who is incorrigible, vicious or immoral, or who is growing up in idleness or crime, or who is an habitual truant from school, or who habitually wanders about the streets in public places during school hours without lawful occupation or employment.”⁴⁵ Note that such a definition was particularly concerned with those who did not stay in the roles allotted to them – whether it was being truant from school or being in a public space without a job. Such a broad definition of a delinquent left enormous subjective judgment to law enforcement and courts. Notably, the majority of the young men sent to Waiale‘e were Native Hawaiian.⁴⁶

The school largely blamed the “delinquency” of the boys on the failures of their families. “In the main, these charges have come from homes which have

⁴³ Porteus, *The Institutions of the Territory of Hawaii and Their Policies, Plans and Needs for Sound Institutional Practices*, 39.

⁴⁴ “[T]oday of the five-hundred and eight inmates of Oahu Prison one-hundred and thirty-eight have been at Waiale School. A sad record!” Quote from “Biennial Report of the Board for the Waiale Training School for Boys and Kawaiola Training School for Girls 1938–39,” Hawai‘i State Archives.

⁴⁵ Walton McWilliams Gordon, “Some Educational Implications of Juvenile Delinquency,” MA thesis, University of Hawai‘i, Honolulu, 1934, 3–4.

⁴⁶ Official reports on Waiale‘e submitted to the Board of Industrial Schools and later the Department of Institutions, all accessed at the Hawai‘i State Archives, attest to this fact year after year.

failed in the proper training of their children,” noted a 1921 report.⁴⁷ This was perhaps the key difference in how Territorial officials understood children, still understood as innocent to some extent, as different from adults – that their bad behavior could be attributed to their families or a “poor home,” instead of being seen as only an individual character flaw. In the view of administrators of the training schools, the sentencing of a “wayward” boy at Waiale‘e from a “bad” family was not punitive to the boy, for whom it was a kind of rescue, though in effect, it punished the family (by taking away their child). “If his home is bad or his environment debasing, he should not be punished, he should be replanted,” reads a memo to the Board of Industrial Schools circa 1930. The memo further defines the job of an industrial school as “to reduce the population of the schools by constant (and of course careful) transplanting of the bulk of its entrants back into normal social environments.” The “transplanting” would not return boys to their “poor homes” but to parole jobs and “home placements,” after “the desirable disciplining of the mind and body.”⁴⁸ Such comments were at least partially concerned with the cost of running the training schools, and submitted along with arguments for how the schools could be maintained at lower cost. However, in practice, many children were still kept at Waiale‘e and Kawaioloa for indeterminate sentences.

The other reason often remarked upon to explain the cause of the “delinquency” of the boys incarcerated at Waiale‘e was their “low mentality.” In a 1934 report, the superintendent of Waiale‘e notes the need for more “psychological” testing and the transfer of “morons and feeble-minded” boys to Waimano Home.⁴⁹ A major section of Porteus’s comments in his 1949 report on the boys at Waiale‘e similarly focused on their intelligence. Undoubtedly, Porteus saw what he called the “Hawaiian and Oriental” boys (the vast majority of the Waiale‘e population) as mentally inferior to “Caucasians,” a finding consistent with his observations in his 1926 book, coauthored with Marjorie Babcock, *Temperament and Race*, where he argued that Hawai‘i’s non-white population (including the Portuguese) averaged 73.3 percent of the intelligence of white people, with Filipinos and Hawaiians having the most “racial defects.”⁵⁰ Thus, he noted that spending much money on attempting to seriously educate such populations would be akin to “helping lame dogs over

⁴⁷ Ernest Bryant Hoag, *Survey of the Boys’ Industrial School, Hawaii* (Honolulu: Printed by Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 1921), 3.

⁴⁸ “Memorandum for the Members of the Board of Industrial Schools.” Undated [circa 1930s]. Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

⁴⁹ “Biennial Report of the Board of Industrial Schools of the Territory of Hawaii, For the eighteen month period beginning July 1st 1933 and ending December 31st 1934.” Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

⁵⁰ Stanley David Porteus and Marjorie Elizabeth Babcock, *Temperament and Race* (Boston: R. G. Badger, 1926), 110.

stiles, and when they are over they are still lame.”⁵¹ Notably, this book was based on research produced for the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association after the 1924 Sugar Strike on Kaua’i that resulted in the deaths of sixteen Filipino workers, known as the Hanapēpē Massacre.⁵² As Dean Saranillio notes, such research was “supposed to help white settler leaders better understand and control Hawai’i’s nonwhite population.”⁵³ Because of their inferior intelligence, Porteus argued more specifically in his 1949 report on the Territory’s institutions, that the boys should receive basic instruction in the three R’s (reading, writing, and arithmetic). Porteus also put little stock in industrial training, however, noting that “practically speaking, they are as much outside the boys’ interests and abilities as ordinary school subjects.”⁵⁴

The one thing Porteus thought the boys were fit for was “outdoor work such as gardening,” which justified his recommendation that the older students at Waiale‘e should be transferred to a forestry camp. Yet, he also makes a long digression in the report disagreeing with a previous report’s characterization of “nearly forty percent” of the Waiale‘e population as being of “very low mental classifications.” Instead, he cites his own Porteus Maze Test findings on the Waiale‘e population to note “an unsatisfactory average” in “practical intelligence” but distinguishing much of the population as merely “delinquent” rather than “feble-minded.”

Such classifications all had particular histories and nuances specific to the practices of early to mid twentieth-century intelligence testing, psychology, and psychiatry in the United States. Porteus’s Maze Test was one intelligence test among many; the most widely used at the time being the Stanford-Binet. The Porteus Maze Test purported to uniquely measure what Porteus called “planfulness,” or planning capacity and foresight. It consisted of a graduated series of printed mazes (a total of eleven designs for the series for children aged three to twelve and a similar advanced version for those aged thirteen and up), which subjects would take by tracing a route through a maze printed on the exam sheet. The test was considered an “unsuccessful trial” as soon as the subject drew their line into a blind alley, and the test was considered failed after two trials for each test. Like other intelligence tests, the test scores resulted in a “mental age,” which was compared to the subject’s actual age to classify the subject’s intelligence. Porteus argued that his test provided an important supplement to the Stanford-Binet, allowing for a more accurate measure of a subject’s “social fitness” as compared to educational ability. Tests that gauged educational ability, Porteus wrote in touting his own test, “do not

⁵¹ Ibid., 112.

⁵² Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire*, 77.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Porteus, *The Institutions of the Territory of Hawaii and Their Policies, Plans and Needs for Sound Institutional Practices*.

detect the mentally unstable, who form a large proportion of the socially unfit.”⁵⁵

In short, then, the difference to Porteus between the “delinquent” and the “feebleminded” was that the delinquent was capable of some industry, though they lacked the ability or desire to fit in with society, as opposed to the feebleminded who was intellectually unable to participate in society. In this distinction, Porteus seems to both promote his own intelligence test as more accurate and reserve the Waiale‘e population as proper subjects for agricultural labor, rather than subjects fit for the Waimano Home for the Feeble-Minded. As I will discuss further in the following sections, these distinctions Porteus made about the male youth of Waiale‘e fit with broader trends across the United States that understood female “feebleminded” people as greater threats to the national “gene pool” and thus more deserving of indefinite institutionalization and/or sterilization.⁵⁶ Thus, alongside his explicitly racist view of Native Hawaiian and Asian immigrants in Hawai‘i as mentally inferior to white people, Porteus held out a progressive hope for rehabilitating these “delinquent” but not really “feebleminded” boys into a productive labor force for the Territory. I would draw attention to how this racist sentiment supplements Porteus’s injunction to the Territorial government that “we” are responsible for rehabilitating such populations into proper adjustment to civilized society. In other words, the racism of seeing Native Hawaiians and Asian immigrants as inherently less than white people informed Porteus’s sense of social duty to these groups. In this way, racist views were not incompatible with reformers’ sense that they were doing charitable and civilized work; rather, this sense was dependent on scientifically argued racism that upheld the anti-Indigenous and anti-immigrant sentiments that the ideological structure of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i operated through.

At times, the families of children sent to the training schools were also subjected to intelligence testing. The results of their tests would be included in the files kept by social service agencies and used as rationale for removing children from their families. For example, as noted in a Master’s thesis on “Truancy in the Schools of Honolulu,” by Esther Roberts Holmer in 1935, multiple case studies note the “mental age” of “truant” boys’ mothers. Mrs. Salazar, for instance, the mother of Will, a “Portuguese-Hawaiian boy of 12 who has been truant . . .” is described as having a “Binet mental age of 10 years, I.Q. 72; Porteus mental age of 9 years – good rote memory, though

⁵⁵ Stanley David Porteus, *Porteus Tests – the Vineland Revision* (Vineland, NJ: Vineland Training School, Department of Research, 1919), 17.

⁵⁶ Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Fixing the Poor: Eugenic Sterilization and Child Welfare in the Twentieth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017); Michael A. Rembis, *Defining Deviance: Sex, Science, and Delinquent Girls, 1890–1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

retarded ability – showed very little planning, is easily confused and disturbed . . .”⁵⁷ Holmer also notes that Will has a “low mental age, (10 years, at 12)” and that “Since his mother is definitely ‘retarded’ and at least two other children are ‘slow,’ it is reasonable to suppose that none of the family is very brilliant.”⁵⁸ Overall, intelligence testing of Native Hawaiian parents provided the Territorial government and its agencies seemingly hard, scientific evidence that poor and working-class Native Hawaiian families were not deserving of having children and that the Territory should intervene.

Such rationales that pathologized Native Hawaiian families and perpetuated an inherently racist notion that Native Hawaiians had lower “mental ages” and intelligence than white people could always be used as an implicit or explicit explanation as to why Waiale‘e did not often succeed at reforming “delinquent” boys. Though Waiale‘e incarcerated youth who were Native Hawaiian as well as Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, Puerto Rican, and other members of immigrant communities in Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiians were often singled out as especially irredeemable. A 1938 Master’s thesis in Education from the University of Hawai‘i did a “follow-up study” of fifty men who had been enrolled at Waiale‘e. The author, Elizabeth Miller, determined that thirty men were “well-adjusted” to society after their time at Waiale‘e, and twenty of the men were “poorly-adjusted.”⁵⁹ Miller pointedly comments that “fourteen of the poorly adjusted men were Hawaiians or Part-Hawaiians.”⁶⁰ Additionally, nine of these twenty men were in prison, three on parole and one in the Territorial Hospital. Miller made her judgments about social adjustment based on a survey that tallied a range of categories including profession, wages, quality of their neighborhood and home’s furniture, neatness of their children, and if they drank alcohol or not. Overall, she concluded that her study demonstrated the difficulties of readjustment for Waiale‘e graduates and argued for “the sympathetic understanding and help of the more fortunate members of the community.”⁶¹

Thus, Miller, like Porteus, saw herself as merely relaying the facts about Native Hawaiian men’s tendency to be more poorly adjusted than other men previously enrolled at Waiale‘e, though of course her survey judgments were subjective. Without investigating more into why Native Hawaiian men might be more poorly adjusted than others, she leaves readers with the sense that they are just inherently more prone to criminality. Yet, she argues that her

⁵⁷ Esther Roberts Holmer, “Truancy in the Schools of Honolulu,” MA thesis, University of Hawai‘i, Honolulu, 1935, 176.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Ruley Miller, “A Follow-up Study of Fifty Former Waiale‘e Training School Boys,” MA thesis, University of Hawai‘i, 1938.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

finding is simply evidence of the need for more charity toward Native Hawaiian and other men of color who are paroled from Waiale‘e, thereby distancing herself from the possibility that her findings are racist. This rhetorical move, conscious or not, on the part of Porteus and Miller, is a powerful one in the context of science and the structure of settler colonialism. It allows the damage of settler colonialism (Native Hawaiians’s dispossession of land, culture, and nation) to be erased in the discourse of white settler leaders and scientists “helping” Native Hawaiians, who, in the evidence of settler science, are inherently backward, inferior, and poorly adjusted. The operation of this move does not depend on whether Miller or Porteus are individually racist or personally supportive of all the aims of the Territorial government in regard to Native Hawaiians. Rather, such rhetoric naturalized the structure of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i, by both painting the Territorial government’s institutions as solely charitable and portraying Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, and others as mentally inferior to white settlers.

“Immorality” at Kawailoa Training School for Girls

While Waiale‘e was often considered a failure even by Territorial officials and consultants like Porteus, the Kawailoa Training School for Girls (also called the Maunawili School for Girls or the Girls’ Industrial School) was commonly seen as more successful and modern. Before opening the campus in a rural area on the windward side of O‘ahu near the towns of Kailua and Waimānalo in 1929, a previous girls’ school was located in Mō‘ili‘ili in urban Honolulu. The school was moved due to space constraints and the idea that the girls would benefit from a rural environment, instead of an urban campus where, as noted a 1925 report by the school’s superintendent, “men of questionable character are continually getting in touch with our girls.”⁶²

Instead of reforming the petty crimes of truancy or delinquency focused on at the Boys’ school, the crimes and methods of rehabilitation at the Girls’ school were focused on perceived sexual immorality. Girls were committed to Kawailoa in large part for perceived “sex offenses” or “sex delinquencies.” As with Waiale‘e, the blame for this “immorality” was the child’s family and, by extension, Native Hawaiian culture more broadly. “The majority of the girls are committed because of sex delinquencies, are part Hawaiian and are from families known to many social agencies,” notes a 1938 report.⁶³ As with Dorothy Wu whose story this essay began with, a “sex delinquency” did not need to involve actual proven sexual relations but merely the appearance of

⁶² “Reports of the Board of Industrial Schools of the Territory of Hawaii,” *Hawaii Gazette*, 1931.

⁶³ “Report of Kawailoa Training School for Girls,” January 1938. Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

improper “association” with boys or men. The primary end goal of rehabilitation at Kawaioloa was to train girls to be more moral and equipped to perform domestic labor so they could work as maids in wealthy homes until they married and kept homes for themselves. As a 1938 report puts it, “The purpose of a correctional institution is twofold: Vocational training and social readjustment. In a girls’ school, vocational training should emphasize home making, which is the probable and hoped-for ultimate profession of any normal woman.”⁶⁴

One acceptable reason for parole from Kawaioloa, and to some Territorial officials the most desired outcome, was if a girl was to be married. Such marriages required the prior permission of the juvenile court and/or the Board of Industrial Schools.⁶⁵ We can think of this transfer, from Kawaioloa to marriage, as a kind of transinstitutionalization that is different from but related to the transfers from the training schools to O’ahu Prison or Waimano House. Marriage was a Territorial institution too, which sought to “rehabilitate” common Native Hawaiian forms of intimacy and kinship into a hetero-patriarchal structure that aligned with white, settler colonial norms. Legal marriage was not uniformly valued by Native Hawaiians and “common-law” relationships, which could be easily dissolved as desired by either party, were (and still are) widely accepted. So too, same-sex relationships and nonbinary gender identities and roles were traditionally accepted and valued. Concerns over sexual relationships between the young women incarcerated at Kawaioloa are often commented on in the archival records. A 1938 report makes note of a recent policy change allowing “the presence of friends other than relatives on visiting days . . . [so that] Boy friends may call on girls and correspond with older girls. This situation has practically eliminated homosexual practices which used to be so rampant at the school.”⁶⁶ Still, this concern was very active in 1945, as noted in the handbook given to girls on their arrival at Kawaioloa, which emphasizes as a rule that “Holding hands, kissing other girls, and walking with arms around each other are forbidden. ‘Boy haircuts’ are not permitted. Girls are expected to be friendly with all, but not too intimate with any of the other students.”⁶⁷ Such a rule makes clear how potential lesbian or queer relationships among those incarcerated at Kawaioloa were threatening because of how they went against heteronormative expectations but also

⁶⁴ Emphasis in original. “Kawaioloa Biennial Report to Board of Industrial Schools, 1937–1938.” Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

⁶⁵ “Girls who marry with the full permission of the Board, shall be granted a RELEASE from the girls’ school.” Letter, March 2, 1934. Folder Kawaioloa Training School, General Correspondence, 1934–35. Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

⁶⁶ “Superintendent’s Report: Kawaioloa Training School for Girls, December 1938.” Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

⁶⁷ Nell Elder, ed., *Girl’s Handbook for the Kawaioloa Training School for Girls* (Department of Institutions, Territory of Hawai‘i, 1945), 18. Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

because pleasure and intimacy (sexual or not) could threaten to break down the discipline of the school.

Though a heterosexual marriage was presented as the model of success for the future of a girl incarcerated at Kawaioloa, presumably one of the reasons why the sexual “immorality” of Native Hawaiian and Asian girls was of such concern at Kawaioloa was a prevalent assumption by social scientists and the general public at this time that they would reproduce similarly immoral children who would also not be beholden to the white, settler colonial norms of Territorial Hawai‘i. This concern attached to so-called “feeble-minded” women in particular ways. As Michael Rembis puts it in his study of a girls’ training school in Illinois, they “reproduced at a much higher rate than their ‘normal-minded’ counterparts, swelling the ranks of society’s ‘unfit’.”⁶⁸ Such concerns nationally spurred many involuntary or coerced sterilization campaigns in many states in the early twentieth century.⁶⁹ However, this eugenic concern also justified indefinite segregation of feeble-minded women, especially of child-bearing age, from society. In my research so far, these concerns are not explicitly stated in the records of Kawaioloa or Waimano Home (similarly I have not yet seen records of sterilization), but this discourse about the danger of feeble-minded women reproducing at high rates certainly helps explain why the “immorality” of Native Hawaiian young women would have been so important to check and rehabilitate.

The official staff manual of Kawaioloa in 1945 describes “the building up of a desirable attitude toward work” as key to the rehabilitation of delinquent girls. “Most of our wards have never been taught that work is an important part of every satisfactory life, and so regard it as punishment,” the manual notes.⁷⁰ The school placed a heavy emphasis on getting the girls accustomed to domestic and agricultural labor along with building skills such as sewing, and weaving lauhala mats, fans, and baskets. Many could be paroled into jobs as cooks or in laundries. In the manual given to those newly incarcerated at Kawaioloa, the superintendent Pearl McCallum warned: “You will find that everyone works, and you will be expected to work. Do not try to shirk when you are given a job to do, but remember that the more you learn while you are here, the more successful you will be when you leave the school to make your own living.”⁷¹ Such training and systems emphasized the necessity of the girls fitting into the capitalist, heteropatriarchal society of the Territory.

⁶⁸ Rembis, *Defining Deviance*, 24.

⁶⁹ Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Ladd-Taylor, *Fixing the Poor*.

⁷⁰ Nell Elder, ed., *Staff Manual for the Kawaioloa Training School for Girls* (Department of Institutions, Territory of Hawai‘i, 1945). Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

⁷¹ Elder, *Girl’s Handbook for the Kawaioloa Training School for Girls*.

Though Kawaioloa generally enjoyed a better reputation than Waiale‘e, Kawaioloa nonetheless faced many of the same challenges. The archival records of Kawaioloa attest to the many challenges the institution faced in reforming the children incarcerated in its cottages into “useful women.” Archival materials note many incidents of runaways, strikes, and even occasionally violence against school teachers or staff. In February 1939, a report notes eighty-four instances of girls running away from Kawaioloa within one month (this included many multiple attempts by the same girls; the total population of Kawaioloa at this time was 133).⁷² A 1938 report notes that in one cottage of the school, “The girls were noisy, unruly and quarrelsome. There were two runaways and many more had the notion in their heads. They broke window panes and yanked nails off from other windows. They used lipstick and rouge and smoked in the house. This last offense was by a group of six girls who continued their misbehavior by a so-called ‘strike’ in class.”⁷³ Apparently the “strike” meant that the girls refused to go to class. Their punishment was “two mornings of isolation at home in holokus.” A holoku is a missionary-styled Hawaiian dress, which despite its colonial foundation, likely would have signaled particular connections and affinities to Native Hawaiian culture, in contrast to contemporary American-styled clothing. That wearing a holoku was considered a punishment underscores the extent to which Native Hawaiian culture was pathologized and stigmatized at Kawaioloa. In the reports, being made to wear a holoku and stay in isolation was presented as a kinder punishment than previous protocols enacted at Kawaioloa of corporal punishment, locking girls in a “punish” cell, or shaving a girl’s hair.

A later report from 1938 includes an attempt to explain the frequency of runaways from Kawaioloa, amid apparent bad press. Superintendent Edith Field notes that she has:

interviewed each runaway returned after I took office. The Board might be interested to know that they all run away for one of given reasons:

1. The excitement of the chase. (These are in the majority and most of these expressed themselves as glad they were caught.)
2. Quarrels among the girls.
3. Bad handling on the part of the staff.
4. Boredom from dull routine, and there is too much of that left.
5. The boy-friend they must see.⁷⁴

⁷² “Superintendent’s Report: Kawaioloa Training School for Girls, February 1939.” Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

⁷³ “Kawaioloa Training School for Girls: Report for the Month of July, 1938.” Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

⁷⁴ Edith Field, “Supplementary Report, October 8, 1938.” Accessed Hawai‘i State Archives.

Field's interpretation of the reasons for those incarcerated at Kawaihoa running away acknowledges minor forms of responsibility on the part of the institution: that there has been some "bad handling on the part of the staff" and that the school has a "dull routine." But largely, she sees running away as merely bad behavior or immorality – the wildness of the "excitement of the chase" or the loose nature of girls wanting to see a "boy-friend," underscoring the kind of perceived "sex offenses" that often got girls committed to Kawaihoa in the first place.

However, Superintendent Field's account of the causes of running away contrasts with first-hand accounts by the "runaways" themselves. In a 1938 "Red Roof Weekly" newsletter produced by girls at Kawaihoa, a recent runaway named Violet who was returned to the school is interviewed. Asked why she ran away, she answers first, "One reason because of being my baby's birthday. Another reason was that Mrs. Hoke said I had to behave for four or five weeks. So I was burnt up and took off." The interviewer, another girl at the school, asks if it was really so hard to behave for four or five weeks. Violet admits that it is not so hard, and when asked again why she ran away, she says, "Oh, for pleasure." This small glimpse into the life of a young woman at Kawaihoa notes that her reasons for running away had primarily to do with returning to and reconnecting with her family and simply wanting to experience pleasure and live a free life. Violet is referred to in the newsletter as a girl, but actually she is also a mother. She has a baby that she is apparently prevented from seeing regularly; the note of it being her baby's birthday suggests that it may have been her baby's first birthday, traditionally an especially important milestone that was and still is marked with a large lū'au, or feast and party. From the archival record, there were many pregnant girls committed to the school. In some cases, it appears Kawaihoa became the place the juvenile court would send any unmarried pregnant girl, despite objections from Kawaihoa superintendents.⁷⁵ It is unclear from the records I have accessed so far exactly how babies of those incarcerated at Kawaihoa were handled. It appears that sometimes babies were allowed to remain with girls at Kawaihoa for at least a short time after birth, but were likely separated from their mothers and sent to extended families or other "home placements" within their first year of life. This is another example of how institutionalization broke families and non-settler forms of care; in this case, we see the intergenerational impact as Violet is separated not only from her own parents but also her own child.

We know that like at Waiale'e, intelligence tests and other social scientific studies were conducted at Kawaihoa, and that transfers were regularly made to

⁷⁵ Letter to Superintendent of Kawaihoa from DH Case, Judge, Circuit Court October 21 1934. Kawaihoa Training School General Correspondence, 1934–35. Accessed Hawai'i State Archives.

Waimano Home.⁷⁶ Yet, from the record I have accessed so far, the emphasis in the institution's official reports is less on the low intelligence of those incarcerated at Kawaihoa and more with using psychology to "treat problem cases." In fact, in at least one instance, high IQs are cited as a reason for running away: "It is unfortunate that we have so little to offer our brighter girls," a 1939 report remarks. "Among the 10 chronic runaways from Aloha are 6 girls with I.Q.'s of better than 100. One of these has an I.Q. of 123, had completed 3 years of high school and should be in college."⁷⁷ Instead of low intelligence, at least through the reports filed from the late 1930s, "over-emotionalism" or "emotional problems" are cited as the driving factor that explains the girls' immoral behavior. Accordingly, "mental hygiene" and other "psychological" care are posited as an appropriate treatment to help rehabilitate those at Kawaihoa. An extended anecdote in a report by Superintendent Frances Brugger in 1938 describes the desired outcome of promoting "mental hygiene":

What is happening to the girls is the most important. One girl who has run away 7 times and burned her mattress after her last return, asked to have a special talk with the superintendent. Quite tongue-tied she finally "got out" that she thought she was trying to run away from herself. She asked if she could have a note-book and pencil so that she could write her thoughts . . . Following is a passage copied from her note-book: "For after all I am not helping Angela Roberts but the one that is in Angela Roberts. The real me, the me that I lost and only now found it. I had to go into despair to find it. But it was worth it. I am trying to straighten the 'me' up."⁷⁸

This account encourages viewing Kawaihoa staff as kind and caring therapists, who just want to facilitate self-discovery and self-reflection in those they keep locked up. This account, however genuine, emphasizes the image of this girl as troubled and troublesome (a self-image she has internalized and desires to "straighten up") instead of the fact that this girl is being kept indefinitely, against her will in an institution. She was not running away from herself but from Kawaihoa and the settler colonial, heteropatriarchal future that institution imagined for her.

⁷⁶ Porteus was well-acquainted with the institution; in January 1938, a report notes that Porteus "showed his movies of Africa and Australia one Saturday night." A routine description of the institution from this same report notes "the intelligence level [of those incarcerated at Kawaihoa] is from I.Q. 58 to 130, though the majority are between 70 and 80 I.Q." "Report to the Board of Industrial Schools, January 1938." Accessed Hawai'i State Archives.

⁷⁷ "Superintendent's Report: Kawaihoa Training School, March 1939." Accessed Hawai'i State Archives.

⁷⁸ "Report to the Board of Industrial Schools, January 1938." Accessed Hawai'i State Archives.

“Feeble-mindedness” at Waimano Home

When children incarcerated at Waiale‘e or Kawailoa were determined, often through the results of intelligence testing, to be “feeble-minded,” they could be transferred on to the Waimano Home for the Feeble-Minded, which opened in 1921. Waimano was situated on 612 acres of Territorial land overlooking Pearl City and Pearl Harbor, on the leeward side of O‘ahu.⁷⁹ Waimano held both children and adults. Commitment required the ruling of a circuit court judge, but “any adult relative, guardian, or custodian of the individual sought to be committed, or any authorized social agency, or an agent of any governmental department or bureau, may file in court, an application for the commitment of the individual into Waimano Home.”⁸⁰ A “certificate stating that individual is in need of institutionalization,” was required by the court, “verified by a committee consisting of a psychiatrist, a clinical psychologist and a psychiatric social worker.”⁸¹ Before the opening of Waimano, so-called feeble-minded children, or “juvenile defectives,” as one study put it, would have been committed to the Territory’s training schools. But as those schools became overcrowded and their superintendents argued that “feeble-minded” wards made their gendered “rehabilitation” of “delinquent” boys and “immoral” girls more difficult, they advocated for a specialized institution, which would become Waimano. As with Waiale‘e and Kawailoa, Native Hawaiians were overrepresented at Waimano.⁸²

Waimano Home, throughout its history, was largely focused on “custodial care,” though some administrations attempted more concerted efforts toward education and training than others. Tamotsu Ishida, writing in 1955 about Waimano, notes that the proximity of the institution to the military base at Pearl Harbor and the beginning of World War II guided some of these changes: “It was seen that the Home could play a valuable part in the war by the production of vegetables on the farm. Thus, the agricultural program was accelerated and at the same time, it was seen that much help could be given the defective in other fields of vocational training.”⁸³ It is unclear how much actually changed in practice. Reports from the mid late 1940s continued to

⁷⁹ Francis Tamotsu Ishida, “A Comparison of the Activities of the Social Service Department at Waimano Home, Territory of Hawaii, with Present Day Activities in Social Service Departments in Institutions for the Mentally Defective,” Thesis for the Degree of Master of Social Work, no. 25, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, Honolulu, 1955.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 39; C. K. Szego, “The Sound of Rocks Aquiver?: Composing Racial Ambivalence in Territorial Hawai‘i,” *Journal of American Folklore* 123, no. 487 (2010): 58.

⁸³ Ishida, *A Comparison of the Activities of the Social Service Department at Waimano Home*, 31.

describe Waimano's primary function as "custodial care," a characteristic which distinguished Waimano from the Territorial Hospital for the Mentally Ill, which was more "equipped for making diagnoses and therapeutic treatment" of the "insane."⁸⁴

Many of those incarcerated at Waimano were kept there for their entire lives. A 1942 report estimates 68 percent of the total population "will remain there for their entire lifetime" because they do not fall into the "higher class" of the "feble-minded" who are "taught many things and, when possible, are placed on parole."⁸⁵ This report further broke down how the "feble-minded" were categorized, largely according to intelligence test scores: as "moron, imbecile, idiot, and incorrigible. The last named are few in number, fortunately, but require constant vigilance since they are dangerous both to themselves and the attendants. A moron's I.Q. is 50–69 inclusive – the imbecile's, 20–49 inclusive and the idiot's, below 20."⁸⁶ Porteus and the staff of the Psychological Clinic appear to have been very involved with such testing and categorization at Waimano, as with the training schools.⁸⁷ Porteus, in the same 1949 report where he castigates Waiale'e for training boys in "vice," notes that Waimano is "in a healthy state, with, at present, adequate accommodations except for obsolete buildings in the girls department." He does recommend better treatment plans and the creation of a new director of research (similar to the position he held at Vineland).⁸⁸

Similar to, and inextricably intertwined with, official explanations of the causes of "delinquency" and "immorality" described by staff and administrators at Waiale'e and Kawailoa, the cause of "feble-mindedness" was understood to rest with the child's family. Though "feble-mindedness" was generally understood as a genetic handicap which was hereditary, and thus not always the intentional fault of a family, there was also a sense that the family was irresponsible for having children to whom such traits would be passed on. This was shaped by the fears, mentioned above in relation to pregnancies at Kawailoa, about "feble-minded" women reproducing at greater numbers than average and dragging down the "racial stock" of the nation. In a 1942

⁸⁴ Robert G. Dodge, "Mentally Ill and Defectives," Report 1948, no. 1 (Legislative Reference Bureau, Honolulu, 1949), 6.

⁸⁵ Hawaii Department of Institutions, Zaida Nelson, *Unto the Least of These . . .* (Honolulu, 1942), 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ "As a result of the thorough work of the Psychological Clinic of the University of Hawai'i under Dr. Stanley D. Porteus, one of the outstanding men of the United States in his field, it is probable that no Institution in any state has more exact information on the mental capacity of its patients." Hawaii Department of Institutions, 10.

⁸⁸ Porteus, *The Institutions of the Territory of Hawaii and Their Policies, Plans and Needs for Sound Institutional Practices*, 102.

report on Waimano, the pathologization and presumed genetic nature of “feeblemindedness” as well as “delinquency,” “immorality,” and criminality more broadly is clear in this quote:

One case was cited in which there were thirteen members in the family originally. There have been four deaths in the past few years. Four are at Waimano Home. Two are in Oahu Prison and both Kawailoa Training School for Girls and Waiale Training School for Boys have representatives in the same family. Does not this one example – and there are others comparable to it! – prove the necessity of indexing the feebleminded in the Territory and of institutionalizing the most urgent cases?⁸⁹

This quote presents the institutionalization of many of members of the same family, throughout the carceral institutions of the Territory of Hawai‘i as evidence of the supposed dangers of “feeblemindedness.” Though a race is not mentioned in reference to this (and “others comparable”), for many reading this report, given the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians at all of these institutions, it would likely have been a Native Hawaiian family they pictured.

This use of the discourse of the “feebleminded” as a danger to modern, settler society is a potent form of settler ableism, a term used by American Studies scholar Jessica Cowling to draw attention to the ways that settler colonialism is structured by ableist logics.⁹⁰ Ableism, as Susan Burch defines it, is “a system of power and privilege that hierarchically organizes people and societies based on particular cultural values of productivity, competitive achievement, efficiency, capacity and progress.”⁹¹ Settler ableism is evident in the ways that settler ideas of “normality, fitness, and competency” have been used to judge Indigenous peoples, and so often designate them in need of “rehabilitation,” assimilation, or other forms of institutionalization and correction.⁹² The assumption that Waimano Home would segregate and properly care for the “feebleminded” was a settler ableist one that took for granted that everyone should aspire to white, settler forms of intelligence (especially including white settler ideas of productivity, given how Waimano emphasized training and preparing those incarcerated for jobs or at least work in the gardens at Waimano). Settler ableism also structured the assumptions that dominated Waimano, Waiale‘e and Kawailoa, that non-white forms of care (including Native Hawaiian families caring for their children) were not sufficient, modern, or appropriate, as with the references to the low intelligence of Hawaiian mothers whose sons were “delinquent” and therefore sent to Waiale‘e.

⁸⁹ Hawaii Department of Institutions, *Unto the Least of These . . .*, 12.

⁹⁰ Burch, *Committed*, 9.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

While I have not been able to find much in my research so far on how Native Hawaiians or Asians in Hawai'i may have understood different forms of intelligence, certainly categorizing and institutionalizing people based on their scores on Western-designed intelligence tests was not a traditional practice. Permanent institutionalization in other contexts was heartily resisted by Native Hawaiians; namely, in the case of leprosy or Hansen's disease during this same period, we know that many Native Hawaiian families fought the Territorial government taking their family members who had been diagnosed with Hansen's disease to the so-called leper colony of Kalaupapa on the island of Moloka'i.⁹³ Resistance or reluctance to commit children or adult family members to Waimano appears to have been a common enough reaction that a study on Waimano from 1955 notes that one of the main tasks of a caseworker at Waimano would involve explaining to parents that "institutionalization is usually long-term," and further that "... they must leave the patient in the institution until such time that the staff feels that the child is ready to return home, to go on a work placement, or to go to family care. It is highly probable too that in many instances the family must be helped to sever ties for the good of the patient."⁹⁴ This description of what it meant to institutionalize a child at Waimano Home showcases how cruel and carceral this practice could be. Not only would children not be released until "the staff feels that the child is ready" but also, "in many instances," Waimano would recommend completely cutting the child off from their family. Again, in many explicit and implicit ways, Waimano, like Waiale'e and Kawailoa, emphasized through settler ableism that Native Hawaiian and other non-white families were incompetent, and that their children were often better off without them.

Conclusion

The histories of Waiale'e, Kawailoa and Waimano have rarely been featured in official histories of Hawai'i, but many people in Hawai'i are familiar with these institutions because of family ties and stories lived and passed down to them. These institutions also live on in literal and haunting ways. Kawailoa is now the site of the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility, a state juvenile correctional facility. The ruins of some of the buildings at Waiale'e remain

⁹³ Adria L. Imada, "Lonely Together: Subaltern Family Albums and Kinship During Medical Incarceration," *Photography and Culture* 11, no. 3 (September 2, 2018): 297–321, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17514517.2018.1465651>; Kerri A. Inglis, *Ma'i Lepera: Disease and Displacement in Nineteenth-Century Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

⁹⁴ Ishida, *A Comparison of the Activities of the Social Service Department at Waimano Home*, 10.

visible from the highway and are well-storied as a haunted site; officially, after Waiale'e closed, the campus was used by the University of Hawai'i as a "livestock experiment station." Waimano is also storied as a haunted place, and has even been used as the setting for spooky TV shows; officially, the state continues to use some of the buildings as offices. By telling the histories of these institutions together, my hope is that we can move away from both uncritical histories of the Territorial period in Hawai'i and passing interest in these sites as spooky. This chapter has attempted to show how focusing on the ways these institutions deployed interlocking discourses of "delinquency," "immorality," and "feble-mindedness," offers a critical understanding of the ways that the Territory of Hawai'i instituted settler colonial hierarchies (of race, gender, sexuality, and ability, among others) by pathologizing Native Hawaiian and other non-white forms of care and family. That children and their families resisted institutionalization and attempted to continue to care for each other demonstrates not only their humanity, but a powerful if overlooked critique of settler colonialism.

I hope this chapter also provides readers a different perspective on social science and its complicity with settler colonialism, with specific reference to Stanley Porteus and the Psychological Clinic and their work across these Territorial institutions, but also more broadly. In 1974, shortly after Porteus's death, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa named one of its buildings "Porteus Hall." Ethnic Studies and allied students immediately protested, but these efforts were initially unsuccessful.⁹⁵ In 1998, the university's Board of Regents finally agreed to rename the building, though the change did not occur until 2001.⁹⁶ At the heart of the protests was Porteus's major published text, *Temperament and Race* (1926), which as discussed above, portrayed white people as the most intelligent race, while Filipinos and Native Hawaiians were the least intelligent. This history of the ethics of commemorating Porteus demonstrates that though the psychologist was a prominent leader and well-respected in Hawai'i by the white elite during his lifetime, his legacy has been significantly contested by Native Hawaiians and other students of color. However, because this fight over the name of Porteus Hall focused so much on the individual man, I would argue that less attention has been paid to the broader legacies of his and his colleagues' work in applying intelligence testing and encouraging the Territory to use the results of those tests to institutionalize or transinstitutionalize people who did not readily accede to white, settler norms of gender, sexuality, and ability. This chapter is one step toward beginning that broader work,

⁹⁵ "ISAR – Stanley Porteus Biography," www.ferris-pages.org/ISAR/bios/Porteus/stannard.htm.

⁹⁶ "Porteus Hall | Building Names | University of Hawaii at Manoa," <https://libweb.hawaii.edu/names/porteus.html>.

which continues to be urgent precisely because of the often painful inter-generational legacies of Waiale‘e, Kawaioloa, and Waimano that continue to reverberate across many Hawaiian families today, and the still prevalent assumption that the Territorial period was benign, as well as the legitimacy many social sciences still lend the settler colonial state as they take and institutionalize children.