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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

BRINGING THE ALOHA SPIRIT TO A MAINLAND CAMPUS:
EXPERIENCES OF NATIVE HAWAIIAN STUDENTS
PURSUING THEIR COLLEGE DEGREES

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
School of Leadership, Policy, and Development:
Higher Education and P-12 Education
Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership (HESAL)

December 2017

This Dissertation by: Alethea N. Stovall

Entitled: *Bringing the Aloha Spirit to a Mainland Campus: Experiences of Native Hawaiian Students Pursuing Their College Degrees*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in School of Leadership, Policy, and Development: Higher Education and P-12 Education, Program of Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership (HESAL)

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ABSTRACT

Stovall, Alethea N. *Bringing the Aloha Spirit to a Mainland Campus: Experiences of Native Hawaiian Students Pursuing Their College Degrees*. Published Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2017.

Four undergraduate students shared stories of their experiences while navigating a Predominately White Mainland Institution. Using a social constructivist hermeneutic Indigenous theory, this qualitative research study involved both focus groups, and semi-structured interviews at a Carnegie research institution. Each of the focus groups and semi-structured interviews involved all of the four participants. Participant profiles were created that reflected five themes in attending a mainland university. Analysis of the data revealed five themes: cultural differences, sacredness of land, The Aloha Spirit, relationships, and leaving the mainland without a college degree. Through further analysis, cultural differences revealed a sub-theme, microaggressions and developing a minority status. Relationships revealed three subthemes, including ancestors, importance of being together, and talking Pidgin. Implications and recommendations for student affairs practitioners included development of a student development model that is centered on the experiences of Native Hawaiian students. For senior level administrators, findings from this inquiry called for continued investments into a campus culture center specifically for Native Hawaiian students. In addition, re-engineering pipelines to connect Native Hawaiian students back “to place” to stay connected to their land and

geographical connections, constructing an accessible space to explore their own culture and history.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		
I.	FOREVER THE LOVE OF HAWAI'I	1
	My Story: Addressing Power Differentials.....	1
	The Need for and Lack of Native Hawaiian Literature	12
	Problem Statement	13
	Identification and Reclaiming Language	14
	Purpose of the Study	15
	Theoretical Framework	16
	Methodological Frame	17
	Research Questions: Purpose.....	18
	Significance of the Study	19
	Definition of Terms.....	21
	Chapter Summary	21
	Overview of the Study	21
II.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	23
	Native Hawaiians in College	23
	Importance of College Degree	24
	Native Hawaiian College Completion Rates	25
	Disaggregating Native Hawaiian Graduation Rates	26
	Student Retention Theorists.....	28
	Application of Retention of Retention Theories to Hawaiian Students.....	31
	The Colonization of Hawai'i	31
	History of Hawai'i	32
	Hawaiian Sovereignty.....	35
	Trends in Education in Hawai'i	36
	Native Hawaiian Education Act.....	37
	Kamehameha Schools.....	40
	Studying in the Mainland.....	41

CHAPTER

II. continued

Indigenous Research: Decolonization in the Academy	42
Indigenous Theory	45
Indigenous Theory and Relationships.....	49
Relationship to People	49
Relationship to Place.....	50
Relationship to Cosmos	51
Relationship to Knowledge.....	53
Student Development Theory	55
Application of Student Development Theory to Hawaiian Undergraduate.....	55
Student Development and Indigenous Communities.....	57
Emerging Student Development Theory Models	58
Campus Racial Climate for Hawaiian Undergraduates	60
Chapter Summary	63
III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	67
Qualitative Research	68
Epistemology: Social Constructivist.....	68
Theoretical Framework: Indigenous Theory	71
Indigenous Theory and Storytelling.....	71
Methodology and Methods	73
Methodology: Phenomenological Research	73
Hermeneutic Phenomenology.....	74
Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Stories	75
Essence.....	76
Participants.....	78
Settings.....	80
Hawaiian Student Club	81
Methods.....	82
Focus Group.....	82
Semi-Structured Interviews	87
Data Analysis	90

CHAPTER

III. continued

Criteria for Rigor.....	92
Credibility	93
Confirmability.....	94
Transferability.....	94
Authenticity.....	95
Theme Development.....	95
Chapter Summary	97
IV. PARTICIPANT PROFILES AND EMERGENT THEMES.....	99
Participant Profiles.....	102
Bennett	102
Military Influence	104
Military Identity	104
Soccer.....	105
Bennett and the Aloha Spirit.....	107
Microaggressions and Soccer	107
Leaving the Island.....	108
Bennett and Self-Determination	109
A Space for Renewal	111
Eugene.....	112
Eugene’s Connection to Family.....	113
Eugene’s upbringing	115
Eugene’s mainland family	118
Eugene’s aloha spirit.....	120
Eugene’s knowing.....	120
Experiences of Microaggressions	121
An Indigenous Practice.....	121
Margaux	122
Margaux’s Connection to the Family	124
Talking Moke.....	124
Margaux’s Ways of Knowing.....	125
Continued Impact of Colonization.....	128

CHAPTER
IV.

continued

Carrol.....	130
Elders to Ancestors	131
Semblance of Cultural Tattoos.....	132
Attending West State University	133
Carrol Gives Back to her People.....	134
Her Sister’s Path is Now Carrol’s Path.....	136
Missing Home: The Island.....	137
Finding Friends from Hawai’i Brings Comfort	138
Carrol’s Authenticity	139
Profile Summary: A Connection That Will Never Be Forgotten	140
Emergent Themes	141
Emergent Theme 1: Cultural Differences	141
Emergent Theme II. Sacredness of Land	149
Emergent Theme III: The Aloha Spirit.....	152
Emergent Theme IV: Relationships.....	154
Ancestors.....	157
Importance of being together	159
Talking pidgin.....	160
Emergent Theme V: Leaving the Mainland Without a College Degree.....	163
A Return to Social Constructivism	165
Chapter Summary	166
V. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	167
Emergent Themes	168
Contextualizing Cultural Differences	168
Sacredness of Land	170
The Aloha Spirit.....	173
Relationships.....	174
Leaving the Mainland Without a College Degree	176
Importance of Stories.....	177

CHAPTER

V. continued

Answering Research Questions	180
Research Question 1	180
Relationship to the land	181
Microaggressions	182
Roommate experiences	183
Classroom experiences.....	184
Cultural Dissonance	185
Continued Decolonizing of Western Education	186
Findings of Research Questions.....	187
Relationships.....	191
Ancestors.....	192
Importance of being together	192
Elements that Shaped the Study.....	195
Implications for Practice	196
Student Development Theory	196
Recommendations for Theory.....	198
The Aloha Spirit.....	200
Asian Pacific Services.....	201
Implications for Campus Administrators.....	202
Continued Investments in Culture Centers	203
Separation of Pacific Islander Students and Asian American Students.....	204
Increased Presence of Hawaiian Faculty, Staff, and Knowledge	204
Reengineering Best Practices.....	205
West State University Enrollment Management and Admissions Office	205
Increasing Relationships within West State University’s Hawaiian Community	206
Expanding Partnerships on the West State University Campus	206

CHAPTER

V. continued

Future Research207

 Maintaining the Sacred Relationship to Land.....207

 Transition Experiences.....208

 Relationship and Responsibility to Families.....208

Conclusion209

Epilogue210

REFERENCES215

APPENDICES

A. Institutional Review Board Approval 239

B. Consent Form..... 241

C. Signed Consent Form..... 244

D. Revised Institutional Review Board Approval Letter..... 247

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		
1.	Aggregated Bachelor Degree Aattainment by Race	27
2.	Disaggregated Bachelor Degree Attainment by Race	28

CHAPTER I

FOREVER THE LOVE OF HAWAI'I

I begin this dissertation by sharing a story about my experiences of Asian Pacific Services at West State University, a regional research university located in a medium sized town bordered by miles of farmland. West State University (WSU) has been an attractive place in recruiting students from the state of Hawai'i, increasing the presence of Hawaiians to this mainland institution. For Native Hawaiians and Indigenous communities, storytelling is traced back to early times and is a way knowledge is shared from generation to generation; stories are how Indigenous histories are passed on. Stories also “tell us how to relate in a community or be part of a community” (Lambert, 2014, p. 30). More recently, Western researchers interested in the experiences of marginalized populations have begun to realize “stories are central to the lives of the colonized Other” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 138), a term I believe is appropriate to understanding Native Hawaiians' history.

My Story: Addressing Power Differentials

In 2011, I accepted the role as interim Director of Asian Pacific Services (APS). Having worked with diverse populations as a student affairs practitioner, I felt confident to lead such a dynamic community even if I did not racially identify with many of the students who use APS. I quickly learned this confidence was unwarranted and I had much to learn about Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) students. I delved into the literature addressing model minority myths and AsianCrit (Liu, 2009; Museus, 2014a;

S. J. Lee, 2015; Teranishi, 2010). This guided my unpacking complex issues surrounding these communities. This literature is now a part of me and has informed my foundation as a scholar and practitioner. It has also guided me to look deeper at the unique challenges facing Native Hawaiian students and the struggles they endure while attending a mainland PWI. Throughout conversations with students, I realized that ‘these students’ became ‘my students’ as I had a direct responsibility in helping them navigate WSU systems of support and an authentic desire to make sure they were delivered the best services.

The state of Colorado and Hawai’i are both participants of an undergraduate exchange program. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a unique program that caters to 15 other states, along with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, offering a more affordable option when choosing an out of state school. Before onboarding to West State University, I learned WSU had strong a strong relationship with a recruiter from Hawai’i, who believed in WSU’s mission. The recruiter, admissions counselor, was pivotal in developing relationships with Hawaiian high schools and many students came to WSU because of the recruiter. West State University experienced an increase in the number of students from Hawai’i. Under new Admissions leadership, the relationship with the Hawaiian admissions counselor ended. This meant West State University saw a continued decrease in applications from students in Hawai’i.

It is my observation that West State University is committed to increasingly attracting and enrolling Hawaiian students. But WSU administrators know little about these students, and we do not have elders that share the story of how Native Hawaiian

students have traditionally navigated the institution. Nor, do we know why Native Hawaiian students choose to study at West State University. These students bring their own stories, as they create and share new ones, attending a PW Mainland institution. This study is, in part, an exploration of the stories shared by Native Hawaiian students.

As a researcher, my own experiences shaped what I heard. In working with Indigenous communities, it is essential I acknowledge my outsider status and privilege before and during any work with Indigenous communities (S. Wilson, 2008). I should also use my story as a way to introduce myself. I racially identify as a Black, Latina, and a Native American woman. I identify as the oldest in my family and have four younger siblings. I consider the relationships that I have with each of my siblings and my mother to be very close.

Growing up in a single-parent household, I witnessed my mother sacrificing many dreams to care for my siblings and me. She had limited income and had to put her own educational aspirations on hold. She worked many hours to ensure my needs, and the needs of my brother and sisters were met. Due to this experience, I learned at an early age that obtaining a college degree was a necessary course for my own self-sufficiency. I have ended up at a place that provides educational access to other students; not realizing that was my life's journey before I even started. I have learned to negotiate an academic lifestyle that few people, and even fewer people of color, possess. My continued aspirations of striving to illuminate student voices that are not always heard have defined my passion and interest in developing unified systems that create proactive change in higher education. Arriving at a space in my life and not able to unlearn what I have

learned; I feel even more compelled to understand how AAPI students and other students of color engage with an institution.

I am a product of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Upward Bound TRIO programs. TRIO programs emerged from the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act to help end poverty in the United States (GovTrack.us, 2017). Upward Bound (UB) is a precollege program designed to help students pursue higher education goals while enrolling and graduating from a post-secondary institution. This is significant because I was exposed to the academic lifestyle of a college student at a young age. I spent high school summers living in the residence halls, taking classes with other UB colleagues, and discovering the importance of balance between homework and socializing. The summer before I attended college, I was considered a ‘bridge student’ and participated in college-level courses. The impact of these rich experiences is still with me in my journey as a student affair’s professional. Due to my UB counselors (Joan Mendoza-Gorham, Allen Banks, Vaughn Robertson, & Jimmi Smith), I began to dream about attending a prestigious higher education institution. A dream that I dared to dream because I never thought it was possible.

I still remember the intense turmoil when I made the decision to attend a small private liberal arts college. The hardest part was leaving my younger siblings, I felt extreme guilt, and I didn’t want them to think I was walking away from them. As the oldest sibling, I took on caretaker responsibilities and became responsible for them when my mom worked evening or weekend shifts. In some ways, I felt enmeshed in my family and experienced little autonomy about the decisions I made. I knew if I stayed home and attended a university where I spent many summers, I would continue to feel the pull of

family commitments. I was worried these family responsibilities would consume my life as a college student and I would not graduate from college. With encouragement from my UB family, my step-dad, and eventually my mother, I packed up my belongings and made the three-hour trek to pursue my college degree.

Attending an out of state college allowed me to grow and develop my own independence. I remember claiming this time as “my time.” Meaning, I used my college years to explore ‘who I was’ and ‘who I wanted to become.’ I learned to negotiate a college-acculturated lifestyle while attending a private liberal arts college that allowed me to learn about myself while participating in study abroad opportunities, interacting with prominent political figures, and becoming a residence hall advisor. These remarkable experiences gave me the added confidence in discovering ‘whom I am’ while fueling my passion to get the best education. I excelled in college by double majoring in two separate disciplines and became part of a distinguished and an elite women’s leadership institute.

Looking back, I am thankful for these times. My treasured college years also provided me an extra layer of foundation. Today, I am married with three kids, and my story has taken me on a new path since my college years. I have become interested in transforming higher education systems that allow for clearer transparency in processes in recruiting and persistence of students from different racial backgrounds. I became interested in this research because my story will continue to live through my kids and their children’s children. Racism and oppression affect all of us, including non-folks of color. And, each of us has the potential to do better in creating spaces where access to education is available to everyone. I believe my experiences and how I learned to

navigate my college can serve as a guide in facilitating this dialogue with my participants.

As the director of APS, my story also includes thoughts about Hawaiian students at West State University. Asian Pacific Services has traditionally had a strong role in assisting with the recruiting, transition, and retention of Hawaiian students WSU. Over the years, the responsibilities of recruiting students from Hawai'i shifted away from APS to West State University's Admissions Office: to people who did not listen to students' stories. This is significant because the West State University organization lacks the understanding and infrastructure of how to serve and recruit Hawaiian students. In identifying these pieces, I realized the vulnerabilities of APS as well. Most predominantly, as APS spent time in the beginning months to establish a natural transition for Hawaiian students, further connections after their initial welcome and orientation to campus was extremely lacking. To address this issue, APS worked to re-engineer the first-year experience for Hawaiian students. This work created a space for me to authentically learn about the social and political history of WSU's Native Hawaiian students, an area that is not talked about due to their colonized history. I became curious to know more about understanding how Hawaiian students "show-up." Specifically, how they came to navigate WSU. As I shifted through the limited research on Hawaiian students, I desired to increase the literature on Native Hawaiian college students. Their stories must be told because, "For our [Indigenous] knowledge to survive, it must live in many places, including Western academies" (Lambert, 2014, p. 68). Expanding the Westernized academy allows for other ways of knowing in serving students. S. Wilson (2008) adds, "It is time for research that is conducted by or for Indigenous people to take

another step forward (p. 15). S. Wilson demonstrates the need for other narratives to be known about Indigenous communities. Advancing knowledge how Native Hawaiian communities navigate a mainland institution by analyzing their lived experiences can promote an additional understanding that is essential in addressing the needs of this population, leading to higher persistence and graduation rates. Additionally, dismantling the problematic hegemonic racial discourse by (re)authoring colonized histories illuminates different truths, leading to increased cultural awareness that affirms stories within the Hawaiian communities. This is important because it honors their production of knowledge.

While working at West State University, my director level responsibilities increased. I was asked to be part of the equity and diversity steering committee (EDSC). West State University had made previous attempts to revitalize the equity and diversity committee (EDC) and was unsuccessful. During the summer of 2014, a survey was developed and administered to students and staff inquiring about campus climate. Based on these results, the president of West State University made a charge to the EDSC, to monitor and deliver a report on West State University's campus climate for students, faculty, and staff. The president's charge was comprehensive and included other areas, which promoted ad-hoc committees, formed through the larger EDC. Due to the high commitment of the EDSC, we worked tirelessly through the November and December breaks. I sensed each of the EDSC members knew West State University was at a crucial place in addressing the campus racial climate that seemed to be unwinding before our eyes. Each of the members in EDSC had witnessed or heard student stories that bordered bias and racism experiences in the West State University community. A recommendation

was made for WSU to seek services from a consulting firm that would conduct a 2-year campus climate assessment. It seems that West State University has pockets of faculty, staff, and senior administrator leaders to provide change in addressing the campus climate but lacks the sophistication to accomplish this monumental and perceived overwhelming task.

My passion resides in pushing agendas forward by bringing the voices to the table of those who have not always been invited. This also means hearing and acknowledging their stories as truth (Mertens, 2010) by listening to the experience of the *other* as they have lived it (Chilisa, 2012; van Manen, 1997). I do not have experiences of my homeland being taken from me, or being forced to rent the land my elders once owned; I am an outsider to these experiences colonization. However, I am not an outsider to attending a predominately White (PW) mainland university. My college experiences are filled with great joy, yet, I still have painful memories of times when navigating my *alma mater* was isolating and lonely. This was due to a lack of students and faculty members who looked like me and in turn, could not understand why this even mattered.

In many cases, I was the only student of color in my undergraduate classes. I was one of two students who identified as a woman of color and most days I felt like I had a spotlight on my head as I walked around campus in a very rural town in northern Iowa. Eventually, people warmed up to me, and I became friends with a lot of folks from campus. I was involved with my residence hall floor and eventually became friends with other resident advisors. This was how I found my niche in student affairs. I was surrounded by people who became my support system, and I sense protected my naïve spirit from experiencing the deep racism, but I knew it was there. I could feel it. As a

survival technique, I learned to tune this feeling off. I sense many of our Native Hawaiian students who attend WSU use a similar coping mechanism in navigating the campus. I also sense I was insulated from some of the experiences of racism because I was a member of a well-known private institution. I stayed within the city college limits, and if I did venture out, most of the time I was with friends that I trusted. Looking back at my experience, I see how fortunate I was. The other student of color who looked like me also lived in the same residence hall. We had separate academic interests and rarely spoke to each other. When we did speak, our quick “check-in” conversations were making sure we were doing OK. My check-in friend left after one semester. She transferred to another small private institution and sadly, did not keep in touch.

In many ways, my own experiences of how I navigated my liberal arts college education are reflected in my job of as a culture center director. I, too, insulate students from the systems of racism that are apparent on the WSU campus. I do this by building bridges and connections with executive level staff and faculty members who have a vested interest in serving students equitably. Forming these partnerships have been essential in re-engineering policy and systems, developing understanding while building consensus thinking, and having fierce conversations with staff and faculty in addressing student needs from a cultural lens.

Additionally, in many cases of my job, I approach students from a mentoring perspective. I believe in letting students know they have choices and do my best to show them the available resources for a solution. Throughout my years in student affairs, I have honed my coaching skills and let students make a decision that is best for them. Each student has their unique circumstances and serving students from a holistic approach is

important in their journey at WSU. I also spend a considerable amount of time, both in and outside of my office, establishing relationships with students. I believe these are essential ingredients in addressing the needs of students while tailoring authentic programming.

Since graduating from college, I have become interested in how stories have helped transformation in communities. Stories tell us how to think and see the world. While unraveling, the storytelling is an art. Sharing stories is also a long-standing tradition in Indigenous communities. The power of storytelling can also transform systems. I would like to generate an improved infrastructure by making the student stories known at WSU. Storytelling is extensively used for passing down generations of information. I will be using stories to inform academia how Native Hawaiian college students navigate a PW mainland university. It is important to understand that these stories are not my stories; they belong to the participants in this study. They share their stories and are taking a courageous leap because they have a desire to transform their academic community. While I left my institution without sharing my own story, I would like to create a path where Hawaiian students will have an opportunity to process their WSU experiences.

As the oldest of four younger siblings, I grew up in a household where I craved knowledge. One of my sisters reminded me that I was never satisfied. I consistently pushed myself to the next step. An example of this is pursuing a doctorate. I have a high motivation to obtain education beyond my Master's degree. Earning a doctorate represents one of the highest levels of education, and I want to expand my abilities in understanding and solving problems. This also includes having additional opportunities

to pursue positions in creating systemic change in campus climate and culture. However, I was the student who hardly earned straight A's, I had to work hard for my grades and I knew my persistence and remaining focused would help me achieve my goals.

I learned at an early age that a college degree is necessary and often, is associated with increased social mobility and higher maximum lifetime wages. Before I finished my college education, I knew some of my next steps included pursuing a doctorate. I share this because I am following in my mom's footsteps, as she became the first one in our family to earn the recognition of "Doctor." A new path has been created for our family. My story also includes her successes.

As I move forward, I feel it prudent to speak about the power differential that existed while conducting this research. I believe in transparency and shared with participants the power differentials in the study. I acknowledged my role, space, and power on WSU's campus as the director of a cultural center. As a researcher who is studying Native Hawaiians and an outsider to this community, I felt an extra responsibility in addressing this complex, yet, significant relationship. To mitigate the power differences, I developed authentic relationships and worked in partnership with each of the participants. On many occasions, I reiterated I was not the expert; the expertise came from individuals who shared their lived experiences. Taking direction from participants contributed to a foundation of trust. Every attempt was made to create an environment where participants felt like they could be their authentic selves.

Recognizing my relationship with participants is important to this study. My outsider status influences verbal and nonverbal communication. In some ways, my outsider status to the Hawaiian community is similar to my outsider status at West State

University. As a woman of color on the WSU campus, I find myself listening to the conversation before engaging in dialogue, which includes body language. Like my outsider status for this study, I sought to understand first before asking questions. My initial engagement with participants was warm and inviting while secretly inside, I was a little nervous. I found commonalities with each of the participants, leading to deeper dialogue and longer explanations of their stories. While I had a prior relationship with participants before the study started, I became hyper aware of community sensibilities and more thoughtful in my language skills.

In the remainder of this chapter, I consider the lack of stories. This includes the lack of literature that exists surrounding the needs and issues facing Native Hawaiian students enrolled in a mainland PWI. Next, I explore critical thinking upon the Black-White paradigm and how this perspective has masked the Native Hawaiian voice. Thirdly, I provide the significance and rationale of this study by sharing the value of focusing on participants' stories as stories have something to teach us.

The Need for and Lack of Native Hawaiian Literature

Little research exists that illuminate the specific experiences or voices of Hawaiian students, or their needs (Nguyen, Nguyen, Chan, & Teranishi, 2016). Hagedorn, Tibbetts, Moon, and Lester (2003) observed that, "studies of underrepresented minorities either do not include Native Hawaiian or do not delineate between Native Hawaiians and Asians" (p. 5). Rarely do studies demonstrate the ways by which Native Hawaiian students navigate and persist through an academic institution (Freitas, Wright, Balutski, & Wu, 2013). This is damaging to Native Hawaiians, who are also an Indigenous people, because few administrators and faculty members understand the complexities and cultural

needs of these students, or how they navigate a mainland college system. And since literature also reveals Indigenous communities are less likely to attend college:

Conducting research in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island communities . . . will help us to better understand what really makes a difference in meeting the educational needs of students; in particular, how to meet both home-culture and Western education needs. (Benham, 2006, p. 35)

Additionally, the literature does little in addressing support services that are needed.

When identifying, and constructing needed infrastructure, the Native Hawaiian community must be in the forefront when re-engineering these programs.

Of the little research that does exist, Kupo's (2010) scholarly work in Native Hawaiian women college students and identity contributed to the sparse literature of this community. Kupo (2010) stated, "Understanding [Native Hawaiian] identity will better assist university officials in creating an environment that is supportive of Native Hawaiian students" (p. 6). Although Native Hawaiian identity is outside the scope of this research study, it does help to expound on the experiences of Native Hawaiian women college students.

Problem Statement

Members of Indigenous communities are less likely to attend college (Grande, 2015; L. T. Smith, 2012). This statement is also true for Native Hawaiians. The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) identified 14.4% of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander populations to have earned a bachelor's degree. This number is low when compared to 30.1% of the total population, having earned a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In the state of California, Native Hawaiians are overrepresented in community college systems while underrepresented in 4-year colleges (The State of Higher Education in California, 2015). Furthermore, Native Hawaiian students who attend a

community college are less likely to complete a four-year degree (Hagedorn, Tibbetts, Moon, & Lester, 2003). The lack of existing literature about Hawaiian college students is a problem because campus leaders do not have the knowledge or infrastructure needed to provide a supportive, inclusive learning environment for this population. Nor, does the current higher education system structure invite or encourage the Native Hawaiian students to participate in 4-year institutions or higher education in general. Greater awareness is needed to attract Hawaiian students to higher education and in particular, completing a four-year degree. Therefore, the needs of Hawaiian students and other students of color must be addressed to increase the low bachelor degree attainment rates.

This research study addressed unequal educational experiences of Hawaiian college students through their stories and reprioritized how students engage in programs and support services. This is crucial to support their educational, professional and personal needs adequately. Moreover, this explored how students became knowledgeable about available academic skill development programs, advising information sessions, and advocacy services that enabled mid-managers and higher administrators to participate in helping to close the racial, ethnic achievement gaps by providing necessary infrastructure that assists in retaining and graduating Hawaiian students.

Identification and Reclaiming Language

My dissertation considers identity, and I have spent a lot of time wrestling with what this meant for participants in this study. Terms used to identify minoritized populations often place labels and contribute to the act of *othering*. AAPI has become shorthand for a whole collection of individuals with distinct cultures, histories, and traditions. Studying my participants as members of AAPI communities further

marginalizes them while further shaping my understanding of their experiences in higher education. After many discussions on how to properly identify my participants, I have arrived at using the term Native Hawaiian and Hawaiian. As cited in Kupo (2010), “Many Native Hawaiians have a multiracial genealogical background due to a history of colonization efforts that included racial blending” (p. 15). Therefore, I have made the conscious decision to focus on those individuals who also identify as Filipino Native Hawaiian as participants for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this social constructivism hermeneutic phenomenology Indigenous theory study explored how Hawaiian undergraduate students experienced and navigated their academic institution. This study included the ways students negotiated, developed, and used support systems and how their experiences contributed to a sustained persistence at a PWI mainland university. Shared understanding of new perspectives; faculty members, student affairs practitioners, and senior level college administrators will develop a systemic infrastructure that supports Hawaiian students.

The literature is incomplete on how Hawaiian college students navigate a 4-year PW mainland institution. This limits the ability to understand cultural needs that are necessary for engagement within and outside of classrooms. Deliberate and instrumental changes must be implemented in addressing the needs of Hawaiian college students to bring about social transformation. Using an Indigenous theoretical framework that decolonizes westernized institutions “shows the imperial legacies of western knowledge and the ways in which those legacies continue to influence knowledge institutions to the exclusion of Indigenous people and their aspirations” (L. T. Smith, 2012, p. xii).

Focusing on the lived experiences of this group confronts social oppression and redefines knowledge production by adding an Indigenous truth (Grande, 2015). Creating a “safe space” for Native Hawaiian students to exchange and tell their stories, on what it is like and how to survive a PW mainland institution, is a place to start this dialogue. This marks the beginning of shared knowledge at West State University because their stories will be recorded. This is significant because students now hold these stories and will pass them onto to both the incoming Hawaiian students and to the entire community.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, I choose to use an Indigenous theory framework because it articulates belief systems, Indigenous ways of knowing, and truths that have yet to be widely accepted in Westernized academies. Traditionally, Indigenous communities have not experienced or seen studies that are culturally and historically meaningful (L. T. Smith, 2012). This means Westernized scholarship has produced very little literature that serves Indigenous people that are “aimed at comprehending, explicating and analyzing the contemporary world from their standpoint within it” (Brydon-Miller & Coghlan, 2014, p. 436). Additionally, Westernized scholarship is:

Laden with tradition [this includes the] silencing of indigenous voices, the disrespect of protocol and customs, the theft of traditional and/or community knowledge and the justification of colonial expansion into lands that were already inhabited by thriving civilization. (Brydon-Miller & Coghlan, 2014, p. 433)

An example of this is seen in the following quote. Kawakami, Aton, Cram, Lai, and Porima (2008) describe how colonization continues to linger in our society:

We have lived under the gaze of newcomers who have evaluated us within their own belief systems, only to find that we are only different but also deficient compared to their cultural norms. However, this gaze has come to represent a truth about us, a truth that is not of our own making. It is appropriate that the gaze be returned now and that we do our own gazing. (p. 208)

This study honors truths that are relevant to specific cultural communities. Indigenous theory honors “community-based knowledges” (Denzin & Giardina, 2015, p. 383) and demonstrates a “shared set of beliefs among Indigenous peoples globally” (p. 369). Additionally, this study contributes to the lack of research that is centered on Native Hawaiian students and how this population navigates a mainland PWI.

Methodological Frame

As discussed in Chapter III, I used a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology for this study. Traditional phenomenology brackets researcher bias and experiences to allow for a fresh perspective (Creswell, 2007, 2013). In hermeneutic phenomenology, the bracketing of bias and experiences does not apply. Instead, the subjective experiences are used to engage with participants and used to understand human existence (van Manen, 2014). Phenomenology “is to understand and describe an event from the point of view of the participant” (M. Q. Patton, 2002, p. 69). Phenomenology understands the ‘essence’ of the human experience (Kafle, 2011). Earlier phenomenology studies centered on positivist scientific rigor. Finlay (2009) emphasizes “the need to study human beings in human terms” this means, “reject[ing] positivist, natural science methods in favor of a qualitative human science” (p. 14). This is a crucial understanding of my research. Due to the shared stories from my participants, a qualitative approach was warranted for this study.

Phenomenology honors the lives and experiences (Moustakas, 1994; M. Q. Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1997) of a phenomenon being studied. The foundation of this study focused on the lived experiences, or as an accordance to phenomenology, “true essence” of NH students and how they navigated a mainland PWI. Friesen, Henriksson,

and Saevi (2012) stated, “phenomenology is ‘uncomfortable’ since it challenges taken-for-granted-attitudes, as language makes these both visible and audible” (p. 121). Thus, it became difficult for people to visibly acknowledge the inequitable educational experiences for NH students. When students tell their stories, the inequities are revealed, learned, and heard. This study highlighted Indigenous ways of knowing and acknowledged different truths, which have been greatly ignored in higher education.

Research Questions: Purpose

The following research questions guide this study:

- Q1 How do Native Hawaiian students experience West State University?
- Q1a How do Native Hawaiian college students experience support systems at a Predominantly White mainland institution?
- Q1b What are the experiences that contribute to the persistence of Native Hawaiian students at a Predominantly White mainland institution?
- Q2 How does Indigenous storytelling support and shape participants’ understanding of their experience at West State University?

The first research question addressed a gap in the literature by understanding Hawaiian college student experiences at a PWI mainland university. My hope was to identify traditional and emerging practices that better inform college administrators in supporting Hawaiian students. I developed sub question one to critically assess current support structures Hawaiian students use when coming to West State University. I was interested in exploring how existing infrastructure assisted Native Hawaiian students in pursuing a bachelor’s degree. Learning how Hawaiian students identify these systems and how these methods worked for students lead to an increased dialogue in meeting the needs of Hawaiian students. Native Hawaiians are one of the most understudied populations in the educational literature. Academia has little information on how

Hawaiian students are retained from year to year. My intent was to investigate lived experiences that contributed to a student graduating from a four-year mainland institution. Lastly, my last research question honored the importance of the true essence of the relationship shared in the student stories. The historical accounts of Indigenous peoples are revealed through their stories, which has been discounted when studying Indigenous populations. Storytelling is a sacred knowledge that provides a transformational path, enriching entire communities. These stories bridged the gap and formulated a bond amongst collective societies. Taking a phenomenological approach, as a researcher, I transmitted and did not question the stories that were shared by my participants (van Manen, 1990).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant on many levels. Rarely have Native Hawaiian college student experiences and perspectives been given attention in and of themselves (Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009). Museus and Kiang (2009) and Museus (2014a) noted that less than one percent of all articles published in highly circulated, peer-reviewed higher education journals are centered on Asian American and Pacific Islander students. This is a problem because little attention is centered on the needs of these students and most likely very little resources are allocated to their needs. Research also indicates that specific studies related to Native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders (NHPI) students are sparse and a gap within the literature exists (Freitas et al., 2013).

Race, ethnicity, and social class are factors influencing college access and persistence. Native Hawaiian students graduate from college, and yet little is known how these students come to learn about and engage with resources as they navigate a PWI

mainland campus community. Understanding the experiences of Hawaiian college students allows university administrators and faculty members to become informed of their unique needs, appropriate approaches to advocacy, and support services. Moreover, additional research may help to create safe spaces on campus and provide intentional support for this underserved community. Using a phenomenological lens “serve as a reliable guide to the listener’s own actual or potential experience of the phenomena” (Spiegelberg, 1982, p. 694). Phenomenologists acknowledge “truth as a matter of perspective” (Friesen, Henriksson, & Saevi, 2012, p. 30). This framework allowed me to address issues of inequity that are currently not being addressed by academia. Hawaiian communities continue to feel the impact of colonization. This affects their attending and graduating from college. Members of campus communities should learn how to approach Native Hawaiian students and identify ways in addressing the overarching needs in sustaining a supportive community. Therefore, additional information is warranted in serving Native Hawaiian college students. This learned knowledge would increase the potential for greater numbers of students obtaining a degree in higher education. Also, this would benefit the NHPI community and society as a whole in creating informed citizens and enhancing greater opportunities as participants in mainstream culture. It is intended that this dissertation will challenge conventional ways of knowledge in how Native Hawaiian students experience and shape the experiences of future Hawaiian students. This dissertation is also designed to empower participants by renewing confidence in their culture and affirming what they already knew (Chilisa, 2012).

Definition of Terms

Asian Pacific Services (APS). A fictional job title used for confidentiality to mask place of employment.

Student Development Theory (SDT). Student development theory provides a framework for understanding students in higher education institutions (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010).

West State University (WST). A pseudonym used for confidentiality to mask the name of the institution and to protect the privacy of participants.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I shared the importance of stories and how stories bring communities together. I used my story as a way to open up other stories that are not well known in the WSU community. Native Hawaiians have their own stories to share, how they come to navigate West State University, a PW mainland institution. I highlight the few studies that considered the needs of Native Hawaiian college students while addressing the unequal educational experiences. Further, I demonstrated how members of Native Hawaiian communities have less than a 15% bachelor degree national attainment rate. I explore the research questions that guided this study and expounded on their purpose. Finally, I discussed the significance of this research study.

Overview of the Study

This study explored the nature of everyday experiences of Native Hawaiian college students and how members of this group navigated an institution of higher education. Participants were undergraduate, full-time students, enrolled at a West State University (WSU) who racially identify within the Hawaiian community. Data collection

methods included focus groups and semi-structured interviews that are all congruent with phenomenology. Data analysis included transcription of interviews and coding of data. Data collections started Fall 2016 with two focus group and semi-structured interviews. The research study drew on tenets from a hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry and an Indigenous theory lens that described the lived experiences of Native Hawaiian college students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Native Hawaiian's have been ignored in education research. They are underrepresented in higher education institutions and among adults who have completed a bachelor's degree. Native Hawaiians continue to experience the sociopolitical history and the impact of colonization. In this chapter, I provide an overview that demonstrates historical and current challenges faced by college going Native Hawaiians students. Along this path I identify pivotal Hawaiian history adding to the complexities of Native Hawaiian bachelor degree attainment. I considered current research of Indigenous populations and identify the criticisms that exist when studying and working to better understand these communities. I next explored contemporary student development theories and the emerging research that is being created about Native Hawaiians. Finally, I end with current dialogue around campus racial climate and how microaggressions continue to effect minoritized communities. I ultimately suggest that while research exists for students of color regarding campus racial climate, few studies are able to capture a pulse on Native Hawaiian students.

Native Hawaiians in College

In the first section of my literature review, I explored the need for increased dialogue in serving Native Hawaiian college students. My focus is on serving the needs of Hawaiian students with an overview of consequences of not earning a bachelor's degree, thus, demonstrating the lack of equity. I continue with a brief history of Hawai'i

while outlining broad pivotal student retention theorists, which have historically catered towards institutions of higher education in retaining traditional white male college students. Finally, I focus on graduation rates and emphasize increased work that must be done in fully serving Native Hawaiian college going students.

Importance of College Degree

A college education is important for students to develop the skills needed to be productive, informed, and engaged citizens. Earning a degree is associated with increased social mobility, higher maximum lifetime wages, and lower unemployment (Thomas, Kana'iaupuni, Balutski, & Freitas, 2012). This is illustrated by the potential to earn one million dollars more over a lifetime compared to those who do not go to college and graduate (Baum & Payea, 2005; Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013). However, access to higher education and degree completion remains inequitable between racial and ethnic groups.

Native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders represent one of the fastest growing racial/ethnic groups in the United States (Hixson, Hepler, & Kim, 2012), and the number of Hawaiian students in higher education has been slowly increasing. Due to the colonization of the Hawaiian Islands, postsecondary institutions can be influential in developing opportunities for NHPI students to flourish on a college campus (Wright & Balutski, 2013). Native Hawaiian students have been historically marginalized and little information exists to understand the struggles and challenges this population faces on college and university campuses (Thomas, Kana'iaupuni, Balutski, & Freitas, 2012). This becomes evident when examining college completion rates of Hawaiian students, as “too few [Hawaiian] students make it through college” (completecollege.org, para. 2) causing invisibility of the challenges this population faces to retention researchers and student

affairs professionals. College access and attainment continues to remain unequal (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; McPherson & Schapiro, 2006) while Hawaiians continue to be underrepresented in postsecondary enrollment and educational attainment.

It is estimated 14% of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have at least a bachelor's degree in comparison with 27% for the total U.S. population of 25 years of age and older (White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 2011).

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that between 2006-2010, 7.3 percent of all Bachelor's degrees were awarded to Asian/Pacific Islander students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). While this represents an increase of bachelor degrees awarded in 1999-2000, the number is significantly lower than the 72.9% degrees awarded to White students. It is evident that the colonization of Indigenous [Native Hawaiian] students continues to have an impact (Grande, 2015). This is demonstrated through the low number of bachelor degrees that are earned each year and the overall number of students who have a bachelor's degree.

Native Hawaiian College Completion Rates

Completion of a postsecondary education is a critical milestone in becoming a contributing member in today's society (Thomas et al., 2012). A broken educational pipeline exists to institutions of higher education, as Native Hawaiians continue to be underrepresented and among adults who have earned a bachelor's degree. Hokoana and Oliveira (2012) documented 66% of Native Hawaiians scored below college-level math, compared to 61% of non-Hawaiians. A similar gap was seen when 45% of Native Hawaiian scored below reading levels compared to 42% of non-Hawaiians. Finally, 52%

of Native Hawaiians scored below college level writing, compared to 39% of the general population.

Complete College America (2011) described 100 representative Hawaiian students to illustrate enrollment patterns. Specifically, if 100 Hawaiian students enrolled in a public college or university, 32 of these students would enroll full-time at a 4-Year Public College. Out of these 32 students, 26 would return as 2nd year students. Digging deeper, five of these students would graduate on time, 11 of these students would graduate at 150% time (six years after initial enrollment) and two would graduate at 200% time (eight years after initial enrollment). In eight years, out of the 100 Hawaiian college students who enrolled in a public college or university, 18 would graduate with a 4-year degree. It should be noted that these data were only representative of public colleges and universities. What is not illustrated in this scenario is the heavy debt load students leave with and for many of these students; the path ends without the completion of a college degree (Complete College America, 2011). This suggested that institutions are doing a disservice in enrolling Native Hawaiian students by admitting them to a university but not providing the necessary infrastructure to serve them. And, by forcing students to take out loan debt for college, we are contributing to the cyclic structures of oppression.

Disaggregating Native Hawaiian Graduation Rates

Due to federal government definitions and captured data, Figure 1 shows the number of bachelor degrees earned for both Asian American (AA) and Pacific Islander (PI) populations. By combining both of these groups, policy makers, data scholars, and higher education officials do not see the urgency for Pacific Islanders, as one of “the most

disadvantaged sectors of the AAPI population” (Teranishi, Lok, & Nguyen, 2014, p. 3). Only when we consider Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander college graduation rates (Figure 2), do we start to see the hidden achievement gap: Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander groups are graduating from college far below the total population and lower than the Asian American populations. The ongoing dialogue that has masked the needs of Native Hawaiian students is not new. Several scholars have pointed to the need for nuanced data, specifically as it pertains to AAPI students (Hune, 2002; Museus, Maramba, & Teranishi, 2013; Museus, Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2011; Museus & Neville, 2012; Museus, 2014a) that “reflect the diverse needs of the population for decades” (Museus et al., 2013, p. 2). This example demonstrates the need to disaggregate data when addressing the needs of AAPI populations, and in this case, Native Hawaiian student. These impressions continue to leave Hawaiian students on the margins. This creates a lack of awareness that demonstrates the struggles and challenges this population faces on college and university campuses (Museus et al., 2013).

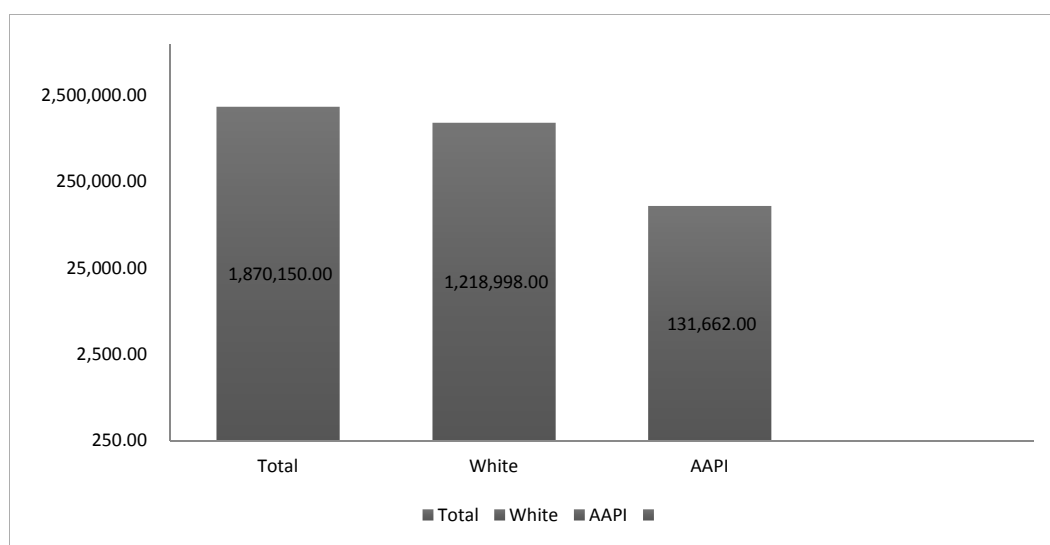


Figure 1. Aggregated bachelor degree attainment by race (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

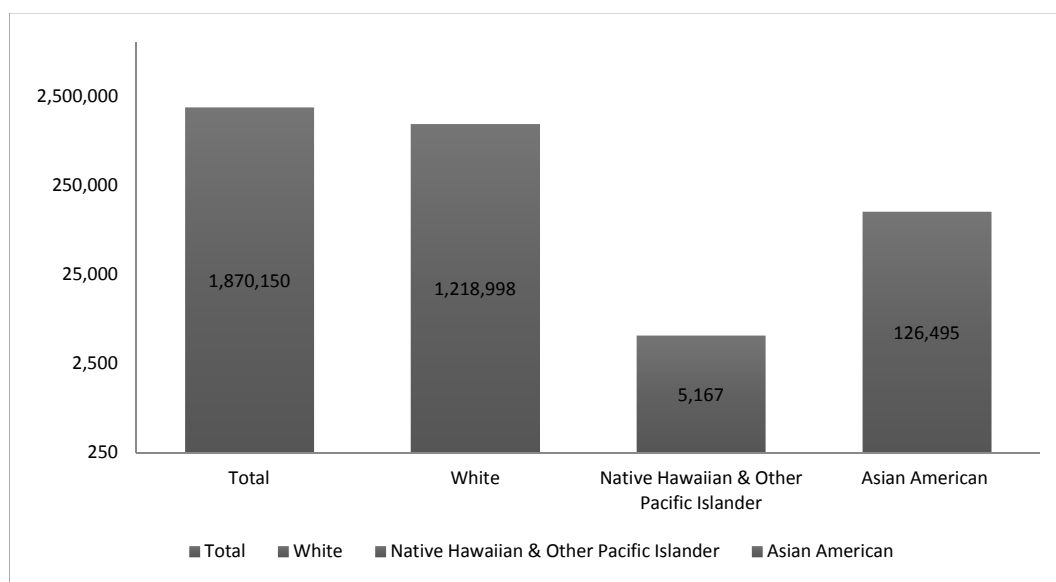


Figure 2. Disaggregated bachelor degree attainment by race (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Student Retention Theorists

Tinto's (1975) social and academic predictive integration model distinguishes a student's ability to integrate themselves into the campus community. Their capability to form relationships with faculty, develop positive peer-group interactions, and gain knowledge that is proven by grade performance, demonstrates a commitment to an institution. Tinto theorizes that students who are able to integrate into the campus community increase their commitment to the institution and are more likely to graduate. Tinto (1975) furthers his beliefs by stating, "the interplay between the individual's commitment to the goal of college completion and [their] commitment to the institution that determines whether or not the individual decides to drop out from college . . ." (p. 96). Later in his career, Tinto (1993) identified three major stages, which students typically pass through in order to complete their degree programs: separation, transition,

and incorporation. The first stage (1), *Separation*, requires students, in varying degrees, to dissociate themselves from membership in past communities. The second stage (2), *Transition to College*, is a period of passage between the old and new; looking back at past relationships and having hope for new relationships. This may be the most stressful stage for students because they have not fully identified or established personal bonds within the college community. The final stage (3), is *Incorporation in College*. The student is tasked with becoming integrated or incorporated to the college community. This stage is where students become involved through cultural centers, sororities/fraternities, clubs/organizations, academic workshops, student/floor government, etc. While these stages are meant to clarify different steps, students experience while pursuing a degree, Tinto does not offer how students of color master these steps. In essence, adopting and applying a retention theory that was meant to serve an all-White clientele does little to support Native Hawaiian students and other minoritized communities.

Astin (1985) found student involvement or connections to campus through a student organization or has frequent interaction with faculty/staff members are more committed to the institution. Astin (1999) also documented the importance of establishing a connection to the retention of minority students on Predominately White Institutions. This is significant because it demonstrates the interconnectedness that is needed for students to persist. It is important for institutions of higher education to develop spaces where students feel that they belong. Williams, Terrell, and Haynes (1998) and Kuh and Love (2000) found that students who made cultural connections through affinity groups were more likely to persist in higher education and this can be accomplished though

cultural student organizations, multicultural centers, and ethnic studies, just to name a few. Students who demonstrate these high levels of commitment are more likely to be successful, thus leading to a retained and promoted student (Seidman, 2005). Research does suggest engaging and building relationships with instrumental faculty and staff members, students of color are more likely to persist (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, how these relationships are built with Native Hawaiian students on mainland universities is not well known. Specific studies that highlight how Hawaiian students persevere through a mainland university are severely lacking.

Freitas and Balutski (2011) conducted a study to understand how Hawaiian students navigate and persist through a University of Hawai'i school system. A cohort of 271 first-time and first-year enrolled students was followed through a five-year time span. It was found that 105 students graduated, just under a 39% graduation rate, while the 135 students dropped out, shy of a 50% dropout rate (Thomas et al., 2012). It was also stated in the study "almost two-thirds of those leaving the Mānoa campus left in good academic standing. Many of those students migrated to other campuses within the system and may eventually complete their program of study" (Thomas et al., 2012, p. 355). Through interviews, a sample of responses was collected that focused on understanding student experiences and how they navigated University of Hawai'i, Mānoa campus. A central theme centered on the issue of success; "why some students persist until graduation and others do not" (Thomas et al., 2012, p. 357). The findings included four themes: (1) family presence, (2) cultural validation and dynamic learning, (3) "way finding", and (4) seeking refuge. While this study represents a piece of the "little work [that] has been done on Native Hawaiians in postsecondary education" (Thomas et al.,

2012, p. 364), it becomes clear that additional work is needed in understanding Native Hawaiian postsecondary experiences.

Application of Retention of Retention Theories to Hawaiian Students

The study of college student retention is one of the most researched topics in postsecondary education. Retention theories assist a higher education's ability to retain a student from admissions until graduation (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Rarely, however, does student retention literature include AAPI populations (Museus, 2014a; Yeh, 2004). Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) theory of student retention and departure remains a seminal theory important to this field; however, the need for new tools "that better reflect the experiences of racially diverse student population" (Museus, 2014b, p. 190) are needed as college students are becoming more ethnically diverse. This statement holds truth for Hawaiian's because little scholarly research exists that focus on student persistence (Jensen, 2011). Earlier studies of college student retention and persistence focused on student's own ability to adapt to college transitions. In today's current college environment, the focus has shifted and places "greater responsibility on institutions to remove systematic obstacles for college completion" (Jensen, 2011, p. 3).

The Colonization of Hawai'i

Current knowledge of Native Hawaiian history is lacking and contributes to the misperceptions of Pacific Islander communities. Since very little is known about Pacific Islanders and their history, they continue to suffer from discrimination and oppression (Takaki, 1989). In this section I focused on pivotal timeframes that have shaped the Native Hawaiian Indigenous community as "Hawaiians unique political and social

history complicates the factors that increase success in college. Understanding how this history affects Native Hawaiian's views on pursuing a college degree is critical to addressing their specific needs" (Hokoana & Oliveira, 2012, p. 201). Although a comprehensive overview of Native Hawaiian history is beyond the scope of this research study, it is important to understand how this community has been annexed and endured racism. All of these pivotal pieces give context of Native Hawaiian communities and how they have been shaped by these monumental histories. This section also gives context to the stories participants bring with them to WSU.

History of Hawai'i

Since the arrival of non-Indigenous people to Hawai'i in 1778, it has been argued that the Hawaiian Islands have never been the same. History points to Captain James Cook who played a role introducing Westerners to the islands of Hawai'i, bringing diseases and causing tribal conflict to a sovereign nation (Benham, 2006). The Hawaiian monarchical government was established in 1810, and remained a unified kingdom for 83 years. Under the leadership of Kamehameha, I, who would later become known as "Kamehameha the Great," was credited with the ability to unite all of the islands during his tenure (Kamehameha Hawaii History Monarchs, 2014). Several international communities, including the United States, knew Hawai'i was a sovereign nation. King Kamehameha believed he was destined by prophecy to lead Hawai'i and utilized his leadership ability to navigate commerce by promoting trade with Europe and the United States. King Kamehameha I died in 1819, and his brother, King Kamehameha II, became his successor. During this time, King Kamehameha II ended the *kapa*, a traditional ancient Hawaiian religious and political codes, such as sharing a meal with a woman.

With the assistance of missionaries, Christianity values and school buildings were established (Kamehameha Hawaii History Monarchs, 2014).

The Kamehameha's would rule the islands of Hawai'i for an additional 53 years with King Kamehameha V, bringing an end to the Kamehameha Dynasty. Elected relatives, also raised through the royal schools to become eligible Hawaiian leaders, would rule to the end of the monarchy. In January 1891, a beloved Queen Lili'uokalani became the last monarch of the Hawaiian Islands, succeeding her older brother King David Kalakaua. Queen Lili'uokalani vowed to restore the traditional ways of Hawaiian government, which were slowly being replaced by increasing dictatorial powers, denying the rights of Native Hawaiian people. On January 17, 1893, the Hawaiian Monarchy was overthrown and Queen Lili'uokalani was dethroned. A group of American businessmen, who were also the grandchildren of the missionaries who came in 1820, sought to have control over Hawai'i (Van Dyke, 1998). Due to increasing pineapple production, Hawai'i became politically and economically attractive, stripping Hawaiian Indigenous rights by modifying laws that favored non-Indigenous people. The Republic of Hawai'i was established, naming Sanford Dole as its first president. Sanford Dole was a cousin to James Dole, who founded the Hawaiian Pineapple Company, known as Dole Pineapple today. In 1898, Hawai'i was annexed by the United States and became a United States territory. The hostile takeover and subsequent "celebration" was symbolized by the removal of the Hawaiian flag and stories of victory became the focal point for some in this "great" accomplishment. However, for the Hawaiian people it was a different story that left feelings of betrayal as the Hawaiian flag was being removed.

It was said it was cut into two or three little inch ribbons and given out as tokens of remembrance to the sons and daughters of the missionary families so that they could keep those as little tokens of their great victory of the Hawaiian kingdom and the end of the turning of the Hawaiian monarchy. (Muhammad, 2009)

By the beginning of the 20th century, most of Hawai'i was owned by non-Hawaiians (Van Dyke, 1998). It should be noted; it would not be until 1993 that former President William Clinton would issue an apology to the Native Hawaiians for the annexation of their land. During this apology resolution, it was announced that the U.S. had illegally acquired Hawai'i lands "without the consent of or compensation to the Native Hawaiian people of Hawai'i or their sovereign government" (Van Dyke, 1998, pp. 102-103). The Hawaiian community is still waiting for some type of resolution to undue this wrong.

As if the annexation was not enough, a joint resolution was approved and mandated all of Hawaiian Islands, including lands acquired by the Republic of Hawaii, government, and the overthrown monarchy homes, were handed over to the United States (Native Hawaiian Education Act, 2004). Revenues that were generated from the lands would go back to the "Hawaiian Islands . . . for the sole benefit of the inhabitants . . . for educational and other public purposes" (p. 522). In 1920, the U.S. Congress passed the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, to decrease the decline of Native Hawaiians from a rate of "1,000,000 in 1778 to an alarming 22,600 in 1919" (Native Hawaiian Education Act, 2004). The Native Hawaiian Education Act allowed for lease of lands at an annual rental of \$1.00 for no more than 99 years. In 1999, legislation authorized term limits to 199 years. In 1959, the former territory of Hawai'i became a U.S. state.

Hawaiian Sovereignty

The Hawaiian sovereignty movement is about rebuilding a culture that gives power and voice back to Native Hawaiians. As evidenced below, Hawai'i continues to suffer from the illegal and prolonged occupation of the U.S. takeover. Lyte (2015) writes,

The Hawaiian community is plagued by poverty, homelessness and the erosion of native traditions. Hawaiian students rank among the lowest groups nationally in reading. Hawaiian high school graduate and college acceptance rates fall below the national average. The high cost of living in the island chain, widely viewed by outsiders as a carefree palm tree paradise, has many native families focused on just trying to survive. (Lyte, 2015, p. 9)

Since the annexation of Hawai'i, the sovereignty of Hawaiian resilience movement groups endures, pleading for a restoration of a kingdom that will give greater independence back to Native Hawaiians. Some scholars believe the Hawaiian sovereignty movement started in 1893 with Queen Lili'uokalani as the Hawaiian Monarchy was overthrown, while other scholars L. T. Smith (1999) describe the 1970s as being pivotal for the movement as it "paralleled the activism surrounding the civil rights movement" (p. 113). Meyer (2008) brings a different lens as she describes "place" as something that is specific to your land, understanding differences occur even between the islands of Hawai'i. Meyer (2008) acknowledges the "need to be inspired" and states, "our definition of sovereignty-deep definition and that is the nation deep within. How do I respond to freedom of thought, freedom of capacity and it doesn't happen if I am told what to do" (Voices of Truth, 2007). Place becomes important because it acknowledges the learned wisdom and the distinctness of the land, that is also seen through wind and ocean currents. The Hawaiian Sovereignty movement endures and has gathered further momentum from both grass roots and legislative efforts. The sacrifices that have been made demonstrate continued strife's, which have highlighted visibility to the political,

social, and cultural histories Hawaiians have endured (Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement, n.d.).

Trends in Education in Hawai'i

Due to Western culture influences, the traditional practices and teaching knowledge that had formerly characterized learning such as storytelling were no longer included in the Hawaiian education curriculum. Instead, an educational system was put into place that focused on classroom models that slowly assimilated Hawaiians into Western ways of knowledge. Emphasis shifted from ohana values to occupations that centered on written literacy (Benham, 2006). In 1896, the use of Native Hawaiian language was banned in the education system and native students were subjected to American, English speaking classrooms (Benham, 2006). This time period created a hardship for Hawaiian families because the formalized school systems did little to acknowledge and honor Hawaiian ways of knowing, eventually deteriorating social and economic conditions of the Hawaiian people (MacKenzie, 2006). In 1986, the law prohibiting the use of Hawaiian language was lifted, but damage had already been done. Fewer than 50 children were fluent in the Hawaiian language (W. H. Wilson, 1998).

Despite Hawaii becoming a U.S. state in 1959, funding from the federal government was slow. In 1983, a comprehensive report on Native Hawaiian education was released to Congress (Native Hawaiian Education Act, 2004). The Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment Project (Ksbe.edu, 1983) was created to address the “recognition of longstanding patterns of low educational achievement and high school alienation experienced by individuals of Native Hawaiian ancestry” (p. 1). The Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment Project (NHEAP) documents Native Hawaiians were below

parity in regard to national norms on standardized achievement tests. The report also demonstrates Native Hawaiian students were overrepresented in special education programs and their educational needs were not being met through the westernized education system (Ksbe.edu, 1983). The Department of Education acknowledged Native Hawaiian's had specific needs that were related to their unique cultural situation (Native Hawaiian Education Act, 2004). Through countless struggles, "Educators and policy makers rationalized that Native Hawaiian children deserved universal education that would prepare them for the labor market" (Rothwell, 2013, p. 1). Five years after the NHEAP of 1983, the Native Hawaiian Education Act of 1988 was put into place.

Native Hawaiian Education Act

The Native Hawaiian Education Act (NHEA), a pivotal piece in Hawaiian history, because the act laid the foundation for establishing a political relationship between the federal government and the Hawaiian people (Native Hawaiian Education Act, 2004). The NHEAP (Ksbe.edu, 1983) found that Native Hawaiians score below parity in standardized test, but also identified that low achievement levels were directly related to cultural factors. Within the NHEA Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments were included, which authorized the development of educational programs that would benefit Native Hawaiians. The funding went to schools that utilized a "culturally appropriate curriculum and teaching techniques [which] stimulated and improved learning and retention, while also instilling a sense of pride in students" (Native Hawaiian Education Council, 2015, para. 5). It was also noted that the success of these programs was designed to emphasize families and communities, an

instrumental piece that was left out from the beginning, when the missionaries put formalized education into place.

In 1993, an updated NHEAP report was released based upon Kamehameha Schools (Ksbe.edu, 1993). Despite the gains of previous programming it became evident that more work needed to be done. Similar findings mirrored the earlier NHEAP assessment (Ksbe.edu, 1993). Additional outcomes also revealed that Native Hawaiian students who are enrolled in “both public and private schools continue to show a pattern of lower percentages in the uppermost achievement levels and in gifted and talented programs” (Ksbe.edu, 1993, p. 91). Native Hawaiian Students (NHS) have higher incidents of absents in secondary school, have higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse, and are disproportionately victimized by child abuse and neglect (Native Hawaiian Education Act, 2004).

A similar theme of Native Hawaiians adjusting to the influences of Western knowledge also emerged in another research. Kao (1995) conducted a study that examined ethnicity and academic performance across Asian Pacific Islander groups and discovered Pacific Islanders scored considerably lower math and reading scores than their white counterparts and “are less successful [in test scores] than the remaining Asian subgroups” (p. 142). Kao (1995) also speculated that Pacific Islanders (Hawaiians) have greater acculturation to mainstream America and this could be attributing to lower standardized test. Kao states, “It may be acculturation to the American mainstream negatively affects academic achievement, since we found higher achievement among children of immigrant parents” (p. 151).

In 2002, Congress, based upon the updated 10-year NHEAP report (Ksbe.edu, 1993), reauthorized the NHEA. This allowed funding for an additional five years and addressed educational barriers, citing the continued need, “to enhance educational outcomes of Native Hawaiians, including the study of Hawaiian language, culture, and history . . . also contributing to the knowledge base about Native Hawaiian education through research and data collection” (Thomas et al., 2012, p. 345). The long withstanding gaps of low school readiness and poor academic achievement continued to set Native Hawaiian students apart from their peers, earmarking additional support needed from the federal government.

The current political landscape of the Native Hawaiian Education Reauthorization Act of 2015 illuminates the work to seek leadership and voice from the Hawaiian community in determining clarity for evolving educational needs and increasing access and knowledge to its constituents (BigIslandNews, 2015). Specifically, the reauthorization of NHEA 2015 (Congress.gov, 2015) calls for the following:

1. The development of a body of Native Hawaiian law.
2. The repair and renovation of public schools that serve high concentrations of Native Hawaiian students.
3. Access to Hawaiian culture and history through digital archives.
4. Informal education programs that connect traditional Hawaiian knowledge, science, astronomy, and the environment through state museums or learning centers.
5. Public charter schools serving high concentrations of Native Hawaiian students. (p. 24)

Although the previously mentioned assessment reports and studies were primarily based within secondary school, higher education has not been formally mentioned, it should be noted with the NHEA’s, a commitment for postsecondary access was addressed by stating, “Native Hawaiian students continue to be underrepresented in

institutions of higher education and among adults who have completed four or more years of college” (Native Hawaiian Education Act, para. 16). While the majority of the emphasis was placed on the K-12 system, student’s precollege experiences are a factor that has been linked to the persistence and graduation of a postsecondary institution (Hokoana & Oliveira, 2012). Funding was also appropriated for college institutions to support scholarship programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels (Thomas et al., 2012).

Kamehameha Schools

Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop is the great-granddaughter and last direct descendant of Kamehameha I. A woman with great foresight, she was once the largest landowner in her kingdom (About Kamehameha Schools, 2016). Not having children of her own, she led a charge to nurture thousands of Native Hawaiian students, as she established a trust that adopted Native Hawaiians to inherit her legacy. Witnessing the sharp decline of her people, “The princess knew that education would be key to the survival of her people, so in an enduring act of aloha, she left them a precious gift upon her passing--375,000 acres of ancestral land” (About Kamehameha Schools, 2016). The land ancestral lands were used for educating her people. The first Kamehameha School was established in 1887 for boys, and in 1894 the first girl’s schools was opened. Princess Bishop died in 1884, and her husband, Charles Reed Bishop, continued her legacy until he passed away in 1915 (About Kamehameha Schools, 2016).

The Kamehameha Schools are important because they represent an “institution for the preservation of Native Hawaiian Culture, and History” (Gaysian, 2015, para 1) and provide opportunities for underprivileged kids, giving preference to orphans and

homeless students. The Kamehameha Schools have been instrumental in leading legislation that has informed the Native Hawaiian Education Act's. Seminal reports have guided and facilitated conversation towards educational reform in Hawaiian Schools that are deeply rooted in Hawaiian culture. Kamehameha Schools also provide direct support to 12 preschools throughout the Hawaiian community and have become a national K-12 model for indigenous schools for "implementing culturally relevant" (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002, p. 123) comprehensive based pedagogy and curriculum.

Today, "Kamehameha Schools cultivates a strong Native Hawaiian identity in its learners by giving them confidence and desire to kūpa'a (stand strong) in who they are as Native Hawaiians contributing and leading their local and global communities" (Ksbe.edu, 2017, para. 1) Kamehameha Schools' mission "is to fulfill Pauahi's desire to create educational opportunities in perpetuity to improve the capability and well-being of people of Hawaiian ancestry" (Ksbe.edu, n.d.).

Studying in the Mainland

According to a recent Hawai'i P-20 initiative, an integrated system that extends from pre-school to graduation from college, more Hawai'i students are choosing college, but fewer of these students are staying home (hawaiiinewsnow.com). Leaving Hawai'i to attend college on the mainland, gave students the college experience of having independence and to see "what it is like." The ease of technology allowed students to have an easier time to stay connected with their family over *Facetime* or *Skype*. Access to technology has removed some of the barriers of missing family and connecting back "to place" when studying on the mainland.

Indigenous Research: Decolonization in the Academy

In this section, I give an interwoven overview about the contemporary thinking of research and Indigenous populations. I highlight how indogeneity communities have contributed to Western research and continue to stretch its existing boundaries of systemic inquiry. I also explore the criticisms that exist when studying Indigenous communities and how a part of academia disputes ‘Indigenous ways of knowing’ and its lack of scholarly contribution to Westernized research. Finally, I show the importance of decolonizing academia.

The history of Indigenous research is complex. Research on Indigenous populations has also resulted in many criticisms by both insiders and outsiders of Indigenous communities (L. T. Smith, 2012). Previous relationships between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous communities continue to be at odds because underlying cultural beliefs and values of Indigenous peoples have not been honored. Thus, Indigenous populations continue to suffer from the colonization of their lands (Grande, 2015; L. T. Smith, 2012). Specific to Native Hawaiians, “For more than 400 years, Oceania has survived Western colonialism. As a result, Pacific Islanders’ cultures--including their social structures, knowledge systems, and spiritual beliefs--were forever changed by Western colonialism and imperialism” (Wright & Balutski, 2013, p. 145). Unfortunately, stories of colonialism and labels have invalidated Indigenous knowledge as inefficient, inferior, and an obstacle to the development of colonized communities (Agrawal, 1995). L. T. Smith (2012) cited Albert Memmi (1991) as they referred to Indigenous communities as “not fully human, they were not civilized enough to have systems, they were not literate, and their language and modes of thought were

inadequate” (p. 29). These sentiments demonstrate how knowledge about the former colonized communities was constructed and are problematic in restoring and developing cultural practices (Chilisa, 2012).

L. T. Smith (2012) describes the word research as “one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary” (introduction). This is seen through contested histories as Indigenous peoples are consistently “rewriting and righing our positions in history” (p. 29). “It is clear that there are powerful groups of researchers who resent Indigenous people asking questions about Western research and whose research paradigms constantly permit them to exploit Indigenous peoples and their knowledge” (L. T. Smith, 2012, p. 17). Moreover, L. T. Smith (1999) iterated how this has affected Indigenous communities, “Indigenous peoples have been, in many ways, oppressed by theory. Any consideration of the ways our origins have been examined, our histories recounted, our arts analyzed, our cultures dissected, measured, torn apart and distorted back to us will suggest that theories have not looked sympathetically or ethically at us” (p. 38). Critics of Indigenous research have also contested, chants, oral storytelling, and Hula as invalid thus challenging the ‘gold standard’ for reliability and validity, implying Indigenous research lacks creditability (N. L. Smith & Brandon, 2008). Due to this Westernized influence, a critical approach is needed to “critique the imperial model of research” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 19) that have historically silenced colonized voices to communicate and contribute dialogue to Western bodies of knowledge.

Indigenous studies have evolved to become a salient contributing strand in the academy (L. T. Smith, 2012) and the process of decolonizing research is an important approach when working with Indigenous communities. Chilisa (2012) describes

decolonizing as a “process of centering the concerns and worldviews of the colonized Other so that they understand themselves through their own assumptions and perspectives” (p. 13). Decolonizing goes beyond the contested histories, because histories are associated with power (L. T. Smith, 2012). It is a process of “taking apart of the story [history], revealing underlying texts, and giving voice to things that are often known intuitively” (p. 3). Decolonizing the academy also centralizes the framing of research question by focusing on “positive aspects and resilience of the community” (Lambert, 2014, p. 67). This is significant because deficit theory, “an approach for justifying inequality [by] intellectual and ethical deficiencies in particular groups of people” (Gorski, 2008, p. 518) has been used to disseminate hegemony across Westernized societies. Decolonizing education systems does not take away the centuries of harm perpetrated on Indigenous communities; it does start to move a community from historical trauma to recovery from colonization (Lambert, 2014). Decolonization also calls for bringing, “subjugated peoples who suffered colonial rule or slavery together with all the peoples of the world to work together towards social change” (p. 24). This requirement contributes to undoing the injustices colonized communities have endured. Creating a space that honors and validates Indigenous ways of knowing are both fundamental and critical elements of decolonizing academia. As stated in Lambert (2014), “When we honor our customs, and when we perform ceremonies, and when we listen to our ancestors, then we have everything we need to heal ourselves within ourselves” (p. 70). The decolonization process forces Westernized educators to ‘awaken from their slumber’ by acknowledging “power imbalances” (Gorski, 2008, p. 523) exist and raise questions that inform our consciousness to dismantle oppression (Gorski).

Indigenous communities are starting to share their own stories in the scholarly literature because it is important for Indigenous knowledge to survive, thus, “it must live in many places including Western academics (Lambert, 2014, p. 68). As Indigenous scholarship becomes increasingly prevalent in academia, it “strengthen[s] Indigenous people’ identities, and support the efforts to achieve intellectual self-determination” (Lambert, 2014, p. 69). This approach in validating and honoring Indigenous ways of knowing also affirms the injustice of colonization that they have endured. These are also critical components when centering research on Indigenous communities (Lambert, 2014).

Indigenous Theory

Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) describe theoretical framework as “suppositions and concepts that inform the phenomenon under study” (p. 10). Theoretical framework provides guidance to researchers how a study is approached (Jones et al., 2014). Theoretical framework serves as a reference point or a way of looking at the world. Frameworks that are used in qualitative research offer a lens to view the study (Anfara & Mertz, 2014).

In this section, I give an overview of Indigenous Theory (IT) and how this theory has been applied to Westernized academic knowledge. I explore the term IT and the considerations when identifying Indigenous persons. I give an overview of characteristics that are used when studying IT and demonstrate the importance of relationships within Indigenous communities. Finally, I show how IT has been used in a study that highlighted two perspectives (Western and Indigenous Amis Tribe of Taiwan) on the concept of ‘measuring time.’

Indigenous Theory is “an ancient, but ever evolving, set of beliefs and practices arising from tribal cultures” (Kovach, 2015, p. 381). Academics and activists popularized the term Indigenous People during the 1970s through the struggles during the American Indian Movement (L. T. Smith, 1999). Indigenous scholarship honors the “naming and bring fourth the spiritual aspects of life” (Meyer, 2013, p. 255) and knowledge that is told through traditions of chants, storytelling, songs, dances, and other Indigenous teachings that have endured through centuries. For example, the interconnected knowing in Hawaiian philosophy incorporates not only your head to use for thinking, but also relying on other major senses that are guided throughout your body (Meyer, 2008).

The term *Indigenous*, meaning “native to a region,” (Meyer, 2013, p. 251) is controversial because it requires creating categories of “who is indigenous” (Corntassel, 2003) and who is not. Requiring a strict and formal definition may result in excluding some Indigenous groups while too loosely defining Indigenous groups can make it difficult to ascertain Indigenous people from different cultural or non-Indigenous populations (Corntassel, 2003; Thaman, 2003). Corntassel (2003) noted that the best way to answer, “Who is indigenous” is, “answered by indigenous communities themselves” (p. 75). Unfortunately, this way of defining Indigenous communities is not always recognized by Western society.

The Indigenous term is often used by Western colonial powers but is being reclaimed and celebrated by Indigenous people because it provides a space to tell their own stories and rewrite their versions of their story.

Every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to rewriting and righiting our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the

events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to back into existence a world fragmented and dying. (L. T. Smith, 2012; p. 28)

L. T. Smith furthers her sentiments by demonstrating that the Western academy has “silenced indigenous voices” (p. 28) and also leaves narrative out from Indigenous communities.

Grande (2015) argued, “Indigenous peoples are reclaiming our environment through language, as we replace the names imposed by the colonizers on our birthplaces, and the mountains and lakes that surround us, reclaiming our words and our languages that have been omitted and silences” (introduction). When Grande wrote about Indigenous communities “reclaiming our words,” the scholar is observing the lack of power and privilege Indigenous communities have historically had and continue to have. There is a conscious awareness of a position of power that exists among certain individuals. Persons with less power are usually excluded from the decisions and not being involved in the definition of the research problem (Mertens, 2010).

Chilisa (2012) shifted our focus from categorizing who is Indigenous to instead understanding “a cultural group’s ways of perceiving reality, ways of knowing, and the values systems that inform research process” (p. 13). Chilisa (2012) identified the following characteristics of Indigenous research:

1. it targets local phenomenon instead of using extant theory from the West to identify and define a research issue;
2. it is context-sensitive and creates locally relevant constructs, methods, and theories derived from local experiences and Indigenous knowledge;
3. it can be integrative, that is, combining Western and Indigenous theories; and
4. in its most advanced form, its assumptions about what counts as reality, knowledge, and values in research are informed by an Indigenous research paradigm. (p. 13)

Chilisa observed that Indigenous research highlights the importance of knowledge, where “story telling is paramount in the style of knowing, based on people exploring their stories (experiences) together” (Romm, 2014, p. 10). Participants who are involved with this research will also be asked to participate in their own oral storytelling, acknowledging their truths, meanings, and paradigms. Indigenous communities have a counter-story to be told and for this story to be understood as another truth in our society. Collecting data in a space that honors interaction and relational dynamics is pivotal in understanding Indigenous communities.

Indigenous groups continue to wrestle with how history is presented and “how it is told from the perspective from the colonizers” (L. T. Smith, 2012; p. 31). History itself is important and is often told from elders and ancestors that provide a foundation and connection to the lived life of a Native Hawaiian. S. Wilson (2008) documents, “elders often use experiences from their own experience and that of the listener” (p. 98). Below is an example that shows the importance of these elements:

As I grow older and think of my kuleana, I look for guidance from them so it is great that I know where they are and there they rest because by understanding who they are and where they are from only helps to further allow me to understand who I am. I am the embodiment of all my ancestors, who are fisherman and women, kappa makers and gardeners. That connection is, to say the least, extremely valuable to me because it is a validation that I am an “Oiwi of this specific place. (Kailiehu, 2013)

This blog presented a different type of knowledge, from an Indigenous perspective. This knowledge disrupts Western science positivists/post-positivist knowledge truths (Hall, Dei, & Rosenberg, 2000). To many Westerners, this knowledge is not regarded as valid but these are stories that are not known to the dominant culture and therefore not understood. It is important to note that that “indigenous approaches to research on

indigenous issues are not met to compete with, or replace, the Western research paradigm; rather, to challenge it and contribute to the body of knowledge of indigenous people about themselves and for themselves, and for their own needs” (Porsanger, 2004, 105). Having a critical understanding of underlying assumptions, motivations, and values inform research practices inform the overall process of gathering information (L. T. Smith, 2012).

Indigenous Theory and Relationships

In this next section, I speak to the different ways IT shows up in (a) relationship to people, (b) relationship to place, (c) relationship to cosmos, and (d) Hawaiian epistemological knowledge. Each of these pieces contributes to a relational way of being and is “the heart of what means to be Indigenous” (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 80).

Understanding these pivotal relationships are essential to my study as it lays the foundation for how my participants are connected to the universe and each other.

Relationship to People

“I am Cherokee. May we live together in balance and harmony” (Walker, 2013, p. 299). The quote acknowledges a deeper level of human connectedness that is interwoven through shared experiences by mind, body, spirit, and the natural world. S. Wilson (2008) describes relationships within Indigenous communities as “being *in* relationship with other people” (p. 80). The relational network that is guided by the spirit and natural world becomes a shared space with other humans (Walker, 2013). Family plays a key role for Indigenous communities and is part of this sacred space (S. Wilson, 2008).

Although I do not identify myself as Indigenous, my grandmother (who passed away when I was in college) continues to play a role in my life as her knowledge guides

me. Dreams have become a way of knowing, especially if I am wrestling with life decisions. This window opening (my dreams) allows me to ‘see’ and feel things on a deeper and clearer level. For example, a distant colleague who is starting to unpack his White male privilege is also responsible for leading a yearly social justice conference. As an administrator of color, I have been triggered by some of his remarks and statements that have not been inclusive of representing students of color. Through a window opening, I have been guided by my grandmother to build a bridge and connect with this individual and have seen the forewarning if a connection was not made. Krog, Mpolweni-Zantsi, and Ratele (2008) acknowledged that, “any contact with the ancestors in dreams or at the grave side is not only cultural, but also spiritual” (p. 542). In these dreams, I rarely saw my grandmother’s face and yet I know it is her. In these dreams, I hear her same essence, as how she would speak to me in this world. It is the relationship that she and I developed before she left her physical presence. Knowledge that is learned in these types of connections becomes a by-product of relationships that are formed over time (Meyer, 2008).

Relationship to Place

Relationship to the land is often a spiritual connection (S. Wilson, 2008). The space between land and humans is interconnected and “by reducing the space between things, we are strengthening the relationship that they share” (p. 87). The shared relationship between land and humans becomes a place where knowledge is learned and shared (S. Wilson). Indigenous people’s customs and traditions “are shaped by the environment, the land, their relationship, their spiritual, emotional and physical relationship to that land” (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 88). Visiting this type of land includes,

“Listening to country . . . [and developing] respectful relationships with the land, animals, plants, dreaming sites, natural processes, ancestors, and living Aboriginal peoples who had custodianship of those lands” (Walker, 2013, p. 301). The connection to a place is more than a location point; it becomes the haven of “creativity, of our problem solving, and of our knowledge building” (Meyer, 2001, p. 129). The relationship to the land, environment, and to each other, are all equally sacred. Establishing these connections at a mainland university could be essential components of persisting through college. Further research is needed to determine how Native Hawaiian students are able to establish or make these connections.

Relationship to Cosmos

The relationship with the cosmos stresses spirituality and a sacredness among Indigenous cultures (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008). Holmes, (2012) writes, “In the Hawaiian literature, Hawaiians are genealogically connected to the universe, which is endowed with transforming power (p. 168), and, “destiny is spiritual” (p. 169), passed down from stories through elders or ancestor genealogy and “is contingent on sustaining cosmic connections that enfold all Hawaiians (Holmes, p. 170). Destiny speaks to the necessary actions that are used for protection in the struggle against capitalism and being colonized. Due to corruption and colonization that has occurred in Hawaii, and other Indigenous lands, members struggle to retain this connection and knowledge (Holmes, 2012). Often times this knowledge, the stories that should have been passed on have been silenced by being told to “distrust their own stories” (p. 171). Perpetuating genocide in another way.

Meyer's (2001) example illustrates bridges our understanding of how rapport with the ocean and the cosmos system are interconnected. The quote reflects a graduate student pushing back on what is being deposited as truth and wisdom from a cultural standpoint. The underlying tones speak directly to how the cosmos is related to spirituality and knowledge under Native Hawaiian beliefs.

My philosophy professor went on about Descartes [being "our" number one philosopher] and how, if the world did not have these thoughts, we would still be in the dark ages, and all I said was, "I disagree." She said "our" like she was my *Kupuna*-my Elder-which she's not. For me Descartes represents reason and objectivity and science, and these three ideas have also been used as tools of "truth" that have helped heal and helped kill. It was an absolutely, fundamental and clear idea for me that Descartes was not my liberator. And so, when I said, "I disagree," she turned and looked at me and said, "Okay, Miss Meyer, how would you teach a class in oceanography?" Yeeee-ha! Thank you! I was so relieved. I thought she just leveled off the playing field because I grew up in the ocean. . . . All right, I will. I would teach it first via science. The predictable science of litoral currents, of wave refractions, how water is shaped by the beach slope, and how beaches are changed because of the volume and speed of water. I would teach oceanography via science . . . and I would teach it via culture.

Now in my book, science and culture are not separated. But this was to me a necessary separation because I didn't want her to misunderstand me at the start; I continued and said . . . I would teach a class in oceanography also via culture. I would teach the names of the moons and how those moons relate to what fish are running, you understand what limu is on splash zones. So, the kind of seaweed also tells you about the quality of the ocean currents. Knowing the Hawaiian names of the moons tells you what the seasons and months are. Naming things is both a cultural recognition and an understanding of the science of that area. A Hawaiian naming of phenomena tells us about the seasonal context and what that place has to teach you. . . . There are eight major currents that run through our islands. Each name tells you something of the character of those currents. What does Kealahiki mean? The pathway to Tahiti. We are not naming this because we have no relationship to it. We name it because we do. So, I was going on like this, and then she said to me, right in the middle of a sentence: "Well then, you Miss Meyer, are an anti-intellectual." (Meyer, 2001, pp. 189-190)

The quote shows academia's distrust in cultural knowledge and demonstrates the interconnectedness between the ocean; the fish that occupy the ocean, and how the moons and the seasons are connected. Meyer's use of this quote also explains how spirituality

and knowing are shaped as Hawaiian systems of knowledge. Native Hawaiian students bring this awareness with them to an institution, yet little is known how these types of experiences and knowledge contribute to their persistence at a predominately White university.

Relationship to Knowledge

Indigenous theory highlights different types of knowledge, which can be described as transactions that occur between Indigenous and Western ways of knowing the world (L. T. Smith, 1999). Knowledge that is learned within Indigenous community is shared and “approached through senses and intuition” (S. Wilson, 2008; p. 55). This type of interconnected knowing also draws from dreams, visions, and conversations with elders who have passed on are regarded as valuable knowledge (Walker, 2013). Chilisa (2012) describes knowers as, “beings with connections to other beings, the spirits of the ancestors, and the world around them that is informed by what they know and how they can know it” (p 116). “Hawaiian’s were never like the people who colonized us, we see, hear, feel, taste, and smell the world differently” (Meyer, 2013, p. 125). Hawaiian epistemology is an ancestral system that cannot be replicated in classrooms and is learned from different sources that become naturally interwoven into all aspects of life.

Relationships are described as the central core of Hawaiian epistemology (Meyer, 2013) and this interconnected knowing “illuminates [the] connections between the human and more-than-human worlds” (Walker, 2013, p. 304). “A practiced knowing must reenter the planet a knowledge that keep pace with the tides, moon, and stars. Bringing this know of knowing forward is the (k)new rigor of our times” (Meyer, 2013, p. 253). It is the calling

of the interconnectedness that starts to shift the thinking from a Western way of knowing to an Indigenous way of knowing.

A study by H. Lee, Yen, and Aikenhead (2012) describes the complex role of integrating both Indigenous and western science knowing to fourth grade Indigenous Taiwanese students. The study highlighted two perspectives (Western and Indigenous Amis Tribe of Taiwan) on the concept of ‘measuring time’. The preliminary ethnographic study was conducted on the east coast of Taiwan with interviews from elders of the Amis Tribe, their children in the fourth grade, and their teacher who lead the classroom. The teacher described themselves as non-Indigenous, yet somewhat knowledgeable in the Amis Tribe culture. Having sufficient knowledge in different cultural identities became a salient theme for this study when you are leading a classroom (H. Lee et al., 2012). The study acknowledged a wide cultural gap exists for Indigenous Taiwanese students because they are learning Western science concepts through Chinese, rather through their native language (H. Lee et al., 2012, p. 1184). Additionally, Aikenhead (2006) described that conventional learning of science often discounts Indigenous knowledge, such as relationships with nature. This study highlighted the importance of recognizing students’ worldviews as “important to the classroom learning environment as the worldview reflected in a scientific textbook” (H. Lee et al., 2012, p. 1198). This is significant because using an extreme contemporary Western scientific knowledge emphasis and concepts “can lead to the gradual loss of students’ cultural identities in non-Western and [Western] countries” (Lee et al., 2012, p. 1198). Although this study used an elementary science classroom, the undertones to this study are salient to this research study. Combining Indigenous worldview knowledge and Western knowledge curriculums that

co-exist with each other, students find interest and meaning in their own cultural roots. A similar thought could also be applied to higher education classrooms for Native Hawaiian populations and other marginalized students. Our society is becoming more diverse with different cultural identities. This study demonstrated the importance of leaders acquiring sufficient understanding how Indigenous traditional wisdom can be embedded in curriculums and other spaces on campus, thus, leading to higher engagement of Indigenous students.

Student Development Theory

In this section, I explain how the early seminal student development theories did little to include the experiences and voices of student of color populations. I explore how student development theorists later tried to incorporate these voices, resulting in additional feedback for better-informed student development theories. Lastly, I discuss emerging research that centers around knowledge and Native communities and how pivotal this research is in contributing to an improved understanding of college going experiences of Native Hawaiian students through a student development lens.

Application of Student Development Theory to Hawaiian Undergraduate

Student development is a term that is commonly used within the field of student affairs (Evans et al., 2010). Student development theorists address relationships between college environments, transitions students encounter (Strange, 1994), and the overall development and human growth. Student Development Theory (SDT) is consistently evolving, much like our students. Evans et al. (2010) defined student development theory to “address student needs, design programs, develop policies, and create healthy college environments that encourage positive growth in

students” (p. 7). Student Development Theory is “development of the whole student, [which] is more complex than one theory or even a cluster of theories can explain (Evans et al., 2010, p. 20). Specifically, student development theory describes how college students grow and change throughout their college years.

Chickering (1969) guided how educational practice could be designed to promote student development. His theories are based on linear concepts and in his original work, he identified seven vectors of development that move through autonomy toward interdependence. The seven vectors of development are: (a) Developing Competence, (b) Managing Emotions, (c) Developing Autonomy, (d) Establishing Identity, (e) Freeing Interpersonal Relationships, (f) Developing Purpose, and (g) Developing Integrity. Each of the vectors contributes to the formation of identity (pp. 20-123). Students will experience vectors at different rates, and it is also possible for vectors to interact with each other. Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) revised theory has changed the order of some vectors due to updated research; however, these authors still fall short incorporating all student voices. The authors’ purpose that a student’s progress through the first three vectors simultaneously occurs during the first and second years in college. This progression is a prerequisite for the fourth vector, which is the groundwork for developing purpose and integrity. Natural progression towards the fourth vector generally occurs during sophomore and junior years. The fourth vector is learning ‘who you are’ and becoming comfortable with self. Students’ progress through the vectors at different rates and may reenter through some vectors (Evans et al., 2010). Chickering (1969) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) established that student development identity theory involves a “growing awareness of competencies, emotions, values, confidence in

standing alone and bonding with others, and moving beyond intolerance toward openness and self-esteem” (p. 49). These statements were offered as their second attempt to address critical critiques to Checkering’s (1969) theory, which left out identity for development minoritized students.

Student Development and Indigenous Communities

Student development theories have also been widely critiqued for its inability to “utilize a cultural lens” (Freitas et al., 2013, p. 85) and its application to Indigenous populations. Museus, Shiroma, and Dizon (2016) noted that Tinto’s (1975, 1987, 1993) student integration theory, which is also viewed as a SDT, does little to explain success for minoritized students, including Native Hawaiians or other Indigenous groups. A significant portion of research regarding the development of SDT is based on the experiences of traditional aged white male’s college students (Museus, 2014b). This is cause for concern because; this limits the praxis of working with Native Hawaiian and Indigenous communities. Earlier models that did include different voices from underrepresented populations were developed from a Black, White, or Hispanic lenses and applied to all students of color, creating a monolithic experience (Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). Consequently, scholars are designing new theory that does not rely on such traditional theories (Museus, 2014b) and creating emergent theories from voices and lived experiences of students of color.

Student development theory provides a framework for understanding students in higher education institutions (Evans et al., 2010) and these frameworks are based on linear, westernized ways of knowing, and acquiring information (Freitas et al., 2013). Student development theory does not include developmental processes for Indigenous

groups of people. This is acknowledged by Freitas et al. (2013) who note, “Indigenous epistemologies embody different oftentimes antithetical, ideas of what constitutes knowledge, cognition, competency, and development” (p. 85). Since SDT “are used to organize and operate higher education” (Freitas et al., 2013, p. 85), it is not seen how these theories value culture or other ways of “knowing” therefore making it hard for Native Hawaiians to be successful in postsecondary educational settings. Yamamoto and Black (2015) demonstrate this by stating, “To succeed in public schools, Native Hawaiians must take on the values and manners related to success in the Western culture. For many Native Hawaiians, school is seen as a place of context, values, instructional strategies, and measures of accountability” (p. 51). This quote demonstrated the struggles Native Hawaiian’s have to endure and the subtle attack of their identities as they navigate a college setting. It is evident higher education administrators need to do better in creating culturally appropriate and relevant SDT, as culture is integral to the lives of Hawaiian and other Indigenous communities.

Emerging Student Development Theory Models

Although the traditional SDT models have left out experiences from underrepresented students, an increasing number of studies are illuminating the role of culture and students’ college experiences (Museus et al., 2013). One such study (Kupo, 2010) discusses new frameworks to be considered, and expands knowledge on Native Hawaiian identity. Kupo’s (2010) research study utilized a narrative inquiry research methodology and tribal critical race theory. Kupo (2010) documents the experiences of how participants conceptualized their cultural identity while attending a large Pacific

university. Kupo's critical work explored the socio and geopolitical influences and the meaning making of their NH identities.

Reyes (2017) demonstrated how culture is interwoven into the lives of Hawaiians by constructing a Native Hawaiian Critical Theory framework that speaks to Hawaiian epistemologies and colonialism. The KanakaCrit outlines the following six tenets:

1. Occupational and colonialism are endemic to society.
2. 'Oiwī (i.e., Native Hawaiian) identifies as multiple, intersecting, and liminal.
3. Social justice is inherently tied to Native Hawaiian ea (i.e., sovereignty, life, and breath) and the lahui (i.e., nation or people).
4. KanakaCrit works towards social justice and restoring pono (i.e., balance and harmony).
5. As Native Hawaiians learn to tell their mo'olelo (i.e., histories or stories), they contribute to their survivance (i.e., national survival and resistance).
6. Knowledge must be developed and used to benefit lāhui. (pp. 9-14)

Reyes (2017) mentioned "survivance" (p. 14): a term that speaks directly to the Native Hawaiian experience by acknowledging the strength and resistance needed to overcome colonialism. Current research is emerging, representing voices from underrepresented communities that speaks to the experiences of minoritized students through SDT (Museus et al., 2015) The KanakaCrit is an example of this as it provides a space to analyze the experiences of Native Hawaiians (Museus et al., 2015). Furthermore, an evident link exists drawing the academic community closer to defining SDT for Native Hawaiian college students. The KanakaCrit highlights the devastation caused by colonialism, the lasting impact that it continues to have on Native Hawaiians, and the importance of resistance in order for the community to survive (Museus et al., 2015). These are all significant pieces that need to be a part of the growing research in developing a tailored SDT that better informs higher educational professionals. The KanakaCrit will inform

this study in helping to provide another aspect of cultural sensitivity that better meets the needs of my participants.

To this day, Chickering and Reisser (1993) do not offer statements or fully address the application of their theory to students from diverse backgrounds (L. D. Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Kuh, Schuh, & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1991). While scholarly material was added for African and Hispanic Americans in Chickering and Reisser's student development theory (1993), Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander student populations were still disregarded and overlooked (Kuh et al., 1991). Continuing to use these theories undermines the authenticity that lacks understanding and knowledge of cultural barriers that exist in how to serve students who bring a different lens to PW mainland universities.

Campus Racial Climate for Hawaiian Undergraduates

In this section, I explore the significance of campus climates in helping students navigate an institution. Strong climates contribute to students feeling connected and engage in universities (Museus, 2014b). It is important to develop meaningful connections and engagement with students, as a way to increase results in higher persistence and graduation rates. I also give an overview of how the current dialogue is changing from campus climate to campus racial climate, due to the increased prejudice and racism experienced by minoritized students within and outside of classrooms through microaggressions. Finally, I explore the need for additional research, which sought out to bring voices from Hawaiian communities to better inform academia and student affair professionals about their experiences through campus racial climate.

College campuses are becoming more diverse. Since the 1970's the percentage of students of color entering a post-secondary institution increases each year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Campus climate is described as, "current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members" (Bauer, 1998, p. 2). Campus Racial Climate (CRC) "has most frequently been applied to understand the experiences of students of color" (Museus et al., 2012, p. 29) on a college campus.

Throughout the United States, racial conflict continues to rise on college campuses and prompts scholars to take a closer look at how institutional settings affect students of color. Studies show that minoritized students experience microaggressions (Caplan & Ford, 2014; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Microaggressions are linked with forms of racism. These are "factors [that] can enhance and interfere with their [students of color] attempts to obtain an education" (Caplan & Ford, 2014, p. 64). Continually, microaggressions have a subtle racist undertone that speaks and causes harm to minoritized communities, "leaving a deep and lasting impact on race relations" (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013, p. 435). Rendón et al. (2000) described that students of color experience higher levels of adjustment and transitioning to campus due to lack of knowledge about mainstream college culture. Yeh (2004) communicated that Pacific Islander students experience difficult adjustments in classrooms due to cultural barriers. Gasiewski, Eagan, Garcia, Hurtado, and Chang (2012) and Harper and Hurtado (2007) acknowledged that racial issues have become increasingly prominent on college campuses.

Rankin and Reason (2005) conducted a study in which they explored ten geographically diverse campuses across the United States. The 55-item survey asked

participants about personal experiences regarding academic policies, campus climate, and diversity issues. The instrument was designed to elicit feedback from traditionally underrepresented and underserved populations that ranged from student, faculty, and staff. The study found that students of color experience college campus quite differently than White students. Moreover, students of color are more apt to indicate the climate was racist, hostile, and disrespectful.

Tinto (1993) and Terenzini and Pascarella (1991) acknowledged the importance of social and academic integration. These systems influence student satisfaction and commitment to college, which has promoted scholars to study college environment and how this impacts students of color. Since more students of color are enrolling in college campuses when compared to earlier years, assessing campus climate continues to be a pertinent discussion for identifying areas for student success: specifically, retention and graduation. Cress and Ikeda (2003) reported that negative campus climate was linked as a descriptive variable, having a detrimental effect on Asian American students' emotional, psychological, and social state, which inhibit academic integration.

Harper and Hurtado (2007) synthesized fifteen years of published research on campus racial climates. The 35 studies resulted in recognition of nine themes, which were placed into three clusters: (a) differential perceptions of campus climate by race, (b) racial/ethnic minority student reports of prejudicial treatments and racist campus environments, and (c) benefits associated with campus climates that facilitate cross-racial engagement. The first cluster identifies perceptual differences between "racial/ethnic minorities and White students" when addressing campus climate as being more racist and less accepting. The second cluster refers to students having difficulty identifying

spaces on campus in which they feel a shared cultural ownership. Lastly, students attending a culturally diverse institution, who are engaged with peers from culturally/ethnic backgrounds, will develop an increased skillset that can be used during and after college. These three categories continue to be central themes in addressing campus climate. The synthesis of this study also reveals the lack of research that demonstrates experiences of Asian and Native American students' campus racial climate experience. Hurtado (1992) and other's (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; J. L. Johnson & Beamer, 2013) explained that negative campus climate is perpetuated as racial conflict arises in the dominant group when there is a sense of losing power and other benefits.

The need for additional studies, which places a central focus on Native Hawaiian students, is crucial in understanding how to make necessary changes that foster a positive campus racial climate. It is also equally important for higher educational professionals to understand the cultural barriers that exist and the experiences of Native Hawaiian students. The above studies demonstrate that a negative campus climate can contribute to feelings of isolation, perpetuating students withdrawing from universities.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the challenges experienced by Native Hawaiian college students are highlighted. Due to their political and social history, they have a unique set of traditions that differentiate them from mainland universities. Throughout each of the five sections presented in this chapter, I interweave the need for additional research that focuses on Native Hawaiians because few studies exist that illuminate their college going experiences. This complicates their path towards success in graduating from a mainland

PWI when the higher education community does not know how to support this population of students.

In the first major section, I explored the importance of obtaining a college degree and how Native Hawaiian-Indigenous populations have historically had a low bachelor degree attainment, when compared to other groups. It was discussed this could be attributed to Hawaiian's enduring colonialism and oppression for several decades and this continues to have an impact on their community. Additionally, I also highlight the importance of disaggregating data and how this has also played a role in masking the low graduation rates. I finalize this section with an overview of student retention theorists and how Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) and Astin (1985) have informed the higher education community about retaining college students. However, when explored deeper, these seminal retention theorist, do not fully incorporate the Native Hawaiian cultural lens. This limits the ability to understand how this population persists through a higher education system.

In the second major section, a brief overview of the history of Native Hawaiians was explored. Pivotal timeline histories were used to highlight the colonization of Hawaiian Islands, the overthrow of the monarchy, and the United States annexing Hawai'i. Again, I acknowledge several other historical crucial points have occurred in Hawaiian history and it seemed these points provided a foundational in understanding the deep complexities Native Hawaiians have endured. Later in this section, the education system was examined and how education amendments provided funding to increase Native Hawaiians low educational attainment. Incorporating cultural practices and

Indigenous ways of knowing, was identified as a need for curriculum development, in undoing the harm from Western formalized school systems in Hawai'i.

In the third major section, I highlighted how Indigenous communities are still haunted by Westernized research. Examples were used that demonstrated the distrust amongst Indigenous communities and how these portrayals have endured through academia. Lastly, I explored the importance of decolonization and how Indigenous communities are sharing “their stories” in re-authoring history.

In the fourth major section, I demonstrated how IT has been instrumental when studying Indigenous communities. IT gives permission to explore other ways of knowing and serves as a way of giving voice to IT communities by “reclaiming our words and our languages that been omitted and silence[d]” (Grande, 2015, p. 1). Additionally, this section explored the importance of relationships and how these instrumental relationships influence knowledge and truths through the use of storytelling. Lastly, I used a study that highlighted an Indigenous Amis Tribe of Taiwan on the concept of ‘measuring time.’

In the fifth major section of this chapter, I explore foundational student development theorists. Again, I highlight the need for decolonization in the academy that speaks to the experiences of Native Hawaiian students through a student development lens. Examples were also used that highlighted the academic community in how they wrestled with lack of current SDT and the lack of marginalized voices. Finally, I discussed the emergent research that is forthcoming from a KanakaCrit theory and how this could be used a natural link in creating a SDT for Hawaiians.

In the last section of this chapter, I included campus racial climate and the microaggressions that are experienced and felt by minoritized community members. I

explored seminal research of Rankin and Reason (2005), Harper and Hurtado (2007), and Gasiewski et al. (2012) and provided a lens to show current campus racial climate experiences of students of color. Current research has started to incorporate a student of color perspective, due to the growing racial conflict that has increased in postsecondary communities and more research in this area is needed. I demonstrate how the voices of Native Hawaiians are not equally present in this research. In the next chapter, I identify the methodological approach use to address the primary research questions and provide a detail account or how I collected and analyzed the data.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore how Native Hawaiian college students made meaning of their WSU community, how they experience WSU's support services, and the role of stories in framing their experience. The use of storytelling and ways of knowing in Indigenous communities was explored. This study sought to understand how participants identify and create social support systems. In this chapter, I (a) outline the research questions that will guide this study, (b) describe the research design in greater detail that includes the epistemology, the theoretical framework of the study, and (c) explain how this study's methodology/research design, participant selection, setting, data collection, data analysis, and the criteria are used to help ensure rigor.

“Hawaiians were never like the people who colonized us” (Meyer, 2001, p. 125) yet, many of our best ideas for retaining and graduating students are based on the dominant perspectives that does little to show other ways of knowing or acquiring knowledge in an education system. I have therefore, crafted the following research questions to more fully explore the undergraduate experiences of Hawaiian students using culturally appropriate methods to guide this study:

- Q1 How do Native Hawaiian students experience West State University?
- Q1a How do Native Hawaiian college students experience support systems at a Predominantly White mainland institution?

- Q1b What are the experiences that contribute to the persistence of Native Hawaiian students at a Predominantly White mainland institution?
- Q2 How does Indigenous storytelling support and shape participants' understanding of their experience at West State University?

Qualitative Research

This study was anchored in qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) described qualitative research as “a study [of] things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). I used this approach because qualitative researchers “illuminate and better understand in depth the rich lives of human beings and the world in which we live (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 2). Indigenous populations have different and unique needs due to sociopolitical histories. Understanding the lived experiences of Native Hawaiians college students, as they navigate through a PW mainland institution, will assist campus leaders to provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment. This study highlights and brings increased awareness in serving Native Hawaiian students and other students of color.

Epistemology: Social Constructivist

Through epistemology, the researcher seeks to understand the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the participant and the researcher (Mertens, 2009, 2010). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described epistemology as a “system of knowing” (p. 257), created by our own worldview, which is deeply influenced and shaped by one’s life experiences. Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) define epistemology as “philosophical assumptions about what constitutes knowledge” (p. 9). Using a social constructivist epistemological phenomenology lens is constructed with participants of the

study and funds of knowledge are made by groups or individuals (Jones et al., 2014). Thus, demonstrating knowledge through “subjective experience and insights” (Kafle, 2011, p. 194) that are captured through participants’ world stories (van Manen, 1997). Warmoth (2000) highlights that knowledge from a social constructivist lens is derived, “from a ‘knowledge community’ of people who agree about the truth” (para. 3). Beck and Kosnik (2006) describes social constructivism knowledge that is gained through human interactions by linking new knowledge to existing understanding. This is a way to understand meaning and shared realities. Warmoth (2000) further stated that knowledge is, “ultimately grounded in conversations among members of knowledge communities” (para. 5). This is important because this study demonstrates the importance of stories by giving them meaning in their social context. A social constructivist epistemology fits well with this study because it seeks to understand shared commonalities within a group. The shared meanings help to understand the phenomena being studied.

Worldviews and acquisition of knowledge differ among dominant and non-dominant truths (Grande, 2015; S. Wilson, 2008). Crotty (1998) describes this knowledge, as “how we know what we know” (p. 9). For example, knowledge in the Indigenous Hawaiian community is traditionally passed down by elders (Holmes, 2000) and communicated through stories, chants, and dancing. The Native Hawaiian story (Kauainenehpc.com, 1951) demonstrated how knowledge has been communicated across many Hawaiian generations:

O ke au i kahuli wela ka honua
 At the time when the earth became hot
 O ke au i kahuli lolo ka lani
 At the time when the heavens turned about
 O ke au i kuka'iaaka ka la
 At the time when the sun was darkened
 E ho'omalamalama i ka malama
 To cause the moon to shine
 O ke au o Makali'i ka po
 The time of the rise of the Pleiades
 O ka walewale ho'okumu honua ia
 The slime, this was the source of the earth
 O ke kumu o ka lipo, i lipo ai
 The source of the darkness that made darkness
 O ke kumu o ka Po, i po ai
 The source of the night that made night
 O ka lipolipo, o ka lipolipo
 The intense darkness, the deep darkness
 O ka lipo o ka la, o ka lipo o ka po
 Darkness of the sun, darkness of the night
 Po wale ho--'i
 Nothing but night
 Hanau ka po
 The night gave birth
 Hanau Kumulipo i ka po, he kane
 Born was Kumulipo in the night, a male
 Hanau Po'ele i ka po, he wahine
 Born was Po'ele in the night, a female
 Hanau ka 'Uku-ko'ako'a, hanau kana, he 'Ako'ako'a, puka
 Born was the coral polyp, born was the coral, came forth. (Kauainenehpc.com,
 1951, para. 1)

The chant illustrates the creation story within the Hawaiian community. This abbreviated version shows how the earth was created and the ancestral beginning of the ruling chiefs and portrays interwoven knowledge and history of Hawaiian culture. The above chant is not well known in Westernized society and yet plays an important role in understanding Native Hawaiian culture, suggestive of the disconnect between Western and non-Western beliefs systems. The dominant Western narrative does not include story-telling chants to tell history of people, and is disconnected by those in positions of power.

Theoretical Framework: Indigenous Theory

A theoretical framework is a “philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and ground its logic and criteria” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Merriam (1998) described theoretical framework as, “the scaffolding, or frame of your study” (p. 66), giving direction and purpose to research (Jones et al., 2014). Maxwell (2013) demonstrate that theories inform and support your research while giving credibility to your design. The use of a framework theory should also align with beliefs and assumptions associated with your study (Kovach, 2015).

For this research, theoretical framework, I used Indigenous Theory (IT). Indigenous Theory informed the design of this study to bring about change to academia as we learn to develop better infrastructure for Hawai’i students and other students of color. Our society continues to perpetuate the dominant voice, leaving little to no space for communities of color to share their stories or truths. Milner (2007) echoes this, “people of color historically have been misrepresented, exploited, silenced, and taken for granted in education research” (p. 388). Often times, the studies of Pacific Islander college students and the experiences they have at PW mainland institutions are often viewed through the lens of the dominant culture, resulted in gross misinterpretation causing further harm to communities.

Indigenous Theory and Storytelling

Indigenous Theory produces powerful voices that become strong pieces of data and evidence. Stories and counter storytelling have been described as a way of giving power to underrepresented groups (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Ladson-Billings (1998) described the silenced voices as being one of the tragedies in the

field of education and further posits that oppression continues to be rationalized by those in power, justifying their own reality as a way to maintain their power and privilege. Indigenous theory allows spaces in our society to hear the untold truths. “Our stories are our theories” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 426) and “stories become our instinctual way of knowing things” (J. L. Johnson & Beamer, 2013; p. 1371).

Freire (1970) believed that dialogue would radically change the world. The dialogue that takes place through stories or narratives told by disenfranchised communities is changing the world. Ungar (2011) shows us, “The power of [story] isn’t that it tells truth, but that it forces us to acknowledge that all truths co-exists [and] that others have different ways of understanding and making sense of the world” (p. 293). Storytelling and counter-storytelling come from an illuminating place that invite the reader in and asks them to listen without judgment as they hear the other side of the story. Without hearing the entire story, only one truth can be learned. Additionally, counter-stories can alter complacency, challenge the dominant dialogue on race, and further the struggle for racial justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Indigenous Theory provides a space for these counter-stories to exist and a framework that addresses the historical and political context (Wright & Balutski, 2013).

My study included participants in the understanding and developing of knowledge construction process through individual, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and member-checks. Indigenous pedagogy demands that Indigenous groups own the research process (Lambert, 2014; L. T. Smith, 2012; S. Wilson, 2008). At times, I found myself guided by the flow of conversation or shifting my focus as other needs emerge, honoring the truth “to people about the reality of their lives” (Collins, 1998, pp. 198-199).

Participants were treated as the experts. It is important to understand the culture and build authentic relationships with the participants.

Methodology and Methods

Crotty (1998) defines methodology as, “the strategy, plan of action, process, or designing behind the choice and use of particular methods” (p. 3). Phenomenologists analyze the experiences of an individual or group that are related to everyday practices and how participants experience their reality or how meaning is socially constructed in the world around them (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Phenomenology is “a reflective process of attempting to recover and express the ways we experience our life as we live it” (van Manen, 2014, p. 20). Common data collection methods for phenomenological methods research are interviews, focus groups, observations, artifacts, life histories, and storytelling.

Methodology: Phenomenological Research

Initially, phenomenology started off as a philosophy and has been widely accepted for use in social sciences, including research methodologies (Creswell, 1998). Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) offered phenomenology as an alternative way of understanding philosophy that assisted researchers in developing the essence of the phenomenon or object being studied (Moran, 2001). Sloan and Bowe (2014) highlight Husserl’s philosophical perspective in reaching true meaning of a phenomenon; one must penetrate deeper into reality. Phenomenology focuses on the experience by lifting up and asking, “what is the nature, meaning, significance, uniqueness, or in singularity of this or that experience as we live through it or as it is given in our experience or consciousness?”

(van Manen, 2014, p. 52). These questions illustrate how to understand the everyday experiences of the world.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Heidegger, an understudy of Husserl, departed from the traditional Husserlian phenomenology and formed a branch of phenomenology, known as hermeneutic phenomenology (Creswell, 2007, 2013; Kafle, 2011; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1997, 2014). Crotty (1998) defined hermeneutics as a means to “interpret or to understand (p. 88) and is a sharing of meaning between communities” (p. 91). Hermeneutic phenomenologists believe our own realities are created by our own perceptions that we experience through events in our lives (Crotty, 1998). Traditional phenomenology uses an epoche or bracketing method that sets aside the researchers bias or experiences to allow for a fresh perspective to understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, 2013). Hermeneutic phenomenology rejects this idea of “suspending personal opinions” (Kafle, 2011, p. 186) and places emphasis on “engaging with our experience as it is lived rather than as it conceptualized” (Aldridge, 2015, p. 123). Therefore, researcher biases and assumptions are not bracketed; they become essential to the overall understanding of the phenomena being studied (Laverty, 2003). Doing so assists phenomenological researchers to be active participants in a heightened transformative stance, bringing attentiveness to the lived experience presented by participants (van Manen, 1997).

To illustrate this type of phenomenology, I will next discuss a study that used hermeneutic phenomenology. Ramezanzadeh, Adel, and Zareian, (2016) designed a study to explore authenticity in Iranian teachers and its link to their emotions. This study demonstrated the importance of researcher assumptions and biases, as they were not

bracketed because researcher's own lived experiences to the study was needed to uncover the conceptualization of authenticity and the connection to emotions (Ramezanzadeh, Adel, & Zareian, 2016).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Stories

Hermeneutic phenomenology “focus[es] on the subjective experience of individuals and groups. It is an attempt to unveil the world as experienced by the subject through their life world stories” (Kafle, 2011, p. 186). Merriam (2009) described stories as “how we make sense of our experiences, and how we communicate with others, and through which we understand the world around us” (p. 32). Friesen, Henriksson, and Saevi (2012) Hermeneutic phenomenology gave a type of knowledge that is relevant for classroom pedagogy. This is important because connecting with students from a pedagogical context allows the faculty member to be ‘in-touch’ with their students; potentially creating shared history with positive contact (van Manen, 2014). Both of these pivotal tenets assist with higher levels of retention and graduation rates. Hermeneutic phenomenology helps to “elucidate lived meanings” (Friesen, Henriksson, & Saevi, 2012, p. 121) by bringing “to light and reflect[ing] upon the lived meaning of [the] experience” (Goble & Yin, 2014, np). Aldridge (2015) described a purpose of hermeneutic phenomenology is to “return to our practice transformed” (p. 123) while becoming more attentive to our own experiences (van Manen, 1997). Storytelling, counter-stories, and voice continue to be a method that illuminates the many false truths of our society. This means challenging the “status quo” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414) to alter complacency. Allowing the voices of Native Hawaiian students to be heard and constructing knowledge helped to suspend bias by highlighting “patriarchal roots of many theoretic concepts,

linguistic structures, and methods in education” (van Manen, 1997, p. xvii). Doing this will assist in the reprioritize of roles in addressing human rights and social justice. Using a hermeneutic phenomenology, as the methodology is pertinent to this study because it allowed for understanding lived experiences or essence through the descriptive stories that are told (Kafle, 2011).

Essence

M. J. Patton (1991) states that “phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question: What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?” (p. 69). Creswell (2013) defines essence as “a descriptive passage that discuss the experience for individuals incorporating ‘what the individuals have experienced and ‘how’ they experienced it” (p. 79). Cited in Kafle (2011) they refer to the term essence as, “the essential meanings of a phenomenon that which makes a thing what it is” (p. 189). Essence is a grasp of a singular aspect of the phenomenon or event being studied (van Manen, 2014), denoting the universal nature of an experience. van Manen (1997) further elaborates how an essence is formed:

A good description that constitutes the essence of a something is constructed so that the structure of a lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way. (p. 39).

Jones et al., (2006) describe the uniqueness of lived experience as the “essence of a particular phenomenon” (p. 47). The essence of a phenomenological study must be “described, explicated, and interpreted” (M. J. Patton, 1991, p. 69). This is important because it allows the world to see and better understand the pure experience of the phenomenon studied.

van Manen (1997) highlights how words do not always have the depth or capacity to capture the full meaning or descriptive essence that is being studied due to the structure and dimension of a language and how it is presented. This adds to the complexity of a phenomenological study. Our everyday life adds and creates an “intersubjective lifeworld” (van Manen, 1997, preface) that allows our immediate family an insider perspective we use to describe an experience. A different group of people, yet alone a different culture might be able to grasp at the idea of the unique experience, the meaning can never be fully understood. However, it is a step closer to understanding the phenomenon. Native Hawaiian students are nested within the United States and due to their lived experiences; they bring a different outlook of being and knowing the world (Meyer, 2001).

This study focused on the experiences of Native Hawaii college students, a marginalized population, which not been given equal attention in addressing college student needs when compared and hearing their stories in the college student literature, and how they have learned to navigate through the formal higher education system through lived experience. Hermeneutic phenomenology methodology provides an understanding of the moment through interpretation and description. As cited in Crotty (1998), Gadamer (1989) believed the highest type of hermeneutical experiences is the “openness to [a] tradition characteristic of historically effected consciousness” (p. 361). This is an important piece as layers of reflection become uncovered we learn about the richness of an experience by a group or individuals (Friesen et al., 2012).

Specific to this study, hermeneutic phenomenological methodology provides a methodological framework to better understand the experiences of Native Hawaiian

students as they progress through a formal higher educational system, a system that has traditionally not honored or recognized Indigenous models, expressions, or transmission of cultural nuances (L. T. Smith, 1999). The current educational system continues to have detrimental effects on Native Hawaiian students as evidenced by low graduation rates (Grande, 2015). Using this methodology placed significance on the lives and experiences of group members that have traditionally been disenfranchised (Mertens, 2010).

Data Collection

Various data collection methods are often used when conducting qualitative studies (Mertens, 2014). Specific to this study, I used focus groups and interviews. The use of focus groups was instrumental to this study because they elicited narratives (Barbour, 2008) while giving voice to those who have not historically had a voice in the research process. All participants engaged in two focus groups and one semi-structured follow-up interview. Conducting two focus groups and semi-structured interviews offer reflective time for more in-depth information and details as I heard about their experiences attending a PW mainland institution. The focus groups and semi-structured interview started after receiving approval from Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A).

Participants

Criterion sampling was used to identify potential participants for this study. Jones et al. (2014) recommend the importance of finding participants who can provide “information-rich cases” (p. 107). Doing so gives the researcher the greatest potential for understanding the reality studied (Jones et al., 2014). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest that the researcher “seek out groups, settings, and individuals where the process being

studied are most likely to occur” (p. 245). M. Q. Patton (2002) recommended that participants must have experience with the phenomenon being studied. Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet predetermined criterion of importance (M. Q. Patton, 2002). The specific sampling criteria I used for this study were undergraduate Hawaiian students who were enrolled as a full-time student at West State University because full-time status means students are more engaged in a university setting (Redden, 2006). Recruitment of participants took place through WSU’s Hawaii student organization and word of mouth from other Native Hawaiian students.

Currently, Hawaiian students who attend WSU are classified as traditional college students. This means they are more likely to enroll in college immediately after graduation from high school and attend college as full time students during both fall and spring terms. A traditional college student also graduates between four and six years. Historically, WSU has had very few transfer students from Hawaii and Over 90% of Hawaiian students who attend WSU are first-time full-time degree seeking students. Recent data also indicates WSU Hawaiian persist in higher amounts, about ten percentage points, when comparing fall to fall retention data to overall general cohort population (Name withheld for confidentiality, personal communication, September 15, 2015).

It should be noted that all participants in this study identified as a woman. Initially many students were asked and made commitments. As the start of the data collection process, students opted out. Due to my role on campus, I presented numerous opportunities and made a conscious effort to actively recruit participants independently of

my position. Surprisingly, this resulted in four women: Eugene, Bennett, Margaux, and Carrol.

Settings

All data were collected at a Carnegie Research Tier Two Institution. West State University is a public suburban campus with undergraduate enrollment of less than 10,000. Currently, WSU identifies as a PW mainland institution with over 70% undergraduates identifying as White (Name withheld for confidentiality). For fall of 2015, 27.6 % enrolled undergraduate students identified as a student of color and less than two percent identified as Native Hawaiian (Name withheld for confidentiality). Enrollment has been steadily increasing for student of color populations and it is expected that this trend will continue, due to the rapidly increasing Latina/o population in the school district where WSU is housed.

West State University has an aggressive enrollment management plan that includes increased targeted recruitment from the state of Hawai'i. An intentional effort, the Director of Admissions from WSU has paid personal attention to this endeavor, often traveling to Hawai'i two to three times a year to facilitate recruitment activities. Additionally, a long-standing partnership has existed with Asian Pacific Services and Admissions to help recruit and retain students from Hawai'i. For example, at the start of the academic year, a full week orientation session is housed within APS to assist students be successful at West State University. The orientation session consists of student and family member panels, mock classroom simulations, tours of the city where WSU is housed, and the ability to connect with other students from Hawai'i. The APS Hawai'i orientation starts before WSU's first-year student orientation and helps with transitioning

to a mainland institution. This is important because it allows for Hawaiian students to settle into their residence hall rooms while become acquainted with on-campus community support programs. Support programs include; APS, Hawai'i student club, developing a connection with their academic or faculty advisor, tutoring services, etc. Also, Asian Pacific Services hosts a support series that is dedicated to meeting the needs of Hawaiian students. These support services include one to one, group informal advising, mid-term grade check-in's, and social gathering events. The Director and a full-time graduate assistant oversee all APS support programs, including giving feedback to student leaders in the Hawai'i Student Club (HSC).

Hawaiian Student Club

The HSC has been in existence for over 20 years and is instrumental in assisting incoming students from Hawai'i transition successfully to West State University. Hawai'i Student Club typically designs one to two monthly social based activities during the fall semester. Since WSU is about one hour away from a major metropolitan area, day trips are planned to experience the "city life" and students are able to stock up on harder to find grocery items. Equally important are the mountains. West State University is on the plains near the Rocky Mountains. When possible, trips are made available to local regional mountains for hiking and connecting back to place. Hawai'i Student Club also sponsors an affordable Thanksgiving ski trip for those who are not able to travel home. During the spring semester, members of the HSC shift its focus to prepping the annual Lu'au spring event.

West State University utilizes a semester-based academic calendar and emphasis is placed on teaching. Focus groups and interviews took place in a culture center

conference room. Attempts were made to help make participants feel comfortable while conducting focus groups in a safe space setting that offered seclusion and privacy.

Methods

In this next section, the types of data collection methods that were used to guide this research study are examined. The use of different data collection methods and standards of rigor are critical components in developing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2013). Focus groups and semi-structured interview were identified as the major data collection techniques for this qualitative research study. Additionally, I kept a researcher journal to track my own thoughts about the research process and for researcher reflexivity. Freire (1970) theorizes the importance of conscientization by describing the most vulnerable [Indigenous communities] will have to lead their way. This means Indigenous communities must acknowledge the harm done to them and reclaim their histories. In doing this, “the oppressed gain their own voice and collaborate in transforming the culture” (pp. 212-213). Employing these methods allowed participants to reflect on their experiences while sharing their voices.

Focus Group

For this study, I conducted two focus groups. Focus groups offer a glimpse into a world that one may not have experienced (Kruegger & Casey, 2015). Because relationships are the “cornerstone of Hawaiian experience” (Meyer, 2001, p. 134), deciding to use focus groups fits well within this study. Consistent within this study of identifying multiple truths, reframing histories through narratives from Native Hawaiian college students, focus groups can be a powerful way to understand lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Focus groups needs to have purpose, such as “how people feel

or think about an issue” (Kruegger & Casey, 2015; p. 2). Groups need to be “small enough for everyone to have opportunity to share insights and yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions” (Kruegger & Casey, 2015, p. 6). The use of focus groups was instrumental to this study because they elicited narratives (Barbour, 2008) while giving voice to those who have not historically had a voice in the research process. Morgan (2007) highlighted that a type of “synergy” (p. 10) can be experienced with participants using focus groups while Meyer (2001) showed that knowledge is gained through relationships and part of this way of knowing is shaped by experiences while listening and being validated by others (Meyer, 2001). Using focus groups allowed me to collect data about the experiences of my participants that have shaped their knowledge. Focus groups continue to be a popular method in data collection (Mertens, 2010; Rodriguez, Schwartz, Lahman, & Geist, 2011) and cultivate safe spaces where participants talk about their lives and struggles (p. 550). Producing another type of data that is not always visible through observation or individual interviews is important. Focus group participants validated each other by engaging and honoring each other’s narratives. Shared understanding of their lived realities, helped to reduce, the distance between the researcher and participants (Mertens, 2010).

Both focus groups emphasized the essence of how participants navigated a mainland university. The focus groups were limited to four participants who identify as Native Hawaiian or Hawaiian. Participants were invited to participate in focus groups by word of mouth and marketing from information sessions through HSC. Each focus group ran for 90 minutes. Due to the length of the FG, snacks were available to participants.

During the first focus group, I thanked everyone for attending while reviewing the purpose of the study. Participants also received and signed the informed consent document (see Appendix B). Towards the end of the focus groups, members-checks were conducted and I summarized major themes expressed through participant's voices. The purpose of Focus Group One (FG1) opened up the dialogue and community building of trust. Focus Group One explored student navigational experiences and factors relating to student retention. Focus Group Two (FG2) explored experiences of support systems and Indigenous cultural values. Focus groups were spaced out over the course of a couple of weeks to allow for additional reflection from the first focus group. After each of the focus groups, a transcript was generated to look for themes. Both focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The questions used for the focus groups included:

1. Please share a little about yourself to the group (where you grew up, went to school, favorite food, and thing you miss most about HI. etc). (Probe: Building a safe community space)

Purpose: I start with this question as a way for me to learn about my participant and as a way to create a "safe space" when exploring some deeper level questions. My intention is to develop a short biographic sketch on each participant early on in the data collection to help inform later responses.

2. Please share a story about being a student from Hawai'i, attending a mainland university? (Probe: How are you negotiating Hawaiian and Western spaces and values)

Purpose: I immediately ask participants to share a story because IT scholars believe these narratives are central to understanding Indigenous culture and individuals making meaning. My hope is that by focusing on stories, my participants will relax and start experiencing the focus group as a safe space. This will help us see if there are gaps in the literature.

3. How would you describe your first few nights in the residence halls at WSU? (Probe: feelings of "mattering" on campus, belonging and connection to a particular group? How did this connection happen).

Purpose: Explore how students describe their first few weeks of school is crucial in understanding foundational pieces that could be attributed to increased retention rates at WSU.

4. Please tell me about your process in deciding to come back to WSU for year two. (Probe: Growth that has occurred. How has this growth helped them in navigating WSU).

Purpose: Identify ways to talk about the phenomenon of attending a mainland PWI.

5. How has your cultural identity shaped you to be successful at WSU? (Probe: How do you claim your Hawaiian identity)

Purpose: Identifying as Hawaiian has political and historical components. Focusing on this question allows outsiders a lens, in learning about an additional piece that Hawaiian students are navigating when attending a PWI mainland university. My hope is that participants will see others struggling within this process and their own feelings can be validated. This is important because Indigenous knowledge transforms and counteracts the destruction of Western effects by emphasizing self-determination, empowerment, and social justice.

6. What is a value you learned as a child that you take with you as a college student?

(Probe: What does internal conflict look like for you? How do you handle internal conflict with different value systems, whose voice is guiding you)

Purpose of Question: In HI communities' relationship are central. Knowledge that is gained was passed down from an established relationship (family members, elders, aunts, etc.). My intention is to learn about the unique kinds of information that are being communicated and how does this knowledge affect what participants are seeing, doing, sensing at WSU? Additionally, how does this knowledge impact participants overall educational goals?

7. Please describe the support systems you have identified and contributed to your success at WSU? (Probe: What resources are students using or not using? Do we need to market other services differently? Taking advantage of all available resources and do we need to identify other resources)

Purpose: In Indigenous communities, bachelor degree attainment rates are lower, comparatively. My hope is that by focusing on available resources I will discover what we are doing that adds or distracts from persistence,

retention, and graduation rates. With current WSU budget constraints, what are pieces that can augment existing support structures?

8. It is not easy to jump on a plane and head back home to Hawai'i. Describe how you all handle homesickness while being away from loved ones for long periods of time? (Probe: Does WSU need to structure student activities differently? Capacity for APS or other campus outreach to add to HI program)

Purpose: Research shows homesickness is a retention factor. My hope for focusing on this question is that I will be able to see if this is an issue for Native Hawaiian students. Address current or restructure existing programs that will create better infrastructure that serves students more authentically.

9. Please tell the group what your future goals and dreams are after you graduate from WSU? (Probe: How WSU can assist students for after WSU life. Any global themes that might be helpful to other departments at WSU)

Purpose: In Indigenous communities, the sharing of knowledge process enriches the entire community. Sharing your own story has the potential to transform lives. My hope is that by hearing each other's stories participants recognize this as an integral part of their own learning and discovery.

Each of these questions served as a guide in generating data to my overall research questions. As an outsider, researcher, "information is gained through a relationship with Indigenous people in a specific community" (Lambert, 2014, p. 2). Lambert (2014) also iterated the importance of the relationship by stating:

Stories as data are important and one key to collecting these data is hearing the stories. One can hear a story and go through the motions of being attentive and acting engaged to allow participants to talk and tell their story. 'Hearing' the story means having a relationship with the story, and teller, and the knowledge that there is value to the story. (p. 32)

Participant involvement within the research process honored the Indigenous theory lens. S. Wilson (2008) speaks to the importance of researchers asking community leaders (my participants) how they want their stories to be told. Acknowledging this

space was instrumental to my research study. Due to the sensitive material that was collected, participants “talking story” about their lived experience at WSU, I felt the importance of establishing a safe space and path of how their stories are told.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews have been described as a common method for qualitative research (King & Horrocks, 2010). Interviews are a type of data collection that are well suited for this research study because I am interested in Native Hawaiian voices that help to inform different truths as “Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing have been largely excluded from school, post-secondary institutions” (Meyer, 2001, p. 36). The purpose of interviews is to provide a foundation for helping participants stay closer to the experience of the phenomenon being studied (van Manen, 1990). Additionally, interviews used under a hermeneutic phenomenology can assist with “the experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon” (p. 132). I used semi-structured interview based on theoretical and methodological considerations. First, due to lack of scholarly literature that exists and that is representative of voices from Native Hawaiian communities, it is important to develop relationships and expand on different truths concerning how Hawaiian students navigate an institution. Interviews are a method for gathering rich information about lived experiences (Galletta & Cross, 2013). Secondly, semi-structured interviews fit in with this research due to the space that allows for an evolving set of questions. It is a chance to welcome voice and other truths when gathering information. The semi-structured interview lasted 60 minutes. Interviews were used to elicit additional rich information

about participant's college experiences. Questions that were used for the interview included:

1. Tell me about your 'ohana (family).

Purpose: I start with this question as a way for me to learn about my participant and as a way to create a "safe space" when exploring some deeper level questions. My intention is to develop a short biographic sketch on each participant early on in the data collection to help inform later responses.

2. Please share a story that describes who a significant person is in your life and how they contribute to your success at WSU. (Is this the same person they expressed in who they are listening to/guiding them during FG time? What does this suggest if it is not? What are the qualities these two-different people have)

Purpose: Family is important in Native Hawaiian communities. Literature iterates the importance of shared knowledge that is passed down through relationships. My intention is to "see" and "feel" who this person is and understand the unique aspects of this individual(s). How has this person shown up in the participant's life and how do they continue to offer support.

3. Please describe a story about your relationship to people, the land, the water, or the cosmos system? How do you negotiate these sacred spaces here on the mainland at WSU? (Probe: How do you experience life in HI and how are you able to bring your way of living to the mainland-if at all)

Purpose: Native Hawaiians have ways of knowing and developing relationships in localized communities. By concentrating on this question, I will start to see the different types of relationships individual students have that ultimately guide them in their college career. Learning how WSU can create an environment that honors this sacred way of being or knowing is instrumental in fully supporting a Native Hawaiian student.

4. Please describe your educational journey from high school to now. Why did you choose WSU? What is one experience that stands out for you since you have been here? (Probe: Any pre-college work? Did this assist them to start their journey at WSU)

Purpose: Colonized communities continue to wrestle with oppression, which is seen through low bachelor degree attainment. My hope is that by focusing on participants' educational experiences before college will inform overall research related to the "why" and "how" students persist at PWI mainland universities.

5. Describe the support you receive while attending WSU? Who do you lean on for extra support while you are here at WSU? (Probe: WSU support services, other types of services needed, but currently don't exist at WSU)

Purpose: Understanding support systems is crucial when identifying gaps in persistence and retention rates. My hope is to identify existing campus infrastructure while demonstrating the need for additional support structures that can be constructed based on the needs of Native Hawaiian students and other minoritized communities.

6. If you were to give first-year students any advice before they start at WSU, what would you tell them? What would you tell their parents/family members? (Probe: A different way of understanding and seeing their experiences at WSU)

Purpose: This starts the process of my participants seeing themselves as their own storytellers. I want to focus on this question as a way to start giving back to the Hawaiian community.

7. Please describe safe spaces on campus where you can be your authentic self? What do these spaces look like? (Probe: Are you able to establish the relationships needed to be successful, who are they, what qualities do they have, and how did you find them)

Purpose: Understanding the relationships Native Hawaiians students have with each other is essential and have the ability to guide retention efforts. My hope is to understand how Native Hawaiian students see and use these spaces, the people or things in them, and the relationships that have been cultivated that makes these "safe spaces."

8. It's two years later and you are approaching graduation, describe what you see? What advice would you give yourself? (Probe: Hopes and dreams for the future, help fill in visionary work and giving them answers they already know)

Purpose: The importance of this question is to focus on transforming their dreams and seeing themselves as leaders in the Native Hawaiian community. Indigenous knowledge is sacred knowledge and my

participants are the experts within their own communities. All of these questions that have been asked, the knowledge that has been passed down by stories have come from experts. This must be acknowledged in the interview.

Semi-structured interviews concentrated on participants' experience through college, identification of potential barriers as they have navigated college, support systems that exist for them while attending college, and an opportunity to share their own narrative story about approaching graduation. Data that was collected from a phenomenology paradigm and an IT theoretical perspective also addressed the need for healing.

The type of data collected from these questions included a rich description of the experiences participants had with focus group and the semi-structured interview process. Additionally, all method questions were critical in understanding the phenomenon being studied and assisted in developing in-depth understanding of how (a) students develop and use support systems and (b) how are students persisting at WSU.

Data Analysis

Philosophies associated with a hermeneutic phenomenology methodologies and Indigenous theoretical framework informed the data analysis process for the study. Indigenous Theory serves as a pivotal framework to tell stories “which not only question the assumed nature of those ideals and the practices that they generate, but also serve to tell an alternative story these counter-stories are powerful forms of resistance” (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 2). The counter-stories shared in this study described how Native Hawaiian students navigated a formal education system. The phenomenological paradigm requires a strong relationship to bring about social justice change. It was essential to have respectful and honest relationships amongst participants (Mertens, 2009).

Qualitative data analysis is inductive, where categories of analysis emerge from careful observations between the researcher and participant (Mertens, 2010). van Manen (1990, 1997) define a set of procedures that are intended to assist and give guidance to analysis of data using hermeneutic phenomenology. van Manen (1997) does not refer to these as steps, but rather an approach for conducting phenomenological research. The six critical activities are: (a) Turning to the question, acknowledges the connection between the researcher and the phenomenon; (b) Investigating the experience as we live it, asks questions “What is it like to experience college on a mainland university?” Or, “What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of being a Hawaiian student on the WSU campus?” (c) Essential themes are captured from reflection and writing; (d) The art of writing and rewriting, through thoughtfulness, attentiveness to language, going back and forth, reflection of writing, formulating, and reformulating, etc.; (e) Maintaining a strong and oriented relation, to help the researcher develop a deep understanding that is required to capture the essence; (f) Balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole, helpful when a researcher gets ‘stuck’ in deciphering the essence. Ensures the foundation of the research and the questions pertaining to the research are congruent and elicit contribution to the phenomenon studied.

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) provided three steps and strategies for analyzing qualitative data. The first step assumes the researcher is constantly reviewing and reflecting upon all data as it is collected. I reviewed transcripts, journals, and observed personal interactions. Keeping my own field notes and journaling after interactions with participants also aided in the data analysis process. The second and third steps coincide

with each other, data exploration. In reviewing the transcripts, I connected participant's stories to their lived experiences. This assisted me in processing of phenomenological analysis through reflection and writing. As I explored data sets, I kept notes on themes and coding. In full attempt to be transparent, I had a prior relationship with each of the participants before my study began. During the write-up of my data, I realized I had additional information about my participants that was not received from focus groups or semi-structured interview. In honoring the trusted relationship, I met with each of my participants separately and inquired about using information I had received outside the data collection period. During this meeting, I shared the participant profiles, since this was where most of their stories would be highlighted. Additionally, I asked each participant to sign an updated consent form, which highlighted the new language (see Appendix C). The updated consent form also required a modification to my original Institutional Review Board application and received approval (see Appendix D).

Participants were involved through each step of data analysis. This including member-checks at each focus groups and each semi-structured interview with participants. Themes are crucial in helping to understand different truths. Once the identified words or phrases were pulled out, I started to code and categorize ideas and concepts. Building over-arching themes in the data were used to determine main ideas or similar points stressed by participants.

Criteria for Rigor

Qualitative research occurs in natural settings, where human behavior and events occur. The intent of qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction (Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2009). Creswell (2007)

recommended the use of multiple strategies to verify accuracy of findings. In this next section I will discuss the traditional ways of truthfulness and how credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability, were carried throughout this research study.

Credibility

Trustworthiness and goodness are how researchers determine worthiness of a qualitative study. To establish quality within a research study, steps must be intentional and well thought out. Prolonged and persistent engagement is a criterion used for judging quality in qualitative research (Mertens 2010, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Jones et al., 2006, 2014). Mertens (2014) demonstrates that false claims and representation of groups being studied are “erroneous” (p. 269) when not enough time is spent in the field. Spending sufficient time and avoiding premature closing is important for this research. To avoid conclusions that are not correct, I asked further questions until repeating themes and examples were heard.

Member checking and peer debriefing are other criteria that were used to establish credibility for this research. Member checking allowed participants of the study to react to the findings of the polished product. At the end of each interview, I summarized what had been said and asked if the notes I have taken accurately reflected the participant’s voice. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend the use of peer debriefing. This is an approach that “provides an external check on the inquiry process” (p. 305). Having a disinterested third party helped to clarify common themes. The debriefing course of actions took place throughout the research process. Through this technique, I authenticated themes and findings that emerged from the analysis of the data through two

colleagues. Theme findings were authenticated by two scheduled appointments. Hour long discussions were held while the data collection was reviewed. During these discussions, data and data analysis were reviewed and placed into appropriate themes.

The disinterested third parties are colleagues in a doctoral program. The first doctoral student identifies as a Black woman, and her area of research is “Black Feminism Thought.” The second disinterested third party identifies as a Native American male. Through his field of counseling, his research interests are TribalCrit and Indigenous Theory.

Confirmability

Transparency of how data is collected and originated is another crucial component in developing quality research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens, 2010, 2014). I tracked data to their original source and demonstrated the thought process in how interpretations were made (Mertens, 2010, 2014). A detailed excel sheet was created to account for all data pieces that have been collected during the research process. Also, I kept a researcher journal that reflected copious notes of all interactions with participants and included my own reflexivity throughout the research study. Marshall and Rossman (2011) share the importance of a peer debriefer who also understands how “inferences were made” (p. 253) regarding the research.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and is applied by the readers of the research. Specifically, it gives the readers context in applying results outside of the study being conducted. The criteria of transferability was addressed by using thick rich descriptions, which allowed readers to have an

understanding of the research (Norman & Lincoln, 2000). Finally, dependability was established by using multiple data gathering methods. This included focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

Authenticity

Mertens (2009) describes authenticity as the researcher and evaluator presenting the research in a way that is fair and balanced. Reciprocity is a term that is used when data is shared with members of the community. In addition to the overall research process, analysis was also shared with the participants. It is my intention to share emergent themes as the WSU community identifies new techniques in retaining and graduating Native Hawaiian students.

Theme Development

During data analysis I initially identified 10 themes: (a) Going back to Hawai'i, without completing a college degree. This included pride and sense of failure; (b) Aloha-ness/Aloha Spirit. This included it's like an energy, pay-it forward concept (sorta), thinking beyond self, mainland students and lack of manners' (c) Sense of Family. This included connectedness to each other/colleagues, importance of faculty and staff relationships, relationships are thought about differently and viewed as a stronger, deeper connection; (d) Talking Pidgin/Moke. This included lack of places to speak mother language; (e) Microaggressions/Blatant racism experiences. This included battling of stereotypes, feeling "othered" for the first time, developing a minority status; (f) Having to be PC. This included mainlanders take everything too serious and literal; (g) Ancestors play a strong role in life. This included stories that were passed on; (h) Importance of being together with other students from Hawai'i; (i) Importance of Family

Connections/Relationships. This included Ohana family and Hanai family; and (j) Sacredness of Land.

Further review of writing and analyzing the first round of themes with first disinterested member, I noticed the content and subject overlapped. For example, theme three, “Sense of Family,” included connected to each other, connectedness to colleagues, connectedness to faculty and staff. Data indicated family involved relationships beyond the Western nuclear family model. Analysis demonstrated close friends to the family are regarded as “family.” Changing the “Sense of Family” original theme to “Relationships” theme supported this finding.

After further review with my disinterested third party and wrestling with themes for succinctness, I collapsed the original 10 themes into 6 themes. The second round of theme development included:

1. U.S. Culture vs. NH Culture. This included three sub-themes: (a).Sacredness of Land, (b) Have to be “politically correct,” all the time, (c) Microaggressions/Blatant Racism, Contending with daily stereotypes, Feeling “Othered,” and having “minority” status.
2. Importance of being together with other folks from Hawai’i. This included talking Moke in spaces that are comfortable.
3. Ancestors. This included stories that are passed on.
4. Aloha-ness/Aloha Spirit. This included “Pay It Forward” Concept (sorta), Force (sorta), Connection to place, Manners (mainland vs NH), and Thinking beyond self.

5. Relationships (defined differently). This included Sense of Family/Ohana vs. Hanai, and Connectedness to colleagues/faculty/staff relationships.

6. Going Back to Island w/o college degree. This includes Pride and Sense of failure.

Continual analysis with the second disinterested third party member, indicated the importance of “Sacredness of Land” and was removed from being a subtheme to a major theme. Upon further reflection, all participants described the importance and connection to the Land. The Sacredness of Land adds convictions to beliefs and perceptions of challenges, endurance, and control over their world. Sacredness of the Land provides understanding to one another and teaches behavior it deemed to become a major theme.

My last round of wrestling with themes reflected five categories. Cultural Differences (first theme) and Relationships (fourth theme) were divided into additional subcategories to offer further depth in exploring the theme. I collapsed the themes because after further review and dialogue with my colleagues, I still had similar areas that could be combined under one theme. Also, the biggest change was pulling out items that needed to be themes instead of sub-themes. For example, Sacredness of Land is a now a theme instead of a sub-theme. The five themes and additional subcategories will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided a rationale using an Indigenous theory framework for this study. Limited research exists surrounding Native Hawaiian college students and their description of how attending a PW mainland university shapes their lived experience at a mainland institution. Understanding this essence is critical in addressing

bachelor degree attainment. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological methodological approach will also radically question assumptions (van Manen, 1997) how NH students experience and make meaning of their time at WSU.

Additionally, I highlighted the importance of storytelling and how stories are connected to people, place, and cosmos systems. I shared how stories are different ways of knowing and honoring truths from Indigenous communities. Illuminating the stories of my participants will challenge the dominant discourse by dismantling hegemony and restoring equality from a social justice lens.

Criterion sampling was used to identify participants for this study and data were collected through two FGs and one semi-structured interview. Data were analyzed through reviewing transcripts, developing themes, and coding. Participants were involved through each set of data analysis, including member-checks at each of the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Lastly, I explored the criterion for rigor, established by Norman & Lincoln (2000).

In the next chapter, I share the stories of all four participants. Bennett, Eugene, Carrol, and Margaux all have a unique experience of how they connected and learned to navigate WSU. Participants were reminded of the connection they had to each other and found “place” within the circle that was created.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPANT PROFILES AND EMERGENT THEMES

We came together not knowing exactly how to show-up. The circle was opened and cautiously we jumped in. We instantly felt the familiarity of being back home in Hawai'i. As we took a deeper look our souls remembered. We remembered others were on this journey and we leaned on each other for support and comfort. Oh, how joyous this space feels. I know our time here will come to an end but you and I have a connection that will never be forgotten.

I begin this chapter with a collection of comments that participants made during the first focus group. These statements, when I placed them in this order, capture the unfolding discussion at our first focus group, which is similar to a story that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning represents participants coming to the focus group where the fuzz of academic haze was still present on their bodies. The participants talked about who they were and where their stories began. The middle represents how the mind remembered and awakened to the familiarity of other Hawaiian students along this path. The story ends with the closing of the last focus group. The purpose of this social constructivist, hermeneutic phenomenologic Indigenous study is to explore how Hawaiian undergraduate students experience and navigate WSU, a Carnegie PW research institution. Before sharing participant's narratives and themes that emerged from the data generated, I restate the research questions.

- Q1 How do Native Hawaiian students experience West State University?
- Q1a How do Native Hawaiian college students experience support systems at a Predominantly White mainland institution?
- Q1b What are the experiences that contribute to the persistence of Native Hawaiian students at a Predominantly White mainland institution?
- Q2 How does Indigenous storytelling support and shape participants' understanding of their experience at West State University?

Each of the participants has a unique experience connected to attending a mainland institution and shared stories that help me understand their contested histories and affirmed their knowledge as a space was created to hear their truths. Lambert (2014) expressed the importance of storytelling as survival and shared the importance of sharing stories and states, “for our knowledge to survive, it must live in many places, including Western academics” (p. 68). In Chapter I, I introduced stories demonstrating intergroup community, connectivity to family, and surviving at West State University. In this chapter, I return to stories shared in focus groups and interviews.

At our first meeting, participants entered one of the culture center houses located on WSU's campus. I remember hearing the polite nervous chatter and wondering what it will feel like when the nervousness subsides. The focus group started with participants identifying a pseudonym I could use in this study. Throughout the focus group, participants chuckled about their alternative names and made humorous side comments when addressing each other by their new name. After the first round of questions, I slid deep into my chair, ignoring my nervousness, and listened to the stories Carrol, Eugene, Margaux, and Bennett were sharing. As their nervousness also started to subside, I could sense their recollections of starting to remember the familiarity of home and being together. Participants shared their stories of missing the familiar smells of home and the

vivid lushness of nature's color absent at WSU during the winter. They reminded each other of the shared connections that always existed among them but were forgotten in the daily routine of academic life. These connections created an invisible bond connecting participants to each other; then and into the future. The hearty rumbles of laughter started and remained a constant throughout both focus groups and interviews, as folks were excited to share in the interconnected knowing with each other. A strong circle of knowledge developed and in the end, participants realized they were brought together by their ancestors, the sacredness of the land, and their Native Hawaiian values.

Carrol described this feeling as, "surrounded by people who were comfortable and [our focus group, a small group of people coming together to discuss questions regarding this study] was in the house specific for Native people . . ." as a way to talk about the comfortableness of coming together as a group. Carrol felt affirmed during the focus groups. This is important because a safe place is conducive for open and honest dialogue. The differences heard are treated with respect and participation increased as this process starts a space for all to contribute. During the time, I collected data for this study, I came to know these amazing individuals and experience them as a community.

This chapter is organized into two sections: (a) participant profiles of the four undergraduate students and (b) the emergent themes identified from data collection. As stated in Chapter I, these stories belong to the participants and I honor them and their courage. It is not typical to tell one's story to an outside culture source. Participants welcomed the open space to 'talking story.' Throughout the data collection process, I experienced how students leaned on the stories that conveyed their foundation of cultural

meaning and convictions. I also learned how stories created healing and how they illustrated the lives and values of Native Hawaiian peoples.

Participant Profiles

In this chapter, I share four participant profiles of WSU students. The profiles were created based on the stories of participants in this study who shared their lived experiences of attending a PW mainland institution. The participants profiles have been carefully crafted to give the reader a bridge to “see” the experiences how members of this research study navigate a PW mainland institution. Participants shared their stories openly and carried their ancestors and the relationship they have with the land proudly as they recounted their histories that were passed down from their elders. Participants shared their experiences of navigating WSU in two, one-hour long focus groups and one-hour semi-structured interview. My researcher notes provided additional details to make a deeper meaning of connections as I heard stories that were reflected of their Indigenous Native Hawaiian culture. The narratives were created to help inform the overall research questions of this study. I, again, acknowledge I am an outsider to these experiences and the stories participants shared.

Bennett

As Bennett entered the APS office for her interview, she quickly propped her feet up on the oversized brown chair that allowed her to sink in for our conversation. It was the beginning of our time together and in Bennett’s style, I knew she was comfortable. This was her way of remembering a familiar place that she would retreat to from her long days at West State University. Bennett has worked in Asian Pacific Services for the past two years and, as the APS director, I have supervised her as well as watched her grow.

Her eager persistence is demonstrated by an active lifestyle and strong self-confidence. This, coupled with her tenacious personality, gives her agency in living a life defined by her. I have learned that Bennett quickly captures details and strategically analyzes situations. Bennett has learned the careful intersections of being employed as an WSU student staff member on campus, a student athlete, and at times, does not feel connected to the Hawai'i student club.

Bennett is a fourth year student in college and graduated from Kamehameha high school. She grew up in a small town on the big island of Hawai'i. Being associated with an athletic family, Bennett played sports throughout her high school career. Due to her brother's athletic success in high school, Bennett observed the importance of creating an identity for herself.

We all grew up in a very athletic family, like everybody has done sports in my family. My brothers are so well-known in basketball and volleyball, too. I did different sports from my brothers just because I didn't really want to be associated with them and their accomplishments.

Bennett still developed an identity around athletics but soon determined she wanted to be known for her own abilities and interests. One way she accomplished this was by being the first person in her family to attend a mainland institution right after high-school graduation.

Everybody talked about my brothers. My brothers were the golden boys. I was like, I am not going to be like that. I'm going to beat you guys. My first brother didn't go to college. Second brother went to college in Hawai'i, and third brother went to college for one year and went here, West State University. I decided I'm going to be the first one to go straight to college, away.

This meant independence for Bennett. Attending college on the mainland was significant for her because it gave her an opportunity to come out of the shadows and give her an

“edge” in accomplishing a task that had not been accomplished by any of her brothers. It was now her time to shine.

Her third brother eventually attended a university on the mainland, but only after attending a university in Hawai'i first. Bennett exclaimed this with a change in her tone and energy. This time Bennett prided herself as being the role model to her family and third brother. Bennett had her heart set on attending Boston University and several other mainland universities. However, she chose to attend West State University because the tuition was affordable which gave her an opportunity to leave Hawai'i right after high school.

Military Influence

Bennett describes growing up in a strict household due to her grandfather and father's involvement in the military. Bennett's identity is reflected through her upbringing. Like her dad, Bennett has a strong sense of discipline and responsibility.

My dad was kind of a military brat. He moved around a lot because our grandfather was in the military. I [also] had a military upbringing because my dad was so into the military as well. So, it was kind of tough, things had to be done a certain way. If it wasn't, then he would make us redo them.

When Bennett was given a task at APS she dropped whatever she was doing and quickly completed her assignment. Bennett made sure the task was “done right” by asking me to “inspect the completion of the assignment work.” The military compliance she learned from her father became a pivotal focus, allowing her to develop independence as well as a strong sense of belief within herself.

Military Identity

Bennett is following in her father's footsteps; during an interview, she observes her life will change shortly after graduating from WSU. She has enlisted in the U.S.

Navy. Although she has been discouraged by her father to enlist, her mom and aunt have always encouraged her to pursue her dreams. Bennett recalls their conversation, “If that’s what you want to do, then that’s what you do. Don’t let anybody like, especially us, tell you anything different.” This is another example of Bennett’s family pushing her to grow up as her own person and firmly supporting her to do what she ultimately wants, which she has done by enrolling in the military.

Soccer

Bennett shared during her interview that she quickly became acclimated to WSU's athletic program and was a valuable member of the soccer team. Bennett speaks highly of her teammates often noting they were the ones who kept her grounded at West State University, relying on them as a type of family away from home.

When asked about an experience that stands out since she has been at WSU, she quickly recalled her last moments of playing soccer.

It’s something I’m probably going to ride out forever. It sucked coming here (WSU). I used to start every game in high school, every game for every sport all the time, play it all, every minute of every game, and then coming here and then having to ride the bench. . . . And then like, you know, like senior year, like the last three games, the most important games of our regular season, or goalie, our assigned keeper gets sick and then I have to go inside and goal. And, all the awards and honors, I could have won in four years that I have been here I won in three games.

Bennett’s first line, “I’m probably going to ride out forever,” could be a surfing term. She is connecting back to “place.” Connecting back to place is also another way of connecting back to her geography and her land.

These were important moments for Bennett because she was not offered many opportunities to play, especially during tournament games. She attributed her lack of playing time to her coach who stuck to a conventional role

My coach is a really traditional person. He's like a traditional soccer player and of course traditional goalies are tall. Even if me and the starting goalkeeper were on the same level of skill, I wouldn't play because I am shorter.

Bennett described her first year playing on the soccer team as her worst because she came from a high school where she was a starting player in all the sports in which she participated. She slowly came to accept that she was happy to have a place on the team, this was her success. Bennett was excited to be part of a team, but also knew that she had better skills than the starting goalie. Bennett saw this as an opportunity and found a way to use her own skills and push her teammates to perform better.

I may have not been the tallest or skillful goalie, but I have the best reaction out of all the goalies. I am the fastest of the goalie. I'm also the quickest to get around and throughout our goalie box. So, I know one of the starting goalies during my junior year, she would always pick me to be her partner in fitness drills because she knew that I would push her. She knew that I would grab her if she was falling behind. I'd be like, 'Come on, get with me.'

When Bennett tried out for WSU's soccer team, she realized she was not the star player and this was a hard adjustment for her. Sport was a big deal to Bennett and her family. Bennett's tone and expression displayed a strong sense of confidence. She knew that she had the required leadership qualities and techniques deemed necessary for the performance of the top goalie. She excelled in many sports and worked hard to be the starting person or leader on the team. She was accustomed to the spotlight and the success that came with this leadership role. Bennett stated, "Well, I used to start every game in high school, every game for every sport all the time, play it all, every minute of every game." Bennett decided to devote her time to helping the team be better and knew some of her soccer skills and techniques were superior to the starting players. She pushed her soccer teammates to be quicker and compete against her during drills and practices. I

sense this was an important role for Bennett and contributed to the success of WSU's soccer team.

Bennett and the Aloha Spirit

Bennett is showing an important aspect of her upbringing, the "Aloha Spirit." The warmth of the Aloha Spirit is felt by many who travel to Hawai'i. The Aloha Spirit is multifaceted and has several different meanings. According to the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges (n.d.), described the relationship part of Aloha Spirit as, "the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence . . ." This is important because Bennett is portraying how she was raised to care and think about community. The soccer team is her community. She knew that everyone on the soccer team was a contributing member and this strengthens her to be a better soccer player for the group. The Aloha Spirit means mutual regard, and Bennett displayed this as she applied her strong skill set to challenge other players in fitness drills during practice. This was her way of being a leader and showing love to the team. Known for her passion and her strong will to live her most authentic life; she takes the values of her upbringing and displays them proudly in her everyday work ethic. This included showing up to soccer practices and doing the best she could, every day. Her hard work paid off when she took the soccer team to the tournament games.

Microaggressions and Soccer

On previous occasions with Bennett, she would refer to her soccer teammates as "her connecting point" to WSU. Slowly, she has started chipping away at this idea and saw how her teammates were not the grounding force she thought. Through my

conversations with Bennett, she gradually spoke about the microaggressions she faced with her soccer teammates.

One time I was listening to this song in Hawaiian and I was singing out loud and folks were asking what I was saying. Like, I am speaking Hawaiian. And, they said, 'well that's not a real language.' They (her teammates) were arguing amongst themselves, 'no, it's more of a dialect' I gave them an example. When I say bathroom is that really a dialect? Do you really understand what you are talking about? I didn't eat after that, we were on our way to brunch and I was still fuming. I was like god-dammit. This sucks!

Bennett remembered her teammates arguing among themselves and feelings of sadness and being let down went through her mind as though they were the ones who were supposed to keep her grounded. While visiting with Bennett, I sensed she was continuing to unpack the layers of her experiences with her teammates, as she critically assessed her time on the soccer team. It was apparent she was sifting through conversations and “seeing” the microaggressions she faced among some of her teammates. I recall Bennett processing this new information, as if she was looking at a movie for the second time but paying closer attention to the details of the movie. It was during these moments I saw Bennett thinking and reflecting back to previous interactions and critically assessing discussions she had. But this time, her eyes were open as she slowly came to terms with the subtle microaggressions she had faced while being a part of the West State University soccer club.

Leaving the Island

Unlike the other participants in this study, Bennett loves leaving the island and coming back to the mainland. Her connectedness to the land continues to be important and her visits strengthen her. However, she felt stifled when visits back home were long

and drawn out. Bennett realized this might be a different opinion than her colleagues have when thinking about Hawai'i.

I think I'm kind of a different person than from most of the people here from Hawai'i, like I wanted to leave. I don't try to avoid going back home but I kind of get tired of it (Hawai'i) real quickly. It's easy for me to leave home compared to most people from Hawai'i. They're just like, 'I want to say.' And, I'm just like, 'I want to go back already, like, I want to work, I want to live my life already.' You know home is always going to be home.

Again, Bennett is reinforcing her independence and showing self-determination for living on the mainland. Bennett has made a life for herself here and when she goes back home to Hawai'i, she feels she is in the shadows of her family, specifically her brothers who are still well known in her community. Bennett wants to have her own experiences and living a life she has created for herself.

Bennett and Self-Determination

When I asked Bennett who she calls on when she is questioning a life decision, she replied, "I don't really call on anybody from back home. It's like a pride thing for me." Bennett has learned to figure out things out on her own.

I actually have never called on my parents or auntie or brother and been like, 'Hey, I don't know what I'm doing.' I think for me, I just kind of think it out for myself and yeah, of course I go through moments of me second-guessing myself and my abilities, but at the end of the day, I know who I am and I don't need to prove that to anybody else.

Bennett is reinforcing her own strength and survival skills at WSU. She has learned to operate in dominant society through trial and error and is "figuring it out." Bennett is describing what Vizenor (2008) defined as survivance. Survivance is the output of Native stories highlighting resistance to dominant culture. It's the spirit of Indigenous presence that lingers in air that affirms body, mind, and spirit to press forward. Survivance speaks to the continuance of self-determination in knowing (forging) a way through the rough

patches. Bennett referred to her own survivance and relied on her inner voice that have guided her through difficult times at West State University. The quote below illustrates how she negotiated her independence with herself and makes tough love decisions that let her live a life of independence.

I guess that's another thing that I know of grew up with. There's a lot of pride in our family. And it's good because we have pride in who we are and the pride of who, in our work, in the work we produce. But it's also kind of like we're not going to call on anybody if we ever need help.

Bennett's pride is deeper than asking for help. Her pride of owning how she made it through WSU, a mainland institution, is a goal for her. She was also contributing to her own self-determination, an importance concept Reyes (2013) associated as contemporary survival for decolonizing self-determined futures. As Bennett controlled her life, she was taking back her freedom and independence by living her most authentic life. A life that is neither defined or hidden by other's accomplishments, but her own.

Bennett knows that West State University is not going to be her home forever.

Her comment demonstrated her resilience and adaptability of adjusting to her environment. Bennett thinks Colorado is beautiful but it's not her kind of beautiful.

Hawai'i is such a lush and green place. But here, it's not. It's like metal. It's kind of like farmland. There is no green here, you look out the window and there's a dead tree (Bennett references a dead bush outside of my APS office). And before that, it was brown. It's not the same, it's completely different from Hawai'i.

Bennett described how she is shaped by her geography. When Bennett references that WSU's geography is "completely different," I can't help but sense she also referring to a connection with the land that she has in Hawai'i. The connection to the land at WSU is missing. Missing, in values and worldviews from where she grew up. Bennett refers to Hawai'i as being "lush and green," could be a spiritual connection to the land that is also

not apparent at WSU. Meyer (2001) described these connections as “physical place and knowing” (p. 128). Meyer furthers her dialogue and described her research and how her mentors (participants) express physical “place and knowing” as a connection to the land (Aina), “Aina as origin, ‘aina as mother, ‘aina as inspiration . . . [to define] who they are, and how it shaped their differences and values” (p. 128). Bennett is demonstrating a lack of connection to the land.

A Space for Renewal

Bennett struggles attending college in a land locked state that does not offer a natural high of being in-tune with the ocean. When I asked about spaces she retreats for comfort or rejuvenation, she replied, “I just kind of suck it up!” When Bennett needs to relax, she finds comfort and natural healing at the beach, back home in Hawai’i, and retreats to the salt water for soul renewal and rejuvenation.

I love going to the beach. I love surfing. I love sitting in the sand and just hanging out. I like beach therapy. Saltwater is the best cure for anything. No matter what scar, kind of scars or hurt, hurting you have, saltwater is always the best kind of therapy.

In earlier conversations, Bennet told me about a relationship she had back home in Hawai’i and the painful breakup that caused her sadness and slipped into mild depression. She grieved in silence for over a semester while she managed to keep up with her academics. Bennett did not go home over the summer break, instead she worked at Asian Pacific Services to keep herself busy. When Bennett refers to the saltwater as healing, she is also referencing this experience and how she would retreat to the beach and find her own sanctuary of peace and healing. The water is soothing and comforts Bennett as she gathers up strength, like armor, to enter back into dominant culture.

Bennett played her last soccer game earlier this year and is no longer part of the team. Bennett also told me she would no longer be working at APS. She has found a community of coworkers that “get her” and a connection with her boss that Bennett describes as ‘motivating and uplifting.’ Bennett is known for her hard work so I was not surprised when she told me about her new job at a local burger restaurant. She still stops by APS to check-in as she catches me up on all the late-night stories through the extra shifts she covers. I am thankful that I still get to see her and already miss our conversations about the Hawaiian Monarchy or hearing about Princess Emma.

You want to go back home; you feel like you can’t handle it. You can handle it. You can. You’ve got to be determined to handle it and you’ve got to be able to take whatever people say about you. You have to take it because not everybody is going to be like people from Hawai’i. You’re not going to find people, other people in the like Hawai’i. It’s going to be different here. You just, you’ve got to take it.

Bennett knows she can always come home to her family. Hawai’i will continue to have a place in her soul that brings rejuvenation. Bennett shared with me that she ultimately knows one day she will likely go back to Hawai’i and raise a family, only after she has experienced being on her own.

Eugene

Eugene grew up in a single parent household with her mom, brother, and younger sister. She grew up on the big island of Hawai’i. Eugene remembers spending summers in Oahu with her grandma, her papa and her two eldest sisters. While in fifth grade, her family moved to Oahu and Eugene recalls everyone being in a similar place and having separate households. Before moving to Oahu, one of her two oldest sisters came to live with them but ended up moving back to her grandma’s house.

Eugene's Connection to Family

Growing up, Eugene did not always have a strong relationship with her mom. Eugene felt her mom didn't fully support her in extracurricular activities, like basketball and other sports in which she was involved. Eugene's mom also worked many hours and this meant Eugene taking on parental responsibilities, like caring and attending to the needs of her younger siblings. While at West State University, Eugene reflected and saw a different perspective of her mom.

It took me forever to realize it. She [Eugene's mom] has always been there, you know. She did everything for us and I didn't realize it until now. I always knew she did so much for us. But, we didn't have a good relationship so I was blind to all of that. Our relationship [now] is only three years old, our good relationship.

It was not until Eugene came to WSU that she realized how much her mother loved and supported her. As Eugene processed the times her mom was there for her, she began to realize how her mom provided for her and was attentive to her needs. Eugene's mom was not shy about investing her energy and time while working multiple jobs and running on sleepless nights.

I was talking to my auntie one time and said, 'Auntie, I just realized how poor we were.' When we were little, you know those top ramen? I got so excited, they were so good. Oh, we got McDonald's and I was so happy about it. We didn't realize we were poor when we were eating like that. Then we moved and sometimes she wouldn't eat, my mom wouldn't eat to feed us and I didn't see that until now.

Traveling to college and moving away from home forced Eugene to become independent. Eugene now realizes how often her mom put her own needs aside to ensure Eugene and her younger siblings basic necessities were met. Eugene's mother did everything she could to give her the best life. Eugene's mom became a role model to her and never expected anything in return.

At one point, she was working two jobs, she was exhausted. She left at like four in the morning and came home at like eight o'clock Back to back for her jobs. But, she was always there, at my games, always got me whatever I needed. My [basketball] shoes were always expensive. I always got a new pair for every season.

Eugene spoke of a time where she recently told her mom how much she loved her and apologized to her mom for not telling her sooner. These moments were conveyed over the phone and through text messages. Eugene took advantage of the time to tell her mom how much she loved her.

Yea, I was like really missing her and so me and my good friend were walking around campus cause, I just needed to get out. I was on the phone with my mom and then she got busy so I just started texting her and I was crying at the same time. It's been twenty years to tell you thank you for everything. Because I just wanted to be told, 'I'm proud of you.' Like, in high school because I never really got it. She is the person . . . well OK, I'm doing it for her. Like I don't like school, I have never liked school. She's why I am here.

Eugene described a natural process of growing up and entering adulthood. Eugene reflected on the love her mom has shown her and is crying because she realized how her mom was always proud of her. Her mom might not have verbally articulated, "I'm proud of you," it was her actions of love that expressed to Eugene how much her mom cared and loved her. For instance, making sure Eugene had quality basketball shoes, arranging her work schedule to be at Eugene's games, etc. Being away from home has helped her to realize that these were all actions that were her mother's way of saying, "I love you. And, I am proud of you."

Towards the end of the above quote, Eugene reflected how she is here, attending West State University, for her mom. Eugene has a strong work ethic and dedicated to following through on her commitments. Eugene works hard to earn her high grades in class, even though being in school does not bring her joy. She knows attending and

graduating college will mean a lot to her mom and will eventually help Eugene move to her next journey of life goals, which she is still figuring out.

Eugene's upbringing. Eugene's father left when she was two. Although she did not grow up with her father, she still had contact with him. Growing up Eugene started watching his behaviors and started to see things differently.

I started understanding everything. I stopped trying to reconnect with him. I tried to reconnect with him my junior year in high school that didn't go well. So, I stopped. I tried again and that worked out for a little while, and then in college, I am done trying. He's a child.

Eugene explained how the painful experiences resulting from a disconnect with her father have not defined her. She has found other people in her life who have shown her unconditional love. Eugene describes the strong relationship she has with her grandmother and the stability she has brought her and other members in her family, "Some of us are really close; we call each other when we need each other." Eugene knows that she is not as close to some of her family members as others. While this causes her sadness, she reflects on her family members who have consistently showed her love. She uses the example of her relationship to her grandmother and how her grandmother continues to influence her life. Eugene calls her grandma's house, home. When she travels back to Hawai'i, she returns to her grandma's.

So, I don't live with my mom. I go to my grandma's. She [Eugene's mom] is always moving, like we have moved over 15 times. I don't know. We have never had a stable home. It's because my mom is a single parent and it's hard finding a place that's affordable. I don't stay with her. I stay with my grandma because it's a set place. My grandma has been at her house forever, they own it. That's where I stay.

Like many of us, Eugene found comfort coming home to a familiar place. She knows that her grandmother's home is not going anywhere and this brings Eugene piece of mind as

she is far away from home. The stability allows her to live a life that is relatively free from unnecessary drama. Due to the consistent and steady increase in living costs of Hawai'i, it was hard to live in her mom's house. Perhaps this was due to limited access of resources her mom had, after bills were taken care of. Eugene did not directly disclose how drama played a role in her upbringing, she noted that "everyone has drama" in her family. The permanency of her grandmother's home allows Eugene to set aside this part of family drama and focus on her time at WSU.

The resilient skills she possessed also translated into other valuable leadership abilities. For example, Eugene is the president of WSU's Hawaiian Club student organization. As the president, she has learned to navigate many challenges and often takes things in stride. Even if she had a full night of academic work, Eugene made time to tell a story and enjoy her time with family and friends. Eugene attributed her skills to the way she grew up and her unique experiences that led her to West State University, "when I got here [WSU] I matured fast when I was little because I was the messenger between my mom and my dad with their divorce. So, I learned quickly and matured faster than my peers." Eugene was not feeling sorry or remorse for herself. Instead, she found the value of maturing faster than her peers, giving her the strength and ability to navigate WSU.

Eugene illustrated her learning by investing time and cultivating relationships with incoming first-year Hawaiian students. She felt responsible for their well-being and safety while being a part of the West State University community.

Back home you take care of folks. Up here, because there are so few of us, it's taking care of everybody. You want to take care of them. Now that I am president of Hawai'i club, I have that responsibility. I gotta make sure that you are ok. Your mom is my mom . . . I worry about the keiki (kids) just because it's their first year. The freshman. This is the first time here and look what they have to deal with. Thinking that I'm going to have the best experience in college. I get to do

whatever I want to do then bang, they get hit with it. This is what is happening on campus, they have to worry about walking home and they live on different campuses.

Eugene knew the hardships and sacrifices for students to leave Hawai'i and attend a mainland university. In an environment where traditional education has been harmful to Indigenous communities, Native Hawaiians struggle to earn a bachelor's degree because of disenfranchisement and maintaining cultural survival (About Kamehameha Schools, 2016). Eugene realized the opportunities for Hawaiians to attend a university outside the Islands of Hawai'i, were rare. She knew when a student from Hawai'i made the decision to attend WSU, it also involved a commitment and promise to bring back the knowledge to the community

Eugene also referenced the intensity of the negative campus climate, involving the Trump presidential election that resulted in a town hall meeting on campus. She felt this was an interference of campus life. She did not want these experiences to tarnish first-year students by taking away the joy of attending college on the mainland. Eugene demonstrated her insight on how Hawaiian students face challenges of classroom microaggressions for the defense of space that authenticates their truths and belief systems, and hinders their ability to be here and be present.

Eugene is aware that long-term planning, financial support, and being thousands of miles from your family takes a toll on all members of the community. This is because it is first time experience for families and the expectations are multifaceted. On one hand, it is bringing back the knowledge to help the growth of the community, and the other fear of returning home without a completed degree. Community is defined as family members, extended family, caretakers, grandparents, neighbors, aunties, uncles, etc.

Similar to Eugene, I sensed the first-year students were especially vulnerable to transitioning to a PW mainland institution. She maintained the Hawaiian core value: putting her community first. Relying on her experiences and those of her peers, some first-year students faced barriers of unwelcoming environments and perhaps lack of financial support. She understood the importance of developing a relationship with first-year students and how it encouraged them to stay and persist. This is Eugene's way of strengthening her interconnectedness to build a strong rapport with incoming peers.

Eugene's mainland family. An important element of Indigenous Theory is the relationship. Eugene devotes time to making sure her colleagues are taken care of. She highlights the connection she has with her suitemates and demonstrates her relationship to people. As stated in Chapter II, Walker (2013) described the importance of human connections and how these can be shared experiences through mind, body, spirit, and the natural world. In the following quote, Eugene was illustrating Walker's meaning of relational connections by taking care of her friend's needs.

I am younger than Kristine, but I always check-up on her. Oh, there is something there; I better make sure Kristine is OK. Like anything because I know she gets scared. Like, thunder, boom. I am out of my room checking because her light is already on. I know she's up, I know she's scared. 'Kristine, are you OK?' 'Yeah, I know, that's why I am here.' Abby has a bad dream; I will go downstairs. It's three AM. I don't care, I will go downstairs. 'You OK?' I will stay with you until four AM because I know she does not like the sleep in the hour of 3. So, that's what I do. Justin is having a bad day, I know that he does not want to talk about it, but he will be OK with you watching a movie with him. So, you sit in the living room and you don't have to talk, you just sit and you do that. I learned little things about everybody so when it comes to taking care of them I know how to do it.

Eugene was providing others the type of care and nurturing the way she wished her mother provided. She speaks about the importance of ensuring that her roommates needs

are taken care. She demonstrates this through regular contact. This includes checking on Kristine when a thunderstorm rolled around because she is afraid of thunder.

Eugene shared that her friend Abby does not like to sleep from 3-4 AM, fearing the “devil’s hour.” The devil’s hour, also known as “The Witching Hour,” is a world-wide phenomenon shared by people from all different backgrounds, for example in conducting a search for this experience, I came across literature from all over world. This early morning hour is known for heavy spirit activity that bothers people during sleep. Eugene knows that Abby has been affected by this hour on many occasions, and senses she is not sleeping during this hour. This required Eugene to make an outside trek. Eugene went down the stairs from the top of her floor apartment to check on Abby. Abby’s house is connected by the steps Eugene climbed down. Thus, Eugene stayed with Abby until she fell back to sleep, which can be after four a.m.

Eugene cares deeply for her suitemates, who became an extension of her family. Eugene described visiting with Justin and patiently waiting for him to open-up about what was bothering him. She knows that if she could catch him in the right moment, he would gradually open up. This was Eugene’s way of connecting with her mainland family.

These connections are essential to Eugene; they keep her grounded to a community while at WSU. She knew that her job was school: to graduate with a bachelor’s degree. Her purpose for being at West State University is deeper than accomplishing her job. She is here to provide healing for her “family” as they navigated a PW mainland institution.

Eugene’s aloha spirit. Through Eugene’s story of how she cared for her mainland family, she is showed a guiding philosophy in Native Hawaiian culture. The Aloha Spirit captures mutual regard that is extended with no obligation in return. Eugene experienced this type of mutual regard from her mom as discussed earlier. Eugene is passing the Aloha Spirit to her mainland family as she is taking care of them by helping them navigate WSU.

Eugene’s knowing. Eugene shared knowledge of being called to West State University by describing a connection, a relationship to place before she even arrived. Being called is also an Indigenous way of knowing. In dominant culture, this is most likely referred to as “intuition” or a “hunch.” Yet, even these words fall short of the fullest understanding of “knowing” in a Native Hawaiian community.

I only applied to three schools and each was close to the mountains. I got accepted to all, just because I knew I was supposed to go to college. And at the same time, I knew that I didn’t like school. I got offered a scholarship at Sky University. I got offered a scholarship at Water College, I didn’t even apply there. It’s a school in Oahu. And, but, something kept telling me Colorado. Rocky, So, that means WSU and another school in Colorado. I took a look at WSU, it’s really nice and sunny. I was telling my mom that I didn’t understand it. I kept getting drawn to Colorado and then she told me when your dad and I were together, after we had Kayla, we were supposed to move to Colorado.

Eugene portrayed the aspect of her relationship to “knowing.” She illustrated the Indigenous ways of knowing. Eugene did this by describing being called to West State University and her relationship to place. Once more, Eugene discovered that she shares in her parent’s being called to move to Colorado. This is Indigenous.

Eugene’s connection to place reminded me of Chilisa (2012) as was described as “beings with connections to other beings, the spirits of the ancestors, and the world around them that is informed by what they know and how they can know it” (p. 116).

Eugene described being called to WSU and felt a spiritual connection. She knew and understood where she belonged.

Experiences of Microaggressions

Eugene spoke about a classroom experience that occurred during her second year at WSU.

In one of the classes, we had an exam that day. To take the exam we had to go up and put our phone on the [professor's] desk and go to our seat. So, I go down and put my phone on the desk, I locked it first, then I came back up. I sit in between five White kids. It's just me. I am surrounded by White kids and the professor comes and passes out the tests. She hears a vibration, a phone. She automatically looks at me. She asks me, 'do you have your phone?' No, my phone is down there. And, this kid next to me has his ear phone in, plugged into his phone that's pretty visible and instead of asking him, she looks straight at me again and asks, 'are you sure you don't have your phone?' And, I looked at each White kid I said, I'm sure I don't have it. And then she gave me this dirty look and left.

When I inquired further about how Eugene moved forward in this class she replied,

"Well, I emailed her. I never told her my name and I don't have a Hawaiian first name."

Meaning, Eugene's name was considered to be a "common" name that allowed her to operate "behind the scenes" in finishing the class. Eugene mentioned these types of experiences only happened a few times and I couldn't help but notice the tears she was forcing to hold back. The action of the professor, asking Eugene a second time and staring at her, when the phone is vibrating while the student next to her has ear plugs in, described a form of microaggression. No one knows what the true intention of the faculty member was. It did, however, give a message to Eugene that was not accepting of her being a member of the WSU community.

An Indigenous Practice

Eugene shared a story of her experiences with the spirit world. Eugene noticed that when she would wake up, it felt like she was not the only person in the room. As

weeks passed during the fall semester, she felt a corner of her room getting darker. When she spent significant time in her bedroom apartment, she spoke about her mood changing and having little to no energy. Eugene described it as a black cloud that was hovering over her bed. Eugene noticed her emotions switched from sad to extremely angry. She didn't want to involve her roommates for fear this would scare them. In previous discussions with her suitemates, they had shared anxiety towards spirits.

Finally, she opened-up to her aunt, and then, to her mom. Realizing what was happening to her daughter, Eugene's mother sent over four ti leaves. Eugene explained the ti leaves were wrapped around Hawaiian salt and oils from Jerusalem. She was given instructions on proper placement of the leaves, one goes by the door, one by the window, one by the foot of her bed, and one at the head of her bed. Eugene commented, "I felt safer as long as I had my ti leaves. At my grandma's house, there are ti leaves all around. That was also how it was at my mom's old house." As Eugene's story unfolded, I saw fear and a struggle to recall all the details. To this day, she still has the ti leaves placed around her bedroom. She is no longer bothered by this dark energy. Her bedroom feels safe to enter, again. This Indigenous practice has its gentle way of removing and resolving the flow of negative energy. Total return of ease is fulfilled with the passage of time. As the ti leaves dissipate, little by little, so does the removal of the negative spirits.

Margaux

Margaux grew up as the oldest sibling with both her mom and dad in Hawai'i. One of her sisters attends a school on the mainland while her younger siblings still live at home. She described a stronger connection to her dad's side of the family because they all live on the same island. "It's great talking with my mom's side of the family, but I am

always with my dad's side of the family." Margaux described the closeness of her extended family

I am really close to my cousins. We hang out a lot. Especially since me and my other cousin go away to school. When we all come back from winter break, we all going to hang out. We have a group, we always keep each other, literally. I had to put (points to phone to show the group app) do not disturb because we are always talking.

Margaux's closeness to her family extends beyond her cousins. Currently, she is concerned about both of her "grandma's" who have health problems

Two very important people in my life that I am worried about now that are a part of this Ohana, are my dad's mom and my mom's mom. My dad's mom, she is full Filipino so she is in the Philippines right now and if she does not come home by the time I get home from break, that time will be a year that I haven't seen her. Her husband was murdered before my dad was even born so it took her until her 50's to find someone else and her second husband eventually passed away, so she's been by herself a while now. My auntie[s] diagnosed her [her dad's grandmother] themselves and say she has dementia; she [the grandmother] does not know them. That worries me because I feel like she will hurt herself. I haven't talked to her for a year, not good service over there. She is someone I hold dearly to my heart. As for my mom's mom, she is on the heavier side, so her health has always been a struggle but she overworks herself. I have not seen her since the summer. Things just happen to her, off guard. Literally, the saying, 'tell the people you love them every day because you never know.' So, I am just checking up on her because you never know. My biggest fear is if I lose them and knowing I can't be there for either of them.

It's been a long time since Margaux has seen her grandmother because she has spent the majority of her time within the last two years at WSU. The short winter breaks does not allow her much time to spend with her family, especially since her grandmother lives in the Philippines. Her summer breaks are longer but they are consumed with long work hours to pay for college tuition. Even though she understands the great sacrifice of giving up her value of family closeness she must make in order to achieve a degree, she remained torn while completing this goal. I sensed Margaux's closeness to her family will forever tug at her heart while she is here on the mainland.

Margaux's Connection to the Family

Margaux explains her connection to the land and when she is away for long periods of time, her longing to be back in a place that provides a familiar feeling.

I just miss . . . I just miss the island itself. And, seeing similar faces and knowing where I'm going and not having to feel scared that I am lost up here. . . . When you are on that plane in the middle of the island, you see HOPE! It's just like that comfort feeling of knowing that where you grew up, this is where you belong, this is where you came from. This is you and I can't help but get chicken skin when I see a tip of the island.

When Margaux goes back home to see her family, she continues the opportunity to work with her younger siblings on Indigenous values such as, “developing manners and reminding them to be respectful to their parents.”

My sister and I have taken on control roles. I mean we have to, especially on break when mom and dad are still at work and they (Margaux's younger brother and sister) think they can get away with things because we are siblings. We put the parent pants on and ask them, ‘What are you doing? You gotta listen, you are being disrespectful. When you go to people's house, this is how you act, or Do you act that way at home?’ We are going to raise you right.

One may see this as a parental role and Margaux does the best she can to instill values that reflect Native Hawaiian culture with her siblings. This included being respectful, the use of proper behavior of speaking when going to people's homes, and reminding them (siblings) of her intent to “raise them right.” She knows that eventually she would like to come back home and have her own family and raise her kids, the way she was brought up embracing her Indigenous upbringing.

Talking Moke

Pidgin is a product that evolved from the Native Hawaiian language. Moke, putting in terms of dominant culture language, is a type of street language. Margaux highlights the importance of shared experiences and being together are rare on the WSU

campus. Margaux expressed, “bring on the moke,” when students from Hawaii are together and share “talking story.” Margaux shared her experience of going back home and her family commenting on her language.

When I went back home, my parents told me that that I spoke Moke. They don't have a Pidgin accent. My dad talks with an accent. My mom talks good English, so I learned how to talk good English. I don't talk Moke. But when I came up here, I felt like I was missing out. When I am up here, it doesn't feel right to speak English, even though everyone does it, but I feel the need to talk Moke because I'm missing out. But when I go home, I have to turn it off because my family and friends don't talk like that. I was talking and talking fast my mom said that she sent me to a mainland school to learn proper English, not to come back home and talk Pidgin. You left speaking English and came back speaking Moke. So, my language changes.

It is not unusual for Indigenous populations to have a command of more than one language. Being bilingual is inherent in the culture and also serves as an identity factor. The use of cultural language ties in with a closer connection to the ancestors, a further deeper connection for Margaux. Margaux expressed the need to be connected to her Hawaiian culture. Talking Moke with her colleagues symbolized many things but ultimately bought her belonging to her community.

Margaux's Ways of Knowing

Margaux is vested in the knowledge of the land. Margaux speaks to her knowing and states, “Knowing what I know is based off the island itself.” Her story traced a part of her upbringing that will always be connected to the land. The shared relationship between the land and humans, became a place where Margaux learned her knowledge. Margaux learned about her shared relationship between the land and people and has become a place where her knowledge is learned. She shares this when she speaks about the taro patch. She is deeply connected to her knowledge of the land and the knowledge of the land stems from. This is seen in the example below.

In Hawaiian class, we go to a taro patch or a potatoes patch. We had to learn how to grow our own food. We fish and it literally took us the whole day to make one meal. Well, we cheated; we had rice because we all love rice back home. And, we had a rice cooker. We went to the taro patch, we grabbed our own potatoes. We went down to the beach and went fishing. The night before one of our uncles went hunting for a boar, so we had our meat. So, we grabbed the taro and we mashed it and we call it 'Poi' once it's mashed. It's like a purple sour pudding. We had poi and if people didn't like it, we had rice. We caught our own fish, we cooked our own pig and that was our meal. From eight a.m. to six p.m., it took us all day to make our food. We learned how to use the land and we are modernized and we have our phones.

Margaux briefly mentions her Hawaiian class, a class she took in high school that connects her in understanding her own Native Hawaiian history. The NHEA (2004) appropriated funding for schools that instructed culturally appropriate curriculum, including the study of Hawaiian language, culture, and history. Margaux's high school was a recipient of this funding, one that left an impression on her.

Margaux's discussion of the taro patch is her connection to the land. She worries this connection will no longer be present for future generations. Margaux's profound knowledge is significant because it comes from the generations of ancestors who have lived in one place for thousands of years and have passed on their knowledge. Margaux is one of the individuals who have acquired that knowledge. She described a life of her ancestors, grandparents, and parent's information about making poi, when to pick the taro plant, how to maintain a taro patch, etc. Margaux's education stems from the shared relationship between the land and herself. Her relationship to place is where her knowledge is learned. This knowledge for Margaux has become her foremost education.

Margaux's story is also about the influence of dominant culture in Hawai'i with modern technology. She worries about future knowledge and what this knowledge will say.

We know the basics, pull taro, cut taro, mash taro, and add water to thin it out. But we don't know the process it takes to make it. Like you have to make sure that the [taro] beds aren't dry, the taro takes up a lot of water, it's literally like a pool of dirt and water, and taro. Then, you have to pick a certain taro and not the babies but the fully-grown taro. Then, you peel it and cut it. For poi, you can only pound poi on a wooden bowl or plate; you have to pound it with a stone. And, there is a certain method to adding water and certain times of pounding . . . we are so modernized that we don't know how to work with our hands other than being on the phone and looking things up.

Margaux's example of the taro patch and making poi illustrates how Indigenous knowledge is disappearing in her home community in Hawai'i. This profound knowledge has been traditionally passed down from one generation to the next. This is significant because it shows the continued influence of Westernized systems in Native Hawaiian communities which does not value the land or understand the way knowledge is passed down. Margaux and the other participants all amplified their concern for not having the ability to participate in their shared cultural practices as their parents and ancestors once did. Research details how the knowledge of Native Hawaiian history, the values, and the Hawaiian language itself, is disappearing (Chilisa, 2012; L. T. Smith, 2012). Margaux's above quote illustrates how colonization continues to linger and impact Native Hawaiian communities. Margaux stated, "I can't help but feel ashamed for being so 'spoiled' and not putting in the work that my elders or ancestors used to do." She felt shame because she did not practice these traditions that were salient to her identity. Margaux shared a pivotal loss of making poi and she also shared feeling the shame is slowly taking away her pride in identifying as Native Hawaiian. Margaux's voice continues to echo that colonization influences Indigenous cultures in many ways.

Continued Impact of Colonization

In the context of education, colonization continues to play a harmful role in Hawaiian and other Indigenous cultures, (Reyes, 2017). One of Margaux's biggest concerns was going home without a college degree. Although each of the participants discussed this in their own way, this weighed heavily on her. Margaux references a conversation she had with her sister before she left for college.

My sister's senior year ended and it was summer. She was going into her first year in college and she said, 'I don't want to go, I am not ready. After the stories, you tell me, I don't think I can do it. I'm scared I might turn out like you, how do I become not like you?' I didn't take it offensively at all because I choose to do what I did. I told her you have to stay focused and if you feel like giving up and you feel like you are not strong enough, just take a break. You are strong enough. You see people that you think you have seen before but they are different. They have been brought up differently they might not treat you the way you have been brought up at home. It's going to be different. The biggest thing is not to give up . . . don't think for a second that you can't do this.

Margaux worried that she might not have always been the best role model for her younger sister. It is clear how much Margaux loves her younger sister and wants her to succeed. Margaux also spoke to her younger sister about people looking like her but they act differently. In this moment, she references mainland individuals who identify as Hawaiian but might have different values or belief systems.

Margaux shared lots of stories with her younger sister. Her stories reinforce the Indigenous values, beliefs, behavioral practices which are shared and preserved throughout the many generations. Brayboy (2005) also references stories and how stories are passed down from generation to generation. These stories become the "truths" of Indigenous cultures and Indigenous lifestyles. Stories are told for teaching and knowledge.

Margaux struggles with academics and has been on academic probation. At one point, she stopped taking classes for a semester. Meyer (2017) shared Krishmanturi's quote, "It is no measure of health to be well-adjusted to a profoundly sick society." (In this case, Margaux is conflicted with what she has been taught and what she is learning in a Westernized educational system. Her stories instruct her sister how to obtain a better pathway in navigating a PW mainland institution. Margaux's struggles with her academics show an inner conflict of finding balance between her Indigenous identities versus dominant culture values that allow her to navigate WSU campus. Margaux knows that her sister can accomplish her goal of completing a college degree. Through her stories, she is conveying to her younger sister that she can persist.

I am supposed to be the example . . . I have taken the wrong path and she knows what not to do now. I emphasized that college's always have resources and you can talk to your professor, you can talk to your TA, you can talk to a GA. You can even call me for five minutes; you can call me for four hours. There is always going to be somebody there to help you.

Margaux explained to her younger sister about college preparation and all the challenges she might face. As Margaux was speaking, I also heard Margaux speaking to herself, giving her sister advice that once was given to her but could not fully engage with campus officials due to the stress of "contested terrain." If Margaux had a faculty or staff member who understood the 'why' she was not adjusting to a "profoundly sick society," (Meyer, 2017) she might not have struggled so hard. Margaux continues to struggle with her academics and she holds the academic ability to graduate from WSU. I have been honored to stand in Margaux's strength and beauty, as she firmly believed, "We are connected and we all take care of each other." If it takes her longer to accomplish this goal, she is right where she needs to be.

Carrol

Carrol was a third-year undergraduate student at West State University. She grew up in the city of Molokai. Carrol was also a diversity mentor for WSU, this is a student leader position that infuses social justice activities and programming for residence halls. During my interview time with Carrol, she immediately focused on a significant change in her family constellation: meeting her three older half-brothers when she was younger. At the age of seven, she recognized that her family had a mom's side and a dad's side.

I didn't meet my older brothers until 2002, I want to say. It was a really weird experience because I was maybe seven and I don't think I reacted or understood how most people would have reacted, 'you have half-brothers' and I was like "OK." And I remember them showing up one day. And there was that awkward phase, but now it's not awkward. My family is . . . I don't want to say split, but there's my mom's side and my dad's side of the family. I grew up with my dad's side of the family because my mom's side of the family lives in Micronesia, which is a different part of Oceania.

Carrol has a calming disposition. She appears to be at ease and takes her time answering the questions in a soft gentle tone. At the age of seven, she understood and accepted the gain of new siblings. Meeting her older brothers did not cause an upheaval in her life. Even though she missed out on seven years of their lives, not knowing the circumstances that caused a disconnect, she readily accepted them into her life. Carrol comes from a big family. She has eight siblings and is the second youngest. Carrol describes a natural and stronger connection to her mom's side of the family, even though she had more access to being involved with her dad's family. Carrol did not comment on why she gravitated to her mom's side of the family, it could be that she has a closer relationship to her mom.

Elders to Ancestors

Kupuna are elders in Hawaiian communities. In Indigenous cultures, elders carry great strength and wisdom and are held in high regard for all the experiences they bring with them. Carrol wove her grandfather throughout her narrative.

I have a tattoo and it's a koi fish swimming around a flower. I am supposed to get a stingray and a turtle swimming around there as well. The koi fish is supposed to represent my great grandfather because he was a fisherman. He was very peaceful and tranquil. He was also very head strong, which is like koi fish. My grandfather was very hard headed but very maternal like. It was weird. When my parents divorced, I was always with my grandfather after church, me, and my siblings because he was Catholic. My siblings and I were the only grandchildren that followed my grandfather's Catholic faith. He went to Catholic Church with us. We would hop into his van because he would say, 'let's go eat' and so he would take the five of us to go to hotels to eat, we would go to a pizza place. So, the turtle is him it's supposed to be my mom's family as a whole cause I couldn't choose. So, it's that sense that family is really ingrained into me and I carry my great grandfather and my mom's family and my grandfather with me.

Carrol's grandfather passed away. The essence of his spirit is vivid to her. The connection Carrol has with her grandfather is perpetual. Being very close to her grandfather, his energy and force continues to radiate within her. Carrol remembered and practiced the lessons of life she learned from her grandfather. Her navigation at WSU is shared with her grandfather. Carrol associates the connection she has with her family members and the influence they have on her as she navigates WSU. Carrol uses her close family ties to navigate the dynamics of collegiate life at WSU. The influence of her family values contributes to her success and achievements. She holds the memories of her grandfather with fondness of him in her heart.

Carrol's grandfather enjoyed having meals in hotels. On Sunday mornings, it became a ritual for her and her siblings. More importantly, it was a major bonding time with their grandfather while being away from their parents.

We ate at hotels because for one it was the only place that was open in the morning, we always went after church on Sunday. It was my grandfather's favorite place to eat. It was kind of our own little get away from my parents and it was just quality time with my grandfather.

Carrol is named after her grandfather and is one of two grandchildren who carry his name. Being named after an elder is a big deal in Native cultures. When elders pass on, you are left with their spirit, a spirit that is the essence of who they were.

Semblance of Cultural Tattoos

The word tattoo, derived from the Polynesian word, "Tatau" means to mark the skin with color (Mai, 2017, p. 1). An individual would get a tattoo to signify a particular event or something significant in their life. Tattoos have symbolic representations that tell a story about the individual. They are used to designate one's life struggle, achievements, sacred images, and life stories. Tattoos become part of the individual's life; they tell the story many times, only known to the individual.

The Polynesian culture views the family as being sacred. When a family member or someone close to them has passes on, tattoos are acquired as a remembrance of those close to their hearts. Polynesian culture also used tattoos to distinguish their religious devotion. It is believed that the person's mana, their spiritual power or life-force is displayed through their tattoo. It is an ancient way to obtain spiritual power, protection, strength, balance and harmony.

It was believed tattoos could be like memories that remained to live on forever. The individual who died, their tattoos would go with them. Thus, having a tattoo of your ancestor was perceived as carrying your ancestor.

Carrol took a lot of time explaining the importance of tattoos in her background. Tattoos represent a significant tradition in Hawaiian culture. The symbols signify the

strong ties in honor of their ancestors. Additionally, they reflect the individual's mana, their spiritual power or life-force. Tattoos are part of the stories that are found in the recording of one's life journey.

According to Carrol, her tattoo is a symbolic and constant reminder of the role her family and ancestors play in her daily life. The tattoo reinforces the bond she has with her family and ancestors. She displays it proudly and fondly exclaims that it is a way that she can literally carry her ancestors with her.

Attending West State University

Transitioning from life at home to a mainland institution has its own set of unique challenges. The unique challenges Carrol faces is two-fold: First, the fact that she is coming from an Indigenous environment to a PW mainland institution, and second, self-discovery. For Carrol, the transitions were life changing for her. She felt she needed to leave Hawai'i in order to discover her own identity.

Basically, I was never myself. But when I came up here, no one knew me, except for a classmate. When I came up here my goal was to become someone else. And, it started off by my friends calling me Carrol, no one else calls me Carrol at home. I came up here and said I'm going to be this person that no one knows. Little did I know that person who no one knows is just myself.

Carrol did not feel she could be the person she wanted to be or live the life she wanted live without discovering who she was first. For example, she was always called Carroline. This meant listening to her own self without her family member's thoughts or opinions getting in the way. In a sense, she came to the mainland to find clearness about herself. Carrol defines her own transition as a process, taking time to figure out who she is. This also meant re-negotiating with members of her family when she came home and learned how to draw boundaries.

I slowly just developed into myself. I can wear dresses without people judging me. I can wear my hair down without people saying, ‘oh, you brushed your hair today.’ Or, ‘you didn’t brush your hair today.’ Dude, you don’t know how my hair works, please stop. Everything I was against at home were things that I came to love. Like, I hated wearing dresses at home and a lot of it was because when I came up here it’s just like, ‘Oh, you look really pretty today.’ So, I became a more confident up here and it’s to the point when I talk to my family and they say the same things that they always do and I’m like, I don’t know what you are talking about, I look cute!’ My oldest sister sees what happens and she says, ‘I get it, you’re cute, shut-up.’

Carrol found attending WSU was liberating, it gave her the confidence to believe in herself and stand up to her family whom she felt some always judged her. Carrol states, “You don’t understand the self-confidence you gain until you get away, until you go someplace, where no one knows you and you are able to be yourself.” Her new surroundings helped her find her new identity and allowed her to say to herself, “Hey, I like you!” Her strength comes from her connections with family that is deep and filled with wisdom.

Carrol Gives Back to her People

When Carrol returns home to Hawai’i, she fields many questions about college life. She knows WSU may not be suited for everyone and conveys this knowledge in a straight forward manner. Carrol understands students might only have one chance to go to college and does not want them to miss out on this opportunity.

I try to be as realistic as I can for them because this isn’t about them going on vacation. This is them trying to make a start for themselves, because I’m trying to make their future basically. And, if the school isn’t a right fit for them, they might not be confident enough to find another school. They might believe that there isn’t another school out there for them. Or, that college just isn’t for them at all.

Carrol shares her views of WSU, highlighting all aspects and details that she considers to be important in weighing a monumental decision to attend WSU. Her interest and participation in the academic world as well as campus activities has opened a

whole new world for her. Yet, she does not always think campus administrators provide space for students' of color voices to be heard. Carrol thinks she still wants to be on the island but did not want anyone to know her business, "I'd be back on the island, if the culture was a little different and people weren't talking so much." Her comment demonstrates the complexities of going to college on the mainland, longing for home, and knowing her job is to finish her degree. Carrol's upbringing, the connectedness she has with her mainland and homeland family, and the influential role her ancestors are a part of her life, and give her strength to persevere WSU.

As she shared these views, Carrol is careful to create a narrative that also describes her own experience and how she has learned to navigate a mainland institution with a completely different cultural climate, her homesickness, and how connections helped through it all:

When I go home they have those workshops they call 'college days.' I tell them that I love WSU and a lot of it has to do with the people I have met, like the people from the athletic department. I also tell them about WSU's short comings, like the whole issue with our campus administration and that beautiful mess. How they fall short in certain departments, like, there are certain professors who aren't the greatest in the world. I also tell them that we don't close on snow days. Don't expect that because it's not realistic. But a lot of it is that I have more positive things than bad things about WSU. I tell them to consider what they are getting themselves into. I tell them about the good experiences that I have about being able to connect to WSU's campus, WSU's community, and the WSU fans. Also, being able to make connections with people, and how this has helped me. And, at the same time, it's hard being 3000 miles away.

Carrol explained being 3000 miles away from home, you have to rely on the strength of the family values to see you through. She has adapted to her new environment and recognizes the pro's and cons of WSU. Carrol speaks indirectly about the college administration and their lack of awareness in serving students from a diverse background. She hopes this will change by creating additional infrastructure to support students from

Hawai'i. Excitedly, Carrol shares the good experiences she is having at WSU. A new set of friends, WSU's city community, and the WSU fans have helped to make her biggest discovery: herself.

Her Sister's Path is Now Carrol's Path

Carrol is especially close to her older sister. Even though her older had a desire to go to college, she was greatly discouraged by their father. Carrol's older sister did not want Carrol to be on the same path and missed the opportunity to leave the island for college. Carrol is on a path that was intended for her older sister, who did not make it off the island. Thus, a path was created for Carrol to arrive at WSU.

The path that I am on now she (Carrol's older sister) was supposed to take seven years ago. She was supposed to come to WSU. My dad told her on the day she graduated that he was not going to help her with college. So, she couldn't leave the island. She was basically trapped there. She is still there and she has her own little family. She helped me because my dad did the same thing my junior year. So, my sister applied to WSU for me, well helped me apply to WSU. There were nights she would just be in my room and we would just talk. One night she said, 'yah, you can't stay here. You got accepted to UH-Moana, you got accepted to the schools in Cali, both of those schools messed up your financial aid. So, right now you only have UH-Moana and WSU. And, you cannot stay here because I don't want you to end up like me.

This is a heartfelt story demonstrating the love the older sister has for her younger sister. Going to West State University was a dream that she could not make happen for herself, but, she was determined for her younger sister to have a better opportunity than she did. She was instrumental in helping her younger sister apply to WSU. Even though it meant being apart from her younger sister and missing her, she knew deep in her heart, this was the right thing to do. Carrol described her older sister, who helped to create a passageway for her to attend WSU. Her older sister shares with Carrol the sadness and loss of a different life she might have had while being exposed to other opportunities. Carrol's

older sister also realizes that if Carrol attend a mainland institution, it will be easier for the next person in their family to attend a university outside the state of Hawai'i. It must not have not been easy to see her little sister leave the island; she knows this experience will provide additional resources for their family. Carrol knows she carries her older sister's dream of attending a mainland institution and uses her mana to persevere at WSU.

Missing Home: The Island

Even after completing two years at West State University, Carrol remains homesick. She has good days and bad days. Her passionate caring and thoughtfulness has caused her residents to know the importance of giving her space when moments of being away from home become excruciating. Carrol has found unique ways of coping through her various positions on campus.

That homesickness is definitely a giant battle. I have been told from a lot of residents they have been blessed as they have gotten to know me. I have events that aren't centered from being from Hawai'i but it definitely helps with coping. If it's me cooking stuff and asking, 'Hey do you want some?' I have a lot of people say, 'I'm so thankful that you wear your flowers every day because it reminds me of home. Like, I can't do that.' Oh, you poor child. Being able to see it . . . it can be very beneficial to have someone who can relate to you on staff, in the residence halls. It makes living here and your first year of transition a lot easier when living here.

Carrol realized that homesickness needs to be addressed on a consistent basis in order to achieve good academic performance. Carroll acknowledges that missing home would be one of the major adjustments she would have to face, something she would need to figure out. She understood that being homesick would be a major hurdle in attending WSU. She discovered a coping skill, but used humor and chuckled as she explained the guilt she occasionally placed on her residents when they were at odds with their parents. For

example, she used this method with her students, “Oh, you fought with your mom, that’s cool, my mom didn’t answer the phone. Be grateful you have her down the street.” Carrol learned that teasing and providing humor with her students, helped to ease the sadness of missing home.

Carrol struggles when mainland students apologize for missing their families. She explains when students are expressing their dilemma of missing their relationship to place, they stop in midsentence when they realize they are speaking to her. Carrol describes her colleagues taking a pause because they know she has not been home for a year. Carrol finds a way of talking this out.

It’s frustrating having to deal with people throwing that in your face [missing home] and at the same time it’s frustrating that they also assume that they should feel bad for me because I’ve had people do that. I’ve had countless people say, ‘sorry I am complaining about missing home when you probably haven’t been home in a year.’ It’s like, why are you apologizing? You have every right to miss your family. Just because I have not been home does not mean you should miss your family any less.

Carrol knows the heartache associated with homesickness. Instead of complaining about her situation, she is choosing to make the most of her circumstance. She does this by building relationships with her residents, showing her authentic humor and acknowledging their pain when they miss home. She provides her residents and other WSU students an open space to talk about their homes when she is desperately missing her own home in Hawai’i.

Finding Friends from Hawai’i Brings Comfort

Carrol has reached out to others from Hawai’i, observing that navigating WSU is too difficult of a challenge to achieve alone. “Eventually you find friends from Hawai’i and you are like I just want to know you because I can’t go through this alone.” Carrol

mentioned her relationship with a baseball coach from Hawai'i and explains the comfort she found in the connection:

Yea, I just met him [baseball coach] this season. I absolutely adore him so much. Every time I see him he always says, "hi" and we always talk about home. There was this one time I went to work, it was a volleyball game and I didn't wear my flower., "Where's your flower? No flower today?" Nah, I replied. I can't really wear it so often because people here get freaked out. He straight up went, "who cares about those people, you wear that flower. I want to see it tomorrow night!" Just having him validate that and at the same time I bet part of the reason you want me to wear it because it's a reminder to home. We share those experiences of missing and are able to talk to each other.

Carrol's stories reinforce the importance of social connections between fellow Hawaiians. Carrol was validated when the baseball coach acknowledged she was not wearing her flower. This is significant because it shows the need for connection to other staff and students who share similar backgrounds. Simple interactions with someone from home is comforting. No words have to be exchanged, you just know the connection is there.

Carrol's Authenticity

Since coming to WSU, Carrol has become involved with a residential hall position that delivers key information surrounding social justice programming and workshops. The diversity mentor program shares a collaborative mission in serving students on a designated floor in the residence halls. This includes leading discussions around transitioning to college. Carrol has a knack in working with first-generation students; and naturally, a lot of first-generation students gravitate towards her. This could be because she is a first-generation student herself. She understands the painful process of homesickness and has learned to create coping mechanisms that work for her. Carrol describes her programming and the importance to draw connections to home is one way

how she manages her homesickness. Carrol highlights the significance of wearing a flower behind her ear as another way to cope being away from home. She knows other students from Hawai'i are also struggling with daily homesickness and uses her flower to remind her and others a semblance of home. In many ways, her flower has become her authentic touch as she navigates WSU.

The contagious and Indigenous values have caused Carrol to envision the spirit of the ocean. Back at home, the ocean is calming but it can also become fierce. The ocean currents can become aggressive and strong as dominant culture tries to define how she needs to interact with society. Carrol's confidence and belief in herself has become her own unique spirit and energy as she tagged her own signature of becoming her most authentic self. This is the only way she knows to be: true to self, true to her Oceania upbringing, and true to her land. Her perception and wisdom pours through the conversations she has with her residents, and these gifts radiate, as the girl with the flower, enters spaces that proudly carry her grandfather's legacy. Carrol has truly become her own person.

Profile Summary: A Connection That Will Never Be Forgotten

In the first part of this chapter I provided stories of each participant's lived experiences as they navigated a PW mainland institution as Native Hawaiian students. These participant's stories identified struggles, growth at WSU, experiences of racism, and connections to Hawai'i.

As is the case with hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, my research design, data analysis began during the first steps of data collection. At the conclusion of each interview or focus group, I reflected on what was said, how stories fit together, and

what was emerging from the data. The data consisted primarily of the subjective experiences of my participants and my own reflective practices. While I considered each story separately, I began to identify common experiences and developed five themes.

Emergent Themes

In the remainder of this chapter, I introduce and explore the five emergent themes identified in this research: (a) *Contextualizing Cultural Differences* which explored both race and family traditions, (b) *Sacredness of Land* shared the relationship between land and humans and demonstrates how knowledge is learned, (c) *The Aloha Spirit* explored a living force that is shared and understood by all participants, (d) *Relationships* explored the interconnectedness of family and Indigenous cultures and provided the foundation of student success, and (e) *Leaving the Mainland Without a College Degree* described the greatest fears of participants of returning home without accomplishing the primary objective of a four-year degree; coupled with a sense of failure, shame, and disappointment. My first and fourth themes are divided into additional subcategories to offer further depth in exploring the theme.

Emergent Theme 1: Cultural Differences

All participants in this study highlighted aspects of being different on the WSU campus. Race, is a constant reminder of this difference for these students. As Bennett, Eugene, Margaux, and Carrol spoke about the differences at WSU, I was reminded they were still new to this conversation. For me, this means they did not have all of the mainland experiences that provided them a “mainland student of color foundation” from which to speak. Although, this is expected in our society because they “looked like a person of color.” I illustrate this point because participants shared they were expected to

have an opinion and know all the “isms” of dominant culture. I return to this topic more fully in Chapter V.

Attending a mainland campus also meant an adjustment of social status. In Hawai'i, participants were used to being a part of the majority, more than 60% of Hawaiian residents are people of color. At WSU, less than 30% identify as a student of color. This is significant because it requires another transition process of how Hawaiian students need to adapt and navigate WSU in order to be successful. Dominant culture, “lives in a society that attaches privilege to being White and male and heterosexual and nondisabled regardless of social class” (A. G. Johnson, 2006, p. 12). Eugene explains this cultural difference in her story. Eugene described above how she was seated in between five white students, “It’s just me.” The professor heard the vibration of a cell phone and she automatically looked at her. Eugene further explained the professor “talks nice to the White kids. To me, “it’s very sassy.” The unearned benefits from dominant culture are not shared equitably by all communities (A. G. Johnson, 2006).

The stories shared in this study demonstrate a difference in values. All participants acknowledged the need to be courteous to each other. Yet, respectfulness and being humble were not as visible in the dominant culture that participants had observed.

Being humbled and always keep working hard. Like, um, I noticed for soccer was a lot of the girls on our team was all about themselves and why isn't the coach playing me and stuff like that. And because of that, because they were not humbled, they didn't work hard. The team would fail in certain aspects. Four years I have been playing soccer and I wasn't a starting player until my senior year. I always stay humble in terms of just saying thank you and getting back in and working hard. These were two things my dad always taught me from back home.

Bennett explained this experience as a cultural difference. Although being humble and working hard are shared values between Native Hawaiian and dominant cultures,

participants shared it is not always reciprocated. Participants consistently highlighted with confusion about going out of their way to be courteous and show hospitality, yet they did not receive the same response from members of the dominant culture.

Carrol also conferred with Bennett and noticed that there is a difference in cultural values. Carrol mentions, “At home, I learned to be humble and be respectful and those are the two biggest values I have in my life. Being humble and respectful. Indigenous cultures stress the importance of respecting the relationship to place, relationship to cosmos systems, and relationship to people. Carrol frequently brings up in discussion the aspect of this, when she sees her residents or other mainland folks appearing rude or disrespectful to each other. For example, all participants shared commonality of calling faculty members by their first name. Eugene recalls hearing colleagues stating.

They (mainlanders) have no respect . . . we have a hard time calling professors by their first name because we don't do this at home. No, I am not going to call you by your first name. That's weird. You are our instructor. You are an elder to us. That's not right. Can I please call you Mr., Mrs.

Carrol and Eugene demonstrate the importance of being respectful within Hawaiian culture. This is manifest when they address a faculty member by their first name, demonstrating disrespect of an elder, a value that is salient to their culture.

Margaux's experience of differing values is shown through an example she uses to explain about food. The buffet set-up style of eating in the residence halls and how sharing a meal with a friend from the mainland revealed differing values.

My friend invited me to go to the dining hall and she grabbed all these foods and didn't eat all of it. I asked her why she grabbed all of it and she replied that it just looked good. I was thinking that back home you are not allowed to waste. Don't

waste your food, people are starving someplace else. I was like, 'hello, don't waste your food.' She said, 'it's ok.' But, it's not ok. Like little stuff, like, that is extreme for me. Back home we make enough. Enough to know that it will last us and it will be good the next day.

Even though Margaux confronted her friend about wasting food, her friend did not seem to mind taking extra food and not eating it, essentially throwing food away. This does not happen in Hawai'i. The island in Hawai'i gives people what they need and the people do not waste food.

As previously mentioned, participants left their homeland, their social status of being the majority changed to a minority status on the mainland. All participants had a story to share that demonstrated a wide range in depth of microaggressions. As participants discussed their painful experiences of microaggressions, it felt that many carried their stories as if they just happened yesterday. When in reality, the stories they shared happened months and years earlier. Microaggressions are unwanted interactions that communicate hostility, derogatory or negative perceptions, insulting a targeted person or group. Microaggressions have been linked to negatively impact marginalized groups.

Margaux describes a classroom experience which occurred during her first couple of days at WSU. University 101 is a foundational class that teaches note taking, study, research skills, etc. The class is not a requirement for graduation but it is recommended for students in their first semester in college. This type of class has been linked to higher persistence and graduation rates.

In my university 101 class, we played two truths and a lie. I remember my two facts. I rode a dolphin, I ate raw fish and oh, what was it. . . . Oh, I went hunting or something like that [A student in my class said] 'you didn't eat raw fish,

nobody eats that'. So, everybody thought that was my lie. Then when I told them my lie was [that] I never rode a dolphin I couldn't help but laugh [Margaux is laughing]. And everyone thought it's not that funny, why are you laughing? You thought I rode a dolphin.

Margaux felt invalidated and harmed by the classroom exchange. Her colleague's expression of "nobody eats raw fish" and thinking everyone in Hawai'i rides a dolphin, is a display of microaggressions because these statements reflect a stereotype. While the student most likely did not intentional mean to cause harm, the residual effects still triggered feelings of discord with Margaux.

Bennett had a similar experience with her teammates. Although this occurrence happened outside the classroom, it was a moment that demonstrated the lack of knowledge of Hawai'i and the current (at the time) WSU soccer team.

Some of my teammates, they don't know. One time were just talking about what we wanted to do, traveling outside of the United States, you know. I should get my passport. One of my teammates was like, what? Like, yea, I should get my passport. The teammate asks, how did you come here then? I inquired further and asked why would you think this? My teammate responded, because you are from Hawai'i'

Laughter filled the air and I couldn't help but feel sad. When I asked about the laughter when I was clearly hearing pain, participants reminded me, "that's Hawai'i" as if they were saying, 'that's us'. Bennett saw my confusion and stated, "I don't blame them because no one no one really knows about Hawai'i. Hawai'i is so far away. I don't want to say 'are you stupid? But are you?' As if I was being reminded to take everything in stride. Margaux stated, "Yea, but at the same time when they are serious about it, like talking about me and who I am. How about we talk about you, there is so much I can say about you, but don't. I was reminded to look at this dialogue with compassion and not accusing or finger pointing, the way I had been socialized to do. A way of looking at the

world I used to do when I was younger but have forgotten how to do this over the many years of being socialized into Westernized culture.

Eugene recalls her telling the classroom experience interaction she had with the professor and being surrounded by White students. Her feelings of being differentiated from her peers, “I never felt discriminated against, just for being a minority. Back home you are the majority, yea different.” When I asked Eugene to elaborate on the difference, she replied, “It’s not a great thing, you know. I don’t know. Back home you look like everyone else, well kind of, everyone is different but accepting.” The difference that Eugene was explaining could be a reference that Hawai’i never had a White majority. Hawai’i is heavily populated by people of color that is primarily influenced by Pacific Islanders. The White majority difference is importance because because history has shown that assimilating to dominant cultural practices potentially undermines one’s self-worth (L. T. Smith, 2012).

Carrol, too, experienced microaggressions on the WSU campus as she relates to a different way people view her on the mainland, “At home, I am not a minority. I am part of the majority. When I am up here I have to be careful of what I say because I am not a majority, I am a minority.” Bennett also uses similar words to describe her experience of seeing, “Clearly I was different. There is like a clear segregation between ethnic backgrounds.”

As participants were unfolding their stories, I remembered how quickly the room became quiet and somber. This was a first during our focus group time. I suspect Bennett and Carrol held back feelings and emotions about what was happening in the WSU community, seeing first-hand what racism looks like. Both Carrol’s and Bennett’s words

also are used to describe the painful realities of other communities of color in dominant culture. Due to the microaggressions participants have experienced, their words make me think that all of their senses are heightened as a survival technique as they have learned to navigate WSU.

In Hawai'i, participants are able to hold on and embrace their Hawaiian identities. Carrol and Bennett bring up a valid point, they are not the minority, but, they are the majority, and as reported, differences are accepted. At WSU, participants are feeling that they are no longer able to embrace this identity.

Both Eugene and Carrol used a similar analogy to explain what minority status feels like and the assumptions they made before attending a mainland university. Carrol reflects values that are incorporated into her student position, "I'm in housing so social justice is a big thing. At first, I was like 'yea.' The mainland is like the melting pot. Then I saw that you all aren't no melting pot. You are all like a salad bar. You all have your own designated damn areas." Eugene refers to dominant culture being a stew, "yea, it's like people think we're a melting pot. I don't think that. We are like a stew. A stew you throw in all of your vegetables because everyone is a different thing and you stir." Eugene was talking about a stew that keeps its own flavor, its own shapes, and everyone still has their own colors. Eugene added, "Here, you are the vegetables that does not belong in the pot." Eugene was referring to herself and other Native Hawaiians, how participating in everyday campus activities, like going to classes or walking around campus distinctively shows they do not feel like a part of the WSU culture.

As I listened to participants and reflected on the themes I was discovering, I kept returning to outdated notions of a cultural 'melting pot.' The traditional model assumes

immigrants abandon their culture and identities to become totally assimilated into US society. However, the new version of the “melting pot” is that it does not exist. Dominant culture has become compartmentalized around identities off citizenship, sex, gender, race, religion, ability, and socioeconomic status (A. G. Johnson, 2006). Both Carrol and Eugene described as a melting pot than the WSU campus. Carrol and Eugene feel the melting pot does not apply to dominant culture. Collectively, the participants felt the mainland culture was a melting pot. Since attending WSU, their assumptions have changed. The truths of the mainland that were taught to them, being a melting pot, are no longer honorable. Carrol views WSU as being a “salad bar” and Eugene views WSU as a stew. The salad bar and stew concepts suggests that cultures do not mix at all, thus, components of our racial, religious, and cultural heritage continue to be embraced. Differences are more likely to be seen in a salad bar and stew than in a melting pot.

While attending WSU, Eugene and Carrol’s assumptions have changed.

Carrol feels the melting pot does not apply to dominant culture. The dominant privileged edges of the compartmentalized boxes (i.e., melting pot) rarely intersect with non-dominant identities (i.e., salad bar and stew). Participants are describing social justice in a reflective way based on their melting pot way of life. This captures the essence of their lived experiences from home, which does not exist at WSU. WSU maintains and identifies the concept of the traditional melting pot. The campus culture is shifting and participants are reflecting the new knowledge (i.e., salad and stew thinking) of this shift. Participants have learned to navigate these differences on the WSU campus.

Emergent Theme II. Sacredness of Land

Everything comes from the land and goes back to the land. The land is a sacred place that must be taken care of. The stories of the ancestors, throughout the generations, have stressed the importance of having loved, honor, and respect of the land. The importance of relationships described throughout this study, also, specify the significance of the land. Each of my participants spoke about the sacredness of and expressed the importance of taking care of the land. Carrol described the strong relationship to the land.

People would say, yah, take care of the earth. But it's different than that back home because it's malama 'aina. Which not just taking care of the earth, but taking care of the land. This is where your family is at. Littering at home is a thing, but it's not really a thing. Like here, you just see trash all over.

Carrol describes a strong relationship to the land, "we have this connection to where we are from." Expounding on what Carrol stated, the connection comes from the spirit of the ancestors, who, once came from the land and have returned back to the land. We are part of ancestors and they are a part of the land. Therefore, we are all connected to one another and to the land. The sacredness of the land is a connection and relationship to the land and to each other. The land connects people to each other. Without the land, you would have nothing. Carrol further explains this connection.

Modern people looked down at us for protesting so much against the corporations for coming in and doing things. Now, we are the only island that has resources to survive. It's interesting at home it's our way of keeping our land strong. At home, there is a saying, 'Aloha Aina' which is saying love/respect of the land. Or, take care of the land. It's really being thankful for what we have for everything that land gives. If I were to do that here, I would look like a tree hugger. It has such a negative connotation. I remember when I first came up here, I would see the place trashed and I would take care of it as much as I could but at the same time, why do I care so much, this isn't even my place. They trash the land this is their land. This is why it looks terrible. This isn't where I plan to live anyways. Thinking about going back I remember seeing all the pipeline protests I was just like, yea, they are taking advantage of Native American's land. This is Native American's

land! And, they have their heart and soul into it but it's like being destroyed so it goes full circle. Seeing and thinking about that. The thinking process up here is really different from home when it comes to keeping the land alive and basically being thankful for what they have.

Carrol was describing the importance of the connection to land. A connection that could be described like a heartbeat. The heart is the land; the beat is the pumping of blood flow to the river of life. Both are connected and cannot be separated to live or thrive. The participants are suggesting that this encoded information, the sacredness of the land, is communicated non-locally between the people of the land at a subconscious level. In effect, the land links all living systems. It is about the appreciation and understanding at a deeper level that members of this study explains how they are all interconnected with each other and affected by the values of the land that has been shown by their parents, elders, and ancestors. They are all synchronized with the external and internal magnetic flow by the earth magnetic forces. Collective human consciousness is affected by the sacredness of the land. Therefore, the participants have created states of care, love, and compassion that has generated a more coherent environment that has benefited each other and helped offset the current climate discord and incoherence. They don't see this in dominant culture. This is puzzling to participants of this study. Dominant culture does not have the connective value of a bond to the land and for participants it is not to be destroyed or broken. Participants felt dominant culture had no connection to the land due to the consistent trash and the untidiness of how the land was kept.

This is significant for a couple of reasons. The participants in my research study did not directly disclose the barriers this created with their peer group, I sensed a disconnect between dominant culture groups and Native Hawaiian groups. Similar to other student affinity groups, I noticed the leadership group of HSC sticking together in

solidarity with each other. Unlike other student affinity groups, the connection and relationship is mutually understood amongst its members. Perhaps the connection to the land is a part of this disconnect that Hawaiian students wrestle with in navigating WSU.

Another significant piece in this section represent the lack of ability to connect back to place or the land when studying at WSU. As stated earlier, with Bennett, she waits until she is able to go back home and reconnects with the ocean. Margaux made a reference of getting “chicken skin” when she flies back home and sees the land through the window opening on the plane. For some participants, this could be too long of a time to stay away, and finding the way back home is lost (M. Meyer, personal communication, March 30, 2017). This suggests the importance of knowing how to serve students in a holistic manner that affirms their connections to the land, and validates the knowledge they bring with them in classrooms and throughout the WSU campus community. Anything less contributes to the harmful eroding of their culture and the continued effects of colonization.

Participants weighed in on the pipeline protest to describe the sacred relationship to land and the different value systems that are held between dominant and Native Hawaiian cultures. Demonstrating the difference in this story trickles across other relationships. For example, Margaux spoke of her connection to land.

We are expected to know our genealogy, first cousin, second cousin. Because that’s your family and you come here and people ask you, ‘what’s a first cousin?’ Are you serious? Our families are oceans apart but we know each other. That’s real.

Affirming the connection to the land, Margaux added, “They (mainlanders) are all connected and we are all separated but we’re connected more.” Margaux sheds light into how are states in mainland are all touching each other having accessibility by car to see

family members. In Hawai'i, family members travel across bodies of water, different islands, to see each other. A stronger connection to the land each and to each other is felt in Hawai'i. Bennett explains the relationship.

It's a cultural thing. The family dynamics here are different, there's a sense of disconnect here, like us and them. But in Hawai'i, you don't have to be Hawaiian you can be whatever you want if you respect the land, the culture the people.

Carrol further explains, "It's impressive to have a degree, but at the end of the day, if you are living in Hawai'i that degree is not going to get you anywhere if you don't know how to live off the land." Carrol speaks to the importance of earning a college degree and uses her experience and knowledge of the land while examining how Westernized culture discounts ways of knowing in Hawaiian culture. "A lot of people think we are uneducated, uneducated because we don't know how our land works, but, we have lived there for hundreds of years. You don't need to a degree to know how the land works." Carrol's example also shows how having current knowledge of Native Hawaiian history, understanding how history of the land is lacking, contributes to the misperceptions of Indigenous communities.

Emergent Theme III: The Aloha Spirit

The Aloha Spirit is an ancient philosophy that Hawaiian and Indigenous people are connected to. It stems from the knowledge that the ancestors gave them. One must note, the Aloha Spirit has been maintained untouched from colonization.

Aloha is knowledge, knowing, and understanding (Meyer, 2017). It is the self-discovery of these three concepts that we learn from the direction and guidance of the ancestors. It is learned from the experiences of understanding and servicing others. Thus, Aloha is a type of knowing that leads us to understanding, because you have serviced it to

others. Aloha is also intelligence and loving; these one needs and uses for meeting life experiences. This is one of the foundations the ancestors have stressed: when you teach yourself, you gain that intelligence, and exhibit the intelligence and service to others you gain understanding, and when you understand you have acceptance, compassion, peace, and kindness. This exhibits the intelligence of Love. Thus, this is what is meant when Aloha is used as a form of greeting. When Aloha is used as a greeting, it is beyond hello and goodbye. The Aloha greeting conveys love and acceptance.

The Aloha Spirit gives one their meaning of life from the practice of deep self-inquiry and reaching the bottom of one's own regenerative spirit (Meyer, 2017). The Aloha Spirit uses a high frequency to achieve the difference between knowledge (accumulation and synthetization of facts) a lower frequency, and knowing how the facts apply to you and shapes your knowledge (intelligence) a higher frequency. The frequency stems from the energy, the knowledge, the intelligence, understanding, and love. These are all core teachings from the ancestors.

Margaux and Eugene described the Aloha Spirit a little differently and everyone added their truth to the collective dialogue around Aloha. The Aloha Spirit is complex, yet, it's a concept that is simple and has taken for granted experiences by dominant culture. Participants spoke about the salient Aloha Spirit being piece of their life that was missing from them while living on the mainland. Margaux describes Aloha Spirit as a type of force that is felt, "It's something you feel, its that energy. I feel like it has a lot to do with the family orientation as well as beyond it, like past lives type of things. In the Hawaiian culture, we have all these Gods and praise them. That lingers and just stays with the island." Eugene shared,

It's hard to describe in a simple thing. It's a simple thing to say, 'hi' to a stranger. It's just automatically respecting everybody. Aloha means not just hello or goodbye, it also means I love you. That is a universal word. You respect the other person you always have manners. People up here don't have manners. . . . Well, back home you got that whole Aloha Spirit thing. You don't even know anyone but hey, you tell them 'hi' anyway. Like, it's just something so small. That's how it is. You know it's instilled in you when you are little this is how you have to act.

Eugene demonstrates the everyday practice of living in Aloha Spirit. The spirit of Aloha is an energy that informs place, it is the continual relationship that one has with their ancestors, who are now part of your daily walk and the air you breathe.

I sensed Carrol thought that the Aloha Spirit could be a part of mainland culture. Thus, the spirit of Aloha never went away; it is still here as it was felt within the community of participants for this study. It is carried with the individual. Carrol stated, "At home I learned to be humble and respectful, and those are the two biggest values I have in my life. It's kind of hard because humility is a big thing at home. Being respectful even if you are the top of your chain at the end of the day, you are still younger than the person below you, you have to respect that." Carrol demonstrated how the Aloha Spirit helps with the navigation of WSU. In the realm of the Aloha Spirit, her self-discovery has brought her to knowledge of the importance humility. She was able to tap into that higher frequency (intelligence) from her services and experiences at home, the values of humble and respect, will get you to a place where you can stand your grounds. Perhaps, it is dominant culture that has forgotten this way of being and knowing the world.

Emergent Theme IV: Relationships

The saliency of family and how family was connected to participant's lives was woven into all aspects of dialogue and interactions throughout focus groups and

interviews. When I asked participants about who supports them through their WSU experience, family overwhelmingly was a huge response. Margaux response was especially interesting. I noticed she took a very deep breath, and I asked her to share what that breath meant.

When I thought about it, I put myself in this spiritual feeling like I just needed to send it to my mom, like I am talking about my mom. Just the word mom itself, I think of my mom and she is very, very hard working and she is given up so many things so we can live, and we can go on in life. She has sacrificed all her hobbies and the things that she has wanted to do. It's all because of family. It's not just herself anymore. And even though me and my sister are away, it pains her to know that can't be physically here to take care of us if anything were to happen. She is like the rock of the family and everybody needs a rock in that family. And when you asked about my family, my mom came up first then my grandparents. So, I associated that if I ever lose them, in that category, in that breath and in that second, I love my mom. I need her. Even though when I go home and go to work, give me my space, stop babying me. But, if I ever lost her . . . she is the rock of the family, she holds us all together, she has everyone's secrets, she has everything and she works hard. She is the first one up and the last one to sleep, she takes care of my siblings. My mom is the important in the family. She's our support system. She our 'go to'. She's the one that balances things out. She gave birth to me.

I remember being struck as Margaux quickly rattled off all the goodness her mom meant as she took in the deep breath. I also felt the energy of the room shift as if other folks were present and listening to Margaux describe the moment of her taking in a breath. Yet, we were the only ones in my office that afternoon. In fact, we were the only ones in the whole house.

Carrol's description of family took on a different meaning as she spoke about her Hānai family. Carrol explains that Hānai are family member's family who are not considered biological. Carrol describes it as a Hawaiian version of adopting.

What it is no legal documentation of adoptions. This very much exists in my mom's family. My grandmother has five kids and there is also my other aunts and uncles, not from here, other sides of the family. Back in the day they would go to

my grandmother's house because they were friends with my dad. It created a bond between my aunts and uncles they call my grandmother-mom, despite not actually being their mom.

Carrol furthers her conversation and spoke about her Hanai family here on the mainland.

As Carrol spoke, I sensed my own definition of family is extremely limited as Carrol spoke about her family.

I have that (Hānai family) here with my boss at the athletic department. I don't think she knows what the actual term means. But me and another coworker of mine, we have been working with her for the last three years. Last year we started calling her mom and she started responding. It basically creates this bond as family and it gets to a point when I talk to the other co-workers who are new, I don't refer to her as mom. I refer to her by her first name. And when I call her by her first name, it's a really weird uncomfortable feeling because no, that's mom. That's not Leslie. It's my mother. It's this mutual understanding between your birth parents as well. Recognizing that you have these connections with other people, and, that you are able to be like [them]. Yes, I can recognize that. That's her Hanai family. It's also mutual agreement, an unspoken agreement I should say, between the person is "hanaied" into the family and the person Hanianing them. It's kind of like God-parents in a sense but not really. It does not have that tie to the family. That person's children become your Hanai siblings.

Carrol talked about the need to be connected to WSU employees, both faculty and staff. While Carrol was the only participant who spoke about needing the connections to a faculty or staff member, I also sensed this need while working with other members of the Hawaiian student community and students of color in general. Though, with Carrol, these connections have become as essential lifeline as she attends WSU.

A lot of people don't understand when I connect so well with my supervisors (WSU staff). It's because I'm so family oriented, I don't have family up here, I have to build that up here. People don't understand that if I lose these relationships I would probably get really upset and basically cry the rest of the time. So, I don't think a lot of people understand that. When I talk about the athletic department, they are just like, 'Yea, you really like them don't you.' It's not just the job, yes, it's a job I go to, but, it's more than that. It's me being able to go to only my bosses and my co-workers (students), but be being able to connect.

Participants also felt the need to be connected to each other. While I intentionally separated these two themes out and spoke to each with differing stories, the relationships

that these connections make are essential components to this group of Native Hawaiian students navigating WSU successfully.

Ancestors. The importance of ancestors was raised throughout my conversations with participants. Storytelling and retelling of stories shared about their ancestors brought meaning, laughter, and truth telling of how participants knew ideas and thoughts to the foreground of beliefs systems and values. I share some of the amazing stories of survival here as a starting point to under the deep connections that reside in Native Hawaiian culture.

Bennett shares how lives continue to be influenced by family members, “It’s your family beyond. In Hawaiian culture your family becomes animals, they become your spirit animal, they become the leaves, the flowers, and the trees. They are everywhere.” Carrol acknowledges this and describes how her grandfather continues to be present in her life even though he has passed.

You carry [them] with you. My grandfather passed away and when I get real angry at mainlanders, I don’t really look to the sky but I’m just, ‘Papa, I’m about ready to punch somebody in the face And, it’s just being able to connect even though they are gone, ever since we were in kindergarten, we were taught these values they are all up in our classrooms.

In previous conversations with Carrol, she shared how close she was with her grandfather and her strong connection to him before he passed away. Although her papa is not here physically with her, Carrol knows she can call on him. This is an example of how IT relationships are essential in Indigenous communities. Additionally, this type of knowledge has not been traditionally illustrated in Westernized education systems.

Margaux shares a story about the connection to the land and how this story has been passed on for several generations by her ancestors through her Hawaiian school studies. This story also serves as a way of knowing, or her truth.

In school. In Hawaiian studies, we learn about the ahupua'a, from the mountains to the sea. It can be a very important root at the top of the mountain. Imagine a tea bag at the top of the mountain and imagine rain from the root and it runs down to the water. It goes down into the streams and into the rivers. Everybody drinks from this river and this root it helps with the sick and healing if we have, it heals you internally. If you have a stomachache, this particular root makes its way down and on the way down. There are all these little side streams that fill up and there's taro (a type of potato) or kalo (another type of potato). Ok, so we are making more downstream and it's time to fill up our Ipu (our gourd) and we need more water for the house so they fill it up and they drink it and they actually have herbs and we feel better. Then it makes its way into the ocean, fish live in the ocean. Also, it makes fish stronger and then it makes them bigger. Our men go fishing and they are filled with these herbs and now we all feel better. The ahupua'a is from the mountain to the sea. We all know this because that's how we had to live. We didn't westernize it and have folks teach us the language for it. We knew it worked we had to believe, we knew what not to do and that was the way of life.

As Margaux shared this story, it became real. The crispness of the water, the lush green of the mountains, and the root at the top of the mountain as it was adding protective healing properties to the water. These pieces were all visible. The end of the story demonstrates the struggle that occurred between Westernized and Native Hawaiian culture. The care that was taken to protect the authenticity of this truth is shared, allowing outsiders to see a part of the resiliency Native Hawaiian had to, and continue to endure, to keep their history alive.

Carrol tells a story that was passed down to her by elders. A connection to the land that has been disrespected by mainlanders traveling to Hawai'i and not honoring the ancestral story, causing

There is this valley when you go through the valley you can hike up to the waterfall and there is the pool that you can swim in and basically there is a myth that there is this giant gecko that lives in the pool of it. So, there are ti leaves around the place. The way that you know that you swim in the pool is that you have to take off a ti leaf and put it on the water. If the ti leaf sinks, then don't go in. If it floats, then you can swim there. And just that tradition occurring over and over and people respecting the land shows the connection that we have. Whenever I go up, I sometime see people who have disregarded it. I know a lot of people who have died or they have gotten hurt because they thought it was just some stupid myth but that's the same thing people say when they take the rocks from the volcanoes . . .

This is another story that highlights the relationship the Hawaiian community has with the land. And it also a story demonstrates the truth of storytelling told by the ancestors and how these stories continue to be passed down by the community. At the end of Carrol's story, she informs us of another story told by the ancestors of the Goddess Pele. Pele, goddess of fire and volcanoes, is angered when rocks and sand are taken from her. Streaks of bad luck or curses are followed home with you until you return the items you have taken. Carrol has conveying the importance of continually being connected to your ancestors. Ancestors are everywhere. No matter where you are, no matter where you go, your ancestors are always with you. You are a part of them and they are a part of you. In essence, you are part of their genetic make-up. Ancestors live on through their off-spring. When Carrol participates in WSU, through classroom or residence halls, she is using the energy from her ancestors. Carrol is expressing a truth that is not a part of dominant culture.

Importance of being together. As Margaux, Carrol, Eugene, and Bennett participated in the focus groups, I noticed the environment changing. At home, they were surrounded by people that looked like them, behaved like them, and spoke like them. However, that is not the case at WSU. It is the constant of seeing White faces, and many

times being, the only Hawaiian student in class. When students from Hawai'i come together, it's a high screeched party because they are so happy to be with each other. It sends feelings of home and connecting back to place. Eugene exclaims, "You have to watch what you say. You can say anything back home. But you can't do that here." Being together is reconnecting with those from the homeland environment; where you are accepted for being yourself.

Bennett acknowledged the focus group space that was created to share these stories was helpful, "It's very therapeutic here. Very therapeutic." Eugene describes being together as comforting where, "People who understand you. You don't have to repeat yourself. I don't have to choose words carefully so mainlanders understand what I mean or am saying." Margaux chimes in, "we get each other." Hearing these comments, it made me realize the importance of the focus group space. It became a space that affirmed their core values and beliefs while affirming each other. It is the aspect of finding each other and their Indigenous culture. They are able to talk about the familiarity of being back home in Hawai'i. Their growth and development comes from the circle they have opened. The support, comfort, and encouragement that were received from the focus group expresses the importance of being together. The Aloha Spirit becomes more evident and is strengthened by being together.

Talking pidgin. "Language is the map of a culture. It tells you where it's people come from and where they are going." (Mokuau, Browne, Ka'opua, Higuchi, Sweet, & Braun, 2015). This quote describes the thinking, the experiences, and the description of their culture as they talk about their language. All participants felt the need to talk Pidgin when attending school on the mainland. Participants described this feeling as comfort and

the ability to connect back to home and community. Margaux shares her experience of going back home and her family commenting on her language.

When I went back home, my parents told me that that I spoke Moke. They don't have a Pidgin accent. My dad talks with an accent. My mom talks good English, so I learned how to talk good English. I don't talk Moke. But when I came up here, I felt like I was missing out. When I am up here, it doesn't feel right to speak English, even though everyone does it, but I feel the need to talk Moke because I'm missing out. But when I go home, I have to turn it off because my family and friends don't talk like that. I was talking and talking fast my mom said that she sent me to a mainland school to learn proper English, not to come back home and talk Pidgin. You left speaking English and came back speaking Moke. So, my language changes.

I asked what the difference was between Pidgin and Moke. I learned Pidgin was also known as a plantation language. Margaux explains the difference.

In Hawai'i, we have the Hawaiian language, then we have Pidgin. During the migration era, the plantation era, the immigrants who came here, we had to make sure everyone understood what everybody was saying, they had to create a language. That's why all these words come in and form a sentence because we all understand it. We have Japanese background, we have Chinese background, Filipino background, all of these backgrounds in order to understand everyone we call it Pidgin, broken down English. Back in the day they would call it plantation language. You needed to understand it so you could understand what every other ethnic person was saying. When you talk in a broken-down English and when you talk into a broken-down English to an extreme, then it's called Moke. The intensity of how Pidgin plays out is another factor of Moke.

Bennett added speaking Pidgin in spaces that were comfortable, "I feel I can be my authentic self at the Asian Pacific Islander house. I notice that when I come in here, like I talk Pidgin a lot more." Bennett described how she felt, talking Pidgin in other spaces, "I don't really speak Pidgin in front of my teammates or at, at the athletic places and stuff like that. I definitely don't. I don't even speak it in class at all, to be honest." When pressed further in understanding why Bennett didn't speak Pidgin in others space across WSU, she realized not many spaces existed that she feels comfortable talking her native language.

Carrol expressed a similar undertone in speaking Pidgin in open spaces that were not as inviting or welcoming.

It's even hard in those spaces (Carrol is referring to residence halls) because those spaces are not necessarily private as it was in our focus groups. Cause even when we had the loco moco night last semester, I could still sense the kids from Hawai'i not fully letting themselves out. For instance, when I talked to the boys from the front desk and there are other resident advisor's or people around and try and speak Pidgin but it's kind of not comfortable because people are looking at us and saying, 'what are they saying, are they talking about us' like it's not proper English and it does not feel like a safe space. Or, we are being judged, cool.

Carrol references to a joint event held between Asian Pacific Services, Diversity Mentors, and HSC. Loco Moco's are a popular dish in Hawai'i. Our groups came together to provide a sanctuary space for healing, talking story, and rejuvenation before heading into the last weeks of the spring semester. These are difficult times for students in general, and, for students from Hawai'i, these difficult times become multilayered of missing home and being away from one's own roots. Carrol commented about the different spaces on campus, like her residence hall, that should be a "safe space" to be her most authentic self, but it is not the space she feels completely comfortable in. She also senses the discomfort for other individuals from Hawai'i as she described her time working at the front desk. Carrol does not feel comfortable talking her native language at the front desk because she knows it makes her non-Hawaiian residents feel uncomfortable. Carrol identifies the traditional student space of a residence hall and residence floor does not bring her the same comfort and rejuvenation the similar way it does for many of her residents. Carrol has few spaces that she can be her most authentic self.

Emergent Theme V: Leaving the Mainland Without a College Degree

There is fear that all this effort may not result in a college degree. The mere thought of returning to Hawaii without the degree raised the prospect of shame.

Participants communicated this reality became true for some of their friends. Margaux spoke about her family and how going back home would affect her.

It also goes back to your family. You want to do it [graduate from college] for them, you know. You are doing it for yourself, your future life. You don't want to disappoint, especially for those who didn't go as far in high school, you just want to make them proud. You want to be the first, the one to change.

Participants instantly started chatter of folks who went home and didn't come back to school. The stories that were told also included students from other institutions. Bennett articulated accounts of former friends and one friend who attended an Ivy league institution.

My father is a sheriff and he started telling me about my friend who is in jail. When I came back and I started hearing all of these things, wow! That person was a great volleyball player, what is she doing back here? She had her future laid out. I had a friend who went to Cornell, Cornell, full ride scholarship, come back. I was like dude, what happened? He was like I just didn't like the people; it was too much of a culture shock. I was like bud, if I had that chance to go to Cornell. . . . Suck that up! And had my tuition paid for, going to CORNELL. . . . Hell ya, I would have sucked that shit up, because you don't want to disappoint . . .

Eugene explained that you want to be, "the one that carries the name" and some of the underlining pieces, "A lot of it is the pride thing. You go back home and you hear folks talking. . . . I don't want to be here listening" Eugene didn't want to be in the same room listening because it was hard to hear about her friends who came back to Hawai'i without their college degree. Margaux chimed in and stated, "I don't want that to be my life" During these moments the laughter stopped, I saw the somberness in their faces. I felt the

intensity of Margaux and Eugene doing whatever is necessary for this not to become their reality. For a few minutes, no one said anything, thoughts were being collected. Then slowly the conversation resumed, on a lower note. Through their discussions, the participants collectively worked through, identifying their concerns of going home without a degree. Carrol also spoke about being the first person in her family to graduate and how this influences her decision to stay at WSU.

I'm the first one in my family to go to college. You're the first one that is going to bring our name up. You're the first one that is going to make us proud. It's just a lot of factors play into it. And at the end of the day, part of it is for you and a lot of it is for your family.

Bennett had a dissimilar experience; she spoke about wanting to do things differently.

I'm like the opposite. My brothers were well liked, everybody talked about my brothers. My brothers were like the golden boys. I was like, I am not going to be like that. I'm going to beat you guys. My first brother didn't go to college. Second brother went to college in Hawai'i, third brother went to college for one year and went here, WSU. I decided I'm going to be the first one to go straight to college, away. So, I did that. I'm going to do this. Yea, it's pride. I know I am so hard-headed.

Participants also acknowledged the hardship of seeing former friends doing the same activities when they left to go to college. Bennett shared examples of friends who never left Hawai'i.

Everyone's going out to the bar again. They do the same thing, nothing's changed. It's sad. And, you don't want to talk down to them because they are your friends. These are the people who actually helped you. Kind of like you put them up here (raises hand to the ceiling) and you don't want to see them at the level below (lowers hand in the air to chest level) it's just sad.

Bennett expresses sorrow as she sees her friends doing similar activities, having the same conversations when she came back home. The focus group described going back home as time, but as a time that stood still, realizing nothing had changed.

A Return to Social Constructivism

When participants came together during both the focus group and interviews, they were “ultimately grounded in conversations among members of knowledge communities” (Warmoth, 2000, para. 6). This is vital because participants had stories to tell and they wanted to tell their story. The stories were substantiated by giving them meaning in their social context. The stories created knowledge through “subjective experiences and insights” (Kafle, 2011, p. 194). Warmoth (2000) spoke of knowledge from a social constructivist lens that is derived, “from a knowledge community of people who agree about the truth” (para. 5). The participants became a community of people and they all had similar truths: they all had a desire to attend and complete their degree at WSU. They also had a desire to obtain a degree for their families. Margaux stated, “It also goes back to your family. You want to do it for them [earn a bachelor’s degree], you know. You are doing for yourself, your future life.” Bennett confirmed this statement and added, “You don’t want to disappoint.” A social constructivist epistemology was demonstrated throughout this study because it identified the shared commonality with participants in this group.

Social Constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructs knowledge that is influenced by the group and its environment. This has been at the annual lū‘au that takes place at WSU. During a Hawaiian lū‘au, hula takes place which shares stories of knowledge that have been passed down for generations. Chanting is another way worldviews and acquisition of knowledge is learned. Chanting passes down the history of its people. The knowledge of Hawaiian history and culture is continued by the social lū‘au. The WSU lū‘au is one of

the ways Hawaiian culture is fostered and emphasizes the hold their culture has and helps to shape cultural knowledge. The hold the culture has on them, as Crotty (1998) states about social constructivism, is seen through the items that are shipped from the islands of Hawai'i to bring participants back "home" for a moment in time. This is a time when the participants experience both the dominant environment at WSU and adding to their experience a taste of home. This invokes a dual feeling, one for the love of their homeland and the other about finding "place" as they begin to feel they are able to successfully navigate WSU.

Chapter Summary

In this section, I explored emergent themes relevant to the primary research questions for this study. I synthesized how Eugene, Bennett, Carrol, and Margaux lived experiences at a PW mainland institution are vital in creating infrastructure that contributes to their retention, persistence, and graduation from college. I provided examples, rich in description, from the participants in this study and expound on the emergent themes to further illuminate their truths to address the needs of Hawaiian students. Lastly, I returned to social constructivism and showed how the participants gained knowledge from each other through their stories that were shared.

It certainly was a time when everyone came together. No one knew how this would end and many circles were open. We have times when the familiarly brought us back to home and those moments were greatly appreciated, honored, and inspiring. Being together gave us a stronger sense of motivation and courage to navigate WSU.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For Native Hawaiians and Indigenous communities, storytelling is traced back to early times. Lambert (2014) shared, “We would not survive without stories. Stories can tell us how to relate in a community or be part of a community” (p. 30). Passing stories from generation to generation is one way knowledge is shared amongst Indigenous communities (S. Wilson, 2008). Stories are a way of perpetuating the culture. As a director of APS, I became aware that responsibility for recruiting students from Hawai’i was shifted from APS to WSU’s Admissions office: to people I do not believe have taken the time to learn or listen to students’ stories. Hearing the stories of Carrol, Margaux, Bennett, and Eugene is an important step in facilitating change.

This chapter is organized into five sections. In the first section, I discuss the emergent themes that were identified in Chapter Four. In the second section, I return to the importance of stories and explain how participant’s stories helped them navigate WSU. In the third section, I return to the research questions and consider each in the context of my data analysis. Next, implications for student affairs practitioners and campus administrators are explored. Finally, recommendations and considerations for future research are discussed.

Emergent Themes

Five themes were identified in this research: (a) *Contextualizing Cultural Differences* that explores both race and family traditions, (b) *Sacredness of Land* shares the relationship between land and humans and demonstrates how knowledge is learned, (c) *The Aloha Spirit* explores a living force that is shared and understood by all participants, (d) *Relationships* explored the interconnectedness of family and Indigenous cultures, thus, provided the foundation of student success, and (e) *Leaving the Mainland Without a College Degree* described the greatest fears of participants of returning home without accomplishing this goal. The first and fourth themes are divided into additional subcategories to offer further depth in exploring the theme.

Contextualizing Cultural Differences

Participants spoke about the pressures they felt to speak on and be an ally for all social justice causes on the mainland. Bennett asked the group, “do you guys feel pressured to do social movement stuff? I know as a minority I feel pressured to.” Hearing Bennett ask this question resonated with all the participants. Eugene felt so strongly about it that she stated, “You always have to have a strong opinion. You gotta be involved; you gotta say something.” Listening to both Bennett and Eugene, I found myself thinking about the 1943 “We Can Do It!” print that was used to promote a strong female war production worker. The poster implied being strong also meant having a pro-war belief. The poster stands for everything that is against the traditional practices of Hawaiian cultures. Each of the participants described unknown “rules” for working within the dominant culture as ‘how to operate within a dominant system.’ My mind quickly raced to the devastating history of colonization that occurred for Native Hawaiians as well as

the Native American boarding school genocide. During these time periods, families were forced to send their children to government and church-operated schools. They were forbidden to speak their Native languages and were assimilated to accept the values and belief systems of White men. This horrific period stripped the growth of Native cultures and destroyed foundations of livelihood. Listening to the experiences from Bennett, feeling uncomfortable about speaking their native language in public and their community spaces, experiences of microaggressions on the WSU campus, and feeling “othered” on the mainland stroke a chord within my soul. I continue to see parallel histories of Native American boarding schools as each of the participants shared stories that had similar undertones.

All participants experienced profound feelings of “othering” soon after arriving at WSU, which developed into them seeing themselves as having a minority status. This was confusing to them because it was unexpected having come from a culture in which ‘minorities’ are the majority and it did not appear anyone discussed this possibility during the recruitment process. The “othering” participants experienced was also quite painful because it manifested itself in so many places on campus. In the classrooms, faculty members did not go out of their way to make everyone feel included to participate in their class. Othering also occurred in the residence halls where participants sensed they could not speak their native language. I believe participants have come to accept themselves as minorities after arriving at WSU and began to navigate support services from this lens. Instead of engaging in their academics as confident, successful students, who have made substantial investments in their undergraduate education, participants reminded themselves they were earning a degree from the mainland. Earning a degree from a

mainland institution participants felt they had a higher status and were more likely to be hired.

For Hawaiian students, the possibility of driving home over the weekend to visit with parents, siblings, or high school friends is limited. WSU does not have a critically large group of Hawaiian students to create a community, in which the challenges of the new cultural context can be voiced, heard, and processed. Similarly, few spaces exist on WSU's campus in understanding the socio, political, and historical needs of Hawaiian students. Margaux, Bennett, Eugene, and Carrol felt this lack of understanding as they learned to navigate WSU. This means having few opportunities to process the "othered" identity. All participants used many stories to talk about this sadness and some accepted it, as evidenced by Bennett's above quote when she stated, "I know as a minority." This makes me think of how little knowledge is known for this group of students as they navigate WSU.

It should be noted that I did not ask about experiences with racism in the process of data collection. This was intentional as I sought to keep discussions focused on positive experiences. However, participants raised the topic while explaining how they navigated WSU.

Sacredness of Land

The sacredness of land represents a strong interconnectedness to place; Carrol states, "We have this connection to where we are from." The land is a link to Indigenous communities. S. Wilson (2008) explains this further, as "the belief that we as Indigenous people have a literally "grounded" sense of identity" (p. 88). The land provides an identity that participants bring with them to WSU. Margaux's story of the mountain and

the sacred plant that delivered vital nutrients through the streams, to the fish, to the Indigenous communities, is an example of the identity she brings to WSU. The story of a sacred mountain is her story in connecting to the land which radiated a strong history, heritage, and belief in herself. Margaux's connections with the land (place) bring strength in knowing who she is and uses this knowledge navigating WSU. Margaux's positive affirmation is, "grounded" by her identity to "the land" and has learned to use this as a tool in attending college.

The strong identity highlighted Carrol's connection to the land. Her strength and love for the land were demonstrated as she called out, "Aloha āina" "Mahlo āina" and stated, "without the land, we would have nothing." Similar to Margaux, her connection to the land (place) allows Margaux to rely on core values that are instrumental in giving her strength and confidence, sustaining her ability to live away from home.

The land also represents creation. Participants expressed that all things come from the land, including themselves. In essence, the land is their DNA and how Indigenous communities are made. When Margaux states, "everything I know is based off the island itself" she is acknowledging the land, how it sustains here and how she sustains the land. Margaux's spiritual connection with the land allows her to think and understand knowledge differently than dominant culture. The shaping of Margaux's knowing contributes to dialogues across the WSU campus. I sense Margaux relies on her knowledge to figure out mainland life. I also suspect this is true for other participants in this study. For example, Bennett relies on self-determination to navigate WSU and other life choices. She returns to "place," her home to regain her connection back to the water, her relationship with the ocean.

The relationship to the land brings healing, both physically and emotionally. Walker (2013) reminded us of the importance of human connections from the shared experiences through the mind, body, spirit, and the natural world. Bennett exclaims, “I love going to the beach. I love surfing. I love sitting in the sand and just hanging out. Um, I always say this, like beach therapy, you know, like saltwater is the best cure for anything. . . . No matter what kind of scars or hurt, hurting you have. Saltwater is always the best kind of therapy.” In Bennett’s connection to the ocean, she has found a way to address her whole self: body, mind, spirit, and the natural world. Perhaps Bennett’s relationship to the land is independence. Bennett is also sharing that she has found a way to address her entire being: the physical, mental, and spiritual. Through her mind, she can connect back to place. Her connection to place can be established on the mainland. This was seen as Bennett was describing her relationship with the ocean and the energy that she radiated through her senses. She can transport her connection from the ocean while she is at WSU. Bennett’s interdependence relationship she has with the oceans reminds me of how she navigates WSU.

It was my sense Bennett, Eugene, Margaux, and Carrol’s connection to the mainland or WSU. may not be as defined or established as their connection to the sacredness of the land. Each of them will always carry the knowledge and the wisdom of their ancestors. The focus groups and interviews fostered the shared experiences of the sacredness of the land through their reminiscent values, giving perseverance and tenacity to navigate WSU. The focus group space may have become a ‘place.’ This discovery was made through the focus group and interview process. The dynamic of the group may have established ‘a place’ on the WSU campus.

S. Wilson (2008) described Indigenous relationships to land as, “spiritual, emotional and physical relationship to that land. It speaks to them; it gives them their responsibility for stewardship” (p. 88). Bennett’s stewardship is attending WSU and graduating. She will continue her stewardship through one of the highest honors, defending her land, as she sets sail to serve in the navy. Bennett’s role modeling of responsibility helps to shape other Indigenous student’s knowledge in ways that are reciprocal in giving back to her community.

The Aloha Spirit

The Aloha Spirit is what Indigenous Theory speaks to. The Aloha Spirit connects to knowledge that is the old and new (Meyer, 2017). Meaning, aloha-ness reminds us of the importance of going back to our cultural roots and into our ancient spaces. Similar to Indigenous theory, it highlights knowledge that dominant culture refers to as lost or unknown. Participants referred to The Aloha Spirit as a type of connection that brings people together. Eugene expressed it as, “You don’t even know anyone, but hey, you tell them ‘hi’ anyway . . . it’s a simple thing to say ‘hi’ to a stranger, it’s automatically respecting everybody.” The Aloha Spirit brings us back to the basics of “love of the land,” and “care of the ocean,” and the love for each other (Meyer).

The Aloha Spirit is the practice of loving. Eugene explains, “Aloha means not just “hello” or “goodbye” it also means I love you.” The essence of Aloha spirit was demonstrated many times throughout the data collection. Participants shared stories from a place of love and unconditional regard. Bennett demonstrates this through her reflection from a microaggression experience and stated, “at the end of it, I don’t blame them because no one really knows about Hawai’i.” Bennett displayed an understanding of

giving everyone the “benefit of the doubt.” Participants reminded me the importance of operating on a “higher frequency” as I asked about all the laughter as participants described stories of pain. It was a conscious choice as I witnessed participants rise above the critical spaces of the “isms” and put forth positive energy into other stories that demonstrated love and connections to each other. It may not be shared in their daily lives but the Aloha Spirit is captured throughout participants, and other students from Hawai’i, who are able to spend time with each other. The Aloha Spirit is shared as Hawaiian students greet each other between classes or walking around campus.

Relationships

Participants described their relationships to the family as they reflected about the interconnected ties that exist within their communities. Using the word “family” in Hawaiian cultures emphasizes a shared connection. Everyone is an ‘auntie, an ‘uncle,’ or a ‘cousin,’ everyone is connected. Eugene explained, “Back home, everybody is family, you may not know the person but you gotta call that person uncle.” Eugene’s example emphasizes the importance that is placed on relationships. Family relationships extend beyond the nuclear family. Eugene is demonstrating how everyone has a place in the community. When Eugene refers to “everyone is family,” she is also illustrating how relationships are crucial to their culture. Without the relationships, you do not have anything. Calling-in family members also honor and shows respect to her family. Eugene’s quote makes me think about the importance of relationships in Indigenous communities and demonstrates how family relationships are the fabric of Native Hawaiian culture.

S. Wilson (2008) describes relationships as a cornerstone of Indigenous Theory. Relationships are also about respect to others, showing respect to elders, and always showing respect to ancestors, who continue to guide the spirit world. Relationships give guidelines on how to act and be part of a community (Lambert, 2014). Participants spoke about relationships on the mainland as being dichotomous. This was reflected in Bennett's statement, "The family dynamics here are different, there's a sense of disconnect here between them and us." Bennett senses a lack of connection between Native Hawaiian relationships and dominant culture relationships. Margaux states, "[We are] expected to know your genealogy, first cousin, second cousin. Because that's your family and you come here, and people ask you, 'what's a first cousin?' Are you serious? Our families are oceans apart, but we know each other." Margaux is feeling frustrated and references she knows more about dominant culture families, how we act, how we communicate, and how we interact with each other. Yet, we do not know how her relationships are formed

Margaux continues.

As for back home, we were brought together because needed a better life, we needed to provide for our family. That's how the island was based off of. So, we all accept that, "hey, we are all family." We are all going to take care of each other. If I saw that your son is crossing the street with a girl, I'm going to tell your mom and I don't even know who you are. We all take care of care of each other. That's who we are.

Margaux explained the depth of Hawaiian relationships. It's a caring for yourself and your family. It is also a caring for your neighbor and your neighbor's neighbor.

Indigenous relationships are called to take care of each other. This type of relationship was also seen with Eugene as she takes care of her mainland family colleagues and current Hawaiian students will be the mentors of future incoming Hawaiian students. As

the director of APS, it is important that our programs have mentoring and leadership components that honor and acknowledge students to Westernized systems. Additionally, campus senior leaders must be aware of the Indigenous relationships, and the cultural value of senior Native Hawaiian students in taking ownership of their keiki students. Knowledge of this vital information and the cultural shaping that Native Hawaiians give to one another, senior campus leaders can provide additional resources that build systemic support structures to ensure maximum student success.

Leaving the Mainland Without a College Degree

My participants are terrified of the prospect of having to return home and leaving WSU without a degree. An observation I made was regarding the feeling of shame. The subject of going back home without a college degree created an atmosphere of severe discomfort and uneasiness. Eugene acknowledged, “a lot of people don’t come back [to WSU].” demonstrating a fear of unsuccessful completion of a college degree. Eugene continued, “I don’t want to be a disgrace. I’d get shunned. You would just be talk of the town.” Eugene was describing stories of friends, which she heard from others in her community, who came back and did not completing their degree. This list was quite expansive, as other participants chimed in about their stories of friends who came back without completing their degree.

Throughout this conversation, I also heard an underlying theme of failure. Failure of not earning a college degree. This weighs on students and for Margaux, Bennett, Carrol, and Eugene, who overwhelmingly indicated they would do “whatever it takes,” to bring home a college degree I could feel the confliction in the tones of their voices. I sensed the conflict represented the homesickness of being away from family members.

As previously illustrated in Chapter Four, Carrol and Bennett did not always have a chance to visit home. Attending a school that is over 3000 miles away from your home brings up many emotions and feelings. Focusing on studies while being homesick is part of the routine Hawaiians have endured. In Chapter Four, Carrol mentioned the giant battle of homesickness. For Carrol, the homesickness does not go away.

Another reason why my participants are terrified of going home without a college degree has to do with failure. Failure to complete an objective that very few people are given an opportunity to do: Pursue a college degree on the mainland. There is another sense of failure, failure to family and community members who send hope, resources, and in some cases, their dreams while their child pursues an education on the mainland. It is a hope for life that will allow for more resources.

The fear is persistent and perhaps requires one to accept the unsupportive WSU environment as a cost of earning their degree. Meaning, due to the strong support and desire students are receiving from their parents and extended family members; trudging through a difficult campus environment while pursuing a college degree is worth the “cost” of an education.

There is a sense of pride a student brings with them in pursuit of their college degree. Earning a college degree on the mainland is a status symbol in some parts of Hawai’i. Participants described leaving the mainland without a college degree as a worrisome fear that that never leaves.

Importance of Stories

Participants in this research study used stories to tell their experiences of navigating WSU. Stories connect us to the past and document important histories, “For

months our Queen and her people wrote songs and stories. Hidden in Hawaiian, to converse without the Overthrowing Provisional Government knowing. It is because of this we know our history.” (McDougall, 2016, p. 21). Stories are important to Hawaiian and other Indigenous cultures because it is a way to pass on cultural practices, values, and traditions (Mokuau, Browne, Ka’opua, Higuchi, Sweet, & Braun, 2015). Participants shared stories amongst themselves and were reminded of their roots that retained valuable information. The historical information that lives within the stories also evoked participants to tell their stories in navigating WSU.

The focus groups served as a way for participants to come together and share their stories. Merriam (2009) states that stories are “how we make sense of our experiences, and how we communicate with others, and through which we understand the world around us” (p. 32). During the times of sharing their story, I saw how their stories become a pivotal tool in navigating WSU. The focus groups provided a sanctuary space for healing from the hardships of WSU’s dominant culture. I return to Eugene’s and Margaux classroom experience. The moments when these incidences happened; Eugene being called out during a test and Margaux’s first-year seminar class classmate, stating that “nobody eats raw fish,” they did not know how to act or respond without causing additional attention to themselves. This did not now allow them the opportunity to unpack their experiences of microaggressions. Although participants did not directly state “space of healing,” I sensed it was felt as an underlying current throughout the data collection process. After hearing both Eugene and Margaux’s stories, participants were shocked and gasped for air. The once hearty rumbles of laughter became silent and somber as participants stared at each in disbelief while becoming more active in the

listening. During these times, I saw participants leaning in and asked each other lots of questions. The focus group and interview spaces provided a way for participants to support and understand each other. Slowly the laughter started again; this was their way of navigating WSU.

Carrol's story of consoling mainland students for being homesick demonstrates her strong empathy she has for her residents. Her story also reveals how homesickness is a daily battle for her. Carrol's residents felt bad when they were speaking about missing their mainland home, forgetting she had not been home for over a year. Carrol knows the toll of homesickness and felt, "just because I have not been home does not mean you should miss your family any less." This is an example of shared empathy. Carrol shared her experience with the group. As other members related to Carrol's experience, they all understood because Carrol was describing their experiences of missing home. Carrol's story did not take the homesickness away; it did provide a connection to one another, who were missing home. A connection of shared understanding in what others were experiencing. Thus, making homesickness more bearable. Carrol's story made navigating WSU a little easier.

Hawaiian Indigenous systems are based on the Native ancestral experience. Storytelling is a shared interconnection with ancestors. Carrol states, "You carry them, [Ancestors] with you." The ancestral stories relate the past and the future. In chapter four, Carrol recalled her story about the giant gecko and placing a ti leaf out on the water. "If the ti leaf sinks, then don't go in. If it floats, then you can swim there." The story Carrol shares has been passed down for many generations and is respected in Carrol's community. Carrol also shared that some dominant culture tourists do not respect this

story, causing death or folks getting hurt. Participants shared other ancestral stories that were also passed down. The stories are more than just stories, “They are, in essence, who we were, who we are, and who we are meant to be” (McDougall, 2016, p. 5). KanakaCrit outlines, “As Native Hawaiians learn to tell their mo’olelo (i.e., histories or stories), they contribute to their survivance (i.e., national survival and resistance). This includes participants survivance at WSU. “Indigenous stories are a reclamation of Indigenous voice, Indigenous land, and Indigenous sovereignty” (Sium & Ritskes, 2013, p. VIII). Stories provide a foundation and a vital connection to their Native Hawaiian culture, shaping their experience at WSU.

Answering Research Questions

Research studies are driven by research questions. While the purpose of this research study was to describe the experiences of Native Hawaiian students as they navigated a four-year PW mainland institution, my two primary research questions and two research sub-questions were:

- Q1 How do Native Hawaiian students experience West State University?
- Q1a How do Native Hawaiian college students experience support systems at a Predominantly White mainland institution?
- Q1b What are the experiences that contribute to the persistence of Native Hawaiian students at a Predominantly White mainland institution?
- Q2 How does Indigenous storytelling support and shape participants’ understanding of their experience at West State University?

Research Question 1

- Q1 How do Native Hawaiian students experience WSU?

As participants shared experiences of WSU, they learned and appreciated their interconnectedness among each other. Sharing their stories included an environment of

teaching and engaging each other as they found solutions, words of comfort, and encouragement to continue through the process of navigating WSU.

I have chosen to focus on participant stories. Through the participant stories, I have chosen five topics that best reflect a part of the emergent themes. The topics I have chosen are: (a) Relationship to the Land, (b) Transition to WSU, (c) Microaggressions, (d) Cultural Dissonance, and (e) Continued Decolonizing of Westernized Education.

Relationship to the land. Connection to the land gives Native Hawaiians and other Indigenous cultures their identity and a sense of belonging. I mention the relationship to the land and once again highlight the stories participants shared during this study. The relationship to the land runs deep with participants; it becomes almost impossible to speak to the participants without speaking about the land and vice versa. The stories speak to the experiences participants have at WSU. Carol adamantly stated that, “without the land, you have nothing!” Carol is referring to herself. If she does not have the land, she would have nothing to fall back on. The relationship she has with her land gives her the strength she needs in order to survive. In other words, the relationship with the land provides her the firm foundational support for her journey at WSU. She leans on this relationship and knows her land supports her while she is away, studying to earn her bachelor’s degree. In some sense, it is a spiritual connection that she has with the land. The land calls to her and serves as a reminder of the importance of her journey when she is missing home. This is a similar connection each of the participants shared when they spoke about the land. Margaux’s connection with the land is equally strong as she spoke about the sadness of her generation relying on technology to remind her of essential components when working with the land. She was experiencing westernization

happening right before her eyes and feeling “ashamed” that the impact of colonization was still apparent in her community. Margaux is describing the connection with her land but she is also telling us, first hand, the impact of colonization has when we do not take care of the land. We forget how to nurture and sustain the land, this puts Indigenous communities out of balance. Margaux has experienced being “unbalanced” when she sat out of school for a semester. She needed to connect back to place, her land before she could center herself back to school and pursue her degree at WSU.

As the APS director, I wonder how the connections with the land affect other students, as some connections are more visible than others. I am still learning and do not fully understand the impact for all students and why it seems to take a little bit longer for some to find balance. For other students, they can find the balance of maintaining the connection with the land and navigating WSU, easier. Perhaps the connections to the land are deeper in others, and this affects Hawaiian students differently? What I have learned, is that the relationship to the land runs deep and each relationship to the land, to the ocean is unique with each of the participants in this study.

Microaggressions. All participants experienced microaggressions. And, all participants experienced microaggressions in WSU classrooms. My participants shared stories about WSU faculty and staff who are unaware of their oppressive actions that impact Indigenous populations and other communities of color. The feeling of being “othered” or as participants described it as “developing minority status” are exhibited through the below stories. In many ways, this section was the hardest for me to write. My own experience with dominant culture and bias has a strong influence on what I hear and see from the participants of this study. It is evident my participants’ experienced feeling

“othered.” This study was not about the racism participants endured, it was about their overall experiences in how they navigated WSU, and some of their experiences could lend itself to systemic racism. However, these experiences of feeling “othered” and perhaps racist undertones does not fully describe their experiences. And, this goes without saying, but I will mention it, did not define them. I also reflect on this section of what my participants of this study would want WSU to know. Ultimately, I sense they would want all of their stories told; this includes their laughter they used as a tool to navigate WSU. This included the strength of their relationships to the land, to each other, and to other instrumental West State University staff and faculty who stood beside them in affirming their cultural beliefs. This also includes their stories of microaggressions and how they have learned to navigate or find alternative paths on pursuing a degree at WSU. I share their stories.

Roommate experiences. All participants shared roommate experiences. The experiences reflected lack of knowledge regarding Native Hawaiians, culture shock, and in some cases microaggressions. I share Carrol’s experience as she recalls meeting her roommate for the first time.

I did not like my roommate. She was so different. They always say just get yourself used to the culture shock, it was a shock. She was from Arizona. Arizona is one of the most racist states. When I walked in [to the residence hall room] her and her dad was there and she wasn’t planning on moving in early. I should say, I walked in and she was there. I talked to her and it was like nothing. Um, I found out a month later that she was moving out and the way I found out was that all her stuff was gone but her fridge. I was like, I’m cool with that. I had her fridge until March. She said I could have it if I paid her like \$65. Like, no.

Carrol expressed not liking her roommate because “she was so different.” Carrol did not openly and directly say that her roommate had a bias towards her, I believe she felt it.

Carrol’s roommate was uninterested in getting to know Carrol. This was demonstrated by

her comment of, “I talked her, and it was like nothing.” The “nothing” Carrol is referring to represents the disinterest in Carrol, or the very least, the willingness to build a roommate friendship, to make a living with someone more amicable. Carrol’s roommate did not communicate with Carrol about her intentions of moving out. Instead, she communicated her dislike towards Carrol by letting Carrol come home to a half-empty room. I also sensed Carrol’s roommate did not want to go back to the room after she moved out by offering Carrol to keep the refrigerator for sixty-five dollars. Carrol has moved on and did not regularly see this person on campus anymore.

Classroom experiences. Earlier, I shared the story of Bennett as she navigated a classroom experience where the faculty member accused her of having her phone during an exam when it was the White student next to her that had their phone on. After this incident, I sensed that Bennett felt trapped and she was forced to find another way of communicating with her instructor.

The residual effect of this experience still lingered for Eugene. These non-verbal actions gave the impression that she did not belong in this classroom and placed her on “unequal footing” (Nishi, Matias, Montoya, & Sarcedo, Matias, Montoya, & Nishi, 2016, p. 12) with other classmates. Eugene observed that “she talks nice to White kids, I come down and it’s very sassy.” Eugene was no longer afforded the access to her instructor, because the teacher conveyed to her, through her non-verbal’s, of not wanting Eugene in her classroom. This is a way of denying educational accessibility to Indigenous students and other students of color. This affects their ability to graduate. Eugene is not taking other classes from this instructor and since this experience is vocal in letting her colleagues know to stay away from her classes.

Earlier, I described the incident of Margaux and her classmates about swimming with a dolphin and eating raw fish. In the group discussion, this was quite upsetting to Margaux, and she wondered how such a stereotypical belief could become so powerful that a lie, created by their society, forced her to laugh at her classmates because she knew they were wrong. Margaux's residual effect was angry because her identity was used against her because her classmates would not give her the credit that she had the correct knowledge and would not acknowledge that they did not. This demonstrates the usual thinking of privilege in the dominant culture.

Cultural Dissonance

As I emerged myself in the data, I reflected on how much Cultural Dissonance appeared in their stories. Museus (2014b) defines this term as, "tensions that students might experience as consequences of the incongruences that exists between students' cultural meaning-making systems, which reflect of the cultures from which they come, and the new cultural information that they encounter in their college environment (p. 196). Through their stories, participants shared how WSU reflected values and belief systems of dominant culture. In chapter four, Margaux described an experience of eating in the buffet style dining hall. Margaux was dismayed to see her friend take extra helpings of food and simply throw it away. Margaux communicated that wasting food was "an extreme" for her. The feeling of extreme could also be communicated that she was feeling cultural dissonance, contributing to increased levels of cultural stress and potentially, over time, disengagement of dominant culture activities (Museus, 2008).

Cultural dissonance is seen with all the participants in this study. Bennett's encounter with her soccer team as her teammates were deciphering Bennett's native

language was a dialect. Carrol's reluctance to speak her native language in front of non-Hawaiians because she has learned people "think" she is talking about them. Eugene experiences cultural dissonance as she felt "othered" in her classroom story of her professor signaling her out during the day of a test. The participant stories remind me of my own cultural dissonance experiences while attending college. Throughout my college years, I experienced faculty, staff, and students explaining to me; they did not see "color." At the time, I did not have the words to articulate the silent alarm that was raging through my body. I only knew I felt rage. It was not until I pursued my master's degree that I learned the ill effects of treating everybody the same. In a sense, I wanted to be treated the same because it meant I was like my colleagues. I learned how to fit in and could go with the "flow." It also meant I had acquired the status of fitting in and harmonizing with the dominant culture. Thus, denying my true authentic self in the beautiful difference, I bring to society. My lens, my paradigms, and my knowledge systems. Over time, I learned how to decolonize my brain. It was through conversations with colleagues that started the process of relearning for my spirit and soul to fly. Cultural dissonance can potentially have a profound and negative effect on academic achievement and the overall development of students. This is important in my role as the Asian Pacific Services director. These discussions are needed and vital to WSU campus as more students share similar spaces.

Continued Decolonizing of Western Education

Benham (2006) discussed the stress of Westernized education and its continued impression, hindering, Native Hawaiians in completing their education.

For many native and indigenous peoples, the place of school is contested terrain; it is a place of conflict, struggle, and negotiation over content, values, instructional strategies, measures of accountability, and so on. Over time, the powerful influence of a dominant culture that values domination, hierarchical structures, competition, materialism and capital accumulation, and the individual over the community-values that have been reproduced in our school organization- had led to complex tensions that have served historically to marginalize native and indigenous communities. (p. 36)

West State University is situated in dominant culture. Decolonizing education requires a commitment to undoing the injustices colonized communities have endured. Creating spaces that honors and validates Indigenous ways of knowing (Lambert, 2014). It is important for WSU to become equipped with this type of support and practice to better meet the needs of Native Hawaiian, Hawaiian, Pacific Islanders, and other Indigenous students.

Findings of Research Questions

Q1a How do Native Hawaiian college students experience support systems at a Predominantly White mainland institution?

Supports systems are instrumental in pursuing a college degree. Research shows family support is a high factor that leads to higher persistence and college graduation rates (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Hawaiian students saw connections to family result in higher persistence.

Participants spoke about the relationships they had on the WSU campus. These connections were pivotal to their support systems as they navigated WSU. Relationships to each other, supervisors, support from family members, teammates, were all different ways participants felt supported in pursuing their education.

Carrol conveyed her support systems are considered in places of her work. Intentionally, she has sought out places to make her WSU experience less isolating and

lonely. Her connections with her boss, her hānai mom, an athletic baseball coach, and the support she receives from her diversity mentor position have been significant influences for Carrol in pursuing her education. Similar to other participant stories I heard, Carrol felt validated and affirmed. She counted on these relationships as if were a safety net for her. If she falls, Carrol knew someone would reach out to her and throw her a lifeline to bring her back in. Carrol also knew when her homesickness kicks in, or she needed a space to rejuvenate from the dominant culture, she used the supportive relationships she built.

I used Carrol as an example to highlight the complexities participants in this study have endured in cultivating relationships for support systems. Bennett articulated her teammates once served as a support system. Currently, it is her supervisor at her new job, a local burger restaurant. Eugene is so busy taking care of everyone and uses her mainland family relationships as part of her support system. She is also strongly connected to her homeland family, and I suspect they play a vital role. Like Eugene, Margaux is connected with her Hawaiian mainland family. She calls on her mainland family for support, and at times, this includes the solid foundation she has with Eugene.

Asian Pacific Services was mentioned in places where they felt support. However, APS was not always the first place to be mentioned. This could be attributed because APS is already seen as a place of support. Bennett makes me think this because of her comment she made when I asked about her support systems, “I feel I can be my authentic self here at APS.” The way Bennett quickly talked about Asian Pacific Services and quickly moved on to the next topic seemed like it was already known. However, Bennett

used to be a staff member for APS, and she has experienced the support that exists within the culture center.

I also heard Carrol speak to APS, as space, she can be her authentic self. Carrol offered her reflection on the first focus group and discussed her comfort level as she transitioned from using English to one of her native languages.

So, it's really hard to transition from proper English to Pidgin [but] when we were in the APS house, with you, it was easy. I felt for me it was because I was surrounded by people who were comfortable with it and it was in the house specific for Native people and because of how accepting you are. Whereas back at my [residence hall] even my staff members give me weird looks.

Carrol described how the APS house provides her comfort. Carrol felt comfortable, as did the other participants, in speaking her language. I also heard the “freedom” to speak her language is limiting. As the APS director, this made my heart sad to think of students not having comfortable spaces to speak their language or places to authentically be their selves.

For this group of students, the participants in my study, I sensed Asian Pacific Services offered a place of support. However, I am reminded that all participants in this study had a connection to APS before this research study. This makes me wonder about other students, who share similar racial backgrounds, and are not connected to APS. Perhaps more needs to be done in reaching out to potential students and bringing communities together in providing a space for dialogue. I sense APS needs to continue their forward momentum by re-engineering and customizing spaces that promote increased conversations around Native Hawaiian and Indigenous cultures.

The support experienced at HSC represent many stories. In previous conversations with some of the participants, Hawai'i Student Club was their foundation

and “go-to” place to be rejuvenated from the dominant culture environment of WSU. As the director of APS, I have seen how connections to Hawai’i student club serve as space of support.

I have also heard other stories that do not speak highly of HSC. During the first focus group, Bennett acknowledged this, “I don’t know, I think it’s kinda my fault. I never reached out to anybody from HSC because I heard a lot of things about HSC that I didn’t like so I never reached out to them.” Later, Bennett quickly shared how her older brother was part of Lū‘au and felt he was not treated very well. These could be some of the things that Bennett heard that she didn’t like about HSC. Both Bennett and Carrol, in previous and separate conversations, discussed the lack of values and implied how The Aloha Spirit was not felt at Hawai’ Student Club. Although Bennett was never fully involved with HSC during her time at West State University,, this was her perspective.

Throughout the data collection process, I also heard self-determination and “figuring it out” as ways of support. All of the participants spoke about contacting family members last. In many cases, participants resorted to calling family members last because they didn’t want to add additional stress to their families. Or, they didn’t want their family members to worry about them. I also sensed reaching out to family members, to explain the situation or give context to a problem, is time prohibitive. For many of the participants, coming to the mainland was a new experience for them. They are the first to leave Hawai’i. Providing reference points to something that is unknown is challenging and takes time. Both of the points I mentioned could be reasons why students are talking to their family or members of their family last.

What was interesting to see is the lack of connection to an office that is deemed as a supportive environment or workplace, like an academic advising center. As a student affairs practitioner, I was curious to see the different relationships that were in the office(s) that I could use as a guide. Instead, I found the connections students are making to each other and in some cases, staff, are the most salient items in contributing to support systems. I sense their cultural upbringing influences the connection to each other.

Q2 What are the experiences that contribute to the persistence of Native Hawaiian students at a Predominantly White mainland institution?

Relationships. All four participants spoke about the importance of having relationships and connecting back to place. The relationships and connections looked differently for each of the participants. Through Carrol's different jobs on campus, she developed relationships with her athletic boss and an athletic baseball coach. Carrol's relationship with her hānai mom, her mom on the mainland, demonstrates the depth of her relationships. For Bennett, the relationship she has with her teammates. In Eugene's case, it is her strong relationship with her Hawaiian mainland family and first-year Hawaiian students. For Margaux, it is her strong connection Hawaii Student Club and more specifically, to hula and passing on the stories to students at WSU as she serves as the coordinator for hula club. Relationships that are established in campus communities contribute to higher sense of belonging. A high sense of involvement was also found to be significant in factors that retain a Hawaiian student (Oliveira, 2005).

Also, all four participants had a type of direct family connective relationship. This is an important piece to look at because it highlights the influence of family and suggests a needed connection in serving Hawaiian students. Perhaps the family relationships are seen here because it brings cultural reference and validation and serves as a reminder

when parents, family, and community members are actively engaged in the educational systems, students achieve greater success (Mokuau, 1990).

Ancestors. It was seen the role of ancestors strengthen student's ability to navigate West State University. The connections with ancestors are a reminder of "who we are," and "where we come from." The knowledge of the ancestors provided participants of this study, a strong foundation. This is important because it was part of the self-confidence they carried as they entered classroom spaces, interacted with non-Hawaiian colleagues. This was shown through the stories that were passed on. Margaux referenced vital nutrients the passing down of the nutrients to sustain the fish and the people in Hawaiian communities. Eugene shared examples of "knowing" and how she felt called to WSU. A calling suggests a close relationship to ancestors. Their energy serves as a guide through our lives. Her ability to be in-tune or have a deeper connection with place (WSU) is also seen here as she describes her knowing. It is the calling of the interconnectedness that starts to shift the thinking from a Western way of knowing to an Indigenous way of knowing.

Importance of being together. Participants discussed the joy of coming together and it was equally felt through the constant laughter throughout the data collection process. Creating this type of space was also symbolic to participants; reminding them they were brought together by their ancestors.

I also sensed the importance of coming together provided healing. hooks (1990) discusses the importance of finding sanctuary in dominant culture, this includes PW mainland institution's campus culture, and illustrates the need of resistance spaces.

We come to this space through suffering and pain, through struggle. . . . We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world. (p. 153)

I sensed participants needed a place to slow the assimilation and connect with peers who validated their identity and Hawaiian authenticity. Solórzano and Yosso (2000) described being “resilient resistance” as a “process of surviving and/or succeeding through the educational pipeline as a strategic response to visual microaggressions.” (p. 180). The participants continue to stop by APS to let me know how they are doing. Developing this type of sanctuary space will be critical over the next years to come.

Q2 How does Indigenous storytelling shape and support participants’ understanding of their experiences at West State University?

The stories that participants shared were shaped by their ancestors through the use of storytelling. Indigenous storytelling “sustains communities, validates experiences and epistemologies, expresses experiences of Indigenous peoples, and nurtures relationships, and the sharing of knowledge” (Iseke, 2013). I share this quote as a reminder to understand the significance of Indigenous storytelling and how stories are used as a tool to pass down customs, history, and heritage. Lambert (2014) shared, “We would not survive without stories. Stories can tell us how to relate to a community or be part of a community” (p. 30). Indigenous stories also represent Indigenous knowledge that is passed down from ancestors.

Participants come to WSU and carried their stories with them. When participants came together, they came with facts. Facts that were acquired through their experiences of West State University, but they did not know how to synthesize them. As participants shared their stories, collectively they were able to synthesize their knowledge and created

a foundation, which allowed for experiences to be exchanged. Thus, providing a richer knowledge in adapting to WSU. Their foundation is a philosophy that stems from their Indigenous identity. When the student shifts their focal point away from their Indigenous education or homeland, to a Western-centered approach, it is important for students to be together to make relevant connections to what they are being taught and to rely on their roots of identity from the ancestors.

Earlier, I referenced the strength participants endured while sharing their stories. As participants shared their stories, I saw the determination and fight within their stories. This was seen as Bennett pursued her next job opportunity and her story of enrolling in the Navy. Carrol's determination was seen as she engaged with her residents on a daily basis, through her homesickness. Carrol also sought determination to build inner relationships within WSU to support her navigation through school. Margaux's strong relationship to the land is also seen as a determination to keep fighting for her degree. Finally, Eugene relationships to both her mainland and homeland families can be seen as her strength in persevering WSU. Their stories conveyed an inner struggle of navigating WSU, as they participated in the campus community. Their customs, values, and beliefs were challenged. It was seen when participants shared their stories with each other; intelligence was gained, giving them a deeper foundation. The story that Margaux shared about her experience and the buffet style lunch she had with her suitemate is a testament to this challenge. As shared throughout this research study, the philosophies of Indigenous communities reside with being respectful to the land. The land will continue to produce the right amount of food when the relationship to the land is respected and nurtured. Taking food and not consuming it, communicates a disconnect to the land. This

example also shows how Indigenous knowledge cultural beliefs are challenged. The Indigenous stories participants bring with them provided a foundation that supports students to be a WSU student. The Indigenous stories that were shared also conveyed self-worth and pride, by giving connection back to their elders and ancestors who shared this sacred knowledge.

Elements that Shaped the Study

Several elements shaped this study. As mentioned, I am the Director of Asian Pacific Services, and I had a prior mentor/mentee relationships with Carrol, Eugene, Margaux, and Bennett. During the data collection, Bennett was a part of the APS staff. After the data collection, Eugene became a part of the Asian Pacific Services staff and is now the president of Hawai'i Student Club. In my professional work, I am known to be competent and effective in my job. I sense that students, including participants in this study, also viewed me this way. On further reflection, I am struck by the amount of information and stories I received and wonder if I was seen more than a mentor, perhaps an aunt? The previous and outside relationships I had with each of the participants in this study might have contributed to the increased dialogue and openness I felt when collecting data.

I did not plan for my study to only include female participants. Males were invited to participate. While the study is not generalizable, readers should consider the identities of my participants before thinking about how my findings might help explain the experiences of male Hawaiian undergraduates. The implication of having all women for this study may have contributed to the openness of my participants during data collection; perhaps they were more comfortable sharing there because they were

validating and edifying each other. Women are the keepers of the culture. This is demonstrated through each of the four women when they spoke about, “The sacredness of the Land” and “the Aloha Spirit.” Their identity thrives on “The sacredness of the Land” and “The Aloha Spirit.” The cohesion among a homogenous group may result in high productivity and the accomplishment of their storytelling.

Shortly after the data collection process, the results of the campus climate survey were shared with the WSU campus community. The results demonstrated a need to strengthen overall campus climate. Two actions items were recommended for the following year: 1. Enhance Institutional Communication and Transparency, 2: Enhance the inclusiveness, and thereby the effectiveness, of WSU’s workplace and learning environments through professional development and online learning for students, faculty, and staff. Overall, the campus climate showed conditions were unfavorable for minoritized students. Contributing to the stories each of the participants shared in this research.

Implications for Practice

Student Development Theory

As I reflected on my participant’s stories it occurred to me that student affairs does not have a well-developed student development theory that explains the developmental phases or processes our Hawaiian undergraduates experience at PW mainland institutions. . . Seminal student theory models may seem most applicable, but require the individual to actually hold a minority identity, which until they arrived at WSU, was not the case. In Chapter II, I explored SDT models and used student theory to provide a framework for understanding how students experience higher education

institutions (Evans et al., 2010; Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; & Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993) within the fields of student affairs. Student Development Theory is pivotal when addressing student experiences and the overall development of human growth (Evans et al., 2010; Strange, 1994). Student Development Theory characterizes how a student grows, how they increase their awareness because of attending a higher educational institution. Carrol defines her own transition as a process, taking time to figure out whom she is. Carrol stated, “I slowly just developed into myself.” College years are a transition from childhood to adult years. Student Development Theory depicts the way students grow, change, and mature throughout their collegiate experience. As a result of the data collection, participants spoke about the importance of developing relationships in and out of classrooms. This was seen through Bennett and her soccer team, having to wait until her senior year to be recognized for her strong skill set; Margaux and her desire to be connected through her class and suitemates; Eugene and her strong connection with other Hawaiian students; Carrol, the connections she has established with her Hānai mom and other influential athletic staff members.

Historically, higher education was designed to serve as a pipeline for White men to enter leadership roles (Karabel, 2005; Thelin, 2011). Consequently, a significant proportion of research regarding the development of student development was based on the experiences of traditional aged White male college students. As mentioned previously in chapter two, a lack of voice from students of color populations are missing from SDT. Museus (2014b) further draws attention to educators in the student affairs that SDT have been “deracialized and acultural” (p. 11), applying a monolithic approach in

understanding the experiences of minoritized populations. Student Development Theory is not a one-size model that fits all student populations.

However, SDT literature is changing. Increased scholarship that reflects experiences from students of color, including Indigenous populations and other minoritized identities is emerging. As discussed in previous chapters, Kupo's (2010) scholarship adds to the changing SDT literature. Their study examines how Native Hawaiian women construct identities and how intersectionality shapes their identities. Kupo's study also explored how the college experience may have influenced their identity development. While Kupo's work touches on SDT, there is a need to continue to explore further. Dr. Kupo's work does not explain fully how Hawai'ian students have a change in status when attending a PW mainland institution.

Another example, Reyes (2013) highlights the importance of Hawaiians being connected to their culture beliefs and understanding how colonialism has shaped their history. Constructing SDT models requires acknowledgement of history for this influences how students navigate a college setting. Especially, when it comes to Indigenous culture and other students of color.

Recommendations for Theory

As described previously, current SDT models lack applicability for Indigenous groups of people (Freitas et al., 2013). While participants provided specific examples of their experiences at WSU, participants also shared, their experiences were different from mainlanders. Participants did not know how to describe this difference other than referring to their culture and belief systems. If I had, a SDT or model that addressed experiences of Native Hawaiian students it might help with adjusting and navigating a

mainland institution. In addition, a SDT would also inform campus practitioner and campus senior leaders how to systemically address the needs of Hawaiian students. For example, I consider “Aloha Spirit” as an example that is important. Eugene discusses the impact of the Aloha Spirit has on her. The Aloha Spirit is not a simple greeting as dominant culture has led us to believe. Eugene shares her description, “It’s hard to describe in a simple thing. It’s a simple thing to say, ‘hi’ to a stranger. It is just automatically respecting everybody. Aloha means more than just hello or goodbye, it also means I love you.” This is something that is not considered in the current models of SDT. The relationally of ‘Aloha Spirit’ could be a place to start to develop SDT processes for Indigenous groups of people. Consequently, gaps continue to exist in understanding the lived experiences of Indigenous students and how they navigate a PW mainland institution. Brayboy (2005) documents the importance of tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, and traditions in understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples. Tachine, Yellow Bird, and Cabrera (2016) further this conversation by stating, “To support Native students’ sense of belonging, institutions must validate and incorporate Native culture and perspectives within the ingrained Eurocentric cultures of non-Native colleges and universities” (p. 1). Carrol demonstrates the need for her to develop relationships while she attends West State University. The connections that she creates on campus display the needs of her Hawaiian culture to be interwoven into her life. Carrol states:

A lot of people don’t understand when I connect so well with my supervisors (WSU staff). It’s because I’m so family oriented, I don’t have family up here, I have to build that up here. People don’t understand that if I lose these relationships I would probably get really upset and basically cry the rest of the time. So, I don’t think a lot of people understand that. When I talk about the

athletic department, they are just like, 'Yea, you really like them don't you.' It's not just the job, yes, it's a job I go to, but, it's more than that. It's me being able to go to only my bosses and my co-workers (students), but be being able to connect.

Carrol is showing her relational way of being. Connection and developing strong bonds are essential in an Indigenous lifestyle. S. Wilson (2008) stated, "relational way of being [is] the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (p. 80). Carrol's strong connection with her hānai family exhibits the closeness that she feels, bringing her comfort.

This illustrates the need for a SDT model that is engrained with a cultural lens and its application to Native Hawaiian students. Native Hawaiian and other Indigenous students will continue to be impacted and marginalized, at best, if we continue along this trajectory of not fully supporting all students. Incorporating their lived experiences from a student development theory is the start of this conversation to build a more inclusive and holistic foundation to Student Affairs.

The Aloha Spirit

It occurred to me there does not seem to be a critical mass of Hawaiian students keeping the Aloha Spirit as the center of their daily lives. This was painful for my participants to be part of a community that does not value "Aloha." A recommendation for student affairs practitioners would be to create a critical mass on the West State University campus to find meaningful ways to create the Aloha Spirit. This could be done through student development programming and workshops, creating awareness and knowledge around the meaning of The Aloha Spirit, and dedicated intentional practice by senior members of Hawai'i student club and Asian Pacific Services.

Involving HSC members is important to this conversation. With their permission, I would like to take a proactive stance in helping to inform the WSU community about

The Aloha Spirit. Initially, I will start with my own inner group of other cultural and resource director's in my area. Throughout the upcoming academic year, further knowledge will be shared with wider audiences of student affairs practitioners. To attract increased momentum, a social awareness poster campaign will be available.

Asian Pacific Services

Asian Pacific Services will continue to honor “focus group” like spaces for members of the Hawaiian communities to come together and “talking story” as a way to provide healing and helping others navigate WSU. Due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback, given, from Margaux, Eugene, Bennett, and Carrol, it seems the focus group space met a need of finding a space to talk about their experiences at WSU.

Also, the HSC organizes a list of activities that assist with student transition and becoming better acquainted with each other. As the director of APS, I will work with Hawaii Student Club and organize times that work with student schedules for the upcoming fall semester to include intentional dialogue and spaces that allow Hawaiian students to talk about their WSU experiences.

I did not get the sense from Eugene, Margaux, Bennett, or Carrol that they felt connected nor had a sense of place in Colorado. Perhaps introducing students from Hawai'i to the mountains earlier will allow them to develop a sense of place in Colorado. Currently, students from Hawai'i, have an option to take a ski trip during a break in November. A partnership exists between Asian Pacific Services and HSC to make the annual ski trip affordable for everyone. If extenuating circumstances exist, APS will cover the cost of the trip for individual students.

Further, it seems necessary to introduce students earlier while connecting them to place in Colorado, by offering an optional weekend leadership retreat that takes place in the Rocky Mountains. The retreat, scheduled during the first month of the fall semester, would help with a further transition to West State University. The leadership retreat would give students a chance to get to know each other while serving as a reminder of their support systems. This was another important aspect of the focus group, reacquainting themselves with familiar faces with other students from Hawai'i. The leadership retreat would also concentrate on individual strengths in understanding how their strengths contribute to being a productive leader on the WSU campus. Additionally, time would be available to validate and affirm their decision to attend WSU, by concentrating on education and personal goals. Finally, it was apparent that a need existed in developing The Aloha Spirit on the WSU campus. Instilling The Aloha Spirit throughout the leadership conference will be vital. The Hawaiian students participating in this leadership retreat will be asked to reflect on their cultural and belief systems and how they can apply their ways of knowing survivance skills, and self-authorship at WSU. It is anticipated dialogue will include honoring The Aloha Spirit, minority status, and current academic classroom discussions as a way to create space that allows for authentic discussions. The leadership retreat would be sponsored by Asian Pacific Services and HSC, eliminating out of pocket expenses for students.

Implications for Campus Administrators

The participants in this study sought places that allow them to be their most authentic self. This is because, "Having a place to be rejuvenated and to feel anchored in one's cultural community increases the possibility that one will have the energy to

achieve academically as well as participate in the cross-group dialogue” (Tatum, 1997, p. 80). Participants spoke about the few safe spaces that currently exist at WSU and finding safe spaces that are in addition, to the once-a-year Lu’au, occasional intermural games, and other sporadic events, are vital for connectivity to each other and back to “place,” as described in Chapter III. Encouraging cultural community engagement amongst students, faculty, and staff is necessary in the growth and development because it allows for “safe haven” spaces and encourages Native Hawaiian students to form connections with each other and non-Hawaiian colleagues.

Continued Investments in Culture Centers

The investments of culture centers or multicultural centers are another way for students to be connected and build transition between home and college life (Princess, 1994; L. D. Patton, 2010). During the focus groups, participants described a connection to APS. Bennett stated, “Yes, it’s very therapeutic right here (referring to the focus group). Very therapeutic.” Eugene agreed with Bennett and felt Asian Pacific Services was a place that affirmed her and stated, “People who understand you. You don’t have to repeat yourself.” Participants are expressing what it means to be rejuvenated and feel authenticated by developing relationships with other who share similar cultural beliefs. Howard-Hamilton, Hinton, and Hughes (2010) stated, “Culture centers [or Multicultural Centers] have historically been places where ethnic minority groups have found solace and comfort in the opportunity to engage in open and honest dialogue with each other and with members of the dominant culture” (p. 113). Having the focus groups at Asian Pacific services brought balance because participants found their way back to each other. It is my sense this strengthened their connections back to ‘place,’ back to their land.

Separation of Pacific Islander Students and Asian American Students

Currently, Asian Pacific Services houses Asian American and Pacific Islander students. Both groups have distinctive histories and within these groups, more stories exist. As previously illustrated in Chapter Two, national momentum has been made to disaggregate data for Asian and Pacific Islander populations (Museus et al., 2013). By combining both of these groups, policy makers, data scholars, and higher education officials do not see the urgency for Pacific Islanders, as one of “the most disadvantaged sectors of the AAPI population” (p. 3). This dialogue also holds true for meeting the specific needs of Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian students. As emergent data and stories are beginning to emerge, the out of date model of capturing both Asian American and Pacific Islanders into a single category does not make sense.

Increased Presence of Hawaiian Faculty, Staff, and Knowledge

Increasing staff and faculty members from Hawai'i to be role models is important. Students need to see themselves in educators who have had similar struggles obtaining a college degree. WSU may not always have the candidate pool in attracting faculty and staff from Hawai'i to serve as role models. In these cases, perhaps West State University can become better informed to develop pipelines and infrastructure that attracts perspective candidates to the institution. The very least, it would be helpful if WSU could develop capacity with current administrators, faculty, and staff to increase awareness of the social, political, and contested histories Native Hawaiians have endured.

Reengineering Best Practices

Finding the way back home is important for all students. Developing periodical connecting points, back to Hawai'i, over the course of earning a WSU degree, seems an important initiative to consider. Developing articulation agreements with Hawaiian universities, would offer West State University Hawaiian students an opportunity in returning to "place" and connection back to their geographic location. Reminding them of their cultural connections and slowing the assimilation process.

Students from Hawai'i would have an opportunity to use their knowledge learned at WSU and apply those skills to their communities. As the director of Asian Pacific Services, I have observed many students decide to stay longer on the mainland, thus, experiencing longer times of being reunited and finding their connecting points back to Hawai'i.

**West State University Enrollment
Management and Admissions
Office**

I have given a lot of thought to WSU's current admission process and the recruitment of Native Hawaiian students. Appropriating additional dollars for a Native Hawaiian recruiter would allow for a better process that orients students to West State University, a PW mainland campus, might help with a smoother transition. The recruiter would need to be aware of historical colonized histories, have a demonstrated understanding of the connections to the land, the water, and the cosmos system, and have lived on the mainland and Hawai'i. Also, the implementation of a six-week summer bridge program that is provided at no cost would help with transitioning to college. The summer bridge program would allow Native Hawaiian students to take credit bearing

classed while being acclimated to the WSU campus before the official start of fall semester. This would also allow for early intervention while developing relationships with instrumental faculty and staff members.

Increasing Relationships within West State University's Hawaiian Community

Each spring semester, the Director of Admissions travels to Hawai'i and sponsors a social dinner for students who have committed to attending WSU. A future recommendation would include the HSC president and two members of their family to attend this event. This would allow further sharing of knowledge about the institution for perspective students and family members. This recommendation also highlights the importance of relationship building within the Native Hawaiian community.

Expanding Partnerships on the West State University Campus

If WSU is interested in increasing the number of Hawaiian students enrolling at the institution, the campus community need to consider how 'othering' maybe hindering its efforts. Approaching the enrollment of Hawaiian students may require a holistic approach that involves increased communications from Native Hawaiian alumni, an admissions recruiter who identifies as Hawaiian and understands the colonized histories and the unique relationship to the land. Additionally, increased partnerships with the APS director are necessary in assisting with the recruitment and retention of Hawaiian students. Expanding on the partnerships that assist students from Hawai'i in transitioning to WSU is vital. Inviting faculty and staff into this crucial dialogue is a recommended step to help bridge shared understanding and histories when working with Native Hawaiian students.

Future Research

As with any research study, more research needs to be conducted to add to the scholarly literature of lived experiences of Hawaiian, Native Hawaiian college students. There are several ideas for future research that would expand the body of knowledge regarding Native Hawaiian College Students. Stemming from participants' stories of the land, one future project includes further exploration of this sacred relationship. The relationship with the land was pivotal for all participants and understanding how to keep and maintain this sacred connection, while on the mainland, is key. Second, further understanding how Hawaiian students transition to a mainland college is also warranted. The stories that were shared reflected first year cultural difference transition concerns. Partnering with the National Resource Center on First Year Experience and Students In Transition to further develop scholarly literature that informs practitioners how to better serve Native Hawaiian students. Finally, little literature exists surround family relationships and role of family responsibility. This is another area to address when serving Native Hawaiian students from a holistic perspective.

Maintaining the Sacred Relationship to Land

Participants' stories and experiences highlighted the pivotal relationship they had with the land. Each of the participants described having a relationship and connection to the land and shared the longing and heartache of returning back home, if only for brief periods, to be connected back to the Land. To better understand how to support students as they navigate a PW mainland institution, it is necessary to identify ways of sustaining and growing these relationships. Additionally, continued scholarly literature that supports how Hawaiian and Indigenous College students are taught to develop relationships with

the land are equally instrumental in serving students. The cultivating of these pivotal relationships is important knowledge in the academic world. In addition, the experience of the “how” knowledge must also be accessible to Hawaiian students.

Transition Experiences

Participants’ stories and experiences of attending West State University reflected first-year development and transition concerns. Research continues to support the significance in developing strong First-year transition programs. Onboarding to a mainland institution also should be a natural part of transition programs. Stronger attention in the nurturing and supporting of Hawaiian students is warranted in this area. Developing studies and Partnering with the National Resource Center on First Year Experience and Students In Transition to develop stronger integration of concepts, research that supports better-practice models that are shaped for Hawaiian populations is vital for increased persistence and graduation college rates.

Relationship and Responsibility to Families

As I shared throughout this dissertation, the connectedness to families is salient to Hawaiian communities. I would like to see further research that explores what these connections look like for students who travel to mainland universities. Further stories that explore the depth of these relationships are needed when studying overall responsibility to families. Some literature suggests that students who attend a mainland institution reported a lower level of responsibility to their families compared to others in their peer group (Hagedorn et al., 2003). While my research study did not exclusively focus on the depth of relationships with family members as they attended WSU, it was clear that family was significant in helping Margaux, Bennett, Carrol, and Eugene pursue their

education. Future literature is needed to increase support systems that address this potential need in serving Native Hawaiian college students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this social constructivism hermeneutic phenomenology Indigenous theory study was to explore how Native Hawaiian undergraduate students experience and navigate West State University, a PW mainland institution. I also looked at how students negotiate, develop, and use support systems. Further, I considered how Indigenous stories were used to shape and support student persistence on a mainland campus. Understanding these experiences is vital in creating an inclusive campus foundation for Hawaiian students and other students of color. Developing an inclusive environment means providing equal opportunities and access to everyone. Sharing this research study to the WSU community will be instrumental in starting to create change. Bringing additional perspectives of truth to faculty members, student affairs practitioners, and senior level college administrators will lead to higher functioning systemic infrastructure that supports Hawaiian students. This also includes revitalizing key partnerships, such as the admissions office and enrollment management committee, across the WSU campus to share the stories participants expressed in this study. As the director of APS, I will continue to develop spaces that bring students from Hawai'i together in providing sanctuary spaces that allow, "talking story" to be a part of their WSU experience. After the focus groups, participants expressed "thanks" and felt the group time together was therapeutic. I also sensed that having this type of space was healing to the participants of this study.

Participants came to West State University with the hopes of fulfilling a dream. A dream that includes bringing family members to be a part their journey while graduating from college. Their experiences are multifaceted and are non-generalizable to all students. Their experiences, told in stories, do tell us a couple of broad strokes. Each of the participants had a connection with the land. The relationship with the land became a pivotal piece to acknowledge and understand how participants navigated WSU. The Aloha Spirit served as a reminder to practice the everyday art of loving each other. This also helped to strengthen the navigation at WSU. Participants were reminded of how the ancestors brought us together and evoked the familiarity of each other. The discovery from the groups dynamics was the importance of being together. This lead to the comfortable feeling of talking their native language, eventually turning to moke. Finally, participants expressed their desired to finish their degree before returning back home to Hawai'i. The place that was created united everyone and gave them a mainland spirit to persevere in widening their circles that would allow other Hawaiian students to follow. As the ancestor stories live on the sacred land, the participant stories will live on the mainland. Like a circle, stories do not end. All of us created the beginning of a new ancestral relationship and a connection on mainland that will be told for many generations to come. These were the connecting stories of the four participants who the courage to share their lived experiences navigating WSU.

Epilogue

Obtaining a doctorate of philosophy was a dream, a dream that I did not know how to speak into existence, until now. As I write this last story in my last chapter, I am indebted to those who have come before me and all who have sacrificed their lives for

me, as I stand on their shoulders. Their shoulders that give me space in an academic community that were once dreams to my elders. Because of them, I have a thirst for unpacking all truths and connecting theory to these truths. My elders continue to guide me as I hear their stories and remember their voices; they are still with me. I do not take this journey lightly. I also do not take lightly the stories of my participants who have and continue to influence my foundation as a researcher, scholar, and a practitioner.

Upon reflection of my role as the researcher in this study, I must also be transparent about the data I decided to capture and use. In many ways, I had access to a significant amount of data, due to my professional role at WSU. I observed HSC meetings, practice sessions for the annual Lu'au event, and had multiple interactions with each of the participants involved with this study. For example, during a conversation I had with Eugene, she was explaining *Night Marchers*, a Native Hawaiian movie that talks about ghost phantoms of ancient Hawai'i. Based on Eugene's interest, I decided to order the DVD and have APS host a movie night. The movie night was one of the highest attended events for Hawaiian first-year students. This tells me that students are craving for a place to be their authentic selves, to be reminded of their community and be connected to their homeland. I share this example to be transparent of my directorship role and how I collected data. Not all data were used for this study.

In Chapter I, I wrote about the turmoil I wrestled with, moving to an out-of-state college. Leaving my family meant that I would miss out on my siblings growing up experiences. I questioned if my leaving would become a hardship to my mother. As a single parent there were times when she depended on me to take care of my younger siblings while she was at work. From our conversations on our basement stairs, my mom

assured me it was OK to leave home. She poured education into all of us kids and believed this was a path for a better future. For example, when my siblings and I earned high grades, we were rewarded with another educational book.

It is recalling these precious moments that I realized the stories Carrol, Eugene, Bennett, and Margaux shared similar experiences of leaving home. In many ways, my story parallels with theirs, in what the participants felt when leaving their home.

It also goes back to your family. You want to do it [graduate from college] for them, you know. You are doing it for yourself, your future life . . . you just want to make them proud. (Margaux)

I felt the same way as Margaux expressed her feelings about going away from home to college. Having my family be proud of me for the accomplishments I made was one piece. The other piece was the desire to show my siblings that they, too, could go to college. I was creating a path for them to follow.

This study has affected me both professionally and personally. As the director of Asian Pacific Services and advisor to Hawai'i Student Club, I find myself studying students and interactions they have with their peers. I continuously watch the connections they are making. I find myself wondering, who is in their peer group and why? Who is not in their peer group, and why not? I have prided myself on the ability to listen fully to what students share. Now, I also listen fully to what students do not share.

As illustrated throughout this study, we still do not fully know the impact of colonization, although it is apparent colonization continues to have an effect on Native Hawaiians, and other Indigenous communities. This was seen in Chapter IV as Margaux spoke directly about colonization and the shame she felt about the loss of making poi. As an educator, I hear these stories and witness an ax slowly chipping away at the heart of

their soul. I am reminded of this pain, as I too, have already had multiple conversations with my daughter's school administrators about the curriculum that is being taught to her about Native Americans. Deconstructing the stories told to her from a Westernized lens is problematic. This energy infuses my daily work not only as an educator but now as a parent, reminding me that I must do better in my path to include stories from Native Hawaiians and other Indigenous communities.

As the current advisor to HSC, I see the importance of how history shapes the students I work for. Revisiting the importance of cultural values, and different ways of knowing, rings loudly in my ears as I facilitate individual and group discussions with students from Hawai'i and campus community officials. Sometimes, the ringing never stops and it is painful. I constantly wrestle with inner dialogue of how to bring transformative change in creating better infrastructure that serves students while keeping their culture, ancestral, and spiritual knowledge intact. This includes sharing what I have learned with senior level administrators, including WSU's Admissions staff. This would allow for other truths to be known when working with Native Hawaiian students. I share this because I see alternative pedagogies that are critical and culturally relevant, as a significant way to address the diverse needs of Native Hawaiian and other Indigenous communities. I hope the ringing never stops. I hope this study started to put a ring in your ear as well.

I cannot help but feel honored, humbled, and privileged to be a part of the all women research group. The opportunity that I received feels like a "once in a lifetime experience." I will always remember the time we spent in the basement of APS, the high pitch screeching sounds followed by rumbles of hearty laughter. Thank you for giving me

this gift and for creating a space for me at your table. I carry your stories with me. I have found my relationship to place.

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board

DATE: October 26, 2016

TO: Alethea Stovall
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [786369-3] Experiences of Native Hawaiian Students at a
Predominately White Mainland Institution

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: October 25, 2016

EXPIRATION DATE: October 25, 2020

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years. If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM



CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Experiences of Native Hawaiian Students at a Predominantly White Mainland Institution

Lead Researcher: Alethea Stovall
Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership Doctoral Student
alethea.stovall@unco.edu; xxx-xxx-xxxx

Research: Matthew Birnbaum, Ph.D.
Associate Professor. Higher Education and Advisor Student Affairs
Matthew.Birnbaum@unco.edu; 970-351-2598

Purpose and Description: The purpose of this qualitative research study is to become familiar with how Hawaiian undergraduate students experience and navigate their academic institution.

You are being invited to participate in a research study to explore how Hawaiian students experience the UNC community. The use of storytelling and ways of knowing in indigenous communities will also be explored. The study will also seek to understand how participants identify and create support systems. The study will utilize current Native Hawaiian students who are enrolled at University of Northern Colorado (UNC) as a second, third, or fourth year and beyond full-time student. The researcher will send out announcements asking for participation through UNC's Hawai'i Student Club and Asian/Pacific American Student Services (A/PASS). If you are interested in participating in this study, the researcher will meet with you to answer any questions you may have pertaining to this study. Throughout this study, the researcher will ask you to engage in dialogue that describe your experiences as a UNC student.

If you volunteer for this research study, you will be asked to participate in two 75-minute focus groups and a 60-minute individual interview. The focus group and interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. Focus groups and interviews will take place at one of UNC's culture centers. The focus groups will be scheduled during a time where no other activity will be scheduled to take place at the culture center.

At the focus group, the researcher may bring in another doctoral student to back up the researcher's notes. The researcher intends to keep the contents (researcher notes, back-up doctoral student focus group notes) of these files confidential and private. All files will be

destroyed after three years. To further help maintain confidentiality, each participant's name will be replaced with a pseudonym. The names of participants will not appear within the study itself or in any professional report of this research.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Upon completion, you will be compensated a 10.00 Starbucks gift card. Should you decided to drop out of the study for any reason, there is no effect to you as a UNC student. The results of your participation will be strictly confidential. You will be asked to provided a pseudonym to assist in protecting confidentiality. Your focus group and interview responses will be recorded and transcribed. No one will be permitted to see or discuss any of the individual responses you provided.

Your participation in this study will most likely not result in any direct benefits to you as an individual. Your participation will contribute to the understanding of the university community can better serve you, and other students who identify as Native Hawaiian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander on the University of Northern Colorado campus. Risks are minimal to you. All files will be in a locked cabinet and stored away for no more than three years.

Please feel free to phone or email the researcher if you have any questions or concerns about this research.

Sincerely,

Alethea Stovall

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C
AMENDED CONSENT FORM



CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Experiences of Native Hawaiian Students at a Predominantly White Mainland Institution

Lead Researcher: Alethea Stovall
Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership Doctoral Student
alethea.stovall@unco.edu; xxx-xxx-xxxx

Research: Matthew Birnbaum, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Higher Education and Advisor Student Affairs
Matthew.Birnbaum@unco.edu; 970-351-2598

Purpose and Description: The purpose of this qualitative research study is to become familiar with how Hawaiian undergraduate students experience and navigate their academic institution.

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If you volunteer for this research study, you will be asked to participate in two 75-minute focus groups and a 60-minute individual interview. The focus group and interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. Focus groups and interviews will take place at one of UNC's culture centers. The focus groups will be scheduled during a time where no other activity will be scheduled to take place at the culture center.

At the focus group, the researcher may bring in another doctoral student to back up the researcher's notes. The researcher intends to keep the contents (researcher notes, back-up doctoral student focus group notes) of these files confidential and private. All files will be destroyed after three years. To further help maintain confidentiality, each participant's name will be replaced with a pseudonym. The names of participants will not appear within the study itself or in any professional report of this research. **Additionally, to the extent that you feel comfortable with, I will be utilizing information from previous discussions that fall outside of our focus groups and interviews.**

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Upon completion, you will be compensated a 10.00 Starbucks gift card. Should you decided to drop out of the study for any reason, there is no effect to you as a UNC student. The results of your participation will be strictly confidential. You will be asked to provide a pseudonym to assist in protecting confidentiality. Your focus group and interview responses will be recorded and transcribed. No one will be permitted to see or discuss any of the individual responses you provided.

Your participation in this study will most likely not result in any direct benefits to you as an individual. Your participation will contribute to the understanding of the university community can better serve you, and other students who identify as Native Hawaiian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander on the University of Northern Colorado campus. Risks are minimal to you. All files will be in a locked cabinet and stored away for no more than three years.

Please feel free to phone or email the researcher if you have any questions or concerns about this research.

Sincerely,

Alethea Stovall

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Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX D
REVISED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPROVAL LETTER



Institutional Review Board

DATE: February 20, 2017

TO: Alethea Stovall
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [786369-4] Experiences of Native Hawaiian Students at a
Predominately White Mainland Institution

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: February 20, 2017

EXPIRATION DATE: October 25, 2020

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.