

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Abstract approved:

Janet S. Nishihara

In recent years, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) have become one of the fastest-growing racial groups within the United States, increasing by 40% between 2000 and 2010, and expected to nearly double in population size by 2030 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012; Empowering Pacific Islander Communities & Asian Americans Advancing Justice [EPIC & AAAJ], 2014). With this increase in racial diversity within the greater U.S. population as a whole, the need for accessible and culturally relevant resources in higher education has become more prominent than ever. While the overall population has increased significantly, Pacific Islander students continue to face challenges of access, retention, and lack of culturally relevant resources and support within higher education institutions. Currently, only 18% of Pacific Islander adults possess bachelor's degrees and only 38% of college-aged youth were enrolled in college in 2011 (EPIC & AAAJ, 2014). Statistics like these are often hidden as institutional data on Pacific Islander students are often aggregated with Asian American data within a pan-ethnic Asian Pacific Islander (API) identity, masking the distinct histories, identities, and challenges of many

students within higher education. At predominantly White institutions on the continental United States, this identity label and its inconsistent use within data collection and subsequent resource allocation marginalize Pacific Islander students not just within predominantly White communities, but from Asian Americans as well, who make up the majority of the API identity. While forms of research and higher education support for API continues to rise, support for Pacific Islander students, staff, and faculty, specifically are not as evident. Through narrative inquiry, this study examines the experiences of Pacific Islander students through the framework of counter-storytelling in Critical Race Theory at a large predominantly White university in the Pacific Northwest. The research questions that framed this study were as follows: (1) What is the historical significance and influence of identity politics on Pacific Islander students in higher education? (2) How has familial, community, and institutional context influenced students' understanding of their Pacific Islander identities leading into their transition into college? (3) How do these identities impact and show up in their college experience? (4) How can the institution better support Pacific Islander student success and identity development during their college career? This study contributes to existing literature that center the experiences of Pacific Islander students in higher education and their narratives analyzing the way the institution interacts with that aspect of their identity. The researcher concludes with implications from findings and recommendations for higher education professionals to utilize on their campuses.

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Supporting Pacific Islander Student Identity in Higher Education

by
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Kayla Y. Kosaki, Author

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Within the past twenty years, Pacific Islanders have become one of the fastest growing racial groups in the United States, increasing by 40% just between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012; Empowering Pacific Islander Communities & Asian Americans Advancing Justice [EPIC & AAAJ], 2014). Prior to 2000, federal data on Pacific Islanders were grouped into a single category with Asian Americans, obscuring critical analyses of each population and representation in federal guidelines (EPIC & AAAJ, 2014). Aggregated into a single category, studies on Asian American populations that included Pacific Islanders as a secondary afterthought often erased discrepancies in sociopolitical experiences, causing communities to fall victim to harmful stereotypes like the Model Minority Myth that deprioritized the need for services and resources for Asian American and Pacific Islander students (Museus, Maramba, & Teranishi, 2013; Wing, 2007). To address these discrepancies, within the past twenty years, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), began requiring federal agencies to designate the distinct categories “Asian” and “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander,” as two distinct categories, from their previous classification so that data collected would more accurately reflect the success, attainment, challenges, and needs of these specific populations (Ching & Agbayani, 2012; EPIC & AAAJ, 2014). However, resources including studies, cultural centers, institutional priorities, and disciplines centering Pacific Islander student identity still remain largely absent from most colleges and universities today.

While the U.S. Census (2012) categorizes its indigenous Pacific Islander population under the category of “Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander,” this designation centers Native Hawaiians, and consequently may be problematic in further marginalizing other Pacific Islander communities, particularly those that are non-Polynesian and experience the most obvious but

unchecked individual and institutional racism (Williams, et al., 2014). As race is often falsely seen as a monolithic and homogenous group, many times individuals and institutions discount the variety and diversity of cultures and experiences that exist within these social constructs. Thus, the current study notes that it is impossible to truly represent the breadth and depth of all communities in a single study and cautions essentializing experiences and histories documented as true for all Pacific Islanders but hopes to recognize the power in united communities and related experiences. With the history of similarities in oppression, marginalization, and unifying utility of a pan-ethnic identity in mind, the current research uses the term “Pacific Islander” in an effort to de-center Hawaiians as a separate entity and focus on honoring all groups and their shared experiences. For the purposes of this study, the term Pacific Islander refers to the indigenous people of the Pacific regions of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. As an incredibly diverse group, this population includes but is not limited to, ethnic groups such as: Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, Palauan, Tahitian, Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Saipanese, Yapese, Tokelauan, Kosraean, Carolinian, Papua New Guinean, I-Kiribati, Mariana Islander, Solomon Islander, and Ni-Vanuatu (EPIC & AAJ, 2014).

Literature within higher education suggest that campus culture and community largely contribute challenges and successes that impact students’ experiences and their holistic social, psychological, and cognitive development (Jones & Abes, 2013). As an institution built on a history of patriarchal Eurocentric standards, there has been a critical movement since the 1960s to expand access to communities of color. However, as studies in Critical Race Theory (CRT) demonstrate, simply increasing access and recruitment of students of color are not enough as racism and discrimination continue to be pervasive problems in colleges and universities across the country. For example, students of color can experience campus climate as more hostile and

unwelcoming than their White peers (Museus, 2014). Several prominent researchers have studied Pacific Islander indigenous epistemology as well as sociopolitical and cultural connections across Oceania (Meyer, 2003; Meyer, 2001; Hau'ofa, 1993; Perez, 2005; Spickard, Rondilla, & Write, 2002), but few have looked at these connections specifically within the context of identity development higher education (Wright & Balutski, 2013; Gogue, 2016; Reyes, 2016).

Scholarship that empirically assess Pacific Islander identity formation and experiences in higher education is especially lacking and can be the most transformative in student empowerment (Perez, 2005). Higher education professionals have the opportunity and responsibility to embrace and encourage multiculturalism in our increasingly globalized world and foster student development and understanding of transformative resistance in order for our society to challenge historic oppressive systems and keep up with the ever-changing demographics to best understand each other and work together as a society (Museus, 2014). Rather than simply providing a checklist of qualities to know and understand to best support Pacific Islander students, which can be problematic as the road to decolonizing our practices in higher education is not as simple nor easy as a list, the current study aims to highlight counter-narratives so that readers can reflect on the ways histories, words, actions, and experiences can affect the students and communities they work with.

The research questions the current study aims to address are as follows: (1) What is the historical significance and influence of identity politics on Pacific Islander students in higher education? (2) How has familial, community, and institutional context influenced students' understanding of their Pacific Islander identities leading into their transition into college? (3) How do these identities impact and show up in their college experience? and (4) How can the institution better support Pacific Islander student success and identity development during their

college career? By illuminating the voices and examining the depth of narratives shared by Pacific Islander students, the current study strives to increase college professionals' understanding of some ways students experience higher education. It also aims to demonstrate how colleges and universities may recognize, support, or hinder Pacific Islander identity development, validation, and overall success in higher education.

Operational definitions of key terms

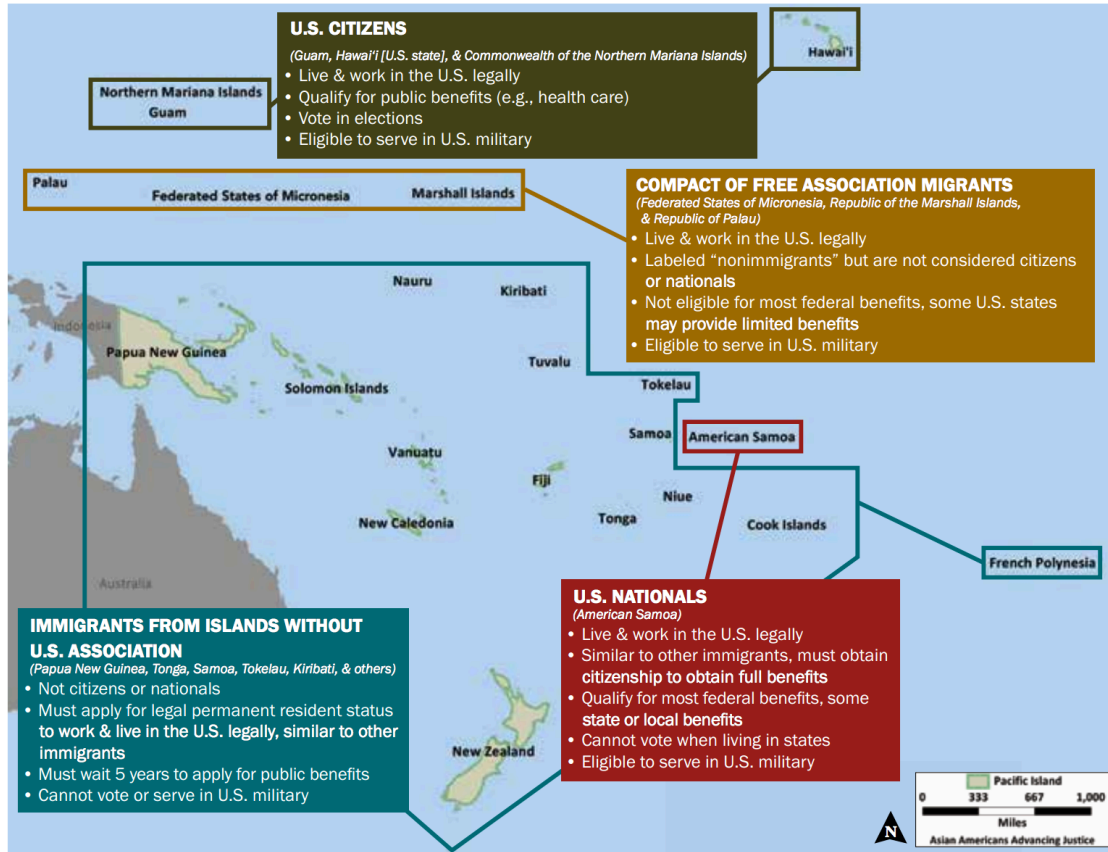
Below is a list of terminology that will be used throughout the research, discussion, and writing process of this study. Though the definitions of these are consistently challenged and carry a complex history and set of politics, for the purpose of this research, please reference the following list of key terms and definitions:

- **Pacific Islanders:** For the purpose of this study, this term refers to individuals with genealogical ties to the indigenous people of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. As an incredibly diverse group, this population includes but is not limited to, ethnic groups such as: Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, Palauan, Tahitian, Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Saipanese, Yapese, Tokelauan, Kosraean, Carolinian, Papua New Guinean, I-Kiribati, Mariana Islander, Solomon Islander, and Ni-Vanuatu. For the purpose of this study, the term Pacific Islander is intentionally used in order to not centralize one ethnicity over the others (Wright & Balutski, 2013).
- **Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders:** A pan-ethnic categorization including Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (API or AAPI). Only used in this study when discussing both Asian American and Pacific Islander as distinct racial groups, not used interchangeably with the terms Asian or Asian American (Poon et al., 2015).

- **Hawaiians:** The indigenous people of Hawai‘i. Used interchangeably with the terms Native Hawaiian and *kanaka maoli*, but never in reference to people who simply reside in Hawai‘i. While this caveat of indigeneity is relevant to all aforementioned Pacific Islander identities, the researcher feels the need to emphasize this specification due to a common misunderstanding and mislabeling of all residents of Hawai‘i as Hawaiian, not akin to California residents as Californian, Oregon residents as Oregonians, etc.
- **Race:** A socially constructed, fluid, and impermanent social categorization based on physical appearance and identification resulting from the “interplay between public policy and denial or provision of various human rights” (Renn, 2012, p. 12)
- **Racial Identity:** “[A] sense of collective identity that is based on the notion that the individual shares a common heritage or experience with members of a specific racial group” (Museus, Maramba, & Teranishi, 2013, p. 51)
- **Ethnic Identity:** “[A] sense of collective identity that is based on an individual’s understanding that [they share] a common origin, history, culture, and language with a specific cultural group.” (Museus et al., 2013, p. 51)
- **Cultural Identity:** An fluid aspect of “identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has a shared system of symbols and meanings as well as norms for conduct.” (Sage, 2016).
- **Spelling Note:** As a developing area of critical race and identity social justice literature, the current study builds off of previous works toward justice for various historically marginalized communities of race, class, gender, etc. In an effort to disrupt notions of the gender binary, this study intentionally uses “x” in place of traditionally gendered

spellings of terms such as Latina/o = Latinx, Pilipina/o = Pilipinx to recognize the diversity of gender identity beyond the woman/man dichotomy.

U.S. Immigration Status by Pacific Island of Birth



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, National Immigration Law Center, U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs; Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice; APIAHF "Access to Health Coverage for Pacific Islanders in the United States." Note: Smaller islands not labeled on map. Information provided on the chart is generalized information based on islands of birth. The information above may not be true for all immigrants born on these islands. Native Hawaiians living in Hawai'i are indigenous people and not immigrants. As indigenous people, Native Hawaiians qualify for other federal benefits through programs such as the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act.

Figure 1: Map of Pacific Islands and U.S Immigration Status (Source: EPIC & AAAJ, 2014)

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter will provide a background on the significance of racial identity development, a brief history of Pacific Islander identity politics, and an examination of current literature on services and resources utilized to support Pacific Islander students within the context of higher education. Centralizing experiences of racialized identity to best understand past and present experiences of Pacific Islander students, the current study is grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT), Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) (Brayboy, 2005) and forms of cultural capital as discussed in Yosso's (2005) conceptualization Cultural Community Wealth.

Disaggregating the Pan-Ethnic Asian Pacific Islander (API) Identity

Throughout history, the practices of defining, collecting, and presenting racial/ethnic data have changed significantly over time and remain inconsistent among the federal government, scholars, researchers, media, and community advocates to this day (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012; Ching & Agbayani, 2012; Wright & Balutski, 2013). This has been especially relevant for Pacific Islander populations, currently one of the fastest-growing racial groups in the United States, growing by 40% between 2000 and 2010 (EPIC & AAAJ, 2014). To address this, within the past twenty years the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), began requiring federal agencies to designate the distinct categories "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander" as two distinct categories, from their previous classification involving a combination of both, though many fields of federal data collection and reporting remain noncompliant in their practices (Wright & Balutski, Ching & Agbayani, 2012; EPIC & AAAJ, 2014).

Pacific Islanders have historically been grouped with Asian Americans, resulting in their erasure or minimal attention in literature, lack of recognition, support, and allocation of resources

due to assumed benefits within the pan-ethnic Asian and Pacific Islander (API) racial category (Poon, et al., 2015; Kauanui, 2008). Formulated as part of a political movement of the Civil Rights era in the 1960s, the pan-ethnic and pan-racial API identity was created as a banner term in opposition to the racialization of Asian Americans by dominant groups (Park 2008; Ching & Agbayani, 2012). Recognizing cross-cultural similarities in history, minoritized status, and treatment in the United States, many Asian Americans collaborated to create a larger group that had strength in numbers and politically more powerful than multiple Asian subcategories acting individually (Ching & Agbayani, 2012). In this sense, the pan-ethnic Asian American identity was and continues to provide a larger voice for marginalized communities, particularly for East Asian communities in the continental United States more so than island communities like the occupied state of Hawai‘i, where Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders comprise approximately two-thirds of the its population and rarely use these pan-ethnic terms (Ching & Agbayani, 2012).

While these terms have served several subgroups within the Asian American population, many individuals and groups dispute the pan-ethnic label’s inclusivity and criticize notions of its positive impact, particularly in regards to Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander populations (Williams et al., 2014; EPIC & AAAJ, 2014; Museus, Maramba, & Teranishi, 2013; Poon et al., 2015). Pacific Islander scholars have asserted the damaging effects of the pan-ethnic and pan-racial aggregation, as “detrimental to indigenous self determination—a central issue among Pacific Islanders” (Perez, 2002, p. 469; Benham, 2006; Kauanui, 2008; Wright & Baluski, 2013; Diaz, 2004). The biggest difference between Pacific Islander and Asian American sociopolitical histories and struggles is the binary between Pacific Islander condition and indigenous status versus the immigrant/settler identity of Asian America (Diaz, 2004). This makes grouping the two racial populations is problematic as conceptualizations of the United

States and citizenship may lie on two opposite ends of the spectrum and strategies for justice may stem from different matters (Diaz, 2004; Perez, 2005). As articulated by Dr. Melina Abdullah, “professor of Pan-African Studies and organizer in the Black Lives Matter movement pan-ethnic identities such as API and equating Black to African American, are products of White supremacy deliberately created to erase, simplify, and collapse our communities” (M. Abdullah, Advancing Justice Conference plenary, March 31, 2016). Jeff Chang (1996) further illuminates the notion in his account of race relations in Hawai‘i. In this qualitative study, Chang (1996) interviewed Pilipinx and Native Hawaiian activists who spoke of local elites, primarily Japanese and Chinese Americans, who have “forgotten the memory of their oppression at the hands of *haoles*” and the fragmenting factor of capitalism and the pan-ethnic identity on their collective community (p. 22). Within the past few decades, more robust conversations about who is included and considered Pacific Islander have led to the creation of scholarship examining the ideological, political, intellectual, and practical boundaries of identity (Wright & Balutski, 2013; Diaz, 2004; Diaz & Kauanui, 2001). Studies such as these highlight the need to critically examine the way racism, recreation of imposed hierarchies, and further marginalization exist and are reinforced within communities of color (Chang, 1996; Koo & Nishimura, 2013). For the purpose of this study, it should be known that the use of *Asian American*, *Pacific Islander*, and *Asian Pacific Islander* or similar pan-ethnic designations, are not interchangeable terms.

Within higher education, when these overarching labels are employed in data collection and analysis, the difficulty of addressing challenges faced by smaller populations like Pacific Islanders is further compounded, masking significant disparities between Pacific Islanders and Asian Americans across key socioeconomic characteristics (EPIC & AAAJ, 2014). Ultimately, current research regarding Pacific Islanders underline a fundamental need to disaggregate

collective terms and collected information to better demonstrate unique needs, to more accurately inform policy and further, to provide better support services for students in higher education (EPIC & AAAJ, 2014). When Pacific Islanders are misrecognized and subsumed under the API category, this erases not just current disparities, but history, indigeneity, and current complex political relationships between Pacific Islander communities and the United States like sovereignty, which remains a significant and salient part of identity, politics, and recognition toward justice (EPIC & AAAJ, 2014; Williams et al., 2014; Perez, 2005; Kauanui, 2008; Diaz, 2004; Diaz & Kauanui, 2001).

Racial Identity Development in Higher Education

Within higher education, particularly in the work of student affairs, identity development has become a salient consideration in students' successful college experience and essential work in student development theory (Jones & Abes, 2013). Building off of foundational work in psychological, cognitive-structural, and sociological perspectives of human development, much attention has been given to identity development to better understand how students make meaning and experience internal processes they may have when encountering external influences in their lives and college careers (Jones & Abes, 2013; Renn, 2012).

Since European colonization of North America, the social construction of race has served as a salient social category within the United States used as form of external identification and organization resulting from the "interplay between public policy and denial or provision of various human rights" (Renn, 2012, p. 12). The history of public policies tied to social, economic, and environmental justice such as affirmative action, gentrification, immigration, land distribution has relied on the maintenance and reinforcement of inequitable codification and continue to be relevant and pervasive in current society (Renn, 2012). As a part of the human

experience that plays such a critical role in the human experience on both a micro and macro level, making sense of racial identity is an essential element for both individual and group identity development (Jones & Abes, 2013; Wright & Balutski, 2013). Studies illustrate that membership in different racial groups often is related to differences in life experiences, circumstances, and expectations, and thus play a key role in individuals' understanding of self and navigating society (Renn, 2012). Within the higher education setting, these perspectives and life experiences can largely affect students' wellbeing, satisfaction, and overall success at an institution (Jones & Abes, 2013; Renn, 2012). A framework that centralizes race in students' developmental processes is further illustrated in the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Critical race theory. While rooted in legal studies, Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides critical lens that explores the role of race and racism in the United States and provides fundamental tenets in understanding and analyzing experiences of Pacific Islander students in higher education (Wright & Balutski, 2013). A CRT framework, within the context of qualitative research, asserts notions that (a) racism is endemic to United States society and is important to consider in critical research, (b) challenges traditionally-held narratives of objectivity, colorblindness, and race-neutrality rooted in Whiteness, (c) challenges ahistorical Eurocentric narratives, asserting the importance of the histories and experiences of communities of color, (d) values the narratives of people of color as an essential source of knowledge, (e) is intersectional and interdisciplinary in nature, and (f) produces justice-oriented literature that works toward eliminating oppression for historically marginalized communities (Jones & Abes, 2013; Wright & Balutski, 2013; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993). By centralizing race in an identity development framework, individuals can better understand how macro systems influence their history and lived experiences in relation to systemic oppression, how individuals see

themselves regarding racial identity, and recognize the salience of those identities (Renn, 2012). As a justice-oriented framework, CRT can be used as a tool to help imagine the ways in which we can support Pacific Islanders' counter-narratives in higher education (Wright & Balutski, 2013).

Indigeneity and tribal critical race theory. Over the past few decades, CRT has become a prominent theory in the social sciences and recently developed into a race-specific family of theories including: Latinx Critical Race Studies (LatCrit), Asian American Critical Race Studies (AsianCrit), and American Indian Critical Race Studies (TribalCrit), all created to challenge the colorblind approach that avoids the application and perspective of race in law, education, policy, and social justice (Renn, 2012). Within this family, Pacific Islander scholars underline connections of indigenous identity development through tenets of TribalCrit, which include political conditions and historical circumstances of indigenous peoples within the United States (Wright & Balutski, 2013; Diaz, 2004).

Brayboy (2005) outlines nine central tenets of TribalCrit—five of which are highlighted by Wright and Balutski (2013) as most applicable to Pacific Islander experiences as indigenous people. These include the notions that: “(1) colonization is endemic to society, (2) United States policies toward indigenous peoples are rooted in colonialism, White supremacy, and desire for material gain, (3) indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized nature of their identities, (4) indigenous people have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification, and (5) the concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through indigenous lens” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429; Wright & Balutski, 2013). Perez (2002; 2005), however, points out limitations that occur when conflating Pacific Islander indigenous identity

with self-determination, sovereignty, and autonomy, citing the history and impact of U.S. colonialism and Americanization on Chamorro identity, resulting in identity crises, ambivalence, and limited consciousness that perpetuate feelings of dependence on the colonizers. Because sovereignty remains a core issue in Pacific Island politics without a clear shared mission, themes within the lens of TribalCrit will be examined, but will not be centered as a theoretical framework for this study.

These points not only highlight critical considerations when working toward supporting Pacific Islander identities, narratives, and frameworks toward justice but also further evidence the dissimilarities between Pacific Islander and Asian American experiences as racialized groups within the U.S. Whereas many Asian American narratives and experiences with racism center around immigration to the states, the history of indigenous Pacific Islanders is one of forcible incorporation and occupation by the U.S. and thus have distinct and competing political values toward justice. This presents hugely problematic issues of erasure in the coupling of the two racial groups into a single category (Kauanui, 2008; Diaz, 2004).

Examples of the opportunity for higher education institutions to disrupt oppressive narratives through theories like CRT and TribalCrit are further explained in the following section, examining the history and presence of multicultural affairs in higher education.

Multicultural affairs in higher education. Since the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, there has been a movement in American higher education, pushing institutions to diversify and expand access to historically marginalized and underserved populations, particularly those of racial and ethnic minority groups. This multicultural movement reached a pivotal point in the 1970s and early 1980s when the federal government and higher education leadership across the country

committed to increase the enrollment, matriculation, and graduation rates of historically marginalized racial groups (American Council on Education, 1985; Literte, 2010).

However, as an institution built upon a foundation of patriarchal White colonial standards, simply putting efforts into recruiting and admission alone are not enough, as support for these students, who face distinct challenges in higher education, is limited to an emerging but relatively finite existing literature base (Poon et al., 2015). As non-White racial groups have grown enormously within the past two decades (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), more and more colleges and universities have responded to the need to better support students of color, with scholar practitioners studying racial identity development, resource development, and equitable services that are effective and culturally relevant to these populations.

This need for more culturally competent services for increasingly diverse college populations has resulted in the formation of multicultural affairs in higher education: a branch of higher education created to promote diversity, justice, access, equity, and multiculturalism through collaborative efforts across students, faculty, and staff (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS Standards), 2015). Historically, colleges and universities have played a prominent role in racial justice movements and have served as settings for the production, contestation, and negotiation of racial identity, debate, and policies for people of color across the country (Literte, 2010). At smaller institutions, multicultural student services are typically organized to serve all historically under-represented students, while at larger institutions, services may be more organized to address specific populations, such as race-oriented student services (ROSS; Literte, 2010) typically categorized by five racial categories: African American/Black, Latinx, White, Native American, and Asian Pacific Americans (CAS

Standards, 2015; Literte, 2010). The current qualitative study takes place at an institution with multicultural affairs organized by race-oriented student services.

In their study examining the experiences of biracial students' engagement with ROSS, Literte (2010) challenged the organization of these multicultural services. While ROSS have demonstrated the capacity to foster racial identity development, they do so through engagement with racial formations that reify traditional monoracialism and thus are limited in their capacity to respond to students who do not identify within these "conventional" racial categories of student services formed in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. This criticism is especially applicable to the current study on supporting Pacific Islander students for several reasons. First, while included semantically in the API umbrella, Pacific Islanders have experienced in-group marginalization and lack of recognition which challenges the effectiveness of these race-based student services (Kauanui, 2008). Second, it is important to note that a majority (56%) of Pacific Islanders identify as multiracial (EPIC & AAJ, 2014). This statistic is most prominent among Native Hawaiians, of whom 69% identify as multiracial.

Studies like Literte's (2010) further demonstrate the ever-changing landscape of race, its social construction within the United States, and the rate at which institutions like colleges and universities must adapt to meet the needs of their student population. As research efforts and university support services combating racial inequity adapt, so do the terminology and language for the populations' subcategories being served, highlighting a need for further developed literature as well as equitable recognition of need and support for these groups.

Community Cultural Wealth

Within current literature on Asian and Pacific Islander students in higher education, significant research on impacts of racial identity and racism has largely been focused on

experiences of marginalization through model minority myth (MMM; Poon et al., 2015; Museus, Maramba, & Teranishi, 2013). This racial stereotype of Asian Americans simplifies them to a monolithic, hardworking, and high-achieving racial group and has been used in wedge politics to undermine the capacity and contributions of other minoritized communities of color, especially Hispanic, Latinx, and Black students (Museus, Maramba, & Teranishi, 2013; Poon et al., 2015). Many scholars note that this stereotype is a significant reason why Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have been excluded from literature within higher education because there is an erased and minimized need to better support them as a racial minority within education, an argument that is used as a core criticism calling for data disaggregation within the API community (Wing, 2007; Museus, Maramba, & Teranishi, 2013). While important to deconstruct, in an effort to counter this myth, many researchers have highlighted low educational attainment among Southeast Asian Americans, Pilipinx Americans, and Pacific Islanders to demonstrate the need for educational support and disaggregated data, and have thus inadvertently contributed to a deficit narrative of these communities (Poon et al., 2015; Yosso, 2005; Hokoana & Oliveira, 2012). This deficit framework posits that Pacific Islanders and their communities are to blame for poor academic performance and marginalization because (1) they enter higher education without adequate knowledge and skills to succeed and (2) there is an assumption of lack of parental support for these students' success (Yosso, 2005). Poon and colleagues (2015) point out that these arguments are critically flawed in that they simplify and essentialize API ethnic groups in a framework of educational attainment, splitting groups into high-achieving (East Asian Americans and South Asian Americans) and low-achieving populations (Southeast Asian Americans, Pilipinx Americans, and Pacific Islanders). While data disaggregation is important to

understand ethnic groups that exist within racial categories, Poon et al. (2015) call for research and frameworks that advance a more humanized research on AAPIs.

With this in mind, the current paper highlights Yosso's (2005) concept of Community Cultural Wealth as a framework for interpreting and analyzing the data collected in this study. Framed within CRT, Yosso (2005) shifts research goals, challenging racism and the deficit view of communities of color by focusing on the cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts overlooked when considering what students of color bring to their experiences in higher education. Prior to Yosso's (2005) contributions, social capital was more widely considered through a deficit framework in which marginalized populations were said to lack capital (knowledge), which could only be gained through family or education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Gogue, 2016). This notion perpetuates social inequality between various classes by centralizing research goals on assimilative practices by means of increased access to education, diminishing without recognizing the value of other forms of cultural capital already possessed by historically marginalized communities (Yosso, 2005; Gogue, 2016; Reyes, 2016).

Within Yosso's (2005, pp. 77-81) framework, there are six forms of Community Cultural Wealth which students possess from their racialized histories and experiences of oppression.

These include:

1. *Aspirational capital*: students' resilience in their ability to maintain future hopes and dreams even in the face of real and perceived barriers
2. *Navigational capital*: students' ability to maneuver through social institutions not created with communities of color in mind
3. *Social capital*: networks of people and community resources providing instrumental and emotional support in navigating institutions

4. *Linguistic capital*: the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style
5. *Familial capital*: the cultural knowledge nurtured among family (broadly applied to community outside of blood relatives) that carry a sense of community, history, memory, cultural intuition, and
6. *Resistant capital*: knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality

Utilizing a CRT framework to challenge historical silencing and invalidating of communities of color, Yosso (2005) contends that students' cultures can be used to nurture and empower them. In effort to disrupt the implicit racism in cultural deficit narratives traditionally held in social institutions, this framework is highlighted as a guideline for analysis throughout the course of this study.

Summary

Historically coupled with Asian Americans under a pan-ethnic API identity, the histories, narratives, and unique needs of Pacific Islanders have been and continue to be largely overlooked by individuals and institutions across the United States resulting in the inequitable support for this community (EPIC & AAAJ, 2014; Poon et al., 2015). As colleges and universities work to foster holistic student development, it is imperative that they challenge the erasure of Pacific Islander students and work to support racial identity development toward justice as they continue to do for other racial groups (Literate, 2010).

Though there is a growing body of literature on Pacific Islander histories, race relations, intricacies of identity, and institutional erasure in higher education, few have examined the intersection of racial identity development and college student services through the lens of

cultural capital that Pacific Islander students bring to the university (Gogue, 2016; Reyes, 2016; Poon et al., 2015). Knowing that students of color come to the university with complex perspectives and experiences, as a researcher and practitioner it is important to recognize that the goal of this study is not to be a source of empowerment for Pacific Islander students, as that narrative is paternalistic by nature. Rather, the goal of this study is to provide literature illuminating the historically and contemporarily silenced narratives of Pacific Islander students so that higher education professionals can better understand and support them in a justice-orientated and non-essentializing way. The following chapter will further discuss the theoretical framework, method, and methodology of the current study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The current study examines the lived experiences of Pacific Islander students at a predominantly White institution including the ways in which they navigate their university and interact with it, centering on these experiences in relation to their racial, ethnic, and/or cultural identity. This chapter defines the research questions, design, sampling and participant recruitment, data collection, analysis, and limitations of the study. Based on the methodology outlined in Jones et al. (2013) I conducted semi-structured interviews with students to collect narratives and reflections on their experiences at the university, hoping to illuminate their social identity and the ways in which their institution supports or inhibits their identity development and meaning-making processes. The goal of this study is to illuminate the lived experiences of Pacific Islander students and help higher education professionals in academic and student affairs better understand the stories of Pacific Islander students so that they can provide adequate support and services at their respective institutions.

Research Questions

This research is guided by four central research questions. Due to a deficit of research and inconsistencies in understandings of Pacific Islander identity and what it means across institutions, the primary questions this research addresses are:

- 1) What is the historical significance and influence of identity politics on Pacific Islander students in higher education?
- 2) How has familial, community, and institutional context influenced students' understanding of their Pacific Islander identities leading into their transition into college?
- 3) How do these identities impact and show up in their college experience?

- 4) How can the institution better support Pacific Islander student success and identity development during their college career?

Research Design

In an effort to better understand the complex and unique experiences of Pacific Islander students, this research is rooted in the tenet of counter-storytelling within Critical Race Theory (CRT) and utilizes a qualitative approach to allow students to respond openly with personal narratives while placing race, ethnicity, and culture at the center of analysis and experience (Jones & Abes, 2013). This qualitative approach allows the researcher to acknowledge multiple perspectives and share participants' narratives. Further, within qualitative research, CRT counter narratives have become a framework of methodology used to debunk historically-held deficit assumptions while illuminating and centralizing the cultural wealth and personal experiences of communities of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005).

It is also important to note that as a qualitative study on identity, the author wants to emphasize its rooting in the related tenet of anti-essentialism—meaning that the participants and their experiences shared within this study are not meant to be assumed as experts on race and racism. Rather, the aim of this study is to highlight the awareness of being a Pacific Islander student and the daily experiences that make these students capable of telling their story in a unique way that challenges preconceived notions (Jones & Abes, 2013). The following section will further explain the theoretical framework, methodology, and method used in exploring Pacific Islander students' diverse experiences with their racial, ethnic, and cultural identity development.

Theoretical Framework. This study was rooted in the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT), highlighting the tenet of counter-storytelling, and Community Cultural

Wealth as a lens through which to interpret the collected data from this study (Jones & Abes, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005). A CRT framework, within the context of qualitative research, asserts notions that (a) racism is endemic to United States society and thus important to consider in critical research, (b) challenge traditionally-held concepts of objectivity, colorblindness, and race-neutrality given this context, (c) challenge ahistorical euro centrism, asserting the importance of the histories and experiences of communities of color, (d) value the narratives of people of color as a legitimate and critical source of knowledge, (e) is interdisciplinary in nature, and (f) produce literature that works toward justice and eliminating oppression for historically marginalized communities (Jones & Abes, 2013; Wright & Balutski, 2013; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993). Incorporating CRT into the the study's analysis will underline the importance of students' unique stories and experiences to highlight strengths, concerns, and needs in relation to experiences shaped by their racial, ethnic, and cultural identity that have historically been silenced within the context of higher education.

Within CRT, counter-storytelling is defined as a tenet that challenges dominant narratives about racism and people of color by centering the experiences of those experiencing the various forms of racism (Jones & Abes, 2013). This redefining of narrative allows readers and researchers to understand racism in a more complex and nuanced way. By rooting the foundation of the current study in elements of this tenet, the researcher hopes to illuminate the stories and experiences shared in the most authentic, effective, and justice-oriented way possible.

The act of counter-storytelling ties in directly with the concept of Community Cultural Wealth as studied and defined by Yosso (2005), which centers on the often unrecognized cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by historically marginalized groups. Prior to the contributions from scholars on community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005; Huber, 2009; Liou,

Antrop-González, & Cooper, 2009), knowledge was conceptualized as the source of cultural capital held by individuals in the middle and upper class while marginalized populations were determined to lack this capital, which could only be gained through family or education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This notion has been widely used as a mechanism to perpetuate social inequality between various classes as much research focuses on ways to increase access to education while diminishing and not recognizing the value of other forms of cultural capital already possessed by marginalized communities. This deficit approach is especially prevalent in research centering Pacific Islander identity and underlines a need for studies on this specific community (Poon et al., 2015; EPIC & AAAJ, 2014). Thus, rather than focusing the study on what Pacific Islander students are lacking, this study aims to frame the conversation around the community cultural capital (aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic familial, and resistant) that these students possess that most enable them to excel in the higher education setting.

Finally, throughout the research process, it is important for the author to making meaning of biases rather than dismissing them under the guise of false notions of objectivity (Jones et al., 2013). To do this, the author will examine identity in relation to the current study and will observe and note the engagement with participants. It is important for researchers to enhance their understanding of self and identity, not as a way to incorporate their own experiences, perspectives, and assumptions, but as a stage of growth in their own identity development and continued support for students with identities similar and dissimilar to their own.

Methodology. Narrative inquiry, as a form of qualitative methodology, focuses on the \ process of understanding the lived experiences of individuals and a way for participants and researchers to make sense of themselves and the world in the form of narrative sharing (Jones et al., 2013; Creswell, 2013). While narrative inquiry exists in many forms, this study will

specifically focus on the practice of narrative inquiry, in which the researcher records the experiences of participants (Jones et al., 2013). As in feminist dictum and justice movements from the 1960s, the study is founded on the notion that “the personal is political” and thus, the biographical narratives of students of color or other marginalized communities can serve as a critical tool that presents practical knowledge and lived experiences that possess valuable insight into discrepancies in our narratives that must be acknowledged in order to work toward solutions (Jones et al., 2013; Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013).

As a researcher, and particularly as one outside of the identity being examined in this study, it is a critical responsibility to share the experiences in a way that will create voice for participants in explaining their stories in how they see the world rather than imposing one’s own perspectives into the study (Merriam, 2009).

Method. The current study utilized the qualitative method of individual semi-structured interviews to gather and analyze the lived experiences shared by Pacific Islander students at a large predominantly White institution. This was implemented in order to best understand the students’ perspectives in the most authentic and familiar way, following the natural flow of conversation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to emulate informal dialogue and encourage honest and open communication between the researcher and participants as well as allow room for the researcher to ask follow-up questions for further clarification. Through these interviews, the researcher was able to understand how context, socialization, and lived experiences have influenced participants’ identity development and understanding of self in relation to their environment.

Researcher Background and Positionality

It is the researcher's responsibility to disclose any biases, perspectives, and opinions for the interest of this study (Jones et al., 2013; Merriam, 2009) and will be discussed in first-person for the purpose of this section. As a fourth-generation Japanese-Okinawan American who grew up in Hawai'i, I grew up in a predominantly Asian and Polynesian community that defined my cultural identity and interactions with various racial groups. Growing up in a community often referred to as a "melting pot" (Roher, 2008; Chang, 1996) and being part of one of the predominant racial and ethnic groups in my community, I was surrounded by and familiar with many different Asian and Pacific Island ethnicities and cultures that formed my sense of local identity and what it meant to feel at home. This sense of identity remained stronger and more salient than any of my other social identities from childhood leading into my college career.

It wasn't until graduate school when I began to gain a better understanding of my positionality and the privileges that I have and continue to carry with my social identities as a middle-class fourth generation Japanese-Okinawan-American cis-woman. As a result of my learning and recent growth in regard to racial identity in a larger United States context, I became more aware of the damaging effects of shallow cultural understanding—having knowledge of the present without centering history—and settler mentalities as they became especially salient considering my family's history of immigration to Native Hawaiian land. Knowing this, I believe it is my responsibility as someone who grew up with the Hawaiian community on Hawaiian land, to work toward justice in restoring the rights and power of *kanaka maoli* and other Pacific Islanders and because our liberation as historically oppressed people of color are intertwined.

I understand that as a researcher, I must manage my personal biases to the best of my ability in a way that will not affect the study and interpretations of the participants' experiences

(Jones et al., 2013). In this, I must also manage my role as someone who grew up in a community where my race and ethnicity are highly privileged and researching support for an identity that I have close ties to, but am racially not a part of. With all this said, I acknowledge that the choice of interview questions, research topic, and recruitment of participants can affect the study. However, I hope to counter these privileges by focusing my research questions on students making meaning of their own experiences identity, experiences, and suggestions for institutional support.

Ethics Training

In addition to acknowledging potential biases in this study, it is important to note that the researcher and principle investigator have completed the course in the Protection of Human Research Subjects thorough the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and are certified to conduct research on human subjects. The study has also been approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning data collection and interviewing participants at the institution for the study.

Study Group

Pacific Islander students were identified and contacted to participate in the study based on the participant criteria outlined below. The site for this study was a large, predominantly White university in the Pacific Northwest with a small population of Pacific Islander students. At this particular institution, the total population is upwards of 29,000 students with Pacific Islander students representing approximately 400, or 1.4% of those students, though this data and its labels are largely inconsistent across demographic information collected by higher education institution.

Participant Criteria. The participants were selected for this study based on specific criteria for the research. These criteria include:

- Be 18 years or older.
- Identification as a domestic student—Participants had to indicate whether they were a domestic student for the purpose of the study within the context of the United States. Participants were either born or raised in the United States and attended the university with the assumed privileges of a domestic student.
- Identification as a Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander—Participants had to self-identify as a member within the group classification for the indigenous people of the Pacific regions of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia.
- Active participation in cultural organizations centering Asian, Pacific Islander, and/or indigenous cultural identity—Participants had to identify as a student leader or active member within the university’s Asian and Pacific Islander or Native American cultural centers and/or specific cultural-based student organizations on campus that center Asian and/or Pacific Islander identity at the studied institution.

Participant Recruitment. To recruit participants for this study, the student researcher created and distributed a flyer and email letter through professional staff members of the studied institution’s Asian and Pacific Cultural Center and Native American Cultural Center. These documents described the purpose of the study, the participant criteria, a brief summary of what to expect in participating, and how potential participants were able to contact the student or principal investigator for more information or to participate in the study. Additionally, the student researcher also attended a summit to discuss contemporary issues for Pacific Islander students in higher education and obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to recruit

participants from a student panel who spoke about their racial identities and experiences that day. Finally, snowball sampling, as outlined in Creswell (2013) was utilized as a recruitment effort as participants invited other eligible students within their networks to participate in the study. This will be discussed in later sections, but it is relevant to note that this method was the most effective in recruiting for this study.

Data Collection

The researcher interviewed four students from a large public university in the Pacific Northwest who were selected based on the participant criteria listed above. All participants who volunteered to take part in this study were scheduled for a semi-structured individual interview with the student researcher at a location of their choice or offered by the student researcher if none was requested. Each participant was asked a series of open-ended questions with the interview lengths ranging from forty minutes to an hour and thirty minutes. Due to the semi-structured format of these interviews, follow-up or clarifying questions were asked dependent on participant responses. The participants were free to skip any questions they preferred not to answer. In addition, the researcher took physical notes documenting observations of the participant and interview, including tone, body posture, expressions, and interview environment, as all could be contributing factors to the participants' level of comfort and answers.

As students of historically underrepresented communities on a large college campus, it was critical to ensure the safety of the students who volunteered to participate in this study. In order to protect the identities of the participants, students were required to review the study's consent form and the researcher documented verbal consent from all participants at the time of their interview. Within this consent statement, the researcher requested permission to record interviews on an audio recording device for analysis. The digital recordings, files, and written

notes are held in confidentiality by the researcher. After transcribing the interview data, the researcher contacted each participant to verify the transcribed documents, check for validity and revise as necessary. The researcher then encoded common themes to reveal similarities and differences between shared narratives of the students' experiences. Finally, the researcher removed all personally-identifiable data connected to each participant in order to ensure confidentiality.

Participant Overview

A total of four students who qualified for the research criteria volunteered to participate in the study. For the confidentiality purposes, pseudonyms are used to describe the participants and their experiences in the study. Any and all identifiable data of these participants were removed from the original data held by the researcher. All participants identified as full-time students at the research site and while all identified as Pacific Islander and female, they each represented unique and varied experiences in background, home community, age, year in school, major, and ethnic identity. These differences are outlined in the next chapter.

Data Analysis

As all studies are subject to researcher interpretation, within narrative inquiry it is essential to center participants' experiences and perspectives so as not to misinterpret the data by limiting interpretations solely to the researcher's own experiences and perspective (Jones et al., 2013; Merriam, 2009). To interpret the data collected from participant interviews, transcriptions were created to analyze for common themes across all four student experiences regarding their shared experiences as Pacific Islander students at a large predominantly White institution. As the sole interpreter of the data, it is impossible to eliminate all researcher bias. However, it is important to honor and most accurately reflect the experiences of the students who volunteered

in this study by not inserting personal experiences or reflections from the researcher and avoiding leading questions that may be irrelevant to the students' experiences (Merriam, 2009).

After transcribing the data collected from participant interviews, analyzing narrative inquiry requires a process of coding in order to best gain a holistic understanding of the experiences shared and the meanings behind them (Jones et al., 2013). Jones et al. (2013) and Creswell (2013) have organized this process of coding into two steps: (1) open and initial coding and (2) axial and focused coding. The first phase of coding requires looking for and distinguishing distinct concepts and categories within the data, breaking them down to the basic units for analysis without imposing preconceived notions of what those shared concepts could be. The second phase of coding requires the researcher to use their own concepts and categories while reexamining the data to confirm accuracy of concepts gathered and explore big picture relationships across those concepts and categories (Jones et al., 2013). This process was created to allow for a greater and more accurate understanding of themes and their meaning.

In congruence with quantitative research and analysis, the objective of data analysis is to establish validity and accuracy in the study as a framework (Creswell, 2013). Establishing validity in the case of qualitative research requires researcher bias recognition and trustworthiness, assessing participants' shared experiences in a way that best communicates their constructions of reality and understandings of their experience (Merriam, 2009). Knowing this, the researcher is responsible to abide by their ethics training, and organization in an approach that is meaningful and valid for all participants (Merriam, 2009).

Member checking. After transcribing data from participant interviews, the researcher shared transcriptions with students, providing time for students to validate the documents for accuracy and revise for changes if necessary. Within narrative inquiry, member checking is a

method to verify participant responses that may have been misheard or misunderstood by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). This process provides researchers the opportunity to more fully understand and assess what participants intended to communicate in their shared experiences and allow them to provide additional information if they feel their answers did not accurately account for everything they wished to share. Further, researchers emphasize that this process allows for elaboration of emerging findings and themes as newly acquired data rather than simple participant verification of the data (Jones et al, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

Audit trail. As a form of verification and validity within qualitative study, it is important for the researcher to have a detailed and transparent description of all documented data, observations, categories, and decisions made in the process of analyzing and interpreting data collected from the study so that it is accurately reported and consistent throughout the research process (Merriam, 2009). This detailed documentation is essential to allow the researcher to fully engage with the data and its interpretations while noting and reflecting on how that data was collected and how decisions to analyze in distinctive ways were made in the process (Merriam, 2009).

Limitations of Data Collection

While the number of participants who took part in the study reflected the small percentage of Pacific Islander students at the predominantly White institution that served as the study's research site, recruiting participants to participate in the study was challenging and relied largely on referral sampling within the group of students who already participated. While this method of sampling and the fact that all participants identified as female represent some limitations in the study, it is also important to note that all four participants represented a variety in home community, ethnic backgrounds, years in school, and academic majors.

As a study grounded in the counter-storytelling tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT), the questions and experiences centralizing race for a historically marginalized identity may have aligned students to share more of their negative experiences associated with their identity as endemic racism is a core tenet of this theory (Jones & Abes, 2013; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993). However, by intersecting critical theory with the qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry and Yosso's (2005) concept of Community Cultural Wealth, it is the hope that this study addresses systems of power, privilege, and oppression in a way that honors these participants' experiences in a validating and empowering, rather than deficit-focused, framework (Jones & Abes, 2013).

Based on the personal and relationship-based way in which participants were recruited and interviews were conducted, the researcher believes that participants answered questions honestly and openly and thus provided authentic themes for the researcher to analyze in their shared experiences and narratives. While this may be a potential paradox in most forms of research, I believe the relationship-based recruiting and interviewing was key to the success of this study, which will be further discussed in chapter four.

Summary

In this qualitative study, the researcher examines the experiences of four Pacific Islander students in their transition into the university and experiences as Pacific Islander students at a predominantly White institution in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. The researcher founded this study and its qualitative methodology in the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, specifically focusing on counter-storytelling and Community Cultural Wealth as a lens of analysis to counter traditionally-held narratives focused on a deficit perspective of communities of color in higher education. The researcher interviewed four

students, transcribed, and coded these interviews in order to identify themes that emerged in the data to better understand the experiences of Pacific Islander students in higher education. The findings and analysis of this study are outlined in chapter four.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Through four semi-structured interviews, the goal of this study was to create a better understanding of Pacific Islander student experiences in regard to their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities at a predominantly White institution. The results outlined in this section underline four central research questions.

- What is the historical significance and influence of identity politics on Pacific Islander students in higher education?
- How has familial, community, and institutional context influenced students' understanding of their Pacific Islander identities leading into their transition into college?
- How do these identities impact and show up in their college experience?
- How can the institution better support Pacific Islander student success and identity development during their college career?

Interviews were transcribed and coded to determine three central themes that emerged from the data. These themes are outlined in this chapter and are discussed with narratives, direct participant quotes, and overall reflection of the analysis in narrative inquiry and counter-storytelling as a foundation for the research. These will reflect the analysis of narrative inquiry in the understanding and meaning making processes of the lived experiences shared by the individuals who took part in the study (Creswell, 2013; Jones et al., 2013).

The following sections will introduce the four participants within this study, illuminate their experiences as Pacific Islanders in their predominantly White college campus, and highlight the three primary themes of the study, discussed in the participants' shared narratives and researcher's analysis.

Participant Overview

Table 1 presents an overview of the four participants in this study. The table is organized by participant, year in college, self-identified racial and ethnic identities as described when asked in their respective interviews, and their home community prior to enrolling in their current institution to provide some overall context for their experiences. The names used to describe the participants and their experiences are pseudonyms that were chosen by the students.

Participant Overview

Participant	Year	Race	Ethnicity	Home Prior to University
Leo	Nontraditional Student	Pacific Islander, Asian, Native Hawaiian	Native Hawaiian, Japanese, German, Portuguese, Irish, Welsh	Hawai'i
Nina	Junior	Mixed Race, Pacific Islander	German, Yapese, Chamorro, Filipina, Carolinian	Northern Mariana Islands
Tatiana	Senior	Mixed Race Asian, Pacific Islander, White	Native Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Okinawan, German, Dutch, Mohawk	Hawai'i
Sophia	Junior	Pacific Islander	Tongan-American	Utah, California

Participant Summaries

Leo. Leo is a nontraditional student who graduated with her bachelor's degree in Education from a small private liberal arts college in the Pacific Northwest, spent time working as an educator, and is currently a second year graduate student. She spent most of her life living and working in her small community back home where she is a fifth-generation Hawaiian homesteader, only living in the Pacific Northwest during the time in which she attended college, but intends on staying on the continental United States to pursue work in supporting Native and

Indigenous students. While mixed race, Leo primarily identifies with her Native Hawaiian and Japanese ethnic identity, as these were most salient to her experience growing up.

Nina. Nina is a third-year student from the Northern Mariana Island of Tinian who is studying Political Science and Peace Studies at her current institution. While a mixed race person, she identifies as a Pacific Islander but more so with her Chamorro ethnic identity because she's never felt connected with her other ethnicities or racial identity and grew up within the small island community and collectivist culture of her Chamorro ethnicity. She firmly believes that what we do as people are heavily influenced by our ethnicity and culture in which we grew up, because that is how ideologies, values, and beliefs, so ethnic identity is essential to understanding self, but that race is important to understand the context of your identity and resources available within institutions like higher education. In her transition into college, Nina wanted to focus solely on academics and mostly kept to herself, not wanting to make a lot of friends in her challenges communicating across cultures, even though she was highly involved in extracurricular activities in high school. Currently a highly-involved student leader in college, she attributes her involvement to the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP), her initial leadership positions in housing, and her relationship with her Residential Assistant, who encouraged her to get involved and participated in study abroad with her and is one of her best friends.

Tatiana. Tatiana is a fourth-year student from the island of 'Oahu who is currently studying exercise and sport science at the university. Coming from a working middle class background in a small, close-knit community back home, she is the oldest of six and was adopted by her grandparents. Racially, she identifies as Asian and Pacific Islander or Polynesian, but most strongly identifies with her Native Hawaiian ancestry, which makes up 48% of her ethnic

identity, though added her frustration that this disqualifies her from Hawaiian homesteads, which require a 50% blood quantum. Growing up on 'Oahu, Tatiana identifies closely with local culture in Hawai'i more so than with her Native culture because she was never involved with a *hālau* (Hawaiian academy) or hula school, rather, she more closely relates to the inviting interactions between people and cultures. She currently is involved with the Pacific Islander club on campus and works at the campus Native American Longhouse, noting her comfort there because the people who work there and at other cultural centers who identify with their cultures are often a lot more understanding.

Sophia. Sophia is a third-year student who was born in Utah then moved to California when she was five years old. She is the oldest of two and is from a family where both of her parents migrated from the island of Tonga in the late 80s. She grew up in a low-income community in a small town in the Bay Area where everyone knew each other and a majority of her community there were Polynesian, African American, and Hispanic. Growing up, she always identified as Tongan or Tongan-American because she grew up in a strict household with “traditional” gender roles and high regard for elders. Her family plays a strong role in reminding her on how and why she should represent Tonga when she's not home, and how she represents the next generation of taking over responsibilities for her home community. She cites the Educational Opportunity Program, Cultural Resource Centers, and support from her EOP Counselor for her successful transition into the university and currently serves as the President of the Pacific Islander club on her campus.

Findings

The findings based on the data are organized into three general themes: multicultural and transnational student perspectives, experiences of racism at the university, and community

support and engagement. These three themes illustrate trends across the multiple narratives of the participants prior to and during their time at the institution. Each theme will be discussed in depth and illustrated with direct quotes from the the participant data. These themes emerged from the open and initial coding and axial and focused coding analysis implemented by the researcher onto the narratives, highlighting common phrases and shared experiences from all participants (Jones et al, 2013). This process allowed the researcher to focus on dominant themes and commonalities from all participants in relation to the study as a whole, connecting each theme and narrative to the larger research questions of the study.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used as the theoretical foundation to examine and understand the participants' experiences as Pacific Islander students at a predominantly White higher education institution, centering race and counter-storytelling at the core of analysis (Renn, 2012). While discussed in the literature review, TribalCrit as an extension of CRT was not utilized in this analysis due to political differences between Pacific Islander and Native American indigenous communities that need to be further assessed before implemented in a meaningful way. Further, Yosso's (2005) concept of Community Cultural Wealth was utilized as a perspective to counter deficit-based models of research typical within studies on students of color and more specifically, Pacific Islander students (Poon et al., 2015).

Theme 1: Multicultural and transnational student perspectives. Politically, the relationship of immigration and citizenship within the United States are complex but critical issues within Pacific Islander communities (EPIC & AAAJ, 2014). While many Pacific Islanders are U.S. citizens, some are foreign-born and hold different types of immigration statuses based on their country or island of birth. These relationships include: U.S. nationals, Compact of Free Association (COFA) migrants, and immigrants from islands without U.S. Association, all of

which have varied eligibility for public benefits. For the purpose of this study, only students who identify as domestic students were eligible to participate in order to have a consistent understanding of the benefits students are eligible for though the researcher recognizes the limitations of this exclusion. This qualification, however, spoke to an interesting intersection of multicultural and transnational student perspectives that exist even within the experiences of the participants.

Cultural values and place-based identity. Across narratives, all participants spoke to their pre-college experiences of racial, ethnic, and cultural identity as something they understood very differently back home than in their college experience and reflected on making sense of those identities and racialized experiences in their new environment. All participants spoke about coming from small collectivistic communities where their various Pacific Island ethnic identities were most salient to them because of the culture in which they grew up. As highlighted by Nina, “I connect more with my ethnicity, and because I grew up in the culture of my ethnicity, I connect more with that.” Rather than using overarching racial identities like Asian and Pacific Islander, participants came from hometowns where communities of color and their cultures were more prevalent thus diminishing the need for racial categorizations in that way as discussed in Chang’s (1996) examination on race relations and panethnicity in Hawai‘i.

In an intersection of values, politics, and place, many students most closely spoke to the recognition of racial identity coming from a place-based perspective. For example, Leo noted that, “back home, like no one really talks about race, it’s not really a thing, like you either from, if you’re either local you’re either an immigrant or you’re a white person. So there’s those three things—or a tourist.” This sentiment was reflected by Nina and Tatiana who reflected on the social and economic changes they witnessed in their community as a result of a surge in tourism

and nonlocals moving into their home community without respect to the culture and understanding of community that locals who have been there for generations possess. Nina further highlighted their understanding and confusion of identity in connection to place and in relation to the inconsistency of institutional awareness for these differences:

...expanding from that is my recognition as a person who's a domestic student but also has a transnational experience, or transcultural experience because, for example, at the MU they only raise flags that are for international students and I'm like well, I'm pretty sure I saw a Guam flag up there and they're not international as well, like how do you incorporate students who come from different parts of the world and are domestic students but don't identify with domestic student culture?

Understanding of race and racism. Because of an understanding of place-based identity, all participants spoke to their experiences talking about race and racism back home in a much different context than they have experienced at their current institution. When asked how families and home communities contributed to understandings of race and racism, all participants talked about the lack of racialized dialogue back home, but a distinct understanding of the responsibility in what it means to be a part of their Pacific Island ethnic identities. Sophia reflected, "I don't think we really talked about the racial issues, but just I feel like my family, they—they remind me why I should represent Tonga when I'm not at home...coming back to school, it's like...wow I gotta like make sure that I represent them when I'm not there." Leo shared similar sentiment, noting that race was never discussed, but responsibility to family and representing their community and future as a Native Hawaiian was a prevalent theme growing up and to this day. Tatiana spoke to the mixed race culture in Hawai'i having a different historical context and understanding of race relations upon moving to the continental U.S.:

One thing that I really—I realized that I really liked about Hawai'i, is that racism there is so different. Like when I came up here and like, you know, being ignorant and not knowing that it was such a strong subject here, you know I would say stupid things, things like the n-word, and like, because in Hawai'i like, we don't say those things like...with hate. Racism—it's not really a hot topic in Hawai'i. I mean, compared to up

here it's not really a big deal, just because everyone's so integrated, you know? I mean, you make jokes, like, Podagee and stuff like that, but it wasn't necessarily like, a conversation, you know?

The narratives shared by the four participants illustrated the role place has played in the cultivation of their personal identity development and context in which they brought these ideas to their college experience. For most of the participants, this meant an understanding of culture and self in a way that presented race and racism back home much differently than their experiences at their predominantly White institution and can affect ways in which individuals connect with their ethnic or racial communities upon entering a university. This was further illustrated in the participants' reflection of experiences of racism at their institution.

Theme 2: Experiences of racism at the university. In their interviews, participants reflected on their narratives at the university and how these racialized experiences contributed to their knowledge and understanding of identity on institutional and individual levels. Across experiences, all participants spoke to their experiences trying to navigate how to bridge their identity back home to who they were in school, highlighting themes of language, racial categorization, and shared experiences of oppression that made salient their understanding of self in the context of navigating a new environment and predominantly White space.

Language. Three of the four participants spoke to the importance of language as a salient aspect that connects them to their cultural and Native identity, but is largely stifled on their college campus through fear of lack of respect for the way they speak. Nina lamented, "...the way I speak; this is not the way I speak back home. So I was struggling with trying to do the American accent and I always felt like when I didn't successfully articulate my thoughts in that manner, I wasn't as intelligent." Tatiana spoke to her experiences with microaggressions she faced upon entering the campus and local community:

I had to deal with “alohas” oh my God that was so weird. So I have this shirt that says ‘aloha’ on it and I was walking in downtown like, my freshman year, and this lady saw my shirt and she goes, “oh aloha!” and I was like, “hi...” *laughter* um and I had to deal with you know, my white friends because I was dating a white boy I was hanging out with his white friends all the time and you know saying stupid stuff like, “aloha broha...howzit?” ...I mean I get that they were trying to, you know, be one with me but at the same time it was very offensive, you know? And I see that now that that wasn’t necessarily just pure fun...I didn’t really understand why I was bothered by it, but now that I look back at it, like I see that it was—it was kind of almost mockery, to the point where I—I used to speak moke like a lot, like I used to just, “ho sup?” you know? And um, I ended up stopping because like, I constantly was asking myself, “Do I sound like an idiot?”

This experience spoke to the intersection of participants’ challenge in finding community while maintaining their cultural identity and representing the communities from which they are from. At the time of her experience, Tatiana recognized the discomfort in hearing her language being bastardized, but didn’t speak to or necessarily understand the broader implications of that experience until later in her college career. While most participants mentioned being multilingual and spoke in several dialects, their experiences with others’ exotification, shallow cultural consumption, and lack of understanding for their languages diminished the value of their linguistic capital in the broader community and resulted in the consequent silencing of the participants. One participant shared the history of political oppression of the Hawaiian language and how her experiences at the university have perpetuated this form of oppression, making it harder to find and build ties to identity and home:

One thing that really gets to me is that I don’t know my language. I mean identifying mostly Native Hawaiian, like, it’s sad to me that I don’t know my language because when I do speak it, like I say the words like um, I don’t know give me a Hawaiian word—*mokulē’ia*, you know like, stuff like that, you know it comes naturally to me, like, I feel like the word forming in my mouth isn’t foreign. It’s—it’s very much there and it makes me sad to know that I can’t speak it. That it’s not just an automatic thing. *snaps* Um and so like, it’s very heartwarming to me, and also like, heartbreaking when I hear other people speaking their language. When I hear um, you know Hispanics speaking Spanish, or I guess Chinese people speaking Chinese and stuff like that, it’s like, oh good for you, but at the same time, God I wish I knew my language. I wish it wasn’t banned you know, back then so that it would be prevalent in my life.

This impact of language showed up not just on an interpersonal level, but also on an institutional level in the way these students were perceived academically and professionally. Looking back on her experiences, Tatiana talked about being fired from a previous job on campus because of the way she spoke, which her boss regarded as unprofessional in manner. At the time, the student wasn't sure what she said wrong even upon reaching out to her manager and didn't connect her experience as potential a form of racial discrimination until sharing it with a Pacific Islander mentor on campus much later. Not being sure whether or not what happened was discrimination, the student didn't pursue any further action. Not recognizing or discussing experiences of racism and microaggressions of Pacific Islanders in broader discussions of social justice further contributed to the lack of student's self advocacy, marginalization, and lack of support on her campus. These experiences are further illustrated as symptoms of a broader disregard and marginalization of Pacific Islander identities on an institutional level.

Institutional neglect. As mentioned in the first theme, the participants' understanding and language of race and racism back home were very salient, but discussed very differently compared to their experiences at the university. Coming from communities that were predominantly people of color of diverse and like-backgrounds, aspects of colonialism and issues with new settlers in their community were pervasive themes that shaped participants' understanding of identity based on culture and place. Participants spoke to misguided understandings of those identities on an institutional level in the way that race-based services are organized and provided to Pacific Islanders. One aspect of this was the uneasy coalition between Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the form of the Asian and Pacific Cultural Center

(APCC) on campus. Nina described their experience attending an open house for Asian Americans and Pacific Islander students in her first year:

I didn't really understand like APCC, I was like okay, there's gonna be a lot of Pacific Islanders. So I went, and everyone was Asian, it was like just me and my cousin who were like brown. And I felt really small and really marginalized and so we left immediately. So I definitely strayed away from that space. And so this year, I'm trying to learn how to embrace that allyship and although I still don't like it when Asian and Pacific are put together.

This event at the cultural center spoke to a shared disregard by the institution experienced across students who share a transnational experience. She also spoke to the connection shared with international students in her frustration after that event:

I have friends who are from all over the world...and so they really make me try and understand what it means to be a person of color domestically, but also internationally. Like, there's also that disregard for international students who identify with different races. For example, I was expressing my struggle with the APCC and my friend said, "Well yeah I also don't like it when they put all the African and African Americans together because it's totally different too." And so that sort of like, oh I didn't realize that we weren't the only people that were being marginalized within an already marginalized community.

In these experiences of marginalization, participants reflected on the dissonance experienced and how they brought to light different aspects of their identity and what it means to be Pacific Islander on a predominantly White campus. These marginalizing experiences also took place in the academic space, where professors shared problematic capitalistic views of Pacific Island nations as communities not worthy of discussion because of the perceived value Pacific Islanders have politically, although many of their relations with the United States were forced upon them, exploiting the islands as strategic locations for war. These experiences demonstrate that by not recognizing the sociopolitical histories and current experiences of Pacific Islander students and their respective communities, institutions exacerbate their marginalization. This shows up in inauthentic coalition building, shallow understanding of culture, and

inappropriate demonstrations of support through the creation of API-based resources, such as Asian and Pacific events or spaces, without considering the reason behind this pairing. This was a sentiment shared even among participants who possessed Asian and Pacific Islander identities;

Tatiana shared:

I love the Asian and Pacific Cultural Center, but Asians and Pacific Islanders are two different things... I mean as Asian as I am, they are two different things, and I mean, when you talk to people and you ask them, you know, why is it called Asian and Pacific Islander or, why are they lumped together, it's you know—that's because that's how the Westerners like, conquered us. You know cause they "found" us, so Pacific Islanders and Asians and...all mixed in together...and I don't—I don't like that...I'm Asian, but I mean being that I identify more with my Pacific Islander side, it's kind of frustrating me. You know? And that's why—that's one of the reasons why I side more toward the Polynesian or Pacific Islander Club, as opposed to Hawai'i Club, because Hawai'i Club is more affiliated with the APCC, which is Asians.

Another was through recognition beginning in the application process. Nina shared her sentiment and feelings of exclusion and misunderstanding from the institution evidenced in something as small and as early as the application process.

[Admissions] doesn't really reflect the identities here...there was like, Polynesian and like, Hawaiian or something, and like, that does not make any sense [because Hawaiian falls within Polynesian], or like Micronesian and like, it made no sense. So I know it takes a lot of money to change the admissions applications but it's super super important because it like, that's like the first step in applying so it sort of gives you a feel of how the university is gonna recognize you.

Theme 3: Community Support and Engagement. Throughout their experiences at the university, while all participants spoke to issues of racism, marginalization, and challenges in navigating their predominantly White campus, they shared several strengths and positive experiences that largely contributed to their successful transition into, and experience within the university. All participants spoke to at least one or two peers or mentors and communities who played pivotal roles in getting them engaged on their college campus in leadership opportunities, which further led to social identity training and broader understandings of self, as Tatiana

discussed in her job training for the Native American Longhouse. In the same way that family and home communities play an ongoing role in these students lives, so do these individuals and experiences in their college career.

Across experiences, all participants shared stories of individuals and support services that played a critical role in supporting their success at the university, sharing a theme of close and ongoing authentic relationships between themselves and individuals at the university. While all students enrolled in the university with skills and backgrounds in leadership, it wasn't until individuals within the university approached them and got to know them on a personal and meaningful level. Nina reflected:

I kept to myself, I didn't want to make a lot of friends...my RA was the one who was like, "Hey, you should get involved." So I got involved with hall council and that sort of made me understand the university culture more because I was exposed more to how people from the mainland communicate, number one; number two, how networking works, and number three, having a more sophisticated mindset in event planning...My Resident Assistant was really helpful; she's now one of my best friends...they see me and recognize my struggle and they validate it and then they push me to do more with it.

Without the support and advocacy from peers and mentors encouraging the participants to engage in leadership roles, it's unclear in what capacities the participants would have had explored their identities on an institutional level given their experiences of racism, discrimination, and mistrust within the university.

Toward the end of the participants' interviews, the researcher asked why they think it is important for individuals to explore their racial, ethnic, and/or cultural identity. Throughout all of the interviews, it was clear that participants came into their higher education experience with strong understandings of who they were culturally and ethnically, but hadn't considered what those identities meant in the larger context of race, privilege, power, and oppression within the

United States until reflecting upon it in college due to understandings of race prior to attending the university. Nina shared:

I firmly believe that a lot of what we do is influenced by our ethnicity—our ethnic identities because that's sort of where we grew up, that was our culture, that's how your ideologies were shaped and that's how your beliefs were shaped, and so just understanding your ethnic identity helps you understand yourself. Especially in relation to other people. And then with your race, it's very important to understand what your race means in the context of the higher education institution because there is a lot of oppression for people of color, and your race in that sort of race to that degree is very influential in the resources you're able to access.

The participants also spoke to the importance of identity development as a means to advance justice so that they don't recreate the oppression faced by their communities back home. Interestingly to note, while some participants shared experiences of internalized White supremacy and racism some members of their home community demonstrated earlier in their interviews, these instances were never discussed with aversion to their elders or communities, rather, recognition of truths and experiences other than their own. This corroborated Perez's (2005) discussion and speaks to the importance of recognizing the history of Americanization and political oppression that continues to be salient in these communities today. As Nina shared:

I feel like you all really need to discover what it truly means to be, to have all of these identities because we need to use that discovery to think critically about our decisions and how our lives will play out in the future. So if I don't, if I hadn't discovered...the person that's faced by oppression in my identity as a Pacific Islander and Chamorro, then I probably would've still gone into Political Science and probably be oppressive in that field.

Finally, the participants reflected on the strengths they shared with the elders and ancestors within their community and the aspirational capital they possessed in the histories of oppression that their communities have survived to be where they are today. This sentiment speaks to the capital students of color, particularly Pacific Islanders, possess because of their strong bonds to sense of self through home, culture, and community. Tatiana reflected:

It's definitely important to look into your background like, for me, you know, when I feel like, "god I'm so stupid, I can't get this" I think about how like, during the overthrow, Hawaiians were like the smartest people out there because they were so like, interested in the knowledge and learning everything that this new foreign Western culture was bringing forth. And so, I think you know, I can do this. You know? And I think that having those roots and knowing those different avenues of how your people would act or do things, definitely affects how you take on the world.

These reflections illustrate some of the positive effects identity development and institutional support have on Pacific Islander student success both within the institution and in relation to their culture and home community. Within the institution, authentic relationships between students and mentors such as the residential assistants, cultural centers, and counselors within EOP were pivotal to participants' success and engagement in the university. Comparatively, learning more about their racial, ethnic, and cultural identity provided key implications for the importance each has in students' academic and personal development. Supporting the development of ethnic and cultural identity validated students' backgrounds, providing them with tools for aspirational and navigational capital outlined in Community Cultural Wealth, utilizing their sense of responsibility and strong connection to home to support their persistence in the face of challenges at the university (Yosso, 2005). Comparatively, learning about racial identity in the broader context of the United States provided participants with tools to support their resistance capital, assisting them in recognition and disruption of systems of discrimination and oppression (Yosso, 2005).

Summary

This chapter presented findings examined from the shared experiences of four Pacific Islander students at a predominantly White institution. Chapter four organized this data into three major themes which emerged from the data: multicultural and transnational student perspectives, experiences of racism at the university, and community support. These three themes illuminate

these students' experiences prior, in transition to, and within their institution. CRT, TribalCrit, and the framework of Community Cultural Wealth were utilized as the theoretical foundation and guidelines in analyzing the narratives shared by the participants in an effort to understand and recognize ways to better develop institutional support for Pacific Islander identities.

Each participant had similar but distinctly unique experiences in the ways they've developed and made meaning of their racial identity. Their narratives provide examples of the many challenges, opportunities, and strengths carried by the Pacific Islander community. The following chapter will examine the findings of this study and provide a discussion of the data, implications of the findings, recommendations for higher education professionals, limitations, and concluding statements for the study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the lived experiences of Pacific Islander students and reflections of their racial identity development from their home communities and in their transition into the a predominantly White university. The data collected in this study was organized within four central research questions: (1) What is the historical significance and influence of identity politics on Pacific Islander students in higher education? (2) How has familial, community, and institutional context influenced students' understanding of their Pacific Islander identities leading into their transition into college? (3) How do these identities impact and show up in their college experience? And (4) How can the institution better support Pacific Islander student success and identity development during their college career? Through examining student experiences using the qualitative method of narrative inquiry, rooted in the theoretical framework Critical Race Theory (CRT; Renn, 2012) and Cultural Community Wealth (Yosso, 2005), this research highlighted individual experiences and explored the meaning making processes of the students and their narratives as Pacific Islanders within United States higher education.

The first chapter of this study introduced the topic and definition of terms used throughout the research paper. The second chapter examined relevant literature and existing studies that informed the current work within this research. This literature review highlighted the history, impact, and need to disaggregate Asian Pacific Islander (API) pan-ethnic/pan-racial identity, racial identity development for college students, and how racial identity shows up in the development of multicultural affairs and race-based student services in higher education. The theoretical frameworks of CRT, TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005), and Community Cultural Wealth were highlighted in chapter two and underlined in chapter three as guidelines for data analysis and a means to better understand the Pacific Islander student experiences shared in this study.

Further, chapter three discussed the methodological approach of the current study and the use of narrative inquiry approach as well as the researcher's ethical processes and considerations. The fourth chapter analyzed data collected, presenting findings and analysis organized within three central themes that emerged from the data, utilizing CRT and Community Cultural Wealth in the analytical process. The fifth chapter will present a discussion of the data collected in the study's results exploring implications and recommendations for higher education professionals in student affairs. Finally, the sixth chapter will provide concluding thoughts, revisiting limitations and outlining future research beyond the current study.

Discussion

The Pacific Islander students who volunteered for this study generously shared their pre-college perceptions and experiences transitioning into their university—a large, predominantly White institution in the Pacific Northwest. The four participants spoke to their experiences interacting with their home communities, a higher education institution, and the steps they've taken to develop understanding of what their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities mean and how they have impacted their experience in the context of higher education.

The student participants shared their experiences with the researcher through semi-structured interviews and had the opportunity to reflect on their identities and experience as Pacific Islanders while transitioning into a predominantly White university in the Pacific Northwest. The interview reflection process invited the participants to reflect on influences from their home community, including culture, language, values, and their experiences navigating college as part of a racially marginalized community. These interviews provided data that spoke to experiences of sociopolitical marginalization and CRT framework of Community Cultural Wealth examined in the literature review. The shared narratives and experiences further

supported and elaborated on the existing body of literature on Pacific Islanders in higher education. The three major themes taken from the data are analyzed and discussed in the following subsections.

Multicultural and transnational student perspectives. As mentioned in the previous chapter, each student who participated in this study brought a unique set of perspectives, experiences, and insight to the conversations we had through interviews for this study. While all participants commented that discussions of race back home did not take the same form in conversation as it does on the continental U.S. and in higher education, all discussed how their experiences growing up in their home culture shaped their values and frame of identity. For several students, in their home communities the boundaries of race were more defined by place, time, and situation, in the form of local, immigrant, White, and/or tourist recognition.

While every student asked for clarification around the definitions of race and ethnic identity, situations of cultural and situational identity were incredibly salient. In many ways, the different ethnic makeup of Pacific island communities and salience of host or colonized culture within those communities played a salient role in students' identity development prior to attending their university. One participant noted the similarities she saw between her experiences and those of international students in her living learning community and shared experiences of marginalization and developed biculturalism in the transition from distinctly different physical, social, and cultural communities into their college experience.

Experiences of racism at the university. The majority of participants in this study mentioned varied episodes of erasure, marginalization, and microaggressions in their college experience both in predominantly White and student of color spaces. These experiences varied from institutional to individual experiences. At their institution, this was experienced in feelings

of inferiority in terms of home language and dialect, marginalization, exotification, and job discrimination coupled with indecision on how to make sense of and address their experiences. Several students also spoke about their recognition and the negative influence of internalized racism within their peer communities at home and within the university.

Community support and engagement. Throughout the course of this study, community building, connections, and support played a critical role in the experiences participants opted into throughout the course of their college career, including their participation in this study. Building upon Yosso's (2005) definition of familial, social, and navigational capital, the students in this study all discussed the impact family (as a broad term) played into their success and engagement at the institution. From suggestions to attend their university to participating in co-curricular activities, community building, trust, and connections were key to all students successfully transitioning into and navigating the challenges of their university. The peers, mentors, and friends that they trusted contributed to their transition and challenges toward growth within the university.

All participants further discussed the importance identity development has played for them in growing, learning, and finding a sense of self that connected experiences of oppression to greater communities and goals toward justice. All students spoke to the importance of exploring, understanding, and validating their experiences from home within the university and the role it continues to play in their strengthened sense of purpose, relationships with others, and lives today.

Implications

Colleges and universities provide a space for students to not only develop their technical skills and knowledge, but also a better understanding of themselves and how they make meaning

of their worlds. It is my hope that this study will contribute to the literature, knowledge, and understanding higher education professionals have about Pacific Islanders in the field by challenging preconceived notions and opening perspectives to the complexity of these students' experiences. Throughout the course of this study, identity has been brought to the forefront of the conversation as a means to connect our understanding of Pacific Islander students to the shared lived experiences. Building upon the themes from the student interviews, I present two implications for higher education professionals to consider when supporting Pacific Islander students at their institution.

The first implication from the data cautions higher education professionals to be mindful of how Pacific Islander students identify racially, ethnically, and culturally. As mentioned in prior chapters, a majority of the Pacific Islander population identifies as multiracial (EPIC & AAAJ, 2014), and in a society where understandings of identities such as race are fluid and socially constructed, it is important to both not impose labels and also be aware that some students may not wish to identify with their racial, ethnic, or cultural identity. Second, as discussed in Perez's (2002; 2005) articles on Chamorro identity and the history/current presence of Americanization in their community, it is important not to impose group identification, especially from non-Pacific Islanders, as this can perpetuate paternalist ideas of governance and colonial decision making processes that have historically disempowered Pacific communities and should be left to self-determination. It is important that institutions of higher education work to break the cycle of oppression that have marginalized these groups in the first place. Because of the complexities of the political movements for Native American and Pacific Islander sovereignty, TribalCrit is mentioned, but is not a central theoretical foundation for the current

study. Discussions for practical instructional recommendations, limitations, and future research are explored in the following sections.

Recommendations

The current study examined elements of the successes, challenges, identity development, and overall experiences of Pacific Islanders in higher education. In one of the final interview questions, participants were asked what programs or services they'd implement for students to feel supported and to explore their racial, ethnic, and/or cultural identity development. Building upon the knowledge, suggestions, and experiences participants shared throughout the course of this study, I offer four practical recommendations for student and academic affairs professionals: (1) challenge Pacific Islander identity minimization, stereotypes, and erasure on campus, (2) prioritize cultural competency training in student, faculty, and staff development, (3) develop resources for identity-affirming academic courses, and (4) prioritize authentic community building. These recommendations are explained in depth in the following subsections.

Challenge Pacific Islander minimization, stereotypes, and erasure. As evidenced throughout the study and within the shared student narratives, awareness and acknowledgement of Pacific Islander identity as its own racial category and diverse group of identities remains a persisting issue in the field of higher education, and across institutions in the United States. Akin to problematic colorblind mentalities toward racial injustice, it is impossibly difficult to move any initiatives toward justice for Pacific Islander communities forward if they are persistently unseen and ignored by institutions. As shared by the students in this study and in Pacific Islander literature, three significant themes of minimization, stereotypes, and erasure that perpetuate racism toward these students on campus (Reyes, 2016; Poon et al., 2015; Chang, 1996; Kauanui, 2008).

With the exception of students from Hawai‘i, one of the key issues that participants raised was the concept of being unknown, and further, viewed as insignificant upon revealing who they are and where they come from. While a rapidly growing population within the United States, Pacific Islanders remain a relatively small percentage of the U.S. population, but that the size of a community does not, and should not, diminish its worth. For centuries, the U.S. has been occupying islands in the Pacific Ocean at varying political degrees for material gain and military advantage. Minimizing experiences and identities minimizes injustices and further perpetuates White supremacy and colonialism (Brayboy, 2005).

Shallow cultural knowledge and consumption that show up in the form of stereotypes also prevailed as a significant theme in the narratives shared by students throughout the study. When not considering the history and cultural relevance of items like leis, aloha shirts, and especially language, individuals problematically stereotype and essentialize what it means to be “Hawaiian” and problematically exoticize culture while simultaneously othering other Pacific Islander ethnicities and communities because so much focus is directed toward Hawai‘i and its appropriated culture. Thus, it is important to audit the messages being sent in large scale events and themed parties that nod toward Pacific Islander culture and practices.

Finally, it is of critical importance to audit the language casually used in discussing Pacific Islanders in higher education. When studies, courses, majors, events, etc. label their work as Asian and Pacific Islander (API) or any variation of that broad category, it is important to challenge the accuracy and inclusivity of how that term is being used making sure that it significantly incorporates all within the pan-ethnic umbrella, rather than just using terms for the sake of inclusivity. Further, as referenced in chapter one, it is important not to use the term Hawaiian to mean all residents of Hawai‘i because it uncritically aligns its usage with other U.S.

states, erases the indigenous identity and presence of Native Hawaiians, and contributes to erasure in the media and society, which often conflates Asian Americans and Hawaiians or erases the latter altogether (Sun, 2015; Teves et al., 2015).

Prioritize cultural competency training in student, faculty, and staff development.

As a qualitative study rooted in CRT, the goal of this study is not to create a checklist of everything to know about Pacific Islander students in order to better support them. While several of these recommendations deal with changing semantics as a form of practical change, studies like this are not relevant without a broader understanding of social justice and the importance of cultural competency in higher education and beyond. As higher education institutions have historically played a critical role in the desecration of indigenous languages and cultures through colonial assimilative practices and Americanization (Perez, 2005), it is the responsibility of these institutions to work toward dismantling and actively working against the centuries of injustice perpetuated in our society.

While institutions have and continue to problematically perpetuate many of the practices that have contributed to the oppression students of color face, they also have the opportunity to validate and broaden movements toward justice, as demonstrated in the political organizations—such as the Black Panthers—that were developed at universities during the Civil Rights movement. In organizing student, faculty and staff development, whether through professional development, events, or academic workshops, it is important to not only incorporate but prioritize multicultural competency and social justice to holistically develop and serve the campus and communities as a whole.

Develop resources for identity-affirming academic courses. Related to the previous two recommendations, it is important that knowledge and awareness of Pacific Islander

sociopolitical histories as well as contemporary practices and politics are made available and easily accessed by all members of the higher education community. This could involve creating Pacific Islander studies majors and/or academic courses. More than incorporating texts of Pacific Islander histories, however, I believe it is critically important to create courses that are culturally relevant in content, epistemology, and pedagogy. Rather than focusing on individual ethnic identities, I think it would be more relevant to focus efforts on literature that validates shared cultural and situational experiences with justice and injustice to Pacific Island communities. While constructs of race change over time, the understanding of local, White, and other was a clear theme throughout the student interviews and speak to an understanding of race from situational identity more so than elements of shared cultural identity, though both are important.

Within the interviews, language came up as a resounding theme, both in the way participants understood themselves and also as a form of connection to their Pacific Island culture. As small island communities, I understand that institutions may not have all the resources to design classes for all specific languages and dialects that exist within Pacific Islander ethnicities. However, by ignoring students' multilingual competency, institutions are doing students an injustice, both in not giving credit to the wealth of knowledge they bring to the institution, but also by implying that their language, and therefore identity, does not matter. Several ways to challenge this could be to develop resources for self-guided linguistic studies students can co-design and take for credit, collaborate with other institutions that do teach Pacific Islander languages, and to develop linguistic tests for students to test out of second language requirements.

Tied to the previous recommendation, another suggestion from students in this study is to prioritize the importance of understanding one's own social identities in higher education. By

doing this, students were able to make meaning and sense out of their racialized experiences at an institution and also engaged aspects of their resistance and aspirational capital in working to overcome challenges knowing they have the strength of their communities' histories and resilience within them (Yosso, 2005). I further encourage self-guided research assignments in which students can pull knowledge from their experiences back home so that they know that their narratives have a place and are supported by their higher education experience.

Prioritize authentic community building. Lastly, coming from collectivist cultures and often small, tight-knit communities, trust and authenticity came up as important themes in the research interviews throughout the course of this study. While institutions can and should certainly work to recruit more Pacific Islanders to their universities, their efforts would be remiss without genuine care and relationship building for students within these communities. In the students' experiences, many of their co-curricular experiences and lives outside of the classroom were most impacted by others whom they trusted and felt comfortable with on some level. Whether it was signing up for a student organization, work experience, applying to a leadership position, or even participating in this study, word of mouth and recommendation played a huge role in the experiences these students were involved in. It is a fact that this study would not have been successful without the generous relational aspect of recruiting by the student participants.

At an institutional level, this would involve recruiting not only Pacific Islander students, but also faculty and staff so that students have a consistent mentor to help them navigate the college resources and culture, as many higher education institutions are predominantly White and vastly different from their home communities. To do this, it is important to align the university's hiring process with the student body and goals of the institution itself while

prioritizing implicit bias training for all those involved with the hiring process. As the students in this study demonstrated, their ability to build community, familial, social, and navigational capital largely contributed to their successful transition into and experience at their institution, and are important considerations to take into account when developing institutional goals for these students.

Summary

This chapter summarized the researcher's analysis of the study, delving further into the themes that emerged from the data and presenting several implications recommendations for higher education institutions and future research with these themes in mind. The following chapter will provide concluding thoughts and a summary of the study, limitations, and implications for future research to better understand Pacific Islander student experiences beyond this study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Learning about the history and narratives of Pacific Islander students is essential to understanding how their racial, ethnic, and cultural identity impact and are impacted by experiences within higher education. The goal of this study was to increase institutional understanding of how to provide better, more culturally competent services and resources to support success in these students' college careers and beyond. As Pacific Islander populations steadily increase across the country and within higher education, it is imperative that colleges and universities seek knowledge to better educate themselves on the unique challenges, as well as strengths, that these students bring into the higher education setting so that institutions can support them in the most culturally affirming and justice-oriented means possible.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study provided a glimpse into the lived experiences of four Pacific Islander college students at a predominantly White institution in the Pacific Northwest. As noted in chapter three, there were several limitations in the data collection of this study. While all four students represented a variety of unique identities, narratives, and backgrounds, all were connected through referral sampling method and identified as female, which could have limited the breadth of experiences shared. Additionally, a qualification of this study was domestic student status in order to capture a shared identity in U.S. student experiences. While many Pacific Islanders are U.S. citizens, this leaves out a number of political complexities some Pacific Islander students face in attaining benefits to attend and succeed in higher education, including public benefits (EPIC & AAJ, 2014). As previously mentioned, it is also important to note that the goal of this study was not to essentialize Pacific Islander student experiences nor offer prescriptions on how to best support them in higher education; rather, the goal of this study

was to offer complexity and insight into these students' lived experiences both within the micro and macro interactions with their university.

It is important to note that in the analysis of data, Sophia had the most underrepresented experiences as she grew up on the continental United States while the other students were from islands. The discrepancies in experiences could lead to future studies on geographical and regional differences in the way Pacific Islander identity is experienced.

As Pacific Islander research and literature in higher education student affairs is a relatively young and developing body of work, it is imperative to examine more deeply the intersections of Pacific Islander identity within other aspects of sociopolitical and personal identity including identities such as: *māhū*, *fa'afafine*, *fakaleiti* (third or non-binary gender) and queer identities, student-athlete identities, religious or spiritual identities, migrant statuses, and more. Unfortunately, the current study wasn't able to fully capture the depth of experiences within these intersection of student experience, but hopes to provide valuable insight on historically silenced experiences and persistent forms of oppression that Pacific Islander students experience at higher education institutions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Study Title: Supporting Pacific Islander Student Identity in Higher Education

Dear Student:

My name is Kayla and I am a graduate student in the College Student Services Administration program in the College of Education. The purpose of my research is to understand and identify the emerging themes of Pacific Islander students' experiences and how to support racial, ethnic, and cultural identity development in higher education.

Participants in this study will be asked to have an individual interview with the student researcher (Kayla Kosaki) for no longer than two hours. The individual interviews will be audio-recorded.

The results of this study will be used to write a thesis for a Master of Science (M.S.) degree in College Student Services Administration at Oregon State University.

Qualifications to participate in this study:

1. Must be currently enrolled full-time at Oregon State University.
2. Must be a domestic student at Oregon State University.
3. Must be 18 years or older.
4. Must identify within the U.S. Census definition of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, a group classification for the indigenous people of the Pacific regions of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia, which include ethnic groups such as: Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, Palauan, Tahitian, Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Saipanese, Yapese, Tokelauan, Kosraean, Carolinian, Papua New Guinean, I-Kiribati, Mariana Islander, Solomon Islander, and Ni-Vanuatu.
5. Must be a student leader or an active student member within the Native American Longhouse, Asian Pacific Cultural Center, Hui O Hawai'i, Asian Pacific American Student Union, and/or the Pacific Islander Club of Oregon State University.

If you meet the qualifications for participating in this study, and wish to do so, please email me at kayla.kosaki@oregonstate.edu. I look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your consideration of this request.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to email me.

Sincerely,

Kayla Kosaki
Graduate Assistant, Center for Civic Engagement
Oregon State University

Appendix B: Explanation of Research (Consent Form)**EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH**

Project Title: Supporting Pacific Islander Student Identity in Higher Education
Principal Investigator: Janet Nishihara
Student Researcher: Kayla Kosaki
Version Date: 10302015

Purpose: You are being asked to take part in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to explore Pacific Islander students' cultural identity at higher education institutions through programs, services, interactions, and involvement of the student. This qualitative research is framed through a narrative inquiry methodology to illuminate and better understand the lived experiences of Pacific Islander college students. Individual interviews will be conducted to explore and examine personal experiences of the students while allowing the students to include their personal perspectives. The research will be analyzed through the interpretations of the student researcher.

The study is being conducted by the student researcher for the completion of a Master's thesis in College Student Services Administration.

Activities: The study activities include personal, individual interviews between the participant and the student researcher. The student researcher will also be taking observation notes throughout the interview. Interviews will be audio recorded unless requested otherwise. Interview transcriptions and notes will be sent to participants to review after all interviews are completed. You will be given one week to review the notes and transcript of your interview and asked to respond to the student investigator with any discrepancies between your views and the data. If you do not respond within the given timeline, the student investigator will assume no changes are necessary and data may be used in the study.

Time: Your participation in this study will last no longer than 2 hours.

Risks: The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the being in the study include: Since you are a student at Oregon State University, there is a risk that you could be identified based upon your interview responses. To minimize this risk, pseudonyms will be used during the study.

Please choose a pseudonym for the records of this study: _____

Potential risk, though minimal, may include emotional reactions with regard to reflecting upon your personal experiences and perspectives on racial, ethnic, and cultural identity and the development process. If you feel emotional during the process, I can connect you with support services at Counseling and Psychological Services.

The researcher is using email to communicate with you in this study. There is a risk that the security and confidentiality of information sent by email cannot be guaranteed. Information sent by email can be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or contain viruses. To minimize these risks, the researchers will not open any email accounts, or data files on any public computers. Only private password-protected computers and/or OSU computers with authenticated password logins will be used to access any materials related to this study. This study will not collect any private information via email. Email will only be used for scheduling individual interviews.

Benefit: This study is not designed to benefit you directly.

Payment: You will not be paid for being in this research study.

Confidentiality: It is possible that others could learn that you participated in this study but the information you provide will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Federal regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you.

If the results of this project are published, I will not be connecting your identity to your responses. Only the student researcher and the principal investigator will be able to access the audio recordings. The recordings will only be used for educational purposes of this research and will be erased once the study has been completed. Direct quotes from the interviews may be used in the reporting of the study.

Voluntary: Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. Your decision to take part or not take part in this study will not affect your grades, your relationship with your professors, or standing in the University. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports.

Study contacts: If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Janet Nishihara at janet.nishihara@oregonstate.edu or Kayla Kosaki at kayla.kosaki@oregonstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.

Probe: Tell me about the neighborhood or community you grew up in.

Probe: What is your racial identity? Do you identify with your race?

Probe: What is your ethnicity? Do you identify with your ethnicity?

Probe: Are there any other cultures you strongly identify with?

2. What were your perceptions of college before coming to the university?

Probe: How have your family, friends, or peers influenced these perceptions?

Probe: How were you feeling/what were your reactions to these conversations or experiences?

3. Please describe your transition to the university.

Probe: Did you face any challenges with your racial, ethnic, or cultural identity in your transition?

Probe: Are there any racial, ethnic, or cultural challenges you continue to face at the university?

Probe: What resources were/are most helpful in overcoming these challenges?

4. How have your peers or family influenced your racial identity or your racial identity development?

Probe: How have they supported you in any way to explore your identity? Examples?

5. How have you been involved with the Asian Pacific Cultural Center, the Native American Longhouse, or a cultural club on campus? For how long?

Probe: How has your involvement with these centers influenced how you identify with your race, ethnicity, and/or culture? Please describe.

Probe: Can you identify which programs or services personally supported you in your cultivation of your identities?

Probe: What challenges, if any, do you face in “Asian Pacific Islander” spaces?

6. What other types of support have you received in your racial identity development at the institution?

Probe: How have you been supported by departments or professionals in your development process?

Probe: How have other student groups or organizations supported you in your development process?

Probe: What experiences, programs, or services have supported you in your process?

7. Do you think it is important for an individual to explore their racial, ethnic, or cultural identity? Why or why not?
8. Do you think it's important for the institution to support students explore and develop these identities during their time in college? Why or why not?
9. How important is your racial, ethnic, and/or cultural identity important to you?
10. What programs or services would you implement for students to feel supported and to explore their racial, ethnic, and/or cultural identity development?

Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Exemption Approval



**EXEMPT
 DETERMINATION**

Date of Notification	10/30/2015		
Study ID	7120		
Study Title	Supporting Pacific Islander Student Identity in Higher Education		
Principal Investigator	Janet Nishihara		
Study Team Members	Kayla Kosaki		
Submission Type	Initial Application	Date Acknowledged	10/30/2015
Level	Exempt	Category(ies)	2
Funding Source	Unfunded	Proposal #	N/A
PI on Grant or Contract	N/A	Cayuse #	N/A

The above referenced study was reviewed by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and determined to be exempt from full board review.

EXPIRATION DATE: 10/29/2020
The exemption is valid for 5 years from the date of approval.

Annual renewals are not required. If the research extends beyond the expiration date, the Investigator must request a new exemption. Investigators should submit a final report to the IRB if the project is completed prior to the 5 year term.

Documents included in this review:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recruiting tools | <input type="checkbox"/> External IRB approvals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consent forms | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test instruments | <input type="checkbox"/> Translated documents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assent forms | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment A: Radiation | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment B: Human materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alternative consent | <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative assent | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letters of support | <input type="checkbox"/> Grant/contract | |

Comments:

Principal Investigator responsibilities:

- Certain amendments to this study must be submitted to the IRB for review prior to initiating the change. These amendments may include, but are not limited to, changes in funding, , study population, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment material, sites of research, etc. For more information about the types of changes that require submission of a project revision to the IRB, please see: http://oregonstate.edu/research/irb/sites/default/files/website_guidancedocuments.pdf
- All study team members should be kept informed of the status of the research. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study team members have completed the online ethics training requirement, even if they do not need to be added to the study team via project revision.
- Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others must be submitted to the IRB within three calendar days.
- The Principal Investigator is required to securely store all study related documents on the OSU campus for a minimum of three years post study termination.

Appendix E: Institutional Review Board Research Protocol

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

October 30, 2015

1. Protocol Title: Supporting Pacific Islander Student Identity in Higher Education

PERSONNEL

2. Principal Investigator: Dr. Janet Nishihara
3. Student Researcher(s): Kayla Kosaki
4. Investigator Qualifications

Dr. Janet Nishihara is the Director of Educational Opportunities Program and holds a PhD in Educational Leadership from University of Oregon. Dr. Nishihara has been involved in several campus-wide initiatives, especially those focused on diversity and the support and development of undergraduate students. She has taught numerous courses within Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, and U-Engage.

5. Training and Oversight

Dr. Nishihara and Ms. Kosaki will be meeting frequently to discuss research, establish timelines and benchmarks, and make revisions in preparation for thesis completion and defense. Ms. Kosaki will derive training and knowledge from coursework in research and assessment and assessment experience with various on-campus internships, including her assistantship with the Center for Civic Engagement.

6. Conflict of Interest

The Principal Investigator and Student Researcher report no conflict of interest.

FUNDING

7. Sources of Support for this project (unfunded, pending, or awarded)

This is an unfunded study.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH

8. Description of Research

The purpose of this research study is to examine the exploration of Pacific Islander students' cultural identity at higher education institutions through programs, services, interactions, and involvement of the student. This qualitative research is framed through a narrative inquiry methodology to illuminate and better understand the lived experiences of Pacific Islander college students. Individual interviews will be conducted to explore the personal experiences of the students while allowing the students to include their personal perspectives. The research will be analyzed through the interpretations of the student researcher.

The study is being conducted by the student researcher for the completion of a Master's thesis in College Student Services Administration.

9. Background Justification

Pacific Islander students represent a significantly small number of students at predominantly White institutions, though it is one of the fastest growing racial and ethnic group populations in higher

education and the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In recent years, they have become one of the fastest-growing racial groups within the U.S., growing by 40% between 2000 and 2010, and expected to nearly double in population size by 2030 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). With this increase in representation among the greater U.S. population as a whole, the need for an increase in accessible and culturally relevant resources in higher education has become prominent. While the overall population has increased significantly, Pacific Islander students continue to face challenges of access and retention within higher education institutions. Currently, only 18% of Pacific Islander adults possess bachelor's degrees and only 38% of college-aged youth were enrolled in college in 2011.

These statistics are often overlooked because educational data on Pacific Islander students are often aggregated with Asian American data within a pan-ethnic Asian Pacific Islander (API) or Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) category, masking the distinct narratives, histories, identities, and challenges of these students within higher education. At predominantly white institutions on the continental United States, this identity label and its use within data collection and resource allocation based on prior U.S. Census models may marginalize Pacific Islander students not just within predominantly white campus communities, but from Asian Americans as well, who make up the majority of the AAPI identity. While forms of research and higher education support for AAPI students continues to rise, specific literature and support for Pacific Islander students, staff, and faculty, are not as evident.

This research will examine ways in which support services should continue to adapt and develop to support an increasingly diverse range of students and the challenges they may face in their personal development. This study will utilize qualitative experiences from undergraduate students and examine if there are common themes around the experiences within the responses.

10. Subject Population

- **A description of participant characteristics:** Participants will be full-time, domestic, undergraduate students at Oregon State University. Participants will need to self-identify as a Pacific Islander to participate in this study. Participants may have had experience as a student leader or an active student member within the Native American Longhouse, Asian Pacific Cultural Center, Hui O Hawai'i, Asian Pacific American Student Union, and/or the Pacific Islander Club of Oregon State University. Students will be selected solely at Oregon State University to allow the student researcher to be in continuous contact with the target population.
- **Total target enrollment number:** Twenty-five students. No more than ten students will be interviewed for this study.
- **Description of any vulnerable population(s):** Not applicable to this study.
- **Inclusion and exclusion criteria:** To be eligible in this study, participants must be currently involved as an active student leader or member within Native American Longhouse, Asian Pacific Cultural Center, Hui O Hawai'i, Asian Pacific American Student Union, and/or the Pacific Islander Club of Oregon State University and aged 18 years or older.
- **Recruitment:** Potential participants will be recruited via email invitations utilizing the roster of student leaders and members within Hui O Hawai'i, Asian Pacific American Student Union, and the Pacific Islander Club of Oregon State University and posted fliers within the Asian & Pacific Cultural Center and Native American Longhouse. Fliers will also be shared at a Pacific Islander Summit held at Oregon State University on Monday, November 2, 2015. The recruitment emails and fliers will include:
 - Title of the study

- Name of the PI and the student researcher
- Clear statement that this is research
- Contact information of the PI and student researcher
- Purpose of the research
- **Primary criteria that will be used to determine eligibility for the study:** Those interested in participating will be invited to contact the student researcher via an OSU email account. Respondents will be coded to maintain participant confidentiality. To protect the privacy of participants, the student researcher will not create or use personal email accounts or place any data files associated with this study on public computers. All computer files related to this study will be password protected.
- The student researcher will email consent forms to participants who identify with the qualifications. This will allow the possible subjects to review the eligibility requirements before they agree to enroll in the study. Consent forms, which will be collected at the time of the interview, will be stored in a locked file cabinet.
 - Chronological Sequence
 - Recruit interview participants – subjects should be listed as over 18
 - Conduct audio-recorded interviews with self-volunteered participants
 - Member checking of interview transcripts
 - Code audio interviews to maintain privacy of participants

11. Consent Process

- **Describe where and when consent will be obtained:** Consent will be obtained after the initial contact email has been received from participants indicating that they are interested in participating in the study. The consent form will be in written format and obtained in person in a private setting. The researcher will document verbal consent.
- **Assessment of comprehension:** Consent forms will be sent via email after participants have indicated interest and meet the eligibility requirements. The student researcher will inform the participants to read the consent form thoroughly and ask them if they have any questions or concerns. Also, this will be addressed in person to make sure they understood the consent form and to give them the option to decline participation. They will be informed that, during the interview process, they will be audio recorded and notes may be taken and that their information will be stored in a password protected file by pseudonyms, and their personal identification information will be stored separately in a file and in a different location. They will also be informed that they have the option to not answer all the questions, as well as to opt out from the study at any given time. Additionally, the researcher will inform them that if they choose to withdraw from the study before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected from them and that information may be included in study reports.

12. Eligibility Screening

- Initial eligibility qualifications will be addressed within the email invitation calling for participants. After written consent has been obtained, the researcher will review eligibility qualifications with the participants to ascertain whether they meet the study requirements of being a full-time student currently enrolled at Oregon State University.

- In case the participants do not qualify, all the information obtained (paper and electronic forms) will be immediately deleted. The paper forms will be disposed of appropriately through shredding and confidential disposal containers at OSU. Any electronic forms will be deleted permanently from the student researcher's computer.
- Prior to the screening questions, the researcher will explain to the participants the purpose of the study as well as the method of interview. They will be informed that they will be audio recorded and that hand-written notes will be taken during the interview. They will also be informed that the interview will likely last no more than two hours.

13. Methods and Procedures

- This research will be guided by a qualitative method using semi-structured interviews, and a narrative inquiry methodology to understand and identify the lived experiences of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students at predominantly White institutions. A qualitative method was chosen to understand the students' experiences and utilize their perspectives and voices to centralize the importance of individuals constructing their own reality (Merriam, 2009). Narrative inquiry was the chosen methodology for the research to allow participants the opportunity to share their lived experiences and to emphasize the importance of personal perspective and interpretation.
- If permitted by the participants, the student researcher will audio record subjects' interviews. The student researcher will also take extensive notes during the interviews. Should participants choose to opt out of recording, this will not exclude their data from study.
- The student investigator will be conducting member checking, during which participants will be sent a copy of their interview transcripts to review to ensure that they adequately reflect their responses. Participants will have one week to review and respond.

Data Collection

- Participants in this study will be required to be full-time students who identify as Pacific Islander and are active participants in cultural groups on campus, including Hui O Hawai'i, Asian Pacific American Student Union, and the Pacific Islander Club of Oregon State University. A recruitment email will be sent to members within these student organizations who meet the criteria, and will be asked to volunteer to participate in the study. No more than ten participants will be chosen to participate in the study. The individual interviews will take no longer than two hours and all interviews will be audio-recorded. After obtaining verbal informed consent and ensuring eligibility, the student researcher will ask ten semi-structured questions to learn more about the experiences of students cultivating their racial identity development at a predominantly White institution with the support of cultural centers and student groups. The participants will be free to skip any question they would prefer not to answer.
- Direct quotes may be used upon the subject's confirmation that transcripts of interviews adequately represent their views.
- To ensure confidentiality of the participants in the study, they will be asked to select their own pseudonym throughout the research. Individual interviews will take place in a private academic or co-curricular room on campus. The door will be closed with a sign on the door to not be disturbed.

Data Analysis

- Following each individual interview, the student researcher will transcribe the recorded transcripts. To ensure validity of the transcripts, the student researcher will offer member checking to the participants to ensure the responses are reflected accurately. The student researcher will hand code the transcripts using a data analysis procedure. A research journal will be utilized to write reflections, questions, and comments while coding to fully analyze the transcripts.
- The student researcher will utilize the data analysis procedure outlined by Creswell (2008) to include: reading through the text data; dividing the text into segments of information; labeling the segments of information with codes; reducing any overlap or redundancy within these codes; and finally, collapsing codes into themes (p. 251).

14. Compensation

- Participants will not be compensated as a result of participating in this study.

15. Anonymity or Confidentiality

- Information will be shared and stored in a manner that provides access only to authorized individuals. Data will not be disclosed to additional parties without prior IRB approval specifically authorizing the disclosure. In accordance with the regulations, the PI will securely store all study related documents and data for three years post study termination. Coded information will be kept on a password-protected personal computer with fully patched operating systems and applications with current antivirus software with current virus definitions. Data will remain on said device for a minimum of three years. No direct identifiers will be stored after finishing interviews. No outside researchers will be privy to the identifiers used to code participants. Backups will be kept on a password-protected external hard drive in a locked cabinet at the principal investigator's university office to ensure secure storage.
- During the research process, the first and last names as well as the email addresses of interview participants will be stored separately from the records of the interview sessions. The audio recordings and text documents collected from the interview will be kept in a password-protected file, accessible only to the researchers. Participants' identifiable information will be kept in a separate password-protected electronic document with a coded filename.
- The researchers will not open any email accounts, or data files on any public computers. Only private password-protected computers and/or OSU computers with authenticated password logins will be used to access any materials related to this study.
- The researcher will transcribe the audio recordings in a private room using headphones. During the transcription, the researcher will use participants' pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. The researcher will use her laptop to transcribe the audio files to Word document files. The transcribed files will be password-protected. Only the principle investigator and student research will have access to the password.

16. Risks

- The foreseeable probability of harm or injury (physical, psychological, social, or economic) occurring because of participation in a research study is minimal. The risks are minimal for participants because they are also able to opt out at any time in the study. The time that is

involved in the interview portion of the study is also restricted to two hours maximum. Furthermore, to reduce psychological harm, a constructivist approach will be taken, meaning that multiple truths may exist in the world and students will not be judged negatively based on their responses. The individual stories of students are important for this work. Potential risks, though low, may include emotional reactions with regard to participants reflecting upon their personal opinions and beliefs about identity development.

- Since participants are students at Oregon State University, there is a risk that they could be identified based upon their interview responses. To minimize this risk, pseudonyms will be used during the study. Participants will be selecting their own pseudonyms.
- Since participants are selected based on racial and ethnic identification, the researcher is aware of the risks including student ethnic or racial groups under study. The confidentiality procedures will be followed in an effort to keep the population as non-identifiable as possible.
- The researcher is using email to communicate with participants in this study. There is a risk that the security and confidentiality of information sent by email cannot be guaranteed. Information sent by email can be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or contain viruses. To minimize these risks, the researchers will not open any email or data files on any public computers. Only private password-protected computers and/or OSU computers with authenticated password logins will be used to access any materials related to this study. This study will not collect any private information via email. Email will only be used for scheduling interviews/focus groups.

17. Benefits

- The benefits of this research will fill a gap in the existing literature for increasing our understanding of intersecting racial identity development and the role and support of multicultural centers in the process. This study could give professionals a framework for how to support students in exploring their identity development at public universities.
- This study is not designed to benefit participants directly. This study has foreseeable benefits in understanding and knowledge about cultural, racial, and ethnic identity development within predominantly White institutions.

18. Assessment of the risks and benefits.

- The foreseeable probability of harm or injury (physical, psychological, social, or economic) occurring as a result of participation in a research study is minimal. The risks are minimal for participants because they are also able to opt out at any time in the study. The time that is involved in the interview portion of the study is also restricted to two hours maximum. Furthermore, to reduce psychological harm, a constructivist approach will be taken, meaning that multiple truths may exist in the world and students will not be judged negatively based on their responses. The individual stories of students are important for this work.
- This study has foreseeable benefits in understanding and knowledge around the racial identity development of public university students and will be contributed to published literature.
- The benefits outweigh the risks within this study.