WHAT IS HAWAIIAN?: EXPLORATIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF NATIVE HAWAIIAN COLLEGE WOMEN’S IDENTITIES

V. Leilani Kupo

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2010

Committee:

Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, Advisor

Dr. Vikki Krane
Graduate Faculty Representative

Dr. Patricia K. Kubow

Dr. Dafina L. Stewart
ABSTRACT

Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, Advisor

This qualitative study used narrative data to explore and understand eight Native Hawaiian college women’s conceptions of identity. The utilization of personal storytelling and narrative provided opportunities for deeper exploration and understandings of Hawaiian identity. In addition, the use of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), identity performance constructs, and intersectionality research helped framed the study and provided lenses that acknowledged the impact colonization, societal expectations, and performance of self had on identity construction and understanding. The findings revealed that although all of the women acknowledged the importance of different facets of their identities, their Hawaiian cultural identities were the most significant for each of them. In-depth interviews enabled exploration of their definitions and conceptions of Hawaiian identity. Participants reflected on their experiences involving identity performance, cultural competency, and validation and described ways in which facets of their identities intersected to create unique lived experiences. In addition, participants reflected on their university experiences and discussed how the college experience shaped their understandings of identity.
This work of *aloha* is dedicated to my mom and dad, Karen and Leonard “Butch” Kupo, Jr., who believed in me even when I doubted myself.

*Hali’aloha* [In loving memory]. To my Grandma and Grandpa Kupo. I am who I am today because of you.

To the *wāhine* who shared your stories with me. Without each of you this work would never have become a reality.

I stand on the shoulders of the giants who came before me and learn the knowledge of my ancestors every day.

*Mālama pono*
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A very special mahalo to the generous and kind wāhine who shared their stories with me (Kanoe, Ke’a, Matilda, Mokihana, Pōmai, Rose, U’i, and Undergrad). Mahalo nui loa for trusting me enough to share your wisdom and knowledge. Your experiences are truth and continue to reframe the meaning of Hawaiianess. I dedicate this project to each of you. Aloha no.

To the generous and fantastic members of my dissertation committee: Drs. Maureen E. Wilson, Patricia K. Kubow, Vikki Krane, and Dafina L. Stewart. Without your encouragement and enthusiasm I would not have been able to complete this project. Mahalo for challenging, supporting, and inspiring me throughout this process. I am a better person because of each of you.

A most heartfelt mahalo to Drs. Lilikala Kame’eleihiwa, Michael Pavel, Kristen Renn, Stephanie Waterman, and Erin Kahunawaika’ala Wright who generously shared their time and insight with me. I appreciate the guidance each of you gave me throughout this process. Your work gives me hope and continues to inspire me. It is because of each of you that I have the courage to stand on the shoulders of the giants who came before me.

Mahalo nui loa to Dr. Lilikala Kame’eleihiwa who confirmed the need for me follow my heart and research issues that are important to the Kanaka Māoli/Native Hawaiian community. You reminded me how important it is to be inspired by and learn from my kūpuna and the ‘āina.

Mahalo nui loa to Dr. Erin Kahunawaika’ala Wright. This project could not have occurred without your generosity, guidance, and support. Mahalo for taking a chance on me and being a wonderful role model. You truly embraced me with the spirit of aloha. You give me hope and have encouraged me to continue this work.
To my mom and dad, Karen and Leonard “Butch” Kupo, Jr. Thank you for your unconditional love and support. You have taught me the importance of family, education, and trust. Both of you have earned this degree with me. Yes, you both will have a doctorate by proxy.

To the ‘ohana Lahapa. I am the person I am today because of my ‘ohana and am a reflection of those who came before me. Your love has taught me the importance of sacrifice, aloha, and mālama. I have learned valuable lessons from each of you.

To Auntie Lani Valko, and Auntie Jan Kalolo. Your encouragement and confidence in me have inspired me to continue my education and to reconnect with the traditions and beliefs of ancient and contemporary Hawai‘i. Each of you taught me how to live a life full of aloha.

Mahalo nui loa to the ‘ohana Duldulao, especially Auntie Gay and Uncle Sonny. Thank you so much for supporting me throughout my data collection process. I cherished every minute I spent with all of you. I will never be able to truly thank you for all you have done for me. And to the Palekaiko gang, mahalo for keeping me grounded throughout this process and making sure I was “keepin’ it real.”

Hali’a aloha [In fond memory] of my grandparents. Aloha nui loa to Leonard “Leo” and Grace Kupo, Sr. Both of you showed me that through love and education, all things are possible. Your kind lessons regarding our family, our connection to the ‘āina, and the importance of learning from our past taught me about the spirit of aloha and what it means to be Hawaiian. I complete this project for you.

To my fantastic friends and colleagues: Mary Ann Begley, Vanessa Cozza, Vanessa Elola, Cassandra Jones, Kerry Jones, Lisa Kirchner, Georgianna Martin, Becky Martinez, Xyan Neider, Amanda Suniti Niskodi-Dossett, Michelle Rodems, and Jared Tuberty. Each of you...
made this process more bearable. I appreciate your willingness to challenge, complicate, and support me throughout this educational journey. Your insights and wisdom were so generous and appreciated. I am so thankful to have each of you in my life. Here’s to our future in the academy and our continued friendships. Thank you for sharing this journey with me! *Aloha kaua.*

To my ever supportive and wonderful friends: Sarah Eng, Katie Johnson, Heather Menne, Carrie Schneider, and Stephanie Scudder. Your friendship and willingness to listen to my academic absurdity was so much appreciated over these past four years. Traveling on this long, winding road would not have been the same without each of you.

And last, but not least, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the organizations that financially supported this dissertation project. *Mahalo nui loa.* Without the generous financial support provided by the *ACPA Commission on Professional Preparation- Nevitt Sanford Research Award*, the *ACPA Educational Leadership Foundation*, and *Bowling Green State University Higher Education and Student Affairs Department*, this research project could not have been completed.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GLOSSARY</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are the True Native Hawaiians?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiians in Context</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conception, Definition, and Identity</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Overview</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiraciality of Native Hawaiians</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomics and Education</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonization and Identity</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiians and Education</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Students and Higher Education</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Education</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Research</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Education: An International Perspective</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of the Problem</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Ways of Knowing</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ke’a: “Hawaiian is being humble and grateful”.......................................................... 89

Matilda: “Being Native Hawaiian . . . gives me the right to speak as a
Native Hawaiian”........................................................................................................ 91

Mokihana: “Being open . . . makes me limitless”...................................................... 93

Pōmai: “It is my responsibility to provide identity options for the younger
generation”............................................................................................................. 96

Rose: “I’m not like many Hawaiians”........................................................................ 99

U’i: “I try to give as much aloha as possible”.......................................................... 102

Undergrad: “I love my culture”................................................................................ 104

Themes Underlying the Narratives: The Content and Structure of Identity......... 106

Defining Hawaiian................................................................................................... 106

Markers of Hawaiianaess....................................................................................... 117

Descent: The importance of genealogy................................................................. 117

A biological component: The value of blood .................................................... 120

Language: A means to a greater sense of Hawaiianaess .................................... 122

Hawaiian values and participants’ worldviews.................................................... 126

Hawaiian style .......................................................................................................... 126

Living aloha: A Hawaiian way of life................................................................. 128

Mālama ‘āina: Care for the land............................................................................ 130

‘Ohana: Family........................................................................................................ 131

Kuleana: Responsibility to the collective............................................................. 134

Participating in Cultural Practices ......................................................................... 137

Native Hawaiian Identity: Not Enough and Too Much........................................ 139
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Background Information on Participants</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY

Translations from Pukui and Elbert (1986).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hawaiian Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Hawaiian Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘āina</td>
<td>land, earth</td>
<td>kaona</td>
<td>hidden meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akamai</td>
<td>smart, clever, wise</td>
<td>kapu</td>
<td>taboo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akua</td>
<td>God, goddess, spirit, ghost</td>
<td>kinolau</td>
<td>forms taken by supernatural beings; body forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aliʻi</td>
<td>chief, ruler, monarch, royalty</td>
<td>kōkua</td>
<td>help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aloha</td>
<td>love, hello</td>
<td>kuleana</td>
<td>right, privilege, concern, responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘aumākua</td>
<td>family or personal gods; Spirit ancestors</td>
<td>kumu</td>
<td>teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haʻahaʻa</td>
<td>humility</td>
<td>kūpuna</td>
<td>elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hale</td>
<td>house</td>
<td>loʻi</td>
<td>irrigated terrace; water garden used to grow kalo [taro]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haole</td>
<td>White people, foreigners</td>
<td>lōkahi</td>
<td>unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoʻoponopono</td>
<td>to make right</td>
<td>maʻa</td>
<td>accustom to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hula</td>
<td>traditional Hawaiian dance</td>
<td>mākua</td>
<td>adults, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaʻana like</td>
<td>sharing</td>
<td>mālama</td>
<td>care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kalo</td>
<td>taro; plant used as a food source</td>
<td>mālama ‘āina</td>
<td>care for land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kamaʻāina</td>
<td>native born</td>
<td>mana</td>
<td>energy, spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kānaka Maoli</td>
<td>Native Hawaiian, the original people</td>
<td>moʻolelo</td>
<td>stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian Word</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Hawaiian Word</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>manaʻo</em></td>
<td>thoughts</td>
<td><em>ʻolelo Hawaiʻi</em></td>
<td>Hawaiian language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mōk</em></td>
<td>Slang. Used as a derogatory description of Native Hawaiians; also been reclaimed by Native Hawaiians to describe themselves</td>
<td><em>oli</em></td>
<td>chant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>naʻau</em></td>
<td>heart, guts</td>
<td><em>puka</em></td>
<td>hole, holey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>naʻauao</em></td>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td><em>pule</em></td>
<td>pray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ʻohana</em></td>
<td>family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When some people think about Native Hawaiians, the typical construct that comes to mind are the images that they have encountered on television, in print ads, through stories friends and family have told them about the people and the ‘āina [land], and/or what they saw and experienced on vacation (Halualani, 2002; Kauanui, 2007; Osorio, 2001). Images of women in grass skirts dancing in firelight, men in loin cloths twirling fire poles or carrying food from the imu [in-ground oven], and depictions of the luau are associated with and create the archetypes of the indigenous people of Hawai’i. Descriptions such as exotic, welcoming, hospitable, and entertaining are used to depict Native Hawaiians (Halualani, 2002; Kauanui, 2000; Osorio, 2001). And yet, other images come to mind. These are also images that are full of great mystery, savagery, and ambiguity and have been passed on from generation to generation (Halualani, 2002):

Deep within the historical imagination, there lies the image of a Western explorer surrounded by dark and strange natives. A gold-embossed frame presents the intricately painted figure of James Cook, rifle in hand, who faced the native from the ever-famous Pacific story of Western contact. The naked natives, each indistinguishable from one another, sneak up behind an unsuspecting Cook, with spears in hand, ready to strike at any moment. (p. 1)

This description of the first Western contact with Native Hawaiians has influenced and shaped what it means to be Native Hawaiian in the twenty-first century. This powerful portrayal has created an image of a population that is mysterious, faceless, brown-bodied, and in need of civilization, civilization that only Westerners can bring to their beings and to their communities. These brown-bodied people are portrayed as savage and unpredictable, heathen, and diseased
All of these images and beliefs have shaped the concept of what it means to be a Native Hawaiian and have developed a framework that has been imposed upon the community, which in turn, has impacted identity development, cultural awareness, and cultural practices.

Because of this, the definition of Native Hawaiian (also referred to as Kānaka Maoli [true people]) identity has been contested, defined, and redefined throughout history. Ever since first contact with Western society and the enforcement of colonial and imperialistic practices, the rights and privileges given to the indigenous people of the Hawaiian islands by the ruling Hawaiian ali‘i [chiefs], the Native Hawaiians have been increasingly encroached upon as has their identity. Hawaiian is an identity shaped not only by the Native Hawaiian community, but also by those who conquered and settled the islands for the countries of Russia, England, and the United States (Mykkanen, 2003). In particular, the origins and transformations of a U.S. national identity for Hawaiians have always been fraught with conflict given the history of an illegal armed invasion—a coup d’état—of the Hawaiian Kingdom on January 17, 1893 by a group of White businessmen from the U. S. (Kauanui, 1999). The impact of outsiders on the identity formation and definition of Native Hawaiians has been long-standing and shaped by oppression, assimilation, violence, and colonization.

Keeping this in mind, when one asks the questions, “What does it mean to be Native Hawaiian?” “What does it mean to be Kānaka Maoli?” and “Who are the Native Hawaiians?” the answers will depend on who is asking and answering the questions and the context in which the questions are being asked. Ultimately, the definition is part of a narrative. According to Hall (2000), identity “is always in part a narrative, always in part a kind of representation. It is always within representation. Identity is not something that is formed outside and then we tell
stories about it. It is that which is narrated in one’s own self” (p. 148). Essentially, the answer to the question is, “It depends.” According to the U.S. government, there needs to be proof of blood quantum (Hall, 2005; Halualani, 2002; Kauanui, 1999, 2000, 2007; Osorio, 2001), proof of a specific amount of Native Hawaiian blood in one’s body, a genetic and scientific determination of race. In this instance, biology is what determines one’s Hawaiian identity, as this is a quantifiable measure of Hawaiianess. In contrast, according to Native Hawaiian/Kānaka Maoli community members, one must be able to trace genealogical roots back to the ancient Polynesian settlers. In addition, one must trace genealogical connection to ‘āina [land] and demonstrate knowledge and proof of parentage through, again, genealogy (Hall, 2005; Halualani, 2002; Kame’eleihiwa, 1992; Kauanui, 1999, 2000, 2007; Osorio, 2001). These two definitions are both used to determine Native Hawaiianess and are in consistent conflict with each other. Essentially, the long-standing question is, “What does it mean to be Native Hawaiian/Kānaka Maoli and who can lay claim to this identity?” It is here that many can see that the external (government) and internal (community) definitions of what it means to be Native Hawaiians are often defined yet rarely explored in a higher education context.

The college experience provides opportunities that support and promote college student identity development, and theorists (e.g., Chickering, & Reisser, 1993; McEwen, 2003a) have identified identity development as a central developmental task for college students. Within the college context, cognitive developmental theorists have advocated “introducing dissonance through challenging students’ ways of making meaning” (Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 335) and have emphasized the importance of providing support that helps them make sense of the dissonance (Kegan 1994), “welcomes students, as they are” (Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 335) and encourages them to “become something more.” These intentional
developmental experiences are “critical to the mission of higher education” (p. 335) and assist college students’ identity development processes. This study examines identity development in Native Hawaiian college women and will provide an opportunity to better understand their experiences at college.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine how Native Hawaiian college women construct and make meaning of their identities and how various dimensions of identity may interplay and/or intersect to shape those identities. The focus of this study is on students’ understandings of their identities, rather than on the identities imposed upon them by external forces. Utilizing personal narrative and storytelling, the study provides an opportunity to better understand how the college experience may influence Native Hawaiian college women’s constructions of their identities and may ultimately help college administrators and faculty consider ways to support and promote identity development.

**Research Questions**

Several research questions guided, but did not bind, this study, as the nature of qualitative research requires flexibility as data evolve and move to inform inquiry. These guiding research questions were used in the construction of this qualitative study:

1. How do Native Hawaiian college women describe and make meaning of their identities?
2. How do various dimensions of identity interplay and/or intersect to shape Native Hawaiian college women’s identities?
3. In what ways does the university experience influence Native Hawaiian college women’s concept of identity?
These questions help explore the concept of identity and provide the opportunity for self-definition and meaning-making as well as the opportunity for participants to examine specific aspects of their own identity and what intersections, if any, occur with other aspects of their identity.

**Significance of the Study**

Historically, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders have been ignored in higher education research. Researchers have argued that the population has been too small to analyze. Traditionally, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander students have been included with Asian American students when researching issues in higher education. Researchers have also excluded the Pacific Islander population from studies as they (the researchers) have not been able to find a critical mass or did not have access to a university or community with a large Pacific Islander population. Because of this, it is difficult to find data on the Pacific Islander population, as the information is traditionally linked with Asian American data and can be misleading as there is a higher representation in higher education of Asian American students than Pacific Islanders in the data collected (Gregersen, Nebeker, Seeley, & Lambert, 2004).

Institutions of higher education in Hawai’i have reported increased enrollments of students who identify as Native Hawaiian (University of Hawai’i, 2003). In addition, Kamehameha Schools\(^1\), a Native Hawaiian-serving K-12 institution, has reported that over 90% of their graduates have enrolled in institutions of higher education both in Hawai’i and on the continental United States (Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate, n.d.). With an increase of

\(^1\)Kamehameha Schools (formerly known as Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate) were founded in 1884 by Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, great-granddaughter of Hawai’i’s first supreme sovereign, Kamehameha I. The mission of the schools, as willed by Princess Pauahi, is to provide Hawaiian children with a good education. Kamehameha Schools is one of the largest, most wealthy private charitable trusts in the world (Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate, n.d.).
representation at institutions of higher education, it is clear that it is important to learn more about the Native Hawaiian student population, their needs while attending university, and how community members fit into the overall university community. This population should not be ignored.

Understanding identity will better assist university officials in creating an environment that is supportive of Native Hawaiian students. As McEwen suggested (2003b), “An understanding of the development of various social identities of college students, along with their psychosocial and cognitive-structural development . . . is important for student affairs professionals and faculty” (p. 204). A better understanding will help student affairs professionals and other university officials create services and programs that will assist students in developing a more complex understanding of their identity and provide opportunities that will help students change, develop, and grow (McEwen, 2003a). Although models have been explored regarding various aspects of identity development such as sexual orientation (Cass, 1979; D’Augelli, 1994; Fassinger & Miller, 1997; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996), specific ethnic and racial development (Alvarez, 2002; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Helms, 1990; Helms & Cook, 1999; McIntosh, 2001; Root, 1996), and religious identity (Cannon, 1988; Fowler, 1981; Klein, 1980), models addressing identity development of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have not been explored. The exploration of Native Hawaiian experiences in college will help university officials identify and understand some of the larger issues that impact the community members.

Because of the lack of research regarding the experiences of Native Hawaiians in higher education (Makuakane-Dreschel & Hagedorn, 2000), it is clear that it is an understudied population. The hope is that as administrators and faculty better understand Native Hawaiian
students and their conceptions of self, they will be in a better position to create and provide support services to encourage identity exploration and development, as well as work to promote a campus climate and culture that is welcoming and supportive of Native Hawaiian students. Because of this, faculty and staff will have the opportunity to facilitate these students’ persistence and retention at institutions of higher education. Ultimately, focusing on the concept and understanding of identity within the Native Hawaiian college student population will provide a different understanding of Native Hawaiian experience at university.

**Terminology**

Language needs to be clearly defined within this particular study. Language is a powerful method used for inclusion, exclusion, and definition of what it means to be Native Hawaiian/Kānaka Maoli. Within the Native Hawaiian community and U.S. government contexts, these definitions have historically framed and influenced the boundaries and molding of identity and have included and excluded people from the population since U.S. colonization began in the late 1800s.

Two terms that are frequently misused, confused, and misunderstood are “Hawaiian” and “Native Hawaiian.” As defined by federal legislation, a Native Hawaiian is “a descendant of the aboriginal people who, prior to 1778, occupied and exercised sovereignty in the area that now comprises the State of Hawaii” (H. R. 5, 1988, p. 363). The term “Native Hawaiian” is used more specifically for people of 50% or more Hawaiian ancestry (Trask, 1996). The more generic label of “Hawaiian” includes so-called “full-bloods” as well as those with only a relatively small proportion of ancestry tied to the islands’ original inhabitants (Barringer & Liu, 1994). To further confuse the “Native Hawaiian” versus “Hawaiian” discourse, some people choose to be identified as Kānaka Maoli. Kānaka Maoli, the true people or original people, is the historical
name, and racial identification, of the community known to be descendants from the original Polynesian navigators who settled Ka Pae’Aina [Hawai’i] prior to Western contact.

Due to the political connotations attributed to Kānaka Maoli, Native Hawaiian, and Hawaiian, it is difficult to find one term that will properly describe members of the community. Kauanui (2008) addressed the issue of language and labels by saying:

I use “native Hawaiian” (with a lower case “n”) referring to the 50% definition in any given legal context, whereas I use “Native Hawaiian” (with a capital “N”) when referring to its legal context where it is defined as anyone of Hawaiian ancestry without regard for the blood quantum rule. When not referring to a specific legal definition, “Kanaka Maoli” and “Hawaiian” are used interchangeably to describe those indigenous to Hawai’i. I do so in order to underscore the shift between the two and remind the reader that the term “Hawaiian” does not work as a residency marker in the way “Californian” does. (p. xii)

Kauanui’s clarification of terms illuminates a complex and important need to clarify labels used when discussing Hawaiian identity and concerns. Regarding this issue, Queen Lili’uokalani (1898/1964), Hawai’i’s last monarch, eloquently stated, “When I speak . . . of the Hawaiian people, I refer to the children of the soil—the native inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands and their descendants” (p. 325). Within this context, she is referring to—“an ‘aboriginal people’ with a ‘birthright’” (Kauanui, 2008, p. xii). Though Kānaka Maoli is used throughout much of the contemporary literature as the label for those who are descended from the original settlers of the Hawaiian Islands, the participants in this study referred to themselves as Hawaiian or Native Hawaiian.
Therefore, to honor their personal cultural identification, the terms Native Hawaiian or Hawaiian will be used throughout the body of this manuscript, unless specific language such as Kānaka Maoli is used as labels by participants, researchers, and government bodies.

**Summary**

This chapter serves as an introduction to the complexities that are foundational to Native Hawaiian identity. It is important to acknowledge and explore the issues concerning who and what defines the standards used to classify Native Hawaiians and the impact of those entities. As U.S. governmental bodies continue to create definitions that quantify what it means to be Native Hawaiian through biological markers, and community members continue to fight for the right for self-definition, questions regarding who can claim Native Hawaiian identity and the rights and privileges that accompany such a distinction become apparent. The concept of Native Hawaiian identity is a complex one. Because of this, it is important to explore Native Hawaiian identity through the experiences of Native Hawaiian college students. This point of view provides opportunities to learn about Native Hawaiian identity and helps researchers explore how the collegiate experience impacts identity development. This type of exploration provides opportunities to understand and explore complex and in-depth identity definitions and provides opportunities for community definitions to contest, support, redefine, and dismantle traditional notions and stereotypes regarding Hawaiian identity.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is an overview of literature that was used to inform the researcher’s development of method and purpose. It also includes background regarding population demographics and issues that directly impact Native Hawaiians such as education and socioeconomics. Information regarding how other countries address indigenous education provides a context to reframe and understand indigenous education and experiences in the United States. In addition, it provides an overview of various theories that were used to ground and explore identity and identity development as tied to college student populations.

**Who are the True Native Hawaiians?**

Cultural groups often are identified and understood by expressions, images, and myths of the past (Halualani, 2002). Indigenous groups, in particular, are remembered through constructions of the past such as representations of the first mystical meeting between natives and Western explorers, and images of naked, exotic savages, tribal dance spectacles, and native kings and queens. Descriptions of the past, which invoke a sense of authentic realness and empirical truth in the process of representation, powerfully constitute and frame the nature of a specific group, its origins, and its collective experiences. These enunciations derive from the historical imagination, a force too seductive and powerful to reside as merely a physical structure or a matter of interpretation. Instead, the historical imagination creates a standing narrative that selectively shapes the past, “remembering and forgetting the past” (Halualani, 2002, p. 1) and in this specific context, what it means to claim a Hawaiian identity.

The struggle continues over the right to claim the name and identity “Native Hawaiian.” Not only is there an issue of political rights and privileges that are granted to those who can rightfully claim the identity “Native Hawaiian,” the right to lay claim to use of language,
protocols, dance, and song also are at risk. “Culture is the site of struggle over meanings and practices implicated in a hierarchy of locationalities” (Halualani, 2002, p. xxi). Identity represents the specific epicenter of such a struggle. Hall (1996) framed this as a point of suture. He suggested that the pressure point of the “discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpolate,’ speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses” (p. 5) and is in relation to the “processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’” (p. 6). With this in mind, the racialization and the development of the category “Native Hawaiian” was the beginning of the differentiation between the Native Hawaiian and the White settlers. The rights and privileges assigned to Whiteness and Native Hawaiianess was determined not by the Native Hawaiians, but by the White colonizers who held positions of authority, controlled resources, and, ultimately, developed the rules that governed the former Royal Kingdom of Hawai‘i (Kauanui, 2000; Silva, 2004; Trask, 1993).

Understanding who the Native Hawaiian are, what it means to be Native Hawaiian, and how Native Hawaiians’ understand and define their identity and their community provide opportunities to better understand the indigenous community, connection to culture, and the struggle for sovereignty and self-determination from the U.S. government. When asked the question, “Who are the Hawaiians?” people have difficulty answering this question. “Many non-Hawaiian residents and tourists in Hawai‘i, or those not genealogically linked to a Hawaiian private memory, argue that they are, in fact, ‘Hawaiians’, or from Hawai‘i with the same rights and access to Native Hawaiian culture, music, dance, and material land claims” (Halualani, 2002, p. 5). Since the early 1970s, demands made by Hawaiian sovereignty groups supportive of resistance efforts were, and still are, contested by many state residents who argue that their rights and privileges to claim a “local” or native Hawaiian identity are equally significant to those of
the Hawaiian protesters (Halualani, 2002). “In the extended struggle over sovereign rights, land, and benefits, haoles [Whites/foreigners], Locals, and native [sic] Hawaiians fight over the claim to be truly Hawaiian and native to the islands” (p. 6). Thinking about this, one must start to wonder how such a multivested discourse of nativism historically came into being and how nativism, specifically Hawaiian identity, became liberalized and so abstract that it could be hailed by several different groups.

Understanding the portrayal of Native Hawaiians in history provides significant insight. Halualani (2002) argued that discourses of open nativism and Hawaiianess originate, in part, from a larger influence of the geography and the historical “Hawaiian identity via a representational ambivalence in the mid-1700s through the 1900s via the scientific technology of mapping and circulation of the [geography] in explorer journals, historical narratives, and popular discourses” (Halualani, 2002, p. 6). To further complicate this matter, the struggle over meaning and belonging are intensified by racial politics, cultural misappropriation, and the struggle over economic resources.

**Hawaiians in Context**

The history of colonization and cultural oppression creates a context for a shared cognitive understanding that relates identity to place. For example, calling on this understanding, Kame’eleihiwa (1992) wrote, “Hawaiians have been in Hawai’i for at least two thousand years. As harsh as the past two hundred years have been, there is yet hope; we still exist on earth. After all the horror that has rained down upon us, we are alive. We are a nation of survivors” (p. 321). In a controversial discussion regarding who is Hawaiian, Kame’eleihiwa pointed out the difference between those who have been in Hawai’i for seven generations and those who trace their lineage back 150 generations to the original Polynesian settlers. She wrote,
“It is not enough to wear a flower lei [garland necklace] and kiss people hello to be Hawaiian. They must experience the pain of our continual degradation, perpetuated upon us by foreigners for the past two hundred years, before they can begin to know who we are” (p. 326). To be Native Hawaiian is about more than where one is born and locationality. According to Kame’eleihiwa, being Native Hawaiian is about genealogy, connection to the land, and care for those ancestors who came before and for the descendents who will come after. Ultimately, the privilege of being able to name and define one’s community should be and will be the right of the Native Hawaiians. Until that time, the struggle over self-determination, self-definition, and inclusion will continue.

Conception, Definition, and Identity

There are many conflicting conceptions of Hawaiian identity; however, two are most prevalent within identity politics discussions. First, indigenous conception of Hawaiian identity is very different from the non-indigenous conception (Hall, 2005). Hawaiian identity lies in a genealogical relationship to the ‘aumākua [ancestral spirit], ‘āina [the land], and kānaka [other Hawaiians]. Hawaiians are linked through ‘aumākua, ancestral spirits, and through mākua, [adults/parents]. Hawaiians have a responsibility to mālama the ‘āina [care for the land] and the ‘āina [land] thus cares for us. Genealogies explain relationships to other Hawaiians and—most importantly—where they came from. “Though these elements may be interpreted differently, with them we are Hawaiian no matter what else we might be” (Hall, 2005, p. 405). Without these elements, there are no Hawaiians. Concepts such as “part,” “full,” “50%, or more,” and “less than 50%” are colonial constructions that threaten to divide Hawaiians from each other (Hall, 2005). This conception is a significant departure from the U.S. government’s definition of
native Hawaiian which consists of those “descendants with at least one-half blood quantum of individuals inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778” (HHCA, 1921).

Second, according to the U.S. government, if one has less than 50% of Hawaiian blood, he or she cannot be considered Native Hawaiian, whereas the community definition allows for one who is genealogically connected and may have less than 50% blood quantum to identify as Native Hawaiian or Kānaka Maoli. The difference between the two conceptions of Native Hawaiian identity is drastic and has significant implications regarding access to government resources and access to cultural and community resources. The access to these resources is dependent on how one defines “Native Hawaiian.”

**Demographic Overview**

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders has recently been recognized as its own category within the U.S. Census data collection process (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a, 2000b). According to the 2000 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a), the Native Hawaiian population (alone or in combination with one or more other races) in the United States was 874,414 (.3% of the general U.S. population), and those who reported being Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders alone were 398,835, or .1% of the general U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Those counted as Native Hawaiian were 378,782 or .05% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Of those who reported being Native Hawaiian or Part Hawaiian, 12,843 (3%) reported receiving a bachelor’s degree or higher and 70,074 (17.6%) reported receiving a high school degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a, 2000b).

At the state level, Native Hawaiians make up 9.1% of the State of Hawai`i population. Conversely, they make up 39% of incarcerated inmates in the State of Hawai`i jails and prisons (H. R. C. 203; McGregor, 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b). In 2000, 11,410 (9%) of those
who were identified as being Native Hawaiian reported receiving a bachelor’s degree in the state of Hawai‘i granted by either a public or private institution. (Hayashi, 2006). Specifically, in the University of Hawai‘i system, a multicampus system that includes a total of 10 four-year campuses and community colleges spread throughout the archipelago, enrollment is documented as being 54,426 (University of Hawai‘i, 2010a). Of that enrollment, 22% reported being Caucasian, 14% reported being Native Hawaiian or part Native Hawaiian, 15% reported being Japanese, 6% reported being Chinese, 13% reported being Filipino, 11% reported being Mixed race, 3% reported being Pacific Islander, and 16% are documented as “All Other.” At an individual campus level, the University of Hawai‘i-Manoa campus reported enrollment 20,169. Of that enrollment, 26% reported being Caucasian, 10% reported being Native Hawaiian or part Native Hawaiian, 17% reported being Japanese, 7% reported being Chinese, 8% reported being Filipino, 4% reported being Pacific Islander, 9% reported of being Mixed race and 19% are documented as “All Other” (University of Hawai‘i, 2010b). As demonstrated, there is a significant underrepresentation of Native Hawaiians enrolled in a university system located in the land in which their ancestors settled and populated.

**Multiraciality of Native Hawaiians**

Many Native Hawaiians have a multiracial genealogical background due to a history of colonization efforts that included racial blending (Kauanui, 2000; Osorio, 2001). In addition, Native Hawaiian can be said to be bicultural, living in both indigenous and Western contexts (Kauanui, 2000). Limited literature is available that focuses on the experiences of multiracial and biracial college-aged students at predominantly White institutions (Renn, 2004). The literature that is available focuses on the perceptions of campus climate and transitional issues associated with college students who identify with multiple racial identities (Renn, 2004).
Neither student development theory nor multiracial identity theory address how multiracial/biracial college students make sense of their college environments. Multiracial and biracial students often feel as if they must choose between racial identities and find themselves defining and defending their ethnic and racial identity choices (Renn, 2004). Multiracial/biracial students also encounter issues of racial ambiguity bias which occurs when individuals try to racially profile multiracial/biracial students and either identify the student’s race and/or ethnicity using phenotype as cues or make the students choose one identity over another. The impact of culture may also influence (a) how individuals claim their identities, (b) the fluidity of their identities, and (c) the salience of identity categorization and identification. It will be important to acknowledge the multiraciality of participants as well as the biculturalism they may hold as a value as this may influence sense of self, self-definition, and how participants understand their worldview.

**Socioeconomics and Education**

The size, racial composition, and socioeconomic character of the Native Hawaiian community have been forever altered by Western contact. Despite a high rate of interracial marriage, Native Hawaiians are not fully or equally incorporated into the dominant society (Ong & Leung, 2003). Socioeconomic statistics show the population is below parity with the dominant groups in Hawai‘i, those being White and Asian Americans. Native Hawaiians have been marginalized by a territorial and state educational system that has failed to provide an adequate education and has served as a tool for colonization and assimilation efforts. Though there are signs of positive changes that can address and amend some of the historical wrongs, the future continues to remain uncertain.
The examination of Native Hawaiian educational attainment, which is a key determinant in social and economic status, has revealed that Native Hawaiians have not been fully incorporated as equals in society (Ong & Leung, 2003). Relative to other groups, Native Hawaiians have lower levels of educational attainment, and those who identify as Native Hawaiian alone are even more disadvantaged. A college education is the most important indicator of educational attainment and socioeconomic success (Ong & Leung, 2003). In 2000, where nearly 50% of Japanese and over 40% of Whites ages 25-39 had attained a college education (Ong & Leung), just 16% of Native Hawaiians (both full and part) had attained this level of education. This disparity is due in part to the fact the Native Hawaiian students perform worse than average in public schools, so they are less able to gain entry into four-year colleges and universities. One consequence is that Native Hawaiians are underrepresented at the University of Hawai‘i (Ong & Leung, 2003). For many, getting a college education outside Hawai‘i is not a viable option. Because of lower educational attainment, Native Hawaiians tend to earn less and are less able to accumulate wealth in terms of home ownerships.

**Colonization and Identity**

Colonization has had a lasting impact shaping the definition and concept of indigenous identity (Kauanui, 2000; Trask, 1993). Due to the power structure imposed by colonization, the question of who defines what as native, and even who is defined as native has been taken away from the Native people by Western scholars, government officials, and other technicians (Trask, 1993). The theft of the ability and the privilege of self-definition testifies to the omnipresent power of colonialism and explains why self-definition by Natives of who and what they are brings forth such persistent and, sometimes, fierce denials by the dominant culture (Trask, 1993). Providing Native Hawaiian college students with the opportunity to begin to self-define and
frame Native Hawaiian identity is one way to allow community members to begin to reclaim and define their identity. In addition, it will help practitioners and scholars begin to better understand how the college experience impacts and/or shapes the concept of identity. It will also begin to challenge or enforce the current identity definitions created by non-Kānaka Maoli, as well as provide agency for Native Hawaiian to redefine and shape identity definitions currently applied to them in an educational context.

**Native Hawaiians and Education**

In higher education, studies focusing on Native Hawaiian identity are virtually nonexistent. Halualani’s (2002) groundbreaking study on Hawaiian identity provides us with a critical starting point for the exploration of the Native Hawaiian experience. But, examining the intersection of higher education and Hawaiian identity is something new and unexplored (Wright, 2003). Understanding how the university impacts the concept and development of identity is a starting point for better understanding the Native Hawaiian experience at university and how to better meet the academic and developmental needs of this group as a student community.

**Indigenous Students and Higher Education**

Although studies have not focused on the Native Hawaiian experience in higher education and these students’ concept of identity, researchers have studied indigenous college students, specifically American Indians. These studies found that support from family, perception of university climates, and relationships with faculty and staff are among the factors that influence decisions of persistence and retention (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988; Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Hefferis, & Baysden, 2000). Researchers suggested that faculty and staff should provide opportunities for students to express
and explore their cultural selves, rather than suppress and ignore them (Montgomery et al., 2000). The researchers encourage an exploration of identity within the student community as well as a creation of a space for identity exploration on the college campus as means to promote retention and persistence as well as personal development.

**Value of Education**

According to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), education is among the most important issues facing Hawaiians today (Hayashi, 2006). Many Native Hawaiians believe attaining appropriate educational opportunities is key to personal independence, socioeconomic stability, and collective self-determination. Unfortunately, too few Native Hawaiians have had sufficient opportunity to access quality educational experiences (Hayashi, 2006; Ong & Leung, 2003). In addition, many have not been able to obtain the kinds of education that would allow them to escape the cycles of poverty, dependence, and low self-esteem.

**Higher Education Research**

As identified earlier, there is very little research on the experiences of Native Hawaiian students in higher education (Hagedorn, Lester, Moon, & Tibbets, 2006; Makuakane-Drechsel & Hagedorn, 2000; Wright, 2003). In addition, there is even less information regarding the identity development of Native Hawaiians in higher education (Wright, 2003). Research has focused on issues of persistence and retention education (Hagedorn, Lester, Moon, & Tibbets, 2006; Makuakane-Drechsel & Hagedorn, 2000). Research has shown that there are low retention and persistence rates, however, investigations into why this is the case have not occurred. Wright (2003) examined issues of Native Hawaiian identity and focused on understanding the concept of identity from the perspective of graduates from a Hawaiian Studies program. Beyond this, very little is known about the experiences of Native Hawaiian and how their self-concept shapes and
impacts their university experiences. Because of this, this particular population deserves special attention, specifically because the University of Hawai‘i Community College System enrolls the highest number of Native Hawaiians in the United States (University of Hawai‘i, 2003), and enrollment continues to increase.

**Indigenous Education: An International Perspective**

The delivery of education to indigenous communities by nation-states has been problematic. Historically, nation-states have provided education for indigenous communities that did not incorporate or acknowledge indigenous ways of knowing, values, or culture. The educational opportunities provided were typically used as mechanisms to subordinate and assimilate indigenous community members to dominant culture (Champagne, 2006; Champagne & Abu-Saad, 2006). These educational systems were developed partially because indigenous peoples carry cultures, values, and epistemologies that do not share common ground with the worldviews of the surrounding nation-states or that of the colonizer (Champagne, 2006; Regan, 2005). Furthermore, indigenous peoples claim rights to self-government, exclusive control over land, and rights to maintain cultural autonomy that many Western/dominant communities find difficult to understand and accommodate within their own national worldviews and national goals (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Champagne, 2006; Champagne & Abu-Saad, 2006). In effect, there is little commonality in the political and cultural values and practices shared by national communities and indigenous peoples.

Education is important in indigenous communities (Beresford, 2003a, 2003b; Bishop, 2003; Champagne, 2006), and it intersects with the concepts and values of family, religion, moral order, and political relations (Beresford, 2003b; Champagne, 2006). It is often viewed as a collective, community responsibility (Beresford, 2003a; Bishop, 2003; Bishop & Glynn, 1999;
Champagne & Abu-Saad, 2006; Sims, O’Connor, & Forrest, 2003) and does not focus on preparing children to be competitive in the workforce, nor does it prepare them for the market-driven, individualistic society that they would live in, should they leave their community (Sims et al., 2003). Rather, education focuses on relationships with the environment, the importance of knowledge passed down from elders, the importance of community history, and the teaching of skills and wisdom important to the culture and for survival (Champagne, 2006). In contrast, education in Western culture is generally considered a path to individual and national empowerment and personal success (Beresford, 2003a; Champagne & Abu-Saad, 2006). Most contemporary nation-states have education policies designed to support technical skills training and programs that promote socialization based on dominant cultural values and identity (Abayo, 2006; Champagne & Abu-Saad, 2006). These philosophies generally create conflict in the foundational educational philosophies used to create curriculum for school systems that typically favor Western values and ideals (Champagne, 2006; Bishop, 2003; Bishop & Glynn, 1999), because they reject indigenous values and cultural norms. Examining the role communities have in creating and influencing knowledge transmission in schools is essential to providing a strong culturally relevant educational foundation to indigenous youth. Specifically, indigenous communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia are examining their roles in creating educational opportunities for their communities at the postsecondary level and ensuring that indigenous knowledge systems are inserted into postsecondary curriculum, programs, and services that create welcoming and supportive environments in the academy.

**Recognition of the Problem**

As in the United States, educators, politicians, and indigenous community members in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia have been alarmed by the low college enrollment and
graduation rates of the indigenous populations in each country and have started to examine factors that impact college access and success (Beresford, 2003a; Brady, 1997). The need to integrate indigenous knowledge systems into higher education curriculum has been identified, and it is believed that the insertion and implementation of these knowledge systems would impact retention and persistence of indigenous students. Integration of indigenous knowledge systems in higher education has been difficult for each country, and the integration process has been framed and constructed differently. Many Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australian educators continuously strive to integrate indigenous ways of knowing into the curriculum in order to improve and strengthen indigenous education and are finding various levels of support and success in their efforts. These efforts have created opportunities for partnership between government officials, educators, and indigenous community members; however issues such as accountability measurements, validity of knowledge, and funding need to be prioritized and addressed by the committee before improvements can be made for indigenous education.

**Indigenous Ways of Knowing**

There are many definitions and understandings of what indigenous knowledge is and how to define it. Depending on the context, indigenous knowledge can be viewed as an epistemology, a manner in which one negotiates the world, honoring and care for traditional arts and sciences, ways of transmitting knowledge, history and mythology, and so forth (Champagne, 2006; Regan, 2005). Abayo (2006) defines it as the “intricate knowledge systems acquired throughout generations by communities as they interact with the environment” (p. 180). The definition includes experiences with technology, social, economic, philosophical, learning, and governance systems, and is not just about woven baskets and handicraft for tourists per se. Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) includes “knowledge and skills used to develop
technologies such as looms, textiles, jewelry, and brass-work manufacture instruments, exploring indigenous technological knowledge and knowledge transmission systems, and recasting the potentialities they represent in a context of democratic participation for community, national, and global development” (Abayo, 2006, p. 180). IKS encompass the relationship one has with the world and how one uses the earth and environment to make meaning. Respect for wisdom and the keepers of wisdom, as well as reciprocal knowledge-sharing in which elders and children teach each other (Abayo, 2006; Champagne, 2006; Regan, 2005). Relationships with the surrounding environment are essential components to maintaining and sustaining IKS.

Knowledge is constructed and based on a social context. When people speak of indigenous knowledge, what they are concerned with are non-Western ways of understanding the world (Regan, 2005). Indigenous knowledge systems continue to coexist with Western constructions of knowledge in many parts of the world, even as they continue to be denigrated and rejected as “unscientific” and even “primitive” and “backward” (Abayo, 2006; Regan, 2005). In fact, indigenous knowledges are bodies of knowledge and understanding that have developed and evolved over time, and therefore contain significant quantities of information and connection about the world in which we live. To be sure, not all indigenous knowledge is correct, but then neither is much of the knowledge that is believed as part of the Western intellectual and scholarly tradition (Regan, 2005, p. 251).

Indigenous knowledge systems are valuable to understanding the world and assist with viewing the world in different contexts, acknowledging relationships with people, the earth, and the interconnectedness with nature. Indigenous knowledge systems place value in the interconnectedness and places value on relationships with people and environments. This different way of understanding and examining problems allows for many voices to be heard and
for their values and points of views to be listened to and included in discussions and solutions (Abayo, 2006; Champagne, 2006; Regan, 2005). Understanding how IKS can be integrated into Western systems of higher education is essential to the sustainability of indigenous education and the academic success of indigenous college students worldwide.

**Indigenous Education**

Supporting indigenous knowledge in the academy is a continuous struggle. Misrepresentations of IKS, misinterpretations, and incorrect assumptions regarding indigenous ways of knowing are often reflected in contemporary research methodologies and inserted into indigenous issues and research (Champagne & Abu-Saad, 2006). Academics who support IKS address these concerns constantly and must negotiate between two different knowledge systems and spaces of knowing (Champagne, 2006; Regan, 2005). They recognize these struggles and the importance of keeping Western values separate from indigenous research. Yet, attempts to rethink, re-contest, and reform traditional “Western oriented” ways of knowing the “indigenous” remains a challenge (Abayo, 2006; Benham, 2003; Beresford, 2003a; Champagne, 2006; Regan, 2005). Indigenous knowledge scholars and advocates must think about how they can effectively confront this challenge and begin to gain allies and supporters in the Western center for knowledge transmission called the university.

In recognition of issues regarding the conflict between indigenous and Western education, many indigenous communities have begun to examine their role in creating accessible education for their youth. Article 15 of the United Nation’s Draft Declaration of Indigenous People’s Rights proclaims:

Indigenous children have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State. All Indigenous peoples also have this right and the right to establish and control their
educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. (Center for World Indigenous Studies, 2007)

Though indigenous communities recognize their rights to culturally relevant education, gaining support for their needs and negotiating Western-based higher education structures is often difficult. Indigenous students, particularly college students, subjected to mainstream ideals, values, and interpretations of history and reality, are often progressively alienated socially, intellectually, and culturally (Abayo, 2006; Beresford, 2003a; Champagne, 2006) as they typically do not conform to dominant cultural worldviews and have been associated with communities that have often been labeled as other, which can negatively impact decisions regarding persistence in the academy.

The nation-state’s education processes are aimed at assimilating indigenous students, transforming their values, and producing allegiances to mainstream culture and society (Beresford, 2003a; Brady, 1997; Champagne, 2006). Not sharing mainstream values and orientations, many indigenous students are not fulfilled in the education processes and drop out of school at relatively high rates (Beresford, 2003a; Brady, 1997). Instances of low enrollment, high attrition, and low retention and persistence rates, as compared to peers who are identified as part of dominant culture, are indicative of struggles indigenous students have in school. Particularly in higher education, low numbers of indigenous students are enrolled in four-year colleges and universities (Beresford, 2003a; Brady, 1997) and even lower numbers graduate with four-year degrees. In order to thrive in the higher education system, indigenous peoples must form more holistic/contextual cultures and strong support systems that honor their cultural values and support their journey through higher education (Beresford, 2003a; Brady, 1997). Yet, if they
choose to continue their education to obtain a degree from an institution of higher education, they typically have little choice but to participate in research and teaching programs that either devalue or do not recognize their cultural identities (Maani, 2000), as there are few institutions of higher education that focus on or value IKS and place value on Western ways of knowing. The insertion of IKS in higher education is one way to address the needs to indigenous peoples in the academy.

Understanding indigenous experiences in higher education on an international level not only provides U.S. faculty and staff with an understanding of how issues in indigenous education are similar and different, but also offers a framework for professionals to better understand context and analyze indigenous issues in the United States. The ability to reframe and re-examine issues in indigenous education from an international perspective affords professionals the opportunity to better understand current concerns and issues as well as understand how other countries are experiencing and addressing these shared issues.

**Identity Development Research**

At its most basic core, identity is the continuous crafting and representation of oneself and one’s community(ies) (hooks, 1992). According to Josselson (1990), who studied women’s identity formation, it is in the understanding of one’s identity on which one “bases her sense of herself as well as her vision of the structure of her life. Identity incorporates a woman’s choices for herself, her priorities, and the guiding principles by which she makes decisions” (p. 3).

Though Josselson focused her studies on women’s identity formation, her definition of identity can be applied in many contexts. As reflected in the literature, identity is very complex. It is fluid, multidimensional, and contextual (Hall, 1996; hooks, 1992; Omi & Winant, 1994; Walker,
According to Freire (1968/1993, 2005), the educational process is critically important to the psychological liberation of those who have been colonized. Indigenous peoples’ involvement in the development and transformation of education, which has been historically used as a tool for colonization, can be used as a tool for indigenous peoples’ educational success and empowerment. Currently, Native Hawaiians have established their own forms of schooling (Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate, 1993), and found these forms to promote academic success within the Native Hawaiian community. These forms of schooling incorporated forms such as the integration of Native Hawaiian practices and protocols in the school curriculum, provided children to learn from Native Hawaiian teachers and staff who served as role models, and promoted cultural exploration and understanding. These are areas in which the mainstream U.S. public schools failed (Wright, 2003). A key part of the educational process involved the deliberate cultivation and shaping of students’ individual and collective identities (Wright, 2003).

The challenge for current educational researchers is to understand how this educational process influences these students and their self-concepts, and how, in turn, this understanding can be used to improve, expand, and even transform educational institutions (Sheets & Hollins, 1999).

**Identity Development Models**

Identity and identity development have been the focus of many researchers’ agendas in higher education. Understanding an “individual’s sense of uniqueness, of knowing who one is, and who one is not” (Harris, 1995, p. 1) has been a goal for many researchers, as understanding
one’s self concept provides a better understanding of how one navigates social roles in society. As Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested, the clear development of a sense of one’s social identity is a significant developmental task that students often attend to in college. In addition, identity development models “describe a process of increasing differentiation in the sense of self and the integration of that growing complexity” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 23) into a more complete and coherent sense of self.

Identity can be seen as socially constructed, and the aspects of identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, social class) are not fixed, immutable categories (Shih & Sanchez, 2009). A social constructionist perspective on identity focuses greater attention on the relationship between external factors and identity formation (Gergen, 2000; Omi & Winant, 1994; Weber, 1998). Rather than focusing on the stages of identity development, a social constructionist perspective considers identity as socially, historically, politically, and culturally constructed (Omi & Winant, 1994). Gergen (2000) expanded on the concept of socially constructed identities, suggesting that identities are relational and, as people develop numerous relationships in an increasingly complex society, it becomes “difficult to recall precisely to what core essence one must remain true” (p. 150). Rather than being committed to a single, fixed identity, Gergen explained that “one’s condition is continuously emergent, reformed, and redirected as one moves through the sea of ever-changing relationships. In the case of ‘Who am I?’ it is a teeming world of provisional possibilities” (p. 139). Weber (1998) identified social constructionism as a common theme within scholarship exploring relationships among race, class, gender, and sexuality. The construction of identity occurs at both the institutional and individual levels and is considered through social, historical, and political frameworks (Omi & Winant, 1994; Weber, 1998).
**Erikson’s theory of identity development.** A wealth of scholarship on identity development is based on the work of Erik Erikson (1959/1980). Erikson acknowledged that individuals have an internal relationship with themselves and external relationships with others. Identity “connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others” (p. 109). Characteristics of a growing sense of identity include “a feeling of being home in one’s body, a sense of ‘knowing where one is going,’ and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count” (pp. 127–128). This sense of identity is an ongoing cycle of loss of identity and regaining identity, each time developing a better understanding of self and more economical means of identity achievement. Erikson described eight stages through which identity develops over the life span. Each stage is distinguished by a psychosocial “crisis” that must be resolved by balancing the internal self with the external environment. The first four stages occur during childhood to form the basis of identity. The fifth stage, which Erikson labeled “identity versus identity diffusion,” marks the transition between childhood and adulthood and is a call to define the self and resolve identity. This fifth stage is most frequently referred to when examining college student identity development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Erikson explained that achievement of identity is essential to adulthood and is dependent on developmental accomplishments such as wholeness, autonomy, differentiation of self from others, separation from family, and making commitments in career choice and relationships. Although influential, Erikson’s work has been critiqued for its over-reliance on samples of White, middle-class males (Josselson, 1990). This specific limitation to Erikson’s scholarship reflects the time period in which he conducted his research and does not detract from his work as foundational for more recent scholarship.
Multiple dimensions of identity. The Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000) portrays a dynamic construction of identity and the impact shifting frameworks can have on the relative salience of multiple identity dimensions, such as race, sexual orientation, culture, and social class. It also provides a framework for exploring how the interaction of multiple identities contributes to the complexity of individual dimensions. According to Jones and McEwen (2000), identity dimensions are portrayed as intersecting rings, signifying how “no one dimension may be understood singularly; it can be understood only in relation to other dimensions” (pp. 409–410). The focal point of the identity dimension is the core sense of self, consisting of “valued personal attributes and characteristics” (Jones, 1997, p. 383). Encasing the core and aspects of identity is the context in which a person experiences her life, such as family, sociocultural conditions, and current experiences. The salience of each identity dimension to the core sense of self is fluid and depends on contextual influences (Jones & McEwen, 2000). However, given the complexity associated with negotiating sometimes conflicting identity dimensions, the salience of which interacts with contextual influences, a more holistic perspective on identity construction considers not only its interaction with other dimensions of identity, but also its interaction with other domains of development.

Much of the recent literature on multiple identities in student affairs scholarship references Abes et al.’s (2007) model of multiple dimensions of identity (e.g., Chavez, Guido-DiBrito, & Mallory, 2003; Davis, 2002; Love, Bock, Jannarone, & Richardson 2005; Miville, Darlington, Whitlock, & Mulligan, 2005). The model offers a conceptual depiction of relationships among college students’ socially constructed identity dimensions, recognizing that each dimension cannot be fully understood in isolation from current experiences. The salience
of each identity dimension to the core is fluid and depends on contextual influences (Abes et al., 2007).

Many existing studies about college students negotiating multiple identities contain an implicit assumption that facets of identity can be separated. Facets of identity are treated as, and believed to be, independent of one another, and are uni-dimensional (Stewart, personal communication, April 21, 2009). However, challenges to this assumption regarding independent aspects of identity have been asserted by feminist scholars (Anzaldúa, 1999; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1994; Elenes, 2003; hooks, 1992), who believe that facets of identity intersect and influence how one understands aspects of one’s social identity. Rather than asserting the independent nature of various facets of identity, the aspects intersect and influence each other. It is through the intersections of multiple identities that one understands his or her individual identity. These intersections are not as distinct from some other “core” identity that is free, somehow, of influence by social identity facets. The MMDI (Abes et al., 2007) reflects privileged identities and does not have to consider the factors as relevant parts of the self.

**Ethnic identity.** Many theorists have studied and proposed definitions of ethnic identity. Tajfel (1981) believed ethnic identity was part of self-concept, which related to an individual’s sense of belonging to a particular social group and the importance and value he or she put on his or her membership. In contrast, Rosenthal and Hrynevich (1985) discussed ethnic identity in terms of the experiences distinctive to different groups. These differences included an awareness of boundaries between one’s own group and other ethnic groups. Phinney, DuPont, Espinosa, Revill, and Sanders (1994) added specificity to the broader definitions. They defined ethnic identity as the “feeling of belonging to one’s group, a clear understanding of the meaning of one’s [group] membership, positive attitudes towards the group, familiarity with its history and
culture, and involvement in its practices” (Phinney et al., 1994, p. 169). Ethnic identity theory, as defined by Phinney et al., proposes that there is an inherent understanding of the foundational practices and knowledge associated with particular cultures, and involvement in practice is an important component.

The concept of ethnicity becomes complicated with the exploration of race theory. Upon an initial review, the definitions proposed for racial and ethnic identity theories reveal that they are remarkably similar. Most scholars would agree that the only unique component of the definitions is found in the choice of descriptor used to describe the group—racial or ethnic. As Trimble, Helms, and Root (2003) observed, “ethnic and racial identity are overlapping constructs, but their distinctiveness flows from the emphasis placed on the seemingly interchangeable terms . . . the emphasis of the source of the identity varies” (pp. 243–244). Most scholars would also agree that “race is not ethnicity” (Helms & Talleyrand, 1997, p. 1246), that there are far fewer racial groups than ethnic groups, and that within ethnic groups, there are multiple racial groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). Although there are many books and articles with racial identity as a core theme, Phinney and Kohatsu (1997) offered a similar definition, describing racial identity as the perception of a shared racial history and the identification with one’s racial group. The similarities in the two definitions are clear—perception of a shared heritage with a racial group to which an individual ascribes membership.

**Phinney’s ethnic identity development theory.** Ethnic identity development, according to Phinney (2004), is an aspect of becoming an adult. Becoming an adult involves figuring out who one is, and includes personal growth that helps one find a sense of direction and purpose in life, making decisions regarding career, lifestyle, beliefs, gender roles, political orientation, and finding a niche or a comfort zone. Essentially, it is about developing a secure identity.
The process is difficult for most young people, because of the complex world in which they live and the many choices they have to make (Phinney, 1993, 2004). “Young people from ethnic minority groups face all these challenges, but have additional challenges as well. As ethnic minorities, they belong to groups that are lower in status and power in society, are less well-represented in society, are subject to prejudice and discrimination, and may hold values different from those of the larger society” (Phinney, 2004, ¶ 2). They must come to understand the meaning and implications of these differences and make decisions about how to live with their dual, perhaps multiple, cultural heritage and status in society. Young people from ethnic minority groups, therefore, face additional identity tasks (Phinney, 2004). These include developing an understanding of the implication of ethnic group differences, figuring out how to relate to their own group(s) and the larger society, establishing feelings of self-worth in face of conflicting messages about their group(s), and developing ways to respond to prejudice and other forms of bias and oppression. These tasks constitute the process of ethnic identity formation (Phinney, 2004).

Phinney’s Model of Ethnic Identity Development (1993) is comprised of three stages. In stage one, Diffusion-Foreclosure, a person may experience feelings of ambivalence regarding their ethnicity. The stage is characterized by the lack of exploration of ethnicity and suggests that minority subjects initially accept the values and attitudes of the majority culture, which include internalized negative views of their own group held by the majority. During stage two, Moratorium, a person may experience feelings of hostility or shame regarding his or her ethnicity. Self reflection begins to occur and questions such as, “Who am I” may be explored. Attitudes and feelings regarding his or her ethnicity begin to develop as well. The last stage is Identity Achievement, in which pride and acceptance occur. During this stage, a person may
better understand who he or she is and embrace his or her ethnicity. The ideal outcome of the identity process is characterized by a clear, confident sense of one’s own ethnicity. According to Phinney (1993), Identity Achievement corresponds to acceptance and internalization of one’s ethnicity.

According to Phinney (1993), ethnic identity formation is a complex, dynamic process involving both exploration and commitment. Ethnic identity exploration and commitment are both strongly influenced by context and environment. Contexts change with migration and also vary with age, as one moves from home, to school, to college, and work settings (Phinney, 2004). He focused on the process of ethnic identity formation and the way in which individuals come to understand the implications of their ethnicity and make decisions about its role in their lives, regardless of the extent of their ethnic involvement.

**Borderland identities.** Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) constructed the Border Identity Theory, which led to an understanding of Chicana identity and subjectivity that recognized class, race, nationality, and sexual discontinuities within the Chicana/o community because the models that had been developed did not reflect Chicana/o identity development and was not seen as relevant to examinations and/or discussions that focused on Chicana/o identity. The *Borderlands* is a discourse that shares a language of fluidity, migration, postcolonialism, and displacement of identities of people who are outside of the hegemonic power structure (Elenes, 2003). The *Borderlands* is a discourse of people who live between different worlds that explains social conditions of people with hybrid identities. Though favored by Chicana and Chicano scholars (Elenes, 2003), Border Identity Theory allows conversation and conception of identity to move beyond binary constructions. It is a “discourse and identity of difference and displacement” (p. 191). Identity formation is never a construction that any subject creates by herself. Identities are
co-constructed by the subject and society at large (Anzaldúa, 1999; Elenes, 2003). This takes place as the subject is labeled as “inferior,” passive, or often unmarked, which denotes normality (Elenes, 2003).

This construction of borderland identity can also be used when understanding identity in the Native Hawaiian community as it provides a frame and context that values language and culture and recognizes the importance of identifying and navigating multiple facets of identity. It also provides a means to discuss the navigation of multiple identity facets and provides a space that allows for people to discuss their conceptions of identities as both isolated and interacting facets that create a unique lived experience. The construction of an inferior “Other” has been attributed to Kānaka Maoli, since first contact with Western colonizers in 1778, when Captain Cook first landed on the archipelago (Halualani, 2002). Much of the Native Hawaiian struggle has been to reclaim what was lost after British and United States colonization efforts: land, language, culture, and identity (Trask, 1993). Because Native Hawaiian are marginalized people in the United States, because they have been the objects and subjects of assimilationist policies, and because their culture, language, and customs have been considered inferior (Silva, 1999; Trask, 1993), Native Hawaiians need to construct their own notion of identity and subjectivity (Elenes, 2003). Similar to the borderland identity discourse addressed by Anzaldúa (1999), it is through the self-construction of identity that Native Hawaiian can begin to reclaim their identity. Through the self-construction of identity Native Hawaiian can navigate location and place and define the fluidity of culture and identity within their own contexts. It is through this self-construction that researchers can better understand how the college experience impacts and shapes conception of identity and eventually better understand the relationship of college to Native Hawaiian identity formation and campus experience.
**Root’s frame of multiracial identity.** As many Native Hawaiians have multiracial roots and straddle two or more cultures (Trask, 1993), it is important to understand theoretical frames that honor and recognize multiraciality and the complexities that accompany such identities. Root (1990) presented a model for how individuals might develop and manage marginality or acclimatization. In remarking on studies that attest to the adjustment of biracial people, Root claimed that “it is the marginal status imposed by society rather than the objective mixed race of biracial individual which poses a severe stress to positive identity development” (p. 188). Root emphasized the importance of shifting from seeking approval from others to self-definition. She proposed that healthy identity development for biracial children must include learning strategies for coping with the “otherness” forced on them by a dichotomous, Black/White society, but noted that these children have few models available in this attempt to resolve “other” status.

Root (1990) proposed four strategies for this resolution. These strategies are not mutually exclusive or progressive, and they may exist simultaneously. They share a number of themes. In each, the biracial person accepts both sides of her heritage, she has the right to declare how she chooses to self-identify, she develops personal strategies for coping with social resistance, and she no longer internalizes questions about her identity as inferences that there is something wrong with her.

In the first strategy, biracial people can accept the identity society assigns to them. Root (1990) called this strategy the most tenuous as it depends on external forces, which may change depending on time and place. The second strategy involves identification with both racial groups. This solution can be a positive one if an individual’s personality remains stable across groups and if she is accepted in both groups. Root noted that this strategy does not change other people’s behavior and that the biracial person may need to develop strategies in both groups.
The third strategy is identification with a single racial group. This strategy might look identical to the first one; however, Root calls it *active* rather than *passive*. The individual chooses to identify in a certain way. A major obstacle to this strategy is that an individual does not fit the phenotype of the group with which they identify, in which case she will need to develop strategies to manage questions by the chosen reference group. The fourth strategy for resolution of “other” status is identification as a new racial group. These individuals feel a strong relationship to other biracial people because of their mutual struggle of being marginalized on multiple fronts. They may move fluidly between racial groups but view themselves apart from these reference groups without feeling marginal, because they have developed their own reference group. Root called this resolution positive if the person does not choose it in order to hide or reject any aspect of her racial heritage. Root noted, though, that the greatest challenge to those who choose resolution is that society is just beginning to recognize multiracial status as a viable identity alternative. Root’s model does not propose a series of stages but suggests a number of developmental outcomes.

Root continued to explore border crossings and multiracial identity in her work featured in *The Multiracial Experience* (Root, 1996). Root described four types of border crossings as the ability to subvert the construction of static identity statuses. The border crossings do not exactly match the strategies for resolving marginal status, but allows for one to view them through a postmodern lens, to see the crossings and identities as fluid. In the first type of border crossing, an individual has “both feet in both groups” (p. xxi). Unlike someone who has a foot in two worlds, but both in none, this person is able to hold and merge multiple perspectives simultaneously. A second type of border crossing requires situational ethnicity and situational race, with a conscious shifting of foreground and background as the individual moves across
social group boundaries maintained by race and ethnicity. To Root, this is not identified as “switching loyalties” but a “natural response to race as socially co-constructed by economics, by gender, and by sexual orientation” (p. xxi). The third border crossing is actually not a crossing but rather a decision to sit on the border and to make it the central reference point. These individuals may claim a multiracial label or a “mestiza” consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1999). In the final type of border crossing, an individual creates a home base in one identity and makes occasional forays into other identities, possibly even settling into a new home base. Root (1996) said that this apparent mobility is not racial disloyalty, but rather a strategy to meet psychological, emotional, social, or political needs (p. xxii). As in her earlier model of strategies to resolve “other” status, this final method of border crossing allows for individuals to change their way of identifying over their lifetime. Though not an explicitly developmental model, Root’s (1996) border-crossing paradigm suggests that healthy resolution of multiracial identity in a postmodern world allows an individual consciously to choose a manner of negotiating life in the borderlands of our constructed racial ecology (Renn, 1998, 2004).

**Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems model.** In higher education, traditional, often unquestioned (Renn, 2004), theories related to gender, racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation identities (e.g., Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Cass, 1979; Cross, 1991, 1995; Gilligan, 1977, 1981; Helms, 1990) have been used to examine social identity development. These theories are typically linear, stage theories, and typically are not flexible or do not acknowledge various individual differences and environmental components’ interactions with each other. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Model (1979), as identified by Renn’s (2004) work that focused on mixed-race college students’ identity, counters this tendency to assert linear identity development models by “calling attention to how individual differences and histories interact
with dynamic environments to create a unique pattern of developmental opportunities and outcomes” (Renn, 2004, p. 49). Bronfenbrenner’s model supports the idea that identity construction and deconstruction in complex environments can be ongoing. It also proposes the notion that individuals shape environments as much as environments shape individuals.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecology model suggests that interactions with the environment, which includes individuals, are essential to identity development. He proposed that all individuals experience different types of environmental systems and identified the impact each system has on identity formation. The *microsystem* is the immediate environment in which a person operates and includes family and classroom. The *mesosystem* is the occasion in which two microsystems interact with each other, such as the connection between an individual’s home and school experience. The *exosystem* is described as an environment that is external to an individual’s experience, an environment in which an individual is not involved, but which affects him or her anyway, such as a parent’s or partner’s work environment. The individual may not have direct contact with the environment; however, changes that occur in the workplace that directly impact a parent or partner, will impact the individual. Lastly, the *macrosystem*, refers to the larger cultural context. Each of these systems is characterized by roles, norms (expected behavior) and relationships. For example, an individual usually acts differently within his or her own family than within a classroom. The person may speak more often or have different language patterns at home and interact with others differently. According to Bronfenbrenner, when the relation between different microsystems is a compatible one, identity development occurs more smoothly. It is the acknowledgement of the direct influence environmental systems have on identity formation that provides a broader understanding of the fluid and nuanced processes that comprise identity development.
When analyzing Native Hawaiian identity, this model’s framework may be more appropriate than traditional U.S. college student identity development models as it acknowledges the constantly changing and interacting environments. It acknowledges contextual factors such as history, culture, and politics and their roles in identity formation, and it supports the notion that both the individual and the environment can impact each other—that there are both independent and dependent relationships between the two.

American Indian identity models. While models of racial identity have been developed for other racial ethnic groups, there are currently no empirical models specifically describing the racial or cultural identity development of Pacific Islanders. This is the same case for American Indians. In the case of American Indians, the practical limitations of not being able to fully address the intergroup cultural variations among tribes (Choney, Berryhill-Paapke, & Robbins, 1995) are such that critics have conceded that if researchers are to develop a model for American Indians, they will need to account for the impact of both governmental policies and sociopolitical history upon the American Indian identity (Lomay, 2004). The same case can be made for Native Hawaiians. This model should include the influences of Christianity, forced assimilation, and other acts of oppression. Notably, Choney et al. (1995) have discussed the importance of distinguishing the development of different cultural values for American Indians who have lived on reservations or in other rural areas as compared to those who live in more urban areas. The recommendations emphasize the need to acknowledge the impact colonization, location, and assimilation have had on conception and construction of identity.

Most models developed by scholars have described American Indian cultural worldviews and identity based on unidirectional, monocultural models (Choney et al., 1995; Lomay, 2004). These models fail to consider issues of the navigation of two or more cultures (that of indigenous
and Western), often do not account for assimilation or acculturation, and often address American Indian identity isolation. Many of the current models are grounded in acculturation (Choney et al., 1995). *Acculturation* refers to the extent to which the individual adopts, accepts, and adheres to both majority and tribal cultural values (Choney et al., 1995). These models typically operate from a deficit approach. Some acculturation models have asserted that more adaptive identity development is one that proceeds along a unidirectional path from traditional culture to majority culture, implying the superiority of majority (White) over traditional American Indian culture. Rather than acknowledging issues of biculturalism in identity formation, monocultural models that privilege dominant culture are used.

Because of the difficulty of applying racial identity or acculturation theoretical models to biracial and bicultural individuals, LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) introduced an alternative theoretical model which puts forward that “an individual is able to gain competence within two cultures without losing his or her cultural identity or having to choose one culture over the other” (p. 395). The model allows for the possibility for an individual of a single heritage to know and understand two different cultures (LaFrombroise et al., 1993). It does not assume a hierarchical relationship between the two cultures and posits a bidirectional and intersecting relationship between the culture of origin and the second culture. It suggests that the individual can choose the degree and manner to which he or she will affiliate with the culture of origin or the second culture. Much like Root’s (1990) biracial identity model, the model is fluid and provides for the individual to explore and identify with individual cultural identities while allowing for the ability to choose the degree and manner in which each culture is identified and embodied.
Although the identity models described above have been used to frame and examine identity development, they are not the most appropriate for the analysis of Native Hawaiian college student development. Many of the models are too linear and/or do not place significant value on lived experiences. They also emphasize the importance of the individual rather than acknowledging the influence and value of the collective/community and its impact on identity conception and construction. The models are not reflective of the cultural contexts or indigenous worldviews that inform many Native Hawaiians’ sense of self and community. It is for these reasons that it is important to explore identity construction in a manner that is culturally relevant and appropriate and reframe the ways identity construction are examined and discussed.

**Intersectionality and Identity**

The investigation of the understanding of identity in higher education has typically encompassed the notion of identity salience. *Identity salience* is the idea that one aspect of one’s identity is dominant or at the core of one’s understanding of who he or she is (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000). Though there is an acknowledgement and value of multiple aspects of identity, the relationship each facet has to the other, and an acknowledgement of identity facets to become more or less salient, research has focused mainly on the most salient aspect of an individual’s identity. Because of this, research has positioned the salient aspect (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender), at the core of one’s understanding of self and has focused on that facet as the foundational component in which identity is experienced and understood.

Abes, Jones, and McEwen’s (2007) research on multiple dimensions of identity has recognized multiple aspects of identity and has supported the notion that aspects of identity can, and do, impact each other, as well as interact and have a relationship with the others. However, these facets of identity are seen and treated as isolated, individual aspects of identity (Bowleg,
rather than components that interact with each other. Ultimately, intersections of facets of identity are rarely discussed.

The concept of intersectionality involves the idea that social identities intersect, or have mutually constitutive relations among each other (Crenshaw, 1994; Mullings, 1997; Nakano Glenn, 1999; Shields, 2008). Intersectionality theory emphasizes the idea that an individual’s social identities deeply influence one’s beliefs and experiences (Shields, 2008) and impact how one understands his/her environment. It is the way in which the various aspects of identity interact and intersect that creates the lived experience. Because of this, the individual’s social location, as revealed through the intersecting identities, must be at the forefront of any exploration of individual social identities (e.g., gender, race, class; Nash, 2008; Samuels, 2008; Shields, 2008).

Theories of intersectionality emerged from the writings of women of color during the 1960s and 1970s (Samuels, 2008). The notion that identity is formed with interconnecting and mutually sustaining aspects of identity, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, has permeated Black feminist scholarship for decades (Nash, 2008; Samuels, 2008; Shields, 2008). The origins of intersectionality framework grew out of feminist and womanist scholars of color asserting the viewpoint that most feminist scholarship, at that time, was about educated, middle-class, White women (Shields, 2008) and did not include or acknowledge the experiences of women of color. In addition, these scholars supported the idea that an inclusive view of women’s positionality should acknowledge the intersections gender has with other significant social identities, most notably race (Dill, 1983; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). These particular critiques were representative of strong voices in a “widely expressed concern that
feminist scholarship should more explicitly acknowledge the ways in which social positions and
group membership overlap and change the experience of social identity” (Shields, 2008, p. 303).

A fundamental assumption in every influential theoretical formulation of intersectionality
is that intersectional identities are defined in relation to one another (Nash, 2008). That is,
intersectional identities, as Spelman (1988) observed, are not a set of isolated and individualized
identities like beads on a string. Rather, they are relationally described and changing (e.g.,
Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983; Collins, 1990). As the foundation for theory, the concept of
intersectionality provided a more accurate and manageable way of addressing two issues. First,
the concept provides language that acknowledges and addresses issues recognizing that it is
difficult to discuss one social identity, such as gender, without considering other dimensions of
social structure/social identity (Shields, 2008), such as race or socioeconomic status. The theory
addressed the idea that social structures and social identity have an influential role in gender’s
operation and meaning (Shields, 2008). Second, intersectionality theory has been understood as
a common and applicable descriptive solution to the multiplying features that create and define
social identities. Social identities reach beyond race, class, and gender; they also include age,
ableness, sexual orientation, to name the most salient. According to Risman (2004), “there is
now considerable consensus growing that one must always take into consideration multiple axes
of oppression; to do otherwise presumes the whiteness [sic] of women, the maleness of people of
color, and the heterosexuality of everyone” (p. 442). This notion provides insight regarding the
impact intersectionality has had on feminist work and pedagogy. While there may be broad
agreement as to the fundamental features of a definition of intersectionality, the relation of the
construct to research practice varies considerably. Different ways of construing
“intersectionality” within and between disciplines and individual investigators make it difficult
to establish that the conversation begins from the same point of reference (Shields, 2008). Because of this, intersectionality research provides a frame through which to explore Native Hawaiian college women’s identities.

The women-of-color critique of traditional feminism’s essentialism emphasized the disconnect between feminism’s claims to speak for all women and feminism’s continual negligence to include racial, ethnic, class, and sexual difference(s) (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1981; Higginbotham, 1992; Moraga, 1983; Smith, 1983; Spelman, 1988). Despite popular use of intersectionality theory as a means of conceptualizing identity, a number of contradictions based in the literature remain unchallenged by feminist and antiracist scholarship (Nash, 2008). These unsolved conflicts filter through feminist and antiracist theory, practice, and politics. The conflicts often confuse understandings and concepts of identity and oppression and obscure the common goals of feminist and antiracist scholars’ work (Nash, 2008). Because intersectionality is a primary feminist framework with extensive interdisciplinary influence, it is crucial to engage with the contradictions, voids, and murkiness (Zack, 2005). Most importantly, scrutinizing intersectionality enables both feminist and antiracist theorists to evaluate the possibilities and potential pitfalls of all-encompassing theorizing (Nash, 2008).

Ultimately, intersectionality theory provides a different way to examine and understand identity theory and development. Acknowledging the impact different facets of identity have on each other provides educational researchers with a different way to understand individuals’ conception and understanding of their personal identities. The theory also reframes analysis of identity and forces researchers to change their understanding of facets of identity as individual and isolated to identity having multiple aspects that have mutual relationships with each other and work together to mutually construct one’s understanding of personal identity.
Identity Performance

Research on identity performance focuses on dismantling and challenging the social construction of identity. It challenges the frameworks and power structures that dictate definitions regarding identity. Research in this area has been pioneered by feminist theorist Judith Butler’s work on gender, sexuality, identity, and the body. Butler’s account of gender as a kind of performance, that gender is performative, in Gender Trouble (1990) has been highly influential in its critique of identity categories and has proposed that gender is a matter of social and political construction rather than the expression of some kind of essential nature. However, it has proven to be highly controversial as the critique extends beyond the category of gender and has framed sex, sexuality, and the body as identity categories. It has been used to reveal oppressive structures and the binary frameworks that structure them to be products of imposed notions that enforce heterosexuality and privilege the masculine. Butler’s deconstruction of the notion of gender helped illustrate that identity categories were fictional productions of “regimes of power/knowledge” or “power/discourse” (Butler, 1990, p. xi). Rather than natural effects of the body, they are social constructs. These notions of gender are fictional in the sense that they did not exist prior to the systems of power/knowledge; in essence, they are expectations and performative products.

Butler asserted that gender is a type of enforced cultural performance, “compelled by compulsory heterosexuality, and that, as such, it is performative” (Jagger, 2008, p. 20). There is nothing given about gender. Precultural or prediscursive ways of being that provide the basis for cultural constructions do not exist. Rather than gender being innate, it is constructed by social constructs and expectations. In this context, identity is a product of signifying practices rooted in systems of power/knowledge characterized as “compulsory heterosexuality and
phallogocentrism” (Jagger, 2008, p. 20). As such, it is a matter of social and political regulation, rather than any sort of inherent aspect of individuals or source of agency.

Butler’s focus on the institution of heterosexuality and the ways in which roles of sexuality were played out challenges the assumption that gender identity performance is inherent. She argued that the performances are repeated for the precise reason that the role being performed is unstable (Jagger, 2008; Willie, 2003). In other words, to approach permanence, it must be repeated continually. By emphasizing the idea that sexual identity is continuously reinstituted and reinvented, Butler provides us with a model for understanding that racial identity is also continuously reinstituted and reinvented (Willie, 2003). Butler (1991) discussed heterosexuality as a role and an institution that is compulsively played out:

If heterosexuality is compelled to repeat itself in order to establish the illusion of its own uniformity and identity, then this is an identity permanently at risk. . . . If there is, as it were, always a compulsion to repeat, repetition never fully accomplishes identity. That there is a need for a repetition at all is a sign that identity… requires [sic] to be instituted again and again, which is to say that it runs the risk of becoming de-instituted at every interval. (p. 24)

In the very need or decision to repeat the performance compulsively, the actor betrays the nature of the characteristic in question and performs in a manner that is, at the most, unreal and, at the least, incoherent and unstable. “The characteristic might be straightness, masculinity, whiteness; it might also be gayness, femininity, or blackness” (Willie, 2003, p. 127). To generalize from Butler’s point, Willie (2003) contended that persons with dominant group characteristics, who also enjoy a higher social status, are “compelled to remind others of their dominant group characteristics again and again in order to prove themselves to seem more real, more healthy, or
more normal” (p. 127). Though performance can be prevalent for dominant identities, it can be argued that there is also a struggle to perform non-dominant identities as “authentic” and normal. In other words, one reason why they repeat the performance continuously is to demonstrate to others that they are more “authentic” or that they more securely possess that higher status.

Butler’s acknowledgement and appreciation of fragility of identity implied two things: first, that changes in an actor’s routine depend on the audience, and second, that an uncertainty exists in the mind of the actor that reveals instability of the racial or sexual identity at which the actor is playing/performing.

Willie (2003) addressed issues of identity performance in a racialized context. Historically, many sociologists implied race was a role, but few have used role theory to describe or theorize racial identity or behavior (Willie, 2003). This most likely occurred because race was believed to be a “symbol whose power would eventually disappear as people of color assimilated into American culture, both phenotypically and culturally” (p. 126). In addition, because the idea of roles implies submission to and acceptance of the status quo, some scholars most likely wanted to avoid suggesting, “that racial minorities were in permanently subservient or unequal roles” (p. 126). The subversive power of treating race as a role lies in the implication that race is not exclusively based on phenotype. The definition is broadened to include “behaviors, is seen as a place to be entered and exited, can be seen as a garment to be taken off and put on, ever changing, deliberate, and chosen” (p. 126). Willie bases this idea on the notion that no performance of identity is identical and the performances can often be unpredictable (Phelan, 1993). To gain a greater appreciation of role theory, it is important to understand the ways in which roles can come to feel natural and conform to the hierarchical and sometimes oppressive aspects of the culture they inhabit.
The impact of societal expectations was explored by Wittig’s (1992) work examining social expectations and lesbians. Wittig’s work challenged social structures and examined the social structural arrangements between men and women and their accompanying roles. In her research on lesbian women, she argued that the lesbian cannot be a woman because she does not conform or perform in a manner that meets the social expectations set forth for the straight adult female in Western society. This notion can be applied to those who defy culturally prescribed expectations regarding race and cultural roles. It can be used to explore the ways in which individuals do not conform to social expectations.

Butler’s (1990, 1991) account of performativity and critique of identity categories has had significant implications for feminist and queer politics. It involves a shift from identity politics based on sameness and the policing of boundaries to a politic of identification which involves the continual examination of the (political) construction of identities, and careful attention to the exclusions on which any identities are based. This move to a politic of identity in Butler’s work involves a shift in the understanding of resistance and change. This could be described as a shift from a concern with freedom and liberation. Butler’s inability to highlight the instability of all identities is a limitation. However, Goffman (1959) proposed that we all play the roles of our identities and that we are all performing all of the time. For Goffman, performance has a broader meaning than the desire to make one’s identity seem stable. Performance needs to be neither compulsively repeated nor deceptive. He argued that we are always behaving for an audience because we can never escape the presence of the social world. Rather than an accusation that we are all inauthentic, playing roles or acting parts is what makes us authentically human.
Identity performance frameworks can be used to examine Native Hawaiian identity and explore notions of Hawaiianess. It can be used to better understand how social expectations and structures shape and, often dictate, Native Hawaiian identity. It provides a frame through which to understand and explore how those who identify as Native Hawaiian challenge social structures by conforming and/or rejecting social expectations attributed to Native Hawaiian people.

**Chilly Climate and Microaggressions**

As identified earlier in Chapter 2, environments are important components to identity development. Due to the focus on Native Hawaiian women’s experiences at college, it is important to understand some of the components that can create negative experiences on campus. Overtly and covertly negative experiences in the university setting can create environments that are unwelcoming and may often cause feelings of isolation for students (Hall & Sandler, 1982; Solórzano et al., 2000). These events are identified and addressed in chilly climate theory and microaggression theoretical frameworks. The literature creates a theoretical structure that assists in the examination of the students’ of color perceptions of classroom environments, the relationship “chilly climate” and microaggression theories have to each other, and how these theories create a framework of understanding of students’ of color perceptions of the classroom environment.

The classroom environment literature has documented a differential treatment of girls and women in coeducational settings, known as chilly climate. The scholarship typically uses the term *chilly classroom* as described by Hall and Sandler (1982), which was used to describe the quality of the experiences faced by female students in academic settings. It was described as an environment where faculty behaviors affect students by “discouraging classroom participation,
preventing students from seeking help outside of class, causing students to drop or avoid certain classes, to switch majors or subspecialties within majors and in some instances even to leave a given institution” (p. 3). Additional studies examined this phenomenon and supported the idea that male-oriented approaches to education do not fit with the learning strategies used by girls and women (Allan & Madden, 2006; Heller, Puff, & Mills, 1985; Krupnick, 1985; Salter, 2003; Salter & Persaud, 2003). The climates of classroom environments have been found to inhibit active participation by women. This, in turn, has a negative impact on their learning (Hall & Sandler, 1982; Heller et al., 1985; Krupnick, 1985; Lease & Schmeck, 1990; Salter, 2003; Salter & Persaud, 2003).

Building on the chilly climate research, researchers have studied classroom climates that documented differential treatment of students based on race and ethnicity. Microaggressions are “subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously” (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 60) replicated over time. According to critical race theory, microaggressions contribute to, and influence, the racial climate on college campuses, which, in turn, contributes to and influences the chilly climate in classroom settings (Solórzano et al., 2000). Microaggressions can be perceived as subtle assaults that can be innocuous (Davis, 1989; Solórzano et al., 2000); however, their cumulative impact creates a burden that emphasizes the unconscious attitudes of White superiority (Davis, 1989; Delgado & Stefanic, 1992; Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Wills, 1978; Solórzano et al., 2000). This can contribute to, and essentially validate, the inferiority of those who are non-White. Though most of the microaggression literature focuses on the experiences of African Americans, the literature allows for the insertion of populations who do not identify as White, as
the literature discusses attitudes of White superiority toward those who are outside dominant/White culture.

As identity research regarding college students occurs, it is important to reflect on the impact classroom environments have on identity construction. Though chilly climate and microaggression research was based on experiences in the classroom, the literature can be expanded and used to analyze experiences both in and out of the classroom. Understanding subtle and overstated insults and acts of oppression can help better understand Native Hawaiian college students’ on-campus experiences.

**Critical Theory**

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) emerged from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and is rooted in the various, nuanced, and historically and geographically located epistemologies and ontologies found in indigenous communities (Brayboy, 2005). Though the epistemologies and ontologies differ depending on time, space, location, tribal nation, and individual, there appear to be commonalities in those ontologies and epistemologies. Tribal Critical Race Theory is rooted in these commonalities while simultaneously recognizing the range and difference that exists within and between communities and individuals.

Like CRT, TribalCrit values narrative and stories as important sources of data. In the mid-1990s, CRT was applied to research in education as an alternative way of viewing educational institutions and the difficulties facing people of color within these institutions (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In an educational context, CRT hypothesizes that racism is prevalent in views of education in regard to issues of meritocracy, claims of color-blind objectivity, and equal opportunity (Crenshaw, 1989, 1994; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001a; Villalpando, 2003). Finally, CRT in education is
activist in nature and inherently must contain a commitment to social justice. Embedded in this notion is a “liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001a, p. 8). Those who rely on CRT integrate their understandings and experiences drawn from a shared history as “Other” while working to change a world deteriorating under racial domination. Scholars utilizing CRT in education explicitly argue that their work must move toward eliminating the influence racism, sexism, and poverty have in the lives of students and faculty (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Parker, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001b). While CRT serves as a framework in and of itself, it does not address the specific needs of tribal/indigenous peoples because it does not address American Indians’ or other colonized communities’ position as both legal/political and racialized beings or the experience of colonization (Brayboy, 2005).

Critical Race Theory was originally developed to address the civil rights issues of African American people. As such, it is oriented toward an articulation of race issues along a “black-white” binary, and, until recently, other ethnic/racial groups have not been included in the conversation. As a result, Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) have been developed to meet the specific needs of those populations. For example, LatCrit emphasizes issues that affect Latina/o people in everyday life, including immigration, language, identity, culture, and skin color (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Espinoza, 1990; Hernandez-Truyol, 1997; Montoya, 1994; Villalpando, 2003). AsianCrit emphasizes and critiques the nativistic racism embedded in the model minority stereotype, immigration and naturalization, language, and disenfranchisement issues that relate to Asian people in the United States (Chang, 1993, 1998). While these theories have developed to meet the specific needs of Latinos/as and Asian Americans, they largely maintain the basic premise of CRT that racism is prevalent in
society. In contrast, the basic tenet of TribalCrit emphasizes that colonization is dominant in society (Brayboy, 2005). TribalCrit also acknowledges the role played by racism. Brayboy (2005) outlined nine tenets of TribalCrit which are summarized below:

1. Colonization is endemic [prevalent] to society.
2. U.S. policies toward indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain.
3. Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space [borderland] that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities.
4. Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.
5. The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an indigenous lens.
6. Governmental policies and educational policies toward indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.
7. Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.
8. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.
9. Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change. (pp. 429–430)

Much of what TribalCrit offers as an analytical lens is a new and more culturally relevant way of examining the lives and experiences of tribal and indigenous peoples since contact with
Europeans over 500 years ago. This is central to the particularity of the space and place American Indians, and other indigenous peoples, inhabit, both physically and intellectually, as well as to the unique, sovereign relationship between American Indians and the federal government and can be utilized to better understand communities who have had similar experiences and relationships with the federal government, such as Kānaka Maoli. Furthermore, TribalCrit provides a theoretical lens for addressing many of the issues facing indigenous communities today, including issues of language shift and language loss, natural resources management, the lack of students graduating from colleges and universities, the overrepresentation of American Indians in special education, and power struggles between federal, state, and tribal governments.

Summary

The preceding chapter provides an historical, demographic, and intellectual foundation for this study. Similar to what happened in much of the Pacific, missionaries’ and explorers’ contact with Hawaiian society transformed the Hawai‘i landscape—physically, psychologically, demographically, politically, culturally—forever. Hawaiians, like the rest of the Pacific region, or Oceana as referred to by many scholars, continue to deal with the impact of colonization. Despite being colonized by and incorporated into the United States, statistics indicate that Native Hawaiians are not faring well in their own homeland. Hawaiians continue to drop out of high school, receive public assistance, have high rates of addiction, become incarcerated or die from various diseases, despite various federally funded and privately funded programs and services geared towards improving the conditions of Native Hawaiians. Given these conditions, coupled with the history of colonization, the movement for self-determination, self-definition, and sovereignty is very strong.
Several identity development theories were presented to assist in better understanding the identity construction processes that would be relevant. However, it is clear that components from several theories need to be used to explore Native Hawaiians’ identity as not all completely address issues such as multiple identities, fluidity of identity, biculturalism, and identity performance.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher will utilize intersectionality (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1994, 1991), TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005), and identity performance (Butler, 1990; Willie, 2003) as foundations for data analysis. Intersectionality research recognizes multiple facets of identity and emphasizes the importance intersections have on identity conception. This concept will assist in the exploration of multiple facets of identity and create a structure that will support the exploration of notions of and experiences with the intersections of identity. Tribal Critical Race Theory will allow for the recognition of the impact colonization has had on identity construction, recognize the importance of indigenous knowledge, and place value on bicultural experiences. This theory provides the opportunity to explore the impact power and oppression has on self-concept as well as provides opportunities to explore how social expectations and power structures that privilege dominant culture impact identity conception. Identity performance provides a framework to examine notions of identity performance. It provides the opportunity to analyze constructions of identity through the lens of that what is performed to meet dominant culture’s social expectations. It also emphasizes the impact identity performance has on identity construction. It is with these three frameworks that a deeper and more complex conception of Native Hawaiian identity can be examined.

For Hawaiians, self-definition and self-determination are essential to sustaining our culture and community. In addition, a culturally centered education is also seen as a possible
means of improving the socioeconomic conditions of Hawaiian people. Because this study incorporates contextual factors like history, political climate, and research positionality, it will be framed within TribalCrit. This view preferences the voices of the colonized and acknowledges the special relationship indigenous groups have with the governmental body. As such, the frame allows for the contextualization of this study within the history and contemporary society. In essence, problems facing Native Hawaiians did not surface overnight, nor will they be solved overnight. Consequently, the TribalCrit approach allows for the complete story to be told from the perspective of the colonized, that is, from Native Hawaiians.
CHAPTER 3: METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine how Native Hawaiian college women construct and make meaning of their identities and how various dimensions of identity may interplay and/or intersect to shape those identities. This study focused on students’ understandings of their identities, rather than on the identities imposed upon them by external forces. Utilizing personal narrative and storytelling, the study also provided an opportunity to better understand how the college experience may influence Native Hawaiian college women’s constructions of their identities and may ultimately help college administrators and faculty consider ways to support and promote identity development.

Research Questions

Several research questions guided, but did not bind, this study, as the nature of qualitative research requires flexibility as data evolve and move to inform inquiry. The guiding research questions used in the construct of this qualitative study are:

1. How do Native Hawaiian college women describe and make meaning of their identities?
2. How do various dimensions of identity interplay and/or intersect to shape Native Hawaiian college women’s identities?
3. In what ways does the university experience influence Native Hawaiian college women’s concept of identity?

These questions were used to help explore the concept of identity and provided participants with the opportunity for self-definition and meaning making. The semi-structured interviews also provided the opportunity for participants to examine their own cultural identity and what intersections, if any, occurred with other aspects of their identity.
Epistemology

As an inquirer, it is important to identify and locate the theories and worldviews that influence how I see and interact with the world. These theories and worldviews impact the way I interact with people as well as how I understand and share knowledge. In addition, they shape how I represent myself, how I define myself, and how I see my position and place in my community, family, and as a researcher in the academy.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are complex and often difficult to explain (Meyer, 2001, 2003; Smith, 1999). They incorporate relationships with nature, people, and the universe. Within IKS, there are many different ways of knowing and understanding one’s place in the world, due to the influences of a particular community’s values, location, and history. However, there are some similar worldviews within IKS that can be found in common across indigenous communities (Meyer, 2003; Smith, 1999). Holistic knowledge is the cornerstone of a unified indigenous worldview. All knowledge, in this worldview, is inseparable from land, place, spirit, language, kin, law, and story. Natural and supernatural signs guide understandings of the relationships among all these elements, and within these synergistic links culture is created and recreated. Communal knowledge ensures that knowledge is not collected and stored for personal power and ownership by individual specialists, but is developed, retained, and shared by groups. In addition, ancestral knowingness is about recognizing knowledge as a fluid, changing force that flows from land, spirit, and ancestors. Indigenous ways of knowing are ancestrally generated, learned, and perpetuated through the teachings of the ancestors, and constantly evolving. Though these are not the only commonalities of IKS, they are important to understand
and acknowledge, as these can be great influences on how I, as a Kānaka Maoli woman, and others, understand the world and interact with the universe.

The influence and impact of holistic, communal, and ancestral knowledges are significant and influence how I interact with my surroundings. I learned the importance of flexibility by learning to swim in the ocean. I learned and know the importance of listening by sitting quietly with my grandfather and listening to the night sounds. I learned and know the importance of caring for my elders through participating in ceremony and watching the makua [adults] interact with the elders. From those interactions, I learned respect. I learned and know how to care for the land from my dad as he taught me to fish, camp, and garden. And, I continue to learn from those who come before me, from the land and water, and from the knowledge passed down from those in my community.

**Hawaiian Epistemology**

According to Meyer (2003), Hawaiian epistemology is a belief that is both ancient and modern, central, and marginalized. It shifts; it is metamorphosed; it is changed by time and influence. It is always constant, yet always changing. I experience the world through my senses, my body, my mind, and the way I interact with nature and the universe around me. My worldview is influenced by the teachings of the ʻāina [land], moana [water], ʻaumākua [ancestors], kumu [teachers], and kūpuna [elders]. I learn by observing my kumu and kūpuna and by listening to the stories they tell.

Linking experience with awareness is active. For example, swimming affects knowledge about the ocean, and dreams affect relationship to reality. The honor we hold for our kumu [teachers], impacts and shapes how we listen. The genesis of Hawaiian knowledge is based on
experience (Meyer, 2003). Essentially, the experience is grounded in our, my, relationship with senses; senses shape our way of knowing.

Relationship is the cornerstone of the Hawaiian experience, which shapes knowledge and how the universe and those who inhabit it interact and learn from each other (Meyer, 2001). Relationships, or interdependence, offered Hawaiians opportunities to practice reciprocity, exhibit balance, develop harmony with land, and extend generosity to others. The maintenance of relationships takes on conscious and deliberate thought and action. Knowledge is the by-product of dialogue, or of something exchanged with others. Knowledge is a gift that occurs when one is in balance with another (Meyer, 2001). Having good rapport and listening to one’s elders and teachers is not unique and revelatory (Kame‘eleihiwa, 1992). It is how that relationship is maintained and nurtured and the extent of its importance that is unique to Hawaiians. The separation of mind from body is not found in a Hawaiian worldview. Intelligence is not separate from feeling. Intelligence is found in the core of our body system—in our viscera, the na’au [body].

The discussion of na’au [heart/guts/feelings] and na’auao [knowledge/wisdom] is an intimate look into core Hawaiian beliefs that strongly identify with the idea of embodied knowing. It is “knowing” that is not divorced from awareness, from body, from spirit, from place. Na’au and na’auao highlight the idea that cultural views of where intelligence is “housed” are also part of how intelligence is received. This way of understanding influences the way I understand my role as inquirer, community member, and student.

Tribal Critical Race Theory

The lens of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) was used as a theoretical underpinning for the development of the analytical framework and data collection and analysis.
TribalCrit provides a more culturally relevant way of examining and understanding the lives and experiences of indigenous peoples since contact with Westerners over 500 years ago. In addition, it allows the researcher to acknowledge the impact colonization has had on cultural identity, sense of community, community definition, and self-definition (Brayboy, 2005; Castagno & Lee, 2007). Furthermore, TribalCrit provides an analytical framework for acknowledging and addressing many of the issues facing indigenous communities today. Lastly, TribalCrit values and acknowledges the special relationship the federal and state governments have with indigenous peoples and provides the space for critical analyses of how the relationships have directly and indirectly impacted indigenous communities that have been colonized by the U.S. government.

Tribal Critical Race Theory includes tenets and principles that are culturally specific to indigenous peoples and communities. Both Brayboy (2005) and Tsosie (2000) have acknowledged that indigenous peoples have a unique history and a special political relationship with the federal government. Both of these factors must be acknowledged as central to analyses of educational experiences, policies, and practices involving indigenous students (Castagno & Lee, 2007).

The TribalCrit perspective was used to examine the conception of identity in higher education. It was used to examine and understand factors impacting Native Hawaiian college students’ concepts and understandings of their identity at a predominantly White university in the Pacific. Situating identity development in a TribalCrit perspective allows the opportunity to highlight and make sense of the nuances particular to the experiences of Native Hawaiian students.
My Identity as Inquirer

It is important that I describe and “locate” myself as a researcher and learner. My understanding of the world shapes and frames how I interpret what I know and how I know what I know. It is important to share and assert my values and understandings of the world, as these will influence how I interact with others and how I will learn about and share their experiences.

My motivation to conduct this study is both personal and professional. Having worked full time in higher education administration for six years, having studied as a full-time doctoral student for two years prior to conducting this study, and having established my identity as a lower class, multiracial, Kānaka Maoli woman, I bring a number of personal and professional assumptions to this project.

I position myself as an indigenous woman from a lower socioeconomic class. I am claiming a genealogical, cultural, and political set of experiences that impact my worldview. My Kānaka Maoli descent lines come through my father. Though I claim my primary identity as Kānaka Maoli, I am multiracial and bicultural, raised in the indigenous ways of my father’s people, the Western ways of my mother, and the dominant culture of U.S. society. My relationship with the ‘āina [land], the moana [ocean], and my ‘ohana [family] has informed and framed my identity. My identity was, and continues to be, shaped and formed by the relationships I had with the ‘aumākua [ancestors] from both my mother and father. But it was my kūpuna [elders] who taught me through stories, through showing, and through the ways of the old days. It is from them that I have learned what it means to be a human being and part of Mother Earth’s continuous cycle.

As an undergraduate student, I was the only Kānaka Maoli student who was a member of the small student of color population at my undergraduate institution located in the upper-
Midwestern region of the United States. As I think back on my experience, administrators, staff, and fellow students were not sure how to react when I described my multiracial identity and my identification with my indigenous roots. Many people would ask me what I was, code for what my racial or ethnic identity was. When I responded with Kānaka Maoli or Native Hawaiian, the response would be one of surprise followed by a general statement that they had always wanted to visit Hawai‘i or that they had been there on vacation. Typically, I would be subjected to reliving their vacation memories, virtually turning my experience as a person into a place or a vacation dream. Never were there university services or programs geared toward Pacific Islander students or multiracial students. I did not feel as if I fit into the student of color population, nor did I fit in with the White student population. As I struggled to find my racial identity, I realized that I did not have a “place” and found very little support for my development particularly because many people did not know how to address my needs as a multiracial, Kānaka Maoli student.

As I ventured into the world of student affairs, I learned that there was very little research on Pacific Islanders, specifically Kānaka Maoli. Research that focused on underrepresented populations in higher education focused predominantly on African Americans and Latinos. Some research had been conducted on American Indians and Asian Americans. Much of the research conducted on Pacific Islanders had been included in Asian American studies, and distinctions between the two populations had not been made. The lack of research made me increasingly aware that my experience of “outsiderness” may not be as unique as I once thought.

I am aware of my identity as an off-island Kānaka Maoli and how it might affect my work. From the initial stages of considering the topic to the research design, my work has been affected by the fact that as a multiracial, indigenous person, I am positioned as a privileged
person in relationship to the study participants, as I would be in the role of interviewer and could be perceived as having a position of power. I would have to think about how the participants would respond to me as an insider/outsider and how they would react to my position as an off-island islander. The identity and community politics surrounding this aspect of my identity may cause participants to see me as a potential threat. I was concerned about what the participants would think about my motivations for doing the research or for asking certain questions, and I had anxiety about their perceptions regarding me and the work I was doing. The positive aspect of this anxiety has caused me to continually examine my position as student, learner, and inquirer. I continue this journey by asking myself questions regarding my motivations for doing this research, and for choosing specific literature, frameworks, and methods.

My gender and socioeconomic identities also impact my research. Through my own experiences with gender, socioeconomic, and racial identity development, I have learned about, and believe in, the social constructs of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation; that society has created definitions about what it means to be male/female/transgender, upper class/middle class/lower class, heterosexual-gay/lesbian/bisexual, White/African American/ Latino/Kānaka Maoli, and so forth. This belief influences my interpretation of theories about race, identity, and student development theory. I believe these aspects of socially imposed identity categories are created in relationships with others who are like or unlike me in various ways. I am aware of the importance of gender roles and socioeconomic class within the Kānaka Maoli community. I am also aware of the politics associated with gender and class within the community, such as the importance of maintaining gender roles, understanding the socioeconomic class implications associated with particular areas on O‘ahu, and how my role as interviewer and inquirer may create a potential tension between me and people I interact with. It is at these points of tension
that I may become more aware of the intersections of my identity. I may become aware of how I believe participants perceive me and how those perceptions impact my interactions with them. In order to cope with these professional and personal assumptions and theories, I included elements in the research design to lessen their impact when possible and included time to reflect on my own experiences and reflect on how interactions, relationships, reactions, and observations influenced the research process. In addition, I attempted to clarify my biases to the participants and to the reader.

**Personal Storytelling: Narrative as Methodology**

Narrative can be both the method and the phenomenon of study (Creswell, 2007). “As a method it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (p. 54). The procedures of this type of research consist of studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences, and chronologically ordering the meaning of those experiences.

This study utilized narrative inquiry methodology. Narrative inquiry is concerned with understanding the wholeness of human experiences through data collected in the form of stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Witherell and Noddings (1991) conveyed the richness of stories for portraying human experience, stating:

Stories can join the worlds of thought and feeling, and they give special voice to . . . the power of emotion, intuition, and relationships in human lives. They frequently reveal dilemmas of human caring and conflict, illuminating with the rich, vibrant language of feeling the various landscapes in which we meet the other morally. (p. 4)
Considerable variation exists in approaches to narrative inquiry (Reissman, 2002). The term narrative has been understood in several different ways. Taking a narrow approach, Labov (1982) defined narratives as a retelling of experiences that maintains the chronological ordering of events as they actually occurred. Narrative is comprised of certain elements, which include character, setting, and plot. Reissman (2002) explained that narratives are often more broadly defined as an “amalgam of autobiographical materials” (p. 697) consisting of an entire life story. Narrative inquiry frequently is cited as well suited to studies of identity because stories provide revealing glimpses into people’s inner selves (Chase, 1996, 2003; Lieblich et al., 1998; Reissman, 2002; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000).

Narratives are a particularly significant genre for representing and analyzing identity in its multiple guises in different contexts. The approach enables investigators to study the “active, self-shaping quality of human thought, the power of stories to create and refashion identity.” (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997, p. xiv)

Narrative research allows researchers to present the experience holistically, “in all its complexity and richness” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 10) and attempts to capture the “whole story” (p. 10). Identity stories are “created, told, revised, and retold throughout life. We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell” (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 7).

According to Chase (2003), when we listen to people’s stories, “we learn how people as individuals and as groups make sense of their experiences and construct meanings and selves” (p. 80). We also learn about the complexities and subtleties of the social worlds they inhabit. We gain deeper understandings of the social resources that they draw on, resist, and transform as they tell their stories (Chase, 1996). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) suggested that storytelling
from marginalized people of color provides powerful counter-stories challenging the stories of dominant culture that made White privilege appear natural and normal.

To begin to explore the understandings of Native Hawaiian college students and their constructions of identity, it is important to create a qualitative study that honors the indigenous tradition of storytelling (Benham, 2008). It is for this reason the chosen methodology is narrative.

**Research Design and Data Collection**

This qualitative study has been designed to utilize individual interview data to answer questions regarding Native Hawaiian college women’s understandings of identity and the ways in which their collegiate experience influences their understandings of their identities.

**Participant Selection for the Overall Study**

Participants who identified as Native Hawaiian women were recruited to participate in the study. University of Hawai‘i-Manoa administrators and faculty were asked to identify Native Hawaiian undergraduate women who held junior or senior academic status. There was no requirement regarding major or relationship with the Center for Hawaiian Studies.

A letter requesting recommendations (see Appendix A) was sent to administrators and faculty at the institution describing the study and outlining the participant criteria. Participants were contacted via e-mail and sent a letter (see Appendix B) detailing the project and the purpose of the study. In addition, details about confidentiality were outlined in the letter.

Recommendations were sent to the researcher and potential participants were contacted via e-mail and by phone. Twenty-two recommendations were received from faculty and staff. The recommendations included Native Hawaiian women identified as having first-year, sophomore, junior, and senior academic status. All twenty-two women were contacted. Sixteen
women responded to the request, all having various academic standings, and seven women agreed to participate in the study. In addition, participants were recruited through snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007) by asking participants to recommend other potential participants. One participant was selected through this method.

Native Hawaiian college women who had junior or senior status were originally identified as the focus population. Six participants identified with these specific criteria. However, two participants did not have this academic status. Rather, one was a first-year student and one was a sophomore. These two participants were included in the study in order to increase the number of participants.

**Location**

The data collection took place at the University of Hawai‘i-Manoa (UH-M), the flagship campus in the UH system, during the 2009 fall semester. University of Hawai‘i-Manoa is an urban, four-year higher education institution, located just outside of downtown Honolulu (University of Hawai‘i, 2010a). The institution grants baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral degrees and is one of 13 institutions that has the Carnegie Classification as a land-, sea-, and space-grant institution. Enrollment is 20,169, with 13,810 undergraduate and 6,359 graduate and professional students. Of the population, 26% are reported to be Caucasian, 10% are reported to be Hawaiian or Native Hawaiian, 7% reported to be Chinese, 8% reported to be Filipino, 17% reported to be Japanese, 4% reported to be Pacific Islander, 9% reported to be mixed race, 19% were identified as “All Other.” The enrollment demographics depicted a lower enrollment of Native Hawaiian or Hawaiian students. This location was chosen due to the reported enrollment of Native Hawaiian students and the opportunity to have greater access to potential participants.
The researcher spent nine weeks on the island of O’ahu and lived with members of her ‘ohana [family] during this time period. Throughout her time there, she was able to be in contact with cultural experts and Hawaiian practitioners and scholars as well as maintain contact with the participants. The researcher traveled to the locations spoken about by the participants in order to gain a better understanding of the environments they described and also used public transportation to travel around the island as well as to and from interview locations. In addition, living with her ‘ohana [family] provided her with opportunities to continue to learn about herself and interact with locals and other Native Hawaiians. These experiences provided a deeper understanding of the experiences the participants were describing as well as allowed the researcher the opportunity to learn more about the environments the participants described.

**Participant Interviews**

Participants participated in two interviews. The interviews were semi-structured (Creswell, 2007) and lasted between 60–120 minutes each. The two interviews provided the opportunity to explore the participants’ understandings of identity as well as an opportunity for follow-up and further exploration. The first interview focused on getting to know the participants, building rapport, and asking questions that focused on their identity and how they defined themselves. The second interview served as an opportunity to revisit topics addressed in the first interview, as well as further explore understandings of identity facets.

A semi-structured interview question schedule was developed to assist with focusing the interview and eliciting rich data (see Appendix C). Questions were based on previous studies that explored college student identity. The questions in the first interview focused on having each participant describe who she is and how she defined herself. The interview questions addressed values, experiences, and identity.
These questions were piloted prior to implementation with two college students who identify as female and Kānaka Maoli with junior academic status at institutions of higher education in Oregon and Hawai‘i. After contacting the pilot study participant who attended university in Hawai‘i, she recommended I contact a potential participant who was attending university in Oregon. These women were interviewed due to their willingness to participate and their availability. The pilot interviews allowed for the opportunity to clarify and augment any questions as necessary prior to the data collection. Pilot testing questions helped to “refine and develop research instruments, assess the degrees of the observer bias, frame questions, collect background information, and adapt research procedures” (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). The questions and procedures were refined by using the feedback provided by the pilot interview participants. Participants were asked for feedback at the conclusion of the interview. They were asked to note if any of the questions were unclear or confusing. They were also asked if there were any questions they would want to be asked or thought they would be asked.

In addition, the I participated in a pilot interview of the interview questions. This process provided the me with the opportunity to better understand her own point of view, experiences, and assumptions. In addition, participating in the interview process provided me with the opportunity to clarify the questions. The interview was conducted by a peer who was familiar with qualitative research methods. Participating in the interview process provided me with the opportunity to continue to refine the questions, as well as identify my personal expectations and biases. Overall, the experience helped the researcher better understand her standpoint and provided information concerning her own biases and how they could impact the data collection and analyses.
To protect confidentiality, each individual interview was scheduled in a location chosen by the participant. By scheduling interviews at least four hours apart, participants could leave and arrive without seeing each other if the same location was chosen. By choosing the interview locations, participants could choose spaces in which they felt secure and/or familiar, which could increase comfort during the interview process. This maintained participant confidentiality and allowed for additional note-taking after the interview, as well as preparation for the next interview. All interviews were conducted in a location suggested by the participants. Each participant was asked to fill out a Participant Profile form (Appendix D) to gather demographic and descriptive data that helped in the creation of a participant profile. Time to get to know each participant and build rapport (Creswell, 2007; Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991) was integrated into each interview by including questions that would help build trust and “break the ice” during each interview.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. All participants were required to fill out and sign an Interview Consent Form (Appendix E) prior to the first interview, reminded of their rights as a participant, and asked for permission by assent before the second interview. All conversations regarding consent were audio-recorded. In addition, prior to the interview, consent to record the interview was sought so the participants understood that they were being audio recorded.

Each participant was asked to bring to the second interview an artifact or to create something that described her identity. Participants were asked about the artifact and how it represented aspects of their identity (Appendix C). Because participants often struggled with finding an artifact and many of them could not decide on one item that represented them, they were asked to talk about a personal motto that represented their identities. This provided the
participant with the opportunity to think about her identity and share how it represented who she is. It also provided a different way to think about how she talked about herself and how she defined and described aspects of her identity.

Although there were eight participants, there were many common themes addressed by all of the participants. The repetition of themes indicated a level of data saturation (Creswell, 2007). Data saturation occurs when the researcher is no longer hearing or seeing new information (Creswell). Topics identified by the participants as being important were common among participants and were consistently discussed in great depth.

To better inform my understandings of the participants’ context, observations of the university environment occurred and were recorded in a field log. I observed the general campus environment, collected campus newspapers and other relevant documents, and talked with individuals who were not study participants. These activities helped me better understand the general campus climate for Native Hawaiian students and helped me better understand the participants’ context.

**Analytic Journal**

The researcher maintained an analytic journal throughout the data collection and data analysis processes that included both reflective and descriptive notes regarding her thoughts and experiences. The notes included descriptions of the campus and interactions with people, as well as the researcher’s thoughts and opinions regarding her experiences on campus and how she processed the information she learned. The observations were used to better inform the data and help with triangulation of data (Creswell, 2007). The analytic journal was also used as a space in which the researcher could have an internal dialogue regarding her experiences, questions, and insights. Having the opportunity to document and revisit thoughts from previous entries allowed
the researcher to follow up with participants regarding common topics as well as begin to identify common themes, experiences, and concerns.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis began with line-by-line coding of transcripts of individual interviews. Open coding (Creswell, 2007) was used to identify meaningful categories and data codes. Axial codes (Creswell, 2007), the development and refinement of topic categories identified in the open coding process, were then developed based on themes found within each transcript and organized into hierarchical themes. For example, the themes “obligation to family” and “commitment to community” were placed together and located under the umbrella code of “kuleana.” Major code categories (Creswell, 2007), or themes, were developed after all transcripts had been coded. For example, the codes “kuleana [responsibility]” and “ʻohana [family]” were used to create the code “values/worldviews.”

Because the researcher was concerned about how her own identity as an indigenous, Kānaka Maoli woman might influence her analysis of the data, she enlisted the assistance of peer debriefers with data-coding experience to code two transcripts each. The researcher compared major code categories with these colleagues and made modifications when necessary. For example, the major code category for identity performance was altered after consultation with peer debriefers to include identity performance data connected to bicultural identity issues.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is an essential component of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). When building trustworthiness, the researcher asked herself if the findings and representation were grounded in the data and if she revealed how she established this. Interactions with peer
debriefers, comparisons with analytical notes, and feedback from participants were used to enhance trustworthiness.

**Credibility.** Credibility depends on the richness of the information gathered and on the inquirer’s abilities. Developing credibility involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. Since from this perspective, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participants’ eyes, the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results. For the purpose of this study, a field journal was maintained for reflexivity, peer review was used as an external check of the research process (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and member checking, which solicited participants’ views of the findings and interpretations, occurred throughout the research process. The researcher used the journal as a means to note observations and questions and, essentially, have a dialogue with herself. It was during her journaling times, which occurred before and after each interview, that she wrote about her personal experiences on island, noted interesting and/or troubling points raised during the interviews, determined follow-up questions, and reflected on past interviews and notes. These experiences with the reflective journal provided the opportunity to be reflexive and review reflections and concerns raised and determine how her insights were and were not being reflected in the data.

**Member checking.** Interviewees participated in the member checking process. Each participant provided feedback and reacted to a summary of the inquirer’s analysis of the data. After the first interview, participants were provided with a summary of the discussion. They were asked to talk about the summary during the second interview (Appendix C). After the second interview, another summary was created by the researcher. Each individual summary
was sent to the corresponding participant approximately three weeks after the final interview via e-mail. The summaries included the researcher’s understanding of the participant’s stories and sense of identity. Each participant was provided with response questions and asked to reflect on the researcher’s summary of the stories the participant shared. This served as a member check (Creswell, 2007).

**Dependability.** The consistency of the process and the product of the research helps determine dependability. The idea of dependability emphasizes the need for the inquirer to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The inquirer is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the inquirer approached the study. The dependability of the data collection and analysis was strengthened by the use of peer review and different methods and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2007; Ely et al., 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Confirmability.** Critical theory does not claim to be neutral or confirmable. Confirmability is the degree to which the inquirer can demonstrate the neutrality of the research interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others. By employing a critical perspective, the researcher acknowledges that a specific lens, that of TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005), was the lens used throughout the data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and her perspective shaped each of these processes.

Trustworthiness was attended to as the researcher addressed her own identity as an inquirer. Through the discussion of her identity as inquirer, she clarified biases and assumptions she had regarding the topic, research, and other related issues.
Confidentiality

The participants’ identity remained confidential. Each participant was asked to create an alias for herself on the Personal Profile (Appendix D), and personal identifiers were removed from all transcripts and analyzed materials. This helped develop trust with the participants, as they were not identified by their names in the research data. The researcher kept a list of aliases and real names in a separate password-protected file.

Consent Forms

A consent form was created for the individual interview process (Appendix E). The form outlined the intent and purpose of the project, the rights of the participants, and potential risks. In addition, the researcher reviewed the consent form and verbally sought from each participant her permission to audio-record the interview. Consent to participate in the second interview was asked for after reminding the participant of her rights and a brief review of the consent form. This process was audio-recorded. All consent forms were kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home.

Potential Risks

The participants may have experienced feelings of sadness, embarrassment, anger, or shame and may have had to recount events that made them uncomfortable regarding personal experiences related to aspects of their identity. Participants always had the option not to answer any of the questions and had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any given time without any fear of retribution. The researcher maintained information regarding counseling resources for the participants should they have felt overwhelmed or needed to further explore the emotions or experiences they thought about. Lastly, the researcher had the university counseling center’s emergency number available in case immediate assistance was needed for participants.
Although the resources were made available, none of the participants were referred to the university services.

**Safeguards from Risks**

The consent form was reviewed with each participant prior to beginning the first interview and consent was audio recorded. Prior to the first interview, each participant had the opportunity to read and review the consent form and ask any questions for clarification prior to signing. In addition, the option to discontinue participation in the study was provided in both written and verbal forms. The researcher reviewed participant rights prior to the second interview and prior to any follow up contact with participants. In addition, consent to record was requested prior to each interview.

**Limitations**

This study was based on examining the experiences of Native Hawaiian college women at a single institution. While the research may have implications for other Native Hawaiian college students at this institution, readers will have to determine the appropriateness of transferring the findings to other contexts.

The limitations to the study include:

- Participants’ experiences may not be representative of the population’s experiences, therefore, it was important to include thick, rich description (Creswell, 2007);
- Participants constituted a small number of Native Hawaiian women and so caution should be used in transferring results to Native Hawaiian college women, men and transgender students.
- Participants, at times, were reluctant to fully share their thoughts due to lack of trust of the inquirer. The researcher addressed this by building rapport (Creswell, 2007;
Ely, et al., 1991) with the participants and included questions that would help build trust and “break the ice” during each interview. In addition, she asked for the participants to choose the interview locations and encouraged them to bring meals with them if meetings were at meal times.

- Participants focused most of their conversations on their non-university experiences. Because of this, an in depth exploration of the university experience did not occur and the information gathered did not solely focus on their collegiate experiences.

**Benefits**

Due to the nature of this project, people who work with Native Hawaiian college students will have a better understanding of their concept of identity and how the university experience shapes understandings of identity. This project can begin to create a foundation for the exploration of Pacific Islander identity development, which currently does not exist in higher education literature and research. Participants shared that they had the opportunity to think about their identities as well as gain a better understanding of their culture. Some shared that they appreciated the opportunities to reflect on and think about their culture as well to explore their individual identities. The findings will provide an opportunity for those who provide services for Native Hawaiian college students to better understand Native Hawaiian identity, how Native Hawaiian identity impacts the collegiate experience, and how to create policies and services that will better serve, and include, Native Hawaiian students.

This chapter provides a rationale for using qualitative methodology for identity study and the methods enlisted to maintain research or methodological integrity. Qualitative methodology preferences the speaker and his or her experiences; thus, it is appropriate for a study on identity formation. As such, the primary source of data collection was interviewing. The participants
represented a diverse group of women. Although all identified as Native Hawaiian, differences such as socioeconomic class, schooling experiences, and family experiences enables a broader understanding of the phenomena.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the frameworks used to organize the participants’ narratives and data. A cultural framework of beliefs, values, and behaviors (Hall, 1996) and participants’ narratives guided the chapter organization and findings. An examination of the participants’ understandings of their cultural identity is followed by their descriptions of the experiences and understandings of more traditional aspects of their identity such as gender, socioeconomic status, and spirituality. Identity performance and intersections of facets of identity are also explored. Participants’ experiences in college conclude this chapter.

Using a Culturally Relevant Lens

Establishing a cultural frame is essential when exploring facets of Native Hawaiian identity (Halualani, 2002; Wright, 2003). According to Halualani, a cultural frame is imperative to understanding the meaning behind the construction and interpretation of “Hawaiian” and “Native Hawaiian.” Given that culture is dynamic, it changes over time. Thus, beliefs, values, and behaviors identified as “Hawaiian” by the participants should be understood within the present context of Hawai‘i.

Because identity construction is contextual, it is imperative that we understand the cultural frame of reference on which the participants draw. According to Hall (1996), identity becomes meaningful when interpreted through a culturally relevant lens. The challenge prior to discussing identity construction and enactment is to create a framework that will act as the underlying foundation of the idea of “Hawaiian” using cultural elements identified by participants. So the questions become (a) how do these participants broadly define their ideas about being Hawaiian and Hawaiianness? and (b) what are participants’ understandings of being Hawaiian?
This chapter has been framed to provide a space in which an exploration of Hawaiian identity and culture can occur. As such, it will not be limited to a discussion of traditional markers of Hawaiian culture, like hula [traditional dance] or inherent hospitality and generosity. Instead, it will provide a more expansive and sometimes uncomfortable view of Hawaiinanness, a view that will not only highlight the good associated with Hawaiinanness but the unpleasant and, often, unappealing aspects.

The data analysis is presented through narratives and the participants’ understandings of their identities and Native Hawaiian culture. The analysis has been framed and guided by TribalCrit and Hawaiian epistemology. These epistemological frameworks have provided a structure in which the researcher could better understand the stories told by the participants. By no means is this an exhaustive view of how Native Hawaiians construct and interpret Hawaiian culture or their individual identities. Instead, it provides a glimpse into how these particular Hawaiians understand Hawaiian culture and aspects of their identity.

Chapter 4 is the initial examination of how these eight undergraduate women understood their identities. Based on their experiences and reflections, their constructions of the processes and practices that define Hawaiinanness and Hawaiian culture indicate a very wide conceptual view of what it means to be Hawaiian. Interestingly, the participants’ narratives highlighted recorded elements of traditional cultural and contemporary society while also illuminating other elements not usually considered when thinking about traditional notions of Native Hawaiian identity (Hall, 1996; Wright, 2003). Consequently, the chapter provides a broad-based understanding for discerning how Hawaiians have come to interpret their cultural identity through their collegiate experiences.
Narratives of Identity Construction

The purpose of the eight summaries presented in this section is to introduce the participants and provide a frame that will help the reader have a better understanding of the participants’ contexts. The researcher’s analysis of the participants’ interviews shaped the construction of the overall analysis and helped her present the “bigger picture” of the combined participants’ identity conceptions through each of their individual narratives. The accompanying section used participant narratives to portray the ideas central to each story about the meaning she made of her identity, particularly her Native Hawaiian identity. In addition, the accompanying section explores understandings of other dimensions of each participant’s identity and how the facets interacted with each other. Lastly, the narratives provide a space in which the participants were able to talk about their university experience and how such experiences impacted their understandings of their Native Hawaiian identities. Therefore, the chapter provides a broad-based understanding for discerning how Hawaiians have come to interpret their cultural identity and the impact their university experience has had on their meaning-making process.

A Brief Snapshot: Location

Set in Honolulu, the University of Hawai’i-Manoa is a vibrant and busy campus. Throughout the days spent on campus, the researcher noticed many people walking, biking, and skating around campus. There were many green spaces on campus and it was typical to see people sitting outside reading, eating, and/or visiting. With major bus routes directed to and from campus, it was easy to travel to and from campus and students typically used the local transportation because it was “cheaper than having a car” (Kupo, analytic journal, September 9, 2009). It was not uncommon to hear many different languages being spoken by groups of people.
on campus and cultural event fliers were posted on many of the campus announcement boards and were highlighted in the university newspaper. In general, the campus had a multicultural feel to it. As participants discussed locations on campus, The Center for Hawaiian Studies (CHS) was identified as having significant meaning to them. The Center for Hawaiian Studies was located on the outskirts of campus. Designed to reflect traditional Hawaiian structures, the academic building was built as a traditional Hawaiian *hale* [house] and contained spaces that supported both academic and co-curricular activities. In addition, the campus *lo‘i* [water garden] was located on the premises and students, faculty, administrators, and community members were encouraged to care for and learn about lo‘i cultivation. When asked about CHS, students spoke about it in very positive ways. They appreciated the courses they took at CHS and enjoyed learning about Hawaiian culture. However, many expressed concern about the structure being “so far off campus” and “not easy to get to” (Kupo, analytic journal, September 25, 2009). Overall, the institution provided an informative backdrop and, at times, provided a frame to better understand the participants’ experiences on campus.

**Participants**

The eight undergraduates who participated in the study represented a broad spectrum of Native Hawaiians. Seven were selected based on suggestions put forth by university faculty and administrators, and one was selected on the recommendation of one of the selected participants. The eight participants represented some very different segments of the Hawaiian population. Each woman had a distinct story to share and a unique perspective on her Hawaiian identity and her individual collegiate experiences. Together, these Native Hawaiian undergraduate women provided data for my exploration and examination of Hawaiian identity with links between interpretations of Hawaiian culture, identity discourse, and identity construction.
In general, the eight women were very diverse in terms of demographics with the exception of gender. Participants were women who ranged between first-year students to seniors at the institution, and they self-identified as Native Hawaiian. None of the participants labeled themselves as Kānaka Maoli. The women ranged in age between late teens and early thirties. One participant was over 30; seven participants were under 25. Of the participants, seven were from O’ahu, which represents a majority of Native Hawaiians in Hawai’i. Two were from West O’ahu, one was from Honolulu, one was from the North Shore, and three were from East O’ahu—very different communities in terms of urban/rural settings, ethnic compositions of the community, and general socioeconomic status of the area. One participant was from the Big Island of Hawai’i, and she spent 13 years of her life in the continental United States. All claimed to have Hawaiian genealogical ties. Spiritual practices also differed. Although all of the participants were raised within a Christian tradition, some practiced on a daily basis, some integrated Native Hawaiian cultural and religious beliefs into their Christian practice, and others no longer practiced formal religion. In addition, the eight participants were very diverse in terms of their ethnicity. Seven identified as having a multi-ethnic background, and one reported as only being Native Hawaiian. All participants identified having Native Hawaiian ancestry and claimed a close identification with their Native Hawaiian identity.

Educational experiences varied. Three attended private K-12 schools, one attended public primary school and private secondary school, and four attended public K-12 schools. All graduated from high school (as opposed to obtaining a high school equivalency diploma). Six participants were first-generation college students. Of the participants, one was a nontraditional student who had stopped out of college and returned after being in the workplace for several
years. Two participants earned two-year degrees before transferring, and one served in the U.S. Military before enrolling at UH-M.

The participants all had different academic majors and class. Majors included biology, English, Hawaiian studies, political science, psychology, social work, and women’s studies. One was undeclared. Five indicated that they hoped to continue their education after they graduated by enrolling in graduate programs. The participants also varied in terms of academic class. Four were seniors, two were juniors, one was a sophomore, and one was a first-year student. All participants had the intention of graduating from UH-M. Because some participants started at the community college, or stopped out for one reason or another, their time at UH-M varied. In addition to the different academic experiences, none of the participants lived on campus. All of them commuted and either relied on public transportation or had a car of their own to assist with the commute.

Regarding family background, each participant had varied experiences. Four lived with their parents, two lived with their parents and grandparents and subsequently were raised by both generations, one lived with her mother, and one was raised in a multigenerational household that included grandparents, parents, aunts, and cousins. Further more, three of the participants experienced the death of one of their primary care givers as young children/ adults. Two reported that their mothers’ had been in abusive relationships. Three participants had siblings and/or family members that were/are incarcerated and/or lived on the beach due to displacement or poverty. Three have/ had a biological parent in the military. Participants also came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds that ranged from very poor to upper middle class. Six of the eight participants were first-generation college students. All of the participants described growing up in very stable households with supportive families (see Table 1).
As reflected in this aggregate description, the participants are fairly diverse. In addition to the demographic diversity, each participant had a unique and rich personal story that will be revealed in the following chapters.

Table 1.

**Background Information on Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kanoe</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Political science/English</td>
<td>Private K-12</td>
<td>H, F, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ke’a</td>
<td>First-year</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Undeclared</td>
<td>Private K-12</td>
<td>H, F, Ch, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matilda</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Social work</td>
<td>Public K-8 /</td>
<td>H, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Private 9-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mokihana</td>
<td>Junior/Transfer</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Environmental studies</td>
<td>Public K-12</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pōmai</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Private K-12</td>
<td>H, Ch, G, I, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Women’s studies</td>
<td>Public K-12</td>
<td>H, AA, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U’i</td>
<td>Junior/Transfer</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Hawaiian studies</td>
<td>Public K-12</td>
<td>H, B/AA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Public K-12</td>
<td>J, F, H, P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aAll names are pseudonyms chosen by participants
*bAA= African American; B= Black; Ch=Chinese; F= Filipino; G= German; H= Hawaiian/Native Hawaiian; I= Irish; J= Japanese; P= Portuguese
Kanoe: “I’m Hawaiian and I am this because of who I am”

Kanoe, a Native Hawaiian woman from West O’ahu, was a confident and humble 21-year old graduating senior political science/English major. The youngest of three children, and the only daughter, Kanoe shared that she had a deep and important connection with her family and that she would rather be with them than go out clubbing or hang out with her friends:

Well, it’s just, I guess I’m like [family] oriented because I’d rather just kind of hang out with [my family] instead of going out. It’s like I’d rather just go to the beach with them and like just the other day, you know, going out and partying and like that I guess. But, that’s just how I was raised. Like, we did a lot of stuff like that when we were growing up. So, it’s just natural for me. That’s kind of like, you know that’s comfort. That’s sort of my comfort.

Although she grew up in a multicultural household and claimed Native Hawaiian, Filipino, and Portuguese lineages, she shared that her family was “first and foremost Hawaiian.”

Growing up, Kanoe was very much aware of various aspects of her identity. Growing up in a Catholic household and attending Catholic school helped her maintain her Catholic faith, and she still practices it today:

I’m Catholic, my mother is [Filipino]. So, she’s the staunch Catholic. I went to Catholic schools since I was in kindergarten through high school. So, it’s pretty, I don’t know. It definitely is a part of my life. So, it guides my decisions and how I feel about certain things.

Although she wanted to play with her brothers and act like them, her mother wanted Kanoe to participate in activities that were more suitable for girls, because her mother “already had two sons.” Throughout her journey of understanding who she was, Kanoe struggled with feeling
comfortable with sharing her true self. She felt more at ease with those who were more familiar with Native Hawaiian culture and her family members. Her experiences as a Native Hawaiian woman have made her more aware of her culture as well as more aware of the negative stereotypes attributed to her identity as a Native Hawaiian woman. It is with this understanding that she continues to navigate the world and balances her “true self” with the expectations placed upon her by those who surround her.

As someone who felt deeply committed to finishing her education, she was proud to be graduating and applying to graduate school. She felt it was her responsibility, her “duty,” to complete her education as she would be the first in her family to graduate from college.

**Ke’a: “Hawaiian is being humble and grateful”**

Ke’a was an outgoing, no nonsense first-year student at UH-M. A passionate, yet soft spoken, 18-year-old woman, Ke’a openly shared insights about how her family and schooling experiences helped shape how she understood her identity. She often talked about her leadership experiences while in school and openly talked about her family and her mixed-race and multicultural background. Self-described as a “young, ambitious person” who attended an all-girls Catholic school prior to enrolling at UH-M, Ke’a was interested in getting more involved on campus and focused a lot of our initial conversation on issues of leadership and her personal leadership development. As a leader, she talked about the importance of helping others and role modeling and shared that she “always [wants to] get out there, meet new people, and try to make connections with others.”

Growing up in a multigenerational household had a significant impact on Ke’a’s understanding of her identity.
That we all live together. So my – me and my parents and my brother and my sister live in one house. And my auntie and my great-grandparents and my grandparents live in the other house [on the same land]. So that’s why we’re so close. So we all like living together. Oh, yeah, so talk about Hawaiian culture.

Living with her grandparents, aunties, and cousins gave her the opportunity to learn not only about her family history, but her Native Hawaiian culture.

[My auntie], she reminds me of where I’m from and where I come from; where my – what my parents and my grandparents and my great-grandparents have done for us. And we should be grateful. Like, the whole, like, gratitude – being grateful and being humble. You know what I mean? . . . But she’s the one that always kept, like, oral tradition about Hawaiian culture to me . . . she always taught me, like, little stuff like that.

In addition, she learned the importance of self-reliance and depending on family. The role models in her life were her parents, who taught her the importance of hard work and appreciating what she had, especially because her family was “poor,” her auntie, who taught her about Hawaiian culture, and her grandparents who instilled in her Hawaiian values and taught her how to integrate them in her life. She learned the importance of respect of elders and the process of ho’oponopono [to make right] through her childhood experiences. Respect and ho’oponopono were two values that guided the way she interacted with people in her life and her leadership style.

There were many times in her life when people underestimated her. She attributed this to people’s attitudes about her gender, age, body size, and her Hawaiianness:

I mean, that’s why pretty much, like, my whole, like, life is like you always – I always have to prove myself to people. Like, I always – like, I’m always underestimated. Like,
even with – like, in that fact, at school – even at sports. I play volleyball [and] because I’m short, right. And then, like, with meeting new people, like, you – and, like, when I was in debate, like, being of race, being a girl, and, like, growing up with not much, like, you have that kind of thing to – I guess I could say you have to prove yourself, I guess. I don’t know.

She often would find ways to challenge others’ expectations, particularly when she participated in debate club activities. It was important to her to be able to prove that she was strong and educated. Although there were times she did question whether she was “Hawaiian enough” due to the amount of knowledge she had regarding to Hawaiian culture and language, she was very proud of her culture and felt it was important for her to continue to learn about the “great” people she was descended from.

**Matilda: “Being Native Hawaiian . . . gives me the right to speak as a Native Hawaiian”**

I met with Matilda in the campus *lo’i*, a water garden designed to cultivate *kalo* [taro]. A beautiful and peaceful environment, the *lo’i* framed our conversations regarding Matilda’s understanding of her identity and her experiences at college. Matilda, a 33-year-old graduating social work major, was open and approachable. Her comments often revealed her deep wisdom and humor and unveiled her generosity and concern for her Native Hawaiian community.

Being raised by her paternal, Filipino grandmother had a tremendous influence on her. As a child, Matilda was raised by both her paternal grandparents until her grandfather’s death when she was young. Her father was in the military and stationed away from home, and her mother was no longer in her life. During this time, she had a very close relationship with both her father, she was “Daddy’s girl,” and grandfather, while her relationship with her grandmother was often strained. When her grandfather became terminally ill, he shared with her that there would be a
time when she would have to rely on her grandmother and that Matilda needed to work hard to build a strong relationship with her. Her grandfather emphasized the importance of respecting and building a relationship with her grandmother.

I know before he passed away, one of the things he said was, “It’s going to be you and grandma, so you better start working with her, appreciating her more.” He didn’t quite say it that way because I was in the fourth grade. He was just telling me, “I’m not going to be there. It’s going to be you two. You’re going to need each other.”

After her grandfather’s passing, Matilda’s relationship with her grandmother changed, and the two developed a more positive relationship. Because of this, they became closer, so much so that she saw her grandmother as more of a mother figure than grandmother and often referred to her as “mom.”

Tracing her Hawaiian roots through her biological mother’s side, Matilda found her exploration of and knowledge about Native Hawaiian culture was important to her and made her feel more confident in claiming Native Hawaiian identity. As she discussed her identity, she said:

I’m Hawaiian and Filipino. Mostly identify with the Hawaiian side. I think that’s because I grew up with the Filipino side, so I’ve always been really Filipino. My Hawaiian side comes from my mom’s side. Because I’ve been away from my mom since I was really little, embracing the Hawaiian side was part of embracing that part of my family because I didn’t have them with me. For sure now, that’s the side I identify with the most. I think there’s a lot of reasons why.

For Matilda, her Native Hawaiian identity was an important facet of her identity and was an integral way to reconnect with her mother who had not been a constant presence in her life.
Growing up in a Filipino household, Matilda was encouraged to explore her Native Hawaiian culture by her Filipino grandmother. She continued to explore her cultural roots and lived in a household that viewed Native Hawaiians and Hawaiian culture in a positive way. With the encouragement of her grandmother, Matilda enrolled in Kamehameha Schools for her secondary education. It was during this time that she had the opportunity to learn about Native Hawaiian culture and felt truly immersed in the culture.

Although she grew up depending on government assistance, she shared that rather than being a negative experience for her, growing up poor was something she never had to think about until she encountered people who had access to more resources.

Matilda shared that people often challenged her identity as a Native Hawaiian and Filipino. Because of her physical characteristics, people would not believe her when she said she was Filipino and/or Native Hawaiian. She was often misidentified as a “Samoan,” and when she would correct people, they would not believe her. As she continued her education, she committed herself to working with her Native Hawaiian community as a social worker. Her commitment to her community stemmed from her *kuleana* [responsibility] as a “child of God” and her *kuleana* as a Native Hawaiian.

**Mokihana: “Being open . . . makes me limitless”**

Mokihana transferred from a local community college and was in her first semester at UH-M. A soft spoken and highly engaging 22-year-old woman, Mokihana shared insights that were reflective of both her kind nature and her spiritual connection. Mokihana’s commitment to her family was very strong and was one of the reasons she committed herself to completing her college education. She believed that education was a way to improve not only her own life, but
that of her family’s. In addition, her education was seen as a way to bring pride to her family and to honor her ancestors.

I know with my family—they never went to college. My parents and my great grandparents—no my grandparents, so it's just that kuleana [responsibility] that responsibility that I have, and want to fulfill, not just for me, but also for my grandparents. So that's one thing that makes me come to school and I guess that defines my identity, you know that's one portion. The traditions of my ancestors, their was sent down to me. Now it's kinda like I try to live it out each day, live out what they brought. That's one thing.

Because of her commitment to completing her education, she decided to enroll in ROTC to help her pay for college and planned to be commissioned after she graduated from college.

Strongly connected to the environment, Mokihana talked about her kuleana [responsibility] to mālama ‘āina [care for the land]. Her commitment to the environment was developed in environmental studies courses that incorporated Native Hawaiian culture and knowledge that she took in high school and at community college:

I got, I would say, the best of both worlds. I learned so much scientifically, I learned so much about just the ‘āina [land], the land and how much there is to learn from. And I learned so much from our culture; so much of my culture, and how I feel everyone should continue to take care of what they have now. And what we have now, if we continue to take care of the land, for the future generations, they'll be able to continue, and we still receive the blessings, the beautifulness that we have.

It was through her commitment to mālama ‘āina that she learned about Native Hawaiian culture and how it related to her connections with her family, the language, and the ‘āina [land].
Mokihana constantly referred to aspects of her identity in a manner that reflected such. As she talked about her identity, she described herself as “a tree.”

My family's like my foundation on my tree. They're like my foundation, like the roots on a tree – so my tree. My family's like my foundation to my tree, and the branches I can say, would probably be never-ending – because it's never-ending, the branches – never-ending knowledge, growing knowledge. And the leaves are those things they're come and go's, you know things like – not besides friends, things that come and go that you sometimes you learn from them once you have to let it go. It's not necessarily a bad thing, there's couple of things that you don't want to do it. And for me, my tree continues to grow, and my tree is my foundation, and my family tree is my family and those that increment within my life, and left out good wisdom, and as the tree continues to go, one thing I pray is that it continues to go strong. That those roots will still be implanted as deep as it can be and it continues to grow. And that’s one thing why, and that’s one thing that kinda made me who I am, and defines me as person. And just those who are supportive, left good, left good wisdom.

When asked what feeds her tree, Mokihana believed that the “relationships in her life” provided the nourishment, and it was the “wisdom” and “knowledge” shared with her that sustained her tree and helped it grow. As she talked about her tree, she shared, “My tree continues to grow, and my tree is my foundation, and my tree is my family.” Her tree had roots “still implanted as deep as [they] can be,” and those roots would “always continue to grow.” It was her tree that “defined” her as a person. As she talked about the tree and the roots in a manner in which she defined herself, the tree represented her family. Her connection to her family was part of her identity and how she understood herself. In addition, she discussed different aspects of her tree.
The branches on her tree were the relationships she had in her life, and the leaves represented ongoing life changes. It was through this analogy that she acknowledged the role her family had on her identity development.

A deeply spiritual woman, Mokihana found her strength not only from her family but in her belief in God. She was a “child of God” and found direction from the teachings of the Bible. Her spiritual beliefs were also nourished through her Hawaiian culture. Although, at times, her cultural and spiritual beliefs were at odds, it was the combination of the two that guided the way she interacted with the world, helped her understand her identity, and made up her values system.

Mokihana was constantly learning about her culture and felt at times that she would always have more to learn. But it was through her “openness” to learning from her kumu [teachers] that she felt she was “limitless,” that “there are no limits to the knowledge” she could obtain. She would always be learning, and it was with that knowledge that she could make a positive contribution to her work, her community, and her family.

**Pōmai: “It is my responsibility to provide identity options for the younger generation”**

I met with Pōmai in the university library. An energetic and engaging Native Hawaiian woman, her insights revealed her to be a highly motivated woman who was concerned about her Native Hawaiian community and continuing her Native Hawaiian culture. To Pōmai, community was essential.

I think a connection with the community is extremely important . . . And I think it’s really important for people to have at least one consistent foundation, besides your family, at least one other consistent foundation I mean not like for your whole life, but for a long time, at least throughout high school, or something like that.
This 22-year-old graduating senior psychology major, who had hopes of attending law school, talked about the influence her primary and secondary education had on her understanding of her identity. It was through her primary and secondary school experiences that Pōmai experienced many challenges regarding her Native Hawaiian identity, and she was often one of the only Native Hawaiians in school.

The value of education caused her mother to enroll both Pōmai and her brother in private schools located in Honolulu. Going to school in “town” had a lasting impact on Pōmai as she shared that, though she received a good education, she “never lived where [she] went to school.” Because she did not live in the community where she went to school, she often felt disconnected from the place where she lived and the place where she attended school and found it difficult to find connection with friends and peers.

Pōmai discussed her experiences with a great self-awareness. Growing up, she was always aware of her multicultural background and was encouraged to learn about and celebrate her family’s cultural background,

So, we’re Hawaiian, Chinese, English, Irish, German, that’s me and my brother . . . Well, we’ve always identified ourselves as Hawaiian. And that’s never been like an iffy thing for me where I’d be like – but I know – because like my brother, he’s a lot darker than me.

However, it was always her Native Hawaiian culture that was salient for her. Being the oldest of two children, she was often made aware that she was a girl due to the difference in house rules placed on her and her brother. Being raised in a Catholic household, Pōmai’s religious values were important to her and acted as a foundation for her decision-making. She did not classify herself as a “super Catholic,” but she shared that she believed in God. She shared that she had
moved away from the church and more formalized practice; however, her faith was still strong as she still maintained the values instilled in her through her education and attendance at church.

Her understanding of Native Hawaiian culture and her Native Hawaiian identity was developed through her formal schooling experiences as well as informed through her connections with her family. Having the opportunity to learn about her family history from her grandparents and parents as well as learning about her culture from her boyfriend had a tremendous impact on her. In addition, her experiences at UH-M, both in and out of the classroom, have played a significant role in her appreciation of her Native Hawaiian culture. For Pōmai, school had been a location in which she had questioned whether she was “Hawaiian enough.” During her struggle with the notion of Hawaiian enough, she took a course where the instructor helped her understand:

[T]hat it was okay if you didn’t wear big flowers and wear Hawaiian bracelets, and wear I don’t know what you would call, like wear whatever because you could be Hawaiian if you still wear your preppy clothes are keep your hair like that because there’s like a myth that it is like, this, this and this, and everything [and] that’s not— this doesn’t count because everyone who wears that must be Hawaiian because you’re Hawaiian and you want to wear it. It’s also Chinese and English among other things. But it’s still, if you want to do it, then whatever you are, that makes it that.

There was no such thing as Hawaiian enough, and this experience made her rethink her definition of Hawaiinanness. She had also experienced people questioning her blood quantum and had worked hard to challenge some of the negative stereotypes placed upon her due to her Native Hawaiian identity.
Pōmai believed it was important to serve as a role model for Native Hawaiian youth. Because of this, she has been compelled to educate herself regarding Native Hawaiian culture and language. She actively engaged in activities that have allowed her to interact with community members and provide “identity options” for those with whom she interacts. To Pōmai, her identity options of being smart, athletic, dancing hula, speaking Hawaiian, amongst others, are important ways to role model different ways Native Hawaiians can behave and go against the stereotype of Hawaiians being “lazy,” “stupid,” “uneducated,” and so forth.

Rose: “I’m not like many Hawaiians”

An energetic and sensitive young woman, Rose openly talked about her experiences as a mixed-race Hawaiian woman from East O’ahu. A 23-year-old women’s studies major in her last year at UH-M, she talked about her experiences attending public school and how her experiences in the U.S. Military deeply impacted her understanding of her identity. At times, unsure of how she could contribute to this project, she openly shared her doubts about why her experiences even counted because of her mixed-race and multicultural heritage.

Rose was raised by her mother and lived with her grandparents and brother and sister throughout a majority of her life. The passing of Rose’s mother in her late teens had a significant impact on her identity, as it was through her mother that she felt deeply connected to her Catholic faith and her Native Hawaiian identity. Although she lived with her grandparents at the time, the untimely death of Rose’s mother significantly changed the family dynamic as well as her self-concept. Although she found great support from her surrounding community members, particularly because her mother was well known and connected in the community, she felt a great loss with the passing of her mother, and it was at this point in her life that she experienced a great deal of change. After her mother’s death, her relationship with her
grandparents changed as they took over the parenting responsibilities. It was at this time that she began to feel more disconnected from her family and friends.

To Rose, obtaining her education was of great importance. It was a way for her to bring pride to her family, as well as a means to better her life. Education was important to Rose because she has seen what:

[A] lack of education can do. The lack of the outside world, not knowing who the president was, not knowing what war we were in, it’s kind of – not only does it make the person look unintelligent, but it also kind of does hurt when you just know your area. . . . its good to go abroad. For example, my uncles, it’s just hard to carry on a conversation. I can just see myself, if I was like them living there right now, if I had nothing past high school, didn’t meet all these people from different places, I feel so stupid, I’d look stupid. “What is Iraq? Where is that?” Something like that. So, I think [my value of education] came from my family and seeing I didn’t want to be like that. And I think education was a big part of it.

She believed that through her education and degree obtainment that she would be able to find a good paying job and create a more “financially stable life” for her and her family. Her education was seen as a way for her to leave the life of poverty in which she grew up. She also saw it as a means by which she could defy and deconstruct stereotypes attributed to Native Hawaiian women from East O’ahu, as she would be educated and have a job that would help her “better herself” and her future prospects. In order to reach her goals of going to college, Rose joined the U.S. Military. The military was seen as one of the only options for her to help finance the education she desperately wanted.
Rose shared that people often questioned whether she was Hawaiian because of her mixed-race background. Although she identified as Hawaiian, Filipino, and African American, she was often told she “looked Dominican.” Instead of correcting the misidentification, she would often “play the part.” She shared that at times she was “flattered” by this and often felt “exotic.” However, there were times that she felt very uncomfortable, and often annoyed, with these types of experiences. In addition, there were times when her friends and relatives would tell her that she spoke like a “White girl” and did not “act Hawaiian.” These types of experiences often made her question her own Hawaiianness and identity. Rose’s thoughts regarding Hawaiianness included:

Hawaiian, to me, well, I went to high school, [Shore] High School, and I learned Hawaiian studies, taking hula classes, language classes, and that’s what it meant to me was the cultural background. Nowadays, as I’m more educated in different cultures and different – compared to the Hawaiian culture. To me, I guess, sometimes it’s just another person, I’m just another person within Hawaii. I guess the whole culture aspect, I guess, historically, doesn’t mean that much to me anymore. I feel like the language is dying, I feel like dances are dying, just the customs are vanishing. And sometimes I’m just – I have Hawaiian blood, that’s all it means.

Rose’s understanding of Hawaiianess changed throughout her lifetime and identified that what was once important to her, her Hawaiian culture and language, did not have as great of an importance to her.

As Rose talked about her experiences, she shared that it was during her time in the military that she experienced a change in how she understood herself. She went from seeing herself as a Native Hawaiian girl “who went to church, danced hula, and chanted” and likened
herself to the character of Lilo from the Disney movie *Lilo and Stitch*, to that of a “fighter of freedom,” a soldier, an American. As a soldier, she said that she had “no identity,” that she was “a number” and that it was the first time she felt like she was “an American,” which was often in conflict with her Hawaiian identity.

**U’i: “I try to give as much aloha as possible”**

A bright and funny woman, U’i’s comments and insights demonstrated wisdom beyond her years. As a 21-year-old transfer student from one of the local community colleges, U’i’s first semester at UH-M had been a positive and exciting experience for her. Since her academic enrollment at UH-M, she had become more engaged in her academic work and had found that she was a “better student,” which was a significant change from her community college experience. She attributed this change to participating in opportunities that allowed her to learn about subjects that were interesting both interesting and engaging. These activities included volunteering at the *loʻi* [water garden] and participating in Hawaiian language emersion school. Her involvement on campus, particularly at the Center for Hawaiian Studies, helped U’i become more engaged with her academic work. As U’i described herself, she talked about the importance of her education:

I would probably say that I'm a student, and I would say I'm a student of like just kind of, I'm learning not only here, but I'm learning outside of here too. And I think the part of the thing that sometimes defines people is not necessarily how you look, and like what they have an all that kind of stuff, but I think sometimes it comes down to like truth first of all, like if they're trustworthy person. I would describe myself as that. And it comes down to loyalty, you know as a friend or as a person, I feel am really like that. And I think it comes down to character, and that's how, I guess that's I would describe myself. I
don't usually describe myself like, I'm a Hawaiian, native Hawaiian student, but I always, I'm always kinda learning from life and like learning from being in the classroom and from being with family or with friends.

Her education occurred both inside and outside of the classroom and informed the way she interacted with the world.

A deeply spiritual woman who believed in akua [God] and integrated her Christian beliefs with her Native Hawaiian beliefs:

I think Hawaiian, like being, all Hawaiians I think it has to spiritual. It has to be spiritually connected, whether it—some of us are Mormons, and some of us are Christians, and some of us are like cultural traditional but to just having mix of spirituality and connection to akua that's so important. And that’s the part of like – its not only a part of my culture, but I realize now that I look back, even before I was studying Hawaiian studies, akua still had a part of my life so – I've always been like spiritually connected. Even when I didn’t want to be, I was.

U‘i continued to want to learn about and explore her Native Hawaiian culture. Because of this, U‘i had decided to pursue a Hawaiian studies major. Although her education was especially important to her as she would be the first in her family to graduate, her faith and family have been just as much, sometimes even more, important to her.

U‘i was strongly connected to her ‘ohana [family]. As she talked about her ‘ohana, she shared that her mother was one of the most important people in her life. It was from her mother that she learned about Hawaiian culture and learned how to integrate Hawaiian values in her life. Her connection to family was a foundation for her. She saw herself as an integral member of her ‘ohana, whose kuleana [responsibilities] as “a daughter” and “a sister” included taking care of
her siblings, contributing to the family income, and obtaining her degree so that she could acquire a job that would allow her to make greater financial contributions to her family. As a family member, she has had to find ways to balance her school responsibilities with her ‘ohana and work responsibilities.

Living with *aloha* [love] was very important to U’i. She felt it was important to spread a little *aloha* everywhere she went. To her, living *aloha* was an integral part of “Hawaiian style.” By being very accepting and open to those she encountered, she would always be open to new experiences, friendly to strangers, and provide a little bit of *aloha* to all she encountered. She worked hard to learn more about her culture everyday and always made sure she let *aloha* guide her actions. Her goal was to spread as much *aloha* as possible.

**Undergrad: “I love my culture”**

A soft spoken and focused young woman, Undergrad’s descriptions of her experiences revealed an insight that was well beyond her years. A 19-year-old biology major in her second year at university, she spent the first 11 years of her life on the Big Island before her family moved to the continental United States. She was an only child who was extremely close to her family and was in a committed relationship with her boyfriend. She identified as a mixed-race Hawaiian whose culture was extremely important to her and shared that she grew up in a lower middle class household.

Growing up, she developed a deep connection with her grandmother and took care of her when she was ill. It was through her relationship with her grandmother that Undergrad learned about the importance of taking care of the earth and the art of gardening, as well as responsibility to care for family and elders:
My grandma, before she died, she was the key of our family, and then when she passed on our family just split up. She had a big impact on who we were, and now our family isn't the same . . . . She made me enjoy planting gardens, just plants in general. She taught me how to cook. When she was getting sick, like, I would take care of her, so she helped me become more of a nurturing person to care about others. And then she just – just being around her, it was just more than enough.

She learned from her grandparents the importance of sacrifice and what it meant to put others before herself. She also learned the importance of sacrifice from her mother:

My mom, she like sacrificed a lot so I respect her and appreciate her. She wanted to become a nurse and instead she went to school for accounting. So she gave up her dreams. My dad, he gave up school just to work and to get medical for us. So, their sacrifice [meant a lot to me].

These values influenced Undergrad and guided the way she thought about her goals and relationships with her culture and family.

Her family’s move to the continental United States and her schooling experiences in Nevada made Undergrad think more about her Native Hawaiian identity. As she encountered people who were not familiar with Hawai’i and Hawaiian culture, she became more aware of her own knowledge and lack of it and wanted to gain a better understanding of her cultural and ethnic backgrounds. During her time there, she felt as if she had to teach her peers and teachers about Hawai’i and Hawaiian culture. Her experiences in the continental United States encouraged her to learn more about the language and cultural values. Interacting with people who were not familiar with Native Hawaiian culture and taking on the role of teacher helped Undergrad reaffirm her Native Hawaiian identity. The experiences made her aware that she was
“proud” that she “was from Hawai‘i and that [she] was Hawaiian.” Since her return to Hawai‘i, Undergrad had found that she had become even more interested in her Native Hawaiian culture. She started to get involved in cultural activities, such as volunteering at the university’s lo‘i [water garden], and has taken Hawaiian studies courses. Undergrad hoped to enroll in medical school after she graduated.

The summaries provide a quick introduction to each of the participants. They are meant to help the reader gain an understanding of the participants’ context and provide background regarding some of the experiences that have shaped their understandings of their identities. These summaries are by no means a comprehensive overview. However, as they introduce each participant, the summaries provide a space in which the reader can begin to learn about the participants and understand how their individual experiences contribute to the greater Native Hawaiian identity narrative.

Themes Underlying the Narratives: The Content and Structure of Identity

This section has been designed to illustrate the underlying story of how participants understood and negotiated multiple facets of their identities. Through the use of participant narratives, the section focuses on examining how they constructed their understanding of Hawaiian identity. The described themes speak to the content of the participants’ descriptions of their identities, as well as the meaning-making structures that guided their identity construction.

Defining Hawaiian

The struggle with defining what it means to be Native Hawaiian was addressed by all of the participants. All talked about their Native Hawaiians in ways that incorporated values, biology, culture, location, and beliefs and honored both their multi-ethnic and multicultural backgrounds. In all cases, the participants identified Native Hawaiian as their primary cultural
identity. Beliefs about Hawaiians emerged from a mixture of personal experiences and reflection and illustrated broader sociohistorical and political contexts. As such, the participants expressed their perceptions of Hawaiians through self and family. Although many of these views were reflections of past interpretations of what it meant to be Hawaiian and are both negative and positive, these views continued to surface and play a role in understandings of contemporary Hawaiinanness in its present context. In a sense, they represent the sometimes basic, yet painful, understandings and interpretations from which participants began to think about and understand being Hawaiian. For U’i, her cultural lineage, or ancestral connection helped her define Hawaiian:

Like what I come from, like the Native Hawaiian, the cultural lineage that I come from is very – it's ingrained in me I guess, and so the little things that I do like personally, that like – I don’t think I realize that I'm doing it, but it because it's culturally ingrained in me to be like that. You know when you're at a new place and you see like new people? Hawaiian style is not to look at them all weird and be like ooh… like Hawaiian style is to aloha them to say “Hi,” to say, “Hey what's up, how you've been?” Or even like people, you've seen them around, but you don’t know their name, it's like Hawaiian style to ask them, “Hey what's your name again?” So, I think sometimes being a Native Hawaiian is cool because you were raised that way, or were taught a certain way . . . Maybe that's not normal behavior, but we were raised that way – so you know . . .I think my cultural lineage is so, I would say it's so strong, like so strong, so like being Hawaiian like I know so little bit about myself still, like, and my ancestors, so smart, so akamai [wise] so – I think cultural – I’m trying to think of what I'm trying to say here. I think cultural heritage has such like a big part to play on my life, and I think it's like ongoing. Every
like – currently in this modern day and age, like the ancestors that I come from are kinda like shape like where I'm at right at this moment,

Matilda discussed the importance of knowing genealogy as an important component of Native Hawaiian identity:

Genealogy I think is important because, as I mentioned that it’s a part of who we are. And I think that’s why for me to have that genealogy, and especially because when we look at genealogies, we all link back to these powerful and special people. Not that we’re all special, but I mentioned [organization] before and the kupuna [elders] talking about drawing strength from that, and I think that’s where we get lost is when we don’t realize that who we are is connected back to this person, and that connects back to this person. Eventually, that all connects back to this ultimate power, whatever you believe that ultimate power is. . . . if you’re going with Native Hawaiian, it’s all going to go back to Po [the beginning/darkness]. So, you know, Papa [mother earth], Wakea [father sky], all the way back to Po. So it’s just that really if you’re not rooted, you’re all over the place, and I really feel like having an understanding of where you come from is what keeps you kind of together.

To Matilda, the ability to trace ancestry was very important in defining Native Hawaiian in that if provided an opportunity to connect to those who came before her. She continued her discussion regarding Hawaiianess with the reflection on the importance of family:

I’m trying to think where I started to be so focused on family. I can’t really pinpoint it. I think a lot of it – growing up with my grandparents, that was my family. I may not have been with my family and my parents may have been separated, but I did have that unit with my grandpa and grandpa. I think just as I’ve been growing up and my experiences
with different people and my observations with people has really made me think about family and the value of family. Even in with Hawaiian culture, that’s the main unit. Everything revolves around family in Hawaiian culture. I think the important thing for me in family is realizing that we cannot be just by ourselves, which is so opposite of what American culture is. It’s all about the individual. For me, it’s about realizing that you’re part of this unit. You cannot function without the support of that unit.

Ke’a continued the discussion of Hawaiianness with the following:

Hawaiian culture, to me, is I think understanding where you came from and the traditions that Hawaiian culture has. Like, say, like, Hawaiian culture – I don't know, understanding my people and, like, how – like, it’s amazing to me that one culture, like, our culture has built this – these islands and, like, built these traditions and, like, sayings and, like, mottos and stuff that everyone is using today.

Through her reflections of Hawaiianess, Ke’a’s acknowledged that, “Hawaiian is being humble and grateful is one of the things that is – I don't know, that’s – to me, that’s part of Hawaiian culture.” Mokihana expanded the discussion regarding Hawaiianes when she said:

Knowledge of not just you know, not just traditions within the Hawaiian culture, chants, stuff like that. So typical stuff, and including the language, that’s the major thing. The language and for me, I never grew up learning the language. I never – my grandparents speak Hawaiian and my grandma used to speak the language, but she went to O’ahu – she lost language because she was forbidden, and so I feel now, you know, it’s like another tap in where I can reach and reach past and learn. And it’s a great way, my – and I’m the first on in my family to ever you know, to ever major in Hawaiian studies and environmental studies, and it’s something. It’s really something. Yeah, I enjoy it. . . .
guess I see that one day hopefully when I get a family, whatever knowledge that I learn, I would like to pass it on through to, you know, my children, and also to those in my family. And it’s just you know, whatever we take, whatever we learn, it can be transferred and can be continued and that’s what I want to do. I want one day to have my family to remember that this – you are a Hawaiian in Hawaii, and you can go out and continue and learn and do what you want to do. I mean, but remember that you still are Hawaiian, that you know there’s still some things and I just want to instill that with them, my whole family, because with what my parents never taught anything about the Hawaiian language, about hula, about anything because you know, within the culture, because they felt it’s kinda like forbidden within our – because of our religion, because Christianity and they felt oh, that’s – kapu [taboo] for me, I see it as a another great tool. And you can use to learn, teach and thrive and that’s what I want my family or kids to learn that.

In addition, Mokihana talked about kuleana [responsibility] and its connection to identity:

[I]ts just that kuleana [responsibility] that responsibility that I have, and want to fulfill, not just for me, but also for my grandparents . . . I guess that defines my identity, you know that’s one portion. The traditions of my ancestors that [were] sent down to me. Now it's kinda like I try to live it out each day, live out what they brought. That's one thing . . . kokua [help], mālama [care for], I guess that's meaning like helping everyone, that’s just – not just from an environmental perspective, but also just from the littlest thing they do to help. So that’s like one, that’s a major, major thing.
Reflections on Hawaiianness included connection to family, knowledge of genealogy, and learning and perpetuating cultural practices and values. These were important components of discussions regarding Native Hawaiian identity.

However, when considered together, among the most striking qualities of the eight narratives was the array of possibilities among the participants’ perceptions of their identity. Varied perspectives on the meaning of Native Hawaiian identity were prominent. For instance, as Rose considered her Hawaiianness, she said, “I don’t know, its just blood” and that her only connection to her Native Hawaiian identity was that of her Hawaiian blood. This limited connection caused her to question her “right” to claim Native Hawaiian as her identity, especially after her Hawaiian-Filipino mother passed away. In contrast, Pōmai’s identification was grounded in her Native Hawaiian blood, which was an essential component to her, her culture, and lineage. “It’s your blood . . . your culture, your location.” Her blood, culture, and lineage provided her with the means to not only claim Native Hawaiian as her identity, but allowed her the freedom to find a connection with her Native Hawaiian community.

For U’i, Mokihana, Kanoe, and Matilda, their Native Hawaiian identity was deeply connected to their families, their genealogy, culture, and the ʻāina [land]. Learning about culture and developing a stronger connection to their families and ʻāina was important to them and provided them with a means of finding connection to their ancestors as well as better understanding Native Hawaiian culture and aspects of their identity. Undergrad was connected through her lineage and conception of her culture and became more aware of her identity once she moved away from Hawaiʻi to the continent.

Well, I – the school I went to in [Star City on U.S. mainland], they’d always talk about Hawaii and they’d say Hawaii instead of Hawaiian and they would – I guess they don’t
understand how big culture is here. So I’d be defending it and yelling in class and telling them, “No, this is it.” And, “No, that’s not how you pronounce it.” So I guess they made me realize how much I love my culture even more. And then when I came here it was just a new opportunity to even just actually learn about it and not just defend it . . . [and being on the mainland made me] proud of that I was from Hawaii and that I was Hawaiian.

Ke’a’s identity as a Native Hawaiian was connected to her family, her history, the ‘āina, and her culture.

And then my grandparents, they also helped me. I realize what, like, family is. Like, if anything happens, like, my grandfather and his family is from [East Town] and [West Town] – the [family’s last name]. And they – and they remind me that we all have to stick together no matter what. Because I remember – a lot of people – I mean, in our family, we’d have a lot of fights. But then my grandpa would be the one to settle it. If someone fights, my grandpa is the one to be there to settle it down. Like, he – once my grandpa was in it, you know, like, you have to stop—It’s that kind of a – he has that much power in our family. Like, it’s pretty much, like, you know. And my grandma works hard and everything, and then my Auntie [Name], like, she – like, she’s always been with me, like, when I was even small. Like, she – like, she’s gonna be my role model and stuff. Like, I would say that, like, she always told me, like – she remind me that our family’s – like, in the end, that’s – your family is your family. And nothing can – nothing can be closer to you than your family. And if I ever needed – I have a problem, then I would stay and talk to my family. And they always taught us about, like, respect and, like – respecting yourself and respecting others. And, like, little stuff like her going
to her friend’s house and bringing something. You know what I mean? That teaches me that if I go to someone’s house – to my friend’s house – I should always bring something just for common courtesy. And, like, little stuff like that, it shows me, like, how Hawaiian culture is, like, embedded still today like that. And I’d say – like she would always take me to – like, around the island trips when she used to take the UH students around the island. And they would tell us, like, stories about each place like Waianae, North Shore, and stuff. Like, that I really – like, I loved it. Because she’s the main person that I know all these – Hawaiian culture, so that one person that helps carry on the traditions and, like, the stories.

She was made more aware of it through her living environment, both living with her multigenerational family and living on family land passed down through generations, and her close connection to her family. Having the opportunity to learn from the elders in her family shaped her understanding of Hawaianness and culture. In all cases, the women were still exploring and reframing their Native Hawaiian identity.

When asked to talk about what being Native Hawaiian meant to her, Pōmai shared, “It means you’re Hawaiian, like your blood; culturally, ethnically, locationally.” To Pōmai, blood, culture, language, and location all were important components of being able to claim Native Hawaiian descent and her ability to trace her genealogy as well as connect with the land her ancestors lived on and speak Hawaiian were important to her understanding of her Hawaianness. She contrasted this to the concept of being “Hawaiian at heart,” which she described as someone who did not have Hawaiian blood but expressed a love for Hawaiian culture and/or adopted Hawaiian behaviors and/or practices. To Pōmai, being “Hawaiian at heart” was not a valid means
to claim Native Hawaiian identity and was concerned with people claiming Hawaiianness when they truly were not:

I really feel that Hawaiian culture has been romanticized, exoticized to the point – I've read some papers on this – to the point where we have people from all over who grasp on and leech on in any way they can by claiming they are some half because they lived here from 1887. The reality is they just feel like they are and or they see something, but they are not Hawaiian.

She encountered many people who were born in and/or lived in Hawai‘i and claimed to be “Native Hawaiian” even though they did not have a genealogical connection to the original Native Hawaiian settlers.

Mokihana, who had been pondering a similar question, discussed issues of blood quantum and genealogy as being important aspects of Native Hawaiian identity, but she also talked about the importance of mālama ʻaina [caring for land]:

Mālama [care for] the ʻāina [land] meaning like – I was fortunate to go on science trip this past summer . . . And I never thought just that little implement in my – that little thing in my life – joining that program, I never thought it would set a foundation, or set a stone in my life – plant something within my life. I never thought anything; I just thought I'm here for sake of it. I'm just here for – because my friends were in, and I heard it was a good program, I heard it's good. We'll see how it goes, see how long I survive. I never thought I would be that much into the environment as much as I am now.

And with that experience, it kinda like molded me where I am now with the whole environment, kinda like showed me that I can do whatever I want and it shows me that I
can help out with my environment. . . . meaning . . . scientifically and culturally, and for me it opened my eyes perfectly, meaning within those two.

Connection to the ʻāina [land], her kuleana [responsibility] to care for the ʻāina, and kuleana to learn about culture from her kumu [teachers] as important components of her identity. To Mokihana, being Hawaiian meant:

Sustaining the culture and sharing it with everyone . . . It’s [like I] can give a light to those who feel like they don’t want to learn and hopefully one day [they] can be that light unto that or that beacon, and sustain a culture—that means, continue cultivating the language and including other traditions in the Hawaiian culture like hula and learning and the knowledge of everything.

Sharing knowledge allowed Hawaiian culture to continue to grow and strengthen itself. However, Mokihana shared that there was “certain knowledge” that could not and should not be shared ”non-Hawaiians.” Because of this, there was a fine balance between sharing knowledges with outsiders to sustain and promote cultural understandings and maintaining certain cultural knowledge and values within the Native Hawaiian community.

As Ke’a talked about what it meant to be Native Hawaiian, she shared that it was important for her to understand her cultural heritage and connection to both history and the ʻāina [land]. Her “people were from [Hawai’i]. And they built this island. And they did all of these cool things . . . and they built this kingdom. And having [history], it’s so unique. Our Hawaiian culture is so unique to the world.” Learning about her history and her connection to the great kingdom her ancestors built was important to her understanding of her identity. Her Hawaiian culture made her feel special and “unique” and made her want to learn more about Native Hawaiian culture and history. In addition to the cultural traditions and history, she also
learned what it meant to be Native Hawaiian. To Ke’a, being Native Hawaiian included being “humble” and “grateful” because “that’s part of Hawaiian culture.” Essentially, knowledge of cultural practices, values, and the hidden meaning embedded within life lessons were important to how Ke’a understood her identity:

I feel so bad for the Hawaiians that don’t really know much [about their culture] . . .

I’m still learning—a lot to learn. That’s why I’m taking Hawaiian now at UH-M. I’m going to be taking Hawaiian studies. But, like, having that—like, learning about your culture helps you with your identity.

To Ke’a, learning about her culture and Hawaiian language and history, were essential to her understanding her identity. It was necessary in order to become more connected to her culture, and she acknowledged that her learning was an ongoing process. Learning was both formal (in the classroom) and informal (from her family and other cultural practitioners). It shaped how Ke’a understood her culture and had helped her better understand aspects of her identity.

Although all of the participants identified as Native Hawaiian, the extent to which they identified ranged from very little to a strong and deeply connected relationship. For many of the participants, growing up in a mixed-race and multicultural household had influenced how they understood themselves. And it was within these variances that a spectrum of Native Hawaiian identity had been created. Kanoe shared that she identified primarily as Native Hawaiian, but acknowledged her other cultural roots:

Well, I definitely identify first and foremost as Hawaiian. ‘Cuz I live in Hawai’i and Hawaiian just makes sense to me. But, I definitely think that like, culturally like, our family as a whole like focuses, not focuses, but like, the way we act, the way we talk is Hawaiian. It’s not like Filipino, it’s not Portuguese, it’s Hawaiian.
For Kanoe, her family’s cultural identity influenced her connection to her Native Hawaiian identity. All of the other participants discussed the importance of their families’ impact on their understandings of what it means to be Native Hawaiian, and most of them grew up in Native Hawaiian families. Interestingly, Matilda grew up in a family whose cultural roots were placed in Filipino culture. Matilda’s Filipino grandmother was a great lover of Hawaiian culture and encouraged Matilda to embrace and learn about her Native Hawaiian heritage. She encouraged Matilda to explore her Native Hawaiian heritage through hula and education:

She loved hula and always watched hula. It’s just being in Hawai‘i, she just really enjoyed the things she knew about Hawaiian culture and the things she understood about Hawaiian culture, and because I was Hawaiian, I think she really wanted me to—and because I didn’t have my mom—that influence, she really wanted me to have opportunities to learn more.

Her grandmother’s positive view of Native Hawaiian culture encouraged Matilda to explore and embrace her cultural heritage and helped her develop a curiosity and appreciation of Native Hawaiian culture.

**Markers of Hawaiianaress**

Participants discussed their definition of what it means to be Hawaiian in a variety of ways. The markers of identity were based on components such as biology (blood), ancestry, cultural practice, values, and language. As the participants continued to discuss their definitions of Hawaiian, they identified particular aspects that were essential to being able to claim a Hawaiian identity.

**Descent: The importance of genealogy.** Perspectives on the importance of blood and lineage varied. However, all of the participants acknowledged their importance in one way or
another. Although Matilda was raised in a Filipino household, she openly embraced her Native Hawaiian identity and culture:

My Hawaiian side comes from my mom’s side. Because I’ve been away from my mom since I was really little, embracing the Hawaiian side was part of embracing that part of my family because I didn’t have them with me. For sure now, that’s the side I identify with the most. That’s probably the main reason of where it began. For high school, my grandma, who raised me, is actually on the Filipino side. That’s my dad’s mom. She has always loved everything Hawaiian, so she’s always pushing me to do different things. She wanted me to go to Kamehameha [school for Native Hawaiian children], so I ended up in Kamehameha. That also has a lot to do with self-identifying with being Hawaiian.

In contrast, Rose shared that she was not like “other Hawaiians.” As she talked about what being Hawaiian meant to her she shared:

Hawaiian, to me, well, I went to high school . . . and I learned Hawaiian studies, taking hula classes, language classes, and that’s what it meant to me was the cultural background. Nowadays I’m more educated in different cultures—compared to the Hawaiian culture. [Now] I’m just another person within Hawai’i. I guess the whole culture aspect, I guess, historically, doesn’t mean that much to me anymore. I feel like the language is dying, I feel like dances are dying, just the customs are vanishing. And sometimes I’m just—I have Hawaiian blood, that’s all it means.

To Rose, her connection to Hawaiian identity was biological, her “blood.” And though “blood” was her connection to her Native Hawaiian identity, at times, in her mind, it was not enough of a reason to claim it, as it was her “only” connection. In contrast, U’i believed that her Native
Hawaiianess was an essential part of her identity. As she described her understanding of what it meant to be Native Hawaiian, she shared:

What does Hawaiian mean to me? And what does being a Hawaiian girl mean to me? I think it all goes back to—well, first of all, to understanding where you come from. Not only—people always say, “I know where I come from, and I never forget where I come from.” When you think about it in the Hawaiian sense, where you come from is so much a part of what makes you who you are today. Your family, your ‘ohana [family], the things that your family has taught you because there’s certain things that your mom and dad or your siblings have taught you about life that you’re not going to learn anywhere else. And that’s a part of who you are.

She continued by saying:

Being Hawaiian is always remembering that you come from a lineage—something powerful. When I was in high school, I never realized that it’s important to be proud of that, and to know that it’s maika‘i [very good]. It’s a good thing to be a part of this culture because sometimes my mom is, like I said—she’s mōk [Native Hawaiian] action. She’s very guided by a lot of Hawaiian thought because of her parents, how she was raised by her parents. And so sometimes we look at it like she’s not sophisticated, or she’s not modern, or she’s not smart, you know? But she’s real akamai [smart].

Matilda shared that her Native Hawaiianess was grounded in her genealogy and cultural understandings. Genealogy was the “link back to [those] powerful and special people” and was important because:

It’s a part of who we are. Everyone who’s come before us has made us what we are, made us who we are, and not everybody’s going to have a good story. Not everybody did
great things in our families. Sometimes people did things that we might be ashamed of, but we’re built up on those things. They’re a part of who we are, and I think that sometimes if we’re not rooted in where we come from, then it’s easy to lose ourselves.

When asked to talk about what being Native Hawaiian means to her, Matilda shared:

The first thing always pops into my mind . . . is just the word *kuleana* [responsibility] . . . just responsibility . . . And so for me it’s *kuleana*, like *kuleana* to learn. To learn about my *kūpuna* [elders], to learn about myself, my family. To learn about the history, the culture and everything, there’s that *kuleana* to learn.

Learning from the “wisdom” and knowledge created by those who came before her was important to Matilda, and it was her *kuleana*, her responsibility, to learn from them. This idea was echoed by other participants. There was a responsibility to learn about culture and language as well as the connection each of the participants had to the land. Their cultural identity was connected to their genealogy, the land, their lineage, and the ancestors who came before them.

**A biological component: The value of blood.** Blood was an important component of Native Hawaiian identity for all of the participants. Although all participants did not explicitly name “blood” as a connection to their Hawaiian identity, or identify a specific blood quantum that legitimized their Hawaiianaess, genealogical ties and acknowledgement of descent were recognized as very important. Participants referred to blood in both a biological and genealogical sense. It was clear that blood was an important component to being able to identify and claim Native Hawaiian identity; however its importance depended on how the participant viewed its value. In a biological sense, the quantity of blood one possessed, or blood quantum, was not an issue (it has become a concern in the context of the U.S. policy regarding recognition and access to reparation resources) as participants did not discuss specifics regarding their blood
quantum and what “percent Hawaiian” they were. Rather, blood was one of the markers that allowed the participants to claim a genealogical lineage. Where Rose shared that her Hawaiian blood was “just blood,” was biological in nature, and had no deeper meaning to her, others such as Ke’a, Pōmai and Mokihana viewed it an essential component to being able to claim Native Hawaiian identity. To them, blood was a tie to genealogical descent and connection to ancient Native Hawaiians and represented more than DNA.

As the participants talked about their understandings of their identity, issues regarding qualifying and defining what it meant to be Native Hawaiian caused very emotional reactions. Pōmai shared that defining what it meant to be a Native Hawaiian angered her. To her, asking such a question “did not make any sense.”

I get kind of upset with that question because it was a very clear-cut question. What is a Japanese person? What is a Korean person? What is fly? What is a tiger? What kind of question is that? How is that ambiguous to all? Wait. Let me make that ambiguous because the social bullshit constructed playing in part all that other bullshit. Because we just made it up, socially constructed it to have a place where it doesn't have – not it doesn't have a place, it doesn't really have a place. Is that an ethnicity? Pōmai argued that “no one [asks] how to define a Japanese person or a Korean person . . . It’s very clear cut.” Defining Native Hawaiian identity not only angered her, but asking for the definition was absurd. She acknowledged that Native Hawaiian identity was ambiguous because the identity markers were socially constructed, and societal definitions of the components of belonging were “arbitrary” and at times were ridiculous. In her mind, blood, culture, land, and location were all components that allowed her to claim her Hawaiian cultural identity. In this case, there was no such thing as “Hawaiian enough,” because, as Pōmai succinctly stated,
“because you are what you are.” And for her, blood, genealogy, and connection to the land were enough to make one Hawaiian.

A paradox emerged as the participants discussed their understandings of Native Hawaiian identity. Where Rose believed she was Native Hawaiian solely because of her blood and that she did not have a closer connection that would allow her to claim her Native Hawaiian identity, Pōmai argued that it was her Native Hawaiian blood that provided for her to claim her Native Hawaiian identity. Overall, blood had different meanings to each participant. Discussions regarding blood and Hawaiianess often were followed with questions regarding rights to claim Hawaiian identity and whether one was “Hawaiian enough.”

**Language: A means to a greater sense of Hawaiianess.** All of the participants indicated that language acquisition was important to them and provided a means for them to connect with Native Hawaiian culture. In addition, language acquisition was believed to provide a valid means to claim Native Hawaiian identity. Acquiring language skills and being “fluent” (Mokihana) was equated to becoming more culturally informed and possessing a greater cultural knowledge. In addition, it was clear that language acquisition was equated with the right one would have to claim Native Hawaiianess and also created a measurement that determined the degree to which one could claim Hawaiianess.

Reflecting on their experiences with Native Hawaiian language and the history of colonization efforts that supported English-only schooling, participants shared the struggle they experienced between learning Hawaiian and their commitment to revitalizing the language and the conflicting societal expectations of speaking only English. Many participants expressed the importance of understandings the impact the suppression of Hawaiian language has had on their
culture and have committed to learning the language to promote their own cultural understandings, as well as perpetuating Hawaiian culture.

The quest to learn more about culture and to revitalize the language was important to all of the participants. It was seen as a way to maintain and perpetuate culture and values. However, some struggled with decisions regarding whether they should learn the language or not. U‘i talked about her struggle with deciding to learn Native Hawaiian. Her struggles encompassed figuring out whether she had the right to learn Hawaiian and whether it was a valid or important language to learn:

When I was in high school, I took Spanish . . . I was totally ignorant to the fact that all this history was behind me, and all these ancestral like things behind me. It’s funny, when I was in high school I said, “I’m not taking Hawaiian because nobody speaks Hawaiian.” Now that I look back on it, that is the reason that I should of took Hawaiian because nobody speaks Hawaiian.

U‘i continued by saying:

So, it makes me like actually sad that nobody speaks Hawaiian and it’s . . . kinda frowned upon some places. Like if you speak Hawaiian, people are kinda like “Hmm” because nobody speaks it anymore. And they say it’s a dying language, but I think it’s gonna be a living language.

To U‘i, language was a gateway to understanding her culture. It provided her with the opportunities to learn about her culture and to be connected to those who came before her. According to U‘i, language was an important component to understanding her identity:

I think a big part of learning about your Hawaiian identity . . . comes from speaking the language. Language, I think, is a huge part of your Hawaiian identity. For me it is. The
ʻōlelo Hawaii [Native Hawaiian language]—it teaches you so much about what you come
from and why things are the way that they are. When you talk about kaona [hidden
meaning], there’s deeper—there’s hidden meanings in everything. In Hawaiian
language, there’s kaona for a lot of things. Aliʻi [royalty/chiefs] could say one thing, but
talk about something totally different.

Language was a key aspect of cultural identity and knowledge. It was a way to find a deeper
connection to the past. To Mokihana, knowing the language was important as it helped her
better understand “the moʻolelo [stories/history], the stories, and certain things” that have helped
create her Native Hawaiian culture. The language was also a way to “continue the process,
continue to pass on the knowledge, to continue knowledge” and pass down cultural knowledge to
future generations. For Matilda, language was essential to learning about her culture as well as
connecting to it because:

The Hawaiian language . . . it’s about connecting to the culture . . . With Hawaiian,
knowing the language has helped me to understand the culture more, and just really
appreciate things. There’s so many things that get lost in translation. You look at a word
like ʻāina [land]. I’ve taken Hawaiian many years, I’ve been in school many, many
years, and it was last year that I really learned what ʻāina means. Because when we learn
ʻāina [land], we learn ʻāina is land, but really, ʻāina is “that which feeds,” not what gets traded.

Matilda was referring to both the literal and the kaona [hidden meaning] embedded within
Native Hawaiian language. As Uʻi also pointed out, hidden meanings are associated with Native
Hawaiian language, and it was the deeper meaning within the language that provided for a
connection to Native Hawaiian culture. The language provided insight into ancestors’ ancient ways of knowing and how they understood the world around them.

For many, speaking and understanding Hawaiian language was a way to build a deeper connection to the culture. Matilda shared, “When we have the language, we have so much more than just a communication tool. It’s a way to learn about our kūpuna [elders], about the way they thought, and the world around them. How the world was around them.” To Matilda, understanding language was important because “so much gets lost in translation,” and it was the loss of meaning that created a disconnect with the past. For example, Matilda talked about the definition of the word ʻāina [land]. “Going from ʻāina, land, to ʻāina, that which feeds, that’s two totally different things . . . When you think of it [as that which feeds], it totally changes the whole concept.” According to Matilda, the definition of the word ʻāina changed so much that people are no longer aware of the original meaning and how the ancestors viewed the land. This change in definition changes the relationship one has with the land and the way one views kuleana [responsibility] to mālama ʻāina [care for the land]. To U’i, language acquisition was not only connected to understanding culture, but:

[It] influences the way that I think about things, too. That aspect is a thinking critically kind of thing. It teaches you sometimes you got to see—you can’t always see things for just what they are. You got to kind of search—go deeper into it. So maybe that’s how it affects me identity-wise.

Language reaches beyond the understanding of culture. For some, it provides a space in which participants can find commonality and feel as if they fit in. Matilda shared that her experience in a Hawaiian Studies class had a tremendous impact on her:
It just felt so good to—first to hear the language. It had been so long since I spoke to anyone. At least ten years. I wasn’t sure if I could still carry a conversation. I would talk to myself sometimes or just write stuff because I didn’t want to lose it. I wanted to at least have basic language.

It was through the basic understanding of language that she was able to gain a better understanding of her culture. For all of the participants, language was one way to begin to understand cultural connections.

**Hawaiian values and participants’ worldviews.** Participants discussed a vast array of values that helped them better understand their culture. As such, instead of illustrating how these participants meet a prescribed set of defining values, this section examines what aspects of life are meaningful for the participants and connects them to their sense of Hawaiianess.

**Hawaiian style.** As the participants talked about what it meant to be Hawaiian, many of them discussed the importance of “Hawaiian style.” When asked to talk more about this, “Hawaiian style” was described as both a frame of mind as well as how one viewed and interacted in the world. To U’i “Hawaiian style” was:

It’s no shame, cannot be ashamed. Before like when I first came to Kamahuku [school name] and I was new and wasn’t like kinda ma’a [accustomed], I wasn’t really familiar with the kumu [teachers] and the people there and stuff like that. You know you’re ashamed to ask a question, or you’re ashamed to like say something, like to say hello, but that’s not Hawaiian style because if you—that’s actually like, hmm, that’s frowned upon, like if you are ashamed, people are gonna be like, “Hmm.” You know, giving you that look. “Hmmm, you’re kind of weird.”
Hawaiian style, to U’i was about interacting in the world in a manner that was confident and humble. In addition, she shared that Hawaiian style also incorporated benevolence and kindness to strangers:

And I think that—if you really get to know us, it’s not that way, like if you go into a Hawaiian home, Hawaiians will always, always, always, like accept you. No matter where you come from, what you’ve been up, even if you’re *haole* [White/foreigner], even if you’re military, even if you have certain views about certain issues. The Hawaiians that I hang around with, I feel like they would never, not never, they wouldn’t necessarily like judge you just by those things you know. I guess it’s very *aloha* is very just kind of free kinda, very free.

As U’i described, “Hawaiian style” was a sense of putting personal issues aside and creating a space where people, Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians, feel welcome. Mokihana echoed some of U’i’s thoughts by sharing that “Hawaiian style” included being “welcoming” and “open to new things.” As U’i discussed “Hawaiian style,” she discussed that it encompassed values and was a descriptor for acceptable behaviors:

And I think another thing with Hawaiians is that we always want to share our *mana’o* [thoughts] like when you get a whole bunch of us together, and we start talking, it’s kinda hard to get us to shut up because we just—everybody wants to say something, everybody has to put their two cents in. That’s very “Hawaiian style,” and I guess another big thing for me is, you know “Hawaiian style,” we’re always eating, and we’re always chilling . . . So, that’s a lot Hawaiian style.

Sharing was an important element of “Hawaiian style.” Sharing of food and resources was a lesson Pōmai learned very early in life:
The worst thing you could do in front of [my dad] was not share. If you didn’t share it would make him so mad, especially if it was food. He’s like, “You always have to share food.” That was always the rule. If I don’t share food . . . you always have to share food, no matter who it is. Always share your food.

Sharing resources, especially food, was an important aspect of “Hawaiian style” for the participants. Hospitality, being friendly, being warm and hospitable, and sharing thoughts and meals were components of Hawaiian style that created a welcoming atmosphere and provided a space for people to be open to each other. As U’i pointed out, there was also an element of aloha [love].

**Living aloha: A Hawaiian way of life.** Within the complexity of Hawaiian style, was the underlying foundation of aloha\(^2\). To outsiders, aloha may mean “love” or “hello” or “good-bye” but within the Native Hawaiian worldview, aloha has a deeper meaning and guides the way many of the participants interacted with and perceived the world. As Ke’a talked about her understanding of aloha she said:

> Like the often commercialized aloha, you know. Like, everybody’s, like, “Aloha, aloha, aloha,” you know? That’s all generic now. But, like, the meaning of aloha is being welcoming, being friendly, being open to others and, to me, it explains Hawaiian culture, I mean, to me, it’s way more than just aloha, like, hello or whatever they do it. It brings out—to me, that’s how I should be. I should always be welcoming and friendly towards others even if I don’t know them and things like that.

U’i expanded on this example by sharing:

\(^2\)“Aloha” is defined by Pukui and Elbert (1986) as “love, affection, compassion…” (p. 20).
I think that *aloha* is mainly how, you gotta be a little bit addicted to love, you know, you gotta kind of be like, your love cannot stop with you, it’s kind of a flowing kind of thing. That *aloha* is translated as love, but translated as all those things inside of you, all that good stuff, all that light inside you, that is not, like supposed to be, like, being about to shine out. Like if you’re a container and you have rocks in the container, and you have a candle in there, you are not going to be able to see the light coming out. You kind of gotta take out all of those rocks, and see that light so—that’s what I—I don’t know, that’s what I kinda look at it as, like letting the love flow through me.

Mokihana shared that simply understanding *aloha* was not enough, it was important to live *aloha* and practice it every day:

I guess living *aloha*, not just going on and saying, “Oh, hi,” and saying, “Hi” to other people, but showing that however you carry that spirit that you have towards others, and people that you don’t know. You know even towards someone that you don’t want to, that I guess you don’t wanna see, and you had a bad relationship with them, but you continue to show that loving, that kindness, showing you care because for me I wasn’t raised like that . . . I wasn’t raised with the style of like, “Oh she did me wrong. That person did me wrong. I’m not going to [help] and shun her away.”

*Aloha* had a greater meaning to Mokihana and encompassed forgiveness and openness.

I wasn’t raised that way, and a lot of people that I know, they weren’t raised that way, and if there was certain situations, there’s *ho’oponopono*, to make right, and there’s the thing . . . And that to me is how I feel, no matter what situation you and another person have, you can still go out there and can still be a nice person, still be kind, still ask for
forgiveness, and still show that you care because you may never know . . . they might come around, and turn around and tell you that . . . [they] need help.

The participants discussed the importance of Hawaiian style and *aloha* in one way or another. These concepts were difficult to describe and meant different things in different contexts. However, the *kaona* [hidden meaning] of *aloha* and Hawaiian style influenced how these participants understood their Hawaiian identity and shaped how they interacted with the people in their environment as well as the ʻāina [land].

*Mālama ʻāina: Care for the land.* The natural environment played a significant role in the lives of these participants. Natural resources—the land, ocean, plants, fresh water—are valued and appreciated. Essentially, the land was valued for the resources it brings forth. Taking care of the land, *mālama ʻāina*, is a very important value. As U’i shared:

> People don’t understand, how come [Native Hawaiians] are so into *mālama ʻāina* [care for land] and all this kind of stuff. And I think it’s like, ʻāina [land], everything essential to us, being alive, comes from ʻāina. Like the water that we drink, the food that we eat, comes from this land, comes from like soil from the earth. And that’s like important in Native Hawaiian thought we believe that everything has as spirit. Everything has—like the plants, the water, everything is connected to an *akua* [god] right, its *kinolau*, its body forms.

*Mālama ʻāina* reached beyond tending to the land. By caring for the land in a way that was respectful and honored the values and the work of the ancestors, people in the community were cared for and the work of the ancestors was perpetuated. By caring for the ʻāina, one cared for their ancestors and showed respect for the respective gods. It was this working of the land where the value of sustaining culture and benefit to community intersected.
Many lessons were learned from mālama ʻāina [care for the land]. Undergrad shared that she learned about the importance of taking care of the land from her grandmother. That it was her grandmother who taught her how to tend the land and to garden. Pōmai shared that she learned the importance of gardening and caring for the land from her boyfriend. From this work, she learned the importance of growing her own food and taking pride in her ability to work the land. Kanoe shared that her relationship with the land was important and that she learned the importance of taking only what she needed and to pule [pray] before taking from the land. The protocols and respect associated with the relationship to the land was important to Native Hawaiian identity because the relationship one has with ʻāina [land] was a way to better understand their connection to each other.

Matilda, Uʻi, Keʻa, and Undergrad all talked about the importance of volunteering at the university loʻi [water garden]. By working the land, each of them talked about feeling more connected to their culture, to their ancestors. Learning about ancient agricultural practices and producing food for their community had a significant impact on them. Working the ʻāina [land] was an important educational experience for each of them. However, it also connected them with others who valued Hawaiian culture and provided a space for sharing of knowledge and building relationships.

ʻOhana: Family. Each participant shared the importance of her family and understanding the history of her family in relation to connection to land, location, culture, and blood. Family was an essential connection to the participants’ Native Hawaiian culture as it was discussed as both an entity, the actual family, and a means to connect to one’s genealogy. To Mokihana, her ʻohana [family] was her foundation. It was how she learned to understand who she was; her family’s connection to the culture and to the land was essential to how she
understood her own identity. It was also her connection to her ancestors. Her connection to those who came before her were traced through her ‘ohana. ʻUʻi shared that family was very important to her as was understanding her role in the family unit:

Me and [my sister] were raised together, but we’re like four years apart, she’s younger, she’s 18 right now . . . I guess—you know when you have a baby sister, like it draws out things in you because of your like protectiveness, and your mālama [care] of them, like you’re always kinda watching out for them. And I think like that—my sister does that to me without me really even knowing it. Like I always make sure my sister is okay, like she’s fed, she’s taken care of, she’s got everything she needs for school, or whatever it is . . . that’s what makes me like the mama bird I guess. Like someone wants to care all the time.

Taking care of family members and being an integral part of the family was important and helped ʻUʻi learn more about what it meant to be a family member. It also enforced the Hawaiian values instilled in her by her mother. Similar to Mokihana, ʻUʻi’s family was also a connection to her past, to those she descended from.

As the participants discussed their families, they did not talk about a traditional, nuclear family. Grandparents, aunties, uncles, cousins, neighbors, and so forth were all included in their discussions about family. Mokihana discussed the importance of maintaining a close connection to her grandparents and her auntie, while Pōmai talked about the close relationship she had with her gung gung [Chinese for grandfather] and her tutu [Hawaiian for grandmother]. As Keʻa discussed her ‘ohana [family], she shared that growing up in a household with generations of her family living in the same space provided her with opportunities to learn from her grandparents, aunties, and cousins:
Living with everyone, like your great-grandparents, your grandparents, your aunties and your cousins, and immediate family, too, you know what’s going on all the time every time, and you’re close to them. Because some people, they don’t even—some people, they don’t even see their grandparents at all. And they don’t have that emotional connection with them. They know they’re their grandparents, but they don’t really know, know their grandparents. I know my grandma’s favorite flower and her favorite color and what she likes to do. I know her favorite restaurant and her favorite shopping. I have a chance to spend time and spend time and talk to my grandparents, figure out our family history. I get to figure out where they came from. And I learn from that, so they gave me experience and they give me advice and wisdom. I know—so it makes me stronger because I know that I have someone there always for me, and always, no matter what stupid stuff I do. And a lot of people don’t have that.

Ke’a’s connection with her ‘ohana was very special to her. It not only encompassed her relationships with her family members, but it was a way in which she could learn more about her family history and her culture.

The participants talked about the importance of the relationships they had with their family members. These relationships extended beyond what would be traditionally considered their immediate family. Relationships with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other distant relations, in addition to the connection they had with their ancestors, were important to how they understood their identity. It was from these relationships that the participants learned about their culture, their values, and their connections to the ‘āina [land]. According to the participants, their relationship with their families was an essential part of their identity. It was from their
family members and their ancestors that they understood their place in the world and better understood their legacies.

**Kuleana: Responsibility to the collective.** When discussing aspects of their identity, participants consistently addressed the importance of *kuleana* [responsibility]. For Hawaiians, *kuleana* is extremely important (Wright, 2003). According to Pukui and Elbert (1986), *kuleana* means “right, privilege, concern, responsibility” (p. 179). In traditional society, *kuleana* referred to a plot of land an individual person or family was charged with maintaining and caring for (Kameʻelehiwa, 1992). So, this idea of responsibility is culturally grounded in Hawaiian tradition. Each participant discussed *kuleana* in various ways and specified the different levels in which *kuleana* was classified: to themselves, their families, and their community. On the personal level, *kuleana* caused them to think about their role in the Hawaiian community. Specifically, it helped participants think about the responsibilities they had to their community.

As Matilda discussed her understanding of Native Hawaiian identity she shared:

The first thing always pops into my mind when I try to think about that question, when people ask that question, is just the word *kuleana* [responsibility] comes to mind, just responsibility. And I think today, in today’s society, the reason why that word comes to mind is just because there’s so many things that we’re facing as a people. And so for me it’s *kuleana*, like, *kuleana* to learn. To learn about my *kūpuna* [elders], to learn about myself, my family, my *kūpuna* [elders]. To learn about the history, the culture and everything, there’s that *kuleana* [responsibility] to learn. Then there’s the *kuleana* to *mālama*, the *kuleana* to take care of this land, to take care of our ʻaina [land], and to take care of our people. So, I think those are the two major things is being Native Hawaiian to me means a lot of responsibility. That’s the first thing that comes to mind is just that, that
responsibility of learning and applying. A lot of that learning is so that I can take care, to mālama [care for], to know how take care of this place properly, because obviously we don’t know how to take care of this place properly. We seem to think we know how to take care of things, but we don’t, and the kūpuna [elders] did. They did it for hundreds and hundreds of years. We’re going on what, maybe between 100 and 200 years, with occupation just over 100 years? Our kūpuna were on this land so much longer than that, and they were taking care of this land, and it flourished in all that time. Granted, you had droughts and things like that, parts of nature that cannot be controlled, but they kept it as something that was sustainable. So definitely just the learning part, the kuleana to learn and the kuleana to mālama, those are kinda the ways I see myself.

Matilda’s conception of kuleana encompassed a broader view. It was through her kuleana to the ‘āina and her responsibility to learn from her kūpuna that she contributed to her community. Her kuleana, both directly and indirectly, benefitted the community.

Kuleana was discussed in other ways as well. Mokihana discussed kuleana to her family and the responsibility she has to not only complete her education, but to embody and perpetuate the traditions of her ancestors:

My parents and my great grandparents—no my grandparents, so it’s just that kuleana [responsibility] that responsibility that I have, and want to fulfill, not just for me, but also for my grandparents. So that’s one thing that makes me come to school and I guess that defines my identity, you know that’s one portion. The traditions of my ancestors, their ways was sent down to me. Now it’s kinda like I try to live it out each day, live out what they brought. That’s one thing.
*Kuleana* was instilled through family connections. *Kuleana* not only emphasized the importance of responsibility, but illustrated the importance of having a strong connection to family. Pōmai learned about the importance of *kuleana* and recognized the importance of family and her conception of *kuleana*. It was the lessons taught to her by her father, that helped her better understand her responsibility to role model “identity options” for the “lower generations” of Hawaiians. It was her *kuleana* to provide them with positive examples of Native Hawaiians to model their lives after.

As illustrated, the concept of *kuleana* was an individual as well as collective endeavor. The participants discussed a sense of personal responsibility to work for the betterment of the Hawaiian community. It was through the individual talents and passions of the participants that they were able to contribute to the community. The participants expressed *kuleana* on different levels: individual, family, and community. *Kuleana* is a means by which Hawaiians define themselves (Wright, 2003). As previously discussed, identity becomes externally defined for colonized people through the law, educational systems, media, and business (e.g., tourism). Through *kuleana*, Hawaiians define themselves in intricate terms of what they will do to address their responsibility to better their community.

The values and worldviews discussed by the participants are by no means all inclusive. However, they are common elements by which the participants discussed their understandings of Hawaiian and their lived experiences. The discussions in which each participant discussed each of the values were complex and rich and revealed an intricate relationship between each of the values. It was clear that as the participants described various components, that they were closely related to each other, and often times, intersected to create a deep and multifaceted understanding of identity for each participant.
Participating in Cultural Practices

Cultural practices such as *hula, lo‘i* [water garden] cultivation, speaking Hawaiian, paddling a canoe, playing music, and singing were seen as important aspects of cultural identity. Participating in the activities were important as they provided a means to learn about practices and traditions that were important to cultural expression. It was through participating in culturally based activities that participants also learned about the values that were foundational to Native Hawaiian culture. Participation in cultural practices included observation and participation. As Matilda said, “We learn by doing,” it was also by watching that they learned skills and cultural values. For U‘i, participation in cultural activities was very important:

Like in our culture, going for like *hula, hula,* and working in the working in the *lo‘i* and paddling and doing all those things. And like I totally admire those things, and like any, which way I can get in, I'm going. That's how I feel, I'm still learning so, any way – like it my friend says, go do Maui for go do this, or go to the Big Island for go pick *opihi* [shellfish], I'm with that. I'm just kinda figuring it out . . . I'm gonna try to hopefully make the most of every opportunity to learn like how all of this that I'm learning will shape me, like who I am.

U‘i, Undergrad, and Matilda all talked about the importance of volunteering at the campus *lo‘i* [water garden]. Since Undergrad went, “Back to Hawaii and [she’s] been taking Hawaiian study classes and participating at the *Kapapa Lo‘i Kapani‘wai,*[campus lo‘i]*[ that’s like where the *taro* is, like every first Saturday. So I’ve been feeling more closely to like my Native Hawaiian heritage.” It was at the *lo‘i* that they felt like they were not only giving back to their community, but were also learning about the ancient ways of interacting with the environment and cultivating the land. Matilda shared the importance of understanding the impact *mana* [energy/spirit] had on
her work in the lo‘i [water garden]. It was important to have a positive mana [energy] when she worked in the lo‘i, to work when she was in a good mood, “you know be positive,” and to have happiness in her heart, because the energy she felt, positive or negative, “can be transferred to the ‘aina” and would be transferred to the plants. Mana can directly impact the health and well being of the lo‘i.

Kanoe’s experience with hula had a particularly significant impact on her identity. For Kanoe, participating in hula had a “big effect” on her. “You know, like you like oli [chant] for a cause and you know, you learn all that good stuff. And, then it’s like just second nature for you, right?” For Kanoe, the values and practices she learned while taking hula had a lasting impact on her. As she reflected on this experience, she shared that she never realized other people had different experiences and did not have the same cultural understandings as she did.

I just thought everyone knew that kind of stuff. And, then when I met people who didn’t know that, I was like, “How come you don’t know that? You live in Hawai‘i.” You know, it’s not like you should know these kinds of things because you’re in Hawaii . . . . I guess . . . we knew the same things. Like people, hula and my parents and all kind of like the same flow of knowledge.

Kanoe was confused as to why people did not understand or put Hawaiian values into practice. When asked to talk more about this she shared that she learned:

Respect first of all. Like, you know you oli [chant] before you go pick stuff or you oli to ask permission. You only take what you need. You know, you don’t like gorge yourself with flowers or whatever. You know what I mean? So, it’s just like. I don’t know.

Hula really did instill a lot of principles in me.
Participating in cultural practices was significant to conceptualizing and understanding Hawaiian identity and helped participants develop a respect for not only the people in their lives, but also for the environment and caused them to be thankful and respectful to those around them. Participation also provided opportunities to enact the very values they were being taught.

**Native Hawaiian Identity: Not Enough and Too Much**

Most of the participants shared that at one time or another they felt as if they were not “Hawaiian enough.” These feelings were often brought on after they encountered a person or an environment that made them question their Hawaiianess. Matilda shared that there were times when she was in the Hawaiian studies classes, and she “just felt like [she was] not Hawaiian enough.”

Then there are other times when I’ve just been in the Hawaiian classes, and I’ve just felt like I’m not Hawaiian enough. I think when I first came to the lo‘i [water garden used to grow kalo [taro] I got this feeling, and part of it was probably just me. Maybe part of it was the way that they were thinking of me, but I’m sure part of it had to do with just what my hang-ups were, as far as being Native Hawaiian. When I first came to lo‘i [water garden used to grow kalo [taro] for class, I would say “Hi” to some of the people. I go, “Hi,” and they just look at me, like, “Whatever.” So I would get this kind of feeling like I wasn’t Hawaiian enough. So I’ve kind of experienced on both ends, like being too Hawaiian and then just not being Hawaiian enough.

She shared that she felt like she did not feel like she fit in because she was not fluent in the language and did not have a full understanding of the culture. These were mostly her “hang ups about being Native Hawaiian,” and, yet, they were obstacles to her feeling as if she fit in and was “Hawaiian enough” to be accepted in the Native Hawaiian community. Matilda’s concerns
about not being “Hawaiian enough” stemmed from her belief that she did not have the knowledge she believed she needed in order to be Hawaiian. These feelings were compounded by experiences in which people challenged her Hawaiianess because she did “not look Hawaiian” and was often misidentified as Samoan.

Ke’a’s experience of not feeling like she was Hawaiian enough came from her not being accepted at Kamehameha Schools (a Native Hawaiian K-12 institution) as well as her physical appearance. When asked to talk about a time she did not feel like she was “Hawaiian enough:”

Like me not getting into Kamehameha. I feel like I’m not good enough. Being Hawaiian, for me, we had that certain standard we had to live to, like when you’re Hawaiian, people want you to know Hawaiian language and they want you to know everything about [Hawaiian culture]. And Kamehameha Schools and not knowing Hawaiian [language]. When they ask you to read Hawaiian and you don’t know how to do it. [And] I don’t really know how to dance hula really good. I was like—Hawaiians are supposed to know how to do this, and [I guess] that’s what they [the people at Kamehameha Schools] think [too].

Her physical appearance has also caused people to question her Hawaiianess. She shared, “Physically, because I’m short and I don’t look Hawaiian, it kind of throws people off and stuff.” Instead of “looking” Hawaiian, she looks “more Filipino.” Her struggle with feeling “Hawaiian enough” was based on an invisible measurement of what she and others considered “enough.” However, “enough” was difficult to quantify and define.

---

3 Hawaiian hula is unique and totally different from other Polynesian dances. No one knows its exact origins but Hawaiians agree that the first hula was performed by a god or goddess which makes the dance a sacred ritual. Although it began as a form of worship during religious ceremonies, it gradually evolved into a form of entertainment (Kumu Hula Auntie Te Moana Makolo, personal communication, December 15, 2009).
Similar to Matilda, Mokihana shared that her feelings of not being Hawaiian enough came from her lack of knowledge:

My friend speaks the Hawaiian language and my cousin will dance hula. And I really do wish I could dance hula, I could speak fluent Hawaiian, and I could learn about the history and more of the Hawaiian history. And if I grew up in it, then I guess I kinda would know what I’m doing. But since I didn’t grow up in it, and I’m learning going through the process now, it seems as if I’m kinda too late, you know.

However, Mokihana shared that she was encouraged by others to learn about Hawaiian culture and that it was never too late to learn:

Several kumu [teachers] and several people who dance hula, and speak the Hawaiian language, and who knows a lot of Hawaiian knowledge, and they told me at different times but the same perspective. They are all on the same page and they said like they told me one thing about learning anything about your culture, you—there is no limits. Meaning, you have no age restriction. You don’t limit yourself. You can learn so much at whatever age level or whatever level it is. But there is no restrictions, [Hawaiian knowledge] is still being passed [down].

For Mokihana, though she felt that she did not know enough to be “Hawaiian enough,” she was encouraged to learn about her culture by kumu [teachers] and kūpuna [elders]. It was from their encouragement that she felt she had “no limits,” that she was “limitless,” in her cultural learning and that it did not matter how old she was, she would always have the opportunities to learn about Hawaiian culture. Her lack of knowledge was not a determinant of her Hawaiianness. Because of this, she was encouraged to explore and learn more about her culture.
In addition to concerns about knowledge, biological concerns were cited as means that made participants feel as if they were not Hawaiian enough. People’s questioning of blood quantum and setting an arbitrary limit regarding valid blood quantum, such as 25% or half, often made participants question whether they were Hawaiian enough. Pōmai shared that people would ask her what percent Hawaiian she was or try to guess her blood quantum and then question her answer because she did not look a certain way.

In contrast, participants shared that there were times when they felt like they were “too Hawaiian.” In these instances, they tried to perform their identity in a manner that was more socially acceptable. This included changing language and speech patterns from pidgin [Hawaiian Creole] to “proper English,” dressing in more acceptable fashions rather than what they were more comfortable in, and performing their behaviors and actions in accordance with a more Westernized manner. These behaviors were performed as such to avoid standing out and being considered different from those in their environment. For example, Undergrad shared that she purposefully changed the way she spoke:

Like introducing myself in [Star City on US mainland] or talking in front of a class, or just talking to someone new who is not from here [Hawaii]. So just anyone in general. I guess, maybe I don’t want them to think different of me. . . like [they question] the way I’m speaking and “She doesn’t know how to speak proper English.” Or you know, kind of get judged before they actually know me. So it’s like just why don’t I just talk properly and you know, eventually when they get to know you, you can teach them what your culture is and how you speak, of where you are from, and then you know. It’s like just ease it in and it’s so not just throwing it in your face.
Undergrad shared that she changed the way she spoke in order to “fit in more” and not be judged or be thought less of because she spoke differently.

Matilda shared that she, too, had experiences with feeling like she was different and “too Hawaiian:”

I felt different a lot of times just in different contexts. Sometimes I feel different because I’m Native Hawaiian, and the people in my class, there aren’t any other Native Hawaiians. They don’t really think of, they don’t have any, I’ve found that more and more people embrace the culture, and they see themselves as kind of visitors. And they relate themselves to, even though they might be local, they understand themselves as kind of outside. Outside is kind of a little harsh, but they see themselves as not being a part of that, and they respect it. They understand, as far as their culture or heritage, the part their people played in that whole part. Sometimes I’ve been in classes where there haven’t been any Hawaiians or not too many Hawaiians, and I’ve felt, like, “Wow, these people, they just don’t understand.” Like, “How can you think those things?”

Feeling as if she was the only Native Hawaiian in her classes made Matilda aware of how different she really was from her peers, how her beliefs and experiences were significantly different and made her stand out. For Matilda, being different in these experiences was not positive. This difference made her rethink how she was perceived in class and made her feel like she was significantly different from her peers. Interestingly, the feelings of being “too Hawaiian” and “not Hawaiian enough” were feelings that Matilda often experienced. She shared that the feelings of “too much” or “not enough” were dependent on her environment, were contextual, and were often created by her own feelings of insecurity as well as her perceptions of others’ expectations of how they perceived her identity and how she should “act.”
Strangers, peers, and, sometimes, family members would make the participants feel like they were “too Hawaiian” and “not Hawaiian enough” and would create experiences that made the participants question their identity. Pōmai shared that she had many experiences in which people told her, and sometimes argued, how they defined her Hawaiinnness. These conversations and debates ranged from not looking Hawaiian to not looking “Hawaiian enough,” as well as being asked if she was full-blooded Hawaiian. Within these conversations, outsiders had aggressively debated Pōmai’s blood quantum with her and made her define and defend, over and over, why she can and does claim to be Native Hawaiian. Pōmai identified an experience in elementary school when she was talking with a friend. A close friend questioned her blood quantum and told her, “I know you’re an eighth Hawaiian,” when in actuality that was not Pōmai’s blood quantum. Pōmai recalled that it was during this particular debate that “[she] just felt that [she] didn’t look Hawaiian enough.” External forces, particularly her friend’s questioning, forced Pōmai to question her own ethnic and cultural identities. It was due to experiences like this that she began to question her ability to perform her identity, to act Hawaiian, in a manner that would be accepted by society.

The participants discussed issues of people not allowing them to claim their Native Hawaiian identities and people attributing Native Hawaiian identity to physical characteristics. It was from these external forces that they started to feel too much or not enough Hawaiian. Interestingly, it was discussions with Native Hawaiian teachers and scholars that introduced ways for the participants to think about identity and reframe the way they think about what it means to be Native Hawaiian. Pōmai shared that it had been through these types of conversations that she redefined her personal understandings of Hawaiian and repositioned herself in a way that has allowed her the ability and privilege to claim her Native Hawaiian
identity. She shared that she learned that there was not one common way for Native Hawaiians to look, “because if you’re Hawaiian, that’s how you look.” The struggle with feeling too much or not enough Hawaiian was due to external/environmental expectations the participants perceived and it was the reframing of conception and definition of what it means to be Hawaiian that was guiding the understanding of their personal identities.

**Acting Hawaiian: Performance of Identity**

Performance of identity is not a new concept. Cultural studies theorists write extensively about how subjects/participants express their individual agency in specific contexts (Hall, 1996). In essence, Hawaiian can be performed. It can be displayed. How it is displayed, however, depends on the context or situation.

Participants addressed concerns with looking and acting Native Hawaiian. Many of them discussed being very aware of their behaviors and how the way they acted could, and would, be perceived by others. They consciously changed the way they spoke or dressed when they were around people they did not perceive to be Hawaiian or who did not understand their culture. There was a distinct change in behavior and presentation of self; but at no time did any of the participants share that they forgot who they were when they changed the way they dressed, looked, or acted. It was clear that the aspects of their identities that were not expressed were not forgotten, but were suppressed. Rose shared that she often paid attention to the way she dressed and always “dressed up” when she went out. She would make sure she did not have on a “puka [holey] shirt” and would always have on “nice clothes” and be sure to wear shoes, not “slippahs” [flip flops].

Aspects of the participants’ identities were expressed after a careful, but quick, consideration of their environment. The environment included the people present, the
participants’ perception of the people’s ranking (e.g., professors), and the people’s level of understanding of Native Hawaiian culture. Undergrad shared that:

When I lived in Las Vegas it’s different because the school that I went to, there’s like Hispanics, there’s African Americans, there’s Caucasian people, and then there’s like Asian people. They’re not like people from Hawai‘i, they’re just different. I don’t know how to explain it. So I would always adapt to the way they spoke, how they reacted to kind of things. I was still my own beliefs and what I thought was—like my thoughts and feelings, but I would try to adapt to them. I guess to not have conflict always to, I guess, build a friendship.

Undergrad acknowledged that it was important for her to “adapt” the way she acted and spoke so that she could fit in better with her environment. Rose shared that she was often told that she “talked like a White girl” by many of her friends, and that she was proud of her ability to defy people’s stereotypes of Native Hawaiians, and U‘i talked about her friends making comments about her “forgetting” she was “part Black.” In addition, they shared that their behaviors and identity performance were dictated by how the participants perceived others expected them to act and how the participants perceived what was socially acceptable behavior. Rose noted that the environment and her perception of her environment often dictated how she interacted with others and identified herself. Her ethnic and cultural identification was dictated by her environment. She shared, “Well, I am mixed-race, so it depends on who I’m talking to when I introduce myself. So, if I’m in Hawai‘i talking to people I know, I usually say I’m a Native Hawaiian.” In other environments, she identified as mixed-race and did not mention her Hawaiianess. Rose was concerned with how others would perceive her.
I kind of feel – it sounds bad, but I kind of feel a little doubt to tell people I’m Hawaiian, just because I’ve heard all the stereotypes outside of Hawaii, how we’re lazy, we’re uneducated, we don’t go to school, stuff like that. But whenever I identify myself, it’s a dependent kind of thing. But I love being here and that’s why I identify myself as a Hawaiian.

Because of this, she consciously, and at times unconsciously, decided how to act based on how she perceived others would perceive her and expect her to act.

In addition to acting Hawaiian, issues with looking Hawaiian were also addressed. Pōmai asked the question, “What does Hawaiian look like?” And it was in her deconstruction of Hawaiian identity that she shared that there was no “one look” or way of dress that make Hawaiians Hawaiian. According to Pōmai, Hawaiians can wear different clothes and have different hairstyles and still be “Hawaiian.” She argued that markers such as wearing a Hawaiian bracelet (an ornate gold bracelet with a name engraved on it), wearing flowers in their hair, or having long hair were not indicators of Native Hawaiian identity. U’i shared she struggled with the idea of “looking Hawaiian.”

Today, as a matter of fact. I picked my flower. I was thinking in my head, I wonder if this is a stereotype of being Hawaiian. You always have a flower in our ear. Because my kumu [teacher], not my kumu, no my coworker always says, “Why do you always have a flower in your ear. You’re such a native.” You know, like that. She just teases me. I was thinking, “Hmm. You’re right.” There is those stereotypes of what it is to be Hawaiian. To dress a certain way. To be a certain way.

She discussed that she picked a flower to wear in her hair before our second interview and questioned why she was choosing to do so. She asked herself why she picked the flower and if
she did it so she would “look more Hawaiian.” She also said she thought about whether she played into the “stereotype by wearing flowers in her hair.” These thoughts were unsettling for U’i and made her question her motives for doing something that was culturally important to her. The questions that both U’i and Pōmai raised regarding looking Hawaiian are questions that begin to deconstruct identity performance and the impact external forces have on validity and one’s ability to perform their identity appropriately for society’s acceptance.

Physical appearances were also discussed. In regards to “looking Hawaiian,” Rose shared that she would often be misidentified due to her physical appearance and her behaviors. She shared:

That’s another thing, too, just your facial features and your color of skin, people automatically think you’re something else. I tried to be a Dominican Republican [and act like someone who was from the Dominican Republic] because people thought I was. I guess I feel like I can play some roles . . . I kind of play, kinda different roles everywhere. In class, I feel like I have to play the American student who wants to learn, but I can’t place or voice my experience being Hawaiian, so it really depends, and that’s how I switch it on and off.

Rose adapted the way she performed her identity to fit the expectations she perceived others have of her. When she acted like someone from the Dominican Republic, she changed the way she dressed, spoke and interacted with others, as well as did not correct those who labeled her as such. When she acted Hawaiian, she spoke pidgin, dressed like a “typical Hawaiian” would, and claimed her Hawaiannes. Her perception of her environment dictated how she performed and behaved.
Participants also indicated that they often grappled with talking about and understanding their true selves. At times, Kanoe felt as if she was not able to be her “true self,” and that was uncomfortable for her. When she talked about her true self, this was in relation to her personal relationships, particularly with her former and current boyfriends:

I think that’s one of the reasons why I like my boyfriend now so much is because before, my ex-boyfriend before that, he wasn’t Hawaiian. I just felt like I wasn’t myself. Like, I couldn’t be myself around him because we were so different. And, then when I met my boyfriend now, I just was like comfortable and nice. You know, we wanted the same things. We liked the same things. I can talk to him about like, oh did you just do that it was so bullshit blah, blah, blah. And, he like understands me. So, it’s not like crossing like you know, the bridge to like try to make the connection. He already knows. Yeah, that’s what I mean.

When she was with her ex-boyfriend, Kanoe felt as if she could not be her true self. At times her boyfriend would make negative comments about Native Hawaiians, which would make Kanoe feel uncomfortable and as if she had to hide a part of who she was:

[My ex-boyfriend] is from Kailua, and he is like Japanese-White. So, he came from like a yuppie family kind of thing. And, I’m from Waianae. My name’s Kanoe, and I’m Hawaiian. [I was] the little brown girl at the table eating dinner. So, it’s just like I felt like, I don’t know. I just felt like I couldn’t actually being myself with him in that context because I was always kind of like, well, yeah, my name is Kanoe nice to meet you. I wasn’t as comfortable.

The awareness that she was different from those around her made her feel very uncomfortable. Feeling like she was the “little brown girl” did not help Kanoe feel accepted or welcomed in her
ex-boyfriend’s home. She actually felt more aware of her differences and often felt that she was being judged because of her appearance and the fact that she was Native Hawaiian. Rose also shared that she did not feel she could be her true self when she was around others. She shared that she does not dress or speak in a manner that represents her and does not feel that she can express her true self. Because she feels that she has been criticized, she does not act like her true self in public. Her true self was only expressed “at home” with her grandparents. When she talked about her true self she shared:

I wear the *puka* [holey] shirt, that’s really me. I feel like that’s really who I am. I honestly don’t think this is really me [dress clothes]. I don’t like dressing up, I don’t like going out to clubs, but when I’m with friends, I go there. If I’m trying to get something, like maybe—well, the internship, I dress well. Stuff like that, when you want to get something to advance, I guess. But I’ve worn pajamas to school. That’s really who I am.

But it really depends, especially when you have people around you who are like that.

As she continued to think about her true self, she shared that her true self was expressed more when she wears her slippers and *puka* [holey] shirt and spoke pidgin [Hawaiian Creole], “kind of no shame. You can say that’s normal for me or local . . . That’s me.” For Rose, she did not have to worry about being judged at home. She could be herself. It was when she was away from home that she had to act proper.

The question regarding “true self” and the aspects of identity performance was framed in a manner in which the participants talked about the times and places they felt they could and could not exhibit their true selves. It was within these conversations that the participants discussed their perceptions of how others’ expected them to “act.” Within this short time span, decisions had to be made regarding whether they would meet those expectations or defy them.
In regards to dress and language, fears of being seen by others as “lazy” and “stupid” often made the participants think about how they would need to dress and speak in order to be perceived as “educated,” “intelligent,” and not as the “typical Hawaiian.”

**Forced Choice: Native Hawaiian and American Identities in Conflict**

Many of the participants discussed a struggle with belonging or having the right to claim their Native Hawaiian identity. Many shared the concern with feeling as if they were “not Hawaiian enough” and discussed the struggle with balancing their Native Hawaiian identities with other cultural and ethnic identities. Underlying these discussions were concerns about feeling as if they had to choose between their Native Hawaiian identity and an American identity.

The participants discussed these experiences as either/or, not both/and. Rose talked about her struggles both during and after her experiences in the military:

> In the military, you really have no identity. You’re just a number, whatever. When I came to college, I was like, I’m this number. I have no identity. I kinda compared it. I guess it was the military, only because as much as I know how much it hurts Hawaii, I know how much it hurts all kind of things, the bombing, their training, at the same time, I guess my identity, really—to clear everything I just said is American. I don’t even know what it means to be an American, the definition on paper, but to me, it just means the whole love your country, supporting your troops, all that stuff. At the same time, sometimes it just means not having an identity.

Rose did not see herself as a Hawaiian when she was in the military. She saw herself as an American. Rose shared this struggle with her identity formation below:
To me, we’re just one big melting pot. China, you have Chinese, you know what Chinese look like. In America, you’re like, “What are you?” So, I don’t know. You’re this. You just guess. It’s like having no identity. That’s all so weird. I used to always think or wish that I was clear skinned so no one would guess what I was, no one would ask me stupid questions, oh, are you from here? And what is poi [mashed taro root]?

As Rose continued to discuss her identity, she shared:

I think, to me, I know it sounds funny, but to me, I guess, I felt like a real American when I was in the military. Here, I just feel like an average Joe trying to get a job, going to school, go home, start the day over again. I don’t know what—what is the importance or the identity of that? I feel like if I looked out there, I’ll just be there doing the same thing, trying to get a job, go home, same thing the next day. In the military, I felt like I had a purpose, I felt like I knew what American—I learned about America, I learned about American history. I’ve taken five American history classes now, just because I miss the military. I just felt like I had a purpose there. Race isn’t an issue.

Rose identified more as an American and felt at odds with her Native Hawaiian identity. As evident in her struggle with whether she had the right to claim her Native Hawaiian culture and ethnic identity, she struggled with her identity as an American. Rather than discussing her American identity as a component of herself, she discussed that she felt as if she did not have an identity, that she was a “blob,” as if being American was empty and voided other aspects of her identity. And yet, she was proud of her Hawaianness and found a connection with her Hawaiian culture. Rose continuously explored this conflict and talked about how she was always thinking about her identity because of it.
In contrast, Pōmai shared that American society and cultural expectations have had a significant impact on Native Hawaiian identity formation:

That’s why I have to say I don’t really agree with America because they make people feel, at least on the mainland, they make people feel like they need to erase their cultures to be the norm, even if the norm is what? The norm is what? The norm is like a made up thing because all those other fucking people just moved here, too, but they just moved here, earlier. But still, after people who moved there before them. So really, I don’t know if they’re doing this on purpose, but they’re creating this norm that’s making everyone else who is the majority, making the majority of the people feel like they can’t be anything too far out of the norm.

She continued by saying:

People have to relate to people, so you end up choosing [an identity option] that doesn’t necessarily fit you, but then you almost make it fit you or you change yourself or you make yourself think it fits you or you just do it for so long and you become erased and become whatever the sucky option was. And now you’re just another sucky option. That sucks. Whatever identity you’re kind of related to. That’s why I really don’t like—I feel like America—well, okay, I’m generalizing, but I kind of feel a lot of times that America’s just like an eraser on identity. It just erases you.

Pōmai elaborated by sharing that American culture forces people to assimilate to dominant culture and adopt a more “American way” of being, rather than allowing them to celebrate their individual cultures and differences. This process of assimilation acted as an “eraser” and caused people to “erase” their identities so they could be accepted. It forced people to create an identity that was more accepted by American culture, a more American identity.
U’i had a similar struggle. She was Hawaiian and did not recognize herself as American. To U’i, being American was in conflict with her Hawaiian self.

I grew up in America. So I’m implanted. I have to always think—I’m still learning to look—to just take things—make simple observations about things around me because in America—in American sense, we always tend to micromanage everything and think really in detail about everything. But in Hawaiian sense, it’s real easy—real simple.

Your friend needs help, you *kōkua*—you help them. It’s real easy—real simple. If you’ve got to make Hawaiian [stuff], you just go to the earth, you *pule* [pray] —you take the earth that you need and you make it. It’s real simple stuff. It’s not hard, but it’s just—we’re not *ma’a* [accustom] to it because we don’t do it all the time.

U’i did not consider herself American but rather saw herself as a Hawaiian who had been “implanted” in America. The very notion of being implanted indicated that U’i did not see herself as American, but saw herself as a Hawaiian who has been forcibly moved. It was as if she has been taken from her homeland and planted in a location that was foreign to her, even though Hawai’i had been occupied by the United States for over 100 years, had been a U.S. territory, and celebrated 50 years of statehood in 2009. Seeing Hawai’i as a place of her cultural heritage rather than an entity of the United States has influenced the way she experienced her identity. This caused her to have to learn two sets of rules and to acknowledge and navigate two different worldviews. This notion of implantation, of being a visitor to the very land that she was ancestrally connected to and the place where she was born provided a sense of conflict for U’i. Not only did she feel not feel like she was American, she felt that she had two cultures, both Hawaiian and American, and she had to learn to actively and successfully navigate both. This
navigation included knowing the “correct” behaviors associated with each culture and how to properly express them in the proper context and environment.

In the minds of all of the participants, being American was in conflict with being Native Hawaiian. This conflict caused dissonance in how they understood their identity and whether they believed they could claim to be Native Hawaiian and/or American. In these instances, it was apparent that many of the participants felt that they could not claim both. This straddling of two worlds, American and Native Hawaiian was a source of concern for many of the participants. As the participants began to articulate their identities, there was an overt struggle with accepting and rejecting certain parts of their identity in order to lay claim to being “Hawaiian enough” or American. It was this struggle that denied the participants the opportunity to claim both identities and fully express all facets of their identity. The struggle to be accepted in the American and Native Hawaiian worlds forced a suppression of facets of identity and expression. The struggle also encouraged an exaggeration of other facets to “prove” Hawaiianness or Americanness. Interestingly, the expression and suppression of identity facets was dependent on the participants’ perception of their environment, which included societal expectations and values. Their perceptions of external expectations and values dictated how they believed they needed to act in order to fit or blend in and be accepted by society and those who are part of dominant culture.

The discussions regarding Hawaiian identity complicated and deconstructed traditional notions and stereotypes associated with Hawaiian culture and identity. They illuminated a deep complexity that illustrated a multilayered connection to history, politics, culture, land, environment, and family. As participants continued to discuss identity, they discussed some of the more traditional facets of identity such as gender, social class, spirituality, and being
multicultural. Their reflections on these particular identity aspects not only described the facets in isolation, but highlighted instances where intersections between facets occurred. These reflections continued to complicate notions of Hawaiian identity.

**Understandings of Identity Facets**

Participants were asked to reflect on the understandings they had with various aspects of their identity and whether those particular aspects interacted with each other or were more or less salient. Although not all conventional facets of their identity (gender, socioeconomic class, spirituality, multicultural, etc.) were salient to every participant, participants discussed the facets of their identities that they were more aware of and shared how they made meaning of those particular facets.

**Gender**

As participants thought about their gender, it was clear that it was a salient facet for only some of them. When asked to talk about their understandings of their gender, Ke’a, Kanoe, and Pōmai shared that they had very specific experiences in which they felt more aware of being different because they were “girls.” To some of the participants, the biological experiences of being a “girl sucked” (Kanoe). Concerns regarding menstruation, childbirth, and the possibility of unplanned pregnancy were often brought up. However, Ke’a talked about the biology of being female in a positive manner and discussed it in terms of female strength. She shared that “women were both physically and emotionally strong” and reflected that she did not “think men [could] last in 14 hours of labor with a child.” To her that idea was ”crazy.” Ke’a shared that being a woman was something that she was proud of because “women nowadays, we’re mothers, we’re working, we’re getting our degrees. I don’t think, to me, men can’t really do the same.” To Ke’a being a woman was an “amazing” thing:
Being able to respect yourself and showing—and carrying yourself in a higher manner, like, I just—I don’t know because coming from an all-girls school you learn a lot about yourself. And, like, that guys and girls are different. And they think differently. We all think differently and everything. It’s just that I feel like we—I don’t know, women—we—I feel like we still have—boundaries that we still have to get over.

To Ke’a, self-respect and strength (physical, mental, and emotional) were important to her. As she reflected on these values, she talked about Hillary Clinton and how people perceived her when she was in her Senate position and during the 2008 presidential election:

People were, like, “Oh, she’s too mean.” “I don’t like the way she wants to take over and everything.” “She’s a witch” and stuff, like. But to me, like, she—like, if it were a man, they wouldn’t say anything. But, no, she has to go out there and put a sweet face on. Not only does she have to go out there and put a sweet face on, but also in the back of the mind she needs to be very, like, tactical, like, on. If she was a man, she wouldn’t have to have that demeanor of, like . . . America’s sweetheart.

As Ke’a talked about the double standard set forth for men and women in how they should interact and display their leadership styles, she continued by saying:

[Clinton] just wants good for everyone. I remember she cried, and the news station, everybody was like, “Oh, she has a heart.” It’s because she was like hard ass during the election. I mean, that’s what she needs to be. That’s what you have to kind of be like when you are a woman. You know what I mean? You pretty much have to be a hard ass to get where you wanna go.

To Ke’a, being a woman was difficult because societal expectations were different for men and women:
Because living in like, a male-dominated world and everything, you can’t be all sweet and nice because people will take advantage of you. So I just think, like, we still have a lot of obstacles to face. And, like, to me, like, being a woman you always have to be strong. And you always have to be on your game, to me.

As a woman, she felt that men constantly underestimated her because of her gender. Specifically when she participated in debate, she shared that she perceived that she was underestimated by the male competitors. They underestimated her ability to perform or be competitive because of her gender, “I mean, guys are cool and all. But, you know what I mean? I’m a girl. And that’s one thing, they always underestimate us. We’re always underestimated . . . always. And you always have to prove yourself.” Although Ke’a talked about the struggles with being underestimated because she was a woman, it was clear that she embraced her woman-ness.

Ke’a’s gender was an important aspect of her identity that she thought about quite often. However, as Ke’a shared, her gender was not the only reason why she felt this way. Her Hawaiianness and her body size were also identified as aspects of her identity that made her feel that she had to prove herself.

Kanoe shared that she learned very specific lessons growing up about what it meant to be a girl. Growing up as the youngest in her household with two older brothers, she noticed that there were two sets of rules: one set for her brothers and one set for her. She felt as if her parents were trying to protect her and did so by focusing on her education. Her mother was particularly influential in her finishing school. Kanoe’s mom would tell her, “you need to finish your degree, then you can get pregnant and have kids and do whatever you want, just get your degree first.” In addition to this, her mother constantly reminded her to “be careful” and to take her birth control pills, so that pregnancy would not interfere with Kanoe’s ability to finish her education. As she
talked about her experiences growing up, Kanoe shared a formative experience regarding when she realized that she was different from her brothers and other male cousins:

I think I was 3 or 4 maybe and when I was younger I had two older brothers and I only had boy cousins. Like, I didn’t have a girl cousin until I was like 15. So, like I really grew up with just boys. So, we went on like, it was like a whole family trip and my cousins came, my brothers, and my aunts and my uncles. I just remember it was like snowing and it was cold outside and my brothers went outside to pee like in the snow. And, I went outside with them and I don’t remember doing it, but I have a picture of myself standing with my brothers like peeing like a boy. It was like standing out—but, I think that immediately I was [to myself], “[I] can’t do that, I’m a girl.” Like, you shouldn’t be doing that because I’m a girl I should be dainty and prissy and nice and proper. But, I was running outside running around peeing outside like a boy. My mom always teases me about that. There’s a picture back home and it’s like framed at our house.

As she thought about the experience, she shared that it “was definitely a moment of clarity” and realized that she was different from her brothers. She was “peeing outside standing up. And to make it worse too [she] was wearing pink overalls.” She has been constantly reminded of this moment and has been teased by her mother about her want to fit in with her brothers and other male cousins.

This experience was particularly significant to Kanoe’s understanding of her difference. She also share another experience in which she learned more about what boys and girls could and could not do:
My brothers had just started playing baseball and T-ball when I was like I think around the same age [3 or 4 years old]. My mom asked me what I wanted for Christmas, and I told her I wanted a bat because I wanted to play baseball. So, she put me in hula. And, she was like, “I’ve got two sons already I don’t need another one.”

Although Kanoe shared that it was a “pretty funny” experience, it was clear that the message sent to her was that there were specific ways boys and girls were expected to behave and that she was to act like a girl and not like a boy.

“Growing up, I had to live with different rules from my brothers.” Kanoe knew the rules her parents set for her were different from those of her brothers. Her parents set very specific limitations on Kanoe’s behavior, which included restrictions on curfew and ways that she was to act. These were different from those imposed upon her brothers, and she suspected they were due to her “being a girl.”

Pōmai shared a similar experience to Kanoe’s as there were very real differences in the way Pōmai and her younger brother were treated at home:

Mom and dad have been more strict on me, more harder on me. I’m the oldest in the family, but I always, like my brother . . . got to do stuff before me or at the same age as me or before me. And him going out and cruising was never a problem, it was always a problem for me. So I just feel like they were like just totally, that’s not fair at all.

She attributed these differences in household rules and parental expectations to her “being a girl,” rather than her maturity level and/or position as the older sibling in the family unit.

In addition to the different rules, Pōmai talked about how her boyfriend was teaching her how to do things her dad never taught her “because she was a girl.” Her boyfriend taught her how to play the ukulele and “how to ride a bike.” Her boyfriend was also teaching her how to
drive a car with a manual transmission. She believed her father did not teach her these skills because she had a younger brother and that he believed her brother, not Pōmai, needed to have such skills. She believed that her dad was “kind of sexist” about teaching her “those kinds of things.”

He kind of just like, there are some things that you teach your children, and he kind of like disregarded me and only taught my brother. I don’t know how to ride a bike. It’s my dad’s fault. He never taught me. So he was like, “Well, I’ll teach you so you know how to do all these things.” So he taught me how to sing. Yeah, how to sing but not how to play ukulele, how to ride a bike, how to drive a stick, those kind of crucial things that my dad kind of like disregarded because I am a girl.

Pōmai believed that her father’s experiences, growing up “with four sisters, four younger sisters” helped him develop the belief that “girls [were] incapable, incompetent.” Although he taught her how to do things, he taught her skills he thought were more appropriate for a girl to learn. As she continued her reflection she shared that she was “pretty sure that girls aren’t incapable of riding a bike or driving a stick.” She felt that she was an intelligent, capable woman, an athlete, who could “keep up with the boys.”

Matilda’s discussion of her experiences as a woman included reflections on her experiences at college, specifically her work at the lo’i.

Here at the lo’i [water garden] especially, it’s really interesting because we kind of have this divide of tasks. Certain things, we just expect the guys to do. Certain things, we just expect the girls to do. Every now and then, we’ll be like, “I’m going to do it. I don’t care what you guys think.” I think it has been interesting for me in that there was that initial kind of, “I can do it.” Then it kind of got to the point where it was like, “You
know? You’re right. That’s a job that the guy should do.” So I’ve kind of settled into that idea of certain things just – it’s fine. I don’t know. That’s another one of the wishy-washy things where I go back and forth. We’re talking about it in my feminist theory class. A lot of it has to do because I grew up with my grandma. My grandma was a woman. High heels, dresses, fashion, dancing. She used to make me walk back and forth with a book on my head.

Matilda’s understanding of her gender was shaped by interactions with her grandmother. When she was growing up, Matilda learned that “it’s okay that certain things should be done by men. [And] certain things should be expected of women.” She also discussed the conflict she experienced between being self-sufficient and allowing men to do some of the work.

The participants’ conceptions of their gender was based experiences in which they felt they were different or were limited. Although there were times when their femaleness was considered positive, it was the negative experiences, the experiences in which they felt different or noticed that they were treated differently that stood out for them.

Socioeconomic Class

The subject of socioeconomic class was something that was addressed by all of the participants. Most of the participants identified with a lower socioeconomic status and shared that though many of them grew up poor, it was not always a negative experience for them. In reality, many of them shared that they did not know they were poor until they were told otherwise.

As participants discussed socioeconomic class, discussions closely tied location, hometown or the place where they grew up, with social class. At times location was used interchangeably with social class and had a significant impact on how they understood their
Hawaiian and socioeconomic identities. Specifically, growing up in particular areas on O‘ahu, areas that had more people who identified with low socioeconomic statuses, shaped how they understood their Hawaiian identity. More often than not, growing up in these areas made them less aware of their social class. It was not until they left their communities/hometowns, either for college or to visit friends and family on other parts of O‘ahu, that they were made aware of their socioeconomic status.

Growing up, Matilda never really thought about her socioeconomic status and never realized she was poor. In actuality, everyone she interacted with depended on public assistance. Depending on public assistance held no stigma in her mind:

For us, I never thought we didn’t have money or didn’t have as much as other people because I had everything I needed. It’s not like I went without it. I might not have had cool toys like everybody, but I remember going to Goodwill and loving it because my grandma never said no. I could have everything. It was like, “Can I have this?” “Yeah.” “Can I have this?” “Yeah.” It’s like a shopping spree and not realizing that Goodwill isn’t the kind of store most people shop in. Somebody owned it before I got it.

Shopping at Goodwill was a positive experience for her. She also shared that everyone she knew:

All got cheese and government peanut butter. I remember being in class in elementary school and learning how to make treats out of government peanut butter and condensed powdered milk. Everybody had it because of the area we [lived] in.

Matilda and her friends often talked about their experiences growing up. As Matilda reflected on those discussions, she shared that, “Me and my friends always talked about how you never know you’re poor until somebody tells you you’re poor.” Growing up in a poorer part of O‘ahu, she
was surrounded by people who had a similar socioeconomic background. Depending on public assistance was normal and did not have a stigma. However, when she and her grandmother moved to another area of the island, she became more aware of her socioeconomic status:

[New Town] was different because people there were mostly middle class. Middle, upper. People were just different. I don’t know how to explain it. They carried themselves differently, and then they had different things. That’s when you start to realize, “How come I don’t have that,” or, “How come I can’t have that?” Everybody had a Walkman. I didn’t have a Walkman. I kept asking for one, but I never got one.

Although she realized that she was different and did not have as many possessions as her friends and others in the community, she “never felt like [she] was really deprived.”

Similar to Matilda, Ke’a’s experiences growing up in a poor family was significant to her. Her family was not “poor, poor,” but her parents each worked two jobs and the family expenses “had to be monitored” closely. Growing up poor, Ke’a learned the importance of being grateful for the people and possessions in her life and the importance of hard work. She shared that she learned the importance of not taking advantage of situations, people, or things, and that “being resourceful” was “important.” She also learned “how to sacrifice, how to compromise, how to improvise, and how to survive, without money.” Because of this, sharing was very important to her, as was the ability to take care of herself. Although being self-sufficient was important to Ke’a, she also learned the importance of relying on family members for support. She shared that it was from her family’s financial struggle that she learned many different values, such as “interdependence,” the “importance of ‘ohana,” and the importance of “contributing” and “cooperating.” She believed her family’s financial struggle, though at times was difficult, “really made [her] appreciate [her] family . . . and understand that value of money,”
Identifying as “working class” was very much in the forefront of Undergrad’s mind. Undergrad shared that she and her family struggled to make ends meet and to make sure that their bills were paid, that they were “just working to pay for you know, something. Just always working nonstop, just to pay for something and not being able to get past that level of being working class.” Her socioeconomic status made her more aware of what she had and gave her a greater appreciation for what her parents provide for her. She shared that remembering what it was like to have to save money and working hard gave her a better understanding of “what happens if you don’t have money.” Although she knew her parents would help her out as best they could, she wanted to “prove to them” she could “be on [her] own.” As she reflected on her experience as working class, she shared that, “Working class makes you appreciate what you have, your values. And it makes you realize that it’s not always easy getting things, and I think it makes you appreciate life even more compared to someone else who is really spoiled and gets what they want, and they are always screaming all the time.” The values she identified from being working class included begin grateful, dedicated, and hardworking. It was important to:

Thank your friends for what they are giving you. And it makes you, I guess, work even harder to not be in the position, so it makes you really, I guess, determined to become something, so you can provide for yourself or your family in the future.

The experiences in Undergrad’s life taught and enforced many values, such as “sacrifice,” “determination,” and “helping.” These experiences helped her better understand who she was. Undergrad’s collegiate experience also made her more aware of her socioeconomic status.

College, it made me think more because like paying for all these different expenses, it makes me [ask] “How am I gonna [pay for college]?” Like I don’t want to get loans and you know, so that’s why I’m like applying to all different scholarships and just making
sure everything is paid off, because I don’t want to be asking my parents, “Can you help me pay for this?” I want to like do it on my own.

Undergrad constantly worried about how she would pay for college and her expenses. She not only worried about her finances, but she worried about the costs’ impact on her family. She did not want to burden her parents with the financial obligations and worked hard to find ways to limit the family financial responsibility.

All of the participants discussed the importance of finishing their education so that they could be employed and contribute financially to their families, “because I have to support – help my mom out and help out my family, I have to work, right? So I guess that's another . . . responsibility—is to earn money to help out” (U’i). The university degree was seen as a means to obtain a credential that would allow them access to a good paying job. Many cited this as a major factor in deciding to enroll in college. It was because of this belief that education would help them financially that many of them were willing to take on debt or sacrifice items of comfort, such as personal cars and work one or two jobs while going to school full time, to obtain their educations.

Socioeconomic status was a significant aspect of many of the participants’ identities. Although many of them shared that they did not grow up feeling neglected or in need, there was a definite impact on their values and how they viewed their relationships, possessions, and the role education would play in helping them get good jobs that would improve their socioeconomic status.

**Spirituality**

Spirituality and religious practices ranged from no longer believing in religious doctrines to daily religious and spiritual practice. All of the participants were brought up in a Christian
faith. However, there were different experiences in the practice and maintenance of their spiritual beliefs. For Kanoe, her religious faith had “definitely” influenced how she thought about herself:

I’m Catholic, my mother is Filipino. So, she’s the staunch Catholic. I went to Catholic school since I was in kindergarten through high school . . . I would say that it definitely is a part of my life. So, it influences my decisions and how I feel about certain things. I would guess it would make me, I don’t want to say super conservative, but it makes me, like, think twice before I do stuff. Just because well, you know, I’m a girl. So, like I have, like, these [thoughts], “What would my parents think?” Will they be angry if I do that? Like, I want to get a tattoo, but because I’m a girl and my parents are really Catholic, it’s not very nice. So, yeah, that, I definitely I feel like governs a lot of my decision-making aspects, I guess. But, I wouldn’t say I’m like—I wouldn’t say it governs like, every aspect of my life, but it does have an influence on me.

Kanoe’s faith guided her decision-making and the impact those decisions have on others.

Matilda’s faith influenced the way she understood her place in the world. As she thought about the various roles she played in life such as “daughter, granddaughter, student,” and the various aspects of her identity, she realized:

I am all of these. They’re all roles, but really who I am, a child and a servant of God. So, what my challenge has been is to understand myself as that. And to see that everything that I do should be working towards what God’s plan is, and glorifying God, and so that is the best way to see myself. And really, when I can really take that to heart, and understand that I am a child of God and I am made perfect in his works, in his grace, then I can learn to appreciate myself more.
Matilda’s spiritual beliefs were her foundation. She used her belief in God to guide her philosophical outlook regarding her future profession as well as help her think and rethink her place in the world.

Matilda shared that she sometimes struggled with finding a balance between her Christian values and her Hawaiian spiritual beliefs. For the most part, Matilda has found a way to balance her Native Hawaiian culture and her Christian values:

The experience has been—and just for me, and I think it’s a combination of what I feel—part of my cultural values and my Christian values put together. It kind of has given me the ability to have different perspectives on life and the way things happen. It’s like everything happens to you from a Christian perspective. It’s the same from the Hawaiian perspective is all about balance and correcting that balance. If something doesn’t work out, it’s because you need to do something to fix the balance. I think they’re similar to each other. The way I view it in my life is that it’s similar to each other. It has given me a lot of strength to draw on. The—probably more on the Christian side, but definitely the whole idea of thinking about our genealogies and how we’re connected. I think that has given me a lot to draw on, too.

At times, though, her cultural and spiritual values collided and were at times at odds with each other:

The only time I’m really conflicted is when you have certain things that relate to gods, different Hawaiian gods. And I think an example would be if you think about Pele [goddess of Fire]. I believe in Pele, and I believe the works that she’s done, and I believe those—all the moʻolelo [stories/histories], but that is incompatible with Christianity. And
so that would probably be—those kind of things are probably the kind of things that I struggle with.

Matilda found a way to value both her cultural and Christian beliefs. Though at times she struggled with honoring both, she found that it was the combination of both Christian and Hawaiian spiritual beliefs that broadened her worldview.

As U’i talked about her spiritual beliefs, she shared that though she was raised Catholic, she was exploring the spirituality that was part of Native Hawaiian culture. It was through this exploration that she was trying to find a way to balance her Christian faith with her Native Hawaiian beliefs:

And I think Hawaiian, like being, all Hawaiians, I think it has to be spiritual. It has to be spiritually connected, whether it—some of us are Mormons, and some of us are Christians, and some of us are like cultural traditional -- but to just having mix of spirituality and connection to akua [God] that’s so important.

To U’i, her spiritual connection was fed by both Native Hawaiian cultural values and Christianity:

It’s not only a part of my culture, but I realize now that I look back, even before I was studying Hawaiian studies, akua [God] still had a part of my life so—I’ve always been like spiritually connected. When I think about being spiritually connected, one part of me is so grateful and like thankful like that I was able to, like that I have akua in my life, and I am so like grateful for all the opportunities and like chances I have, and chances that akua [God] has given me that I don’t even deserve.

Although she was baptized Catholic and attended Christian church, she believed “right now in ke akua [Hawaiian gods].” Even though, in her mind, “it’s not really formal religion,” she
understood that akua would always be there for her, that “akua will be there in the good and the bad, and so even like—because in the ups and the downs, akua has to always be there.” She continued to say that, “believing in something—like being spiritually connected, helped [her], to be [herself].” Because of akua and her connection to akua, she knew that that she could be her true self.

Her spiritual connection to akua [God] became more prominent for U’i when she traveled to the island of Kaho’olawe with a group of students and hiked to the top of the volcano on the island.

Last summer we went to Kaho’olawe. That’s what kinda changed my perspective about like Hawaiian issues and my place in the like the redefining world. Like my place in society, in general. And when I was in Kaho’olawe, I realized that like a big huge part of who I am—and is always gonna be a part of who I am—is a like a spiritual side. I could really identify, not only with being a Native Hawaiian, but I could identify with having a connection with akua. That moment is so valuable, like that one moment that give you because you know we could all sit up that mountain and just talk story, and talk about how beautiful it was, or what we could see, and how we felt being up there and all that kind of stuff. But when you take a moment outside of that, and you sit down and you like think about, like the reasons that you're there, or you think about the significance of that moment, you know akua really speaks to you, it's almost like we went up there, just to talk to akua [God] pretty much. And I guess that's the time I could indentify with like

---

4 Kaho’olawe is an uninhabited island that was once used by the U.S. Military as a test site and location for target practice. In 1993, the island was returned to the Hawaiian people. It is now a location that is currently being replanted and restored and used for cultural practices and education.
with who I am today, that's kind of yeah – that kind of why today and that was an awesome experience. I'll never forget that.

The process of taking off her shoes and hiking the rocky trail to the top of the volcano helped her understand the “suffering of the island” and, in turn, better understand human suffering. It also provided an opportunity for her to deepen her spiritual connection and become more aware of it. Her experience at Kahoʻolawe was significant and “pretty much changed [Uʻi’s] life.”

That experience. Just being there. We walked—we hiked up to the top, it was super windy. We came to like some stones where they do a lot of their like rituals, like I guess traditional Hawaiian practices, and they told us all, you can all have a moment, and go sit down, and just talk to **akua** [God] and just have like a moment, even to yourself, just to like reflect on what’s going on in—the with you right now.

It was her experience on Kahoʻolawe that made Uʻi aware of the connection she had to both **akua** and the ʻāina. The spiritual connection she felt with **akua** and the ʻāina [land] were interconnected. It was experiencing both the spirit of the ʻāina and deepening her relationship with **akua** that created a more meaningful spiritual experience for her. It also provided an opportunity for Uʻi to expand and deepen her spiritual practices.

Keʻa also experienced a deep spiritual connection through Native Hawaiian culture. Keʻa was raised Catholic, though her family, “really isn’t Catholic.” Although there was a disconnection between her family’s religious practices and her own Catholic beliefs, she developed a strong belief in God. She believed that “God love[d] her” and that “He love[d] everyone.” Keʻa believed in God and knew that “no matter what [she did] . . . He forgives.” However, she also believed in the power of Hawaiian gods, such as **Pele**, goddess of Fire:
Like, this is so crazy that *Pele*, the Goddess of Fire, come on, man. Like, how sweet is that? I mean, God, people don’t really have—like, some people don’t even have stories like that. And when you go around the island, you can see it [*Pele’s work*], you know. And just, like, I’m a part of this. It makes me excited. But, I don’t know, I feel—I think—I feel much more of a connection, I guess, with—but, yeah, I don’t know what else.

Although Ke’a had strong Catholic beliefs, she also believed in the power of the Hawaiian goddess *Pele*. She believed in other Hawaiian cultural beliefs and superstitions that contradicted and conflicted with Catholic doctrine. Acknowledging the conflict, she found a way to navigate and balance her cultural beliefs and her spiritual beliefs and make room for both to guide her way of thinking and believing.

Much like Ke’a and Matilda, Mokihana shared a similar struggle between upholding her religious beliefs and her cultural beliefs:

> I mean . . . you still are Hawaiian, that you know there’s still some things and I just want to instill that with them, my whole family, because with what my parents never taught, anything about the Hawaiian language, about *hula*, about anything because you know, within the culture, because they felt it’s kinda like forbidden within our—because of our religion, because Christianity and they felt oh, that’s—*kapu* [taboo] for me, I see it as another great tool. And you can use to learn, teach and thrive and that’s what I want my family or kids to learn that.

Rather than believing that they would have to choose between their culture and religion, the participants found ways to maintain both their cultural and religious values.
Pōmai, Ke’a, and Undergrad all indicated that they believed in Christianity, but did not formally practice. Pōmai was not a “super Catholic” like her mother and grandmother and did not go to church regularly. Both Ke’a and Undergrad discussed the importance of their Christian faith was to how they understood themselves. Both of them shared that they needed to recommit themselves to attending church on a weekly basis, but did not have the time to do so. Although Ke’a and Undergrad wanted to increase their practice, neither of them believed that they were bad or not Christian enough. They simply needed to find time to go to church.

**Multiple Cultural Identities**

As participants discussed aspects of their identities, many of them shared that though their Hawaiian identity was an essential, and for most fundamental, aspect their self-concept, their other cultural identities were also important. Seven of the participants identified as multi-ethnic and shared the importance of understanding the cultures in which they traced their descent lines. The value of cultural heritage beyond that of Hawaiian was important and helped participants not only better understand those they were descended from, but better understand some of the experiences they had as multi-ethnic individuals. Although the participants identified as multi-ethnic, each of them discussed what it meant to them in different ways. Kanoe identified as Hawaiian, Portuguese, and Filipino, yet she identified “first and foremost as Hawaiian.” She talked about various customs and practices her family incorporated into their lives from each culture. However, her family was Hawaiian first and then Portuguese and Filipino. Undergrad shared that her background was composed of Hawaiian, Japanese, Filipino, and Portuguese, yet the two most prominent cultural identities for her were Hawaiian and Japanese.
I guess the two connected would be my Japanese and Hawaiian nationalities. Yeah, only because for my Japanese culture, I would actually participate in some stuff. Like we would pound mochi [glutinous rice], and this January, we would go to the hoganji [Buddhist temple], and you know, so like we would go to the Obon dance [Buddhist celebration of departed ancestors]. And like when everyone went to the Hoganji, and we would learn like how to go all up and like pray, and throw the incense or whatever. Yeah, and then my Hawaiian culture is just because I’m here now, so I’m just learning slowly the different aspects of it.

Although Undergrad talked about the importance of her Hawaiian cultural identity, she also valued and embraced her Japanese culture and felt deeply connected to both. Matilda had a similar experience. As Matilda was discussing her identity, she shared, “I’m Hawaiian and Filipino. Mostly [I] identify with the Hawaiian side. I think that’s because I grew up with the Filipino side, so I’ve always been really Filipino.” Matilda was raised in a Filipino household and was encouraged to explore her Hawaiian culture. As she discussed her identity as both a Filipino and Hawaiian, she discussed the struggle she faced exploring and embracing both cultures.

I think I almost feel like I don’t want to completely abandon the Filipino side because my grandmother, my dad, and my grandpa are such an important part of who I am. They come from that side. I want to be able to have a part of them with me. I most identify with the Hawaiian side. That’s what everyone can see. So I guess that’s pretty much—I just want to have that piece to hold on to. I don’t have the same interest in everything Filipino. I just want to at least have a basic understanding of the way the culture works. It’s—I grew up in the Filipino culture.
Understanding and identifying as both Filipino and Hawaiian was difficult for Matilda. Although she identified more with Hawaiian, and looked more “Polynesian,” she was raised in a Filipino family, with Filipino culture and values. Her struggle with these identities reached beyond her personal identification. For Matilda, identification with, understanding, and honoring both cultures was essential to building connections to both her biological mother’s and father’s sides of the family. As Matilda discussed each identity, she did not speak about them as negative components. She did identify negative experiences that occurred when she interacted with those in her surroundings. Those that stood out for her were the experiences in which she claimed to be part Filipino and people did not believe her, due to the way she looked. However, she was proud of her lineage and the connection she was able to make with each culture. These identities created a rich experience for Matilda. And though she struggled with being accepted by both communities and learning about both cultures, much like Undergrad, both were important aspects of her identity.

Conflict and questioning of self also occurred due to multiple cultural identifications. Ke’a shared some of her struggles with identifying as and feeling like she was Filipino and Hawaiian. Her discussion of her experiences as Hawaiian and Filipino often highlighted conflict in her self-concept:

Am I Hawaiian or am I Filipino? You know what I mean? I can both identify with each other, but it’s sad because on my Filipino side, it’s always been like a negative kind of thing. Every Filipino girl and every Filipino family I know, they’re small, skinny little Asian girls that compete in pageants and have to become nurses. I don’t know, the stereotype of that, strict families and the stereotype of Filipino stuff. And I don’t know my Filipino side of my family. I don’t know my cousins in the Philippines. I don’t know
who they are. . . . I don’t know my Filipino family. And my Filipino grandma, I love her and everything, it’s just that I feel like she’s weird, just because the language barrier and everything, and her values are way different than my values and the way that my other grandparents taught me. . . . Everybody always say, “Oh, you’re Filipino.” Yeah, but I don’t feel like I’m Filipino. I never grew up that way. I wasn’t taught that way. I don’t know anything about my Filipino family. I know about lumpia [Filipino spring rolls] and that’s about it. It’s pretty sad. I don’t know. I look like this [Filipino], but I don’t know my whole culture, and it sucks, but I don’t know.

The question was one she thought about often and was an either/or concept for her. Because of this, it was clear that her identification as both created an internal conflict in her identity. Ke’a identified as both Hawaiian and Filipino due to her lineage. However, she did not feel closely connected with Filipino culture. And though she looked more Filipino, she felt “more Hawaiian”:

Mostly because my Hawaiian family raised me. And they showed me how strong family could be. They raised me. What am I gonna do? My Filipino side, they’re absent. They didn’t do anything for me. I didn’t really see them a lot. That’s how I see it. It’s a struggle. It always affects me all the time, just because the way people see me, they always think I’m a Filipino girl. I am, but I just am not that typical Filipino girl because I’m Hawaiian, too. And I have to always explain myself. I grew up with my Hawaiian family and it’s what I identify myself with.

Although Ke’a identified as Filipino and Hawaiian, much like Kanoe, Undergrad, and Matilda, she had a stronger connection to her Hawaiian culture. This connection often created conflict for Ke’a because she looked “more Filipino,” and was treated as such until people understood she
was also Hawaiian. The conflict also arose for her because she did not feel or act “Filipino.” Her experiences as Hawaiian and Filipino have created a complex lived experience that has forced Ke’a to think about why she identifies as each and to which identity facet she feels a closer connection. Overall, as participants discussed their multicultural identities, they discussed how and why they identified with each culture and how they embraced each aspect of their culture. Ultimately, participants identified with each of their cultural backgrounds differently. Yet, their Hawaiian identities were constant and foundational.

**Body Size**

Body size, as a facet of identity, was addressed by two participants. Both Ke’a and Matilda were very much aware of their size and how it contributed to how they understood aspects of their identities. In both of these participants’ experiences, size matters. Ke’a often noticed that people would “underestimate” her due to her size,

> And that’s unfortunate because, like, it’s just that – especially because I’m, like, I’m short and – I’m short and small and stuff. . . . I mean, that’s why pretty much, like, my whole, like, life is like you always – I always have to prove myself to people. Like, I always – like, I’m always underestimated. Like, even with – like, in that fact, at school – even at sports. I play volleyball [and] because I’m short.

Because she had a smaller body, in both size and stature, she felt that people would consider her weak and treat her as if she was not capable of participating in physical activities such as volleyball. She felt that because she was “short” others would think she was not a good athlete. She was also made more aware of her size when she participated in debate activities. She felt that members of opposing teams, in particular male members of opposing debate teams, would underestimate her and often be surprised at her debate skills and passion. Ke’a talked about how
she felt that she would have to “prove” herself and her abilities all of the time due to misconceptions and stereotypes about her size.

Matilda also addressed issues of misconceptions and stereotypes linked to her size. Because she was a “bigger” woman, she often paid attention to her actions and the awareness would make her self-conscious and cause her to think about other people’s reaction to her. She shared that because she was a “bigger, Polynesian woman” that she had to be more aware of how others would and could “interpret” her actions.

We were talking in class about how as a bigger Polynesian looking girl, everything I do gets interpreted differently. If I drop something louder than normal, I’m angry all the sudden. This happened to me at work. [One of my co-workers said,] “What’s your problem?” [I said,] “Huh? I’m sorry. I dropped it. It was a total accident.” They’re like, “What’s your problem?” If I were a small, little Filipino girl, we wouldn’t be having this conversation. The whole idea of having to be interpreted a different way based on what they think you are. “That Samoan girl”. I always get that. They always go straight to that.

She recognized that others’ attributed particular behaviors and treated her differently due to her size and if she were smaller, she believed that she would be treated differently. Matilda has always been aware of her size. She has “always been bigger, and . . . as strong as the boys.” Matilda’s size would often make her more cautious about her actions. She often thought about how people would receive her due to her size. In addition, her size made her more aware of her cultural identity, that because she was a “bigger Polynesian woman” people treated her differently. She encountered people who would argue with her and telling her that she could not be Filipino because she “did not look Filipino” and that because she “looks Samoan,” she must
be Samoan. These kinds of encounters would make Matilda question her identity and, at times, be more cautious and conscious about her actions. For Ke’a and Matilda, experiences that involved a greater awareness of size were linked with their understandings of gender and cultural identities. These experiences provided a space in which both Ke’a and Matilda felt as if they were underestimated and not allowed to fully express themselves.

As the participants discussed facets of their identities, many of them described their understandings and conceptions in very different ways. They spoke specifically about times when they were more aware of certain aspects of their identities and whether the experiences had a positive or negative impact on them. In addition, as participants reflected on facets of identity that included gender, socioeconomic class, spirituality, and culture, not everyone identified the same as being salient and varied between participants. Throughout the discussions regarding identity facets, participants talked about these experiences in terms of isolation and relationship.

Many participants talked about issues of gender, social class, spirituality, and culture as isolated experiences. However, some also talked about instances when facets of their identities intersected and created a different lived experience for them. It was evident that participants had significant experiences with both their cultural identities and the other aspects of their identities and that, at times, the intersections of facets of identity created a deeper awareness of particular identity facets.

**Intersecting Identities Shaping Lived Experiences**

Interactions between facets of identity were addressed by some participants. They discussed how the intersections of particular dimensions of their identities impacted their lived experiences. However, not all of the participants spoke about intersecting identities. As participants described their identities, it was clear that some of the experiences and some of the
conceptions of identity were not shaped by individual or isolated facets of identity. Experiences were shaped by the intersection of identity facets. For example, participants did not talk about the experience of being a woman and a Native Hawaiian, and a Christian, but were shaped by the intersections of these facets and the experience of being a Christian, Native Hawaiian woman. Kanoe shared that she experienced being treated differently because she was a “Native Hawaiian girl from [West O’ahu],” and believed this was due to stereotypes placed on Native Hawaiian women from her hometown. The location Kanoe referred to represented low socioeconomic status. Her experiences reflected the intersections of her identities: being a Native Hawaiian female from West O’ahu and were emphasized by components in her environment that included social expectations, stereotypes, and individuals’ attitudes. As she discussed the intersections of these facets, she reflected on the stereotypes and social expectations attributed to women (that of being weak), Hawaiians (that of being lazy, uneducated, and stupid), and those who identify with a lower socioeconomic class (that of being lazy, incompetent, and dependent on government support). These stereotypes and social expectations began to layer and interact with each other and created a unique lived experience that made her aware of all of the expectations associated with each isolated facet and how they interacted and emphasized each other. Rose had a similar experience with her identities of being a Native Hawaiian female from East O’ahu. It was the combination of these identities that caused people to expect them to “have babies,” “be uneducated,” be jobless, “be tough,” and, as Kanoe labeled, act like “titas”⁵. It was the types of

⁵ Titas is short for “sister” or “sisters.” It is a term typically used to describe a Native Hawaiian woman who, stereotypically, is ignorant, has lots of children, participates in activities not considered feminine, is considered tough, and who typically does not have a future. Though the term has a negative connotation, some have reclaimed the term to mean strong Hawaiian woman.
expectations, that of being weak, incompetent, uneducated, and tough, that often made Kanoe and Rose think about their identities and question how they understood themselves.

In addition to Kanoe’s experiences as a Native Hawaiian woman from West O’ahu, she also talked about the expectations placed upon her by her parents regarding her education. Completing college was extremely important to her parents and discussions regarding birth control were constantly linked with the importance of completing school. Kanoe could have “babies after she graduated.” These conversations often influenced her understanding of her role as a Native Hawaiian woman completing her college degree. Similar to discussions regarding socioeconomic status, it was with the completion of the degree that would assist her in obtaining a job that would make her more financially stable. And it was at this point of intersection of her gender, cultural identity, and class that she was made more aware of social expectations not imposed upon her brothers.

Matilda, U’i, Ke’a, and Mokihana shared that they found their cultural and spiritual identities intersected in that their Christian beliefs were at times at odds with and/or were integrated with their Native Hawaiian cultural beliefs. For Ke’a, believing in God and believing in Hawaiian gods, such as Pele, was often a struggle. Yet, both of these beliefs were very important to her, as they helped her gain a better understanding of her identity. When talking about her cultural and spiritual beliefs, Matilda said:

Just for me, and I think it’s a combination of what I feel, part of my cultural values and my Christian values put together. It kind of has given me the ability to have different perspectives on life and the way things happen. It’s like everything happens to you from a Christian perspective. It’s the same from the Hawaiian perspective is all about balance and correcting that balance. If something doesn’t work out, it’s because you need to do
something to fix the balance. I think they’re similar to each other. The way I view it in my life is that it’s similar to each other. It has given me a lot of strength to draw on. The—probably more on the Christian side, but definitely the whole idea of thinking about our genealogies and how we’re connected-- I think that has given me a lot to draw on, too. Another experience I had in [my professors]’s class, which really was just like, “Ah ha,” for me was the whole idea of doing genealogies and talking about people connecting to ali‘i [royalty] lines.

For Matilda, it was the combination of both her cultural and religious values that impacted the way she interacted with the world around her.

Body size and its intersections with aspects of identity were addressed by Matilda and Ke’a. Matilda shared that at times her Native Hawaiianess and her size would intersect. As she discussed her awareness of her size, she also described people interpreting her differently because she is a “bigger, Polynesian looking girl.” She noticed that people attributed certain characteristics and interpreted her actions differently due to both her size and her Hawaiianess. Because she was a “bigger Polynesian woman,” she was more aware of her actions as they could be interpreted as aggressive or angry. She was aware of the attributes others placed on her due to these two aspects of her identity. These two facets of her identity caused people to interpret her behaviors in a negative way and because of this, she was deeply aware of her body size and culture. For Ke’a, her Native Hawaiianess, her size, and her gender intersected and often caused people to “underestimate” her and treat her like she was “lazy” or “dumb” and think she was “weak” and could be bullied. Although size was not discussed in a manner that would indicate that it was a significant facet for Matilda or Ke’a, they had a greater self-awareness, that they were more conscious of their actions, their facial expressions, and their behaviors, when
they interacted with others. Their size made them more aware of the other facets of their identities, specifically their cultural and gender identities.

Though not overtly discussed, many of the participants talked about experiences navigating and negotiating their multiple cultural identities. Ke’a, Undergrad, Kanoe, Pōmai, and Matilda, It was through the navigation of these layers within the facet of cultural identity, that participants talked about valuing both their Hawaiianes and other cultural identities such as Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino. For example, it was important for Matilda to learn about “both [her] Hawaiian and Filipino culture.” It was through learning about both that she could feel “connected to both sides” of her family. At times she did discuss feeling like she had to choose between the two cultures and did not want to have to privilege one over the other. Although she felt “more connected to [her] Hawaiian side,” she also wanted to maintain connections with her Filipino side. This experience was similar to other participants.

The intersections of components of various identities lead to a heightened self-awareness. At times, they had negative experiences and the negative experiences were often more prominent than any positive experiences. In addition, these intersections provided a more magnified self-awareness as connected to their cultural and ethnic identity. For the participants, intersections were points of great introspection and it was at these intersections that questions regarding their understandings of self manifested. These have been points of great personal growth and/or exploration of identity.

Hawaiianess and Experiences in the Academy

The university environment had both a positive and negative impact on all of the participants. Each of the participants shared that it was a space in which they had the opportunity to learn more about their Native Hawaiian culture. They could interact with other
Native Hawaiians and have opportunities to have hands-on experiences. In fact, many shared that they had become more involved and interested in their Hawaiian heritage due to the resources provided to them while at university. Having access to courses that focused on Native Hawaiian culture taught by Native Hawaiian practitioners and scholars was important to their cultural understandings. As U‘i said,

> With Hawaiian studies, I always feel like the more I learn about Hawaiians in general, I feel like encouraged, and I feel like it’s all practical knowledge. It’s all stuff that I actually will use in my life and am using in my life.

Feeling connected to their culture was important as it encouraged the participants to learn more about and claim their Native Hawaiian identity, rather than feel as if they were not “Hawaiian enough.”

In addition, building relations with Native Hawaiian scholars was important to the women. As they discussed the relationships they had with professors, they described relationships that reflected both that of teacher to student and mentor to mentee. Mokihana appreciated the time professors took to talk with her outside the classroom and was “so appreciative” of the time she could spend with her professors. She talked about discussions she had with professors and how they would talk about academic and personal issues, “it was so generous of them” to share their time with her. She also discussed the importance of making a connection with the faculty as they were great role models for her and helped her realize that she could be successful in the academy. It was through these relationships that she was “encouraged to keep learning” about Native Hawaiian culture and had her notions of Hawaiian challenged. Kanoe also had discussed the importance of having connections with faculty:
I took a Hawaiian literature class and there’s an English class. And, I don’t know, it was just like the literature and the cultural studies aspect of English. So, that’s what my focus is. And, then, yeah, she was just kind of lecturing in class one day and I was just kind of thinking to myself like, “I can go to grad school for this. This will be fun.” Like, I don’t know. It wasn’t ever like, “You should go to grad school” or “Oh, you should go and do this.” It was kind of like, “I can do that.” It was like a Hawaiian literature class and it was the first time it was being offered at UH. She was like, “Do you know how important this is for you to have to perpetuate – to like perpetuate and to continue this?” I was like, “Yeah, straight, makes sense.” You know, like the study, study that, you know, to get into it. And, I was like, “I can do that. Yeah, I can do that.” So, I know that and political science. I took this politics and media class that I thought was really, really good and made me want to go to grad school for political science. So, it’s just like – it wasn’t ever like a conversation. It was more like these just like moments of like epiphanies or like “Oh, I can do that, I can do this, I can go to law school.”

Kanoe shared that it was through her relationships and discussions with Native Hawaiian professors that she realized that she could focus her studies on “indigenous issues” and do something that “she loved.” Matilda shared that it was her relationship with not only her Native Hawaiian studies professors, but the director of the university lo‘i [water garden], that helped her better understand her Hawaiian culture and challenge her own understanding of Hawaiian.

The practitioners and professors associated with the Native Hawaiian studies program not only taught about Native Hawaiian culture, but provided academic and social support for these women so they could find motivation and strength to continue to pursue their education. U‘i’s college experience had a tremendous impact on her.
I think definitely that college has changed the way I see culture, definitely. It makes me value more what I come from. It makes me value more—like the opportunities that I do get, like if I get to work in a fishery, or if I get to go help my friend set up a baby luau or if I get to take this Sunday, and take a couple of my friends that are interested in Hawaiian study issues, then I get to go with them, and take them down to I’olani Palace like it’s opening all these like ways that I’m like learning and I think definitely has changed my cultural perspective.

For some, the Native Hawaiian studies curriculum was the only place where they would be able to learn Native Hawaiian language and cultural practices:

Things that I’ve learned [in college], really would be like knowledge of not just you know, not just traditions within the Hawaiian culture, chants, stuff like that. So typical stuff, and including the language, that’s the major thing. The language and for me, I never grew up learning the language. I never—my grandparents speak Hawaiian and my grandma used to speak the language, but she went to O’ahu—she lost language because she was forbidden, and so I feel now, you know, it’s like another tap in where I can reach and reach past and learn. And it’s a great way, my—and I’m the first on in my family to ever you know, to ever major in Hawaiian studies and environmental studies, and it’s something.

In Mokihana’s experience, her family was not able to pass down Native Hawaiian language and cultural practices. She was able to learn about them when she attended university.

Having access to a physical space that connected them with other Native Hawaiians was important to the participants. The Center for Hawaiian Studies (CHS) offered the participants access to resources and programs that focused on Native Hawaiian issues.
specifically about the professional development programs, such as graduate school preparation and resume writing. Attending seminars planned and implemented by staff at the Center had particular impact:

When I attend . . . the . . professional seminars, like all of us in there are like Hawaiian, so it stands out more. Like all of us in there are like Hawaiian, so it stands out more. And like when we have Hawaiian speakers come in, you know, I see how strongly they feel about being Hawaiian and that’s where it stands out the most. And you know, I learn from and understand and respect and just see like, wow, you know, I wish I had that connection and one day I may have it. You know, it’s just—it’s learning more, yeah.

For Undergrad, having access to a space that provided opportunities to interact with other Hawaiians helped her not only learn about the specific topic, but also helped her learn more about her culture.

As participants discussed their university experience, they divided the university into two spaces: The Center for Hawaiian Studies (CHS) and the rest of campus. The Center for Hawaiian Studies was seen as a location that provided support for Native Hawaiian activities and encouraged exploration of Hawaiian culture. It was also a space in which the participants felt welcomed and safe on campus. As the participants continued to discuss their on-campus experience, it was clear that other locations on campus did not feel comfortable to them. As U‘i discussed the importance of having a space to go to and feel comfortable on campus, she shared:

Sometimes when I’m at upper campus, I feel like a tourist. I don’t feel totally like I’m totally in the—[like] I’m one with everybody. Sometimes, I feel like I’m just kind of looking—watching everything kind of go by. I don’t feel totally a part of it, which is fine. It’s not a big deal to me. [I’m] not totally comfortable.
U’i’s reflections revealed that the very location, or space, that provided resources encouraged the participants to learn about Native Hawaiian culture, the university, was also a place that caused the participants to feel isolated and unwelcomed. She continued by saying that she felt this way because:

There’s not more Hawaiians here [at UH-M]. That might be why [I don’t feel welcome] because you don’t see people that look like me. There’s only so little of us, and most of us are down here [at the Center for Native Hawaiian Studies]. It feels more comfortable being down here [Center for Native Hawaiian Studies] than being over there [upper campus]. Because over there, it’s a lot of exchange students, and there’s nothing wrong with that, and a lot of haole [White/foreigners]. Different mixes and there’s nothing wrong with that, but I just don’t feel totally connected to it. And that’s why I hang out on this side so much.

U’i was not the only participant to share that she did not fully feel welcomed on campus or in non-CHS classroom spaces. As experiences on campus were discussed, Kanoe shared encounters she had with fellow students, specifically non-Hawaiian and non-local, making negative comments about Native Hawaiians:

I remember like one time I was in one of my classes and this like girl from Boston. Like, I don’t know we were talking like Hawaiians like demilitarization, And, then this girl like raised her hand . . . So, she’s like, “I don’t know why all local people hate people from the mainland.” And, I was like, “First of all, Hawaiian is not local, thank you. Second of all, Hawai‘i is illegally occupied.” I just went off on her. Like, I was like how can you be so ignorant. Like ugh, it’s so frustrating. Like, I have no . . . and she’s in Hawaii’i
for maybe like four or five years . . . She had the tattoo of Hawaiian Islands on her foot and she called herself kama'āina [Native born]. I was like nooo.

Negative experiences with non-Hawaiians and non-locals were difficult topics for many of the participants to talk about. Rose shared that she felt her university experience had a definite impact on how she thought about and understood her Hawaianness. She struggled with:

The classes. Also having a non-Hawaiian authority above us. Our chancellor’s White, my professors are all not from here, and they talk about—so it’s like not having that Native who has actually lived through being Hawaiian teach me what it’s like to be in Hawai’i. [It has] kind of changed my view of if they can learn it, then anyone can learn it. Such Hawaiian culturalists out there, like, “Oh, I’m Italian, I can learn about it, I’ll teach it. I know it because I learned it.” So I guess, for me, its people above me teaching me changed my view about what it is to be a Hawaiian.

She struggled with non-Hawaiians teaching about Hawaiian culture and teaching her about her own identity. She continued by sharing:

I’ve had women’s studies classes and they talk about everything from native women abuse to Planned Parenthood, all that stuff, and I see the way they treat those subjects. It’s like, whatever. I feel like it’s those who are not from here who just come here on a scholarship or grant and teach us and tell us that their thinking is right. What I’ve lived through is not in the statistics or the books. I’ve been told that many times. Oh, you don’t know that. Do you have facts? I can’t back it up physically, but I’ve lived through that, so it’s like to be told I’m wrong changed my view about everything.

Rose felt that the topics that addressed Hawaiian issues in her classes were treated in a way that was ignorant and/or disrespectful of the culture. The course materials did not include a Hawaiian
point of view and was not reflective of the lived Hawaiian experience. She often felt as if the attitudes and “facts” did not represent the Hawaiian experience, and, in fact, they perpetuated negative stereotypes. In addition, she did not feel that the academic space welcomed her point of view because she did not have “research” to support her statements.

These negative and, at times, hostile, events were common and many of the participants talked about how such events shaped not only their experiences at university, but how they understood their Hawaiian identity. Feeling as if their lived experience was not valuable and could be better explained by textbooks had harmful impacts on many of them. Having to address non-Hawaiian faculty and peers’ stereotypes and misappropriation of Hawaiian culture made many participants feel upset and unwelcome in the classroom because they were seen as “angry” (Kanoe) or combative. Although not in every case, many participants’ experiences in the classroom negatively impacted their collegiate experience and often made them want to disengage from the coursework, their peers, and professors. Although the university experience encouraged an exploration of Native Hawaiian culture and created opportunities for building a deeper connection to Native Hawaiian culture and community members, there were definite feelings of being both accepted and rejected at university.

Summary

This chapter provides the findings from the data collected through in-depth interviews with eight participants and provides an examination of Native Hawaiian identity. It offers the reader different ways in which participants conceptualize Hawaiian identity and culture, as well as other facets of their identities such as gender, socioeconomic status, spirituality, and culture. While the extensive variations among the individual narratives spoke to the challenges of telling one coherent story about the identity of eight diverse Native Hawaiian college women, the
variations also illustrated an integrated perspective regarding the nature of Native Hawaiian identity construction. As illustrated in the data, the processes and practices that determined Hawaiian fell into three broad conceptual categories: beliefs, values, and behaviors and practices.

One of the most interesting pieces in this study was the discussion regarding beliefs and perceptions about one’s own self and concerns about feeling “too much” and “not enough” and definitions of Hawaiian identity that were emphasized through these experiences. Participants were also very clear in defining membership into the “Hawaiian” group. Definitions regarding membership in the Hawaiian community were framed in terms of blood, genealogy, and connection to land, and they did not consider those who claimed “Hawaiian at heart” as true Hawaiians. Those considered true Hawaiians were those who were descended from the original settlers of the Hawaiian Islands.

Discussions regarding values and practices focused on traditional Hawaiian values and participation in traditional Hawaiian activities. Living *aloha*, interacting with the world in Hawaiian style, language acquisition, and *‘ohana* [family] were all critical components of understanding Hawaiian identity. This study found that *‘ohana* was central to their cultural foundation. *‘Ohana* was valued in terms of genealogy as well family structure, and it was through the *‘ohana* that one could lay claim to Native Hawaiian identity. In addition, living *aloha* and Hawaiian style were important elements critical to understanding their identity. Being accepting and open to all they encounter was an essential part of how they interacted with the world. Lastly, language acquisition not only helped the participants feel like they were more “Hawaiian” but also provided a greater connection to their history, culture, and ancestors.

Behaviors and practices were those activities that Hawaiians viewed as, well Hawaiian. They covered many traditional ideas of Hawaiian behaviors such as *hula* and *lo‘i* cultivation.
This study found participation, actual doing of the work, was where much of the meaning was made and participants were able to better understand the lessons that were taught. Interactive participation in learning was a way for participants to not only learn a skill, but to find connection to those who came before them. They participants learned by watching/observing their *kumu* [teachers] as well. It helped them develop a deeper understanding of the values that were foundational to particular activities. It was through this learning that qualities of Hawaiian culture were carried over into contemporary society.

Identity performance, feelings of being “too Hawaiian” and “not Hawaiian enough,” and the impact of environment became a focus of the study. The data illustrated how the participants interacted with their environments and how the environment (i.e., surroundings, societal expectations, perceptions of social norms, people) would impact how each participant decided to express her identity. These performances of identity often included changing of speech patterns, self-identification, and dress. Performance of identity was both conscious and unconscious. The decisions to act particular ways served various functions. For example, some would act a particular way so that they would “not stand out,” (Undergrad) while others acted a particular way so that they would seem more “educated” (U’i). Identity performance was a great concern for all of the participants and often made them feel as if they were not able to act as their true selves.

As presented in this chapter, Hawaiian culture is fairly expansive. Conceptions of Hawaiian identity include a vast array of experiences and understandings that shape each of the participants’ lived experiences. Hawaiian is a complex blending of performance, environment, and contradiction. As described, Hawaiian is framed by a sophisticated integration of beliefs, values, and behaviors within a context. Therefore, the ways in which participants’ currently
express Hawaiian identity comes from those initial understandings of Hawaiinness and are shaped by their lived experiences. It is through these lived experiences that the argument can be made that there is no monolithic Native Hawaiian identity. However, there are particular foundational beliefs, values, and behaviors that combine to create a lived Hawaiian experience. This cultural analysis functions as the lens by which participants’ experiences construct Hawaiian identity. The findings support the notion that, though there are consistent themes and ideas that are foundational to Native Hawaiian identity, a constant and monolithic Native Hawaiian identity does not exist.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study explored the different constructions of Hawaiianness through discussions of Hawaiian identity and culture with Native Hawaiian college women. The results of the study suggest that the construction of Native Hawaiian identity depends not only on cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors, but also on contextual influences such as environment and societal expectations. In addition, themes such as performance of Hawaiian, multicultural influences, and intersections of facets of identity were explored. In this chapter, the researcher considers the results in relation to existing literature on ethnic identity formation, intersectionality, and identity performance. It also highlights the impact the collegiate experience has had on understandings of identity. The chapter also discusses implications of the study for practice and future research.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore Native Hawaiian college women’s perceptions of aspects of their identity and how dimensions of identity such as spirituality, gender, and social class interacted with their cultural identity. Three research questions guided this study: (a) How do Native Hawaiian college students describe and make meaning of their identities? (b) How do various dimensions of identity interplay and/or intersect to shape Native Hawaiian college students’ identities? and (c) In what ways does the university experience influence Native Hawaiian college students’ concept of identity? The results of the study suggested that the responses to the three questions are closely intertwined. Therefore, I discuss them in conjunction with one another.

All of the participants identified Native Hawaiian or Hawaiian as the most salient dimension of their identities, as a critical component of their beings. Identifying as Native Hawaiian was the dimension of identity to which they gave the greatest thought, and it was the
dimension that most affected their everyday lives. It was the dimension that shaped, in many respects, how they thought about themselves. The participants described and made meaning of their identities in multiple ways. For example, identifying as Native Hawaiian gave participants a closer connection with their families, ancestors, culture, and history. It was also identified as a source of hardship or discrimination, which translated into a painful existence or questioning of self. Regardless, all of the participants identified as Native Hawaiian and, therefore, as different from the dominant culture.

Understandings of Hawaiianness were also developed based on perceptions of what it meant to be American. Although they might not have labeled it as such, some participants seemed to struggle with simultaneous desires to be Hawaiian and shun Hawaiianness as well as be American and shun Americanness. These conversations were reflective of struggles between indigenous and Western identities and the struggle between assimilating to dominant culture and maintaining Hawaiian culture and identity. Some participants acknowledged the importance of their environment in dictating the decisions they made to “act” more or less Hawaiian, which would often dictate how “American” they acted. The participants described the experience as having to privilege one over the other, as either/or, and that to be Hawaiian was to be less American and vice versa. Others recognized the impact that environmental influences had on making them feel “too Hawaiian” or “not Hawaiian enough.” All of them thought about the implications of their actions and how their acceptance or rejection of societal definitions and stereotypes of Hawaiian would impact whether they felt like they were accepted by others and/or fit into their environment.
The Complexity of Cultural Identity

The foundational component of all the participants’ discussions was that the most salient of their identities was their cultural identity, specifically their Native Hawaiian identity. All participants discussed their experiences primarily from the context and frame of Native Hawaiianness. Within these conversations, Native Hawaiianness was the foundation from which they understood themselves and viewed the world. This was illustrated as participants discussed their personal identity in relation to their families, culture, and land.

As participants discussed their identities and understandings of Hawaiianness, it was important to clarify their definitions and gain a clear description of the context in which they were discussing particular aspects. The elements that were often discussed in different ways were blood, genealogy, ‘ohana [family], and ‘āina [land]. Each element had different meanings to the participants and often represented several concepts. For example, in the discussion of blood, participants discussed it in terms of biology and blood quantum, as well as descent lines and genealogy. These conversations were framed in the contexts of U.S. government definition and the Native Hawaiian community definition. Genealogy was discussed in terms of the ancestors, kapuna, and history. ‘Ohana [family] was discussed in terms of nuclear family (e.g., mother, father, sister), extended family (e.g., aunts, uncles, grandparents), community, and genealogy. And lastly, ‘āina was discussed in terms of location and an entity that provides sustenance and life. It is important to understand the nuanced differences each participant used, as it is all of these concepts that converged to create understandings of Hawaiianness and Hawaiian identity. Ultimately, the participants discussed an understanding of identity that was shaped by history, culture, politics, social climate, and time., and reflected the importance to recognize the special relationship the Native Hawaiian community has with the U.S.
government. They also illuminated the racialized and political nature of Native Hawaiian identity (Brayboy, 2005). In acknowledging this, it is clear that identity was experienced as fluid and constantly changing.

As participants made meaning and described their identities, they addressed two questions: (a) “who am I?” and (b) “what is Hawaiian?” For many of them, as they discussed their identities, they clearly understood that they were Hawaiian. However, definitions and conceptions of Hawaiian varied. It was clear that life experiences and relationships were critical to their understandings of Hawaiian. There were vast differences in understandings of, and interaction with, Hawaiian culture and history. And yet, there were some very clear themes that were held in common among all of the participants.

All of the participants discussed the importance of genealogy and land. The link between land and genealogy is central to Hawaiian identity (Kame’eleihiwa, 1992; Trask, 1993). Land, (specifically, Hawai’i) is the foundation of Hawaiian culture, as Hawai’i is the place that Hawaiian emerged from, and it is the entity that provides humans with sustenance (Kame’eleihiwa, 1992; Trask, 1993). These particular connections, genealogy and land, were discussed in terms of blood and descent lines. As Hawaiian identity was discussed, blood was included in the conversations and was seen as foundational. However, it became quite clear that the definition of blood needed to be clarified, as blood, when discussed by the participants, was discussed in both biological and genealogical terms.

Participants discussed blood in ways that represented biology, DNA and genealogy, connection to ‘ohana [family], and ancestors. It was also seen as a historical link to the ‘āina [land]. The use of genealogy linked the participants to their Hawaiian culture and allowed for them to trace their descent lines. There was no discussion of blood quantum or percentage of
Hawaiian amongst the participants. Cultural identity was based on genealogical descent. However, it was also important to have Hawaiian blood. This biological marker was not quantified by the participants, but was still essential in order to claim Hawaiianness. Some references were made to the government’s preference to use blood quantum to determine Hawaiianness and access to resources available to Hawaiians, such as water and land rights. In this sense, governmental definition was also an influential policy that defined Hawaiianness. As discussed in Chapter 2, the government defines Hawaiian by blood quantum. That is, the government breaks Hawaiianness down in terms of genetics. This definition emphasized the special relationship Native Hawaiians have with the U.S. government (Brayboy, 2005) and emphasizes the political nature of Hawaiian identity. As such, one’s Hawaiianness can be found, essentially in one’s DNA (Kauanui, 2008 Trask, 1993). Moreover, it can be quantified. So in this sense, Hawaiian is also seen as immutable, as Hawaiianness is passed down genetically and not in terms of shared history, political status, or cultural behaviors. Of course, blood quantum is historically situated as ideas of “race” based on eugenic theories that ethnic identity was strictly inherited and not, as Omi and Winant (1994) asserted, based on contextual factors which lead to the process of what they call racialization. Nevertheless, these ideas have lasting effects on the Native population in Hawai’i, especially in terms of the dividing of resources. For the participants, blood was important. This definition and practice would at times cause the participants to question their right to claim Hawaiian identity.

As the participants discussed their identities, they discussed values that were central to their understandings of self. Often times, ethnic groups identify a set of values that define their entire group (Hall, 1996). For Hawaiians, there is a popular notion of assigning “traditional” values to define Hawaiianness (Wright, 2003). Some of these values are *aloha* [love, respect],
ha‘ahaʻa [humility], hoʻoponopono [to make right], lōkahi [unity], mālama [caring], kōkua [helping], and kaʻana like [sharing] (Kame’elehiwa, 1992; Wright, 2003). Although these are very positive values, they represent a fraction of the core group of values Hawaiians carry. The participants’ discussions of values such as kuleana [responsibility], aloha [love], ‘ohana [family], and ‘āina [land] expanded notions of cultural values and demonstrated how these values worked together to inform Hawaiian identity. These values were also seen as ways for them to connect to their ancestors, community, culture, and the land. The exploration of values included reflections on the importance of kuleana [responsibility]. For Hawaiians, kuleana is extremely important (Wright, 2003) as responsibility to community guides many of the beliefs and practices. In traditional society, kuleana referred to a plot of land an individual person or family was charged with maintaining and caring for (Kame’elehiwa, 1992). So, this idea of responsibility is culturally grounded in Hawaiian tradition and is an important value that informs Hawaiian identity.

Another aspect of Hawaiian identity was based on shared historical memory, shared experiences, and shared practices. As in traditional times, genealogy established one’s identity. Because Hawaiians viewed an individual as a collective—the genetic and historical sum of your ancestors, knowing your genealogy provided a frame of reference (Kame’elehiwa, 1992; Trask, 1993). Connecting genealogy to ‘āina [land; place] connects the family to location and space. It is quite obviously, integral to genealogy. In essence, “genealogy is paramount” (Trask, 1993, p. iii) to Hawaiian people. This aspect of identity is fostered by the family context—and remains central to these participants’ understandings of Hawaiianess. Participating in cultural practices such as tracing genealogy, speaking Hawaiian, and perpetuating ancient practices such as ways
to tend the ʻāina [land] and speak the language are essential components to Hawaiian cultural identity.

Also connected to the shared historical memory is the language. The loss of Native Hawaiian language has had a significant impact on the participants. Historically, speaking the language was discouraged and Hawaiian children were forced to speak English in missionary and territorial schools (Benham, 2003). Because of this, negative attitudes regarding Hawaiian language have been passed down through generations. Grandparents and parents who experienced the English only environment, attitudes, and education passed down the value and importance of speaking English and not speaking Hawaiian. Due to these practices, many have either lost their Hawaiian language skills or never had the opportunity to learn Hawaiian. As participants discussed Hawaiian identity, they emphasized the importance of language. It was through their understanding of language that they were able to feel connected to their culture and ancestors. Their inability to speak Hawaiian made many participants question their Hawaiianness, and it was through their ability to understand and speak Hawaiian that they felt a deeper connection, as well as a greater right, to claim Native Hawaiian identity. Cultural identity as described above is deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge systems (IKS).

The notion that identity is derived through the special relationship participants have with the environment, respect for elders as wisdom keepers, and use of the earth and land to make meaning (Abayo, 2006; Champagne, 2006; Regan, 2005) is essentially IKS. Learning from one’s ancestors, knowledge and honoring of one’s genealogy and the connection they have to those who came before them, and acknowledging a deep connection to the land informed all of the participants’ Native Hawaiian identity in one way or another, and has been identified as an important component in other indigenous communities identity such as American Indian of the
U.S. (Benham, 2008), Māori of Aotearoa/New Zealand (Bishop, & Glynn, 2003), and the Aboriginal people’s of Australia (Beresford, 2003b). It is this foundational concept that makes their cultural identity development unique and provides a space for them to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships they have with their families, community, and land.

Similar to Halualani’s (2002) findings, cultural identity, for many of the participants, was complicated when they discussed their multiple cultural identities. As discussed in Chapter 4, though each participant discussed her cultural identities differently, and many identified with more than one cultural identity. It was clear that the environment was an important component regarding which identity was more pronounced and noticeable to them as an individual. Much like Renn’s (2004) study regarding mixed-race college students’ conception of identity, each participant’s identity was shaped by interactions with her family, understandings of sociocultural expectations, and interactions with her environment. Similarly, as with Anzaldúa’s (1999) work on borderland identities and Root’s (1996) work with multiracial identity development, the cultural identity aspects were porous and allowed for the participants to easily move between their cultural identities as well as navigate the location at which the various identities bordered, touched, or intersected with each other.

Cultural identity was not a static experience for any of the participants. It was complex and deeply rooted in history, tradition, and family (Halualani, 2002; Wright, 2003). It was also shaped by factors such as environment, governmental policy, geopolitical history, and sociocultural expectations. Participants were well aware of their cultural identities and the many layers that made up this facet. And yet, when they interacted with environmental components, the way in which they expressed their cultural identities or their association with a particular
aspect of their cultural identities was fluid, constantly changing, and depended on perceived social expectations.

On a very basic level, society continues to describe Hawaiian in terms of particular actions. Dancing *hula*, playing music, eating particular foods (e.g., “Hawaiian food”: *poi*, raw fish, roasted pig), engaging in particular activities (e.g., ocean sports like fishing or diving), and of speaking Hawaiian are all different kinds of performances of Hawaiianess. Some of these activities were described by participants as necessary components of Hawaiian identity. However, their descriptions also diverged from traditional notions of Hawaiian and extended beyond that of the activities listed above. Performance of identity were based on participation in particular activities, but also acknowledged the importance of honoring and understanding the cultural values, protocols, and history associated with each. As explored earlier, this basic construction of Hawaiian is one most people in Hawai’i and around the world view as intrinsically “Hawaiian.” Yet, what about other Native Hawaiians who do not engage in these particular type of cultural activities? These representations perpetuate certain stereotypes of Hawaiian, as the constructions severely limit expression and often are exclusionary.

**Identity Facets: Isolated and Intersecting**

As participants discussed notions of self, they framed the discussions in ways that reflected both intersectionality, facets of identity interacting with each other, and isolation. As participants reflected on conceptions of Hawaiianness, it became evident that their Hawaiianness was a vital to their understanding of self. It was often used as a foundation of understanding. When asked to reflect on other identity facets, it became evident that other dimensions of identity such as religion, social class, and multiple cultures, and gender did influence on the meaning participants made of their Native Hawaiian identity, while sexual orientation was not a
dimension any of the participants shared as having any kind of impact, though this may have been impacted by heteronormativity of contemporary U.S. culture.

**Identity facets in isolation.** When asked to reflect on various facets of identity, participants had various understandings with each. Regarding gender identity, understandings varied among participants. Although Pōmai, Kanoe, Ke’a, and Matilda discussed the saliency of their gender identity, it was often spoken about in regard to experiences that made them more aware of their woman-ness. Experiences in which they were bound by societal rules and expectations and/or underestimated due to their femaleness often made them more aware of their gender. It was clear that social expectations and societal norms created their experiences as women. It was through these experiences, that their lived experiences became more salient for them. However, when they experienced the intersections of gender and Native Hawaiian identities, their understandings of and experiences with gender became even more pronounced.

The perceived saliency of social class differed among the eight participants and was often a result of contextual influences, particularly location and family. Cultural identity and socioeconomic status were important points of intersection. Specifically, Rose, Kanoe, and Matilda observed that their attention to social class made them more aware of both their cultural identity and class status. Most of the participants shared that they thought about their social class when components of their environments emphasized how they were different (e.g., access to transportation, area in which they lived, working to pay for college). It was something to which the participants gave much thought.

Spiritual identity was also identified as having varied importance. For reasons the participants perceived as related to their life experiences and their cultural identities, the saliency of spiritual identity varied greatly, ranging from deeply important to their understandings of self
to not at all a component of their daily life. The negotiation between cultural identity and spiritual identity had a direct impact on self-definition for many of the participants, all of whom were raised in and/or practiced Christianity. As participants negotiated their desire for religion or faith, their uncertainty as to whether or not it could exist with their cultural beliefs was identified as a point of conflict. In these instances, spirituality became increasingly salient for some. Many discussed the saliency of their spiritual identity and often discussed how their spiritual identities were a necessary component of their understandings of self. Within these discussions, participants discussed how they often felt at odds with their cultural beliefs and spiritual beliefs and how they negotiated the conflicting values and practices to shape a spiritual practice that would allow them to honor both their Christian faith and their cultural beliefs.

Differences were also acknowledged as participants discussed their multicultural backgrounds. Although the participants all identified as Native Hawaiian, their multi-ethnic backgrounds were important to how they understood their identities. In addition to embracing their Native Hawaiian culture, many of the participants discussed the importance of learning about and embracing elements of other cultures they were connected to. Similarly, for many of the participants, identifying as Native Hawaiian and other ethnicities was not seen as a negative experience, nor was it seen as a negative aspect of their identities. Their connection to other cultures was an important component of their identities and added richness to their understandings of self. These experiences were similar to that of the participants in Renn’s (2004) study examining mixed race college students identity. Not all of the participants in this study explicitly discussed the intersections of their cultural identities and at times spoke about their multiple cultural identities in the contexts of both isolation and as facets that intersect; however, they did, discuss experiences with negotiating multiple cultural identities, the
intersections of these identities, and how they did, or did not, feel connected to each. This could
have been due to lack of understanding of or the language associated with intersectionality. It
was through these layered conversations of multiple cultural identities that participants struggled
and gained a greater understanding of their Native Hawaiian identity.

In summary, cultural identity, specifically their Native Hawaiian identity, was typically
the most salient dimension of identity and the meanings that were constructed varied greatly
among the participants. Facets of identity such as gender, social class, spiritual beliefs, and
multiple cultural identities were found to be important to identity construction. However,
meaning made regarding the participants’ identities tended to reflect a focus on Native Hawaiian
identity and how it was influenced by the meaning made and construction of these other identity
facets. The focus on, or privilege of, Native Hawaiian identity could be influenced by the
participants recruited for the study and the focus of the research questions. By seeking out Native
Hawaiian college women, issues of Hawaiianess and gender could have already been topics in
the forefront of their minds and may have been experiences they had already started to consider.

There were definite instances in which participants acknowledged intersections of facets
of their identities, such as Kanoe and Rose’s experiences as Native Hawaiian women from
economically depressed areas of O’ahu and U’i and Mokihana’s experiences with their culture
and spiritual beliefs. At these junctions, they became more aware of their Native Hawaiianness
and the multiple facets of identity and recognized the importance of the identity facets’
relationships with each other. However, for the most part, participants did not perceive multiple
facets of identity as interacting with one another, but instead as relatively independent. As
discussed in the remainder of the chapter, these general responses to the other research questions
provide a basis for understanding Native Hawaiian identity development among college students.
**Intersections of identity facets.** At times, it was difficult for many of the participants to discuss individual facets of their identities without referring to their Native Hawaiian identity. Understanding their cultural identities was the most pressing concern for them, though other dimensions of identity were discussed and identified as important (e.g., gender, socioeconomic class, spirituality, and multiple cultural identities). At times, these other identity facets were perceived to be related to their understandings of what it meant to be Hawaiian. Participants’ experiences, however, indicated that social class, spirituality, gender, and multiple cultural identities complicated their understandings of Native Hawaiian identity, and is reflective of discussions involved in intersectionality research. These points in which various facets intersected with each other were often accompanied by events that caused them to think about, and rethink, the way they understood their identities. In addition, the points at which aspects of their identities intersected made the participants more aware of the intersecting facets. These intersections made participants more aware of the environments, social expectations, and contexts in which the intersections became more obvious to them.

Intersections of identity were also identified as points in which deeper self-exploration and questioning of identity occurred. The influence that the various facets of identity, such as cultural identities, gender, spirituality, and social class had on conception of self was complex. Although participants, as a whole, did not identify the same facets of identity with similar importance, these facets were identified as important to informing their understandings of Hawaiianness. In addition, it was clear that particular aspects of participants’ environments made them more aware of how dimensions interplayed with and informd their sense of Hawaiianness. Ultimately, spiritual, gender, social class, and culture, shaped sense of self among the participants, but did so in varied ways.
Although not all of the participants discussed experiences or understandings of intersections of identity, those who did experience such intersections often discussed a complex and layered experience. As they were discussed instances in which they were more aware of particular aspects of their identities, they discussed that they also noticed the environmental influences that often influenced and interacted with aspects of their identities. These short-term, external interactions between environmental influences, societal expectations, and aspects of their identities often created an awareness of the intersecting aspects of their identities. As participants discussed identity facets, some of them talked about how aspects would intersect to create a unique, and often painful, lived experience. Participants noticed these intersections during experiences in which environments and social expectations made them more aware of being different from dominant culture and aware of negative stereotypes.

Areas of intersection of identity facets were seen as points in which deeper understandings of holistic identity occurred. As discussed by Bowleg, (2008) in her study regarding Black, Lesbian, women’s identity, it was the intersection of all of the identity facets that created a specific lived experience and it was important to examine identity facets as those that interact with each other, not as isolated, individual components. It can be assumed that these deeper understandings were a result of the increased questioning and introspection that occurred at these points. In addition, the interactions of societal expectations and environmental elements emphasized the differences and emotions each participant experienced. As participants discussed the intersections of their identities, awareness of the intersections, more often than not, were emphasized through times of conflict. Essentially those who discussed identity intersections shared that awareness of intersections were made most evident during experiences that had a negative impact on them, causing them to become more aware of their differences.
Although Native Hawaiian was the most prominent and foundational component of how they understood themselves, other aspects of their cultural identities were also important to acknowledge, and differed between participants. Identification with multiple cultures was essential to their understandings of who they were.

**Contradictions in Descriptions of Identity**

Participants described Hawaiian identity in contradictory terms of negative and positive attributes. Learning about Hawaiian history and culture through Hawaiian studies courses provided a “deeper connection” (Mokihana) and helped participants to think about their roles in the Hawaiian community (Pōmai). In contrast, participants also talked about how Hawaiian was a burden or a struggle that, at times, caused anxiety and frustration all of the them. Ironically, it was also a point of pride for many of the participants. Essentially, they expressed concerns about pressure they felt regarding openly practicing one’s culture in an unsupportive context. The experiences emphasized the kuleana [responsibility] to the Native Hawaiian community. They depicted the burden that accompanies community membership and recognize that part of being Hawaiian is finding your individual role in helping the Native Hawaiian community and actually doing it.

**Navigating and Negotiating Indigenous and Western Identities**

Issues of colonization, power and privilege, and relationships with the U.S. government framed many of the conversations regarding identity. Participants separated Hawaiianess from Americanness. In the context of the conversations, many of them identified American as acting “right” and Hawaiianess was identified as “comfortable.” This finding is reflected in the tenets framed within TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005). Colonization has had a deep impact on construction
and value of self and the value is placed on that of dominant culture, to privilege and conform to American society’s cultural norms, while rejecting or suppressing Hawaiian culture and values.

These conversations of identity performance and identity validation, feeling as if they were “proper” or “Hawaiian enough,” are reflective of processes associated with assimilation, and are similar to the findings presented by Bishop and Glynn (1999), whose work focused on colonization’s impact on Maori culture and identity and Lomay (2004), whose work focused on colonization and its role in American Indian identity construction and education. The behaviors and performances participants shared as important to being accepted in non-Hawaiian environments often included behaviors associated with dominant society (Abayo, 2006; Bishop, 2003; Smith, 1999). These behaviors included speaking “properly,” not pidgin (Undergrad), speaking English only, not Hawaiian (U’i), dressing “professionally” (Rose), and not “looking too Hawaiian” (Ke’a). The goals in these particular instances were to act and look more American, to act in accordance with dominant culture’s social expectations. Similar to Benham’s (2003) discussion of the impact of colonization on indigenous education in the U.S., value was placed on assimilation and privileged the values and behaviors of U.S. dominant culture. The very idea that Hawaiian is not American illustrates a bicultural element that, depending on the environment, privileges more dominant culture behaviors over Hawaiian ones. In accordance to the tenets put forth by TribalCrit, privileging that of dominant culture is reflective of the impact of colonization and illustrates the difficulty for colonized communities to maintain and uphold cultural beliefs and practices when forced to adopt dominant culture and reject or suppress their indigenous community’s cultural values.

American was never equated with Hawaiian, or vice versa. It is from this that there is a clear indication that American is in conflict with Hawaiian. One cannot express both at the same
time. One is either Hawaiian or American. Similar to the participants in Renn’s (2004) study that focused on multiracial college students’ identity and Root’s (1996) study that focused on multiracial and biracial individuals’ construction of identity, Ke’a, Rose, Pōmai, U’i, and Undergrad discussed feeling as if they had to make a choice between American or Hawaiian. These women further complicated this idea as they talked about American identity as being empty or a void. The notion that one’s American identity is empty illustrated a loss of culture, in the case of the participants a loss of self, in order to become a part of dominant culture. American culture was also discussed as an actor, an “eraser” of identity. These conversations were continued to illuminate the impact of U.S. assimilation policies and internalized oppression, as well as highlighted actions and behaviors participants performed as acts of resistance. Through the assimilation process, or the process of hiding one’s self, American culture was seen as a tool used to erase identity, as if there was something to erase, and the erasing was used to deny one’s culture. As participants discussed notions of becoming more American and suppressing aspects of their identity, they were very clear as to the behaviors that constituted American. The void that they discussed was a loss of Hawaiian culture and sense of self in order to better fit into dominant culture. The notion that American was a void was not the true foundation of the discussions. The foundation of the discussions was anything that was Hawaiian was not American. To be American is to reject being Hawaiian and to be Hawaiian is to reject being American. According to the participants, to be accepted by dominant culture, to not be seen as different, one must adopt American behaviors and hide one’s Hawaiianness. Interestingly, as participants discussed navigating this treacherous space, they did not talk about losing aspects of who they were. Instead, language and language patterns highlighted a
suppression of behaviors and were typically dictated by perceptions of social expectations in an 
environment.

**Indigenous Knowledge**

When participants discussed Hawaianness, they often referred to the knowledge passed 
down to them from their ancestors, the indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) or indigenous ways 
of knowing (Abayo, 2006; Bishop, 2003; Regan, 2005). As framed by TribalCrit (Brayboy, 
2005), there is inherit value place on indigenous knowledge and “Tribal philosophies, beliefs, 
customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of 
indigenous people” (p. 430). The beliefs, values, and customs described by the participants were 
essential to how they understood themselves, their relationships with their communities, and 
their relationship with the environment. Indigenous knowledge systems were important and 
often shaped their worldviews. However, the knowledge that was passed down was challenged 
when the participants interacted with non-Hawaiians and when they attended university classes. 
This contradictory practice typically ignores cultural knowledge and devalues the cultural 
knowledge, history, and values passed down through generations. The conflict between Western 
and indigenous and American and Hawaiian are complex and layered with components of 
identity politics, colonization, and sociopolitical histories. As such, indigenous identity, 
particularly Hawaiian, will continuously be impacted by the need to both assimilate and reject 
the dominant culture’s notions of Hawaiian culture, identity, knowledge, and history.

Similar to Halualani’s (2002) findings, Native Hawaiian identity is shaped by multiple 
factors and often complicated by generational narratives that reflect and perpetuate values and 
experiences of the past and combine to construct contemporary Hawaiian identity. That is, 
participants’ knowledge of self was determined by their understanding of their genealogy, their
interactions with Native Hawaiian elders, and their relationship with the land. Participants’ constructions of identity were based on social and governmental constructs of Hawaiinanness and often grounded in narratives passed down from generation to generation regarding definitions of Hawaiinanness. In addition to the narratives passed down by older Native Hawaiians, narratives shared by non-Hawaiians, those that contributed to the dominant culture’s definition of Hawaiian, also shaped conceptions of identity. These conflicting worldviews, those of Western and indigenous, often shaped conceptions of identity and were based on what it meant to not be Hawaiian or American.

Although there are many ethnic identity models as related to higher education, none sufficiently describe or apply to Native Hawaiian identity construction. The MMDI (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007) provide a framework in which identity can be deconstructed and analyzed through the lens of each individual facet, as well as provided opportunities to explore points of intersection. However, the model does not fully account for the impact of indigenous knowledge, the influence of colonization, or bicultural identity navigation. Nor does it fully examine instances of multiple layers contained within identity facets, such as that of the multiple cultural identities as identified by the participants. Identity research produced by Anzaldúa (1999), Bowleg (2008), Crenshaw (1994), Renn (2004), and Root (1990, 1996) focused on multiple identities and emphasized the importance of being able to acknowledge and navigate multiple identity facets, as well as explore implication for identity intersections. They also explore issues of identity politics and the complex and multilayered understanding of identity. However, they do not fully explore the impact the government has had on identity development or indigenous notions of knowledge and self.
Because current identity development models are insufficient, exploration of Native Hawaiian identity needs to involve the use of critical theory, specifically that of TribalCrit, (Brayboy, 2005), intersectionality, and identity performance. These frameworks provide structures in which Native Hawaiian identity can be framed in a culturally relevant manner. They recognize and value indigenous ways of knowing as well as acknowledge the impact dominant society has on identity construction and performance. These frames also privilege the role power and oppression have had on Native Hawaiian culture and identity construction. Until a more culturally relevant identity model can be developed these lenses will provide a solid foundation to explore Native Hawaiian identity.

**Challenges Associated with Hawaiian Identity**

Traditional notions of Hawaiian identity were problematized by the participants. The question, “what is Hawaiian?” led to answers regarding what Hawaiian is *not*. As participants discussed what Hawaiian is and is not, issues of stereotypes, acting right, and wanting to fit in were addressed. As participants discussed constructions of identity, they acknowledged the importance of growth and learning from their environments and histories. Identity was not seen as static. In actuality, participants discussed notions of expanding and reframing understandings of their identities. Interestingly, as participants discussed these issues, many shared that they did not lose or forget identity aspects. They were well aware of who they were and how they understood facets of their identities, in particular their Hawaiianness. Rather, they chose to “suppress” (U’i) particular parts of their identities and perform in ways that would help them better fit in and “be accepted” (Undergrad).
The Complexity of Identity Performance

The conscious and unconscious identity performance decisions described by participants seemed to be based on the participants’ perceptions of their surroundings. Not only did these decisions assist in the understandings and management of the participants’ personal identities, they also addressed and managed others’ perceptions and expectations. In order to do this, participants had to have an understanding of societal expectations, their surroundings, stereotypes, and self-definition.

Participants were aware that they also had to predict how others would typically perceive them. Similar to Willie’s (2003) findings, the participants had a self-awareness that was, at times, created by negative experiences that made the participants more aware of their otherness. The negative experiences not only provided opportunities for participants to explore aspects of their identities, they also made the participants more aware of environmental components that contributed to the negative experiences. These experiences often shaped how they would “act” in similar situations. It was through these experiences that participants became more aware of multiple aspects of their identities, as well as more aware of the nuances of their environments.

Another dimension of these conversations highlighted a conscious choice to suppress or express certain components of their identities. This was described as a decision-making process that was informed by participants’ perceptions of environmental components and perceptions of how others’ expected them to perform/behave. The decisions regarding performance were based on both internal and external factors as well as decisions regarding how they wanted others to perceive them and whether they wanted to perpetuate stereotypes or challenge them.

As participants discussed their lived experiences, issues of cultural validity were addressed. These discussions often took the form of “too Hawaiian” or “not Hawaiian enough.”
At the core of these discussions was the issue of identity performance. Similar to Butler’s (1990) and Willie’s (2003) work, participants based their performances on social expectations of dominant culture. In order to do this, they had to understand the nuanced expectations set by dominant culture and understand how to modify their behaviors and cultural values and expressions in order to conform to dominant culture’s expectations. The participants described two processes that helped them decide how to act. One process described that environmental components, such as social expectations, geopolitical history, government, and community, impacted their internal definitions of how they understood themselves and what Hawaiian is and is not. This external impact on internal understandings of self-framed decisions they made regarding how they interacted with their environment. This is similar to the process described by Butler’s (1990) identity performance work. In addition, the participants also discussed a process in which they would determine how to interact with their environment, which is similar to Butler’s (1990) discussion regarding agency and identity performance. This process was based on their perceptions of their environments. Essentially, making meaning of one’s environment, the perception of social expectations, dictated how they interacted with others and was described as an internal evaluation of external environmental components to determine understandings of self and influence identity performance.

Participants discussed issues of acting “too Hawaiian” or “not Hawaiian enough.” In this context, they described burdens associated with expressing their cultural practices and discussed the burden of exercising culture in an unsupportive broader context. As participants discussed “acting” certain ways, issues of contextual environmental factors were a main factor in their decisions regarding identity performance. To the participants, these factors were complex, ever changing, and often included location, physical surroundings, people, and perceptions of
expectations. It was a combination of these elements that would create the environment that was
ever changing and fluid and a performance of identity that was ever changing. As the
participants discussed their experiences, it was clear that there was a decision-making process
that occurred for them, and these decisions were made based on perceptions. Participants
discussed having to think about how they perceived a person’s perceptions of them. This
perception would inform decisions regarding the way they would perform their identity.
Concerns regarding how others perceived them and the perceptions of stereotypes that
could/would be applied to the participants often informed how a participant would perform their
identity.

During this decision-making process, participants would have to decide whether or not
they wanted to “act Hawaiian” (Rose) or not act Hawaiian. This often meant they would have to
decide if they would speak pidgin or “proper English” (Undergrad), “look” more or less
Hawaiian (Rose) or “dress more or less Hawaiian” (U’i). Decisions to act particular ways were
also influenced by whether they wanted to defy or enforce stereotypes placed upon Native
Hawaiians or if they were not worried about them. In the action of wanting to defy negative
stereotypes they perceived others were placing on them, participants shared that they would
“speak properly” (Kanoe), “dress-up and not wear puka [holey] clothes” (Rose), and act more
“professionally” (U’i). The participants talked about wanting to resist the stereotypes attributed
to them. They worked hard to try to break down or defy these stereotypes by changing the ways
the spoke, behaved, dressed, and interacted with others, and did so by acting more American.
While striving to deconstruct the stereotype of Hawaiians, working to decolonize the minds of
those they interacted with, the participants were, at times, inadvertently colonizing themselves by
assimilating and adopting dominant cultural behaviors and ways of acting to gain credibility
These behaviors can be seen having both positive and negative impacts on the construction and conception of identity.

These struggles to fit in or be accepted by their peers are often experienced by college students who identify with both majority and minority communities and are working toward developing a self-awareness, or toward self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Developing into an independent and self-aware individual is a difficult task for anyone. Intellectual and social developmental processes are struggles for many college students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). However, the developmental process is complicated when the navigation and development of identity facets that are not reflected by dominant culture become involved. The process becomes increasingly complicated as one identifies with multiple identities that do not reflect dominant culture.

**Phenotype and Identity Performance**

The notion of “Hawaiian enough” was based not only on acting, or the performance of Hawaiian, but based on whether one physically “looked” Hawaiian. With this in mind, it became apparent that phenotype, the expression of specific physical traits, based on genetic and environmental influences counts. Participants described experiences in which they were treated differently and encountered different types of reactions from those with whom they interacted which were directly connected to how they physically appeared (e.g., skin color, facial features, hair color). Questions regarding a participant’s right to claim Hawaiian identity were often guided by whether they “looked” and/or “acted” Hawaiian. Situations described by the participants, such as being misidentified and/or people questioning their cultural heritage because they did not “look” like a typical Hawaiian, created experiences in which participants questioned their right to claim their Hawaiian identity and/or became frustrated and angry because they had
to define and defend who they were. As was discussed in Chapter 4, there is no defined way for a Hawaiian to act or look. Rather, the definitions seem to be based on societal notions of what Hawaiian is or is not. These definitions were typically based on stereotypes and notions of Hawaiinanness put forth by the dominant society.

For the participants, identity performance was based on understandings of what Hawaiian is and is not, though these concepts were not always clearly identified or defined. In regards to what Hawaiian is not, as participants spoke about language, if speaking “properly” is not Hawaiian, one could argue that speaking improperly is Hawaiian. Also, if acting “professional” is not Hawaiian, acting unprofessional is by virtue Hawaiian. These concepts are disturbing and, sadly, the reality for many of the participants was that they deeply impact their understandings of Hawaiian.

**Environmental Factors**

Perceptions and understandings of environmental components in both formal and informal settings were critical to how the participants understood and performed their identities. All of the participants discussed concerns regarding acting Hawaiian and knowing the locations in which they could or could not act Hawaiian. Although participants were not able to fully identify specific environmental cues that helped them determine how to act, they did acknowledge the importance of knowing social expectations of given contexts (e.g., classroom, on campus, interacting with non-Hawaiians) and shared that they were more likely to act less Hawaiian until they felt they could feel comfortable enough with their surroundings to act more like themselves, or more Hawaiian. These experiences are similar to those discussed by Renn (2004) in her study focusing on multi-racial college students. It was important for the participants in Renn’s study, as well as those in this study, to have the ability to navigate and
negotiate contextual social expectations. This process for the participants was, at times, difficult, but critical for them to feel as if they fit in and could be accepted.

For the participants, they not only had to pay attention to how they acted around non-Hawaiians, but had to think about how they acted around Hawaiians. In actuality, the participants always had to think about how to behave and look. It was a constant process that was always changing due to contextual environmental factors and the participants’ perceptions of those factors. Participants had to consider many factors that included location, the way they looked, who they were interacting with, social expectations, and so forth. It was as if they could never stop thinking about social expectations and how others would perceive them.

When examining these ideas with the experiences of feeling too Hawaiian or not enough Hawaiian, similar arguments can be made. To be Hawaiian, in many cases, involved ability to speak Hawaiian, know protocols and practices, and participate in cultural activities. In addition, genealogy and connection to land and history were also important factors. In all discussions, contextual environmental factors were key elements that were used to determine proper ways to act and measure how performance of Hawaiian would be received. They were also used in a manner in which participants internally measured their Hawaiianness and found validity or questioned themselves.

**The University Experience**

Experiencing identity occurs when the theoretical becomes actualized (Wright, 2003). Within the discussions that focused on identity construction and understanding, participants talked about how each experienced identity. Almost all participants described transformations in the understandings of their personal Hawaiian identity after going to university, taking Hawaiian studies courses, or attending programs at the Center for Hawaiian Studies (CHS). As previously
illustrated in Chapter 4, participants used expansive concepts—citing genealogy, location/place, different behaviors, and values—to describe Hawaiian identity. This expanded idea of Hawaiinanness was broadened through interactions with Hawaiian community members and the CHS faculty and staff. Participating in Hawaiian studies courses and/or programs provided a context for building notions of Hawaiian as well as provided participants with a sense of their personal responsibility to the Hawaiian community. This responsibility is called *kuleana*, and it is the responsibility they have to better their community.

Although the university environment provided opportunities to interact with Hawaiian community members and encouraged exploration of their Hawaiian identity, it was also a location in which they felt unwelcomed and at times experienced hostility. As UH-M is located in Hawai‘i on the island of O‘ahu, the very land in which participants claim genealogical connection, one might assume that it would be a space in which Native Hawaiian students would feel welcomed. However, this was not the case. As participants discussed their experiences on campus, the more positive experiences occurred when they were at CHS, in Hawaiian studies courses, or in classes in which there were several Native Hawaiian students. More negative experiences occurred in locations on campus that were not affiliated with CHS or did not have a high representation of Native Hawaiian students.

Participants talked about their experiences on campus, specifically in non-Hawaiian settings, and about feeling unwelcomed, or as U‘i described, being a “tourist.” Classroom environments were identified as being spaces in which participants did not feel as if they were welcomed. They were often seen as spaces in which they would have to teach their classmates and instructors about Hawaiian culture, have to dispel stereotypes about Hawaiians, be told that their lived experiences as Hawaiians were incorrect because the experiences were not reflected in
textbooks or research, and/or were taught about Hawaiian culture by non-Hawaiians who claimed to be experts on Hawaiian culture. Similar to research conducted to explore issues of chilly climate (Hall & Sandler, 1982; Heller et al., 1985; Krupnick, 1985; Lease & Schmeck, 1990; Nielsen, 1990; Salter, 2003; Salter & Persaud, 2003; Schulze & Tomal, 2006) and microaggressions in the classroom (Davis, 1989; Delgado & Stefanic, 1992; Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Wills, 1978; Solórzano et al., 2000), the participants discussed both overt actions, such as peers saying ignorant things about Hawaiians, as well as subtle “assaults” (Solórzano et al., 2000), such as not feeling comfortable speaking in pidgin, that often made them feel unwelcomed and uncomfortable in class. They also discussed instances in which they felt stereotypes were perpetuated in the classroom and enforced by faculty. These spaces did not create a welcoming environment conducive to learning. Rather, they created a space in which students felt isolated and defensive. The participants’ university experiences often highlighted challenges associated with others refuting IKS and typically happened in the classroom (Abayo, 2006; Bishop, 2003; Smith, 1999). It was in this space that Western knowledge was privileged as it could be validated through Westernized methods (e.g., published work based on research). It was in this space that Western knowledge was used to teach about the Hawaiian experience and culture.

In contrast, they spoke positively about their experiences at CHS and feeling comfortable and welcomed. The Center for Hawaiian Studies was an academic center used for both academic and social programming. A building constructed like a traditional Hawaiian hale [house], the space was constructed to support interactive and experiential academic and social activities open to the UH-M and greater community. It was designed to incorporate, represent, and support Hawaiian cultural values and beliefs. Although the main purpose of the center was to provide a
specific space for Hawaiian Studies courses and research to occur, social programming and support services for Hawaiian students were also supported in the space. Interestingly, the space was located off campus and was not near what could be considered the center of campus.

As the participants talked about their experiences with CHS, they shared that they felt comfortable interacting with the faculty and staff and felt they were actively encouraged to be involved, whether they enrolled in Hawaiian studies courses, tended the lo‘i [water garden], participated in language immersion, etc. In this regard, the campus experience was an important aspect of the participants’ experiences. To the participants, it was important to have a space in which they could feel welcomed and comfortable on campus (Howard-Hamilton, 2000; Patton, 2006). It was the space created by CHS that allowed them to escape some of the more hostile interactions they experienced on campus. It was also a location in which they could interact with peers, faculty, and staff who understood their experiences and helped them process and reflect.

These experiences described by participants support studies that examined American Indian college students’ experiences on campus. The studies found that familial support, perceptions of university climate, and relationships with faculty and administrators were important factors that influenced retention and persistence (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Lin, LeCounte, & Eder, 1988; Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Hefferis, & Baysden, 2000). The participants found that their positive experiences with faculty and administrators at CHS added value to their collegiate experiences and, more often than not, provided academic and social support that not only encouraged exploration of Hawaiian identity, but created an inviting environment that supported the participants’ decisions to continue and complete college. It was because of these special relationships based on cultural understandings and Hawaiian values and knowledge that participants were able to have more positive experiences on campus.
Presentation of self was an essential component of how participants understood their identities. As participants discussed their definitions of self, they also addressed how they expressed their identity. As illustrated, both definition and expression of identity provide a broader picture of Native Hawaiian identity. The description of definitions of self provide a context in which participants learn what it means to be Hawaiian and highlights many different factors that combine to create Native Hawaiian identity. How they act, or perform aspects of their identity, provides a context in which external forces such as politics, community, history, social expectations, create a framework participants must navigate and understand so they can perform their identities in ways that allow them to understand their environment and manage others’ perceptions of them. It is critical to acknowledge both of these processes and understand how they interact with each other to create notions and understandings of the participants’ identities.

For many of the participants, their college education was viewed as a means to obtain a good job. Many of them decided to enroll in college so that they could obtain employment that would help them become more financially stable. Because of this, many of the participants viewed their college experience as preparation for the workforce. Their discussions of their collegiate experiences did not focus on involvement beyond participation in CHS activities and events. The majority of their experiences evolved around their classroom experiences and the activities they participated in that would assist in workforce preparation.

Indigenous identity is a truly multifaceted, political, and often controversial topic. There is little agreement on precisely what constitutes an indigenous identity (Weaver, 2001). Arguments regarding how to define and measure it, who has it, and even appropriate terminology are constantly contested (Weaver, 2001). In addition, questions regarding what is actually being
talked about have to be addressed: race, ethnicity, cultural identity, acculturation, bicultural identity, multicultural identity, and some other form of identity. Although comprised of many different facets, self-definition, community definition, and external identification are important factors that influence indigenous identity (Halualani, 2002; Trask, 1993).

As demonstrated through the data, Hawaiianness is complex and comprised of many components that interact with each other to create a lived experience. However, each component is nuanced and, often, has many layers. The findings of this study are meant to extend our ways of thinking about Hawaiian identity, especially given the contemporary Hawai‘i context. It also expands the notion of Hawaiian identity to reach beyond that of culture and include more traditional facets such as gender, social class, and spirituality.

This study clearly indicates that an educational context can have a tremendous impact on the way identity is formed and expressed. It is through the university experience that each participant cited that she learned more about her Hawaiian culture and often was made to think about her culture and cultural identity due to questions regarding her relationship with her Hawaiianness, her “right” (Matilda; Rose; U‘i) to claim Hawaiian identity, and understandings of identity interacting with components of her environments that would lead her to question her identity and her self-concept. Although participants discussed in great detail their understandings of their Hawaiian identities, they also discussed how other facets (e.g., gender, spirituality, social class, culture) either worked alone or intersected with each other to create a unique, lived experience.

As indigenous identity is explored, factors such as environment, geopolitical and social histories, relationships with the government, and cultural knowledge all shape conceptions of identity. In addition, social constructs such as gender, economic class, and spirituality have
shaped how identity is conceived and expressed. Native Hawaiian identity was seen as something essential, a foundational component of participants’ self-definitions. Identity was constructed and understood as participants interacted with their environments.

As related in this study, indigenous identity for Hawaiians is based on the idea of Hawai‘i as the indigenous homeland. Hawai‘i is the location, the source, from which Native Hawaiians and culture emerged. And as the indigenous people, Native Hawaiians have certain political and cultural rights acknowledged by the international community as outlined in international law (Wright, 2003). Indigenous identity makes us think about how indigenous students are different from other students, including ethnic minorities, and forces us to acknowledge the historical relationship with the government and the impact colonization and oppression have had on indigenous identity. And as such, we need to start to conceptualize identity in a different way based on the experiences and the unique rights of indigenous people. Indigenous identity also speaks to a far more collective understanding of identity. Identity, in this context, is both an individual effort and a collective endeavor. In this study, a larger part of indigenous identity is based on a sense of community and responsibility, and it was this collective understanding that informed the individual conception of identity. A shared sense of history and culture, as well as a sense of responsibility toward the betterment of the community, was essential components to Native Hawaiian identity. These community values, as well as others, created a foundation and informed Hawaiianess.

What is evident from these interviews is that there is no one interpretation of Hawaiian. Through their life experiences and university experiences, students were provided with knowledge to expand their formerly limited view of Hawaiian. As such, Hawaiian was not strictly defined in terms of traditional markers of Hawaiianess like for example, dancing hula,
speaking Hawaiian language, or inherent benevolence. Native Hawaiian identities are complex as well as political. They are not limited to cultural practices or perceptions of indigenous phenotype. Rather, these identities speak to the inclusion of multiple experiences (personal, academic, historical) of the Hawaiian people and the enacting of this identity for building a Native Hawaiian Nation (Wright, 2003).

As identity research continues, it is important to begin to understand the impact external forces have on identity development. As demonstrated in this study, facets of identity are complex. Cultural identity can be composed of multiple identity facets that often intersect and diverge. National identity, that of Americanness and Hawaianness, lead to a multinational and bicultural experience that complicates Hawaiian identity as it acknowledges Hawaiians as historically colonized people. The bicultural experience of indigenous and Western becomes that of indigenous, colonized indigenous, multicultural, and Western. Identity is then situated in a political sphere in which the nation-state’s definitions of Hawaiian and Hawaianness conflict with the Hawaiian community’s self-definition and Native Hawaiians have a special relationship with the United States government. The question, “What is Hawaiian?” is shaped by governmental definitions and restrictions as well as Hawaiians’ demands for sovereignty, self-determination, and self-definition as well as by Native Hawaiian community definitions and restrictions and cultural beliefs and values. These definitions are often in conflict and create uncertainty and tension. These discussions are further complicated due to the multi-ethnic and multicultural reality of Hawaiians.

**Expanding Identity Research**

The data supports the need to expand current identity models. Although current models, such as the Model of Multiple Identity Development (MMDI; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007),
acknowledge multiple facets of identity and discuss the importance of identity facet intersections in the developmental process, it is apparent that there is a need to expand or explore further. A more sophisticated perspective is needed to begin to explore and understand Native Hawaiian identity. Through the stories provided, it was clear that indigenous knowledge, connection with family and land, intersections of identity, and the performance of identity were critical components in their understandings of identity. Understanding where they came from, knowing their ancestry, and practicing and instilling cultural values were essential to understanding of self. Intersections of identity deeply impacted sense and understanding of self, as well as helped them better understand social expectations placed upon them due to intersecting identities.

Within the navigation of their true selves, the selves they felt comfortable with and represented all of the facets of their identity, and performed selves, the decision to emphasize or suppress particular aspects of their identities, that they understood who they were. Acknowledgement of both the performed self and true self provided opportunities for participants to explore their identities and better understand the environments and environmental cues that would support particular behaviors and performances. These two understandings of self were important to the overall conception and understanding of identity. The relationship between true self and performed-self was described as reciprocal, as the true self informed the performed-self and the performed-self informed the true self. Identity performance reflected aspects of true-self and allowed for the participants to consciously and unconsciously reveal and suppress aspects of their identity, while allowing for contextual environmental factors to inform identity performances.

In addition, the data also supported the need to further deconstruct facets of identity, specifically that of culture. As discussed by the participants, cultural identity was multilayered
and often included beliefs, practices, and values from multiple cultures. The layers were
described as permeable, that they could move between and through the layers. This allowed
participants to cross and straddle multiple cultural layers, to identify with their Native
Hawaiianness, but also recognize and value other cultural identities they identified with such as
Japanese, Filipino, Chinese, etc.. In addition, there is a need to provide a space that
acknowledges the relationships between Western and indigenous culture and their impact on
identity formation. This research supports the work of Root (1990, 1996) and Renn (2004),
whose work on mixed-race individuals acknowledged the complexities of people who defied
traditional monoracial and monocultural concepts of identity. There is a need to explore the
dynamics of cultural identity within the context of holistic identity.

Environment matters. Acknowledging the different components of environment, the
contextual environmental factors, and the impact they have on conceptions of self is important
when exploring identity formation. Because of this, Bronfenbrenner’s Ecology Model (1979)
provides insightful framework that can be used to examine such identity development. The
model acknowledges the importance of environment in identity construction and provides a more
fluid framework that allows for ever-changing environmental components to be recognized as
important to identity construction. Although this model would help provide a frame to
acknowledge the impact environments have had on identity construction, other components need
to be added to create a more relevant indigenous identity model.

Lastly, conceptions of Native Hawaiian and indigenous identity support current
challenges to Native American and other indigenous identity development models. As identified
by Choney et al. (1995), the use of monocultural identity development models to explore
American Indian or indigenous identity are insufficient. There is a need to continue to explore
identity conceptions through bicultural, sometimes multicultural, frameworks that account for colonization and multiple cultural influences, and allow for and acknowledge the navigation of both indigenous and Western cultures and worldviews. Models should be developed that allow for identity fluidity, as described by both Anzaldúa (1999) and Root (1990, 1996). Developed models should acknowledge and allow for individuals to cross and straddle identity borders and should allow for individuals to explore and identify with multiple and individual cultures. Lastly, models that focus on indigenous identity should acknowledge and work to provide a frame that acknowledges the degree to and manner in which each culture is embodied and embraced.

**Implications for Practice**

Both the research process and the results of the study suggest several practical implications for student affairs professionals, as well as faculty. Among the most compelling stories that emerged from the findings was the distinctiveness of each of the women’s experience in the construction of her Native Hawaiian identity. While patterns emerged across the narratives, each woman had her own story to tell and her own journey to navigate. The variation among the students’ stories serves as a reminder of the importance of treating each student as a unique individual. Indeed, the participants commented that they wanted their individuality to be respected and not have assumptions made about them. To treat students as individuals, it is important to provide opportunities for them to discuss who they are and who they want to be, and that educators listen.

It was apparent through this study that when given the chance to talk, students have much to say. Indeed, among the implications that stand out is the importance of creating contexts that enable dialogue and reflection with and among Native Hawaiian college students about identity
construction. Within these conversations, it is important to allow for the incorporation and value of IKS and opportunities to learn about Hawaiian culture in a culturally relevant manner. The strong response to my request for study participants indicated that students are interested in discussing their identities. The positive feedback I received from the participants about their experiences with this study suggested that having the opportunity to discuss issues pertinent to identity with an attentive listener is a beneficial developmental experience. The interest in the study and the positive feedback from the participants indicates there is an unmet need for students to have the opportunity to discuss their identities. It is therefore important that contexts be created where students have the opportunity for reflection and dialogue.

Opportunities for reflection can and ought to occur in a variety of contexts in order to meet the needs of a diverse group of Native Hawaiian students. Not all students are interested in or comfortable participating in Native Hawaiian programs, and reflection opportunities should therefore be varied and appropriate for a diverse student population. Appropriate contexts might include academic courses in which issues related to Native Hawaiian culture and identity and self-understanding are included as part of the curriculum or pedagogical approach and should be in both written and oral formats. Co-curricular opportunities, such as community service and multicultural programming should also be included. Partnerships with Native Hawaiian faculty and staff within the contexts of program and curriculum development are important as they would be able to provide a different dimension to the programming and may provide insight into Native Hawaiian culture that one could not obtain from textbooks. In addition, opportunities to have interactive, hands-on experiences are important aspects to learning.

There is also a need to have a formalized space in which Native Hawaiian students, faculty, and staff can meet and interact with each other, similar to that of CHS. For the
participants, having a space that supported academic and social activities, connected participants with adult role-models, and promoted Hawaiian culture was an essential component of their college experience. In essence, the center met their needs and provided social support structures and promoted integration (Brown, 2000; Constantine, Robinson, Wilton, & Caldwell, 2002; Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999). However, simply providing a space is not enough. Culturally relevant programs designed by staff who understands Native Hawaiian culture is important. A space in which Native Hawaiian college students feel welcomed contributes to creating a positive on-campus experience. It can also be seen as a location in which Native Hawaiian students can access resources and find support in the form of building relationships with Native Hawaiian peers, faculty, and staff as well as build relationships with those who support and celebrate Native Hawaiian culture.

Administrators and staff need to understand the educational goals and motivations of Native Hawaiian students to better support them. Although not all Native Hawaiian students may view college as a means to gain employment that will assist in the improvement of their socioeconomic lives, it was an important consideration for all of the participants. Their goals for attending college were to obtain a degree that would help them obtain a job after they graduate. Because of these goals and the economic purposes associated with attending college, as identified by the participants, it would be important for administrators and faculty to design services and programs that are flexible and culturally relevant. The programs should consider time commitment and focus on both social and professional skill building. In addition, administrators and program planners should consider ways to incorporate culturally relevant programs that honor Hawaiian culture, address current Hawaiian issues and concerns, and encourage professional skill building.
Although many institutions may not have large populations of Native Hawaiian students, administrators and faculty can benefit from the findings provided by this study. Cultural understandings and acknowledging the importance of community and community connections can help administrators who work with indigenous student populations. In addition, gaining an understanding of how to better support Native Hawaiian students through relationship building, mentoring, and academic support may provide a means in which services and programs can be designed to better support Native Hawaiian and other indigenous college students.

As participants discussed understandings of identity, many focused on their overall life experiences, their connections to family and culture, and did not discuss their college experiences in depth. This could be due to the connection many of the participants had with their college experience, which included living off campus. Because of their living arrangements and the time they spent on campus, it is possible that they did not have the cultural capital of the White peers (e.g., styles of discourse and cultural knowledge) valued in school systems than their White peers, making the university terrain that much more unfamiliar (Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000) or were not fully integrated (Tinto, 1993) into the greater campus environment. Rich and descriptive data were provided by the participants. However, much of it did not directly connect to their college experience.

While this researcher was fortunate that many people responded to her call for participants, it is important to acknowledge the need to build relationships with leaders, particularly faculty and administrators, who serve as gatekeepers and recommended students for the study. The difficulty she encountered recruiting a larger group of women to participate has important implications for practice. While some of her difficulty might have been attributed to the fact that she is a researcher not affiliated with UH-M, some might have been attributable to
issues specific to the campus environment and the number of Native Hawaiian students enrolled on campus.

It is important to note that environmental context and perceptions of social expectations were critical components to the participants’ understandings and performance of identity. Specific interventions might be especially appropriate in the context of Native Hawaiian identity construction. For instance, in the classroom, course material should be included that is representative of diversity within and among Native Hawaiian and other indigenous peoples that allow students to reflect on their own life experiences. In addition, adding or allowing for the use of IKS within the curriculum would allow for the exploration of different knowledge types and validate the Hawaiian experience. Students can engage in self-exploration through journal writing and “raising and answering their own questions” (Howard-Hamilton, 2000, p. 51) as well as engage in discussions with their peers and faculty. However, it is also important to have a clear sense of the classroom environment and create a space in which Hawaiian students feel engaged and welcomed. While most courses can include such diverse perspectives, service-learning courses provide particularly appropriate context for exploring differences among dimensions of identity and reflecting on one’s own identity (Jones & Hill, 2001; Jones, 2002).

In the co-curriculum, opportunities could be provided for supervised discussion among peers where Native Hawaiian students can interact and engage with each other, as well as their non-Hawaiian peers, in discussions regarding Hawaiian identity and culture. Participation in hands on, culturally based programs such as working in the lo‘i, dancing hula, navigation, and paddling, provide a space for Native Hawaiian, and non-Hawaiian, students to explore and learn about their culture as well as interact with kumu [teachers] and community kūpuna [elders]. In addition to providing opportunities for Native Hawaiian students to explore and better
understand their culture, it is also an opportunity for non-Hawaiian students to learn more about Hawaiian culture and provides an opportunity for non-Hawaiians to develop a greater appreciation for Hawaiian culture. By participating in cultural activities that focus on Hawaiian culture, non-Hawaiian students, as well as Hawaiian students, will have opportunities to expand their worldviews, dispel stereotypes associated with Hawaiian culture and people, as well as provide opportunities for dialogue regarding the impact colonization has had on Hawaiian cultural practices and identity.

The results of this study also suggest the importance of providing role models for Native Hawaiian college students. Several of the participants acknowledged that some of the most important conversations and relationships they had were with Native Hawaiian faculty and kumu [teachers]. It was through these conversations that they learned more about their identity and began to question and defy and deconstruct stereotypes placed upon their community by dominant culture. It was also important for them to see Native Hawaiians in roles as faculty and administrators, as it gave them hope and encouraged them to continue their educations. Several discussed the importance of seeing examples of Native Hawaiians who do not fit stereotypes. They mentioned the importance of seeing Native Hawaiians in professional careers. This suggests the importance of having visible Native Hawaiian faculty and staff on college campuses. These role models must be available not just in settings specifically related to Native Hawaiian issues. It is therefore important that colleges and universities provide supportive environments that facilitate the ease with which faculty and staff are able to be open about Native Hawaiian identity and culture. It also speaks to the importance of campus programming where students can interact with Hawaiians with mature life experiences.
Further, the results of this study suggest that student affairs educators should be open to understanding and framing Native Hawaiian identity as indigenous and multicultural rather than including them in the category Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islanders and comparing and/or equating Asian American identity and experiences with that of Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders. It was apparent through the study that the participants ascribed very different meanings to Hawaiian and that the term was sometimes insufficient for describing how they understood their Native Hawaiian identity. Conceptualizing identity as indigenous or Hawaiian might reduce the tendency to assume similarities among students’ Asian American and Pacific Islander identities that do not exist and might provide a framework that allows students increased control over the meaning associated with their identity. It will also acknowledge the roles indigenous and Western knowledge and the United States government have on Hawaiian identity.

**Implications for Future Research**

This project provides a snapshot of the concepts of identity within the Native Hawaiian college student population and how the university experience impact their identity development. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, a more complete understanding of Hawaiian identity development calls for a much broader study of Hawaiian college students and graduates. Some future research areas are:

1. Examine the experiences of Native Hawaiian college men, adult students, or graduate students.

   A study using ideas of Hawaiianness identified in this study with other populations may provide insight into the validity of the ideas and provide a deeper understanding of Hawaiian identity.
2. Examine the experiences of Native Hawaiian students who live on campus. The participants in this study did not live on campus. Because of this, a study examining residential living and Hawaiian identity development may provide a deeper insight into the impact of the university experience on Hawaiian identity development.

3. Examine the experiences of Native Hawaiian college students who attend college/university on the U.S. continent. This study occurred in the state of Hawai‘i, but as noted earlier, Native Hawaiian college students are attending university in the continental United States. Examining their university experiences and their impact on identity development would be essential.

4. Examine the experiences of Native Hawaiian college students who were not born and raised in Hawai‘i and explore how the college experience impacts understanding of Hawaiiana. All of the participants in this study were born in Hawai‘i, and seven were raised in Hawai‘i. However, as is reflected by my personal experience, many Hawaiians were not born and raised in Hawai‘i. Exploring their understanding of their Native Hawaiian identity and the impact college has had on it is also important.

There are a number of different avenues this research can take. These are only a few ideas that emerged from the present in this study. In addition to the suggested areas for future research, it is important to critique and examine the frameworks utilized to examine Native Hawaiian and indigenous identity. Critical theory, specifically that of TribalCrit, would be particularly useful in providing a framework that acknowledges the impact colonization has had on the Native Hawaiian community, recognizes the special relationship the community as a whole has with the
United States government, and emphasizes the importance of the collective. In addition, critical theories such as TribalCrit encourages the researcher to reframe understandings of identity and to privilege the voices of the participants and recognize the impact sociocultural factors have on contemporary Native Hawaiian culture and society.

Conclusion

The exploration of Native Hawaiian identity is a complicated and contradictory process. The complexity is created by the multilayered cultural, political, and historical contexts, practices, and beliefs that have converged and intersected with each other to create the contemporary lived Hawaiian experience. The exploration is further complicated as negative and exotic notions of Hawaiianess are perpetuated and maintained by the dominant culture. Forging a Hawaiian identity is a difficult task. It is a task that has to acknowledge both history and contemporary society and must work on navigating definitions of Hawaiian identity created by Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians. Inherent to Hawaiian identity is the need for and value of self-definition. As a community, having the agency to define for themselves Hawaiian identity, rather than having external organizations and non-Hawaiian philosophies imposing identity definitions on Hawaiians is essential.

Understanding the relationship between education and identity is invaluable on both an academic and personal level. Academically, scholarship on identity development speaks directly to understanding social power, through education, and its effects on colonized communities. In turn, it also speaks of the empowerment of students who participate in an educational experience that has components of a Native-centered setting. This scholarship provides education practitioners with a basic knowledge of Native Hawaiian students, an extremely understudied population, and their understanding of self and community as a whole. It illustrates the
importance of environment and how it can have both a negative and positive impact on Native Hawaiian college students’ identity development. This research also challenges and extends the understanding of indigenous identity development.

Currently, Native Hawaiians are in a struggle for survival in Hawai’i. In spite of the tremendous challenges and struggles, Hawaiians continue to persist and forge ahead, and not just merely survive. Hawaiians look for answers to reverse the devastating effects of colonization, especially as they are perpetuated in the Western educational system. Part of dismantling the oppressive system is educating Hawaiian youth with a supportive nurturing educational environment where Hawaiian culture, language, and experiences are valued and part of the teaching process, rather than a mechanism that supports and perpetuates stereotypes and the traditional view of Hawaiian. This is just one way in which Hawaiians can assert indigenous identities.
REFERENCES


Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA). 1921. Title IA.


Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (2000). Creating a culturally responsive learning environment for African American students. In M. B. Baxter Magolda (Ed.), *Teaching to promote intellectual and personal maturity: Incorporating students’ worldviews and identities into the learning process* (pp. 45–53). New Directions for Student Services, No. 82.
H. R. C. No. 203. Requesting a study of disparate treatment in Hawai’i’s criminal justice system.

(House Resolution)

Hull, G. T., Scott, P. B., Smith, B. (Eds.). (1982). *All the women are White, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave: Black women’s studies*. Old Westbury, NY: Feminist.


Schools. Retrieved from the Kamehameha Schools Bishop Estate website:

http://www.ksbe.edu/campus/schools.html


Rendón, L. I., Jalomo, R. E., & Nora, A. (2000). Theoretical considerations in the study of


Salter, D. W., & Persaud, A. (2003). Women’s views of the factors that encourage and
discourage classroom participation. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*(6), 831–
844.

Samuels, G. M. (2008). Editorial—identity, oppression, and power: Feminisms and


Shih, M., & Sanchez, D. T. (2009). When race becomes even more complex: Toward
understanding the landscape of multiracial identity and experiences. *Journal of Social
Issues, 65*(1), 1–11.

Silva, N. K. (1999). *Ke kūpa’a loa nei mākou (We most solemnly protest): Kānaka Maoli
resistance to colonization.* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawai‘i, Honolulu, HI).
Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (UMI No. AAT 9940629)

Duke University Press.

Beresford & G. Partington (Eds.), *Reform and resistance in Aboriginal education: The
Australian experience* (pp. 69–91). Crawley, Western Australia: University of Western
Australia Press.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: INVITATION LETTER- ADMINISTRATOR RECOMMENDATION REQUEST

[DATE]

Dear:

As a doctoral student in the higher education administration program at Bowling Green State University, I am conducting my dissertation study entitled: Exploring Kānaka Maoli College Students’ Understanding of Identity to learn about the understanding of identity of Kānaka Maoli/ Native Hawaiian college students and how Kānaka Maoli make meaning of their identity. I am working in conjunction with Dr. Erin Kanhunawaika’ala Wright, Director of Native Hawaiian Student Services at University of Hawai‘i-Manoa.

I plan to interview 8-10 University of Hawaii students for this study. I am asking you to nominate students you think would be good participants for this study. Because I am focusing my study on learning about how Kanaka Maoli/ Native Hawaiian students understand identity, I would like to ask for the participants to fit the following criteria:

- Self identified as Kānaka Maoli/ Native Hawaiian;
- Women with junior or senior academic status at the university.

Participants will be asked to participate in two, separate one-on-one interviews that will be approximately 60-90 minutes in length and respond to a summary of those two interviews in writing. These interviews will take place at the University of Hawaii, on campus, unless another location is requested. These interviews will be audio-recorded. After the two interviews, I will create a summary of the two interviews and ask the participant to respond in writing. In addition, each participant will be provided with the opportunities to read and revise her own statements, read a summary of the interviews, and review my interpretation of his/her responses. In addition, each participant will receive a $50.00 stipend upon completion of the study.

All recordings, transcriptions, forms, and other documents will be coded to protect the participants’ identities and will be destroyed upon completion of the study. The participant’s name will not be included in my results, as a pseudonym will be used in research findings. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and he/she will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or explanation. Please send all nominations to me via e-mail at Ikupo@bgsu.edu.
For more information, please contact me at (419) 372.7274 or lkupo@bgsu.edu, my advisor, Dr. Maureen Wilson at (419) 372.7321 or mewilso@bgsu.edu, or Dr. Erin K. Wright, University of Hawai‘i sponsoring staff member at (808) 945-1561 or ewright@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions or comments about the conduct of this study or your rights as a participant, you may also contact the Chair of the Committee for Human Subjects, University of Hawai‘i, (808-956-5007, uhirb@hawaii.edu) or Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University (419-372-7716, hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu).

Mahalo for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and hope you will decide to nominate students to participate and help me with my dissertation study.

Sincerely,

V. Leilani Kupo
Doctoral Candidate
Bowling Green State University

Dr. Erin K. Wright
Director, Native Hawaiian Student Services
Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge
University of Hawai‘i- Manoa
APPENDIX B: INVITATION LETTER- STUDENT

[DATE]

Dear:

As a doctoral student in the higher education administration program at Bowling Green State University, I am conducting my dissertation study entitled: Exploring Kānaka Maoli College Students’ Understanding of Identity to learn about the understanding of identity of Kānaka Maoli/ Native Hawaiian college students and how Kānaka Maoli make meaning of their identity. I am working in conjunction with Dr. Erin Kanunawaika’ala Wright, Director of Native Hawaiian Student Services at University of Hawai‘i-Manoa.

I am inviting you to participate in my research project. If you choose to participate, a **$50.00 cash stipend** will be awarded to you at the completion of the project. I plan to interview 8-10 University of Hawaii students for this study. I am looking for students who fulfill the current criteria:

- Self identified as Kānaka Maoli/ Native Hawaiian;
- Women with junior or senior academic status at the university.

I am asking you to participate in two, separate one-on-one interviews that will be approximately 60-90 minutes in length and respond to a summary of those two interviews in writing. These interviews will take place at the University of Hawaii, on campus, unless you request another location. These interviews will be audiotaped. After the two interviews, I will create a summary of your two interviews and ask you to respond to them in writing. In addition, you will be provided with the opportunities to read and revise your own statements, summary of the interviews, and my interpretation of your responses.

All recordings, transcriptions, forms, and other documents will be coded to protect your identity and will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Your name will not be included in my results, as a pseudonym will be used in research findings. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or explanation. Your participation (or non-participation) will not influence your relationship with Bowling Green State University or the University of Hawai‘i.
Please complete the enclosed participant profile form and return it in the postage paid envelope provided by [DATE]. Please submit just the coversheet if you do not wish to participate and you will not be contacted again. I will contact you regarding the possibility of participation if I do not receive the participant profile form and/or cover sheet by [DATE].

For more information, please contact me at (419) 372.7274 or lkupo@bgsu.edu, my advisor, Dr. Maureen Wilson at (419) 372.7321 or mewilso@bgsu.edu, or Dr. Erin K. Wright, University of Hawai‘i sponsoring staff member at (808) 945-1561 or ewright@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions or comments about the conduct of this study or your rights as a participant, you may also contact the Chair of the Committee for Human Subjects, University of Hawai‘i, (808-956-5007, uhirb@hawaii.edu) or Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University (419-372-7716, hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu).

Mahalo for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and hope you will decide to participate and help me with my dissertation study.

Sincerely,

V. Leilani Kupo
Doctoral Candidate
Bowling Green State University

Dr. Erin K. Wright
Director, Native Hawaiian Student Services
Hawai`inui`akea School of Hawaiian Knowledge
University of Hawai`i- Manoa
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL—FIRST INTERVIEW

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me. Your sharing stories from your life will help me better understand Kānaka Maoli/ Native Hawaiian identity. The interview questions are very open-ended and I want you to share with me only what you are comfortable sharing. Do you have any questions before we start?

- How would you describe yourself to me?
- Tell me a story that would give me good insight into who you are.
- Thinking about your life in general, tell me a story about the people that have been most influential in shaping who you are as a person.
  - The places?
  - The situations?
  - The experiences?

- Are there times in your life when parts of your identity have been more salient?
  - Is there an aspect of your identity that is most central to how you understand who you are?
    - If so, what?
    - If not, has there ever been?

- Can you tell me a story about a time when you were aware of a certain aspect of your identity?
- Can you tell me a story about how you view certain aspects of your identity?
  - Do you have religious or spiritual beliefs? How have your religious or spiritual beliefs shaped how you think about yourself?
  - How has your socio-economic class shape how you think about yourself?
  - How does your gender shape how you think about yourself?
  - How does your race/ ethnicity shape how you think about yourself?
  - Are there other aspects of your identity that you think about? How do these aspects shape how you think about your self?

- Do you feel as if you have conveyed to me the most important stories about who you are as a person? If not, what other stories from your life should I know?
- Can you tell me about any changes you have experienced regarding how you think about your identity since you entered college?
- Tell me about a significant experience that has made you question who you are.
  - Tell me about a significant experience that has made you question who you are that has occurred while you have been at college.
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL—SECOND INTERVIEW

(The participants will be asked to bring in an artifact that best represents their concepts of their identity.)

Thank you again for agreeing to share your thoughts and knowledge with me. For this interview, we will talk a bit about the last interview and go more in depth about aspects of your identity. I have asked you to bring an artifact that represents your identity and to share how it represents who you are.

- What was the experience of reading your summary like for you?
- Was there anything that was triggered by reading the summary, or any other additional thoughts that you’ve had since the first interview, that you’d like to add to what we discussed?

Artifact
- Tell me about this artifact.
  - Why is it important to you? What does it represent about you?
  - How did you decide to bring in this artifact?
- Can you give me an example or tell me a story about why you chose this artifact to represent who you are? Any other examples/stories?
- While we spent most of the time during the first interview talking about identity in general, I want to talk more during this interview about specific aspects of who you are, such as your religion, social class, sexual orientation, and gender – some of which you talked about also during the first interview.

During your first interview you talked some about your race/religion/gender/social class
  - how would you characterize your _____?
  - how important is your _____ to who you are as a person?
  - are there times when it becomes more or less important to who you are?
  - tell me about the relationship between your ____ and your racial/ethnic identity.
**Repeat for each identity dimension discussed during the first interview.

You didn’t talk much about your race/religion/gender/social class
  - how would you characterize your _____?
  - do you consider your ____ to be something that is important to who you are as a person?
  - are there times when it becomes more or less important to who you are?
  - tell me about the relationship between your ___ and your racial/ethnic identity.
**Repeat for each identity dimension not discussed during the first interview.
RESPONSE TO SUMMARY—Essay/Reflection/Member Check (To be sent after second interview)

Hi ___,

Thank you for agreeing to review a short summary based on the stories you told during your two interviews. While I asked you very broad questions during the interview, I was carefully listening for stories and responses that addressed three specific research questions. What follows is a draft summary of how I understood your stories to address each of these research questions. The questions are in bold. Please keep in mind that this is only a draft based on my interpretation of what you said.

As you review this summary, please think about if there are any parts that you don’t think I got quite right or things that you want to clarify or add. You know yourself much better than I do, so please be very honest with me about your reaction to what I wrote. I do not want to put words in your mouth or mischaracterize who you are as a person. I will ask you to review the summary and share your reactions with me via e-mail. In addition, I have included some prompt questions for you to answer. I will use these summaries to help me develop larger patterns, similarities, and differences among all of the study participants; as well as to select parts of your story to tell in more depth.

You’ll notice that I did not include in this summary a lot of the things that we talked about during the interview. One of my next steps will be reviewing everyone’s transcripts again to look for other themes that don’t directly relate to the research questions, but that I will also want to include in the final product. I will send you a summary of these other themes for you to comment on once I have completed that step.

As always, thank you for your time, assistance, and willingness to share so much of yourself with me!

As you read the summary, please think about the following questions and send your responses to me via e-mail.

- Tell me about your reaction to the summary. Do you feel it describes you? Why or why not.
- How do you feel about my interpretations?
- Is there anything you want to add/clarify; anything I left out that you want included.
- (Summary of two interviews will be inserted here)
APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The information asked for below will be used to help create a participant profile about you. Once completed, your name will be separated from this form and your information will only be identified by your chosen alias.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym (Please choose one for yourself):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:                          Race/ Ethnicity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do you consider your/ your family’s socioeconomic status:

In what year did you begin college?

b. In what year do you anticipate graduation?

Are you a: □ First-Year Student □ Sophomore □ Junior □ Senior

Did your Mother/ Guardian: □ Not Attend College □ Attend College □ Graduate from College

Did your Father / Guardian: □ Not Attend College □ Attend College □ Graduate from College

Has anyone in your family attended college? □ Yes □ No

If yes, who else?

Please identify their relationship to you (e.g., aunt, uncle, cousin, etc.)

Has anyone in your family graduated from college? □ Yes □ No

If yes, who else?

Please identify their relationship to you (e.g., aunt, uncle, cousin, etc.)
APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM

Hawai‘inui‘akea School of Hawaiian Knowledge
Office of the Dean

University of Hawai‘i and Bowling Green State University

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Exploring Kānaka Maoli College Students’ Understanding of Identity

The purpose of this research study is to understand how Kānaka Maoli /Native Hawaiian college students describe and understand their identity.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and will involve participation in two interviews that will last about 60-90 minutes each. The interviews will focus on your understanding of your identity as a Kānaka Maoli/Native Hawaiian college student. Each interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. Additionally, I may contact you after the interview to ask for clarification or elaboration on your responses. You will also be asked to respond in writing to a written summary of the two interviews. This summary will be sent to you via e-mail and you will be asked to send your response to me via e-mail. Lastly, a summary of themes from all of the interviews will be sent to you for you to respond to. This will be sent to you via e-mail.

Your participation in this study will help me better understand how Kānaka Maoli/Native Hawaiian college students understand and make meaning of their identity and how it may be impacted by their college experience.

In addition, if you choose to take part in this project you may have the opportunity to better understand how you make meaning of your identity as a Kānaka Maoli/Native Hawaiian and how it influences your daily life. Taking part in this project is entirely voluntary, and no one will hold it against you should you decide not participate. If you do decide to take part, please know that you may stop participation at any time.

The risks of participating in this study are minimal and are no more than what you would encounter in every day life. You will be asked to talk about how you describe and understand yourself and aspects of your identity, as well as your experiences at the University of Hawai‘i.
The confidentiality of your identity will be carefully protected and any mention of your name or any other identifying features will be removed or coded in the written transcripts of the interview and any presentation materials. The interview transcripts and participant profile will be secured so that only the inquirer and her advisor will see them. The audiotapes will be erased upon completion of the study. Please note that a summary of your responses will be included in the project that I am completing and if you are directly quoted, your statements will be attributed to your self-selected alias. Additionally, I may contact you after each interview and your written response to ask for clarification or elaboration on your responses.

At any time during the interview, you can choose not to answer any question asked. You may withdraw consent and stop participation at any time during the project without consequence. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the University of Hawai‘i or Bowling Green State University.

Additional questions or concerns about this study may be directed to V. Leilani Kupo, doctoral candidate, at lkupo@bgsu.edu, or Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, Dissertation Advisor, mewilso@bgsu.edu or Dr. Erin K. Wright, University of Hawai‘i sponsoring faculty, ewright@hawaii.edu. If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Committee for Human Subjects, University of Hawai‘i, (808-956-5007, uhirb@hawaii.edu) or Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University (419-372-7716, hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu).

You will get a copy of this consent form.

Your signature below indicates that you have been informed about what is expected of you as a participant in this study, that you are over 18 years of age, and that your participation is entirely voluntary.

__________________________________________  ___________________________
Signature                                                                 Printed Name

__________________________________________  ___________________________
Phone Number                                E-mail                                      Date

__________________________________________  ___________________________
Inquirer’s Signature                         Date

__________________________________________
Printed Name