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True Culture at War With Colonizer Culture: The Underrepresentation of Pacific Islander Students in Higher Education.

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This dissertation, by Loriann A. Leota, has
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ABSTRACT

TRUE CULTURE AT WAR WITH COLONIZER CULTURE: THE
UNDERREPRESENTATION OF PACIFIC ISLANDER STUDENTS IN HIGHER
EDUCATION

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This dissertation is an examination of the limited number of Pacific Islander students that
advance from high school to higher education. It also examines the percentage of Pacific Islander
students that attend higher education, but do not acquire their degree. Pacific Islander students
informally recognize the dominant United States culture and curriculum as not culturally relevant
and colonizing in nature. Thus, they struggle to adhere to colonizer culture and rely heavily on
their culture (true culture), which has a set of norms that do not align with American cultural
values. Pacific Islander culture is collectivist, which is in opposition to individualistic American
culture and includes up to four or five generations who share responsibilities and resources and
where all of the elders within are treated with the same respect given to their parents. When a
major event happens within a family (death, wedding, graduation, etc.), the family (including
"extended family") is responsible for contributing both financially and with their time. This is an
expectation that pulls an enrolled student away from their school responsibilities. The limited
number of Pacific Islanders graduating from higher education has strong economic implications.
Unfortunately, there has not been much work done by those in the colonizer culture to get to the
bottom of this issue and implement a plan to improve access. Despite these issues being constant
for Pacific Islanders, there are several gaps within the research and areas that have been studied
that do not always reference current data. These gaps make it clear that there is a strong need to

explore Pacific Islander students' challenges, needs, and ways to best support their progress. For the purpose of this study, Pacific Islanders are defined as Melanesians, Micronesians, and Polynesians. The study participants are all residents of the United States. This study sought to understand whether or not Pacific Islander culture lacks alignment with the American educational system and asked participants perspectives on challenges, barriers, and cultural impacts to advancing to higher education. The results (Chapter IV) section of this dissertation contains the most valuable information: pieces of the stories of the survey participants. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https:// etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: culture, colonizer, higher education, Pacific Islander, Pasifika, Melanesian, Micronesian, Polynesian, student, underrepresentation

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful son, Duncan Caden Leota. Duncan was pure joy personified. He was a shining light and made a strong impression on anyone who met him. He lived every moment of his life to the fullest and beyond, with an openness and freeness that was tangible. He led by example, and taught those around him what it was like to live a life free of judgment and to be wholly oneself. When Duncan laughed at something or someone he found funny, it was impossible not to join in on his laughter. When he would sing and move to his favorite songs, it was impossible not to sing and dance alongside him. When Duncan looked at you with his big, beautiful, brown eyes, he looked with immeasurable care and depth, that it ignited your every cell. Duncan really saw people for who they are to the core, and attached himself to those that understood him and his intricacies.

He showed the people around him, children and adults alike, how much love he had to give each and every day. Between him verbally expressing his love and his non-verbal cues and actions, Duncan brought the love and light with him to every space he entered. Duncan was the light. Duncan is the light.

To keep Duncan's legacy alive, I aim to find at least one moment of joy in every day and truly live my life with fullness, as that is what Duncan did each and every day. It is my hope that all of those who read this dissertation will also do the same.

Son, you have taught me patience, love, kindness, determination, and joy. I will keep you in mind in everything that I do. I am so incredibly blessed to be your mom and to have had the gift of six years of you being on this earth. I would give anything and everything to have you here on earth for the rest of my lifetime and beyond. I love you, always and forever!

Acknowledgements

God: First and foremost, I would like to thank God. He has given me strength throughout all of the challenging moments in life that should have stopped me from moving forward and stopped me from completing this dissertation. I am truly grateful for his grace and mercy.

Dr. Richard Kahn, Chair: Thank you for pushing me outside of my comfort zone and for allowing me to be exactly who I am. I never once felt as though I needed to change who I was or dim myself to meet a certain standard. In fact, you made me feel as though my approach (even if it wasn't typical) should be highlighted. I always wanted to be the kind of student that bucked tradition and didn't check every box, but not checking boxes proved to be challenging for me. It's still not easy, but I'm far more willing to take a less traveled road now than I was before I met you. Your patience and kindness towards the end of this journey helped me to power through.

Dr. Lesley Jackson, Committee Member: Thank you for your guidance, your questions, and your constant push to make sure that I was approaching this in the best possible way. You never let me get away with good enough and even called me out when it seemed like I had lost my way. Your voice and your guidance was exactly what I needed through this journey and I believe that my final work was strengthened by your support.

Dr. Victor Thompson, Committee Member: Molimoli Atu le faafetai, tusa ai ma Lo outou faasoa Mamao ma le tou ta'ita'i manuia. E le taunu'u lenei faamoemoe pe'a le tou au iai. Faafetai. Thank you for your wisdom and guidance. As the committee member most closely tied to this topic, your voice was so important to me. You are a trailblazer and the elder we have the privilege and honor of looking up to as a Pacific Islander educational leader. Thank you for

paving the way for the younger generations. We would not have access to the opportunities that we have if we didn't have your shoulders to stand on.

Walter: I don't know if you will ever understand exactly how much you mean to me, but I will spend my entire life showing you. You have taught me patience and that it's not always necessary to color within the lines. Everything that I do, I do with you in mind. I hustle even harder and you provide me the fuel to do so. I am so incredibly blessed to be your mom. I know that you will defeat all odds and accomplish incredible things in your life and I'm so glad that I get a front row seat to your journey towards success. I love you and no matter what challenges you face, know that mommy has always got you!

Mom: Ng mlo sebechek el nguu chelechang el kau a uchul. Ak mlo medengelii a ducherreng me a beltik el reng el kau a ulchotii el mer ngak. Chedil, kede mla churungel el rokui. Ng kmal betik a renguk er kau. I did this for me, but I also did this for you, for our family, for our people and I was able to do it because I had your support. Thank you for loving my boys and helping me care for them as I worked through this dissertation. This EdD is just as much yours as it is mine. We did it, ma!

Dad & Janet: Dad: Thank you for teaching me what it means to be strong and that it's good to do all the things that I once thought only men should have to do. I am grateful for the relationship that we've built over time and know that I can count on you when I need you the most. Janet: Thank you for taking all of my calls about life, doctoral programs, and the dissertation process. You knew just what to say to light a fire under me when I had given up and I am so grateful to you for that.

Richard: I'm grateful for the 11 years that we spent together, the life we built together and our incredible boys. I was able to complete my second Masters and apply for my EdD because you were by my side, so for that (and more), I am grateful.

LaRonda, Navi, & Sara: Much of this journey was complicated in a way that I never could have imagined and there were so many times when I didn't even know how to stand. Every single time, without hesitation, you picked me up and encouraged me to put one foot in front of the other. I genuinely do not believe that I could have crossed this finish line without your friendship, love, and support. I will be forever grateful to you for all that you've done for me. LaRonda, you're almost there. You've got this! Navi, you're so close and it's been an honor to see your journey. You are truly a genius and such an inspiration! Sara, I survived the worst thing that anyone could ever face because you held me up (both literally and figuratively) and you made sure that I was able to put one foot in front of the other. I can never repay you for all that you've done for me, but I will spend the rest of my life trying.

Cohort 4 (C4): If you would have told me that I'd earn lifelong friendships from this doctoral journey, I honestly wouldn't have believed you because it wasn't something I cared to do or was focused on. You have supported me, cared for me, listened, and spoke words of encouragement to me throughout our journey together and I hope that you have felt supported, cared for, and listened to by me. Our bond is incredible and I am beyond grateful that we were the group of students that got placed together. The single word that first comes to mind for each of you is as follows: Amod: Model, Ashley: Love, Dani: Beauty, Danyaile: Challenge, David: Care, Eryk: Connection, Kailyn: Understanding, Lamarr: Inspiration, Louisa: Kindness & Orlando: Support. Any time, any day, forever, I got you and I love each and every one of you!

NPIEN, For Micronesians by Micronesians, Melanesian_Women_Today, Island Grad: Thank you for sharing my survey with your communities and for doing what our people do best - surrounding and supporting a fellow Islander. You are all doing great work and I'm grateful to get to witness what you are doing within and for our communities.

The Participants: From the bottom of my heart, thank you! I am so grateful that you trusted me enough to share your stories with me and I can only hope that I did your stories justice in their presentation in this dissertation. You are all a beautiful representation of Pasifika and I'm proud to have had this opportunity to get to know you. Please know that I am cheering you on from here and will happily support your endeavors.

Pacific Islander Students and Families: Yes, I did this for me, but I also did it for all of you. Education is a key that unlocks so many doors and provides access to a higher income. While the system may not be set up for us, we can work within it and still find a way to hold true to our culture. It is important that we find our way and create greater financial access for ourselves and our people. It's time that we rise and make a seat for ourselves at the table. If you need support or information, please reach out to me or many of the organizations within our community that are there to help.

Me: I'm not one to ever thank myself at all, but 2022, 2023, and much of 2024 were the absolute hardest years of my life and I pushed through all of the pain to do what I believe to be important work. So in the words of Snoop, "Last but not least, I wanna thank me. I wanna thank me for believing in me. I wanna thank me for doing all this hard work. I wanna thank me for having no days off. I wanna thank me, for never quitting." I did it and I'm so excited about what's to come. This is just the beginning!

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"At the center of Pacific Islander culture is the family system, that is, the network of interpersonal relationships that shape the processes by which cultural practices and values are transmitted, maintained, and affirmed" (IResearchNet, 2016). This family system, while beneficial for a variety of reasons, has a tendency to get in the way of one's progress in both the U.S. educational system and U.S. professional system, which results in stunted economic progress. This can be seen in all aspects of life, including relationships with those outside of a Pacific Islander's family and prioritization of things that do not promote a more traditional definition of success. However, an area of life that is majorly impacted by this, but is not often discussed, is formal education.

Pacific Islander students make up 0.4% of the PK-12 population in United States schools with 53.5% attending public schools where students of color comprised at least 75% of total enrollment. In 2020, 0.3% of U.S. residents enrolled in post-secondary institutions were Pacific Islander. Of the percentage of students who began seeking a bachelor's degree full time at a four year institution in the fall of 2015, 53.6% of first-time Pacific Islander students completed that degree at the same institution within six years (Regional Educational Laboratory Program, 2021). Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) boast the highest percentage of Pacific Islander students with 38.1% overall enrolled (Vaughn et al., 2021).

A review of the California School Dashboard,[1] as California has the second largest percentage of Pacific Islanders in the United States (Luo, 2022), reveals that Pacific Islander students scored Orange on a scale that moves from Blue to Green to Yellow to Orange then Red for Chronic Absenteeism, English Language Arts, and Mathematics (California School Dashboard, 2021). This data brings forward a major concern regarding academic performance and progress for Pacific Islander students. Further, Pacific Islander students are less likely to explore higher education and for those that do, the percentage of students that successfully complete college is poor (APIA Scholars, 2020). This data is concerning and while the outcomes of Pacific Islanders within the United States may be an outrageous problem with multiple causes and leverage points, further research needs to be done in all these areas. A couple such areas are cultural norms impacting attendance and the expectations of family. Here, I would like to focus on the idea that the expectations of family are hindering the academic progress of Pacific Islander students.

In true culture, Pacific Islanders value their extended family more than what is typically expected of a White American. Extended families are often treated with the same level of respect as you would treat your parents and your Aunts and Uncles are able to discipline you as your parents would. As parents within a family age, the children are expected to financially contribute to the household. This expectation may be stressful, as it creates not only a financial obligation but also an obligation of physical presence (Pacific Islander Initiative, n.d.). However, attempting to fully articulate true culture is challenging because the immense size and diversity

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[1]The California School Dashboard was created in response to the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) law of 2013 holding Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) accountable for student performance. It is an online tool that shows how LEAs and schools are performing on state and local indicators (CA Dept of Education, n.d.).

within Pasifika (Pacific Islands) does not allow for a written explanation and some of which can only be understood by experiencing it (Scanlon & Wilson, 2019).

The hyper focus on family expectations is partly the result of colonization, which had an impact on cultural expectations. Although Pacific Islanders have always maintained the importance of family, the hyper focus is out of a need to hold onto identity when colonization sought to erase it (S. Mar, 2021). Micronesia was first contacted by the Portuguese and Spanish explorers and have since been colonized by both European and Asian countries. Micronesia was colonized by Spain, Germany, and Japan before becoming a U.S. territory. Polynesia was colonized by Germany and New Zealand before the split of the islands where American Samoa became a U.S. territory and Western Samoa became an independent state. Melanesia was colonized by Dutch explorers and remained under British protection before gaining independence in 1970. "Today, these island nations struggle with the legacy of the colonization and westernization of their island homelands" (Stanford Medicine Ethnogeriatrics, n.d.).

The decolonization of Pacific Islanders has been a complex and multifaceted process shaped by historical, political, and cultural dynamics. Many Pacific Island nations were once subjected to European colonial rule, which left enduring impacts on their societies. The mid-20th century witnessed a surge in efforts towards decolonization, driven by a global shift in attitudes and the emergence of independence movements (Najita, 2006).

The Pacific Islands faced challenges in asserting their autonomy, as colonial powers often exploited natural resources and disrupted traditional ways of life. In the post-World War II era, the United Nations played a crucial role in facilitating decolonization through various resolutions and initiatives. Countries like Samoa, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea gained independence in the 20th century, marking significant milestones in the decolonization process (T. B. Mar, 2016).

However, challenges persist as some territories, such as French Polynesia and New Caledonia, continue to navigate complex relationships with their colonial powers. Decolonization in the Pacific is not solely a political process; it involves reclaiming cultural identity, preserving indigenous languages, and addressing socio-economic disparities. The ongoing journey toward complete autonomy reflects the resilience and determination of Pacific Islanders to shape their own destinies and safeguard their unique heritage (Aldrich, 2010).

Personal Significance

I am a mixed woman who is almost half Pacific Islander. As an adult and an educational leader, I became more aware and more interested in my culture. My interest grew even further when I began to notice that my Pacific Islander students were absent more frequently than their peers. Because of their frequent absences, they were falling further behind their peers and struggling to keep up with the class. As an elementary principal, I am charged with ensuring students are present every day and are growing academically. This is a responsibility that I do not take lightly and regularly meet with families to better understand what barriers exist and what I can do to try to remove the barriers. When speaking to the students and their families, it became clear that their absences were tied to family responsibilities and while their families thought that their education was important, it was not as important as their family. For example, when a death in a Pacific Islander's family occurs, regardless of how immediate the family member is, the planning and events immediately begin, but don't end for up to one month after the loss. During this entire time, students are absent from school as they are helping their families to prepare for all of the events.

My personal interest in this topic is furthered also because I was married to an Afakasi (half-caste) man (half Samoan and half Black). Although he is Afakasi, he was raised by his

Samoan family. His loyalty to his family is unlike anything that I've ever seen before. When we had children, this became even more apparent. I want to ensure that the beliefs associated with our cultures don't impact our children's ability to progress. My personal connection to this topic motivates me to dig deeper into the data.

As a mixed Pacific Islander woman who has completed a college degree, my perspective is rooted in my experience. I am aware that my culture expects me to place family as my top priority and that focus may impact my career or academic success. However, because I am not a full Pacific Islander, I was also raised to prioritize academic and career success. As I've advanced both academically and in my career, I've realized that I need to create space for myself and that means that I have to dance on the line of aligning myself with culture and adhering to White American expectations of success. While I would love to live in a world where I could align myself fully with my culture and still advance, I understand that I need to "play the game" and do so by finding balance.

Professional Significance

I have been fortunate enough to participate in the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI) under President Biden's administration. When we meet, those of us that help to provide a voice for our community discuss a variety of issues. One such issue is to better understand the data specific to Pacific Islanders and not AAPI as a whole, as our needs are very different. WHIAANHPI is working with the U.S. Department of Education to address the need to get a better picture by disaggregating the data. Thus far, the data often lumps Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders together, which is a disservice to our community, as it does not make clear how universal the aggregated data is for the communities it claims to represent or if rather there are crucial differences across the

communities on particular issues that a single dataset obscures. Outside of WHIAANHPI, Local Education Agencies (LEA) with Pacific Islander students must also discuss and attempt to address the need to disaggregate because ignoring the issue will continue to negatively impact the LEA's data. Unfortunately, until recently, there didn't seem to be many real solutions being proposed. In the early fall of 2022, I presented to executive members of the White House on the importance of data disaggregation for the AANHPI communities. On January 17, 2023, the White House officially announced that data disaggregation was one of their priorities and that the work had commenced. We will hopefully soon have access to accurate data for our specific populations.

Academic Significance

Despite Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) being one of the fastest growing groups in the United States, the percentage of AAPI students pursuing (and completing) higher education is small. The disaggregation of data for the AAPI community is of extreme importance because once that's done, it is clear that Pacific Islander students represent a smaller percentage of the overall data for AAPI students. Stereotypes aimed at AAPI students have a significant impact on how AAPI students are viewed. Because of this, educators and education policy makers are influenced and don't provide for AAPI students appropriately, and more specifically, Pacific Islander students. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, in 2019, "23.8% or Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders had a bachelor's degree or higher, 7.4% of Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders have obtained graduate or professional degrees." Additionally, there are barriers that impact Pacific Islanders attendance and completion of college. Part of the issue is that while Pacific Islander students are sometimes recruited, there aren't many steps taken to retain them as students in higher educational settings.

One of the primary barriers identified by *Pacific Islanders in Higher Education: Barriers to Recruitment and Retention* was, "The fact that cultural, kinship, and family obligations are often priorities before higher education" (Ah Sam & Robinson, 1998).

Despite having almost identical cultural beliefs, Pacific Islanders aren't all supportive of one another. In fact, some groups are disproportionately discriminated against. One of the most discriminated against Pacific Islander Groups are Micronesians. Because there are far less Micronesians than there are Polynesians or Melanesians, the research is often lacking for Micronesians and this is especially true with respect to Micronesian children's development in their home culture and contexts. It is known, however, that Micronesian children typically learn through "gradual, observational and experiential process with an adult or older child and through repetitive practice" (Spencer, 2019, p. 226). Despite this, the structure of Micronesian schools (as well as many schools in Melanesia and Polynesia) mimics some of what is typical in the United States: a focus upon achievement testing, which assesses both English Language Arts and mathematics. The similarity in academic expectation doesn't ultimately mean much, as not all school-aged children on all of the islands attend school. While Pacific Islander attendance is poor in the United States as well, there are processes in place to ensure that students attend school. The Student Attendance Review Team (SART) serves to create a corrective action plan with parent/guardian input and Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) is a hearing that also typically includes the District Attorney's office and a member of local Law Enforcement where the attendance requirements are made clear and additional legal action can possibly take place. This is not the case on the islands and many children only attend for a few years or not at all, despite education being compulsory (Thompson, n.d.).

Even with this division, we know that culture is of utmost importance to Pacific Islanders. American collegiate institutions don't often celebrate cultural differences. While there may be improvement in some acknowledgement of cultural differences, acknowledgement is where it typically ends. Many institutions now have Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) offices and publish surveys and materials to acknowledge the different cultures represented within the student body. However, it is often done to check off a box and not to seek understanding of the community. This is evidenced by the funding allotted to the DEI offices. At Antioch for example, the salary of Head of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (HEDIB) is comparable to the other Directors within the university. However, the budget allotted to the office is exceptionally small, which would make it very challenging for the HEDIB to do much to improve cultural relevancy for students.

Further, instruction is almost universally and uncritically in English (unless you're studying another language). As Crocombe and Maleisea (1988) remarked decades ago, with little change since, "The language of educational instruction in most developed countries is that of the colonizing nation. Colonizers regarded their language as superior to that of the colonized" (p. 12). This fact is even more upsetting when you realize that schools within Pasifika also feel the need to instruct in English, a language that is truly foreign to them. A review of the different areas that encompass Pasifika reveals that English is taught even at the primary level. In Samoa (Polynesia), English is introduced orally in schools during the third year and by the time students reach their seventh year, English is the primary language of instruction (Peterson, n.d.). In Tonga (Polynesia), English is taught as a second language. However, "the educational system still reflects this (Wesleyan Missionaries) colonial/missionary history" (Thompson, n.d.). In Palau (Micronesia), most "instructional materials are written in English . . . our challenge is to motivate

our students and teachers to continue to use Palauan in these studies" (Regional Educational Laboratory Program, n.d.). Lastly, in Fiji (Melanesia) "English is the second language for the majority of students, but it is viewed as the official language of instruction in Fiji classrooms" (Lagi, 2016). This focus on English instruction leaves students (and their families) with a strong desire to ensure that their language doesn't die. Because of this, the home environment is a native language rich environment. Continuing to advance oneself through instruction received only in English stands in opposition to this desire, especially for island nations struggling to keep their language alive (Roberts, 2007).

One of the islands concerned with their language dying is Palau. Palau is an island in Micronesia and it is a United States Territory. Palau is part of the Compact of Free Association Migrants (COFA). "In exchange for permitting the U.S. exclusive use and military strategic positioning in the Pacific, the U.S. provides grants to fund education, health care, and infrastructure in these jurisdictions" (APIAHF, 2021). This agreement hasn't proven to be helpful to the people of the Federated States of Micronesia, The Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. In fact, many of the benefits promised have been stripped away–it is an issue that WHIAANHPI is looking into addressing. The Islanders entered into this agreement and adapted to a more Americanized approach to all things, including language. Palau in particular has had several language influences over the years: Spain, German, Japan, and America have all administered Micronesia (Crocombe, 1988, p. 287). These influences are still present in some areas of the island today–many elders on the island still speak Japanese. Even though there are various languages spoken throughout the island, a focus on the Palauan language is almost gone. Older generations fear that the language will die with them and the younger generations do their best to hang onto the language and will often reject situations where

the English language is primary (including college). This is something many indigenous communities are facing through "injustice regarding the validity of ancestral knowledge" and the "loss of native languages" (Elias, 2020).

"Every Pacific Islander American of whom I have much knowledge has a strong sense of blood, of lineage, of clan connectedness, of history as a basis of identity and group membership, as well as family, practice (i.e., behavior and knowledge of the culture) and place" (Crocombe, 1995, p. 169). Thus, as the rich sense of true culture chronicled by Crocombe and summarized in my account here is clearly at the center of Pacific Islanders' lives. It seems fair to infer that such foci detract from PIs ability to advance academically (and thus economically) as a result. Further investigation of these matters is at the heart of my dissertation inquiry. Therefore, my research seeks to explore:

Research Questions

1. How do Pacific Islander students define success?
2. What role does culture play in the decision-making process?
3. What impact does culture (Fa'a Samoa/Anga fakatonga) have on a Pacific Islander student's academic journey?

Significance of the Study

While there is relatively consistent statistical data that makes it clear that the number of Pacific Islanders in higher education is low, there isn't enough data to provide an understanding as to why. This lack of research helps to ensure that nothing is being done to address this issue that has serious implications for the Pacific Islander community. Gaining a better understanding of potential barriers to access will allow for LEAs and colleges/universities to better understand

the needs of Pacific Islander students and work to increase the percentage of Pacific Islanders that attend and graduate from a college or university.

Limitations and Delimitations

There are a few limitations due to the lack of current research regarding Pacific Islanders and higher education. Additionally, Melanesian participation was limited, despite efforts to increase the number of Melanesian participants. The researcher connected with Melanesian organizations, posted to social media with several popular Melanesian hashtags, and asked the Melanesian participants to share with their network. Despite this, the number of Melanesian survey participants was significantly lower than that of Micronesian and Polynesian participants. However, the number of interview participants was only one less than the number of Micronesian and Polynesian participants.

There is a limitation to the research in the United States, as New Zealand has more research on this topic than the United States does. While that research is helpful, the unique communities and experience of Pacific Islanders in America is different.

While this study sought to receive responses from a variety of Pacific Islanders from different walks of life, the vast majority of the respondents received this survey from Pacific Islander organizations they know about because of their college connections or because it was shared with them by a friend/colleague. The data tells us that 0.3% of U.S. residents enrolled in degree-granting institutions were Pacific Islander and that 53.6% of that population completed their degree at the same institution within six years. That is not represented well in this study because the greater percentage of possible respondents either did not see the study or chose not to participate. When speaking to Pacific Islanders in passing about the study, several shared that they would not participate because they did not know what would happen with the information

they shared and there was a lack of trust with the idea of research. While they communicated that they understood that the research was being performed by a Pacific Islander, they did not trust that the university or anyone that read this dissertation would handle what they'd shared with the same level of care or respect that they believed the researcher would. Because the majority of the respondents were in or had attended college, that specific portion of the data set is misaligned with the national average.

Researcher Assumptions

The researcher assumes that culture impacts Pacific Islanders' desire to attend an institution of higher education. This assumption is based upon the circle of Pacific Islanders that she grew up with that comprises both family and friends. She entered into this study with an understanding that she has this cultural asset that informs her inquiry and was intentional about ensuring that it did not impact the validity of the results.

Key Terms

AAPI: AAPI is an abbreviation that stands for Asian American and Pacific Islander and is most commonly used as an adjective (Kylie, 2021).

Aiga: Aiga is a Samoan term that includes not only the immediate family, father, mother, and children, but also the whole union of families of a clan and even those who although are not related are yet subject to the family control (New Zealand Electronic Text Collection, n.d.).

Colonizer Culture: The culture and societal norms of White America in the double form of both imperialistic and settler state (Barker, 2021; Tuck & Yang, 2012). It is rooted in the understanding of colonizers, who use their numbers, laws, policies, and powers to gain control of Indigenous Peoples. It tends to become the behavior that is expected and accepted in American Society (Biin et al., 2018). Learning this expected behavior occurs through the process of

"deculturalization" (Spring, 2016) and so "Colonizer Culture" is understood and advanced here as a form of culture that is actively involved in exactly this process both domestically and abroad.

Decolonization: Involves dismantling structures that perpetuate the status quo and addresses unbalanced power dynamics. It also involves reclaiming cultural identity, preserving indigenous languages, and addresses socio-economic disaprities (Biin et al., 2018).

Fa'a Samoa: Fa'a Samoa is the cultural context for all sanctuary activities and functions. It refers to the traditional Samoan lifestyle, or way of life. It is the foundation of Polynesia's oldest culture, which places great importance on the dignity and achievements of the group rather than on individual achievements (Fa'a Samoa, n.d.).

Kede Kmedu el Omis: Palauan translation of "change is coming" (personal translation).

Melanesian: Melanesians are from Melanesia, which consists of islands beginning with New Guinea and continues through the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Fiji, and numerous smaller islands (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Micronesian: Micronesians are from Micronesia, which lies between the Philippines and Hawaii and encompasses more than 2,000 islands, which includes Palau, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Kiribati (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Polynesian: Polynesians are from Polynesia, which encompasses a huge triangular area of the east-central Pacific Ocean with the Hawaiian Islands in the north and its base angles at New Zealand in the west and Easter Island in the east. It also includes Tuvalu, Tokelau, Wallis, and Futuna, Samoa, Tonga, Niue, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, the Marquesas Islands, the Austral Islands, and the Tuamotu Archipelago (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Socio-Ecological Outcomes (SEO) Model: The SEO model shows that each domain (social, noncognitive, academic, environmental, & campus ethos) influences student success (persistence, achievement, attainment, transfer; CCEAL, n.d.).

Suiga Ole a Sau: Samoan translation of "change is coming" (family translation).

Talanoa: Talanoa is "talk story" which is the sharing of histories, ideas, opinions, and events with others.

True Culture: Is the amalgam of the cultural values that are embodied by and understood by Pacific Islanders. It is challenging to simply state because it is a way of living and goes beyond that which can easily be defined. However, the main values within true culture include respect, service, leadership, family, and belonging (User, 2023). Through True Culture in its expressions and forms of knowledge is not to be simply equated to an analogous name such as the Latine or Hispanic use of "La Cultura" (Sanchez, 2003), the latter named idea evokes the character of what is here cast as Pacific Islanders' "True Culture."

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are considerations to be made about the impact of noncognitive, academic, environmental, and campus ethos factors that hinder Pacific Islanders' academic success. A review of pertinent data reveals that Pacific Islanders are limited in their career and economic success, which is limited by their lack of participation in higher education (Lee, 2005).

Pre-College Considerations

Colleges and universities create and promote expectations for professors and students to ensure students have access to educational resources, are learning, and are supported by the faculty and administrators. The colleges and universities who seek to improve the rate of Pacific Islander students enrolled (and maintained) explore data in hopes of determining where there are gaps. This practice provides a more accurate picture when appropriate steps are taken to disaggregate the data. The disaggregation of data for the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community is of extreme importance because once that's done, it is clear that Pacific Islander students represent a smaller percentage of the overall data for AAPI students. However, because the data often is not disaggregated, stereotypes aimed at AAPI students have a significant impact on how all AAPI students are viewed. Because of this, educators and education policy makers are influenced and don't provide for AAPI students appropriately. As explained by Lee (2005), "the academic struggles . . . of Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders clearly challenge the model minority stereotype . . . highlight the importance of collecting data disaggregate by ethnicity." Further, when data isn't disaggregated, it "influences policy decisions that continue the invisibility and erasure of PIs as Indigenous people" (Vaughn et al., 2021).

Goals

It is important to understand Pacific Islanders students' (and their families') college aspirations. Research reveals that the largest barrier to academic success is "the fact that cultural, kinship, and family obligations are often priorities before higher education" (Ah Sam & Robinson, 1998). Ah Sam and Robinson (1998) found that the influence of the home culture had a profound impact on whether or not a student advanced academically. In fact, other significant barriers addressed by Ah Sam and Robinson related to additional cultural differences "in learning styles, English proficiency, and distance" (Ah Sam & Robinson, 1998). There are gaps in the research relating to Pacific Islander educational attainment, which impacts the availability of current research. As remarked by Casey (2001), "research with indigenous or native peoples is more frequently found today in academic research literature, though for Pacific Islanders, it is primarily in unpublished doctoral dissertations and master's theses with minimal documentation."

Colleges and universities have a responsibility to determine what support must be put in place to provide equitable opportunities for Pacific Islander students. They have a commitment to remediate social wrongdoing of underrepresented groups (including Pacific Islanders) by considering what societal norms and background factors may be impacting student success (Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2014).

Cultural Expectations

Before a Pacific Islander even considers higher education, they often experience 13 (plus) years of education in a setting that does not respectfully understand their culture. These cultural expectations that Pacific Islander students bring to educational institutions include a priority of belonging to one's family, religion as another priority, and maintaining the traditional way of life

(in Samoan: Fa'a Samoa). "Fa'a Samoa places great importance on the dignity and achievements of the group rather than on individual achievements. The traditional communal lifestyle revolves around the aiga, or family" (Fa'a Samoa, n.d.). The stress on the success of the aiga works in opposition to the colonizer culture of a focus on the advancement of oneself. As Ka'ōpua (2013) explains, "settler education systems are intended to perpetuate dominant cultural values while simultaneously erasing and suppressing the experiences of nondominant communities."

Colonizer culture refers to the set of social, economic, and political practices associated with the historical colonization carried out by European powers across various regions. This culture was marked by the imposition of European norms, values, and institutions on colonized societies. European colonizers often sought to reshape local cultures in their own image, asserting dominance and exploiting resources for economic gain (Amsler, 2016).

Cultural imperialism played a significant role, as colonizers imposed their languages, religions, and legal systems, eroding indigenous traditions. The impact of colonizer culture extended beyond tangible aspects, influencing social hierarchies and power structures. The imposition of European languages often resulted in the marginalization of local languages, contributing to the loss of cultural diversity (Tomlinson, 2012).

Economic exploitation was a fundamental characteristic of colonizer culture, as European powers extracted wealth from colonies through practices like forced labor, resource extraction, and unequal trade relationships. The legacies of colonizer culture persist today, with many postcolonial Pacific Islander societies grappling with the ongoing effects of cultural assimilation, economic inequality, and the lasting imprint of colonial ideologies. Understanding colonizer culture is crucial for comprehending the complexities of decolonization and the ongoing efforts to reclaim and preserve diverse cultural identities (Lawson, 2010).

In Pacific Islander culture, "collectivism and community are the backbone" which is quite different than colonizer culture (typical in America) which values individualism (Devi, 2022; Partners Healthcare, n.d.). Pacific Islanders believe that their "identity and being are defined from the collective" (Armstrong et al., 2023). Pacific Islanders make decisions often based on what is best for their family or the community at large (Tapasa, 2023). Part of the need for collectivism stems from parts of Pasifika being in remote locations with limited access to material goods, which led to a need to sustain everyone (R-Squared, 2023).

Pacific Islanders struggle with both negative stereotypes and stereotype threat. Steele et al. (1995) first defined stereotype threat as "being at risk of conforming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group" (p. 797) and has further been studied by Osborne (2001) which evidenced the role of stereotype threat in negatively impacting academic performance). Pacific Islanders (males in particular) are then inadvertently tasked with trying to convince society that they aren't what stereotypes[2] say they are and they are capable of achieving academically. This leads to unnecessary stress in students that may not find value in consistently trying to prove themselves.

Pacific Islanders in education are part of a non-traditional student population when compared to students adhering to colonizer culture (i.e., the culture/societal norms of White America). This has serious implications for student progress. Looking through an asset-based lens (looking at the positives/assuming strengths), it is easy to identify strong adherence to Pacific Islander culture as a benefit because it requires strong will in today's global society.

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[2]Stereotypes of Pacific Islanders include being "simple people lacking in complexity, intellect, or ambition" and are depicted in media as "dangerous, evil . . . noble savages" (Hereniko, n.d.).

Looking through a deficit-based lens (looking at the negatives/assuming they are not trying hard enough) however, one can recognize that it is almost impossible for Pacific Islander students to balance their cultural expectations with colonizer culture (the culture/societal norms of White America). Linda Tuhawai Smith (2021) makes it clear that colonization is still problematic: "it means there is unfinished business, that we are still being colonized (and know it), and that we are still searching for justice" (p. 38).

The gender stereotype for males in colonizer culture is to be masculine, strong, and to rarely seek support (Kimmel, 2021). This idea is reinforced by the media consumed by the masses (books, movies, art, etc.) This is not true in Pacific Islander culture however, where the women are revered and are to be respected (Fondren, 2018). These typical traits make it clear that it is important for educators to foster a classroom culture where Pacific Islander students feel welcomed and as though they belong and do so while understanding that Pacific Islanders do have separate challenges and differences within their community.

A perspective that has been limited by its exploration is the impact of religion and spirituality on Pacific Islander students. Christianity is an integral part of Pacific Islanders' lives. "First-time visitors to Polynesia are often surprised at the intensity of the islanders' commitment to Christianity" (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., n.d.). This is a large piece of a Pacific Islanders identity that is largely missing on college and university campuses. While there is often a religious presence of sorts, a Pacific Islander church is lacking. Providing Pacific Islander students with access to a Pacific Islander church experience while at school allows for both families and the students themselves to feel as though their needs are being met by their college or university.

Background

The aiga (family in Samoan) is at the center of Pacific Islander culture. The lens by which Pacific Islanders view success is through that of family success and being able to give back to the community (Pacific Islander Network, 2021). However, family success does not equate to college attainment or significant economic growth. In fact, a large percentage of Pacific Islanders in America work in blue collar and service jobs (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], 2007). This becomes more problematic as each individual grows older, as their body has a harder time dealing with the physical demands of these positions.

Much of what Pacific Islanders hold near and dear by way of culture is the result of decolonization. However, the culture that is practiced today is influenced by colonization.

Pacific Islander invisibility is a very real issue within the American education system. While ethnic studies curriculum has been adopted, Pacific Islanders remain largely absent from the curriculum. Culturally responsive teaching and further sustaining pedagogy provides a solution to this issue, as it tasks educators with being responsive towards students' cultures, languages, and to access their knowledge base (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012).

The Socio-Ecological Outcomes Model

The Socio-Ecological Outcomes (SEO) Model "accounts for the primary factors affecting the success of men of color in community colleges" (Harris & Wood, 2016). The foundation of this model emerged from *The Five Domains: A Conceptual Model of Black Male Success in Community Colleges* (Wood & Harris, 2014). The Five Domains model looks at social, noncognitive, academic, environmental, and institutional implications. It is a conceptual model that focuses solely on black (male) student success in community colleges (Wood & Harris, 2014). It is also the precursor to the Socio-Ecological Outcomes model. While the focus of the

SEO Outcomes model is not on Pacific Islanders, the application of the model proves helpful in examining the forces at work for educational success of Pacific Islanders as an ethnic and racial minority within the larger American system.

Inputs

The SEO model's first two constructs are background/defining and societal factors. An individual's background and their society has an impact on whether or not they are successful. Background/defining factors include: age, veteran status, primary language, citizenship status, generation status, and disability. Societal factors include: stereotypes, prejudice, economic conditions, and capital identity projection. There isn't much that can be done by outsiders (teachers, administrators, counselors, etc.) that can change these factors. However, an educator's decision to ignore these factors can have a significant impact on the success of the student, so it is important for educators to be mindful of the factors and the impact they have on a student.

Socio-ecological Domains

The socio-ecological domains include noncognitive, academic, environmental, and campus ethos. These domains represent the core and accounts for the interactions and the experiences of students while attending college. The relationships and interactions between the domains are fluid, but "capture the interplay between salient sociological and environmental factors that interact and shape student success outcomes" (Harris & Wood, 2016, p. 38).

Noncognitive Domain

The noncognitive domain includes intrapersonal relations and identity. Interpersonal relations in this model include the variables of self-efficacy, locus of control, degree utility, action control, and intrinsic interest. Because family is primary, action control is impacted, as students aren't always able to completely focus on school. While some students may maintain

intrinsic interest, their self-efficacy, locus of control, and degree utility may be lacking in that they may not believe that they are able to excel, may struggle to see the potential for job opportunities based on elders' prior experiences, or may feel subjugated within/by a colonial educational system (Fresno City College, 2019). The model's "identity" category represents variables relating to students' gender, racial/ethnic and spiritual identities. These variables are written into the SEO model and do not serve to fully capture identity, which may include a multitude of additional variables. The variables within the noncognitive domain are primarily psychosocial and capture students' emotional and affective responses to social contexts (Harris & Wood, 2016).

Pacific Islander culture is of utmost importance to Pacific Islander students, in spite of their need to fit into the colonizer culture in order to be more widely accepted. Continuing to advance oneself through instruction received only in English stands in opposition to this desire to uphold culture, especially for island nations struggling to keep their language alive.

Academic Domain

The academic domain includes faculty-student interaction, academic service use, and commitment to course of study. Educators play a pivotal role in creating an environment where Pacific Islander students feel they can engage and be successful. Creation of this environment consists of informal interactions outside of whole class instruction. A lack of a solid relationship between the educator and their Pacific Islander students will result in a lack of trust and therefore, a desire for the student (and their family) to not be fully transparent with the educator. Pacific Islander students are absent more frequently than their peers (California School Dashboard, 2021). Because of their frequent absences, they often fall further behind their peers and struggle to keep up with the class. These absences are tied to family responsibilities and

while families believe that education is important, it isn't as important as family. When a death in a family occurs, regardless of how immediate the family member is, the planning and events immediately begin, but don't end for up to one month after the loss. During this entire time, students are absent from school, as they are helping their families to prepare for all of the events. If a trusting relationship isn't established before an event such as this takes place, the student (and family) will not disclose this information and won't seek out work or an independent study option. Instead, the student will just miss out on those instructional days and not have an opportunity to obtain the instruction lost.

Environmental Domain

The environmental domain includes mediators, commitments, and stressful life events. Within "mediators" are finances, transportation, and external validating agents. Students' family responsibilities can include a financial component, as Pacific Islander families are often large and financial contributions to the family are expected. When a student is tasked with assisting their family to avoid food or housing insecurity, it places an added stress upon the student who may not be able to also tackle the stress of school. Unfortunately, external validating agents are not always available to Pacific Islander students, as many Pacific Islander students are the first within their family to go to college, so the lack of understanding about college may make it challenging for their family to encourage them enough for them to persevere. Within "commitments" are family responsibilities and employment. The family responsibilities include a financial component, which requires many Pacific Islanders to maintain a job while in school. The family responsibilities also include physical presence, which pulls students away from their studies. Pacific Islanders commitments to their family include a need to ensure family is taken care of, which means that family is a priority over all else (HPHA, n.d.).

Campus Ethos Domain

The campus ethos domain includes sense of belonging (student-student, student-faculty and student-student service), connectedness, campus resources (access and efficacy), and internal validating agents (faculty and staff). Far too often, the onus of student success is placed solely on the students themselves. The SEO model recognizes the responsibility that the educators (and schools) have to facilitate student success. This socio-ecological approach to understanding student success moves away from a deficit-mindset that envisions student-capabilities as a prime mover towards outcome disparities and hones in on the dysfunctions and inequities of the institutions that students must successfully navigate instead. Ah Sam and Robinson (1998), found that although Pacific Islander students are sometimes recruited, there aren't any steps taken to retain them as students in higher education. Pacific Islander students often feel disconnected and therefore do not feel as though they belong. They know that their family will always be home for them, so it makes living away from family or dedicating that much time away from family seem like an incredibly poor decision. However, steps can be taken to create a school family that would help to ease the tension a Pacific Islander student may feel by being away from home.

Outcomes

The Outcome is hopefully student success, which includes persistence, achievement, attainment, transfer, goal accomplishment, and increased human capital within the labor market. All of these indicators of student success are predicated on an understanding of Pacific Islander culture, building strong relationships, and trying to meet the unique needs of the students with heavy ties to their culture.

SEO Model Conclusions

The Socio-Ecological Outcomes model provides a critical lens through which Pacific Islander student success can be studied. It is limited in that its focus in educational scholarship has been primarily on males of color. However, because the Pacific Islander female is strong and more likely to stand on her own (aside from cultural expectations), there is arguably a greater sense of urgency to get to the bottom of determining how to best support Pacific Islander male students (Braginsky et al., 2016). Pacific Islander success results from caring educators who are willing to go the extra mile to learn about the culture and what is typically expected of Pacific Islanders, so that they feel a sense of belonging in their classroom (Bowen, 2021). Educators should also be willing to celebrate their native languages and understand that there is a sense of protection associated with their languages because many Pasifika languages are in danger of disappearing and "when a language dies, histories die with it and identities change" (Tamasese & Tamasailau, 2008).

It is imperative that educators apply an equity approach to educating Pacific Islander students by ensuring that each student has what they need to be successful (Erwin, 2003). In some ways, their needs are quite extensive (compared to other ethnicities), but just because they have a higher level of need, it does not mean that we should ignore the need. Applying the SEO model to Pacific Islander students will provide valuable insight into their progress and their specific needs to better determine how to increase the number of Pacific Islander graduates.

Economic

The data makes clear that Pacific Islanders in America are mainly employed in manufacturing industries, have high rates of unemployment, and experience poverty (IResearchNet, 2021). According to the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities

(2023), "The evidence that a college degree significantly improves one's employment prospects and earnings potential is overwhelming." Because most Pacific Islanders do not have a college degree, their job prospects are limited mostly to service occupations, as they are more likely to work in "precision production, craft and repair occupations or as operators, fabricators, and laborers" (We-4e the Americans, 1990). Seventeen years later, this data continues to be true as reported by EEOC (2007), "Pacific Islanders, however, are more likely employed in blue collar and service jobs." There are gaps in employment data, as many sources do not disaggregate the data and report AAPI employment data, which paints a very inaccurate picture for Pacific Islanders.

Because of the limitations on industries that Pacific Islanders are eligible for employment, their salary is below the national average and the poverty rate is high. "In 1989, the Pacific Islander per capita income was $10,342, lower than . . . $14,143 for the Nation" and "About 58,000 or 17 percent of Pacific Islanders lived below the poverty level in 1989" (We-4e the Americans, 1990). This data has unfortunately remained fairly consistent, as the poverty rate for Pacific Islanders in 2021 was 17.6%. It should be noted that there are limitations to this data, as USAFacts pulled this data from the 2021 American Community Survey, where only the largest Pacific Islander ethnic groups are reported (USAFacts, 2023a).

If there is hope for Pacific Islanders to improve their income, there is a need to improve their access to education. Improving the percentage of Pacific Islanders with college degrees will automatically advance the economic circumstances of Pacific Islanders in America.

Kede Kmedu el Omis. Suiga Ole a Sau. Change is Coming

Although Pacific Islanders may not advance academically due to their cultural norms, suiga ole a sau (in Samoan: "A change is coming"). Although generations of Samoans have lived

Fa'a Samoa ("the Samoan way"), there is a shift towards Fa'a America and "young Samoans these days can be seen popping, locking and breaking as hip hop culture takes hold of the islands and other countries where Samoan people have migrated" (Dunford & Ridgell, 1996). These styles of dance and style of music do not fall within the realm of Fa'a Samoa. While elders see this as problematic because it doesn't align with true cultural dancing/music and may be seen as inappropriate, younger generations moving away from tradition may result in an increased number of Pacific Islanders advancing through higher education.

With everyone having access to the internet at their fingertips, Pacific Islanders are starting to move away from traditional culture in part because of the influence of social media. "Adolescence and the early twenties in particular are the years in which you are acutely aware of the contrasts between who you appear to be and who you think you are . . . it's similar to the 'imposter syndrome' in psychology" (Child Mind Institute, 2024). Adolescents and young adults have images and text filling their timelines that are shaping their thoughts and their actions. While feeds and timelines are filled with risqué imagery, they are also filled with images and texts of young adults happy to attend college and exploring the world. The influence of social media is impacting the decisions that young adults make and Pacific Islanders are not immune to this.

While there is hope for an increased number of Pacific Islanders graduating from college due to a higher percentage of PIs becoming Americanized, the traditional way is very hard for the older generations so many will tighten their grip when it feels as tradition is slipping away. This reduces opportunities for children and young adults to experience a more Americanized way of life. It is a battle that will likely continue until there is more understanding on both sides (educational systems & Pacific Islander families).

What the Data Tells Us

It is important to note that it is challenging to ensure there is truly an accurate accounting related to Pacific Islanders because of the limitations of the data. Much of the published data is from the 1980s and 1990s, with some sprinklings of newer data. Although one could hope that much would have changed in the last 30 to 40 years. However, some of the data sources that are more recent seem to indicate that not much has changed.

The breakdown of occupations held by Pacific Islanders is detailed in Figure 2.1[3] (We-4e the Americans, 1993). The occupation with the highest percentage of Pacific Islander is technical sales and administrative support at 32.1%, with the smallest percentage surprisingly working in farming, forestry, and fishing at 2.5%.

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[3] The tables presented are likely crude estimates of present-day reality, but is the best that we have for an informed picture. Pacific Islander specific data is infrequently released and it wasn't until 2020 when the Census Bureau finally added a checkbox for "Pacific Islander" in its official census forms. Prior to 2020, it did not exist (USAFacts, 2023a).

Figure 2.1

Breakdown of Occupations Held by Pacific Islanders
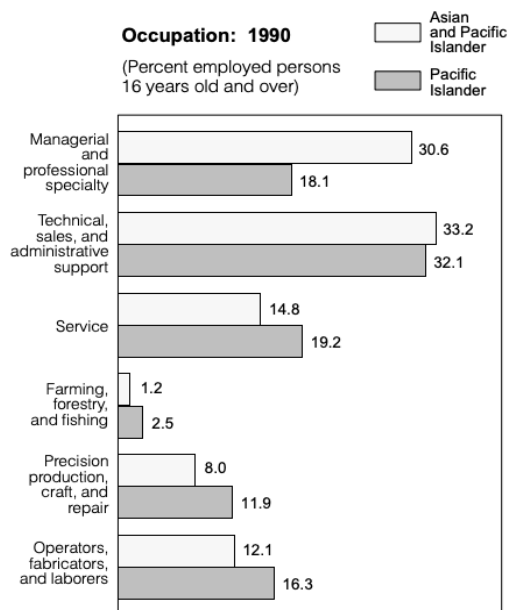
The breakdown of Per-Capita Income in 1990 is detailed in Figure 2.2 (We-4e the Americans, 1993). When the data is pulled for the AAPI community as a whole, the Per-Capita Income is considerably higher than Pacific Islanders alone. The data breaks Pacific Islander data into four Pacific Islander groups: Hawaiian, Guamanian, Samoan, and Tongan. This data is limited because it is composed mostly of Polynesians and fails to review the data for Micronesians and Melanesians.

Figure 2.2

Breakdown of Per-Capita Income in 1990

Per Capita Income: 1990
(In 1989 dollars)

Group	Income
Asian and Pacific Islander	$13,638
Pacific Islander	$10,342
Hawaiian	$11,446
Guamanian	$10,834
Samoan	$7,690
Tongan	$6,144
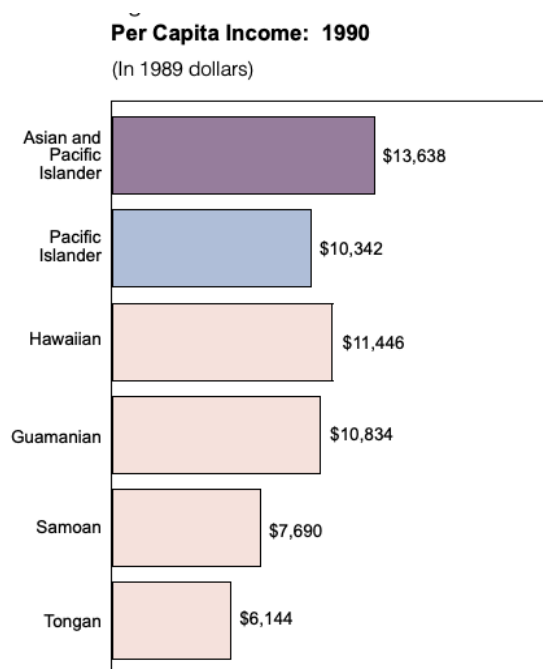
The percentage breakdown of poverty rates for persons in 1990 is detailed in Figure 2.3 (We-4e the Americans, 1993). When the data is pulled for the AAPI community as a whole, the poverty rate is lower than when reviewing the data of Pacific Islanders alone. Again, the data breaks Pacific Islander data into four Pacific Islander groups: Hawaiian, Guamanian, Samoan, and Tongan. This data is limited because it is composed mostly of Polynesians and fails to review the data for Micronesians and Melanesians.

Figure 2.3

Percentage Breakdown of Poverty Rates for Persons in 1990

Poverty Rates for Persons: 1989
(Percent in poverty)
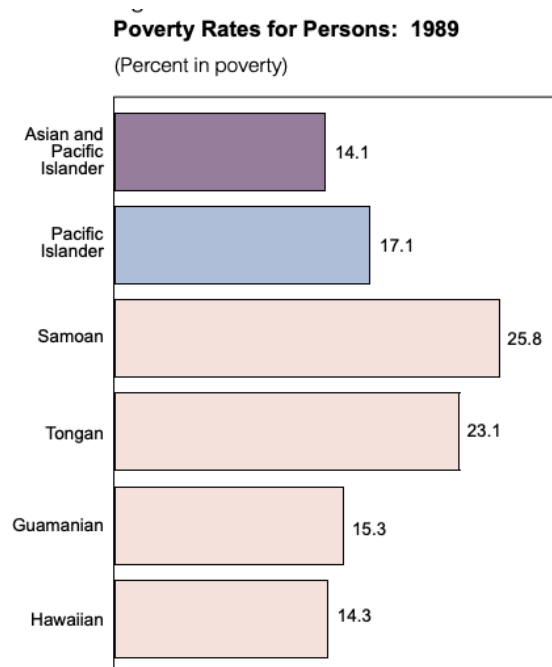
The earnings for workers is significantly different for those that are not degree holders versus those that are. The annual median earnings for workers aged 22 through 27 that are not degree holders versus those that are reveals a $14,000 difference in Figure 2.4 (APLU, 2023). Lifetime earnings are considerably higher for degree holders than for those that are non-degree holders and the earnings increase as the degrees increase. Lifetime earnings for non-degree holders is $1,304,000 versus $2,268,000 for those with a Bachelor's degree as seen in Figure 2.5 (APLU, 2023).

Figure 2.4

Annual Median Earnings for Workers Aged 22– 27 Who Are Not Degree Holders Versus Those Who Are

Figure 2.5

Lifetime Earnings for Non-Degree Holders Versus Those with a Bachelor's Degree
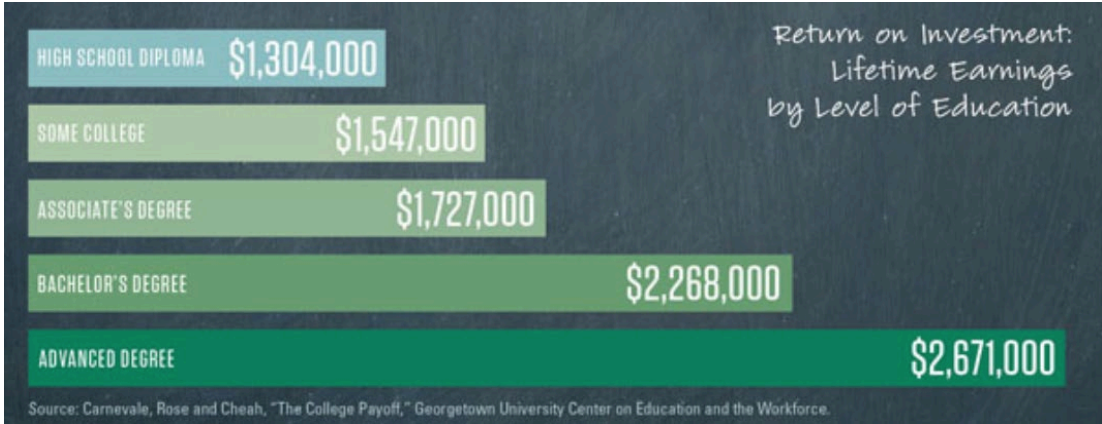
Pacific Islanders suffer with mental illness and mental distress at high rates. When reviewing the data of U.S. adults reporting serious psychological distress in the past 30 days (Urban Institute, 2019), it is clear that Pacific Islanders struggle far more than any other group with 4.1% reporting serious psychological distress in the past 30 days, with the next highest group being Vietnamese at 2.6%, as seen in Figure 2.6 (Urban Institute, 2019).

Figure 2.6

Share of US Adults Reporting Serious Psychological Distress in the Past 30 Days

Share of US Adults Reporting Serious Psychological Distress in the Past 30 Days

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	4.1%
Vietnamese	2.6%
Filipino	1.6%
Korean	1.6%
Indian	1.6%
Chinese	1.5%
Japanese	1.1%
All AAPI	1.7%
All US adults	3.1%
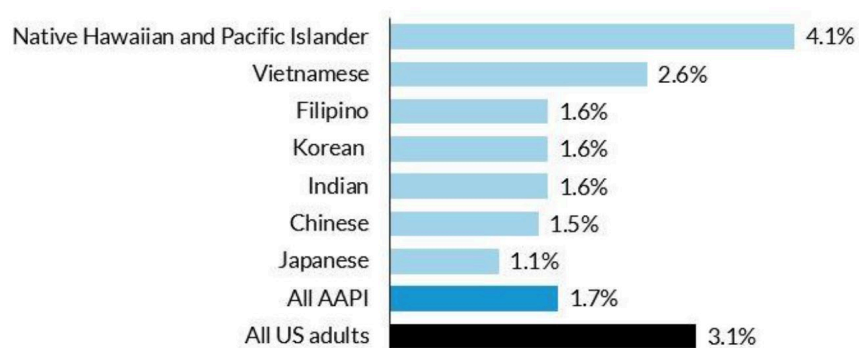
Source: CDC National Health Interview Survey, 2010–2014.
Notes: Serious psychological distress includes mental health problems severe enough to cause moderate to serious impairment in social, occupational, or school functioning and to require treatment; AAPI = Asian American and Pacific Islanders.

URBAN INSTITUTE

Despite the higher rates of mental distress, Pacific Islanders represent the smallest percentage of US adults using mental health services. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA; 2019) found that Pacific Islanders (2008-2012) data reveals that 18.1% of AAPI U.S. adults with a mental illness used mental health services with the second lowest group (Hispanic) revealing that 27.3% sought out services, as seen in Figure 2.7. The

disaggregation of this data by SAMHSA (2019) revealed that only 6.1% of Native

Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders received mental health services within the last year.

Figure 2.7

Use of Mental Health Services in the Past Year Among US Adults with Any Mental Illness

Use of Mental Health Services in the Past Year among US Adults with Any Mental Illness

- AAPI: 18.1%
- Hispanic: 27.3%
- Black: 29.8%
- AIAN: 41.6%
- White: 46.3%
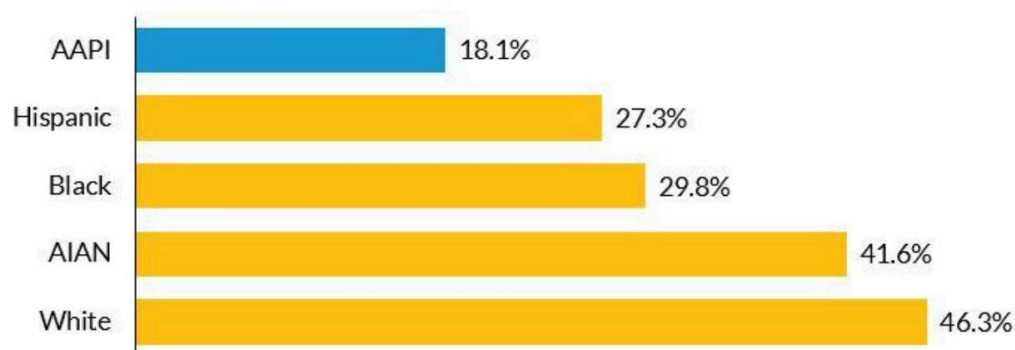
Source: SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2008–2012.
Note: AIAN = American Indian and Alaskan Native; AAPI = Asian American and Pacific Islander.

URBAN INSTITUTE

Pacific Islanders are less likely than other ethnic groups to attend college. The American

Community Survey (2006-2008) provided a breakdown of National Hawaiian Pacific Islander

adults who have not attended college. Almost half of all NHPI groups reported that they did not

attend college. The largest percentage were Samoans at 57.9%, with the smallest percentage

being Guamanians or Chamorros at 49.3%, as seen in Figure 2.8 (APIA Scholars, 2019). Of

those that did attend college, almost half left college without a degree. The largest percentage

again were Samoans at 58.1%, with the smallest percentage being Guamanians or Chamorros at

47.0%, as seen in Figure 2.9 (APIA Scholars, 2019).

Figure 2.8

Proportion of NHPI Adults Who Have Not Attended College

Figure 1: Proportion of NHPI Adults Who Have Not Attended College

57.9% Samoans
56.8% Tongans
53.0% Native Hawaiians
49.3% Guamanians or Chamorros

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%

Source: American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates, 2006–2008.
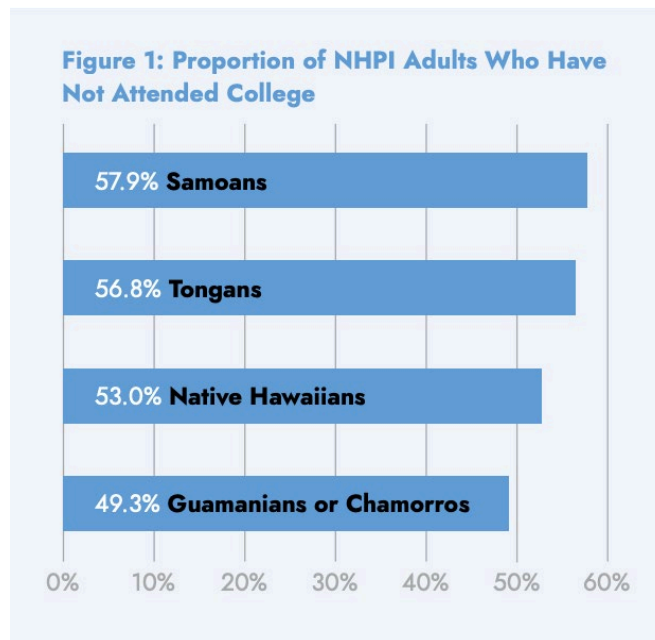
Figure 2.9

Proportion of NHPI College Attendees Who Left College Without a Degree

Source: American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates, 2006–2008.
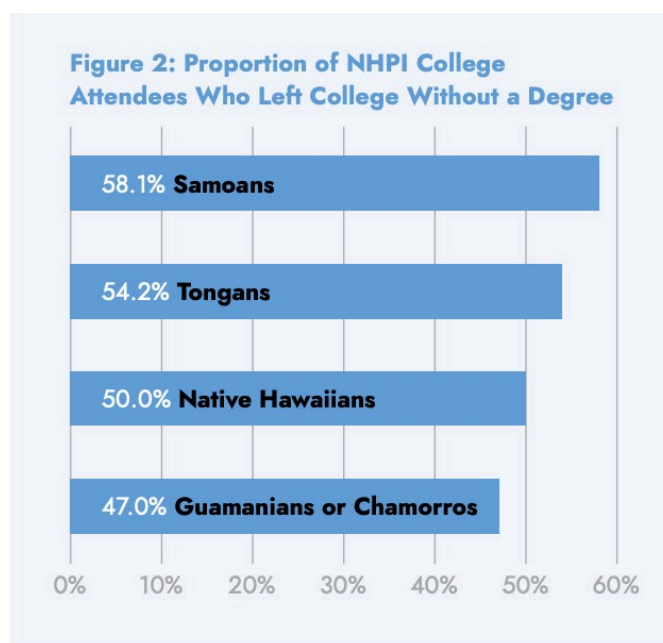
Pacific Islanders have a higher dropout rate in the State of California than any other ethnic group (UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 2006). White students make up the lowest percentage of high school dropouts at 5% and Native Hawaiian students make up the highest percentage of student dropouts at 11%, as seen in Figure 2.10.

Figure 2.10

High School Dropout Rate
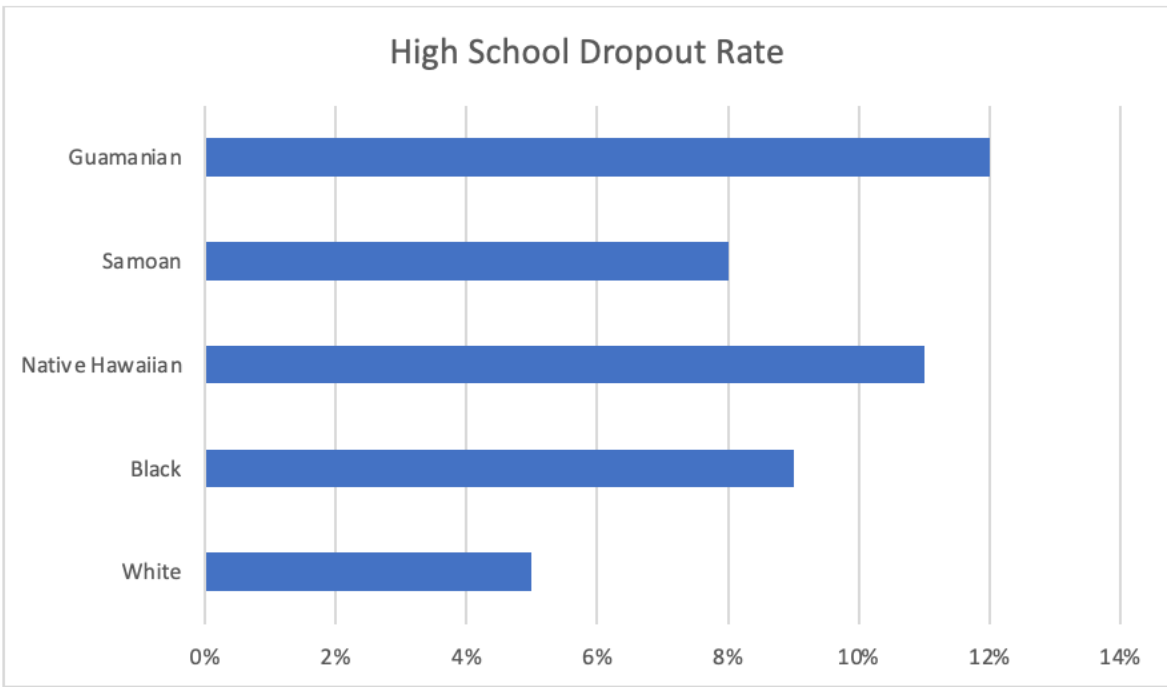
English and math proficiency are also areas of weakness for Pacific Islander students (UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 2006). When reviewing the data of 11th graders in California, it is clear that the highest percentage of below basic proficiency for English is Samoans at 59% and the highest percentage of students with low math proficiency are Black students at 69%, followed by Samoans at 59%, as seen in Figures 2.11 and 2.12.

Figure 2.11

Below Basic English Language Proficiency
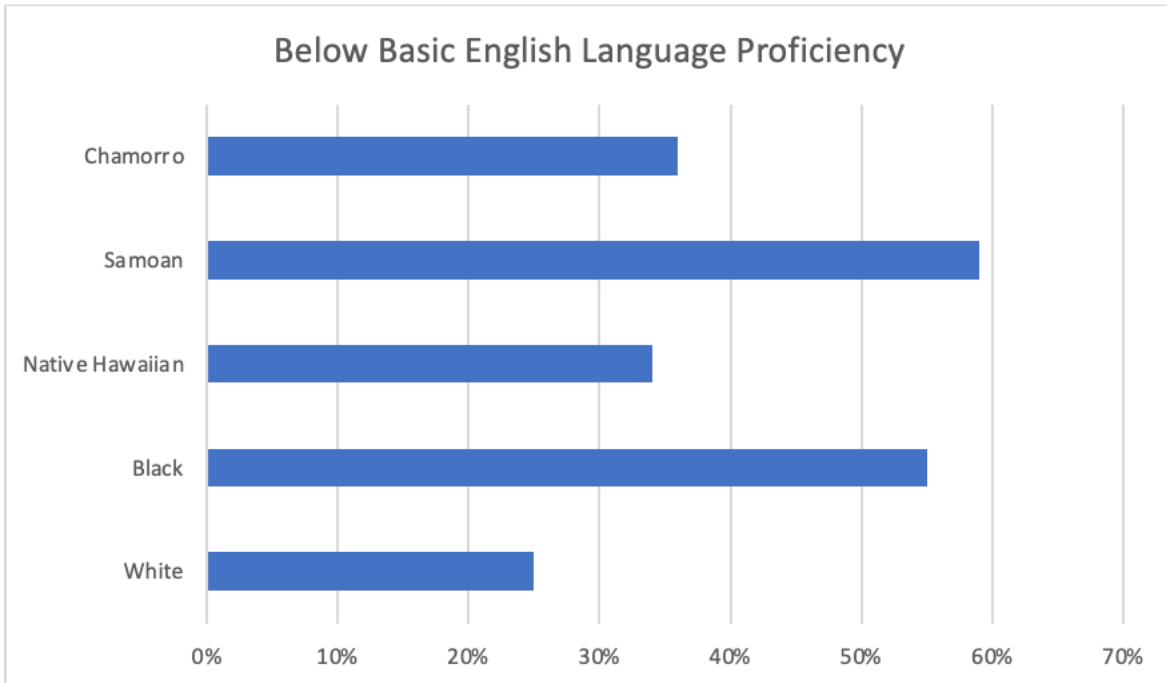
Figure 2.12

Low Math Proficiency
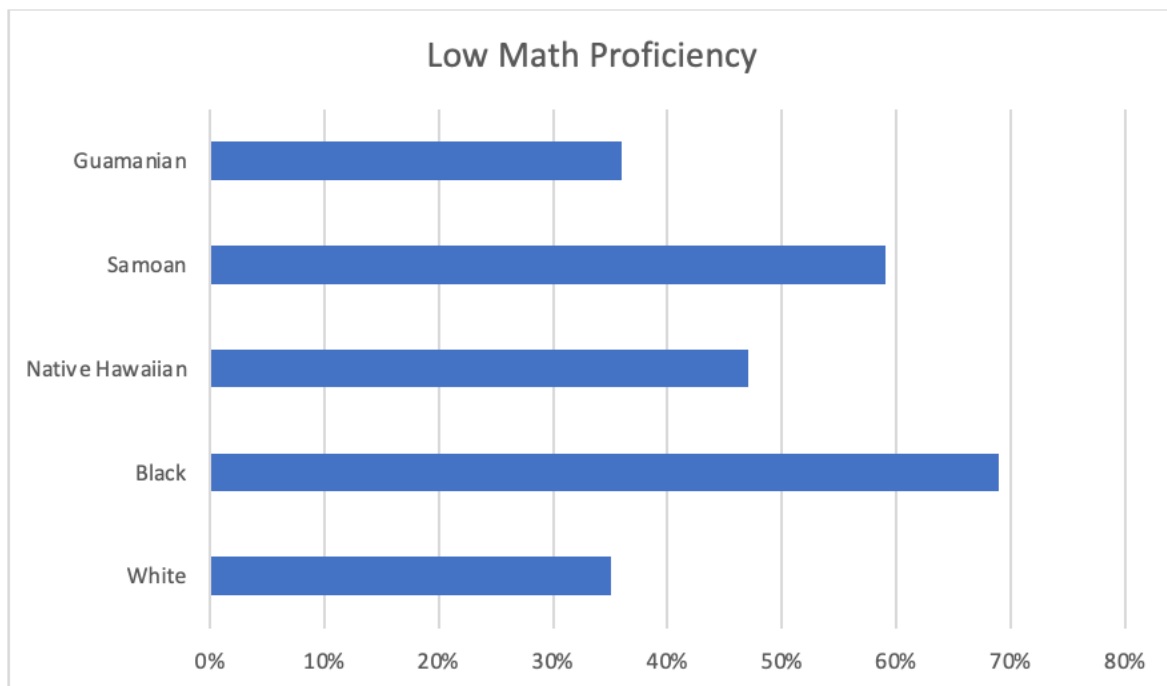
Lack of Representation

Pacific Islanders continue to be among the fastest-growing ethnic groups in the United States. However, as of 2022, Pacific Islanders make up only 2% of the K-12 teaching force and 1% of K-12 principals (One Day Editorial Team [O.D.E.], 2022).

In the fall of 2020, Pacific Islanders represented 0.1% (587 males and 628 females) of full time faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions. Of that percentage, the most commonly held position was assistant professor. In fact, Pacific Islanders make up the smallest percentage of full-time staff by race/ethnicity and occupation category at degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Where Do We Go From Here?

Many Pacific Islanders have allowed their cultural expectations to impede their progress for far too long. While change is coming, there is a lack of information and resources available to Pacific Islander students that may ultimately impact their ability to persevere through the challenges that may arise throughout their academic journey. Some of the common issues for college students include anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, dealing with conflict, eating problems, body image issues, lack of confidence, sexuality or gender identity questions, and past or recent trauma (Carruth Center, n.d.). While these challenges are difficult for anyone to face, they are eased with appropriate support. Unfortunately, Pacific Islanders seek mental health services less than any other group. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA; 2019) found that Pacific Islanders were more likely to cite "'low perceived need,' 'structural barriers,' and 'not thinking services would help' as reasons for not using mental health services". This is an area that must improve if we expect for Pacific Islanders to advance academically.

There is a desperate need to educate all Pacific Islanders about the consequences of not seeking higher education. Elders believe that they have the answers and that their children and grandchildren can follow in their footsteps without issue. However, this archaic thinking does not align with the typical expectations of today's business world. Many entry-level positions of today require a college degree. Even if you enter the workforce in the retail or food service industries, you are limited in your ability to advance without a degree. This picture needs to be painted for Pacific Islanders, so that they better understand the benefit of obtaining a college degree.

This information must be shared in a delicate manner if it is to be well-received. Pacific Islanders belief in family is so strong that someone expressing something that is contrary to that which their family has told them may fall on deaf ears. Thus, it is information that can only be shared after a trusted relationship is built. Once a strong bond is established, the individual then becomes part of the aiga (family) and can speak more freely about their concerns and what can be done to improve the lives of Pacific Islanders in the United States.

Pacific Islanders struggle in an educational system that speaks about equality, but does not actually promote equality, as education for students of color "in the United States continues to be substantially separate and unequal" (Smedley, 2001) and there are "lingering vestiges of racial inequality in our schools, specifically on inequity in spending on students of color" (Center for American Progress, 2012). The COVID-19 pandemic allowed everyone to truly see the inequality that's present in education. Although that inequality began with a technology gap, as students with limited access to technology and the internet struggled to find access and engage in their learning from home, it continued to reveal itself socially and emotionally (Simon, 2021). Moving beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, most schools (91%) sought to address social-

emotional learning however, "many of these practices focus solely on changing student behavior rather than implementing practices that build relationships and create learning environments that support positive social and emotional growth" (Trust, 2020, p. 3). Building relationships with Pacific Islander students will go a long way in helping them understand what is needed in order for them to succeed.

The lack of Pacific Islander advancement in the United States is a serious problem that can only be solved through our educational system, backed by public policy. Pacific Islanders themselves aren't going to solve the problem, as they are fighting to keep their culture alive, while also trying to assimilate to colonizer culture. Our educational system holds an incredible amount of power and the ability to make changes that would benefit the entire Pasifika community. Understanding the data, appreciating the culture, building relationships, and revamping the system to be accepting of Pacific Islander students will result in increased student enrollment and completion of a college program.

The findings make it clear that access, persistence, and degree completion continue to be challenging for Pacific Islander students. More research is needed to focus on the role that colleges and universities play and how religion, family commitments, and displacement impact access. Further, more work must be done to ensure that Pacific Islanders aren't ignored in policy discussions. It is imperative that the AAPI community be looked at independent of one another to determine each community's specific needs. Only then can the real work begin.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Critical ethnography aims to produce reflexive knowledge about the culture wherein the researcher questions his or her own interpretations, acknowledging that knowledge is socially constructed, political, and partial. It originated from a combination of anthropology, the Chicago School of Sociology, and the civil rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Three of the leading scholars of critical ethnography are Phil Francis Carspecken, D. Soyini Madison, and Geoffrey Walford. In 1996, Phil Francis Carspecken authored a "five-stage approach to doing critical ethnography" titled: *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide*. The stages are defined as follows: Stage One: Building a Primary Record, Stage Two: Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis, Stage Three: Dialogical Data Generation through Interviews, Group Discussions, and IPR, and Stages Four and Five: Conducting Systems Analysis (Carspecken, 1996).

All of the Pacific Island nations were colonized and went through the stages of decolonization (Aldrich, 2010). Because of asymmetrical power relations, colonization occurred. Critical ethnography focuses on asymmetrical power relations and the normalization of that structure in society, in order to foster social change. It is also important to learn about and then articulate the inequities suffered by marginalized communities (Carspecken, 1996). Because of this, critical ethnography was the most appropriate choice of method for this study.

While traditionally, critical ethnography is based on observations and living within the community, as a Micronesian woman who married into a Polynesian family, I am a part of two of the Pacific Islander groups I am presenting. I am not interested in a specific community versus a diasporic community. As such, I conducted in depth study and dialogue with participants. My oral tradition and stories I carry are valuable. Instead of traditional critical ethnography, my

method is an Indigenous critical ethnography: a qualitative study based in both an overview of my personal experiences and those within my community, in addition to the experiences of those of my research participants of whom I did not have a prior relationship. I am presenting Indigenous methodology. As a member of this community, I am sharing parts of our culture and our barriers to education. I am sharing these parts in an attempt to highlight barriers, but some of this work requires the reader to trust me and understand that our culture and our history cannot be boiled down to something that can be clearly understood in a single dissertation, as it is far richer than a single dissertation would allow. Indigenous ways of knowing are supported by Palmer and Caldas (2016) in *Research Methods in Language and Education*.

Stage One: Building a Primary Record

In Stage One, a primary record was built through note taking, audio taping and video taping. The information collected in the primary record is monological. It focused on taking a third-party position through description of those observed from the perspective of an uninvolved observer. To ensure validity, two journals are kept with the first producing a "thick record" or primary journal and the other a "not-so-thick record" or field journal.

The primary journal or "thick record" served as a data anchor. Most of the analysis focused on what was compiled in the journal. These observation notes were typed into a series of word processor files, and copies of these same notes to which codes, commentary, and sections of expanded analysis were added in the next stage. The components and qualities of thick description include: speech acts, body movements and body postures, low-inference vocabulary, time recording, occasional use of brackets and observer code were employed, context information was recorded, verbatim speech acts were put in italics, typed into a word processor and simple diagrams were entered into the record.

The field journal or "not-so-thick" record consisted of entries some time after the events described had taken place. The notes were taken 30 minutes after and involved jotting down what you remembered. The entries also captured observations of conversations held in passing.

Stage Two: Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis

During Stage Two, reconstructive analysis began. It was during this stage that speculations were made about the meanings of interactions recorded in the primary record, analytical work employing second-order concepts and coding began. This work "'reconstructs' into explicit discourse, cultural and subjective factors that are largely tacit in nature" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 93). These foundational analytic procedures were repeated throughout the study. While much of the analysis focused on the interviews conducted during stage three, a return to more passive observations was also important.

Before one can begin reconstruction, it is necessary to be familiar with the general conceptual models involved. "The basic process involved in human understanding is hermeneutic, and hermeneutic processes involve a movement from initial holistic modes of understanding toward holistic grasp of meaning" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 95). The process involves a loop from tacit to explicit and back to holistic. The hermeneutic influence holds great influence and should be consciously employed in reconstructive work. The features of hermeneutic circle are: its intersubjective quality, recognition of meaning through position-taking employment cultural typifications, normative reflection, the normative circle and personality factors.

When we reconstruct meaning, we must implement pragmatic horizon analysis. Carspecken (1996) provides the following understanding of pragmatic horizon analysis:

The idea of pragmatic horizons comes from regarding action, rather than perception, to be the most primary in experience. A perceptual horizon is understood to be a special case of a pragmatic horizon, according to this idea, because a perceptual object only becomes fully foregrounded when it is symbolized and therefore located within generalized contexts of possible communication. A perception is knowledge-imparting only when it becomes a possible reference in communicative acts. (p. 103)

Meaningful acts mix normative-evaluative and subjective claims. There are five main categories of reference and claim within the horizon of meaningful acts and they are as follows:

1. A claim that the act is intelligible.

2. A claim that the act is socially legitimate or appropriate.

3. A claim that the actor has a certain subjective state (feelings and intentions) at the time of acting.

4. A claim that the actor has a certain identity.

5. A claim that a certain objective state of affairs exists.

The horizon about a meaningful act uses the words, linguistic syntax, and grammar that contribute to the act's intelligibility.

The information gleaned from Stages One and Two initially informed my description of true culture and colonizer culture in this study. It was then confirmed through my personal understanding of true culture as a Pacific Islander and my research.

Stage Three: Dialogical Data Generation Through Interviews, Group Discussions, and IPR

The qualitative interview was actualized through the types of questions asked, the responses the researcher provided, and the data analysis conducted on interview transcripts. This process was better structured after formulation of an interview protocol. The interview protocol

consisted of 18 questions. Interview responses were also important, as it was imperative that the researcher remained unbiased and did not lead the interviewee. Interviewer responses consisted of bland encouragements, low-inference paraphrasing, non-leading leads, active listening, medium-inference paraphrasing, and high-inference paraphrases. The same norms were considered for application for group discussions, which would have been facilitated, but ultimately the researcher did not proceed with.

An important piece of dialogical data generation is interpersonal process recall (IPR). Interpersonal process recall was developed by psychologist, Norman Kagan. "Kagan has explored the therapeutic and educational possibilities of playing video tapes of interaction back to the actors and allowing them to comment on any portion of the events they choose" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 163). Interviewees were videotaped as part of interactions and some then viewed the tape and stopped it at any point to express their thoughts, feelings, or what norms may have influenced their response. IPR is not recommended until after a primary record and typical qualitative interviews are conducted.

Stages Four and Five: Conducting Systems Analysis

Stage Four focuses on discovering system relations by looking for cultural isomorphisms between sites, behavior setting surveys, examining cultural commodities and circuits, and validity requirements. It was important that the researcher examine their full cultural reconstructions to seek system relations. For example, a study of a classroom should also then involve some level of examination into the home and neighborhood cultures of the students and teacher. The Behavior Setting Survey (BSS) developed by Barker in the 1960s emphasizes the contexts in which human behaviors occur and provides a rigorous set of methods for

characterizing molar human behavior in relation to environments. It is also important to note that cultural commodities cannot be ignored. They are a resource in the construction of identity.

Stage Five focuses on using system relations to explain your findings through culture and environmental conditions and the concept of interests. The relationship between cultural reconstructions and the physical environment in which the subjects live and work in should be noted. However, a macrosociological theory was needed to make the link between environmental factors and economic/political arrangements. To build off of the empirical data toward macrosociological theories, it was helpful to focus on interests. These interests are partially determined by circumstance (access both economically and politically). It helped to frame an understanding of why the subjects "seek dignity in the ways they do and why they may fail to meet human needs for self-respect" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 204).

Application of the SEO Model sought to approach and interpret this inquiry and explain the findings with an alignment to existing research.

Ethical Protections

The three basic ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice were followed. It was important that the research participants were not caused distress and were protected from both physical and mental harm. This was done through eliminating bias, listening more than speaking, and allowing the participants to let their individual stories unfold naturally.

The risks were limited and the benefits outweighed, as the benefits have the potential to impact generations of Pacific Islanders. These benefits could include completion of college and attaining a college degree, which will result in a positive economic impact.

Particularly vulnerable participants as determined from the initial interview or even during or after the interview would not be included in the official data. I continued to build upon

the rapport established through the interview process, as relationships are at the center of trust with Pacific Islander people. It was also important to me that participants understood my personal stake in this research. Should the study result in an impact on participants mentally, resources to access local mental health providers would have been provided.

The findings of this research will be published. However, there is no identifiable information about the participants or their families in any publications. All research materials were stored in a password-protected computer that only the researcher was able to access to ensure the privacy of information provided.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was to define the problem (i.e., Pacific Islanders' limited advancement to higher education), design the study, determine what could be in place to disrupt existing power relationships and provide recommendations. The researcher understood their positionality, as they were tasked with engaging in an extensive and enduring conversation with the participants (Introduction to Critical Ethnography, n.d.).

Timeline

The researcher began by seeking IRB approval, which they obtained as there were no identifiable risks associated with the research study. This study asked participants perspectives on challenges, barriers, and cultural impacts to advancing to higher education. Some of the questions were potentially sensitive, and there was a potential for participants to experience some discomfort and privacy invasion.

Once IRB approval was obtained, the researcher shared a flier and a link to her GoogleForms consent aimed at Pacific Islander students aged 16–86. The age range of the participants was to ensure that there was a strong understanding of the reasons for advancement

or lack of advancement to higher education. The researcher also hoped that the wider age range would help readers to understand whether or not there have been any changes in the last few decades in relation to this matter.

Those that completed the GoogleForm were invited to participate in a survey, which took approximately 20 minutes to complete, although some participants took as long as 48 minutes to complete the survey. Based on the survey responses, participants were purposefully selected for interviews to create a diversified pool. Fifteen individuals were chosen for a semi-structured interview that took about 45–60 minutes (on average) and gathered information about what the participants identified as potential barriers to higher education, as well as share their story. Participants met via Zoom and the interview was recorded on Zoom. Participants consent was requested and obtained at the onset of the interview.

After surveys were conducted and the data was organized, it was embedded in the researcher's dissertation. The surveys sought to understand how each participant defines success and whether or not their culture impacted their decision to attend/not attend college.

Post-Doctoral Work

Post-doctorate, dissemination of this research will begin with making direct contact with equity and/or student support departments within district offices. The researcher will begin by focusing on districts with a high population of Pacific Islander students. After providing foundational information for those districts, the aim is to create a partnership with them to provide professional development for not only district administrators, but both certificated and classified staff. Then, the researcher will seek to expand reach to districts with a smaller percentage of Pacific Islander students. The various stages of post-doctoral work will likely take a significant amount of time and effort, but once it gains traction, the researcher then plans on

communicating with colleges/universities, so that they can be better prepared to retain Pacific Islander students that attend. Outside of disseminating information to school districts and colleges/universities it is also important to disseminate to the general public. It is important to shine light towards this important issue. Dissemination of information today can be through journals, traditional media, conferences, websites, and social media. While social media doesn't hold the same weight as a more formal form of communication, it provides immediate dissemination, which can result in interest in the subject matter.

Data Collection Procedures and Sample Size

The data collection procedures I employed were observations, qualitative interviews, and interpersonal process recall. While there appears to be no well-established guidelines for sample sizes for qualitative research, it appears that most texts recommend a sample size of anywhere from 10 to 30, with 20 to 30 being typical. Due to the in-depth nature of the interviews, I aimed for a sample size of 15, with five participants from each group (Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian).

Data Analysis Procedures

The five-step process of qualitative data analysis is what I adhered to. The process involves: (a) Preparing and organizing your data; (b) Reviewing and exploring the data; (c) Creating initial codes; (d) Reviewing the codes and revising or combining into themes; and (e) Presenting themes in a cohesive manner.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This study utilized purposeful sampling to recruit the participants of this study. Participants for this study were recruited from all over the United States. A flier was developed and distributed via Pacific Islander organizations housed in California and through social media (Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter). Study participants were provided with a survey link to complete a nine-question survey via SurveyMonkey after completing a Google Forms consent to participate.

Population and Sample

Bhandari (2020) provides that "a population is the entire group that you want to draw conclusions about." In this study, the population is Pacific Islander students. Seventy-one Pacific Islanders made up the purposeful sampling, which is "the specific group" that my data was collected from (Bhandari, 2020). Fourteen participants identified as male, 54 participants identified as female, and three participants identified as non-binary as detailed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Breakdown of the Survey Respondents by Gender

Male	Female	Non-Binary
14	54	3

In this study, the overall sample is the 71 participants who completed the survey portion of this study: 10 were Melanesian, 31 were Micronesian and 30 were Polynesian as detailed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Breakdown of the Survey Respondents by Pacific Region

Melanesian	Micronesian	Polynesian
10	31	30

The survey participants met the following criteria of the study:

- Pacific Islander (Melanesian, Micronesian or Polynesian)

- Aged 18 +

- Consented to participate in this study.

Data saturation is reached when there is enough data collected to draw necessary conclusions and additional data collection will not produce "value-added insights" (Quantilope, 2023). As Hennik (2021) states, "Saturation can be achieved in a narrow range of interviews (9-17)" (p. 9), which led to the decision to hold 18 interviews, with six participants representing each area of Pasifika (Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia). Unfortunately, a sixth Melanesian participant could not be obtained, resulting in five Melanesian participants, six Micronesian participants, and six Polynesian participants, for a total of 17 participants.

Survey Responses

Survey question one was, "What is your name?" The responses were varied and are not being reported.

Survey question two was, "Please provide your identified age and gender." The responses regarding respondent age are detailed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Breakdown of Survey Question Two (Age)

Age Ranges	Number of Participants
18–19	4
20–22	10
23–25	10
26–28	12
29–31	11
32–34	8
35–37	4
38–40	3
41–43	2
44–45	0
46–60	7

Survey question three was, "What Pacific Islander group do you belong to?" The responses are detailed in Table 4.2.

Survey question four was, "Have you or will you be attending college?" The responses regarding respondent age are detailed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Breakdown of Survey Question Four

I did not attend college.	0
I graduated from college.	52
I attended, but did not graduate from college.	5
I will be graduating from college.	12
I will be attending college.	2

While the data gathered through my interviews (e.g., the majority of respondents attended, graduated or will graduate from college) can appear to controvert published research on the topic, as well as my own personal observations and conversations within the community, the accounts of these predominantly collegiate Pacific Islanders confirmed prevailing understandings about socio-educational challenges for the community nonetheless.

Survey question five was, "Have any of your elders attended college?" The responses regarding respondent age are detailed in Table 4.5. Many of the participants with family members who attended college shared that they felt more strongly about attending college because one of their elders attended.

Table 4.5

Breakdown of Survey Question 5

Yes	44
No	27

Survey questions six, seven, and eight were open-ended questions that are not being reported in a table format. Survey question six was, "What impact does culture have on a Pacific Islander student's academic journey?" Survey question seven was, "What role does culture play in the decision-making process for Pacific Islanders?" Survey question eight was, "How do Pacific Islander students define success?"

Survey question nine was, "Is it possible to reframe a Pacific Islander's thinking about success?" The responses regarding respondent age are detailed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Breakdown of Survey Question 9

Yes	70
No	1

Interview Responses

From the survey participants, 17 participants (5 Melanesians, 6 Micronesians, 6 Polynesians) were selected for interviews that were held via Zoom and lasted between 30 minutes and two and a half hours. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based upon my interview selection criteria. Those invited to participate in interviews met the following interview selection criteria of the study:

- Pacific Islander (Melanesian, Micronesian or Polynesian)

- Aged 18 +

- Consented to participate in an interview

- Provided a substantive survey response

- Represented gender variety for each Pacific Island group

Despite reaching out to invite a fairly even number of participants from each gender group, the interview participants that ultimately agreed to participate in the interviews were not as varied as initially hoped for. These interviews were held to obtain data from each participant regarding their lived experiences as a K-12 Pacific Islander student and (if applicable) as a college student. The same interviewing technique was applied to all interview participants to answer open-ended, probing questions regarding their lived experiences to answer the eighteen interview questions of this study. All interviews were audio/video recorded with the consent of each participant prior to engaging in the interview. The closed captioning built-into Zoom software was used to transcribe each interview, which was then corrected manually as necessary when automatic transcriptions failed to caption accurately. Following the transcription of interviews, themes and patterns were reviewed to answer this study's research questions.

The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 58, with the average age being 29. Fourteen participants were female and three were male. Although the aim was to have a more even number of interview participants from each gender group, approximately 76% of the survey participants were female and after reaching out to several survey participants to obtain interview participants, 14 female and three male participants agreed to move forward with the interview process. Their self-identification ethnic heritage consisted of the following areas of Pasifika: one from Solomon Islands, two from Vanuatu, two from Fiji, three from Ponhpei, two from Yap, one

from Kosrae, one from Chuuk, one from Palau, two from Hawaii, three from Samoa, one from Niue, and two from Tonga. Three participants identified as full Melanesian, two participants identified as part Melanesian, five participants identified as full Micronesian, one participant identified as part Micronesian, five participants identified as full Polynesian, and one participant identified as part Polynesian. The diversity of the participants in age, island of origin and location of upbringing provided the possibility of a variety of responses to the questions and gives credibility to both responses and themes.

Table 4.7

Breakdown of Interview Participants

Participant Number	Age	Gender	Island of Origin	Full or Part Islander	Grew Up in the US or On the Island	Attended College	Elders Attended College
1	28	Female	Solomon Islands	Full	Both	Yes	Yes
2	49	Female	Vanuatu	Full	Both	Yes	No
3	21	Female	Fiji	Part	U.S.	Yes	Mother Only
4	24	Female	Vanuatu	Part	Island	Yes	Yes
5	58	Female	Fiji	Full	Both	No	Yes
6	36	Female	Pohnpei	Part	U.S.	Yes	Father Only
7	28	Male	Yap	Full	Both	Yes	Yes
8	23	Female	Pohnpei	Full	U.S.	Yes	They started, but didn't graduate.
9	22	Female	Kosrae & Pohnpei	Full	Mostly U.S.	Yes	Mother started, but didn't graduate.
10	28	Female	Chuuk & Pohnpei	Full	Mostly U.S.	Yes	Yes
11	23	Female	Palau	Full	Both	Yes	AA Degrees
12	30	Female	Hawaii	Full	U.S.	Yes	Yes
13	23	Male	Hawaii	Full	U.S.	Yes	Mother Only
14	21	Female	Samoa & Niue	Part	U.S.	Yes	Yes
15	29	Male	Samoa & Tonga	Full	Mostly U.S.	Attended, but didn't graduate.	No
16	38	Female	Samoa	Full	U.S.	Yes	No
17	18	Female	Tonga	Full	U.S.	Started	No

Major Findings

The participants in this study provided data to nine survey questions. Participants one through seventeen were selected from their survey responses and participated in a Zoom interview and responded to 18 interview questions regarding their experiences as a Pacific Islander student in the United States. Upon a thorough analysis of the data, the researcher developed criteria for the findings to be considered major. If 35 or more survey participants and then nine or more interview participants were in agreement with their response, it was determined to be a major finding.

The findings of this study reveal the challenges Pacific Islander students face as they advance towards higher education and for those that attend an institution of higher education. My research reframes what success means and challenges deficit language and mindsets towards Pacific Islander students in the United States by examining the implications of their culture being at war with colonizer culture. My findings also reveal the collectivist nature of Pacific Islander culture and the richness of the Pacific Islander way of life. The results highlight the inequities Pacific Islanders face with their limited college access and limited support to advance academically. All of the participants spoke about being the minority within the Pacific Islander community and there was very limited support (if at all) within their K - 12 education. Their friend and family group had a very limited number of people who had advanced to college (if any at all).

Coding of data resulted in six major findings: (a) Pacific Islander Culture Impacts a Pacific Islander Student's Academic Journey; (b) Pacific Islander Culture Plays a Significant Role in the Decision-Making Process for Pacific Islanders; (c) Pacific Islander Students Define Success as Being Able to Care for Their Loved Ones; (d) It is Possible to Reframe a Pacific

Islander Student's Thinking About Success; (e) Pacific Islander Students Face Barriers When it

Comes to Education; (f) School Districts and Colleges Do Not Have an Understanding of What it

Means to be a Pacific Islander Student. Survey participants responses are detailed as "SPP" for

Polynesian survey participants, "SPMi" for Micronesian survey participants, and "SPMe" for

Melanesian survey participants. Responses detailed as participants one through seventeen are

responses from the interview participants. To this end, it cannot be said enough that the

marginalization of Pacific Islanders stories and practices of True Culture are so relatively

marginalized in American scholarship and policy circles that it is the belief of the author that,

however humbly, simply adding to the formal register of Pacific Islander sentiments about

American education and its cultural contexts unfolds as a form of decolonization. Doing so as

doctoral research for public consideration, then, is a conscious attempt to transform systemic bias

against Pacific Islanders that exists in the predominant practices of United States educational and

governmental institutions.

**Major Finding 1: Pacific Islander Culture Impacts a Pacific Islander Student's Academic
Journey**

Pacific Islander culture has an impact on a Pacific Islander student's academic journey in

a variety of ways. The impact itself is significant due to the collectivist nature of Pacific Islander

culture, which participants discussed as a factor that impacted their academic journey and further

explained by SPMi 6:

> I believe the culture itself can either make or break a student's push in academia.
> For example, I believe our culture is collective. However, if you're expected to be
> ambitious and provide in that way for your family, you may have better academic
> outcomes. If you're considered a caregiver, the stress on your role may be more
> centered around caring for those younger than you. If you're seen as a

breadwinner, the family may look for you to work as soon as possible even if that job does not require any education.

Participants also expressed the challenge of balancing cultural expectations and academic expectations, as evidenced by SPMe 3: "It requires us to focus on balancing religious duties, family responsibilities, and creating time to focus on studies."

Because traditional culture is important, being away from other Pacific Islanders and/or those that practice and understand their cultural norms can be especially challenging. In some cases, distance from home culture creates emotional distress, as it can feel very isolating:

> For me, my cultural background greatly impacted my academic journey because of the absence of my culture around me. Higher education is so individual-driven and competitive. It's easy to feel like you're just there to get good grades and graduate all on your own, especially when you feel isolated from other students who don't share the same background as you. (SPMi 8)

As explained within Chapter II, Pacific Islander culture is collectivist and colonizer (American) culture is individualistic. In America, there's an importance placed on working in isolation from others and competitive nature (Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, 2019). This aspect of colonizer culture is especially challenging for Pacific Islanders, as we are raised to understand the importance of our community and keeping our community in mind in all that we do (R-Squared, 2023).

Major Finding 2: Pacific Islander Culture Plays a Significant Role in the Decision-Making Process for Pacific Islanders

Pacific Islander culture permeates all aspects of life, which is why it plays a significant role in the decision-making process. Pacific Islanders are raised with a core set of values and it is expected that every Pacific Islander is to follow them. Any deviation from those values is viewed as a distancing from or rejection of culture and may also be viewed as a sign of disrespect of your elders.

> Respecting our elders is important in our culture so many people like to do what their parents, grandparents or other elders advise. If you came from a family that where the elders prioritized academia— you'll probably make decisions that show that value. If you come from a family that values fishing— you may have a lot of the youth centering learning around that skill. (SPMi 6)

The values of holding family in the highest regard and placing all areas of life as secondary to family are misaligned with a colonized education system: "My Pacific Islander identity shaped me with the values and knowledge that I appreciate. However, I know those cultural values do not always align with an academic institution so that cross-cultural shift is hard to navigate" (SPP 24).

Pacific Islanders make decisions based on the needs of their family and/or the community. Whereas the highly individualistic culture of the United States focuses on autonomy in all decisions. Studies have been conducted in the medical field to ensure that medical providers understand that decisions regarding medical care for Pacific Islanders are made by families and not just the patient (McLaughlin & Braun, 1998).

Major Finding 3: Pacific Islander Students Define Success as Being Able to Care for Their Loved Ones

While success may look slightly different for every individual, the core belief of success being defined as the ability to care for your loved ones rings true. There are a multitude of ways to care for your loved ones and there are many Pacific Islanders who begin working at an early age to contribute financially to their family home. This financial support typically continues throughout your parents/elders lives, which may place a financial strain on the younger generation attempting to support not only themselves, but their elders. Oftentimes, the financial support is provided through working a labor job such as security, warehouse worker or custodian. This type of employment is physically demanding and places a lot of strain on the

body. Irrespective of the strain, having a consistent paycheck to support your family is the

primary goal:

> Success also comes if you are capable of making a lot of money and being able to provide for all of your family. Success for islanders is achievable if they are willing to give back to the pacific island community. (SPMi 6)

> Success means being able to provide for yourself and your family. As Pacific Islanders, we are extensions of our family, and as part of a collective, it is important that we are able to be self sufficient and happy, and to be able to share that with our loved ones. (SPMi 10)

Due to the collectivist nature of Pacific Islander culture, when one of us wins, we all win. One of

us winning also serves an example for younger generations: "Making your family and

community proud–being a role model for the younger generation and showing them that they can

do this and so much more (representation)" (SPMe 3).

Colonizer culture views success as financial gain and social mobility as being achieved

through individual determination and having an effort to succeed (Churchwell, 2021). Pacific

Islanders do value making money, but only to ensure they are able to care for their family

(Fischer, 2023). The pressures are especially evident with high rates of depression, anxiety and

alcohol use disorder, with unfortunate low rates of mental health support (Subica et al., 2019).

Major Finding 4: It is Possible to Reframe a Pacific Islander Student's Thinking About Success

It is clear, based on the participants responses, that it is possible to reframe a Pacific

Islander student's thinking about success. However, a lot of the reframing comes from seeing or

hearing from elders, as we are taught to respect the expertise of the elders within our

community:

One hundred percent! Yeah. I wish someone was there to, you know, explain why specific things are done in our culture, like it would have helped me understand more. I feel like things like this would help students all over the Pacific Islands see it from an older perspective. (SPP 15)

Younger participants acknowledged that times are changing and that in addition to our traditional cultural beliefs around success, the definition of success may also include higher education for some families in ways that it didn't before:

I think so. You know, my generation has definitely been the one to be pushed to go to college and while that may not be accessible for everyone, some people may not want to go. It wasn't pushed on my parents generation the way that it is for my generation. (SPMi 11)

Although it is possible to reframe a Pacific Islander's thinking about success, focusing on what that may mean requires one to think about our culture. In doing so, it becomes clear that some of the benefits of our culture can also be ways that are problematic:

I think sometimes it can almost be dehumanizing when we are only living for other people. Therefore, being able to realize our humanity in this and treat yourself with compassion, but to answer your question, is it possible? I think so, yeah. (SPP 17)

One of the other factors that rang true was viewing success from a cultural perspective versus a colonized perspective and how that may cause a shift in the way that success is viewed:

Personally, like my vision of success has changed throughout the years and depending on like the colonial lens was very like, when I was in high school it was very much that you have to go to college and that's how you're gonna succeed. But now, thinking more critically about it, there are many other ways you can succeed and trying to go back to my roots and culture and thinking about it in a non-colonizer way. I think that anyone's vision of success can be changed. (SPP 12)

Postcolonial tension is apparent and an area that is a major cause for concern. In colonizer culture, elders are often discredited (Reid, 2023). If younger generations of Pacific Islanders adapt to this colonizer mentality, it will further contribute to the epistemicide and

late-stage colonization of Pacific Islander people. It is important to strategically and consciously renegotiate on terms that are empowering to the community as well as its individual members and not just trade true culture for colonizer culture.

Major Finding 5: Pacific Islander Students Face Barriers When It Comes to Education

Pacific Islander students face barriers that range from financial to operating within a system that doesn't understand them and often doesn't believe in them. One of the most common barriers is financial, as most Pacific Islander students come from families that are struggling to make ends meet. In 2021, it was reported that a higher number of Pacific Islanders live in poverty compared to the US population and the median household income of Pacific Islanders is less than the US average (USAFacts, 2023b). The financial barrier impacts a Pacific Islanders ability to even view college as a possibility, so they may not even look into ways to fund their college education:

> For many students I know that is and also if you are coming from a background in which you don't have money it's less likely you are going to pursue higher education because you don't see it for yourself, even if you are an amazing student. If you don't have the means, you aren't going to pursue that anymore. (SPP 17)

The financial burden to attend college extends beyond just the tuition itself. Because of that, college is often cost prohibitive for Pacific Islanders:

> That's a long laundry list. I think first and foremost our financial barriers. Hurdles financially that you have to think about because it's not just about the tuition. It's about room and board. It's about how to feed yourself. It's where you live if you can't afford to live on campus. There's so many little intricacies that people don't realize that comes with college and that students still need help getting to that point. It's not just about tuition and that increases all the time. I think that's one huge barrier. I think also the barrier of not having many Pacific Islanders around you is also a huge barrier. Trying to manage like being in my culture and then manage to be in someone else's culture that is honestly foreign to me still and not being able to have that supportive community is a huge barrier because you want to feel comfortable. (SPMi 11)

Outside of the financial barrier, the demands placed on students due to culture can make college seem like an impossibility:

> I honestly believe that the cultural impact made on Pacific Islanders academic journey is draining and school could seem like it isn't an important option for Pacific Islanders. Sometimes school isn't an option because of the financial support that we are given for academic success and it can be upsetting to realize that you aren't given that opportunity. (SPMi 9)

And: "It may affect the time needed to complete one's academic journey due to demands to support family and the village yet it is a healthy cultural ideal to serve and care for one another" (SPP 28).

An additional barrier faced by Pacific Islander students has to do with the model minority stereotype that was once only associated with Asian American students, but is now associated with Pacific Islander students due to us being clumped together under the AAPI umbrella. There are some educators and institutions that uphold a sense of the model minority stereotype, but at the same time do not expect Pacific Islander students to uphold the stereotype in the way that they expect Asian American students to: "Model minority expectations, pressure to excel with the expectation that you won't" (SPMi 28).

Major Finding 6: School Districts and Colleges Do Not Have an Understanding of What It Means to be a Pacific Islander Student

School districts and colleges do not have an understanding of what it means to be a Pacific Islander student and don't appear to care to learn. The American education system is built based on colonizer ideology (Huff, n.d.; Jones, 2020; Sen, 2021; Siu, 2015), which does not align with Pacific Islander culture:

> I think it plays a huge role on the academic experience. Especially here in America the education system was not made with the nuances of our culture in mind. With this being the case, it is not surprising as to why we see the disproportionate amount of PIs not finishing college. (SPP 14)

And: "Academic systems are built upon colonizer ideals. This makes it difficult for Pacific Islanders to practice their culture unless they are able to find community during their academic journey" (SPP 12).

There is a lack of representation not revealed in the staff at schools/colleges, but through the curriculum that Pacific Islander students are taught through:

> From a USA-educated perspective, there is an absence of education about Pacific Islanders in schools. I understand that we are indeed a minority in this country and 'not historically significant' compared to groups like Europeans or Native Americans but not seeing my own people represented in school made me think that I didn't have a place there and further a place in this country. (SPP 29)

And:

> I faced an academic environment which was inherently anti-indigenous and deeply rooted in white and western theory, practice and evaluation. Being from a culture which is vastly different from the academic culture made me more vulnerable and I often felt alone in my classes. (SPP 13)

Because of the lack of representation and because of the cultural misalignment, Pacific Islanders may not even see the benefit of education. The things that we value are not covered in textbooks within the four walls of a classroom:

> Our culture sees Westernized education as - why do we really need it anyways, when we have been surviving for this long and generations without it? Knowledge of our indigenous land, language, environment and families is much more important to us than education in the classroom. (SPMi 23)

Lastly, the feelings about a colonized educational system are negative due to the impact that colonization has had on our people and our systems at large:

> Everything. Cultural identity aligns perfectly with the exploitative nature of higher education. Education is the foundation of liberation and for cultures that have been impacted by colonization, redefining that relationship with a critical lens can begin reclaiming that history. (SPP 27)

Talanoa (Talk Story)

In Pacific Islander culture, it is typical to engage in talk story. Talk story is sharing of histories, ideas, opinions and events with others (All Good Tales, 2018). While the interview process was semi-structured, it was a form of talk story because each participant was sharing their history, ideas and opinions as it pertains to higher education. One participant from each area of Pasifika is highlighted through talk story to better explain their perspectives.

Participant 1

Participant 1 is a 28-year-old female from the Solomon Islands. She is full Melanesian and has lived in both the United States and on the island. She is a college graduate and is not the first college graduate in her family.

She expressed that true culture involves holding a connection with other Pacific Islanders irrespective of language. It involves being connected by something that is common. It plays a significant role in the decision-making process, as she expressed a need to also feel connected to the ocean. Her decision about where to attend college included proximity to the ocean and her family.

She described the definition of success for Pacific Islanders as being able to provide and give back to your family in whatever capacity and to make them proud. However, culture strains a student's journey because, as she explained it, academia is designed to do it for you but as a Pacific Islander, you don't have the privilege of focusing on just yourself during your academic journey. Pacific Islanders always have to take care of their family and sometimes that requires the student to take time away from school and miss out on academic requirements.

During her K-12 journey, she did not have support that understood what it meant to be a Pacific Islander student. She expressed that school districts and colleges "definitely" do not have

an understanding of what it means to be a Pacific Islander student and that if schools are going to have Pacific Islander clubs, a focus on having a Hawaii club and a separate indigenous Pacific Islander students club is beneficial to increase the number of students who join.

She shared that her experience was somewhat unique, as she had a parent who was highly educated and valued education. Despite growing up with this expressed in her household, she still experienced challenges throughout her college journey that were specific to her being a Pacific Islander in higher education.

Participant 9

Participant 9 is a 22-year-old female from Kosrae and Pohnpei. She is full Micronesian and has lived in both the United States and on the island, but mostly in the United States. She is a college graduate and her mother started college, but did not graduate.

She expressed that true culture means being able to express your identity and more specifically where you're from or the community that you represent. It also involves traditions and models that you stand for. It impacts her decision-making process, as everyday decisions and big events always relate back to one question: "How can I represent my island?"

She described the definition of success for Pacific Islanders as being able to provide for your family, which does not mean attending college as long as you are able to provide. She expressed how culture can get in the way of education studies because you have to do what your family wants, even if it is in opposition to academic advancement. Additionally, financial barriers play a large role in whether or not Pacific Islanders are able to go to and stay in college because they have their own families to think about.

During her K-12 journey, her schools placed a large emphasis on furthering your education and shared that it would be a lot harder. While there was an emphasis placed on higher

education, she felt that there wasn't an understanding of what it means to be a Pacific Islander student and the trials and tribulations Pacific Islanders go through. Because of this, she experienced other Pacific Islanders in Hawaii say that they were born and raised in Hawaii when in fact, they were born on the island, but didn't want to admit that.

She shared that because she didn't have a parent who attended and completed college, she was influenced by her time being taught on the island to attend and complete college. She attributes some of her ability to push through towards completion to her understanding of Micronesian culture. She applies the Micronesian way of persevering no matter the personal challenges one faces to her college experience.

Participant 13

Participant 13 is a 23-year-old male from Hawaii. He is full Polynesian and has only lived in the United States. He is a college graduate and his mother also graduated from college.

He shared that true culture is very family oriented with centered beliefs and cultural practices. True culture comes from two things: the universal components that Pacific Islanders share together, not just intra family, but intercommunal and then what one learns as a family member (traditions passed down with family-specific nuances). He expressed that there is value and worth within Pacific Islander backgrounds, families, and individuals within cultural expression. Decision-making is impacted by value systems, as there is a thought about the impact on the land not just now, but seven generations from now, as well as maintaining traditional values and perspectives. He made a decision to reject a strong medical school because it was too far away from family and would likely not allow for learning as a culturally informed, culturally centered practitioner.

He explained that the definition of success has always been confusing because his identity aligned definition of success was different than the social norms of the community he grew up in. This confusion brought up several questions: "What does it mean to get a college degree? What does that mean towards my community?" His undergraduate experienced allowed him to work through how to merge academic learning with culturally centered practices through traditional approaches. He intends on taking the tools he learned from a Western institution and find a way to use them for the benefit of his family and his community in a Pacific, indigenous centered way. Ultimately, his reframed definition of success is the pursuit of knowledge, which isn't necessarily through Western systems of academia, through a community centered cultural point of view and apply it to the Pacific Islander community.

His college experience provided him with limited access to other Pacific Islanders and when he did see other Islanders, they were often participating in stereotypical activities (sports and the arts). He began to realize that the competitive mindset that was typical at his college was not benefiting him and he reoriented himself towards his goals, which included serving in Native and Pasifika communities. Because of that, community based work shifted to become the priority. This journey wasn't one that was supported by his university and one that he had to work through on his own.

Culture impacted his academic journey in a variety of ways. He explained how it can be hard to enter a Western institution that is rooted in histories of colonization and white supremacy that are conflicting with Pacific Islander histories. Attending a Western institution can feel like being in a foreign place where there isn't an understanding of Pacific Islander culture and may even directly or indirectly seek to abolish culture. The classes you attend are focused on Western epistemologies and oppose traditional methods and traditional understanding. Data sets presented

in classes often included AAPI, which often left out surveying of Pacific Islanders altogether and when asked, professors would share that they couldn't create the statistical power to do so. There's a lack of engagement of Pacific Islanders and it frustrates Pacific Islanders both inside and outside of the classroom and it feels culturally unsafe.

Throughout his K-12 experience, there wasn't support or understanding of what it means to be a Pacific Islander student. There was sometimes a fascination with Pacific Islander culture but in a way that was demeaning. In college, he felt obligated to engage in things that were not in alignment with culture and often felt invisible. Because of his experiences, he sought to find ways to decolonize himself, in spite of the oppression and tendencies of others to oppress Pasifika people in education.

He shared many challenges that he experienced on his road to college and his college journey. His mother and his ties to his culture helped him to push through those challenges. The experience of attempting to adhere to true culture within an institution that seems to erase culture other than Western culture was taxing.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This study began with an assumption that culture impacts Pacific Islanders' desire to attend an institution of higher education. Based on that assumption, three research questions were formulated:

Research Questions

1. How do Pacific Islander students define success?

2. What role does culture play in the decision-making process?

3. What impact does culture (Fa'a Samoa/Anga fakatonga) have on a Pacific Islander student's academic journey?

Findings

There were six major findings uncovered from this study:

1. Pacific Islander culture impacts a Pacific Islander student's academic journey.

2. Pacific Islander culture plays a significant role in the decision-making process for Pacific Islanders.

3. Pacific Islander students define success as being able to care for their loved ones.

4. It is possible to reframe a Pacific Islander student's thinking about success.

5. Pacific Islander students face barriers when it comes to education.

6. School districts and colleges do not have an understanding of what it means to be a Pacific Islander student.

The six findings are directly linked to the three research questions posed. Finding numbers three (Pacific Islander students define success as being able to care for their loved ones) and four (It is possible to reframe a Pacific Islander student's thinking about success) are linked to the first research question: How do Pacific Islander students define success? Finding number two

(Pacific Islander culture plays a significant role in the decision-making process for Pacific Islanders) is linked to the second research question: What role does culture play in the decision-making process? Finding numbers one (Pacific Islander culture impacts a Pacific Islander student's academic journey), five (Pacific Islander students face barriers when it comes to education), and six (School districts and colleges do not have an understanding of what it means to be a Pacific Islander student) are linked to the third research question: What impact does culture (Fa'a Samoa/Anga fakatonga) have on a Pacific Islander student's academic journey?

Conclusions

The findings of this study resulted in the following conclusions.

Conclusion 1: Pacific Islander Culture is Misaligned with the American Education System

In order to provide greater access for Pacific Islander students, Local Educational Agencies and colleges need to make changes to better understand Pacific Islander culture and create relationships with the students and families within their community. Many K-12 school districts have taken on the stance of "all means all," but really only consider numerically significant subgroups to be a part of the "all" because those are the reported subgroups. If we really want to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all students (and we should because even one student falling behind is one too many) then we need to do something different for Pacific Islander students.

The educational system wasn't created to lift up the richness of the cultures of its inhabitants. As explained by Smith (2021): "The colonizer did not simply design an education system. They designed an education especially to destroy Indigenous cultures, value systems and appearance" (p. 22). There wasn't a desire to seek alignment nor was there a hope of infusing

cultural values into the American educational system. The colonizer sought out to erase culture and create an educational culture of their own and that system is still present in American education today. Many Pacific Islanders agree that institutions of higher education "were never intended for us and continue to be places that do not acknowledge or value our existence" (Vaughn et al., 2021).

Conclusion 2: The Barriers for Pacific Islander Students Make it Especially Challenging for a Pacific Islander Student to Obtain a College Degree

There are two consistent barriers that Pacific Islander students face when it comes to higher education: lack of financial resources and family/work responsibilities. Students that needed to take developmental courses in English and Math spent down some of their PELL grants, which impacted the total amount of funding they had towards completion. Because there are a limited number of Pacific Islanders with college degrees, their earning potential is limited, which makes it difficult for Pacific Islander families to fund a college education. This financial barrier is also complicated by family obligations, which may include a need to support family financially. Even if financial obligations aren't present to support the family, family support often requires physical presence and that is a priority over college requirements (APIA Scholars, 2020).

Implications

The major findings of this study led to the following implications.

Implication 1: Pacific Islanders Have to Battle Whether Their Culture or Colonizer Culture Will Win for Them

The American educational system provides a narrow perspective of the world and ignores the stories of BIPOC communities. Students are taught through a white colonial lens with a

common disregard for their backgrounds and their cultures (Huff, n.d.). The American educational system continues to be compliance driven. There is a lot of talk about student agency, but the reality is that most classrooms are still focused on churning out students that will fit into a perfect box (HundrED, 2021). Compliance driven classrooms that maintain a traditional focus on colonizer culture don't allow for students to explore, express, or celebrate their cultures. This creates a situation where students have to decide whether or not they will acclimate to colonizer culture or maintain their true culture which they are taught (by their families) is important.

This study confirms the stories that other Pacific Islanders have shared about their educational experiences. Teli Hafoka, a Tongan student who grew up in Stockton, California received little encouragement from her educators and counselors, despite being in the top percent of her high school class. She felt "pigeonholed as a dumb athlete" and when she was advised, she was given information about community colleges. Because she didn't have the advice of those within her school and her parents weren't informed about what was needed to go to college, she ultimately attended community college and dropped out after one year (NBCNews, 2014). Teli's story is ultimately a success story because after seven years of working in a manual labor job, she received encouragement to go back to college and despite the lack of support within the educational system and the challenges of the misalignment with her culture, she was more determined to complete her studies. Teli is pursuing her doctorate and states, "I can't identify with most of my professors . . . we're done being statistics and we're over being talked about. We have come to understand that reclaiming our narratives is important . . . we are few but mighty" (Hirshon, 2021).

Implication 2: Pacific Islanders Will Continue to Struggle Financially if the System Doesn't Change

The earning potential of Pacific Islanders is limited due to a lack of college degrees within the community. According to the Harvard Business School Study titled *Dismissed by Degrees* (2017), employers believe that applicants with a college degree are better prepared and possess more hard and soft skills than candidates without a degree (Pelta, 2023). Maintaining this mindset reduces the types of jobs that are available to Pacific Islanders, which is why Pacific Islanders are often working in manual labor jobs that do not pay very well. If there is nothing done to increase the number of Pacific Islanders obtaining a college degree, this will continue to be a struggle and financial barriers will continue to be a major challenge for the upcoming generations of Pacific Islander students.

Recommendations and Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendation 1: Update the District's Strategic Plan to Ensure Critical Responsiveness

K-12 school districts across the United States create and implement a strategic plan that provides the public with their mission, vision, and focus areas for a period of time (Kennewick School District, n.d.). To ensure that the needs of Pacific Islander students are met, adding cultural responsiveness with a specific focus on several marginalized groups (including Pacific Islanders) will ensure that school districts understand the cultural differences, recognize bias, and embrace the beauty of Pacific Islander culture. Having this understanding will allow for educators and administrators to better support Pacific Islander students and their families. As part of this goal, the district can also expand hiring practices to provide greater opportunities for Pacific Islanders to be hired, so that students can see representation within their schools.

Recommendation 2: Develop Partnerships with Pacific Islander Organizations

There are many Pacific Islander organizations throughout the United States (AAPI Community Organization Directory, n.d.). School districts can reach out to local AAPI or PI organizations to help identify needs and obtain a better understanding of Pacific Islander culture and provide language resources (when necessary). These partnerships can also help to create scholarship opportunities and work study opportunities for Pacific Islander students. Leaning into cultural experts and trusted community partners can help to bridge the gap between school districts and families and help to establish trust.

Pacific Islanders value community responsibility and with a relationship in place between trusted organizations and schools, Pacific Islander students and families can begin to see education as an extension of their community responsibility. Creating partnerships will allow for Pacific Islander students to learn from their elders within their community and see the benefit of persevering and completing a college program (Vaughn et al., 2021).

Recommendation 3: Create and Implement a Plan to Address the "Achievement Gap" for Pacific Islander Students

The United States Department of Education have five main groups that are reported, which include: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White (NCES, n.d.). While the United States Department of Education have yet to disaggregate the data, Local Educational Agencies can more easily. In the State of California, Aeries is the most commonly used Student Information System (PRWeb, 2018). Aeries makes it easy to run a report that will provide lists of students generated from the race field on the Student Ethnicity and Race form. This would make it easier for schools/school districts to disaggregate student data to determine how specific Pacific

Islander groups were faring. Having this information makes an instructional and intervention plan more accurate, as the correct students would be targeted.

In recent years, states have passed laws or plans to adopt ethnic studies courses and curriculum. Most of these actions took place between February 2019 and January 2021. In California, Assembly Bill 2016 was passed in September 2016 to require the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop, adopt, modify, or revise a model curriculum in ethnic studies for students in grades seven through twelve. In September of 2020, the governor vetoed AB 331, which would have required high school students to take a one-semester ethnic studies course as part of their graduation requirements. The bill was reintroduced in December of 2020 as AB 101 and in 2021, a law was passed requiring high schools to offer ethnic studies courses in the 2025-2026 school year, with the class of 2030 subject to this as a graduation requirement (Ethnic Studies Legislation, 2021). While the intention behind this law is good, the ethnic studies model curriculum that was adopted on March 18, 2021, contains significant gaps and the journey towards adoption involved advocacy from several ethnic groups to ensure that the curriculum was inclusive. Chapter 4 of the ethnic studies model curriculum provides sample lessons and topics. Reviewing sample 14 titled "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the Model Minority Myth" reveals several things that are concerning. The lesson purpose and overview makes it clear that there is a stronger focus on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are included because we are a part of the AAPI label. The lesson plan then includes sample ethnic groups and a note that the list is in no way exhaustive. The first 15 ethnic groups are Asian American and the last five are Pacific Islander. The five Pacific Islander ethnic groups that are listed are confusing as they list Fijian, Samoan, Hawaiian, Micronesian, and Polynesian. Micronesian and Polynesian are two of the three groups within Pasifika. However, the third

group, Melanesian, is not included at all in the list. Fijian is the only Melanesian representation and Samoan and Hawaiian technically fall within Polynesia. However, conversations with Native Hawaiians would lead to an understanding that Native Hawaiians have needs that are different from that of the rest of Polynesia and there is a preference to be seen as a separate group to ensure a focus on their particular needs. This is further understood by the changing of the White House Initiative's name under the Biden administration. During one of our interagency working group meetings, the conversation of Native Hawaiian's needing to have their specific needs being met was raised and the name of the White House Initiative changed from the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) to White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI). While an adoption of ethnic studies curriculum is a step in the right direction, there is still significant work to do.

Additionally, the term achievement gap is always associated with students of color who are being outperformed by their white peers. The word "gap" itself does not acknowledge the harm and racism being experienced by students of color (Love, 2023). Words are powerful and continuing to use language that is not properly explaining the racial disparities and harm, we are failing to appropriately address the issues of racial justice.

Recommendation 4: Develop Partnerships Between LEAs and Local Colleges that are Aimed at Increasing the Number of Pacific Islander Students Advancing to Higher Education

LEAs creating partnerships with local colleges serves to benefit both the LEAs and the institutions of higher education. Colleges with current Pacific Islander students enrolled in the local colleges can serve as role models for the students enrolled in the school district and the school district can also have the benefit of hiring college students to serve as interns and then

possibly full time employees post graduation. Furthermore, higher education institutions can create a specific scholarship for Pacific Islander students that is promoted through each LEA. This would help to reduce the financial barrier (that this study revealed) that impacts many Pacific Islander students. This can allow for a direct track for Pacific Islander students and help to reduce the stress associated with a transition to college.

LEAs and Colleges can look to the Pacific Islands' Student Association (PISA) at UCLA to understand the benefit of partnership. PISA has been partnering with high schools in the Los Angeles area since 1986 with a goal of empowering Pacific Islander students to graduate high school and pursue higher education. From its inception through 2014, PISA refused to host a culture night because they didn't want to simply be viewed as performers or for the outer community to exotify Pacific Islanders. PISA believes that "it's imperative that we build community so that we can empower each other. It's because of community-building . . . that we are stronger and able to address common issues like access to higher education retention" (Hirshon, 2021).

Recommendation for Further Research: Education in the United States Versus on the Islands & Mental Toll Taken on Pacific Islander Students Due to the Misalignment

This study focused on the American education system and the advancement of Pacific Islanders who attended K-12 schools in America. It is important to determine if there is a significant difference in the academic achievement of students who grew up on the islands versus students who grew up in America. A couple of the participants attended a short period of time on the islands or spoke of their cousin's experience growing up on the islands. There appears to be an increased focus on preparing and encouraging students on the island to pursue higher education than there is in the United States. The stories and experiences make it clear that the

approach is different and while the educators on the islands stress that college is challenging, they are still encouraging and share opportunities that may provide a financial benefit to prepare students to attend university. While my study did not focus on the success rates of students who grew up on the islands, it is important to determine if a more encouraging, informed approach will result in a greater number of Pacific Islander students attending institutions of higher education. If so, that could be very informative and result in a benefit to students who are educated in America if American schools adopt the island approach.

Pacific Islanders in general suffer with mental illness and mental distress at high rates, as evidenced in Figure 6. It would be important to determine the mental toll taken specifically on Pacific Islander students who are trying to navigate the misalignment of their true culture and the American education system. Having accurate data will allow for appropriate support and can also make clear that the current system is harming Pacific Islander students. As discussed by Gomez (2017), Asian American Pacific Islander students are at increased risks of dealing with cultural pressures, discrimination, history of trauma, and mistrusts of the dominant cultural system, which results in the lowest rate of mental healthcare utilization (Gomez, 2017).

My Talanoa

I grew up on the East Coast and attended both K-12 and institutions of higher education where there wasn't a single Pacific Islander on staff. When I then became an educator in California, the state with the second highest percentage of Pacific Islanders in the United States, I was the only Pacific Islander on staff at all of the schools that I worked at (in both Los Angeles and Orange Counties). This lack of representation was a challenge to me as a student because I always wondered why there was no one who looked like me or shared my same values in school. It continued to be a challenge as an educator and educational leader because I became the sole

individual who was tasked with supporting our Pacific Islander students. Instead of my colleagues attempting to understand Pacific Islander culture, all Pacific Islander students and their families were often just directed to me for support. While I am happy to support my people, I continue to be angered by the fact that others feel as though it is not their duty to also do so.

Throughout my academic career, I've been tasked with completing assignments and writing papers just for the sake of doing so without any consideration for alternate ways of expressing understanding. This continued throughout my doctoral journey as well, as paper after paper were written to prove that I was capable of working up to writing a dissertation that proved that I had done sufficient work and had a strong enough understanding of my topic. As a K-12 educator, I believe in student agency and do not believe in rigor just for the sake of rigor. My experience of the doctoral journey felt as though it was full of rigor for the sake of rigor and often devoid of student agency. As a Pacific Islander scholar-practitioner culminating the doctoral journey, I feel as though the traditional dissertation should be abolished and believe that liberation "from epistemological and pedagogical domination" will allow us to "imagine a different world" for higher education (Eve, 2021).

This process has often made me question myself and stressed the individualistic nature of education. It additionally made me feel as though my personal knowledge about my community and my culture was unimportant and that unless I was able to find recent citations, I couldn't possibly be telling the truth. As previously stated in this dissertation, citations for Pacific Islanders are limited because the United States presented aggregated data until just a few years ago and the number of Pacific Islanders in education is so limited. Despite the problematic dirth of "legitimate" research by Pacific Islanders on Pacific Islanders, I found myself having to strategically gather any citations I could find in a desperate attempt to support a claim that true

culture in my community knows all too well already. The point being that the normalization process of the scholarly inquiry of the dissertation led much less to providing me with robustly transformative new knowledge about my problem of practice and, instead, helped to confirm for me why Pacific Islanders are apparently absent from the very academic cultures that help to orchestrate the procedures by which colonizer culture disciplines and controls its truth claims. I was encouraged by certain faculty to present my knowledge as a wisdom holder as much as possible. As scholarship itself reveals, opposing cultural norms (true culture and colonizer culture), together with distrust of academic institutions, mean that it is not possible to simply speak on behalf of true culture, as I was encouraged. The degree in which I can speak from a scholarly perspective, is impacted by the limited research in comparison to many other cultures to inform sharing information in this way. From an ethnographic perspective, I heard predominantly from the relative minority of Pacific Islanders who had achieved academic success or who had academic success within their families to draw upon. Even though they also acknowledged the difficulties of the cultural differences and structures stacked against them, it wasn't the same as being able to share stories of the large body of Pacific Islanders who aren't in that position.

When I sought to understand why there was such a limited number of Pacific Islander students advancing to higher education, I didn't realize the significant impact that this research would have on me personally. As I reviewed the survey responses and began communicating with respondents to secure interview participants, I felt a heavy weight on me, but couldn't quite place why it was weighing so heavily. After concluding my first interview, I had some clarity. The stories and the experiences of my participants were similar to many of the experiences I had growing up. I realized that I had spent almost all of my academic career excusing ignorance and

being harmed in the process. It was hard to grapple with these emotions and face the fact that I had become so used to the American educational system and that I had become someone who (as a student) was compliant, which was in complete opposition to the person that I am as an educator and an educational leader. The emotional toll of this discovery was heavy and I realized that I needed to give myself more time to conduct and recover from each interview.

Throughout the interview process, I realized that not only was I harmed, but so many other people were too (and still were being harmed). The silver lining in all of this heaviness was that when I looked at each of the interview participants, I saw someone who was incredibly strong and had beaten the odds. I felt so proud of each of the participants that had survived their academic journey and persevered to achieve both Pacific Islander success but academic success. The positivity was short lived, as I was forced to face the facts that I was looking at the faces of the minority and that so many of my Pacific Islander brothers, sisters, and cousins hadn't advanced to higher education or did but weren't able to finish. Instead of sitting in sadness, I am fueled to find solutions and hope that this dissertation helps to lift the voices of my Pacific Islander brothers, sisters, and cousins to inspire others to go to college and to beat the odds. I also hope that it will help to raise awareness to the challenges our people face so that LEAs and universities begin to look at Pacific Islander students as important, even if they aren't a numerically significant subgroup because all means all, right?

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APPENDIX A: ONLINE CONSENT FORM

PURPOSE: The purpose of the qualitative research is to investigate the challenges faced by Pacific Islander students to advance to higher education and complete a college program of study.

PROCEDURES: Pacific Islander students aged 16–45 are invited to participate in a few surveys, which should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Based on the survey responses, participants will be purposefully selected for interviews to create a diversified pool. Approximately 10–15 individuals will be chosen for a semi-structured interview that will take about 45–60 minutes and gather information about what the participants identify as potential barriers to higher education, as well as share their story. Participants will be meeting via Zoom and the interview will be recorded on Zoom. Participants consent will be requested at the onset of the interview.

POTENTIAL RISKS: There are no identifiable risks associated with the research study. This study will ask participants perspectives on challenges, barriers and cultural impacts to advancing to higher education. Some of the questions could be sensitive, and some participants may feel some discomfort and privacy invasion.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: This study aims to understand better the reasons behind the underrepresentation of Pacific Islander students in higher education. While we do not expect any direct benefits to the participants, there will be benefits to the researcher, future Pacific Islander students, Pacific Islander families, Local Educational Agencies, Offices of Higher Education and policymakers.

COMPENSATION: There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The findings of this research may be published. However, there will be no identifiable information about you or your family in any publications. All research materials will

be stored in a password-protected computer that only the researcher will be able to access to ensure the privacy of information provided.

PARTICIPATION RIGHTS: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participating in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with Antioch University. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS: You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study, please contact Loriann Leota.

Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Richard Kahn, Core Faculty, Doctor of Education Program, Antioch University.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE SURVEY AND INTERVIEW: The participants who chose to participate in the survey and interview indicates your willingness to participate. Please keep this document for your records.

APPENDIX B: ONLINE SURVEY

Underrepresentation of Pacific Islander Students in Higher Education

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this short survey!

1. What is your name?

2. Please provide your identified gender & your age.

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Non-Binary

☐ 16

☐ 17

☐ 18

☐ 19

☐ 20

☐ 21

☐ 22

☐ 23

☐ 24

- [ ] 25

- [ ] 26

- [ ] 27

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- [ ] 39

- [ ] 40

- [ ] 41

- [ ] 42

- [ ] 43

☐ 44

☐ 45

☐ 46 - 86

3. What Pacific Islander group do you belong to?

☐ Melanesian

☐ Micronesian

☐ Polynesian

4. Have you or will you be attending college?

○ I did not attend college.

○ I graduated from college.

○ I attended, but did not graduate from college.

○ I will be graduating from college.

○ I will be attending college.

5. Have any of your elders attended college?

○ Yes

○ No

6. What impact does culture have on a Pacific Islander student's academic journey?

[ ]

7. What role does culture play in the decision-making process for Pacific Islanders?

[ ]

8. How do Pacific Islander students define success?

[ ]

9. Is it possible to reframe a Pacific Islander student's thinking about success?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Done

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APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

My interview protocol is below:

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Loriann Leota and I am a Micronesian doctoral student at Antioch University conducting research In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education. Thank you for previously completing the survey. This interview includes eighteen core questions regarding your definition of success, your culture and your personal experiences. I would like your permission to record this interview, so that I may accurately document the information you convey today. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please let me know. All of your responses are confidential and will remain so. Your responses will be used to develop a better understanding of how you and other Pacific Islanders define success, their culture and provide a window into their personal experiences. The purpose of this study is to increase our understanding of how culture impacts success, especially academic success.

At this time, I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible investigator, specifying your participation in the research project: *True Culture at War with Colonzier Culture: The Underrepresentation of Pacific Islander Students in Higher Education*. You have digitally signed and dated consent, certifying that we agree to continue this interview.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop or take a break, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission, we will begin the interview.

1. Please provide your identified gender and age.

2. You indicated that you are Melanesian/Micronesian/Polynesian, but what specific island are you from?

3. Are you full or part Melanesian/Micronesian/Polynesian?

4. Were you born on the island or were you born in the United States?

5. Did you grow up on the island or did you grow up in the United States?

6. Have you ever attended college?

7. Have any of your elders attended college?

8. How do Pacific Islander students define success?

9. What does true culture mean to you?

10. What role does Pacific Islander culture play in the decision-making process?

11. Is it possible to reframe a Pacific Islander student's thinking about success?

12. What does the ___ way mean to you? (Your culture's way.)

13. What impact does culture have on a Pacific Islander student's academic journey?

14. What barriers do you believe Pacific Islander students face when it comes to education?

15. What did your K-12 schools share with you about college?

16. In your experience, do school districts or colleges have an understanding of what it means to be a Pacific Islander student?

17. What can schools do to help Pacific Islander students on their academic journey?

18. Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to share?

(If participant wishes to discontinue study, ask if they would be willing to share why.)

Thank you so much for your participation!

APPENDIX D: PERMISSIONS

Permission to Republish

APLU President
To: Loriann Leota

Mon, Dec 11, 2023 at 7:01 AM

Dear Ms. Leota,

Congratulations on the publication of your dissertation! Your original message was answered in the affirmative by   in APLU's Public Affairs Office via your request to the APLU Information Box. If you have further related requests, you can reach out directly to Public Affairs at "APLU Public Affairs" <   >.

Best regards,

Executive Assistant
Office of the President

From: Loriann Leota <   >
Sent: Sunday, December 10, 2023 11:36 PM
To: <   >;   <   >; APLU President
<   >
Subject: Fwd: Permission to Republish

Good evening,

My name is Loriann Leota and I am writing my dissertation for completion of my EdD at Antioch University. I am writing to request your permission to republish two images/graphs contained in your article titled: "How does a college degree improve graduates' employment and earnings potential? (https://www.aplu.org/our-work/4-policy-and-advocacy/publicuvalues/employment-earnings/). I am specifically seeking permission to republish the graphic labeled "Annual Median Earnings for Workers Aged 22-27" and the graphic labeled "Return on Investment: Lifetime Earnings by Level of Education."

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c. AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive and that AURA is an open access archive. https://aura.antioch.edu/

Attached is a copy of the images as they will appear in my dissertation.

Thank you.

--

Loriann A. Leota, M.A.T., MA.Ed.
Ed.D. Candidate in Educational & Professional Practice, Multicultural and Anti-Racist Education

@urban.org>   Fri, Jan 12, 2024 at 4:56 AM
To: Loriann Leota
Cc: Urban Institute External Affairs

Hi Loriann,

I hope this message finds you well. I talked to our communications team and you're more than welcome to use our graphics as long as you credit Urban and link the report you took the graphics from. I hope this helps. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please let me know! Thank you.

Policy Intern

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Office of Policy Impact
www.urban.org

ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY

Permission to Republish
4 messages

Loriann Leota <   >   Mon, Jan 8, 2024 at 9:15 AM
To: @urban.org,   @urban.org

Good morning,

My name is Loriann Leota and I am writing my dissertation for completion of my EdD at Antioch University. I am writing to request your permission to republish two images/graphs contained in your report titled: "Fighting the Stigma: Mental Health among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders" (https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/fighting-stigma-mental-health-among-asian-americans-and-pacific-islanders). I am specifically seeking permission to republish the graphic labeled "Share of US Adults Reporting Serious Psychological Distress in the Past 30 Days" and the graphic labeled "Use of Mental Health Services in the Past Year among US Adults with Any Mental Illness."

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c. AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive and that AURA is an open access archive. https://aura.antioch.edu/

Attached is a copy of the images as they will appear in my dissertation.

Thank you.

--

Loriann A. Leota, M.A.T., MA.Ed.
Ed.D. Candidate in Educational & Professional Practice, Multicultural and Anti-Racist Education

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2 attachments

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@apiascholars.org>   Tue, Jan 23, 2024 at 11:34 AM
)antioch.edu>

Good afternoon Loriann,

Thank you for reaching out. You have our permission to republish the graphics you noted below with citations.

We are always interested in new research, so if you have time this spring I'd love to connect and learn more about your research/study.

Wishing you all the best with your doctoral studies!

From: Loriann Leota
Sent: Monday, January 8, 2024 12:09 PM
To: info
Subject: Re: Permission to Republish

Good morning,

I am writing to follow up regarding my request to republish. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have or provide additional information if necessary.

Thank you!

On Sun, Dec 31, 2023 at 4:21 PM Loriann Leota   wrote:

Good evening,

My name is Loriann Leota and I am writing my dissertation for completion of my EdD at Antioch University. I am writing to request your permission to republish two images/graphs contained in your report titled: "Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education" (https://apiascholars.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NHPI_Report.pdf). I am specifically seeking permission to republish the graphic

labeled "Figure 1: Proportion of NHPI Adults Who Have Not Attended College" and the graphic labeled "Figure 2: Proportion of NHPI College Attendees Who Left College Without a Degree."

My dissertation will appear in the following places:
a. Proquest Dissertations and Theses Database and that Proquest is a Print on Demand Publisher http://www.proquest.com/products-services/pqdt.html
b. Ohiolink Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center and that Ohiolink ETD Center is an open access archive https://etd.ohiolink.edu/
c. AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive and that AURA is an open access archive. https://aura.antioch.edu/

Attached is a copy of the images as they will appear in my dissertation.

Thank you.

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Loriann A. Leota, M.A.T., MA.Ed.
Ed.D. Candidate in Educational & Professional Practice, Multicultural and Anti-Racist Education