



January 2019

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Renuka Mahari De Silva

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NATIVE AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN OF HAWAI'I: *EXPLORING THE IMPORTANCE
OF INDIGENOUS NARRATIVES AND STORYTELLING TO UNDERSTAND
ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS.*

By

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A Three-Article Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

In partial fulfilment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

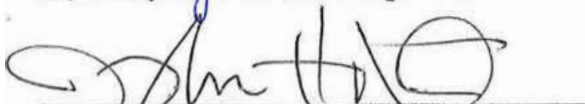
Grand Forks, North Dakota

August
2019

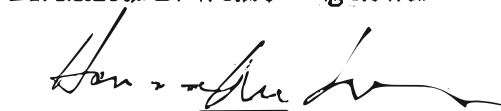
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This dissertation, submitted by Renuka Mahari de Silva in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done, and is hereby approved.


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Renuka Mahari de Silva
Date: June 25, 2019

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the members of my advisory committee for their guidance and support during my dissertation process and the doctoral program at the University of North Dakota. Mahalo nui loa.

To my parents in memoriam, Dr. G. L. Richard de Silva and Mrs. Walpitage Dona Mary de Silva who instilled early in my life, a deep respect for all knowledge systems.

I am a thread that is woven into a larger tapestry that I call the world.

Everything I do, and say, have a consequence.

To my dear son, Cameron, who has cheered me on, sometimes through the most difficult of times, being away from home; you are the wind beneath my wings. I love you so much.

To my dear brothers, Asoka and Rohana for believing in me, and supporting my many journeys.

To my dear Auntie Betty (Mrs. Betty MacGregor), you were my mentor, teacher, and my *Canadian mom*, you made my educational journeys seamless. Thank you for opening your beautiful home to me when I first came to Canada to attend university.

To Mrs. Indrani Kalupahana, a dear friend, and the wife of a scholar, who is here for me today, thank you for your kindness and the care you show every day.

To all the wahine with much aloha for supporting my work, opening your homes and those special places of ancestral learnings—mahalo.

Mahalo nui loa, dear Manu (Dr. Manulani Aluli-Meyer), for offering a torch to illuminate my path and the many ways you helped me connect with the communities, and, especially, Aunty Lynette, mahalo nui, Aunty.

I am grateful for everything in my life, for the travels, and for the people I meet every day

and for the experiences I gather.

Learning and sharing will never stop, this is my aloha.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation contains three articles. The research for these articles was conducted through many interviews and working directly in the communities from around the Island of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. Each article addresses a research topic that is connected to ancestral stories and historical events brought forward by women through stories and storytelling. These stories embed rich ancestral knowledge from a specific time and a specific place and space. In reading these articles, the reader is exposed to the power of story and storytelling, and how that in turn, reconnects people to places to learn from ancestral knowledge, and apply these important learnings to current practices. Although all articles are tied together from the perspective of stories and storytelling, each article is representative of its own research, data collection, and analysis.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Glossary

‘Āina (*That which feeds, Land, Mother*)

Ahupua ‘a (*Land divisions from the hills to the sea*)

‘Ike (*Knowings*)

Kānaka (*Native Hawaiians*)

Kua (*Backbone*)

Kuleana (*Obligation, responsibility*)

Kumu (*Teacher*)

Kūpuna (*Elders*)

Lo ‘i kalo (*Irrigated terrace for growing taro*)

Loko i ‘a (*Fishponds*)

Mana (*Power*)

Mana wahine (*Power of women*)

Mo ‘olelo (*Stories/historical accounts/narratives*)

‘Ohana (*Family, one’s own/community*)

Ōlelo Hawai ‘i (*Hawaiian Language*)

‘Ōiwi (*Bones, Native*)

Piko (*Umbilical cord*)

Wahine (*Women*)

Navigating the Work

Me Ke Aloha Mai, *With My Greetings*

Within this chapter, I wanted to begin by offering some background to my research and how I came to do this work. It is important to note that because my research was conducted in Hawai‘i, I have used Hawaiian words which the reader might find at times challenging to navigate through when reading the material. I also want to give a fair warning to the reader that this dissertation will not follow the regular dissertation format, but rather, a format that comprises of three articles. The main body of this dissertation, however, will begin with an overall abstract that encompasses the *Big Idea* behind the research contained within all three articles. Each article is formatted as a chapter with a glossary preceding each of its own abstracts. The purpose of this glossary is to identify Hawaiian words and contextualize their meanings within each article to make reading and understanding the work perhaps less challenging.

Ōlelo Hawai ‘i (*Hawaiian Language*)

In writing this research work, I wanted to honor my kumu (*teacher*) Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, kūpuna (*elders*), Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, Luana Albinio and Hawaiian scholars, Dr. Haunani Kay Trask, Katrina-Ann Kapā ‘anaokalāokeola Nākoa Oliveira, and Dr. Manulani Aluli-Meyer that treats Ōlelo Hawai‘i as a mainstream language. Therefore, I used Hawaiian words with translations in my articles to honor the people of Hawai‘i and my participants from whom I have learned much. However, I decided to italicize English words when translating from Hawaiian to make word translations more visible for the varied readership to understand words or phrases they are not equipped to recognize. I may also point out, that since Ōleo Hawai‘i was originally an oral language until the mid-18th century, power of the language was carried by how the language was used out loud as a mo ‘olelo (*stories/historical*

accounts/narratives) in combination with actions and movement as in the case of hula (*dance*) (Lipe, Kanī‘aupi‘o-Crozier & Hind, 2016). Therefore, many words used in everyday life had multiple meanings, so, it is important to contextualize the words to the time, location and place indicated in the writings. Furthermore, another important point that I wish to make is that the Hawaiian words and phrases that I have used are those that were brought forward by my participants during our interview process. They wrote down the word/s and phrases and their meanings for me when I was taking my notes in specific locations. Therefore, the translations contained in our conversations and interviews are not mine, because of this reason, the meanings of words and phrases may change depending upon the context of the conversation and where a certain conversation took place. Many of my participants by profession are social workers and educators, and several of them are educators of Ōlelo Hawai‘i (*Hawaiian Language*). In order to prepare the reader with an understanding of Hawaiian words and their application in a specific context, I have provided a glossary to precede each chapter indicating some of the common words used in that particular chapter.

My Research Trajectory

I was born in Sri Lanka and grew up and attended schools in Sri Lanka, Hawai‘i and several countries in Africa and North America. So, when it comes to asking myself the question of belonging or affiliation, it is difficult to point to a specific country or a singular culture. If I look at the number of years spent in a single country, then for sure that would be Canada, yet I have within me threads that connect me to a multitude of places and spaces from where I have learned much. These learnings and their applications into my life in many forms and ways have given me a transnational perspective to my work, life and of being. I am native (not indigenous) only to Sri Lanka (formally, Ceylon), but then if I traced my genealogy, I know that in today’s

sociological terms, I would be considered a descendant of a settler colonial in Sri Lanka. A colonizer, who, in-turn was (re)colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch/ Spanish, and the British from the early 16th century to mid-20th centuries collectively. Although I was born in a free Sri Lanka, my parents were not; therefore, I learned of the effects of colonialism on people and a culture firsthand from them. Since I have been a traveler during most of my life, I feel a deep connection to many places around the world where I have lived that have similar colonial trajectories to Sri Lanka. Living and growing up in Hawai‘i and my frequent stays there have now connected me to its people and the land in a meaningful way that is relevant to my life moving forward. I believe that it is important to know where I come from in order to know where I am going. It is from this place of knowing and of connection, that I entered into my current research.

Current Research

Having the support of Konohiki - Kūlana o Kapolei (*Elder in charge of Kapolei*), Dr. Manulani Aluli-Meyer and community elder, Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, opened pathways for me to meet and enter into conversation with many Kānaka (*Native Hawaiian*) wahine (*women*) participants. In my conversations with these participants, I found out that most of them identified themselves within their communities as either coming from an ‘Ōiwi or a Maoli genealogical connection, a clear indication that they were well aware of their personal genealogies. Since I have frequently mentioned the terms, Kānaka Ōiwi and Kānaka Maoli in my articles, I wish to clarify their reference here. Kānaka Ōiwi refers to people who are *Native* to Hawai ‘i, and Kānaka Maoli refers to those who are *Indigenous*, direct descendants from Polynesians (Cook et., al, 2003). In contemporary Hawai ‘i, however, all Hawaiians born in the Islands with generational ties to a specific place they share with the ‘āina (*that which feeds*),

identify themselves as Kānaka (Interview, Luana Albinio, March 25, 2019). Since I was interested in personal stories and historical accounts of peoples' connections to the current work they are engaged in, I found it important to know individual genealogical connections. Knowing their genealogical connections to a specific place allowed me to see how their stories connected to that place and how the knowledge contained within those stories were relational to specific kūpuna (*ancestral*) knowings. The data gathered from these interviews allowed me to understand the purpose and direction of these wahine (*women*) and the mana (*power*) they bring to the important work they do on a daily basis. Mana wahine (*power of women*) is the *voice* behind many revitalization projects and sovereignty movements that are taking place throughout all the Islands. Through these *voices* of the *wahine*, I understood how mo'olelo (*stories/historical accounts/narratives*) are connected to places of Kipuka (*places where ancestral knowledge lives on*) and why that is important? For example, the current food sovereignty movements are situated in such places of kipuka so the youth and 'ohana (*family, one's own/community*) can learn about the long-forbidden mo'olelo to access kūpuna (*ancestral*) knowledge for the sustenance of food systems through their connection to land and environment. During my research, I learned of the ways the environment *speaks* and how that translates to taking appropriate action while honoring the land. Increased actions within sovereignty movements have created acute awareness of kūpuna knowledge and their application to many revitalization projects. These knowledge systems are now being complemented with modern technologies to gauge ecological changes swiftly, such as the acid levels in fishponds or water levels of the ocean in relation to fishpond walls and marine erosion so that dangers to the ponds can be remedied faster to protect ecosystems within fishponds and around the Islands' shorelines.

Similarly, when I looked at the artwork of some of the wahine (*women*) leaders, their *voices* were acutely present within the works. These *voices* from within the canvas, as well as their own physical voices, connect the audiences to a specific time, a place and a moment in history, creating emotions which are still raw because their generational pain was never acknowledged by the colonizing forces. These artworks as well as personal mo ‘olelo (*here to mean narratives*) always connected in distinct ways to historical accounts to places and spaces that showed how one’s kuleana (*obligation*) is tied to the beloved ‘āina (*that which feeds*) for the betterment of an entire community.

Dissertation Format

My research dissertation is comprised of three articles which are identified as chapters. Each article looks at different aspects of mo ‘olelo (*narrative/story/historical accounts*) and the kūpuna (*ancestral*) wisdom (*knowings*) that are embedded within them and how these wisdoms are tied to specific places and how this knowledge and *knowings* are shared. Sharing of these *knowings* of the kūpuna (*ancestors*) and their knowledge application to present ecological conditions and social situations make those *knowings* current, because “dimensions of traditional knowledge are not *local* knowledge, but knowledge of the *universal* as expressed in the local” (Meyer, 2001, p. 4).

Although all three of my articles are unified within the sphere of kūpuna knowings in their content, they each have a specific focus and a topic. Each of those topics and their findings is explored and analyzed using several methodologies that are discussed and presented in depth within each article. Some of the main methodologies used are narrative, portraiture, and ōiwi. The word ‘ōiwi means *bones* in Hawaiian. However, the term, ‘Ōiwi is also used when

referencing Native Hawaiian people with genealogical ties to the Hawaiian Islands (Kanaiaupuni, 2009).

In one of the articles, I used intersubjective and feminist lenses as a way to understand and validate a different (to my orientation) cultural framework. Using those two lenses, allowed me to analyze and discuss the findings from an ‘ōiwi perspective as opposed to one that is based on a Western worldview. Thus, I was able to distance myself in my research from *objectifying* Indigenous and Native Hawaiian people. In this regard, my framework within this research needed to be different to be relevant within the ‘Ōiwi and Maoli communities. Because of this *reorganized* process of analysis, I found out that I cannot use a traditional feminist lens because the Hawaiian culture was never based on a gender binary. Therefore, wahine mana (*women’s power*) was never about feminism, but it was and is about kuleana (*obligation*) to the ‘ohana (*family*) and ‘āina (*that which feeds*).

A General Overview of the Research

The Interview Process

Geographical location of research. The physical location of the research was the Island of O‘ahu. However, within O‘ahu, I traveled to several locations to interview my participants which added an interesting dimension to my work. This is because different locations experienced historical events differently and their stories reflected those differences. The eight main locations where I conducted the interviews were Kahana Bay (northeast), Waiāhole Valley (east), Waimānalo (southeast), Kāne‘ohe (southeast), Nu‘uanu Valley (southeast), Wai‘anae Valley (west), Kapolei (southwest), and Honolulu (south). These are also locations where my participants have lived for generations; therefore, they were very familiar with the area, and the local culture that contained rich histories in their mo‘olelo (*narratives*). Therefore, when I

interviewed, the kūpuna (*ancestral*) knowings that were brought forward by my participants were very specific to that area of the space contained within the general location of the place. I mention this specifically because, in ancient Hawai‘i, the Islands were systematically divided by the ruling chiefs into ahupua‘a (*land divisions from the hills to the sea*) for governing purposes. These ahupua‘a were often very close to each other, but they were separated by a specific ruling ali‘i (*chief*) as well as the physical land markers of the ahupua‘a. Therefore, the stories within each ahupua‘a reflected a Kānaka worldview that related to experiences from that place of existence. Hence, there were many stories I listened to that had the same or similar message, but the story’s trajectory and its relationship to the kānaka changed according to the storyteller, her kūpuna, physical landscape, and her audience. However, when it came to specific creation stories such as the birth of the Islands (Papa and Wākea), the main storyline remains unchanged; for example, the creation chant of the Kumulipo, mele ko‘ihonua (*Hawaiian creation chant*). This story is well explained in one of the following chapters.

Participants and selection. The selection of the participants was based on my ongoing research interest focus which has always been women and their positionality in various spaces around the world. Therefore, for this research, I specifically interviewed women. Their ages ranged between twenty-five and seventy. For my study, a wide range in age groups of women was intentional and was established purposefully, because the kūpuna (*in this case, elders*) who are generally sixty years and above are held in high esteem and are honored with passing down the knowledge to their younger generations through mo‘olelo (*stories*), hula (*dance*), mele (*song*), and ‘oli (*chant*). The kūpuna access their knowledge from their family and community kūpuna, so I am privileged with getting insights from about one hundred and fifty years or more of knowledge systems that have been passed-down from these elders (the story of puihi and limu

in subsequent chapters are cases in point). On the other hand, the mid-range to early thirties age group showed how perhaps these same knowledge systems and stories have changed or reinterpreted because, “Culture has an origin, a present expression, and a future design” (Meyer, 2003, p. 53). For example, a system such as knowledge, is developed over a specific time in a location, and this knowledge is “shaped by space and time, is open to historic influences and becomes current, because it is the nature of culture to survive” (Meyer, 2003, p. 53). Again, this concept of change due to historical influences and how these have influenced stories and the arts are widely discussed and analyzed in one of the following articles with the use of narrative inquiry and portraiture methodologies.

Data collection & ethics and standards. This study gained IRB approval from the IRB Committee of the University of North Dakota on June 5, 2017. All willing participants were accommodated with a set of semi-structured interview questions (Appendix) and an *Informed Consent Form* to sign. The interview questions strictly pertained to storytelling and the health and well-being of the Hawaiian people, and the interviewees trajectory within that scope under current circumstances. For instance, it is quite possible that a participant may have changed their viewpoints over the course of time, but this was not the focus of my interviews. The *Informed Consent Form* was given twenty-four hours to forty-eight hours prior to the interview, recording, and videotaping of the interview as this provided participants an opportunity to consider the interview and its format. For example, when I spoke with one of the participants, Luana Albinio, she said that she appreciated the time as it allowed her an opportunity to feel it in her na‘au (*gut*) if she could trust me with the stories. I must also mention that keeping with protocols of both IRB and Hawaiian, permissions were secured for photographing historical documents, cultural

sites, and present-day revitalization of agricultural project sites of lo`i kalo (*irrigated terrace for growing taro*) and loko i`a (*fishponds*) within the ahupua`a around O`ahu.

Before the start of each in-person interview, I presented each participant with fruits or a lei (*floral garland*) an honored tradition of welcoming and being grateful and asked their permission to be interviewed, even though, agreements were in place. Two of the participants were women I knew over the years from my studies at the University of Hawai`i, and others were invited to be interviewed either due to a chance meeting (*Abbie Waiwaiole Havre*) or on the recommendation of friends, community elders and through *Hawai`inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge* at the University of Hawai`i. An important point to mention is that I never interviewed anyone without first getting an opportunity to speak and spend time with them. This is because as I mentioned in detail in the chapters, Hawaiian worldviews are built on relationships and reciprocity. Therefore, no interview was immediate, even in the case of a chance meeting of Abbie at the Queen`s Hospital in Honolulu.

Hence, this relationship factor between the researcher and the participant is significant because the implication is that there are trustworthiness and credibility for the participants to participate in the research. As I have shown in my research within each article, this trust factor helped deepen conversations and consequently offered richer insights into my research questions. Moreover, this combination of relationship and trust factor also allowed me to reach out to my participants multiple times, if I needed in order for any clarifications of data. This also meant that sometimes, the narration veered off somewhat, but because of the underlying trust between the two parties; the researcher and the participant, the narratives, ultimately, unified the two. In other words, having this underlying trust, allowed me to be present and be a part of the dialog or *being in the moment of the story*, and usually, this entailed doing an activity before and sometimes

during the interview, so the activity becomes a part of the story. An example of such an activity was when I visited the Nanakuli Childrens' Center in Wai 'anae, with Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, whom I got to know as Aunty Lynette, (there were no children present at the gathering, only the social workers and staff who were mostly women). When we first arrived at the Center, we greeted each other, shared food, then sat around the table and participated in making a lei as we were being formally introduced. During this introduction, we participated in making a single lei while sharing an important personal story (fig. 1). This event of sharing personal stories is commonly known as *talk story*, around the Islands. However, Talk Story, also refers to when kūpuna are engaged in sharing ancestral wisdom and creation stories, especially when children are involved in the audience.



Figure 1. Shared lei making and talk story. Nanakuli Childrens' Center, Queen Lili 'uokalani Trust, Wai'ane, October 22, 2018.

The idea behind this activity is not just to be introduced to the community, but, also to reiterate the importance of trust, support and aloha (*in this case, to mean love*) in building relationships to perform kuleana (*obligation*) to ‘āina (*that which feeds*).

Data analysis. For the purpose of data analysis, I began by acquiring written, visual texts, audio, video and historical texts, all in addition to my ethnographic field notes. This meant, revisiting the taped or the video interviews and conversations while constantly checking the notes, and of course, reaching out multiple time to my participants.

However, the analysis part indeed is an important activity in piecing together, to pull apart, and sew together deep meanings and knowings to construct a bigger story, and to see how pieces in the story *speak* and connect to other parts of the story and pull together threads to weave tapestries that connects to ancient wisdoms and their application in present situations. I find this type of data analysis enhances a participant’s voice, or her meanings attached to the story as a part of being mutually respectful of the process of storytelling and analysis, which Lincoln and Guba quote Reinharz (1978) as the “*Lover Model*” (Lincoln, & Guba, 1989. P. 230). Another important part of the analysis is how I coded emerging themes. To borrow an understanding from Johnny Saldaña (2015), a code can be a “word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language base or visual data” (p. 4), this can pertain to many areas of the qualitative research process. Therefore, in my work, I used the word *coding* broadly. What I mean by this statement is that my coding was based on three main qualitative methodological frameworks of narrative, portraiture and ‘ōiwi. These frameworks allowed various ways to code while allowing space to honor indigenous traditions. So, for example, in using portraiture, I was able to use context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole which are also the key

features of this methodology to capture the multiple dimensions of the visual, auditory and the tactile. This capturing allowed for the illumination of metaphors, allusions, images and repetitive refrains that encompasses bodies of work. Each one of these frameworks is discussed in the chapters, however, I will also provide a broad overview here, so the reader is aware of what is contained in the following chapters.

Methods

A General Overview

The current research broadly entails people and lived experiences from a kānaka (Native Hawaiian) perspective, and how their lives are intertwined with their environments through stories and storytelling. Indigenous knowledge has come to be known as a valuable knowledge system that is “transcultural (or intercultural) and interdisciplinary source of knowledge” (Battiste, 2002, p. 7) because traditional knowledge is universal knowledge that is expressed in the local (Meyer, 2001). In each of my chapters, I have explained in depth how these knowledge systems play an important role in understanding people’s relationship with the land and how that is crucial to the success of many of the revitalization projects that are happening in the Hawaiian Islands.

According to Sharan Merriam’s (1998) description, qualitative research is the most appropriate way of “understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world” (p. 6). Qualitative methods allow for complexity and richness that questionnaire surveys are incapable of providing to the researcher. Human beings live and tell stories for many reasons, and it is a way to understand one another and to give a time and place to stories. Use of a narrative allows people to shape their daily lives and of others as to who they are and create frames of references to make meaning of their lives through constructions and

interpretations. Therefore, a narrative is a way of knowing and thinking about personal experiences as a *story* (Clandinin, 2006). Hence, to use a “narrative inquiry in qualitative research is to adopt a particular view of experience as a phenomenon under study” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 46). Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) note that there are four converging phenomena or turns; a way of thinking from one way to another within the narrative inquiry. These turns vary in speed depending upon the experience of the researcher and their experience with doing research. These four broad themes include the following: The relationship of the researched and the researcher, the move from number to words as data, a shift from the general to the particular, and the emergence of new epistemologies or ways of knowing. Hence, for narrative inquirers, both the humans and the stories are “continuously visible” (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p. 7) during the study. The inquiry offers “the ability to capture the social representation processes such as feelings, images, and time” (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003, p. 5) that allows for the development and expansion of different viewpoints and interpretations of gathered data (Mitchell & Egudo 2003).

My field methods are not unlike those of most anthropological ethnographies in which the researcher aims to gain an insider’s view of the culture all the while referencing participants’ experiences to her own to understand differing points of view. Since I had an opportunity to build relationships prior to the actual interview, the process of gathering information became quite fluid. This interaction between participants and the researcher is important as it allows the researcher to see a story as a version of life at a particular moment of the storyteller. However, a unique aspect to my research was the fact that I listened to all women’s stories to “collaboratively access participants’ life experiences and engage in a process of storying and restorying” to reveal “multidimensional meanings and present an authentic and compelling

rendering of data” (Leavy, 2015, p. 27). This process was done through a reflexive, participatory and aesthetic process that enabled me to glean and extract emerging themes from the presented data to restory so that the findings can be relevant and may be meaningful to the readership’s (authors, researchers, educators or social scientists) understanding and imagination as indicated by Leavy (2015) and Kim (2006). Most of all, the work’s relevance to indigenous communities. An important point to remember is that narrative inquiry can be used in various ways because it deals with human experiences. Moreover, these experiences can also be conceptualized in many ways. Most importantly, a narrative approach can reach out to:

Under-represented stories as well as viewing all stories as social practices amidst others (in relationship or tension with them, not inherently better or worse) that are equally observable, analyzable and researcher-researched accountable. Small stories in this respect can enable the shift from the precious lived to the messier business of living and telling. (Bamberg, p. 152)

Hence, listening to my participants’ stories was central to the “intensification of the constructive dialogue between narrative inquiry and narrative analysis around issues of identity” (Bamberg, 2007, p. 152) which is an integral part in all my research contained in this body of work.

Specific Methodologies Within Study

This research design is based on the qualitative method that includes narrative, portraiture and ‘ōiwi methodologies with an epistemological approach. The term epistemology is defined as the knowledge contained within the social relations of knowledge production (Gegeo & Gegeo, 2001). It has been a term used by indigenous researchers to express indigenous worldviews or philosophy (Ermine, 1995; Meyer, 2001; Wilson, 2008). Cobern (1996) quotes Kearney in saying that a worldview is “culturally organized macrothought: those dynamically inter-related

basic assumptions [i.e., presuppositions] of a people that determine much of their behavior and decision making, as well as organizing much of their body of symbolic creations...and ethnophilosophy” (p. 584). In other words, worldviews refer to what a majority of the people within a certain culture believe and behave according to an agreed-upon set of assumptions. Therefore, it is quite possible that within a certain worldview, other micro worldviews to exist, but it is usually the macro worldviews that seem to be used as identity markers of a particular culture. In fact, according to Nietzsche as quoted in Sire (2015),

“worldviews are cultural entities which people in a given geographical location and historical context are dependent upon, subordinate to, and product of...A Weltanschauung (Worldview) provides this necessary, well-defined boundary that structures the thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors of a people. From the point of view of its adherents, a worldview is incontestable and provides the ultimate set of standards by which things are measured” (p. 28)

I mentioned the meanings of the term, worldview here, so the reader has a general understanding of how I use this term within the body of work presented. Therefore, when I use the term, of Kānaka worldview, I mean to bring to the reader’s attention the widely held beliefs of a majority group of people, in this case, the Hawaiians.

Within this research, there are two other specific terms that the three articles will embody, and they are paradigm and ontology. Native and Indigenous research is emergent within the western qualitative research, so it is important to state what is meant by the claim that it is important to look from an indigenize perspective to approach methodologies to understand paradigmatic approach. Within a paradigmatic approach to research, the paradigm influences the choice of methods (i.e., why a particular method is chosen), how those methods are employed

(i.e., how data is gathered), and how the data will be analyzed and interpreted (Kovach, 2005). As Neuman (2006) reminds, a paradigm is a basic orientation to theory and thus impacts method. Within this approach, significant attention is paid to assumptions about knowledge. Within this approach to research, it is expected that the philosophical orientation of the research is informed by the methodological framework to show internal consistency. In other words, my research must make sense from a k̄naka knowledge perspective. Moreover, the second specific term of ontology refers to the organizational language that gives form and structure to help define knowledge assumptions (Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2006). Current research direction is based on the place of the origin of stories and of knowledge systems which is O'ahu, Hawai 'i. This research also incorporate intersubjectivity and feminist theory as additional theoretical lenses for gathering and interpreting data and making meaning of participant stories to indigenize and analyze a k̄naka culture with relation to colonization and its aftermath.

Narrative Inquiry

The use of a narrative offers a different form of research presentation as compared to more traditional research methodologies. In narrative inquiry, the personal story is used as the center of the study to create a more holistic and embodied story (Glesne, 2016) which is an important factor to consider in the storytelling culture of indigenous communities. As defined by Chase, narrative as a research methodology has a "...distinct form of discourse: as meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (Chase, 2011, p. 421). Thus, when a participant shares her story, the researcher uses analytical strategies to make meaning from the story (Riessman, 2005). An important part of narrative inquiry is to examine and understand how

the participant “...links experiences and circumstances together to make meaning, realizing also that circumstances do not determine how the story will be told or the meaning that is made of it” (Glesne, 2016, p. 185). Although the researcher hears the consciously told stories by a person, the researcher also has to look for deeper stories and meanings that a participant might not be aware of (Bell, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018). One of the ways to analyze the stories and the answers to the questions is by way of the narrative inquiry process that will take a holistic view.

A holistic analysis is where the *story* is represented in the narrative and parts of that text are interpreted with respect to other parts of the *story*. This is very important when listening to indigenous stories because not only do these stories have a beginning, middle and an end, but that end is often not a completion of the story, but a connection to another story or possible events through its parts that forms important lessons and knowledge systems, making the story cyclical in nature. For example, this cyclical nature of the story, and how its knowledge is applied to other parts of the story, in restorying, is clearly articulated in the story of puhi, and in the story of the afterbirth connecting to kalo. Every question that I posed during our interviews, ended up being connected to many stories, built upon other stories, that layered multiple voices, of the storyteller both current and past that echoed as I listened, as in the case of makawalu (*observational techniques*) and the stories attached to those techniques.

Analyzing interviews began by my listening to my participants and taking into account how they related to the questions and responded to them and building storylines that made sense to the participant. Lynne Davis (2004) posits that “stories cement together generations of collective memory, embodying the historical, spiritual, social, and spatial... linking past and future in the present. Stories are containers of Indigenous knowledge and thought, just as Indigenous languages are their fiber” (p. 3). When we listen to stories, in the end, we look for

significant statements contained within the stories and comments to look for emergent themes that form patterns as in the case of resonant metaphors and refrains in portraiture methodology. These markers offer the researcher and the readers an opportunity to understand the underlying meanings of the context that gives its power to resonate and strengthen belief systems that carry *truths* for generations from their worldviews.

Portraiture as Inquiry

Portraiture in narrative methodology, on the other hand, leaves its doors open to a myriad of ways of gathering the storied experiences and lives to analyze human interactions and speaks to the aesthetics of storytelling. It can be used effectively to “inform and inspire, to document and transform and to speak to the head and the heart” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 243). It considers the transitivity of one relationship to another in the form of a social exchange using art as a basis (Jones, 2006). Transitivity is according to Pierre Bourdieu as quoted by Bourriaud (2002) is a “space of object relations between positions” whereby producers strive to “preserve or transform it,” because the art world is relational, and it presents a “system of differential positions” through which it can be read (p. 27). In this system of observation, if the social exchange is the same as art, then what inter-disciplinary efforts can be used by a researcher to portray them? The art of portraiture could be a dynamic vehicle that would give credence to such efforts.

As with the arts, there are certain elements that portraitists must utilize to create full meaning that yields aesthetic features of the narrative, such as, attitudes, feelings, colors, pace, and ambiance. These features of portraiture methodology in sufficient details “transport the portrayal beyond simple representation into the realm of expression” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 28). Moreover, the use of “keen descriptors” within these expressions can “convene into

emergent themes, and the interrelationship of these themes is woven through the connections of their content against the backdrop of their context” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 29). Context is the added dimension that is necessary to understand the subject and the circumstance of its interaction to or from within the relationship that helps the portraitist observe, discover, and interpret. This intentionality of employing aesthetic aspects within context helps to convey a meaning which in turn helps the reader or the perceiver to create new interpretations of the subject (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997).

A contextual dimension is an important aspect of portraiture because it becomes the framework of the subject being observed and studied (in my research, this meant not only listening to the artists’ physical voice but also the voices that emanate from the canvases). In portraiture, context refers to setting- physical & geographic (vivid descriptions of the setting, demography, neighborhood), temporal & historical (evolution of the organization and values shaping its structure), cultural and aesthetic (rich metaphors use to indicate overarching themes and undercurrents that permeate through the portrait) within which the subject exists and interacts (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997) as in the case with Kalo Pa ‘a o Waiāhole by Carol Mealaaloha Bishop.

Moreover, contexts help to place people and action in time and space to help understand their behaviors and patterns that can be codified more truthfully, because the observer can observe the subject or the actor engaging in purposeful activities without feeling contrived for the most part. This, in fact, enriches the researcher’s “interpretation of the actors’ behavior,” (etic view) as well as helping the readership “understand the actors’ perspective - how they perceive and experience social reality (emic view) (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 43). Working within this type of contextual dimensions authenticates studies more easily because it further allows the

actors to express themselves fully by acknowledging their freedom to share their insights, wisdom through action, reflection, and interpretation. In this work, portraiture in combination with the narrative and ‘ōiwi methodologies helped critique the works of several kānaka artists to show how coloniality established new norms to marginalize Native and Indigenous population in Hawai‘i.

The ‘Ōiwi Methodological Lens

For the Native and Indigenous Hawaiians, mo ‘olelo (*history/story*), especially, those that are related to cosmogonic in nature form the foundation of geography highlighting the geological connections that connected Kānaka to their ‘āina (Oliveira, 2014, Kanahale & Kanahale, 1992). For the Kānaka, the ‘āina, bears a special significance, because it is the land that feeds her people. ‘Āina (that which feeds) is familial, and she is the mother of all Kānaka, and this is not metaphorical (Camvel, 2012; Aluli-Meyer, 2013). This connection of the ‘āina to all Kānaka, however, is identified by the metaphorical use of the piko (*umbilical cord*). As a mother is connected to the baby by her piko in the womb that is surrounded by the soothing water and kept safe while being nurtured, so is the ‘āina in taking care of her children within the environment that surrounds the ‘āina (Meyer, 2013). In addition, all that is animate and inanimate are connected by their piko to the ‘āina, and their existence and continuance are interdependent upon each other and of the great spirit which absorbs and keeps ‘ike (*knowings*) safely in the skies, valleys, mountains, streams, and oceans until such time comes for the ‘ike to be passed down by the kūpuna (Aluli-Meyer, 2013, Oliveira, 2014; Nakoa & Wright, 2015). Therefore, this connection of people to the land and spirituality is a part of the kua (*backbone*) of Kānaka worldview that is central to the body of the work presented in this dissertation.

CHAPTER II

MANA WAHINE: *CALLING BACK THE TREASURED MO‘OLELO FROM THE FORBIDDEN PAST TO HEAL THE PRESENT.*

Glossary

Ahupua ‘a (*Land division*)

‘Āina (*That which feed/Mother/Land*)

Āina Hawai ‘i (*Hawaiian land*)

Akua (*Gods/ancestors*)

Ali ‘i (*Chiefs*)

Ali ‘i nui (*King or Queen*)

Ihe Kapu (*A governing system of spiritual law in ancient Hawai ‘i*)

‘Ike (*Knowings/to know/to see*)

Kamaaina (*Local person*)

Kānaka (*Native people*)

Kanaka (*Native person*)

Kapu (*Restricted, forbidden, taboo*)

Keiki o ka aina (*Child of the land*)

Kilo (*Observation*)

Kipuka (*Ancestral place of knowledge*)

Kuleana (*Obligation/responsibility*)

Kumulipo, mele ko 'ihonua (*Hawaiian Creation Chant*)

Kūmu (*Teachers/origins/sources/foundations*)

Kūpuna (*Ancestors/Grandparents*)

Kupuna (*Ancestor/Grandparent*)

Hō mai Pono (*Traditional understanding of time and place*)

Lo 'i kalo (*Irrigated terrace for growing taro*)

Maka 'āinana (*Kānaka of the ahupua 'a*)

Makawalu (*Observation method/ observing with eight eyes*)

Malihini (*Visitor*)

Mana wahine (*Sacred power of women*)

Maoli (*Indigenous*)

Mauka (*Mountain*)

Mauli (*Health*)

Mele (*Songs*)

Mo 'olelo (*Stories/histories*)

Na 'au (*Gut, gut feeling/knowing*)

'Ohana (*Family, one's own/the community*)

'Ōiwi (*Native/bones*)

'Ōlelo Hawai 'i (*Hawaiian Language*)

'Ōlelo No 'eau (*Hawaiian proverbs*)

Oli (*Chants*)

Pā (*Wall*)

Pāhonu Loko l 'a (*Turtle Fishpond*)

Piko (*Umbilical cord*)

Pilina (*Connection*)

Pono (*Balance*)

Pule (*Prayers*)

Uala (*Sweet potato*)

Wahine/ *Women/woman*)

Waimanalo Limu Hui (*Seaweed restoration project*)

Waiwai (*Wealth*)

*Mana Wahine: Calling Back the Treasured Mo'olelo from the
Forbidden Past to Heal the Present.*

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Abstract

This study examines the importance of mo ‘olelo (*stories/histories*) that connects kūpuna (*ancestral*) knowledge to specific places and spaces to understand knowledge systems that are deeply embedded in the land and environment. Understanding these knowledge systems and their interconnections to land and people through their genealogies have become important in creating pathways to free the lāhui (*native Hawaiian*) nation from hunger and poverty. In the Hawaiian tradition, a blooming plant, ‘a‘ali‘i has been used as a metaphor in ‘ōleo ‘na eau (*Hawaiian proverbs*) to model strength, resiliency, and flexibility of wahine (*women*) because this plant can survive challenging environments and elemental forces and bloom to become a beautiful and a useful resource. In contemporary Hawai‘i, kānaka (*native*) women have become this beautiful resource. Therefore, when we listen to mo ‘olelo, of specific places and spaces, we see these wahine traits of strength, resiliency, and flexibility in how they perform their kuleana (*obligation*) to the land and people by strengthening the ties of sovereignty within the Hawaiian Islands in teaching ways to secure food for the lāhui. Using narrative inquiry and kānaka ōiwi methodology, this body of work will draw broader parallels through the lenses of intersubjectivity and feminism, to understand the implications of coloniality and the continued rise of women’s presence in their efforts to strengthen food sovereignty among native communities. Findings indicate that despite forced cultural and political changes over time, the mutual emergence of women elders, leaders and cultural practitioners at community levels are bringing their wahine mana (*sacred powers*) to regenerate their Hawaiian epistemic knowledge.

Keywords: Mana wahine, narrative, intersubjectivity, feminism, kānaka, mo ‘olelo, food sovereignty, place and space

The 'Āina: That Which Feeds

People of 'Āina, The Kānaka

To Indigenous Hawaiian people, 'Āina (*the land and also to mean that which feeds*) means much more than a place of existence. Indigenous people are known as, those who are born of the land and who share an understanding of the relationship they have with the land, language, forms of cultural knowledge, an interaction to their natural resources and living within the environment (Smith, 2013). In the Hawaiian Islands, these people of the 'āina are called the kānaka. The Kānaka Maoli are those who are direct descendants of the Polynesians, and Kānaka 'Ōiwi are those who are native to Hawai 'i through generational living and intermarriages (Cook et., al, 2003). However, kānaka is a term that is commonly used for all those who are born of the 'āina and have lived for multiple generations (Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan: interview, 2018; Luana Albinio: interview, 2019; Kana'iaupuni & Malone, 2006). In Hawai 'i, the 'āina is defined as *that which feeds* (like a mother) which encompasses the very essence of love, joy, and nourishment for her children (Kānaka are considered to be the children of 'āina). Therefore, for the kānaka, 'Āina, is the *Mother*, and according to kanaka scholar and cultural practitioner, Manulani Aluli-Meyer (2013), *mother* is not a metaphor. This is because 'āina is the central theme which draws all other themes to create a unified whole. For the Native Hawaiians, living on the land means having a relationship with it and understanding the meanings contained within the many layers of knowledge that are sometimes hidden. Hawaiians refer to this hidden knowledge as kaona, *layers of hidden meanings*, meanings, which are usually contained within the hills, skies, and rivers (Luna Albinio, Interview, March 19, 2019). According to Luana, this is one of the reasons why it was important for the Hawaiians to live close to the land. This relationship with the land and *knowings* were integral to the survival of the kānaka because

geographically, the Hawaiian Islands are an isolated volcanic land mass in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Therefore, a reciprocal relationship with the land and environment were of paramount importance for survival. This article will look at the ways by which Hawaiians built relationships with the land and the ocean to learn from them in order to apply that knowledge to sustain their daily lives. Hence, this research process included posing a series of semi-structured questions to the participants that led them to their narratives and historical connections in explaining their relationship with the land and the ocean. In this regard, narrative inquiry coupled with 'ōiwi and intersubjective lenses are used to frame the findings and the ensuing discussions.

For the Hawaiians, the land and the ocean shape their thinking and of being, creating a symbiotic relationship between the environment and the people (Aluli-Meyer, 2013). This symbiotic relationship informed the kānaka of values that needed to be prioritized and *knowings* that needed to be safeguarded. Indigenous knowledge, therefore, did not come from learning about the land but rather it came by learning *from the land* (Aluli-Meyer, 2013). This *knowing* that is imbued in the kānaka DNA and its application to daily living is what is meant by *intelligence* to them (2013). At the center of this *intelligence* and its preservation were the wahine (*women*) of the 'āina. In Hawai 'i, the term DNA is commonly used by many kānaka wahine to identify their ancestral beginnings (referring to origins of birth through goddess Haumea) and clarify their specific kuleana (*obligation/responsibility*) to 'āina (Interview, Sophia Carba, June 20, 2017; Camvel, 2012).

Ancient Hawai 'i and Kuleana (*Obligation*) to 'Āina

In traditional Hawai 'i of the nineteenth century and earlier, all the Islands were divided into systems of ahupua 'a, governed by the ali 'i (*chiefs*). These ahupua 'a were land divisions that extended from the tops of the mountains to the shorelines, and each of these divisions were

governed by an ali 'i who in turn were ruled by an ali 'i nui (*King or Queen*), whose genealogies traced back to Hāloa, the kaikaina (*younger sibling*) of Kalo (taro) (Oliveira, 2014). According to the Kumulipo, mele ko 'ihonua (*Hawaiian creation chant*), Hāloa became the first ali 'i and kupuna (*ancestor*) of the kānaka (2014).

Although, the ahupua 'a were governed by ali 'i, the societal pono (*balance*) was maintained through Ihe Kapu (McCubbin & Marsella, 2009). A system of spiritual law that enabled the kānaka to exist in harmony with one another, with nature and the spiritual realm. In the ahupua 'a, the land was owned by the ali 'i nui, all others were given land parcels to work, perform the required kuleana to the ali 'i and support each other and live in harmony. These harmonious relationships made the maka 'āinana (*kānaka of the ahupua 'a*) very inclusive and helped to promote social interactions that renewed close bonds between themselves and other family groups. In this respect, all of maka 'āinana considered each other to be their 'ohana (*family, one's own/the community*). Additionally, since the 'āina was the mother to maka 'āinana, no parts of the 'āina could be bought or sold. Instead, the maka 'āinana were expected to work the land as a part of their kuleana (*responsibility*) in perpetuity to honor and share the 'āina, that which feeds (Oliveira, 2014). This kuleana to the 'āina was multilayered. Each land parcel had a specific place in the landscape, and the maka 'āinana who lived on those specific spaces of the 'āina had a specific place in society. Thereby, each maka 'āinana had a kuleana to other maka 'āinana and the ali 'i and those above him. A part of this reciprocity of kuleana between the maka 'āinana also meant an exchange of goods based on the needs of his 'ohana. This idea is well explained by kānaka ōiwi kupuna, Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, whom I got to know as Aunty Lynette,

Hawaiians came face to face with survival every day. Living on an island surrounded by the ocean for miles meant being mindful of the resources. Our life depended on living in harmony not only with our ‘ohana but also with the environment and our aumakua (ancestral gods). We learned early that if we are wasteful, we disrespect our aumakua. And if we disrespect our aumakua, we will be punished, and we will no longer be prosperous. We learned early that with privilege, comes responsibilities for our future generations, so it was important to maintain a balance in all aspects. Our people learned that families of the mauka (uplands/mountains) didn’t have the resources of the makai (sea). And those from makai didn’t have the resources of mauka. For example, those uplands ‘ohana did not have necessary salt and fish, and limu that was important to our diet and makai people didn’t have wood for canoes or kalo, ulu, pork and fruits that were a necessary part of our diet. So, we needed to exchange and share. In this exchange, we built a bond and affection toward each other. (Interview, Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, October 19, 2018).

This respectful “acts of kindness and interdependence and reciprocity allowed the maka ‘āinana to prosper and to establish their own niches in society” (Oliveira, 2014, p. 39). Moreover, this type of social inclusion allowed the general population to “thrive on horizontal relationships rather than vertically, valuing each person’s contribution to society” (2014, p. 39). In other words, among the kānaka, the value of kuleana was not associated with gender and nor was gender-stratified in the way of the European worldview. What I mean by this statement, is the kānaka women were not considered lesser in status to men, because, they had an equal responsibility to perform their kuleana for the betterment of the entire community. In some respects, the wahine of the ahupua ‘a were revered within their ‘ohana because being a wahine,

carried a culturally significant marker as mentioned in the Kumulipo. Oliveira, (2014) describes the meaning and the origins of Kumulipo in the following way:

Of all Kānaka cosmogonic genealogies, the *Kumulipo* is the best-known today. “Kumu” means “origin, source, foundation,” and “lipo” means “dark, night, chaos.” The union of these two words denotes the very beginning of time when only darkness and chaos prevailed. The *Kumulipo* is a story both of origin and evolution, with allusions to the natural growth of a baby within the womb. In the *Kumulipo*, the ‘āina is not born in a natural birth process, nor is it created by the hands of the akua; rather, it grows from the depths of darkness and evolves into ka pae ‘āina Hawai ‘i (the Hawaiian archipelago). (pp. 2-3)

According to the Kumulipo, it was wahine goddesses Pō and Haumea who created the world and the Hawaiian Islands respectively. Haumea (also known as Papahānaumoku) is credited as being the goddess of childbirth, war, and politics. According to Hawaiian spirituality, goddess Haumea is reborn in each successive generations of her female descendants, thus passing down ancestral memory from one generation to the next. This transference of *knowingness* or the ‘ike of the ancestors directly links kānaka women to ‘āina Hawai ‘i (*Hawaiian land*) and the familial genealogy (Camvel, 2012). Furthermore, because all kānaka women are directly connected to Haumea, they were considered to be innately connected to the land and spirituality placing them on par with men in the important work they did on a daily basis to support the ‘āina. Moreover, as far as the wahine of the royal court were concerned, they were the only ones who could legitimate the birth of an ali ‘i, thus often these wahine advised their ali ‘i nui (*monarchs*), fought alongside in battles or ruled the Hawaiian kingdom as in the case of Queen Lili ‘uokalani (2012).

As a racialized person of color with a similar historical trajectory, and a researcher of Native and Indigenous Hawaiian women and storytelling, I was interested in exploring how kānaka wahine remained resilient through the actions of a larger, more militarily powerful Americanism that racially and culturally marginalized kānaka population. A population whose world collapsed from the violence of contact from 1778. By 1893, the continued violence and American military invasion eventually led to the forced annexation of Hawai‘i to the United States (Trask, 1996). With this forceful intrusion, came Americanization through establishing racist political, educational, economic and social institutions that placed the Hawaiians squarely at a disadvantage. For instance, in the year 1921, the American federal government officially classified the kānaka by blood quantum. Those who were of fifty percent or more of Hawaiian blood were identified as Native (capital N) and had claims to land parcels, and those who fell under the fifty percent mark were not Native, thus had no rights to land. In this manner, the Hawaiian nation was “divided by race, a concept and reality foreign” to the Hawaiian way of thinking (Trask, 1996, p. 907). As Haunani-Kay Trask (1996) further states, the year she was born, 1949, “being a Hawaiian was a racial and a cultural disadvantage than a national definition,” hence considers herself to have been “born into captivity” (p. 907).

Alarmingly, in little more than a century of American occupation, in 1893, ninety-five percent of Hawaiian people had perished, ninety-nine percent of Hawaiian land and water were taken away from the kānaka along with their political sovereignty (Trask, 1996). Yet, kānaka wahine seems to hold firm their place on their sovereign land because in their minds and bodies, in spite of generational cultural violence and degradation, they never really left their mother, the ‘āina. Moreover, since the 1970s, the kānaka, especially the wahine have regrouped to address the question of sovereignty through food and land revitalization projects of which there are many

throughout the Islands today. However, the question of the positionality of these wahine specifically, working with revitalization projects, helped me to understand the importance of place and space and their connection to a specific *knowing*. Moreover, these wahine's various mo 'olelo (*stories/histories*) showed me the importance of connection to 'āina through their kuleana and the importance of their kuleana for the future substance for a sovereign land. My journey of learning about connections to the land and the importance of place, space and time within those connections placed me in ideal situations for interviews, conversations, and collaborations.

The Process Leading to Current Research

My conversations with community elders and leaders began in 2010 while working on my Master of Education at the University of Hawai 'i at Mānoa. Indeed, I wrote a paper based on Hawaiian teen girls and their educational challenges among many other works. This initial work entailed my making lifelong connections with some of the educators and elders. They have now supported me in opening pathways to for me to get to know other elders, leaders, educators and artists in native communities. Today, these wonderful people have become appreciative partners in support for this research through their wiliness to be interviewed, to participate in conversations and collaborative work in the communities. Since those early days, I have traveled to Hawai 'i many times because, in part, my immediate family have lived there since the 1960s and are permanent residents. Moreover, I also grew up in the Islands in the early 1970s before choosing to attend university in Ontario, Canada, many years later.

For this research though, my conversations with elders and educators, in particular with Dr. Manulani Aluli- Meyer and Dr. Hannah Tavares from the University of Hawai 'i began about four years ago. I discussed with them my prospective interest of engaging in kānaka research with a specific focus on women and their mo 'olelo (*storytelling/histories*). They both

encouraged me to follow my heart in the service of ‘āina. From that point, my subsequent conversations with Dr. Cheryl Hunter from the University of North Dakota is how this work emerged. All participants for this work are women (*wahine*), except for one. Many of these wahine are elders (*kūpuna*), community leaders, activists, kūmu (*teachers*), artists and mothers.

Despite the generous support, I had a challenge, which is, that *I am an outsider*, a subject (researcher) looking at objects (researched), and I do come with certain biases and assumptions that must be taken into account as I engage in this work. Therefore, I wanted to be methodical in how I approached my work. A question of methods and methodology reigned high on my path of consideration. In this regard, a hermeneutical approach seemed a possibility, yet to me, a traditional hermeneutical approach alone did not address the approximation of culture with regards to *me* and my interaction with the *other* (researched). Hermeneutics does indeed open pathways to understand differing worldviews through extracting information based on how people interpret their lived experiences, and how the researcher, in turn, interprets them (Rothfuß, 2009). However, in my work, I needed to find a way, where I can delve deeper into a worldview different to mine and understand the interpretations from my participants’ viewpoints and their experiences without my interfering in the meaning making. In the traditional hermeneutical framework, I believe this is not possible because when I am speaking with my participants, it is their experiences that ultimately need to inform what is *known* and not mine. Therefore, this situation posed a challenge for me. I believe my biases and preconceptions are what makes understanding of another culture or a belief system possible because of my willingness to be open, to listen, to learn and experience life in the community alongside with its members. Ideas that are discussed in depth by some of the philosophers and researchers, Clifford Geertz, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur among many others.

For Geertz, Gadamer, and Ricoeur having “preconceptions or prejudices are what makes understanding possible in the first place” (Ranco, 2006, p. 63). This is because historical influences of such observable texts, place, and people have left a negatively colored indelible mark. Over the years, these negative marks have created a strong awareness in me with regards to issues surrounding inequity and social injustices. Bringing this awareness; to my research allows me to approach this work from a standpoint of intersubjectivity within the methodological framework of the ‘Ōiwi (*Native Hawaiian*) in order to deconstruct and decolonize data (knowledge) and meaningfully engage in the analytical process. *Meaningfully*, to mean that which makes sense to the people and the communities of my research which ultimately leaves them with the power to accept or deny my findings. This is because the complexities of stories, place, and their interconnectedness to its constituents direct us as researchers to listen with sensitivity to *how* they (participants/objects) tell their stories.

Accordingly, anthropologist, Vincent Crapanzano, reminds us to know when to engage and disengage during observing, participating and experiencing what is under study. In this regard, to me, using the intersubjective lens to weave a wholistic tapestry of participants’ experiences made sense because intersubjectivity allows a space for the researcher to view participants experiences from their point of view with the use of personal narratives and other artifacts that are brought into the interaction between the researcher and participant (Duranti, 2010). Therefore, I am using intersubjectivity as a way to move beyond the notion of just understanding participants’ experiences to an area of empathy. A process that suggests a *trading of places* with the participants. This process allows us as researchers, and at times, limit us in our capacity within intersubjectivity to parse together our understanding of our participant’s world and the actual experiences. This is to mean, opening the researcher’s mind to understanding the

participant's worldview based on their systems of beliefs, and pulling those understandings to form a wholistic view that is in alignment with that participant. During this process, experiences of the participants may emerge, initially, as fragmentary. However, this process within the framework of intersubjectivity ultimately opens a window of opportunity to the researcher to alter his/her horizons (Gadamer quoted in Ranco, 2006) "until the object and the world are unified into a coherent whole. One thus "understands" the object and one's own convictions within the same experiential event" (p. 64). These are important roadmaps in research undertakings and knowledge building because when engaging in community research with real people in intimate ways and settings based on a particular indigenous worldview, there are certain points to consider. These points are, the researcher's ability to collaborate, the community's positionality within the research topic and a space for participant voices to resonate through the works, and finally, making sure to follow the research-ethics paradigms for indigenous research (Ranco, 2006).

Navigating the Terrain

The word, terrain, to me, has different meanings depending upon how I use this word and in which context. Here, I use this word to represent, geographical landscape, language and relationships. All three words require an understanding, respect and a sense of reciprocity within the context of place and of a specific space in which the research is conducted.

First of all, the geographical landscape required my understanding of place, the mo 'olelo (*history/story*) and how that relates to what I wanted to focus upon and why would that be important to the people of that place and to the research? Therefore, a careful contextualization of geography to language in how I interpret the findings is crucial to knowledge gained. Hawaiian scholar and kupuna, Mary Kawena Puki (1983) postulated the following: "In language,

there is life and death”(p. 129, Lipe, Kanī‘aupi‘o-Crozier & Hind, 2016) because, how one interprets information that gets passed on depends on the understanding and the respect shown to the place, and the context in which the words were uttered. From a Hawaiian historical point, this idea of the importance of a contextual understanding of language carried a special significance, especially, during the days when ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i (*Hawaiian Language*) was an oral tradition (Lipe et al, 2016). This is because the act of knowledge transference (*knowings*) by mo‘olelo (*story/history*) to the next generation was crucial for the kānaka’s survival. Moreover, even in today’s context, how a language is used and its application to findings is important in creating validity within the praxis of any work.

Finally, the understanding of reciprocity was important, and in my mind was a requisite when gathering data (knowledge) because what constantly circulated in my mind was why will anyone share any information regarding what I wanted to know? Therefore, from this point of view, I knew that as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Māori scholar, states in Denzin et al. (2008) that “spaces between decolonizing research practices and indigenous communities must be carefully and cautiously articulated” (p. 6). This is also to mean that the power within this developing dialog in this research must rest within the indigenous and native communities where the acceptability of the mode and methods of the conducted research rests entirely upon them. In other words, if this work is to be meaningful within the indigenous paradigm, I have an obligation to deconstruct and decolonize positivist structures that privilege western knowledge systems, and only then, that I would allow indigenous knowledge to emerge from specific spaces of a place (Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). After all, people in a specific place construct knowledge that is meaningful within that environment and community.

Therefore, it must also be them who are the rightful interpreters of that knowledge and how that knowledge is transferred and applied within their environment is their power (Casey, 1996).

In choosing to work with the narrative inquiry combined with intersubjectivity within the framework of ‘ōiwi methodology seem to speak volumes in the path I wanted to take. Being familiar with the use of these methodologies in my previous work, I feel their utilization in this work allow for an intimate exploration of the work that women do and how their interconnectedness to the place and space creates an expansive role in the creation of food sovereignty, a focus for this work.

In a broad sense, food sovereignty refers to being self-sufficient in food production and its sustainability. According to Altieri and Toledo (2011) as quoted in (Mawyer & Jacka, 2018) food sovereignty is defined as “the right of people to produce, distribute and consume healthy food in and near their territory in an ecologically sustainable manner” (p. 242). In Hawai ‘i, food sovereignty has a much broader context to its meaning. That is to say, following the European colonization, and the eventual annexation of the Hawaiian Nation to the United States, Native and Indigenous lands were taken over by the government. In many cases, these land grabs were then divided in to parcels and for the most part, sold to wealthy foreign entrepreneurs for their development of plantation agriculture (Camvel, 2012). As history shows and also indicated in literature, these actions taken by the government and wealthy entrepreneurs entailed water diversions and altering indigenous systems of agriculture such as lo ‘i kalo (*irrigated terrace for growing taro*) cultivation. Taro was the staple food of the Hawaiians. Therefore, altering lo ‘i kalo cultivation meant, altering the Hawaiian peoples’ diet. Subsequently, these political and economic alterations not only had a devastating impact on the natural ecosystems, but they also contributed to the displacement of Indigenous and Native people of Hawai ‘i (Interview, Carol

Mealaaloha Bishop, September 2018; Lincoln, Rossen, Vitousek, Kahoonei, Shapiro, Kalawe, & Meheula, 2018). This displacement of the Hawaiian people sharply altered indigenous food cultivation and its sustainability throwing the kānaka into cycles of poverty and hunger.

However, throughout the Hawaiian Islands, small pockets of traditional agricultural practices have persevered over the last 240 years since European arrival (Lincoln et al., 2018). These sustained agricultural practices together with the Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1970s have contributed to the steady increase in traditional farming methods in an effort to reintroduce the kānaka to healthy indigenous foods and sustainable cultivation practices. The *Hawaiian Renaissance* refer the period in mid 1970s where the kānaka galvanized people together and took to the streets in demanding back land rights and cultural identity from the State of Hawai ‘i (Interview, Carol Mealaaloha Bishop, September 2018; Lincoln et al., 2018).

The use of the narrative combined with intersubjectivity within the framework of the ‘ōiwi, allowed the voices of the participants to flow, echo and reverberate from their perspectives. The data (knowledge) that was gathered and the meaning that ensued became relevant and meaningful within that specific space and place which were transferable to other spaces and places within the indigenous paradigm. This cyclical knowledge application and its relevance in today’s work in the Hawaiian Islands show that the ancient ancestral knowledge is indeed current, “dimensions of traditional knowledge are not *local* knowledge, but knowledge of the *universal* as expressed in the local (Meyer, 2001, p. 4, Posey, 2001) because it is knowledge that is acquired *from* the land.

Narrative and Intersubjectivity as a Relational Tool

The Use of the Narrative

In narrative research, the interaction between the participant and the researcher is important as it allows the researcher to see personal narratives as a version of life at a particular moment of experience for the narrator. However, a unique aspect to my research dwells in the fact that I am willing to listen to all women's experiences, their ties to a specific place where they are helping to make a difference and to understand the importance of their agency and participate in a dialogue when appropriate. This places me in a position to "collaboratively access participants' life experiences in the way of accessing [*k*]new knowledge (Meyer, 2003) and engage in a process of storying and restorying" to reveal "multidimensional meanings and present an authentic and compelling rendering of data" (Leavy, 2015, p. 27) because the mo 'olelo are place and space specific. Lynne Davis (2004) posits that "stories cement together generations of collective memory, embodying the historical, spiritual, social, and spatial... linking past and future in the present. Stories are containers of Indigenous knowledge and thought, just as Indigenous languages are their fiber" (p. 3). Therefore, when we listen to mo 'olelo, the use of narrative inquiry helps the researcher to look for significant statements contained within the stories and comments to look for emergent themes that collectively intertwine and form patterns. This patterning offers the researcher and the readers an opportunity to understand the underlying meanings of contextual settings where the mo 'olelo takes place.

Understanding these underlying meanings gives power to narratives which in turn resonate with and strengthen belief systems that carry *truths* for a generation's specific cultural settings. This is because Indigenous worldviews honor orality as "a means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the *relational* which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition"

(Kovach, 2010, p. 42). Thus, a mo 'olelo is relational within the narrative inquiry process that can be helpful in guiding indigenous research consistent with a particular indigenous worldview. In my case, the kānaka worldview.

For the current research contained within this article, I interviewed many women from around the Island of O'ahu with ties to the outer Islands of the Hawaiian chain. Their personal narratives offered layers of voices, collective stories and memories from familiar and unfamiliar places and spaces. These collective voices embedded within stories and memories gave a depth to their generational and personal experiences. Many of these women travel between the Islands to perform their kuleana to beloved 'āina and 'ohana in order to revitalize and maintain *knowings* that was once kapu (*restricted*) during the post-colonial period. Some of these women are community leaders, and others are kūpuna (*elders*), kumu (*teachers/educators*), artists, mothers, cultural practitioners, and activists. They all have one element in common, love for the land and its sovereignty. Sovereignty through revitalization of land from a point of kuleana, culture (family/language/spirituality) and food from a point of health and well-being. For these women, it is their ultimate kuleana to pass on the [*k*]new knowledge (here to mean ancestral knowledge) to the younger generations, so that the kānaka can move beyond the generational pain and marginalization and reestablish vibrant, meaningful and healthy lifestyles. In using the methodological lens of intersubjectivity therefore, the researcher is further able to negotiate the cultural distances by engaging and disengaging when appropriate with her participants when conversing and receiving knowledge.

Importance of Intersubjectivity

In spite of the fact that I grew up and went to school in Hawai 'i and that I have traveled back and forth many times a year to the Islands over the last forty years, I will always be a

malihini (*visitor*) and not a kamaaina (*local*). This is because I did not spend most of my life living on the Islands and made any physical ties to the Hawaiian culture. This was an important fact to consider when I am engaged in exploring intimate relationships of ‘ōiwi (*Native*) and maoli (*Indigenous*) Hawaiian women and their interconnectedness to the land.

At the start of this research, I was cognizant of the fact, that my viewpoint was more of a western orientation as that was how I was socialized while living, attending schools and working in the northern hemisphere for the greater part of my life. Therefore, I was in constant search for a methodology that would segue into an arena where the cultural differences between me and kānaka women could be narrowed through a common understanding within the context of this study. The use of intersubjectivity provided me with that understanding because this methodology lends itself to forming the basis for intercultural understanding which is vital to my research and its ultimate validity. Although this methodology closely aligns with hermeneutics, I think intersubjectivity stretches far beyond the hermeneutical plane to include intermediary spaces and spheres between the subject, object and all that are related to narrow the distances allowing for connection to become relevant. This is because “interculturality between researchers and the researched is imbued with relative ephemerality and randomness, and by the same token, a lack of relationality quite unlike a life-world that is permanently shared” (Rothfuß, 2009, p. 174). Therefore, the conceptual understanding of intersubjectivity is important to the understanding of the *cultural other* because it creates a sense of self-consciousness (in researcher) in relation to recognizing socially the *other* (researched) for mutual interpersonal relationship and recognition (2009). This relationship is important as it forms a basis for the appreciation of the *other* and their cultural constructs. This is because intersubjectivity recognizes elementary differences that societies feature in the formation of their internal position

“within a continuum of individualization and collectivism, varying between social cohesion as a society and individual self-relationality” (2009, p. 177). This makes intersubjective attitudes group-related, yet individualistic in how they reproduce within the spatial fabric to interact with each other and the greater society, implying the importance of personal relationships (2009). Therefore, this pathway of using intersubjectivity was meaningful for me to utilize when I am looking at a worldview that is culturally alien to mine. Thus, an intersubjective lens affords me a way “to recognize my participants for their diversity, complexity, and meaningfulness of the other’s human expression of life” while navigating in ways to “reduce the distance to the reference frame of the alien culture in order to permit an understanding of it” (p. 177).

Intersubjectivity, therefore, allows a way to disengage in the intransparent hierarchy (in the form of symbolic violence) internalized during the course of colonial history. Therefore, the intersubjective framework allows a pathway to create to the best of possibility, a reduction of symbolic violence during the interview process by my acceptance of my *being the learner* and accepting my *participants as the knowledge holders*. This negotiated positionality helped minimize socio-cultural differences while opening doorways to enhance interpersonal conversations to take place on an even keel. In other words, my participants knew from my interactions with them, that I was non-judgmental, and looked to them, as the main sources of experiential knowledge within the context of narratives that would eventually inform my research while honoring their (participants’) emotions and interpretations. Therefore, the information observed and received was interpreted in a relational manner within the context of place and space of the community.

The 'Ōiwi Methodological Lens

For the Native and Indigenous Hawaiians, mo 'olelo (*history/story*), especially, those that are related to cosmogonic in nature form the foundation of geography highlighting the geological connections that connected kānaka to their 'āina (Oliveira, 2014, Kanahēle & Kanahēle, 1992). For the kānaka, the 'Āina bears a special significance, because it is the land that feeds her people. 'Āina is familial, and she is the mother of all kānaka, and this is not metaphorical (Camvel, 2010; Aluli-Meyer, 2013). This connection of the 'āina to all kānaka, however, is identified by the metaphorical use of the piko (*umbilical cord*). As a mother is connected to the baby by her piko in the womb that is surrounded by the soothing water and kept safe while being nurtured, so is the 'āina in taking care of her children within the environment that surrounds the 'āina. In addition, all that is animate and inanimate are connected by their piko to the 'āina, and their existence and continuance are interdependent upon each other and of the great spirit which absorbs and keeps 'ike (*knowings*) safely in the skies, valleys, mountains, streams, and oceans until such time comes for the 'ike to be passed down by the kūpuna (Aluli-Meyer, 2013, Oliveira, 2014; Nakoa & Wright, 2015). Therefore, this the connection of people to the land and spirituality is a part of the kua (backbone) of kānaka worldview.

This kānaka worldview represents an essential aspect of my research. This is because it offers multiple corridors for me to learn about the formation of the 'āina, first living organisms and the birth of the akua (*gods*) and the Hawaiian people, so, I know how to accurately interpret my findings and inform my research. The use of ōiwi lens combined with the lens of intersubjectivity provides me a pathway to understanding how ancestral 'ike continues to connect the kānaka to their beloved āina, and environment. Furthermore, these research lenses helped illuminate how ancient connections between land and people are made current through ancestral

‘ike that is contained within the mo ‘olelo and reverberates to give once lost agency back to the women and their current kuleana to land and family.

Delving deeper into my research process sanctioned by the University of North Dakota’s IRB (Internal Review Board), and as a start to my research, I asked my participants (all women) an initial question: “What was their most important relationship?” The answer was unanimous, their pilina (*connection*) to āina and their na ‘au (*gut*) that reinforces this knowingness back to themselves and all kānaka. A large part of this connection that is felt in the na ‘au carries the clarification that all kānaka are children of the ‘āina. Therefore, the ‘āina *is* the mother, and this is not a metaphor as previously stated (Meyer, 2013). All other connections within these women’s lives connected back to this very singular and most important connection. As one of my kupuna, Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, whom I call, Aunty Lynette, says that, *the health of the people is depended upon the health of the land, and there is no separation between the two* (interview, October 2018). Therefore, these women’s identity as being *the children* of ‘āina is another important fact within my research, because this concept of *child and mother* connection is very much tied to their kuleana to current revitalization projects that encompass food, land and language sovereignty. This kuleana is a key component in understanding these women’s resiliency that underscores mana wahine (*sacred power of women*).

Understanding the Concepts of Mana Wahine and Sovereignty

According to the guidance of ‘Ōlelo No ‘eau (*Hawaiian proverbs*), the wahine (*women*) have been metaphorized in mo ‘olelo and in oli (*chants*) from time immemorial as ‘a ‘ali ‘i, strong blooming plants that could withstand all environmental challenges. Accordingly, Puki (1983) explains the metaphor behind the ‘a ‘ali ‘i the following way: “The ‘a ‘ali ‘i has long been used as a Hawaiian metaphor and model for strength, resiliency, and flexibility because it can

survive challenging environments and elemental forces and still bloom to become a beautiful and useful resource” (Lipe, Kanī‘aupi‘o-Crozier & Hind, 2016, p. 57). In their beautifully illustrated story of the ‘a ‘ali ‘i’s life cycle, Lipe et al (2016) traces kānaka women’s survival despite their struggles and critical journeys through oppressive systems and compare those experiences through the generations with the survival traits of these plants.

Ultimately, it is these critical journeys and struggles that have strengthened the women with renewed mana to engage in transformative work to bring back sovereignty to their beloved ‘āina (Lipe et al, 2016, Meyer, 2013). Furthermore, Hawaiian scholar, Lilikala Kame‘eleihiwa states in *Kauanui* (2008) that the wahine combined with their genealogies connected to Haumea is specifically what gives kānaka wahine their mana. For example, Kame‘eleihiwa argues, that “the female gods are ancestors to modern Hawaiian women and have inspired them in their role as the strong female leaders of today” (p.283). Using her Hawaiian roots and knowledge of ‘ōleo Hawai ‘i, oli (chants), mele (*songs*) and pule (*prayers*), Kame‘eleihiwa, has restored “a lost genealogy to of female gods to their place in the Hawaiian cosmos and the history” (p. 283). These initiatives have reestablished mana wahine to new heights in contemporary Hawai ‘i in their movement toward a sovereign Hawai ‘i. However, to think of this mana, wahine, and their transformative work in revitalization projects from a point of feminist perspective is neither valid nor correct.

This invalidation of feminist perspective is due to the fact that feminism was developed out of the West mainly from perspectives of gender equality and rights associated within those perspectives in White societies. The reason for this non-alignment is due to White feminists’ assumption that indigenous women are defined by gender rather than by their race, and that “rights achieved by White women will benefit indigenous women and that the White women and

indigenous women share the same level of oppression” (Moreton-Robinson, 2000, p. 475). They do not. However, ideals of feminism in the United States, for example, later expanded into civil rights and African American women’s positionality within the White hegemony. Unfortunately, even now, in diversified societies in the so-called first-world countries, feminism is still a binary issue surrounding Black and White, and equities and rights within that binary thread which preclude the indigenous and women of color. Hawaiian scholar and activist Haunani-Kay Trask states in her book review (*Talkin’ up to the white woman: Aboriginal women and feminism*, 2000), “White women are generally uninterested in or occasionally hostile to our struggles, land rights, sovereignty, or any other part of reparations for the overthrow of our government by the United States in 1893” (Moreton-Robinson, 2000, p. 475). This is because “We indigenous people occupy two cultural worlds; White people occupy only one. We are the colonized; they are the beneficiaries of colonialism” (Trask, 1996, p. 911). Task (1996) continues on to say, “In our language, the past is our future. We face our past: ka wā mamua—the time before. The past holds our wisdom and our kūpuna (elders’) knowledge. As our culture tells us, we are guided in the present on the path so well followed by our ancestors in the past.” (p. 913)

It is from this point of kūpuna knowledge that wahine mana and sovereignty is grounded so that the audience understands why wahine mana and indigeneity is simultaneously associated with sovereignty and not with the main-stream White feminist ideologies of *rights* based on gender. The sovereignty movement within the scope of food and land by kānaka wahine expands beyond just *rights*; it encompasses the larger narratives of cultural integrity that also encompasses overall health and well-being of the kānaka through revitalization projects from an indigenous perspective.

Piecing Together the Knowledge Found

Kaulana Nā Pua: A Voice for Sovereignty

Kaulana Nā Pua is the first part of the verse from a mele composed by Ellen Wright Prendergast in honor of Queen Lili ‘uokalani and the people of Hawai ‘i. Mele Kaulana Nā Pua is also known as Mele ‘Āloha ‘Āina (*Patriot’s Song*) (Nordyke & Noyes, 1993). Kaulana Nā Pua, directly translates to *Famous are the Flowers*; flowers referencing children, who are the Hawaiians because they are of the ‘āina. This mele in fact has given the strength to Hawaiians in their movement toward sovereignty because it speaks to the illegal takeover of the Hawaiian lands by the United States and how the Hawaiians must stand steadfast in rebuilding sovereignty because of their love for the land and for their beloved Queen Lili ‘uokalani who was the last reigning monarch of the Kingdom of Hawai ‘i. This mele embraces onipa ‘a (steadfastness) as a commitment to Hawaiian sovereignty. This idea is best articulated by Carol Mealaaloha Bishop, artist and activist of Waiāhole in the following way:

Living Sovereign is my philosophy of life. It helps me identify the part of me that needs nurturing in order to achieve, health, happiness, and prosperity. Think being energized by farming, ocean activities, and family interactions. Incorporating ‘Ōleo in your daily life—from that a feeling of contentment. So as to be satisfied with one’s purpose in life. Incorporating more culturally based foods, plant-based meals, self-grown and shared produce fare in daily life—knowing where your food comes from. You are sovereign within your space. Living sovereign is living in this space., at this time without labels, State affiliations for aid, grants, and subsidies. Along with the aloha “spirit” we possess as Hawaiians, that mana is in our DNA, it is not a place, or a thing, you cannot buy it or

possess it, although many try. We share it and you reciprocate. (Written answer to interview, September 12, 2018)

These words of Carol Mealaaloha, whom I got to know as Meala, resonates the main idea behind the phrase, Kaulana Nā Pua. Meala. As a wahine and a *child* of the ‘āina, she is cognizant of her contribution to both the land and the health and well-being of her people in maintaining her kuleana (*obligation*) of reciprocity. Moreover, her inferences of past cultural losses and her current acknowledgment of the work ahead of her for kānaka sovereignty is too overwhelmingly evident.

Currently, Hawai ‘i is vibrant in her work in the revitalization of the food sovereignty movement. This forward movement began with many years ago, albeit slowly with meetings (hui) between community leaders; mostly wahine and the State in negotiating new leases on ancient fallow lands for cultivations. These lands are known as homesteads; Hawaiian lands that are held by the State of Hawai ‘i in perpetuity for Native Hawaiians. During my research work in O ‘ahu, I went to several of these homesteads to learn and work with the community. Waiāhole’s lo‘i kalo (taro patches), Kane‘ohe’s Paepae o He ‘eia (fishpond), Kahana Bay’s fishpond (under restoration), Waimanalo Bay’s Limu Hui (seaweed restoration) and Wai ‘anae’s Ka ‘ala Organic Farm lo‘i kalo. Although all these community projects are in O ‘ahu, all of them are either supported by or work in conjunction with other communities around the Islands. Four prominent community-based organizations that support these individual projects are Kamehameha Schools, Kua ‘Āina (non-profit), MA ‘O Organic Farms (non-profit), Ka ‘ala Organic Farms (non-profit) and Waimanalo Limu Hui.

Kamehameha Schools are the largest landowner of the Hawaiian Islands. They tirelessly work to preserve ancestral land and knowledge systems through placed-based educational

projects within their school system, and as well as, at various revitalization projects in many communities to energize food security programs for the ‘ohana in O‘ahu and in the outer Islands. Kua ‘Āina, is a singular entity that is based in Kane ‘ohe. Their mission is *‘āina mamona— abundant and healthy ecological system in Hawai ‘i that contribute to community living* (Interview, January 19, 2019, Brenda Asuncion, Marine Biologist, Kua ‘Āina). Kua is working with State and external grants to support communities in fishpond management and restorations. They are the large fishpond network in Hawai ‘i. It started 2003, as Hui Mālama Loko l ‘a. It is operating as a hub for information and support with subsistent fishing and fishpond restoration in small communities (fishing rules, seasonal closures, sharing of traditional knowledge systems associated with fish migrations and spawning patterns of different species). Kua also works with community elders to revive and safeguard ancestral knowledge in fishpond management for the betterment of the community and sometimes works through State legislation to protect community projects and applied ancestral knowledge systems in their management. As Brenda says (Interview, January 2019), *“because of Kua’s support, communities feel that their stories and practices are able to be passed on to their younger generations and this makes the elders feel that their knowledge is valued.”* She sees this type of validation by the communities as a great achievement for their non-profit. Moreover, Kua’s involvement in placed-based education and connection to a community of about forty fishpond projects for food security is another valuable collective contribution to Hawai ‘i food sovereignty program. As for MA ‘O farms, which stands for Mala ‘Ai Opio (Farm of the Youth) of Wai ‘anae, started their initial ‘Hands Turned To Soil’ youth conference in food sovereignty program in 2003. Since then, MA ‘O farms have guided many community-based food sovereignty programs that help grow and distribute food back to the communities. Their movement, MA ‘O – Mala ‘Āi Opio is the

nourishing of youth through food production, “helped awaken Hawaiian communities to develop and host youth projects dedicated to gardens, healthy eating, and conscious relationships with land, moon and each other” (Meyer, 2014, p. 100). Ka ‘ala Organic Farm, also of Wai ‘anae focuses on restoring ancient abandoned lo ‘i kalo to their traditional role as the breadbasket of Wai ‘anae coast. The ahupua ‘a of Wai ‘anae Kai that was once self-sufficient and produced food adequately to its people while managing its land and water resources sustainably but is now one of the most underprivileged areas in the State of Hawai ‘i. Unfortunately, 38.5% of Native Hawaiian families with children under five years old live in extreme poverty in this area (MA ‘O Organic Farms, n.d.). Waimānalo Limu Hui at the Pāhonu Loko l ‘a (fishpond) was started by Luana Albino, a kumu and a kupuna who has lived in the Waimānalo community for six generations. Seeing the depletion of limu, an essential food source in the kānaka diet, and seeing extreme poverty and hunger in her community, Luana spearheaded the Pāhonu Loko l ‘a restoration as an important arm to the already strong food sovereignty movement in the Hawaiian Islands. The goal of Hawai ‘i’s food sovereignty movement is to restore the ‘āina’s ancestral abundance to empower the community through knowledge systems rooted in ancestral knowings and eradicate hunger among the kānaka.

The Embeddedness of *Knowings* and Their Importance Toward Food Sovereignty

Places and Spaces

Ancestral knowings are what is deeply embedded in mo ‘olelo in specific places, whether these places are in Wai ‘anae, Kane‘ohe or Waimānalo. It is the stories that help keep alive the knowledge of the land and the cosmologies which were and are integral to the people’s survival. In these stories, we see a blending of culture and nature, a relational awareness. This native

Hawaiian view of the land is well illustrated in the following comment by Pulama Collier of Maui, a cultural practitioner, and educator (Meyer, 2014),

Āina momona/Fertile land. The land is our ancestor, teacher, parent, provider, and nurturer continually shaping and defining us. Hawaii is an island nation protected, preserved and nurtured by our oceans, lands, sky, and heavens. Land/‘āina is abundant, rich, and living. We connect to our land as we connect to ourselves. To see our land as ‘āina momona is to also see ourselves as full of life, fertile, abundant, and healthy. (Collier, 2012, p. 100)

Fertile land is metaphorized to mean the *holder of knowledge* that is the ‘āina. Learning from the land to both receive and give back is one’s ultimate kuleana for the health and well-being of all ‘ohana. According to Lipe (1996), ancestral knowledge is embodied within each individual and with that comes, power, privilege and the kuleana (*responsibility*) to listen to mo ‘olelo to learn from and share with future generations. Although there have been disconnections and disruptions to these precious knowledge systems in the past, many wahine are regrouping to strengthen the bond between the kānaka to their mother, the ‘āina. In contemporary Hawai‘i, with the resurgence of traditional practices in cultivation, the revival of traditional food preparations, revitalized methods of land irrigation, ‘ōlelo (*language*), and sustainable farming thorough application of kūpuna *knowings* in fishponds and limu restoration in local communities are a testament to these efforts.

To illustrate these reconnections of the kānaka to their ‘āina, ‘ōleo (*language*) and *knowings*, I will begin by giving an example from an interview I conducted with Kealaulaokamamo Leota, whom I got to know as Mamo while visiting Paepae o He ‘eia Fishpond. This ancient fishpond in Kane‘ohe which is on the northeast side of O‘ahu. Mamo is a

teacher and practitioner of cultural education and outreach who teaches school-aged children at the fishpond. Paepae o He 'eia is one of the largest and oldest (eight hundred years) revitalized, fully functioning, fishponds on the island of O'ahu. It is owned by the Kamehameha Schools, and the project's purpose is three-fold. One is to reintroduce and feed ancient healthy foods to local kānaka population as it was done in the days of the ahupua 'a. The second is to teach ancient farming techniques in the current context using innovative methods that do not create an imbalance in the environment. The third is to introduce young children to ancestral knowledge of farming and food production using *kilo (observation)* within a system called Makawalu. The word, Makawalu means *eight eyes*. Therefore, this system of Makawalu entails learning to *read nature* using *eight eyes*. In other words, to observe *events* or *happenings in nature* deeply, so that you can see, smell, feel, taste and hear what you are observing, so you know how phenomena function and to take appropriate action. According to Mamo, it was with the use of these skilled observations that the kūpuna knew when or when not to act with regards to natural events;

Using makawalu, we teach kids to step back and really look at things to understand their function. We use three categories that our kūpuna used, and they are Papahulilani, Papahulihōnue, and Papahānaumoku. The first category of Papahulilani means observation of the heavens; this means the skies, the clouds, winds, and the moon cycles. The second category of Papahulihōnue means observation of nature in natural settings, like water in streams and ocean, mountains, vegetation and animal behavior. And the third category of Papahānaumoku means, the observation of birthing; in other words, how things grow. Everything we do is very tide-based because our kūpuna knew how to use the moon cycles because the moon affected the tides and tides affected how we farmed. They say you can't predict the weather, but our kūpuna knew how to predict the

weather, and they did that very well. (Interview, Kealaulaokamamo Leota, November 1, 2018)

A knowledge system such as Makawalu is developed over a specific time in a specific location. In Hawai‘i, this knowledge system is shaped through space and time by knowledge holders through metaphors embedded in mo‘olelo so that the general population understand and can relate to their everyday life. This relatability was integral to how the knowledge is applied, preserved and pass down to future generations.

Paepae o He ‘eia Fishpond

While the main focus of food sovereignty program is to teach self-sufficiency of cultural foods and eradicate hunger among Native and Indigenous communities, *sovereignty is also about feeding people spiritually*, says, Mamo (Interview, November 2018). According to her, at Paepae o He ‘eia Fishpond (fig. 1), the kumu (*teachers*) take pride in teaching students and ‘ohana, maui, *full well-being of a person*. This means, learning how to eat healthy, as well as, how to have a healthy mind, and body (connection to spirit). This idea of spiritual well-being is resonant through out my interview with Mamo. Delving deeper into the conversation, Mamo explained what living free of conflict means in ancestral times and how that is important in performing kuleana for health and well-being of the community,

Living free of conflict helps one to be aware and connect with spirituality to gain knowledge. When we have unresolved conflicts, our minds work messy and we engage in actions that are messy. We have an ‘Ōlelo No ‘eau (Hawaiian proverb), that says, “Hana kāpulu ka lima, ‘ai kāpulu ka waha.” What this means, is that, when your hands work messy, your mouth eats messy.” So, it is important to find our spiritual side to learn how to handle conflicts. Our kūpuna taught us that, now we must listen. For me, when I am

angry, I usually take a walk and chant. This helps me to get rid of anger and feel healthier. When you don't have anger, you can resolve problems with a clean brain in a productive way. So, this type of self-healing work is also what we teach our 'ohana here. This is what our kūpuna expect from us. (Interview, Kealaulaokamamo Leota, November 1, 2018)

Living conflict free was a necessity in learning from the land. What is inferred by messy hands and messy eating is lack of intentionality in how one is expected to perform kuleana for the benefit of all. Having the right mindset was integral in developing one's keen awareness of one's surroundings so when the land *speaks*, one is able to absorb the knowledge and apply and reciprocate in return.



Figure 1. Paepae o He 'eia Fishpond, Kane'ohē.

An important part of the system of Makawalu is teaching the ‘ohana ancient practices of managing, and fish farming techniques, without creating an ecological imbalance. This entails not only maintaining loko‘ume iki (*physical structures*) that contain the pond and its mākāhā (*gates*) but also learning to work with the moon cycles and tides to maintain the desired fish population without depleting fish on both sides of the pond. This takes an incredible knowledge of fish, their fawning cycles and migratory patterns. Moreover, ‘ohana are also taught how to observe and release predatory fish from the pond. According to ancient mo ‘olelo, each pond has guardians and if these guardians show up, that means, there is an imbalance in the pond that must be corrected immediately while taking care not to harm them. At Paepae, the two guardians are Meheanu, a *salamander* that can take different forms and color (inside the pond where fresh water meets the saltwater) and outside, the pond is, Lupekia’i which is a *stingray*. Mamo has sighted both guardians over the years she has tended the pond, and tells me how her swift actions saved the fish and sometimes a relationship with a co-worker within the pond environment,

Once I saw a Lupekia’i inside the pond, and right away that told me, that there was an imbalance in the water within the pond. And Lupekia’i was there to protect our fish. I ran out to check the pond, and I was right, there were no fish to be found-- Lupekia’i was hiding the fish in the kuapa (rocks of the wall). So, I opened the gates (mākāhā) to balance the water. When the right balance was reached in the two waters, Lupekia’i left and the fish came back from their hiding. For the fishponds to operate and maintain the right balance, there needs to be a correct balance of brackish water. In ancient times, our kūpuna were able to know this by observing the fish and other creature that live in the pond. Knowing which fish were entering the pond through the gates and which were leaving, and which guardians were showing up, and in which form they were taking, told

our kūpuna the ecological balance in the pond and in the ocean. So, now, it is up to us to observe, to know and to pass on the knowledge to our ‘ohana, so they will never be hungry. As kumu, this is a part of our kuleana. (Interview, November 2018)

Mamo’s shared experience illustrated to me how the knowledge system of Makawalu is deeply interconnected with people who are cultural practitioners. This type of keen alignment with ancestral knowledge embedded in stories is vital for the contemporary youth and ‘ohana to know and practice if they are to move beyond the generational losses and begin to live healthy lives. Being open to learning from kūpuna knowledge and perfecting it for current and future application are the beginning stages of sovereignty in all areas for the kānaka.

Waimānalo Limu Hui at Pāhonu Loko l ‘a

Kupuna (*elder*) Luana Albinio’s genealogy extends to Kohala, Hawai ‘i to the Island of Maui. Currently an elementary school teacher and kupuna in the community of Waimānalo, she volunteers at the Waimanalo Limu Hui (*seaweed restoration project*) she helped found in November 2017 at Kaiona Beach Park, Waimānalo. Since its founding days, the volunteers (includes children and youth) have steadily grown. The Pāhonu Loko l ‘a (*Turtle Fishpond*) restoration has risen to new heights under the guidance of kupuna Luana and other limu practitioners. They meet once a month for limu restoration, and once every three months for the pā (*wall*) restoration. I first met Luana when I volunteered in December 2018 to weave and secure limu on the walls of Pāhonu pond and beyond the reef at Kaiona Beach Park in Waimanalo to revive nearly depleted limu. Limu weaving is to take spore-rich limu pieces, weave them into a lei using raffia (fig. 2), and then, tie them on small rocks (fig. 3) to be anchored to the pā of the pond and on to the reefs. This method allows limu to establish on the rock pā and the reefs to regenerate and rejuvenate the nearshore marine environment.



Figure 2. Limu lei making.



Figure 3. Limu rocks.

The reason for Luana to be a part of the food sovereignty movement is personal. As she recalled, growing in Waimanalo meant,

“eating from the sea,” our diet was mainly, fish and seaweed.” Our ‘ohana in the mauka (mountains) had poi (pounded taro), pig, wood (for our canoes), fruits and we had a variety of fish, puhi (eels), salt and seaweed (different kinds) which we also exchanged in those ancient times.

She remembers the many family journeys to the ocean, to Pāhonu pond to catch fish and harvest limu but always making sure to only take what was needed,

“Food was never wasted, our kūpuna instilled in us that abundance equaled how we sustained the ocean and how well we take care of it. As we were growing up, our mothers told us the stories about the ocean, about the Islands and how they got their names, and why that is important for us to know. In those days, women told the stories and held the children close to them. From women, we learned about mana and the importance of mana wahine. For me, starting this hui and gathering other women to join is a part of my mana that I bring, and it is also my kuleana to ‘āina and my ‘ohana. (Interview, March 2019)

Ecological sustenance played an important role in the lives of Hawaiians. Eating from the sea suggests the delicate balance that needed to be honored and preserved in order to make sure that people had enough food. Since the introduction of coloniality in the Islands, the Hawaiian ways of living and belief systems were legally expunged. One of the dire consequences of these changes for the Hawaiians were the introduction of foods that were foreign to their bodies and unhealthy. Over the years, following the illegal annexation of the Kingdom of Hawai 'i many of the lo 'i kalo (*taro patches*) and Loko l 'a (*fishponds*) were abandoned. Overfishing and over-harvesting of limu in areas of Waimānalo Bay and others like it have depleted the limu, bleached the coral and vastly reduced fish populations to near extinction among certain species. Luana's goal is to restore the various kinds of limu that were once *plentiful*, in Pāhōnu. These different types of limu were, Manauea (red), Kohu (pink), Kala (brown), 'Ele 'ele, Wawae 'iole (also locally known as Rat's Foot), and Pālahalaha. These types of limu were key to maintaining a healthy marine life as well as contributing abundantly to the native diet. According to Luana, limu was also sacred and medicinal for the Hawaiians because limu represents Goddess Hina. As a staple food source, limu was third only to fish and poi. Therefore, the need for its restoration is an urgent call for action to eradicate hunger among the kānaka. As Luana says,

You know, this is not a difficult concept, when there is no limu, we don't have healthy coral, and when we don't have healthy coral and limu, there is no fish. Balance is very important for healthy ocean life, and our kūpuna knew this. We have a lot of work to do. It has been a slow process, but we are getting people back to the land and ocean, and we are reintroducing foods that are healthy for the body. Eating from 'āina and the sea is cheaper than buying processed food which is very bad for the body. (Interview, March 2019)

Kānaka’s connection to the land is very present among all the women (wahine) I worked alongside with and interviewed. All the women I spoke with mentioned how important it is to galvanize other women and bring the right mana to reclaim the land and ocean to bring health back to the lāhui (kānaka nation). One of the ways the mana wahine are reclaiming these lands and oceans is by way of *rebirthing* the mo ‘olelo attached to specific places. In the case of Pāhonu Loko l ‘a, there is an ancient mo ‘olelo attached to it. Pāhonu Loko l ‘a was not a fishpond in the traditional sense. This Loko l ‘a had a specific function. The ancient ahupua ‘a of Waimānalo was ruled by ali ‘i, Kukui. His wife Pāhonu liked to eat Honu, sea turtle. Therefore, this Loko l ‘a was originally built for Pāhonu, and it was kapu for anyone else to harvest any turtles from it. Of course, much later, under the Hawaiian Kingdom, these special Loko l ‘a were turned into a source of food production for the lāhui. For the kānaka, knowing the meaning behind the name and its connection to the ‘āina is a source of inspiration for collective action. Beyond Pāhonu being an important site of food sovereignty in today’s Hawaiian landscape, it is teaching ‘ohana and their youth self-sufficiency in food production and healthy lifestyles.

Ka ‘ala Organic Farm

Another site where kānaka women are gathering for collective action toward food sovereignty is at Ka ‘ala Organic Farm in Wai ‘anae Valley. One of the women who has galvanized many other women from the local community of Wai ‘anae is Laurien Baird Hokuli ‘i Helfrich-Nuss. Born on the slopes of Mauna kea in Hilo, Hawai ‘i, and growing up on the plains of Ewa Beach, in Honolulu, Lala, as I got to know her is a third-generation Hawaiian, a world traveler, and a Hawaiian cultural practitioner.

Lala calls herself a keiki o ka aina (*child of the land*). With this privileged identification to the ‘āina comes a kuleana which she has lovingly embraced—service to the land and ‘ohana.

A part of that service, for her, means, reestablishing herself to land and spirit. From that space, she has collaborated with the farm to create a group of women from the Wai ‘anae community under the umbrella, Hui Kū Like Kākou. Under this umbrella, every Sunday, wahine (*women*) bring their mana to teach and be engaged in sustainable farming and cultivation of ancient foods to bring food security to the community. Lala is directly involved in collaborating/creating pathways for local, national and international women, men and youth (fig. 4) to participate in food sovereignty movement around the Island of O’ahu through outreach programs connected to the farm and her own enterprise, *Conscious Concepts*. She tirelessly works to give all involved in collaborations an idea of what true waiwai (wealth) is in specific places. This means, weaving together ecological, cultural, social and spiritual capital in the service of the beloved ‘āina.

I first met Lala, in Honolulu, at the Mānoa Cultural Center for the community event of Hō mai Pono (*traditional understanding of time and place*) through studying moon cycles. Since then, I have met Lala at several venues and began a conversation which continues to this day. It was during an early conversation, that she invited me to be a part of her Hui Kū Like Kākou along with a group of dancers from New York to visit Ka ‘ala Farm to be a part of learning from the cultural base of Wai ‘anae which is identified as a kipuka. Kipuka is a place where ancestral knowledge lives on (*Interview, Lala and Ka ‘eha, January 13, 2019*). While I was at Ka ‘ala (fig. 5), I met many cultural practitioners from whom I have learned so much as well through extended conversations and interviews that supported my current research. Another such a cultural practitioner is Ka ‘eha who like Lala connected with youth and ‘Ohana from all Islands to teach about the importance of cultivating a relationship with the ‘āina.



Figure 4. At Ka ‘ala Organic Farm, Wai ‘anae Valley. Lala is in yellow shirt at the center.

In precolonial Hawai‘i, the Wai ‘anae Valley belonged to the ahupua‘a of Wai ‘anae Kai. During those days, our ahupua‘a was known as ‘āina momona (land of plenty) that provided kalo, uala (sweet potato), fish and other foods for thousands of native Hawaiian people. According to ancient mo‘olelo, the secrets of the land is held in these mauka which is one of the reasons why this valley was so rich. It is said that a pule (prayer) was

offered to the spirit and aumakua (gods) in each of the four directions before and after being on the 'āina, so, the people were blessed in turn, and their crops were safeguarded both from natural disaster and wild boars.

Even today, we continue with our pule to our spirit and aumakua before we step into the lo 'i kalo and other cultivations. We deeply respect the land and kalo because we know it is then, that we are blessed with an abundance of food. Because of this respect that we show to our 'āina, and our spit and aumakua that wild boars do not dig our kalo in the lo 'i or the uala. Some of the surrounding areas have this problem but not us. (conversation, Ka 'eha, January 13, 2019).

True to Ka 'eha's word, I was a part of the prayer process by thanking our own parents and ancestors who have brought us to that space for this important learning. This process allowed me a space to become aware of who I am and how I came to be on the banks of that particular lo 'i kalo. At that time, I felt that I too was a keiki o ka aina and not merely a guest who had long left the 'āina but have come back to return the aloha through new learnings.

Today, even after more than two hundred years of the Western cultural impact, the mauka (*mountain*) lands of Wai 'anae Kai are still a largely intact cultural landscape with extensive areas of kalo and uala (*sweet potato*) terraces and several important heiau (temples). In fact, after the initial harvesting of kalo at the farm, my kuleana for the day, Ka 'eha's took another wahine (Keala) and me for a walk deeper into uncultivated fallow land toward the mauka (about a mile away from the farm) to show the richness that lay idle under the overgrowth. During colonialism, water from the mauka was diverted to sugar cane and pineapple fields and thousands of acres of terraced lo 'i kalo, such as these were forcefully abandoned as kalo was not a marketable



Figure 5. Lala, cultural practitioners and volunteers at Ka 'ala Organic Farm, Wai 'anae Valley.

product, therefore, the flow of water to the lo'i was seen as a waste of a valuable resource. However, Ka 'ala Farm is steadily working toward land and lo'i restoration by extending its cultivation to the edges of the mauka as it used to be with the help of external grants and dedicated volunteers like Lala and Ka 'eha. From my long walk that day, I learned that deep in the forestlands of the Wai 'anae Kai forest reserve provide habitat for indigenous flora and fauna that capture rainfall and recharge drinking water aquifers, a waiwai itself. For Lala,

Indigeneity is about re-rooting yourself back to the place of your connection, living in the community and returning the aloha. When you do this, you navigate your life differently, and from a deeper level. And your work begins to create ripple effects that connect others to the work you do for the community. We as wahine, need our collective mana to reverse

hunger and claim sovereignty in our food production and land so that it benefits our 'ohana and our youth—they are our future. (Conversation at the hale (house), Ka 'ala Farm, January 13, 2019)

Lala's deep insight into *indigeneity* got me reflecting about how we place ourselves in particular spaces. Sometimes how we place ourselves in these particular places and spaces, affect our responses making us either connect or disconnect. As a matter of interest, Lala is not of Hawaiian heritage but by virtue of living and growing up in the Islands for three generations have given her a space to intentionally create a connection with the 'āina. As she candidly said, it took her papa's ill health and seven years away from Hawai 'i to navigate herself back to these resplendent Islands. Lala is glad she is *now* home because her homecoming has given her back grounding on the soil, that she is thankful for and it has given her a sense of purpose in her continued journey of mālama 'āina (working and caring for the land) for the benefit of all:

We were a land that fed our own people, and we need to get back on track. In Hawai 'i wealth wasn't measured with money but with the health and well-being of its 'āina and people...wealth comes in intricate diverse forms, because life experiences are diverse and carry energy. (Conversation at the hale (house), Ka 'ala Farm, January 13, 2019)

“Āina Hawai 'i may have fed all of its children in precolonial days in ample and healthy ways. However, the colonial legacy of social and cultural disruptions have left the kānaka without land and water for their needed cultivations, and forever tying them to a market economy for which they had no foundation or the means to acquire such. As a result, today, Hawai 'i imports ninety percent of the food that it feeds (Meyer, 2013). Many of these foods are unaffordable, therefore, unavailable for the native Hawaiians. As a result, much of the Native and Indigenous Hawaiians are undernourished and live in poverty. According to Meyer, if a food emergency were to hit the

Islands, people of Hawaii will only have food for one week, because most foods are imported, and the lāhui will not have a chance to gain access to that food source anyway (Conversation, Manulani Aluli-Meyer, September 4, 2018).

Moving Beyond Food Sovereignty

Restoring Aloha Back to Kānaka Communities

In looking back at ancient times, every ahupua‘a had a standard of practice, where everyone had a vital role to play in their specific kuleana toward a common good of the community. Wahine mana was an important factor in maintaining a balance in the family and within the community. However, these important threads were broken with the introduction of industrialization. Imbalance in power structures created within coloniality has left the kānaka in dire straits with regards to their daily existence and with that, their connection to their beloved ‘āina.

Today, the wahine of Hawai‘i’s are looking toward taking forward action by reestablishing their kuleana to ‘āina and ‘ohana. They have utilized their collective mana with the resonant agency as shown by each wahine I have interviewed. These wahine have regrouped to move past current oppressive systems and are managing the food system to feed the lāhui. One of the ways they are doing this is by bringing back the mo‘olelo to *birth* the importance of places and spaces within knowledge systems that made sense within their ancient cultural practices. Words like kipuka, kuleana, mana, maui (*health*), waiwai (*wealth*), Pāhonu (*turtle pond*), heiau (*temple*), and indigeneity give special meanings to places where (re)birthings are taking place within this sovereignty movement. Moreover, when you combine these words with word phrases like *eating from the sea, momona ‘āina, returning aloha, using makawalu*, and *kūpuna knowings*, reinforce the importance of the interconnectedness to land to *learn from* it,

which was a necessary part of kānaka survival. This interconnectedness is an important *kūpuna knowing* that were passed on in mo ‘olelo. Most of all, one of the core essences of the kūpuna knowledge is the understanding of mauli (wellness). As Mamo stated earlier, *sovereignty is also about feeding people spiritually*. Her inference here is that unless the mind and body are in harmony with the spirit (environmental and genealogical connections), there cannot be sovereignty that is sustainable. So, from this point of view, application of kūpuna knowledge enhances how one connects to the land which in turn enhances the way how one interacts with it. Complex knowledge systems informed the kānaka how to live a life of balance (pono) through these close observances, kuleana, and reciprocity.

In reflection. For me, using an intersubjective lens within the ōiwi framework has created an understanding of kānaka women and how their mana is brought forward to affect positive change for the lāhui. Intersubjective lens helped to distant myself from my assumptions to learn, observe, understand and interpret meaning from a kānaka perspective without judgment. Within this context, I was forced to be reflexive about the knowledge I was building and how that impacts my research all the while honoring kānaka culture. Furthermore, intersubjectivity opened my mind to understand a group of people whose worldview is not my own but have certain values with which I connected. For example, when I felt that I too was a keiki o ka ‘āina while cleaning harvested kalo in the stream (fig. 6) and standing on the banks of the lo ‘i at Ka ‘ala.

These types of emotions or feelings cannot be experienced from within, if one is not open to listening and learning from another’s perspective and being deeply aware of a particular place and space. The ability to cultivate this awareness is what threads us together as humans and that which move us toward resiliency. Perhaps, this is why the kūpuna called these wahine ‘a ‘ali ‘i,



Figure 6. Renuka, cleaning kalo corms in the stream at the Ka ‘ala Organic Farm, Wai ‘anae Valley.

strong blooming plants that could withstand all environmental challenges. The environmental challenges here alludes to colonization and its devastating effects on the women. Nonetheless, true to its saying, these wahine have survived the strong winds for their continuous bloom. Their present engagement in Hawai 'i's sovereignty movements speak to the strength of their mana in creating ripples that connect and diversify their efforts within native communities for their continued vision for a healthy lāhui nation. From those initial days of the sovereignty movement led by women like Haunani Kay Trask (1970s), younger women like Mamo and Lala have taken up the cause with guidance from kupuna and Konohiki (a person who is in charge of a land division and a cultural practitioner), Luana Albinio and Manulani Aluli-Meyer. In their efforts for a sovereign Hawai 'i, they have been steadfast in their demands for curriculum connections to the educational system that include placed-based educational opportunities for children and youth. Kamehameha Schools and many kipuka such as Waimānalo Limu Hui and Ka 'ala Farm have joined in efforts in enriching indigenous education with a vision to free the lāhui nation from hunger and poverty. Inclusion of kūpuna knowledge systems in public, private, charter schools, and the university system is a testament to the mana brought forward by many wahine that is making Kaulana Nā Pua a close reality.

CHAPTER III

ART AND THE VOICES WITHIN: *EXPLORING KĀNAKA WOMEN'S STORYTELLING*

IN THE VISUAL MEDIUM THROUGH PORTRAITURE AND

KĀNAKA 'ŌIWI METHODOLOGIES

Glossary

Akua (*Gods/ancestors*)

'Āina (*That which feeds/Mother/Land*)

Ali 'i (*Chiefs*)

Ali 'i (*Ruling chiefs*)

Ea (*Life/lifeforce/sovereignty*)

'Ike (*Knowing/to see/to know*)

Kānaka 'Ōiwi (*Native People*)

Kānaka Maoli (*Indigenous People*)

Kua (*Backbone*)

'Ōlelo Hawai 'i (*Hawaiian language*)

'Ōlelo no 'eau (*Hawaiian proverbs/ poetical sayings*)

Oli (*Chant*)

'Ohana (*Family, one's own or extended*)

Kapu (*Ancient Hawaiian laws and regulations*)

Kuleana (*Obligation/responsibility*)

Kumu (*Teacher*)

Kūpuna (*Elders/ancestors/grandparents*)

Lāhui (*Nation/collective identity*)

Limu (*Seaweed*)

Lo‘i kalo (*Irrigated taro patch*)

Maka‘āinana (*General population*)

Makai (*Ocean*)

Mana (*Sacred powers*)

Manu (*Birds*)

Mauka (*Mountains*)

Mele (*Song*)

Mo ‘olelo (*Story/historical accounts*)

Na ‘au (*Gut/gut feeling*)

Nohona Hawai ‘i (*Hawaiian way of living*)

Piko (*Umbilical cord*)

Pilina (*Connection*)

Pono (*Peaceful and balanced life*)

‘Umeke (*Containers*)

Wahine (*Women/woman*)

Wahi pana (*Storied places*)

*Art and the Voices Within: Exploring Kānaka Women's Storytelling in the Visual Medium
Through Portraiture and Kānaka 'Ōiwi Methodologies*

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Abstract

This research study examines Kānaka women's storytelling in contemporary Hawai'i through the visual medium. This research was conducted solely by Renuka Mahari de Silva, including its data collection and analysis. The second author, Cheryl Ann Hunter supported this work by editing the written work. In doing this work, the researcher immersed herself in discussing artwork with Kānaka 'Ōiwi (*Native*) and Kānaka Maoli (*Indigenous*) women of Hawai'i in artmaking. Using a narrative approach, combined with portraiture methodology, this body of work draws broader parallels through the lens of kānaka 'ōiwi methodology, to understand the implications of colonial marginalization. Furthermore, this work looks at how these women's voices and emotions are drawn through the arts to redefine positionality of the kānaka women of Hawai'i toward their cultural and land sovereignty. Findings indicate that despite forced cultural and political changes over time, kānaka women's innate beliefs and their interconnectedness to land and spirituality has begun to reshape in multidimensional ways both culturally and ecologically. These women not only feel directly tied to a generational spiritual base that nurtures them, but they also feel that "dimensions of traditional knowledge are not *local* knowledge, but knowledge of the *universal* as expressed in the local" (Meyer, 2001, p. 4).

Keywords: Kānaka, narrative, portraiture, 'ōiwi, spirituality, artmaking, storytelling

Connecting to a Kānaka Perspective

Kānaka Identities and Their Formulation

We all experience the world from our own unique and individual perspectives. These perspectives are often based on cultural values that are learned and reinforced in families and schools (Derr, Roussillon, & Bourns, 2002). Cultural values refer to “deep-seated nonconscious assumptions” (Kaulukukui, & Nāho‘opi‘i, 2008, p. 97, Derr, Roussillon, & Bourns, 2002) in behaviors. These nonconscious assumptions are deeply ingrained in people through “childhood experiences, language, religion, philosophy, geography, and other variables linked expressively to homogeneous society” (Kaulukukui, & Nāho‘opi‘i, 2008, p. 98). For the Kānaka Ōiwi, Native Hawaiian people, this homogeneous society meant having a *pilina (connection)* to the place and *‘āina (land, also considered as the mother of all Hawaiians)* that is not only strengthened by ancestral genealogy but also by the collective memory of a shared history. A history that was synthesized and rendered into *oli (chant)*, *mele (song)*, or a *mo ‘olelo (story/historical accounts)* “which can then be converted into a performance mode such as hula dance” (2008, p. 214). The term, Kānaka Maoli translates in *‘Ōlelo Hawai ‘i (Hawaiian language)* to mean a true or real person, a descendant from early Indigenous settlers who share a common genealogy (Ho‘omanawanui, 2010, Oliveira, 2014).

This sharing of common genealogy is an important cultural aspect of the kānaka (Native Hawaiians) identification, ancestral knowledge, and *‘āina (that which feeds/land/mother)*. A central tenet that incorporates all that is kānaka is *‘Ōleo Hawai ‘i*. This is because *‘Ōleo Hawai ‘i* served as a bedrock for knowledge transfers by *kūpuna (elders/ancestors/grandparents)* by way of *mo ‘olelo, oli, mele, and hula* since time immemorial (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, 2016). Since *‘Ōleo Hawai ‘i* was an oral language until the mid-eighteenth century, its orality rendered well to the

complexities of kānaka ea, in this context, ea to mean *life* (2016). This ea is “based on the experiences of people on the land, on relationships forged through the process of remembering and caring for wahi pana, storied places” (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, 2016, p. 10). In these storied places is where ancestral knowledge is illuminated for the future preservation of ‘āina and the health and well-being of the kānaka. Therefore, in using ‘Ōleo Hawai in the way of a mo‘olelo offered the kānaka to “learn, teach, connect and make sense of the world” (Lipe, Kanī‘aupi‘o-Crozier, & Hind, 2016, p. 53). Thus, a mo‘olelo carried important information as a way to maintain Hawaiian cultural heritage and knowledge systems that connected the past generations to the present that was integral for survival. This connection was made through embedding important ecological information in the way of metaphors that were often tied to ‘Ōleo no‘eau, Hawaiian proverbs or poetical sayings that made sense in common, everyday life. As Lippe (2016) notes, an ‘ōleo no‘eau usually condensed longer collection of lessons to “easily memorizable phrases” (p. 54). For example, listening to gather knowledge was an important kuleana, *an obligation*, by an audience. So, in the ‘ōleo no‘eau tradition, when one is called to listen with one‘s third ear, and see with one‘s third eye, means to deeply observe important cues to gather knowledge to serve ‘āina, impart lessons, special memory, or experience with others (in conversation with Auntie Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, Nohona Hawai‘i, 2018, Meyer, 1997). This act of deep observation was also an important aspect of Nohona Hawai‘i. Nohona Hawai‘i refers to living in the Hawaiian way in keeping with the ideals of Pono, peaceful and balanced life.

Therefore, when I interviewed several women artists who agreed to speak about their work, I listened with my *third ear* and looked at their artwork with my *third eye* as I too was familiar with this cultural aspect from my own background to fully appreciate the articulation of

my participants' work and meanings embedded within. In this context, the use of the third eye and third ear is a "way of opening oneself to check out the validity of what is shared" moreover, it encourages you to think if what you see and hear "fits with what you know to be *pono* in your na 'au" (in conversation with Aunty Lynette Paglinawan, Nohona Hawai 'i, 2018). The term, *pono*, refers to being in balance and harmony in life, and *pono* is also connected to one's family's genealogical roots because the k̄naka asserts that they are defined by their ancestry, and they are directly connected to a specific space and place (Aunty Lynette Paglinawan, Meyer, 2003, Nakoa, & Wright, 2015). This assertion of k̄naka's connection to the land and being identified by it was an important point for me to remember all the while I was engaged with my research. This act of remembering such assertions was important to me because, ultimately, the dissemination of the findings would have to be analyzed and substantiated from that perspective. I say this because it is important to understand *who people are* before engaging in deciphering their work. In other words, I wanted to understand how the k̄naka constructed, theorized and encoded knowledge to pass down to the next generations. This meant understanding the k̄naka worldview by engaging with them from within the community at the grassroots-level and being a participant in important community activities.

In this respect, I was fortunate to have been invited by Hawaiian ōiwi and maoli elders into their communities so that I could begin to gain an understanding of the ways of Nohona Hawai' i by engaging in Native community initiatives and storytelling for many months at a time over three years. Some of these initiatives besides storytelling were artmaking, lei making, limu (*seaweed*) restoration, lo'i kalo (*irrigated taro patch*) planting/harvesting and learning about ancient fishponds on specific sites. Moreover, continuing to learn from Aunty Lynette of the Nohona ways has begun to show me how many of its ways resonates with me in my values

and my own ancestral trajectory. I say this because I too am a Native from a different island country whose ancestors endured coloniality over many centuries in similar forms as did Native Hawaiians. This personal history gave me a sense of a common historical connection from the perspective of a similar space and place. Moreover, I am an artist, versatile in multiple mediums, and have been practicing art for many decades. I have held exhibitions both solo, and joint with many other artists, in several places including Ontario, Canada. Additionally, I also happened to grow up in Hawai 'i because of my parents' travel and their further education in the early 1960s. Therefore, there were several intersections within my life's trajectory that led me to pursue this research in Hawai 'i. Looking at art by kānaka women laid out an interesting roadmap for me as I too am an artist. Therefore, interviewing the artists, looking at their work for emergent voices, and listening to the artists' physical voices offered me a lens to understand their relationship with the land and how this relationship and their cultural identity shifted during the colonial era. Together with these layers of voices from canvases and women's physical voices offered me a way to see how the cultural shifting has altered these women's agency in contemporary Hawai 'i. Moreover, these multiple layers of voices also offered varying kānaka perspectives that led me to consider diverse Hawaiian worldviews and what that means in Contemporary Hawai 'i. Hence, in this paper, I will discuss the works of three artists and their relationship to art, cultural identity and how these artists are using their voices to address their concerns in a contemporary Hawai 'i. In doing this work therefore, necessitated me to utilizing an 'ōiwi lens which is based on kānaka worldviews to disseminate the findings which are discussed in depth later in this article.

The use of an 'ōiwi lens enabled me to flesh out the assertion of how the kānaka are defined by their ancestry and how that is tied to 'āina which in turn informs the work of my

participants and defines their identities and positionality within contemporary Hawai ‘i. These key data points offered me valuable information for the final analysis of the aesthetic whole in the building of my ultimate portraits of participants’ artwork. Therefore, it became important for me to look at my research in Hawai ‘i from the methodological lens of k̄naka ‘ōiwi. This lens combined with narrative inquiry and portraiture methodology aligned with my research direction more accurately. This is because my ultimate responsibility of this research lies with the power of the k̄naka community and that power means adhering to their community protocols and speaking the truth of the k̄naka people. *K̄naka ‘ōiwi Methodology* was developed by k̄naka scholars of Hawai ‘i. (Nakoa, & Wright, 2015) as a way to decolonize and dehegemonize Hawaiian research done by non-k̄naka scholars who have routinely used epistemic frameworks to humanize the colonizers which are no longer acceptable to the K̄naka and other Native Pacific Islanders (Gegeo, & Watson-Gegeo, 2001).

The ‘ōiwi Methodological Lens

For the Native and Indigenous Hawaiians, mo ‘olelo (history/story), especially, those that are related to cosmogonic in nature form the foundation of geography highlighting the geological (storied places and artifacts) connections that connected k̄naka to their ‘āina (Oliveira, 2014, Kanahele & Kanahele, 1992). For the k̄naka, the ‘āina bears a special significance, because it is the land that feeds her people. ‘Āina is familial, and she is the mother of all k̄naka, and this is not metaphorical (Camvel, 2010; Aluli-Meyer, 2013). This connection of the ‘āina to all k̄naka, however, is identified by the metaphorical use of the piko (*umbilical cord*). As a mother is connected to the baby by her piko in the womb that is surrounded by the soothing water and kept safe while being nurtured, so is the ‘āina in taking care of her children within the environment that surrounds the ‘āina. Furthermore, all that is animate and inanimate are connected by their

piko to the ‘āina, and their existence and continuance are interdependent upon each other and of the great spirit which absorbs and keeps ‘ike (*knowings*) safely in the skies, valleys, mountains, streams, and oceans until such time comes for the ‘ike to be passed down by the kūpuna (Aluli-Meyer, 2013, Oliveira, 2014; Nakoa & Wright, 2015). Therefore, this the connection of people to the land and spirituality is a part of the kua (*backbone*) of kānaka world view. This worldview represents an essential aspect of my research. This is because it offers multiple corridors for me to learn about the formation of the ‘āina, first living organisms and the birth of the akua (*gods*) and the Hawaiian people, so, I know how to accurately interpret my findings and inform my research. Therefore, this ōiwi lens provides me a pathway to understanding (with the support from my community elders) how ancestral ‘ike continues to connect the kānaka to their beloved āina, and environment. Furthermore, this ōiwi lens illuminates how these connections are made current through ancestral ‘ike that is contained within the mo ‘olelo and reverberates to give once lost agency back to the women and their artwork.

Moreover, I now know from ‘Ōiwi Methodology, that it is the mo ‘olelo, that acts as a conduit in binding together relationships “between land, ocean, and the sky; akua and ali ‘i (*chiefs*); and ali ‘i (*ruling chiefs*) and maka‘āinana (*general population*) a concept that is important in understanding indigenous cultures” (Oliveira, 2014, p. 1). This concept is seconded by Tewa scholar, Gregory Cajete who states, as quoted in Oliveira (2014) in the following way,

“It is the landscape that contains the memories, the bones of the ancestors, the earth, air, fire, water, and the spirit from which a Native culture has come and to which it continually returns. It is the land that ultimately defines a Native people” (p. 66).

The landscape contains memories through mo ‘olelo (*stories*). Therefore, these mo ‘olelo are used as ‘umeke (*containers*) to store memories and personal connections to ancestors; and being

able to recite these stories by the kūpuna meant the acquisition of important information that connected kānaka back to the land. As a result, “place-based memories may reveal themselves in place specific mo ‘olelo” (Oliveira, 2014, p. 66) offering specific personal connections. This generational mo ‘olelo transmission of epistemology (ways of knowing), praxeology (ways of acting) and ontology (view of human nature) offer a model of causality, morality, and cosmology for the kānaka. Embedded in the perpetuation of this cultural construct of reality are external social controls, rules, axioms, moral codes and kapu (*ancient Hawaiian laws and regulations*) all within the vastness of the ‘ohana (*family, one’s own or extended*). A firm understanding of how these mo ‘olelo are connected to ‘ohana and their collective kuleana and love for ‘āina forms the cornerstones of Hawaiian epistemology which is an integral part of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi Methodology and this research.

Kānaka ‘Ōiwi Methodology

Mana Hawai ‘i: A Hawaiian Epistemology

The word *Kānaka* as we know refers to all Native Hawaiians while the word ‘*Ōiwi* means “bones” in Hawaiian. However, the term ‘*Ōiwi* is also used when referencing Native Hawaiian people (Kanaiaupuni, 2009). Therefore, when I use terms, Kānaka or Kānaka ‘*Ōiwi*, I use these terms to mean Native Hawaiian people and the very essence they embody within the diverse Hawaiian worldview because Hawaiians believe that ‘*ōiwi* carries the mana (*sacred powers*) of the people (Lynette Paglinawan, 2018, Kanahale & Kanahale, 1992). Mana refers to the energy found in all things animate and inanimate. The kānaka believe that mana evokes respect for one’s akua (*gods*), therefore, spiritual. For example, mana emanating from ecological elements or nature has the power to calm, energize, heal and relax” (McCubbin & Marsella, 2009, p. 376). For the kānaka, it is the mana that binds and connects people, family, land and the spirit world

contributing to the centrality of the relationality of the kānaka to all things. The research methodology that encompasses this kānaka worldview is referred to as the Kānaka ‘Ōiwi Methodology (Nakoa & Wright, 2015). Therefore, this methodology is based on Hawaiian epistemology, and its utilization in my research opened diverse pathways for me to comprehensively understand and appreciate the depths of work that was presented to me by my participants. Epistemology refers to in a broad sense, what makes up *knowledge*. As quoted by Gegeo & Gegeo (2001), epistemology is,

concerned with who can be a knower, what can be known, what constitutes knowledge, sources of evidence for constructing knowledge, what constitutes truth, how the truth is to be verified, how evidence becomes truth, how valid inferences are to be drawn, the role of belief in evidence, and related issues. (p. 57)

Manulani Aluli-Meyer (2013), a Hawaiian scholar and a community activist, however, takes this knowledge construction and its understanding to another level to identify Indigenous epistemology to a quantum level where “observable knowledge can be valued once more” (p. 1) in a holographic way. According to Meyer, in ancient times there were three main ways in which people viewed and experienced knowledge. Elevation of Indigenous epistemology to a holographic level challenges people to view these three ways in a non-linear sequence. In other words, to view events as they happen simultaneously and holographically (Meyer, 2013). Meyer identifies these three ancient ways in which to view and experience knowledge the following way,

(1) via the objective, physical, outside world, the world of science and measurement, density and force; (2) via the inside subjective world, the space of thought, mind, idea and interiority that helps us understand meaning and our linkages with phenomenon; and

finally (3) via the quantum world shaped by transpatial descriptors and intersections, a spiritual dimension un-linked to religious dogma, described in ethereal, mystic, and yet experiential terms: i.e. All my relations; or in Science: the Implicate Order. Simply put, body, mind, spirit. (p. 94)

Meyer (2013) further iterates that in order to understand Indigenous epistemology, we need to see this trilogy as a whole and not view the spiritual aspect of the epistemology as a “pink crystal” (p. 94) where spirituality has become dysfunctional within scientific methodologies. To strengthen this point, Meyer quotes Marco Bischof,

Quantum Mechanics has established the primacy of the inseparable whole. For this reason, the basis of the new biophysics must be the insight into the fundamental interconnectedness within the organism as well as between organisms, and that of the organism with the environment. (p. 94)

According to Meyer (2013), Bischoff speaks to the wholeness and interconnection that is a part of Indigenous reality. For the indigenous mind, “*The whole is contained in all its parts. Body/Mind/Spirit is One idea*” (p. 94). Therefore, this holographic epistemology helps us to better understand the “depth and rigor of an indigenous mind” (94).

Together with this knowledge of holographic epistemology, Meyer identifies Hawaiian epistemology within the following philosophic structures: “(a) spirituality and knowing, (b) culturally defined senses, (c) relationships and knowledge, (d) utility and knowledge, (e) words and knowledge, (f) the na ‘au” (Meyer, 1997, 22, Kaulukukui, & Nāho‘opi‘i, 2008). For the Hawaiians, the na ‘au refers to both thinking and feeling in an instinctual manner that aligns more with a “*sixth sense*,” rather than with the notion of “*intelligence*” as we know in the western world. This sixth sense knowingness is a “distinct and legitimate part of a part of

Hawaiian epistemology” (2008, p. 100, Meyer, 1997). Therefore, according to Meyer, (1997), “identity is linked to culture, and culture defines epistemology” (p.22). As a researcher of k̄naka and their artworks, this understanding of wholeness and its interconnection to all parts of the Hawaiian epistemic philosophical structures is important when navigating through artists’ narratives and their articulation of the artwork. This is because the analysis of the artwork depends upon the subjective nature of the Hawaiian epistemology as well as the time and space of the work’s occurrence. The indigenous framework of the ‘ōiwi lens lends itself to the understanding of the specifics of the space and time intertwined with k̄naka worldview to make sense of the story associated with the artists and their works.

Engaging in Indigenous Research

Engaging in indigenous research for a non-indigenous and a non-Western woman means opening one’s self to several sets of vulnerability within research paradigms but at the same time it allows one to (re)surface “our wounding, the hurt of colonial forces of oppression...” (Boveda, & Bhattacharya, 2019, p. 17) to learn and understand about internalized colonizing narratives of the participants. This engagement between indigenous women and non-Western researcher allows a type of “bridge-building where we feel safe in our vulnerability” (p. 17) to discuss openly parts of us that are tender and raw (2019). Ultimately, it is through exposing such vulnerabilities of these internal narratives that helped me as the researcher to accurately interpret indigenous work based on a worldview which is diametrically opposite to the Eurocentric worldview.

There is a vast difference between the Eurocentric worldview and the worldview of the k̄naka. According to Cajete, as stated in Camvel (2012), Western understanding of phenomena are based on objectivity, abstraction, weighing and measuring. Precisely, this focus on

objectivity “can block deeper insights into the metaphysics of the reality and process of the natural world. Western science does not consider the affective, intuitive, and soulful nature of the world” (p. 15). There are many Indigenous thought pundits who lay down similar arguments with regards to the research of the indigenous ways. For example, Maori Marden, a Māori scholar’s view is interpreted as the following in Meyer (2013b), “Abstract rational thought and empirical methods cannot grasp what is the concrete act of existing which is fragmentary, paradoxical, and incomplete. The only way lies through a passionate, inward, subjective approach” (p. 272). Meyer continues to say,

Subjectivity thought, logic, rationality, intelligence, conceptualization—these are some of the inside processes mind brings forward. They are the snapshots from our trip to meaning, heightened purpose, and useful inquiry that will aid in healing ourselves and our world. The mind part of this triangulation harnesses what is seen, counted, and expressed into a metaconsciousness that explains, contextualizes, or challenges. It gives us the green light to engage in creative exploration needed to unburden ourselves from the shriveled promise objectivity has offered the world. We are being asked to think now, to develop truth in our bias, to speak our common sense, to deepen what intelligence really means. (p. 272)

This idea is echoed by Mutua & Swadener, (2004); Semali & Kincheloe, (1999) where they encourage non-indigenous researchers to deconstruct and decolonize positivist structures that privilege western knowledge systems and their epistemologies. In taking this stance, the non-indigenous researchers will not fall into the trap of using indigenous knowledge systems “made into objects of study, treated as if they were instances of quaint folk theory held by members of a primitive culture” (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith (Eds.), 2008, p. 6).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Māori scholar, further states in Denzin et al. (2008) that “spaces between decolonizing research practices and indigenous communities must be carefully and cautiously articulated” (p. 6). Furthermore, Smith posits that culturally responsive research practices must be developed where such practices would locate the power within the indigenous community and that they would be the ones to determine and define research practices as acceptable or non-acceptable (p. 6). Therefore, my path to this research meant that I needed to expand my ideas of empiricism to make meaning of my findings that are meaningful to the scholarships of the Indigenous as well as for the western.

Hence, the utilization of *ōiwi methodology* carried a deeper meaning for me. It meant my restructuring the research process and discussing this process with indigenous scholars and community elders of O‘ahu, Hawai ‘i to gain acceptance of my work and gain invitations to engage with maoli and ‘ōiwi communities across the island. This was a deep blessing. Without the help and support of scholars, artists, and community elders and members, such as Dr. Aluli-Meyer, Kepa Maly (speaking with him and reading his scholarly work on Hawaiian history and culture), Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, Meleanna Meyer, Kealaulaokamamo Leota, Laurien Baird Hokuli ‘i Helfrich-Nuss, Māhealani Wong and Carol Mealaaloha Bishop to name a few, I would have been hard-pressed to continue in meaningful research. Being engaged in the communities provided me a space to build relationships, to speak, to engage in, and listen to honest talk about my participants’ true feelings concerning their experiences and works of art. These interactions directly contributed to how to bring back *ea* which in the Hawaiian language also means sovereignty from lived experiences of the ‘āina.

Narrative Inquiry and Portraiture as a way to Illuminate the Voices

Resonance of Narrative Inquiry

In narrative inquiry (Glesne, 2016), the personal story of participants is used as the center of the study to create a more holistic and socially embodied story. Therefore, it is an important factor to consider when working in the spaces of native communities.

As defined by Susan Chase (2011), narrative, as a research methodology has a “...distinct form of discourse: as meaning-making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one’s own or others’ actions, organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (Chase, p. 421). Thus, when a participant shares her story, the researcher uses analytical strategies to make meaning from the story (Riessman, 2005). An important part of the narrative inquiry is to examine and understand how the participant “...links experiences and circumstances together to make meaning, realizing also that circumstances do not determine how the story will be told or the meaning that is made of it” (Glesne, 2016, p. 185).

Although the researcher hears consciously told stories by a person, the researcher also has to look for deeper stories and meanings that a participant might not be aware of during this storytelling (Bell, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018). One of the ways to do this inquiry is to look at the parts of the story and see their relatability to other parts to create a whole because all stories have many layered expressions that carry voices from varied perspectives (Josselson, 2011). This is where the methodology of portraiture for me can be a useful tool to carve, extract and rebuild the story that is embedded between and within the imagery and the voice of the artists.

The Art of Portraiture

The genesis of portraiture methodology rests within the phenomenological tradition made popular by Edmund Husserl in the mid-nineteenth century. Phenomenology is typically used to address universally experienced phenomena using, for the most part, scientific rigor in its analysis. Portraiture, on the other hand, seeks to blend art and science, bridging empiricism and aestheticism in an “effort to capture the complexities, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv). This is because portraiture focuses “on ‘goodness’”; documenting what is strong, resilient, and worthy in a given situation, resisting the more typical social science preoccupation with weakness and pathology” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016, p. 19). Furthermore, portraiture methodology allows for the participation of conversation among diverse groups of people making it one of the most inclusive of methodologies (2016). In other words, it invites people, not from the academe but also those from eclectic audiences to engage in deep conversations about complex human experiences, spaces, and places that are not always measurable.

There are five key features of portraiture which are context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole. Using these features in combination with the narrative inquiry, portraiture methodology gives resiliency to capturing many aspects of contexts, to the interpretation of participants’ talk and actions. This is an important point for my research. For valid interpretations and multiple entry points in the discussion of artworks, I need to know what motivates people’s actions, and their intentions and how meanings are attached to those intentions through expressions and see how all this is embedded in the context. It is only then that I feel I can capture the multiple dimensions of the visual, auditory and the tactile which allows for the illumination of metaphors, allusions, images and repetitive refrains that

encompasses bodies of work. Therefore, when I use these features to document, record voices of the artists and their visions coupled with the corresponding artwork, I make the artists *visible* and situate their knowledge, wisdom, and authority in the context to shape the evolving image, that is important to the k̄anaka. In other words, I am intentional in locating the power within the Indigenous communities where I had the privilege to interview and listens, to the voices of the artists while observing the arts. As Russel Bishop (2005) posits, this type of research engagement is what “encourages self-determination and empowerment” (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008, p. 6) of the indigenous people. This respectful way of research engagement is important to me because ultimately, I am held responsible for my work in indigenous spaces and how my findings are reflective of my values.

Navigating the Process of Analysis

Respectful ways of engagement in my research meant being in a space where the participants felt comfortable in my presence and they were willing to speak about their experiences that informed their artwork. What this meant was that I had to be in honest conversation with my participants that went beyond just gathering information about their work. In other words, our initial conversations comprised of layered personal and professional experiences. By divulging my own experiences of coloniality in my spaces shed a light into my own vulnerabilities as a racialized woman of color living, working and studying in very White spaces. Willingness to be vulnerable, Boveda & Bhattacharya, (2019) say, is a “de/colonial move” (p. 17). In exposing my vulnerability, it invited my participants to do the same and “connect in shared humanity that is not in the realm of superficial interest convergence, but in the realm of knowing and being agents of love for each other and ourselves” (Boveda & Bhattacharya, 2019, p. 17) and work. This collaborative, conversational approach was an

important part of bonding that allowed for an unbridled process in gathering data and its analysis. When we make safe spaces for participants to engage in collaborative conversations “the culture speaks itself through an individual’s story” (Catherine Kohler Riessman in Bell 2003, p. 96), because the private constructions within stories by the storyteller and language used meshes with “a community of life stories” (p. 96) constituting reality in many ways and from layered voices of selective works for the selected audience.

Furthermore, when the conversational approach is used within Hawaiian Native and Indigenous frameworks, I found that it invoked several distinct characteristics important to understanding the significance of the stories told by the artist storyteller. Margaret Kovach (2010) points out why and how this method fosters distinctive characteristics. For example, a) a conversational method is linked to a particular knowledge base and situated within an indigenous paradigm, b) it is relational and purposeful involving a decolonizing aim, c) it involves a particular place, d) it involves an informality and flexibility, and finally, d) it is collaborative, dialogic and reflexive. These points are especially relevant in the Hawaiian context because the “*Hawaiian culture is based on relationship and reciprocity*” (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018).

This concept of relationship and reciprocity is exemplified in the Hawaiian word, ‘Ohana (family). The “O” of the word means eternal and “Ha” means breath, a connection to the past, present and future, and “Na” means relationship, thus when the words *Ha* and *Na* are combined, they come together to mean *relationship*; a relationship that is eternal. These innate cultural characteristics form an important part of Hawaiian people’s genealogies because it takes the position that the *relationship* is first and that this relating comes before a *transaction*, be it an interview, dialog or a collaboration. Since my relationship was established with my participants,

I was seen first as ‘ohana who needed support with my research, rather than as a researcher who needed to gather data to fit into a colonial structure with disregard for the kānaka communities.

My findings indicated that in pre-colonial Hawai‘i, Native and Indigenous women were held in high regard. Women were believed to be the pilina (connection) between the past and the future of the ancestors, and those yet to come. This pilina is through the piko (umbilical cord). In ‘ōiwi epistemology, the piko is identified as one of three major connective locations for the receipt of the ancestral knowledge. This spiritual positioning of women was established by the Kumulipo, mele ko ‘ihonua (Hawaiian creation chant), which states that it was a woman who created the world. Accordingly, Haumea (also known as Papahānaumoku) is the goddess of childbirth, war, and politics and she is said to be reborn in each successive generations of her female descendants, thus passing down ancestral memory from one generation to the next. Thus, making the concept of piko and its pilina (*connection*) to Akua (gods) a centrality in the Hawaiian worldview. Therefore, this transference of *knowingness* or the ‘ike of the ancestors directly links kānaka women to ‘Āina Hawai‘i. (Hawaiian Land) and the familial genealogy (Camvel, 2012). In speaking with the participants, I saw how their artwork was representative of this pilina that yielded powerful wahine mana to the layers of voices contained within the art. Although I spoke with many artists and listened to them articulate their artwork and observed their renditions, for the purpose of this paper, I will only speak about 3 artists and four renditions. This is because I would then be able to keep this paper and its content to a manageable length. The three artists I spoke with were, Carol Mealaaloha Bishop, Keala, and Meleanna Aluli-Meyer who gave me permission to use their names and their art for the research and discussion of this paper. The third mural which contains two sides represented by Meleanna, was rendered by five other artists who are both ‘ōiwi and maoli.

Voices Echoed

An Artist's Journey

According to philosopher, Edward Casey (1996), a place takes on the qualities of its occupants, “reflecting these qualities on its own constitution and description and expressing them in its occurrence as an event: places not only *are*, they *happen*” (p. 27). This is because places lend themselves to narration, historical or story and directly reflects the character of its constituents (1996). Carol Mealaaloha Bishop's mixed media (3ft x 4ft) rendition of Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole, (fig.1) (original 1999 and current copy 2018) speaks to such narration. Mixed media refers to the use of two or more materials or mediums utilized by the artist to deliver a message, such as paint and paper on canvas.



Figure 1. Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole, Carol Mealaaloha Bishop, 2018. Mixed Media, (3ft x 4ft).

I first met Carol Mealaaloha Bishop, a kānaka maoli at the *Waiwai Ola Art Show: A Waterkeeper Tribute to Hawai‘i’s Living Water Resource*, in Honolulu, Hawai‘i during the opening night of the show on September 7, 2018. The phrase, *Waiwai Ola* in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i means “*living wealth*” referencing to water. Therefore, in Hawai‘i water is used as a metaphor for wealth as well as for healing, life, and healthy sustenance. Mostly, water is sacred and belongs to the ‘āina to be shared by all. At the *Waiwai Ola* art show, there were specifically two paintings to which I was drawn. For this paper, I decided to feature Mealaaloha’s mixed media piece which was originally constructed in 1999 and subsequent copies fashioned digitally for various events and exhibitions as a copy of the original. This copy of the original was done specifically for *Waiwai Ola* show in 2018 which was later sold after the exhibition.

What drew me to Mealaaloha’s piece was the image of the kalo plants in their totality. The plants’ striking color of the composition and how these giant kalo with their corms still attached but rootless seemed to be *suspended in animation* against a bright blue backdrop as if to halt the moving audience to a pause. In that instance, I am glad I paused, because, pausing gave me an opportunity to meet the artist whom I got to know as Meala. After speaking about her involvement in the exhibition with this piece, Meala agreed to be interviewed both at the venue of the show privately on the following Saturday night, and as well at her homestead where the art was made in Waiāhole, which was also the original site of the water struggle depicted by this particular art piece.

Subsequently, interviewing her on the very grounds where the water struggle started and ended gave an added surreal dimension to the contextual meaning embedded on the canvas of *Kalo Pa‘a o Waiāhole*. In fact, artwork can be made using any method anywhere, but the “circumstances of their production may contribute towards the effect they have” (Rose, 2012, p.

27). In other words, producing *Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole* at the actual site of the struggle reignited (for Meala) a sense of loss and emotional suffering of the people while transporting the audience to a specific time and space. This shifting of time and space adds a complex layer of previously unheard voices and unseen images of real people from a time past take center stage for the contemporary audience. These complex layers add intensity to technologies used “in the making of an image determine its form, meaning, and effect” (p. 27). In the visual text, technology is defined as “any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil paintings to television and the Internet” Mirzoeff (1999) quoted in Rose (2012 p. 25). Therefore, this visual technology is relevant to “how an image is made but also how it travels and how it is displayed” (p. 25) contributing to the meanings and relevancy to the artist and the audience.

Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole although is a contemporary rendition, it is a historical piece because it actually depicts the famous water struggle between the late 1970s and 1980s in the Waiāhole Valley of O 'ahu. This struggle was between the kānaka of Waiāhole and the corporate entity, McCandless Estate that became the owner of over 600 acres of valley's land in the late nineteenth century through the land division of the Great Mahele of 1848. This land division and ownership restricted existing kānaka farmers and fishers to access water from streams and tributaries such as the Uwau, Waianu, Waiāhole, and Auwai. These streams and tributaries were the water source for the kanaka for millennia in the ahupua 'a of the Waiāhole Valley (Tvedt, Jakobsson, Coopey & Oestigaard, 2006). This water restriction was done through a system of sophisticated tunneling that diverted stream water from Waiāhole Valley (windward side of O 'ahu) to Ewa Plains (leeward side) for plantation needs and to accommodate the urban sprawl of Ewa. This was because Ewa Plains became the new site for modern economic development

and export agriculture in sugar cane and pineapple plantations. These plantations were owned by large land owning corporations such as Dole Foods, Hawai 'i Farm Bureau, U.S. Navy, Castle & Cooke, Campbell Estate, Robinson Estate and Bishop Estate (2006).

In fact, from the 1880s through 1980s sugar exports became a formidable force of O 'ahu's social, economic, political and environmental landscapes and water was central to all these forces. To provide some background, out of all the export agriculture, sugar irrigation required the most water. Sugar, a thirsty crop required 4,000 tons of water on average to produce one ton of sugar which meant that it took one million gallons of water a day to irrigate 100 acres of sugar cane fields (Tvedt et al., 2006). In this way, water needs for sugar were different from that of lo'i kalo (taro patches). Kalo cultivation depended upon the cool waters of streams that constantly flowed through lo'i back to the streams, whereas sugar cane needed sunny, dry land with great amounts of water for its sustainability, hence the need for water diversion from the Waiāhole Valley to Ewa Plains. By the time the water restrictions were firmly in place through provisions contained in Water Rights Act, the lo 'i of Waiāhole were barely getting enough water for its cultivation and the healthy sustenance of fish populations and streams' ecosystems. This directly affected kānaka's' health and well-being.

Furthermore, people did not have water for their cooking or their personal needs. Mealaaloha Bishop states about the Waiāhole's devastation this way,

We kānaka have gone through so much, and we are still going through so much. Back in the 70s, I was a part of the water struggle and so was my great grandmother in Kuai in Kalalau Valley much earlier than me. Because all this land grabbing and water restrictions were happening all over the islands, from Lanai to Kuai to Maui to Hilo, it was terrible. We were made to be beggars.

My ancestors lived on this land of Waiāhole from time immemorial, and through our farming and fishing, we looked after ourselves and our ohana. By the time they (McCandless Estate) diverted our water, we were left with just 3,000,000 gallons of water per day flowing through our streams, and this was not enough for our kalo or to maintain our fishponds, because our fish, also depended on the brackish water to mate and spawn. This meeting of the waters for our fish meant a symbiotic relationship between the makai (ocean) and the lifegiving sacred waters of our mauka (mountain). This sacred balance was destroyed along with our ways of living by the greed and destructive ways of the rich and powerful. Many of our people died of starvation, and many others ended up on government welfare which was very new to us.

We are not people of welfare but when your land is taken away from you, eviction notices are handed to you, and your water is restricted, and your lo'i are turned into growing food that is not your own, like rice, kānaka became displaced. Kalo is our lifeblood, kalo is who we are, and water is sacred, we never wasted water because it belonged to everyone, not just one person or an entity. When they shut off our water, many of us left the valleys and our homes and became homeless in the cities. It was terrible; we were angry. (September 27, 2018).

Meala describes in great detail the systematic colonial usurpation of her ancestral land. Her painful account speaks to ecological and human displacement caused by the water diversion. For the kānaka, every aspect of nature carries mana (*sacred power*). A well-balanced pono lifestyle creates good mana to sustain the 'āina holistically so it can feed her children abundantly. This was not the case at Waiāhole because the destruction created a grave imbalance causing violence to 'āina which in turn affected the health and well-being of people and the environment. Meala's

collective consciousness about the ‘ohana, the fish, the lo ‘i (*irrigated kalo patches*), the streams and the waters shows how the *essence* of her being as a woman and a kānaka is connected to the environment keeping with her alignment with the kānaka worldview. A loss to any part of that whole is a loss of a direct connection of her kuleana to space and place and their cultural histories. Since “places not only *are*, they *happen*” (Edward Casey, 1996, p. 27), Meala’s narrative (re)frames the historical context within the contemporary context to show how as a past occupant she is now reconstituting through her agency and art the *place* to reintroduce the cultural values that were once forbidden.

Kalo Pa ‘a o Waiāhole

Pa ‘a in ‘ōleo Hawai ‘i mean steadfast. During the water struggle in the Waiāhole Valley, the kānaka of the valley earned the nickname, “*hard-headed*” by the people in surrounding areas. This term, hard-headed translated into Hawaiian is Pa ‘a o. The word *kalo* is not only the staple food of the Hawaiians, but it is also used as a metaphor to identify the Hawaiians and their connection to the ‘āina. To the kānaka, *kalo* is of great importance because it signifies the birth of the Hawaiian people according to the Creation Chant of the Kumulipo (Lili‘uokalani, 1978, Oliveira & Wright, 2016). So, when Carol Mealaaloha Bishop named her artwork, *Kalo Pa ‘a o Waiāhole*, it directly reflected the struggle of the people. Many of those who struggled were women who stood steadfast in defiance against governmental and corporate powers in demanding and ultimately winning the restoration of the water back to the Waiāhole Valley. Mealaaloha, was one of the front runners of that struggle, and she believes that as an artist and a kānaka farmer who lived on the land for many generations, her kuleana (*obligation*) was to tell the story and take back the land for the ‘ohana of future generations as a step towards claiming, sovereignty of their ‘āina. When it comes to the land, there is no separation between women,

spirituality and their connection to the land. This inseparability is best stated by Meleanna Aluli-Meyer during one of my earlier interviews,

Generationally, women and knowledge systems are seamless because we mark the land as our mother. We understand her as that which feeds us. So, these ideas of women, land, and spirituality are one and the same, and being a mother to one son and being a hānai to another has a profound meaning to me. What all this tells me is that we are in reciprocity and a relationship with one another, and with spirituality, and this is what guides us to be in a relationship with our land. (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018)

Wahine (*women*) are the stakeholders with their ultimate pilina through their piko to ‘āina because they carry the mana and the ‘ike (*knowings*) passed down by Haumea who is the goddess of childbirth. Therefore, mother, wahine and ‘āina are one and the same because they are genealogically connected by their piko to the Ākua who created ‘āina. This pilina by the piko is sacred, as it is the passage for sustenance for a baby when it is in the mother’s womb so is the ‘āina to its children (all Native Hawaiians share a common brother, Kalo) on the land. In other words, the land is *that which feeds* through its piko, here to mean metaphorically, as a “conduit to life source and the point around which all else move” (Ka‘opua, Tamang, Dillard & Kekauoha, 2017, p.22) taking only what is necessary and giving back to the land by performing kuleana to honor and sustain the land to benefit all. This reciprocity is what is ardently articulated by Meleanna using her motherhood and love for ‘āina as a familial marker and not as a metaphor.

Building a Portrait

In the final analysis of building a portrait within the framework of a rendition by bringing together context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole, the researcher must first consider how each one of these aspects interacts, with each other and contributes to building that final *aesthetic whole* to create the portrait. Therefore, when looking at the visual text, there are four *sites* I must take into account. These are the site(s) of production, site(s) of the image itself, site(s) of circulation and site(s) the of audiences (who are seeing the image). Furthermore, each one of these *sites* encompasses *modalities* that work in conjunction with the image to give meaning. These *modalities* are technological, compositional and social (Rose, 2012). When we combine these *sites* and *modalities* in a combination of Lawrence-Lightfoot's key features, will we be able to see the *aesthetic whole* and decipher the intricate and complex meanings embedded in the art from the perspective of the artist and the audience?

The Canvas

For me, the most striking feature of *Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole* is Meala's use of color, brush strokes and its image composition. Giant kalo leaves with their corms still attached loom forward from the canvas which almost seems as if to draw the audience in, but at the same time, these giant plants seem immobile. Iridescent greens with yellow highlights on the leaves and the stems of kalo seem to capture the light (reminiscent of impressionistic art of late nineteenth century) as if they are still growing in the lo 'i, but they are not. However, upon a closer look, you will see that each image within the composition tells a story. For example, etched into the leaves (figs. 2 and 3) are images of people from the struggle, and the seven valleys that were affected by water restriction, all held together by collaged pieces of newspaper articles from the days of the struggle. The veins of the leaves resemble streams that feed the valleys and empties back out to

the streams. The blue backdrop that resembles the waters is collaged with news headlines and sections of articles that seem to float amidst bold red brush strokes and yellow triangular shapes that seem to bring the attention of the audience to the foreground of the artwork as a starting point for a discussion (fig. 4 and 5). Finally, the corms of kalo (Fig. 6) are emblazoned with images of the real people who came back to brazenly stand against the injustices by corporate entities by occupying the land which eventually stopped the land clearances and issuances of eviction notices to the farmers.

Artist's Perspective

For Meala, colors used on the canvas mirrors the vibrant colors that are abundant in the valley. From greens and the yellows of the kalo plants in the sun to the blue tones of the cool waters of streams to the reds of the blossoms of mountain apples. Meala speaks about her piece and her movement forward this way,

Taking away lands from the people in the past was cultural genocide, we need to incorporate these diverse growing ways back into our lives. So, we know where our food comes from. This image belongs to the world where people have had similar struggles; this art piece is a reminder never to give up. It is also a reminder to our youth about what their ohana had gone through and how best to move forward. (Interview, Meala Bishop, September 27, 2018)

So then, here is where I need to start building the portrait. Understanding of the context of *Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole* gives this work of art a whole different perspective. In other words, with this work, *context* alone does not carry a singular meaning as to where this piece painted, by whom and why? On the contrary, the *context* here opens many pathways away from a western

orientation to multiples spoors for consideration and from which to derive meanings from a kānaka orientation.

If Edward Cassey (1996) says that a *place* takes on the qualities of its occupants, then, *Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole* certainly shows how these qualities are evident in the painting's bold interpretation through its documentation of events. As Meala put it, *Pa 'a o* of the people who defiantly stood their ground until their demands were met are unmistakably present on the canvas and in her voice. Seeing sections of archived news articles collaged throughout the canvas coupled with images of well-known, recognizable activists create an indelible presence in Hawaii's political landscape. Furthermore, this piece can be effectively juxtaposed against the current sociopolitical landscapes of many spaces around the world containing many audiences. Words and phrases of articles collaged seem to eerily echo the voices from those images of the activists some of whom are still alive, like Meala and those who have passed. In some parts of the world where similar struggles are taking place, this art piece acts as a trophy. A trophy won by the collective consciousness of *hard-headed* native peoples who were directly responsible for achieving their social, cultural and political objectives from the oppressive dominant power base. In fact, the passage below substantiates, Meala's unapologetic use of primary colors that are utilized to show her anger and frustration toward her oppressor. This intentional brandishing of color on the canvas as a weapon is significant and effective. It helps the art piece to beckon the audience to engage (as I did) in a discussion around veiled imperialism in the form of a dominant ideology which still exists today. Imperialism, an ideological standpoint created through power structures in governance in this case, in Waiāhole, dissolved land rights and desecrated a cultural belief system. Thus, reducing the kānaka of Waiāhole to a state of dependency.

So, you asked me about the colors. Well, the bright colors slashed on the canvas shows my frustration during the struggle. There was a great disparity between the rich and the poor, there still is. During the struggle, we were on our own, and what we were saying fell on deaf ears because corporations were wealthy, and they were being supported by the government. To them, we were like outsiders. And for the owners of the big corporations, growing kalo was a waste of money, and it wasn't their food anyway. But to us, kalo is more than a food, it is who we are, and it is that which feeds us through our reverence to 'āina (land that feeds and gives). You needed to have money to take on big companies. If it weren't for the non-profit organization, Earth Justice working for pro-bono in the 80s, we would have never got this land back, and you wouldn't be standing right here with me on this piece of land from where I painted.

To give you a little bit of background, I can tell you that as women, we were the ones who really pushed for this struggle in the valley, because we saw how our families were being destroyed. Now I can relate to Haumea and the Maui Ola reverence of ancient times and how women had a strong presence in Hawaiian affairs, but for me, it was my aunties and mom, tūtū lady, tūtū li'i li'i, & tūtū nui. But that memory is part of that exotic land where I lept from only to land in a cultural void where passing for a haole, learning to do modern ways was the way. Hula is brutal, and the language and people eventually will die out I was told. Please do not speak pidgin. The ocean filled that void, confusion, questions, washed away in the ocean. This is one of the reasons why I became a surfer. In many ways during that struggle and even afterward, I was in very difficult spaces.

(Interview, Meala Bishop, September 27, 2018)

Meala's openness about her racial and cultural background is pronounced in her account. Her closeness to her mother who was pure Hawaiian and grandparents from both sides she calls big and small (tūtū nui and tūtū li'i li 'i) and her agony of being a haole (*mixed-race*) and questioning her identity seems to add to her frustration that is well depicted on this canvas. Meala's use of giant images of kalo plants is a metaphor to represent her Hawaiian heritage. These images are suspended on an ocean of bright blue color punctuated with red strips creating a haunting presence that speaks to her personal displacement that gave rise during this struggle. Meleanna Aluli-Meyer explains this idea of displacement in the following way,

The western orientation is based on economics and power structures. Our mindset has to do with reciprocity and relationships. It has nothing to do with money, power or ownership. We put our trust in the sharing of resources, and we believe that when we do not share our resources, we violate the spirit. (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018)

For someone like Meala, who has only known love and cultural values from a Hawaiian perspective, a sudden thrust towards a new world belief system for survival and self-assertion, became a daunting task. A task at which she says she failed, which in turn, created many unhappy situations and challenges while growing up. These challenges and cultural displacement, however, have made Meala reflexive, and shows her cultural alignment within the Hawaiian worldview, "...Now I can relate to Haumea and the Maui Ola reverence of ancient times and how women had a strong presence in Hawaiian affairs...to us, kalo is more than a food, it is who we are, and it is that which feeds us through our reverence to 'āina." Meala goes on to say,

We are still not in the clear. We now have a new struggle. After the struggle of the 70s and 80s, and our winning back the land and water in the 90s, we were given new leases for our lands. And some of our leases are now running out, and we want extensions so that our 'ohana can continue to live and farm these lands. It's an uphill battle, and now blood quantum has come into question. Our government is using this blood quantum as a tool to take back the land so they can develop it and make money. But that's okay, more and more women are taking up this battle, except there are so many battles that wahine mana is needed for, now we need to regroup and extend our collective to include the youth so they can join us and continue the fight. This is our land; this is our aloha.

(Interview, Meala Bishop, September 27, 2018)

Continued struggle for personal and collective sovereignty in Meala's Hawaiian identity is a strong stance that resonated throughout the interviews. As the researcher, I can now see that this stance has become imprinted on the canvas. Her continued call for action on issues of sovereignty is emphasized, by acknowledging the importance of women's positionality and grounded sense of her kuleana to their beloved 'āina aloha, *Wahine mana*, of course, means the spiritual power of women that establishes their positionality within the Hawaiian cultural structure. As I mentioned earlier on the paper, this *mana* is passed on to every woman at birth by Haumea, the goddess of childbirth, war, and politics so that every wahine (*woman*) will stay true to her kuleana. Before our second interview, Meala sent me an email on September 12, 2018, which had the following paragraph which clearly articulates this *wahine mana*.

LIVING SOVEREIGN is my philosophy of life. Its helps me identify the part of me that needs nurturing in order to achieve health, happiness, and prosperity. Think being energized by farming, ocean activities, and family interactions and incorporating Ōlelo in

your daily life. From that a feeling of contentment. To be satisfied with one's purpose in life. Incorporating more culturally based foods, plant-based meals, self-grown and shared produce fare in daily life. Knowing where your food comes from. You are sovereign within your space. Living, sovereign is living in this place, at this time, without labels, State affiliations for aid, grants, subsidies. Along with the aloha 'spirit' we possess as Hawaiians, that mana is in our DNA, it is not a place, or thing, you cannot buy it or possess it, although many tries. We share it, and you reciprocate.

The emergent portrait of this artwork is anything but passive. The consistent refrains of cultural values, connection to akua, devotion to 'āina, cultural genocide, loss of land and political oppression are profoundly evident in Meala's interviews and her art. Meala's voice comes through vociferously through the still images, documentations and color play by intentionally creating tensions between the truth and what is not shared previously by those in power. However, by bringing out this work as a copy of the original to many current major art shows, Meala succeeds in creating not only a new audience but also making the past, *present* for new generations because this piece, *Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole* provides a historical lens to an ugly past. Furthermore, from a metaphoric perspective, the beauty of the people and their reverence to beloved 'āina are signified by images of giant kalo plants, yet, these plants are not in the ground, but they are uprooted, rootless and maintains a haunting stillness (fig. 2). The fact that the corms that support the plants are covered by the identifiable images of those who stood in defiance is yet another telling story of people's displacement that speaks to kānaka's continuing journey of claiming sovereignty of the beloved 'āina and of the kānaka.



Figure 2. Details from Kalo Pa ‘a o Waiāhole, Carol Mealaaloha Bishop, 2018. Mixed Media.

Reverence to the land and a sense of belonging is important to many younger people who have come to call Hawai ‘i home. In the same way that the kānaka *hānai* people from a different cultural background for many generations, many of the youth and others who have come to call Hawai ‘i home have adopted the ways of the kānaka. This adoption was made possible because of the *accepting* ways of kānaka:

Hawaiians were so progressive. Being Hawaiian was not a referendum in blood. What we cared about was peoples’ allegiance to our nation of Hawai ‘i. When our country was taken, there were people from many parts of the world, from Germany, Russia, China, Greece and they all pled allegiance to our kingdom and we valued that. This blood

quantum valuation is a western orientation which benefitted them; it's a method created for divisiveness that helped them to create power structures for easy governing, owning native lands and making money. (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018)

Hānai forms an important segment of the reciprocity process because reciprocity and relationships are very much embedded in Hawaiian families. In the Hawaiian culture, hānai is an honored tradition. Hānai refers to not only the adoption of a child of a relative but any child from any background and making it a family kuleana to care for that child or children (Oliveira, 2014). In this same tradition, whether a child is from a mixed-race background did not make a difference in the hearts of the Hawaiians as they believed in the act of hānai (adoption) as a part of their kuleana to ‘āina.

A Hānai Daughter

A Tattooed Canvas

My second artwork of discussion entails a “*living*” canvas. What I mean by this is that this art exist on the back of woman in the form of a tattoo. Therefore, I would say that this particular piece is living and breathing as its owner. Designed according her vision, this tattooed artwork belongs to a woman who adopted Hawai ‘i and became a hānai daughter to a Hawaiian family. Her adopted Hawaiian name is Keala. She is a dancer from California and comes from a Chinese cultural background. Keala’s personal story is one of gratitude and self-enlightenment. Coming from difficult circumstances in life, Keala feels that there was a specific purpose for her several visits to Hawai ‘i during her youth and as an adult, although, she did not know that at the time. Now in her thirties, Keala is here to stay.

I bring Keala’s story here because of a beautiful tattoo she helped construct on her back which will be the next topic of my inquiry, (fig. 3).

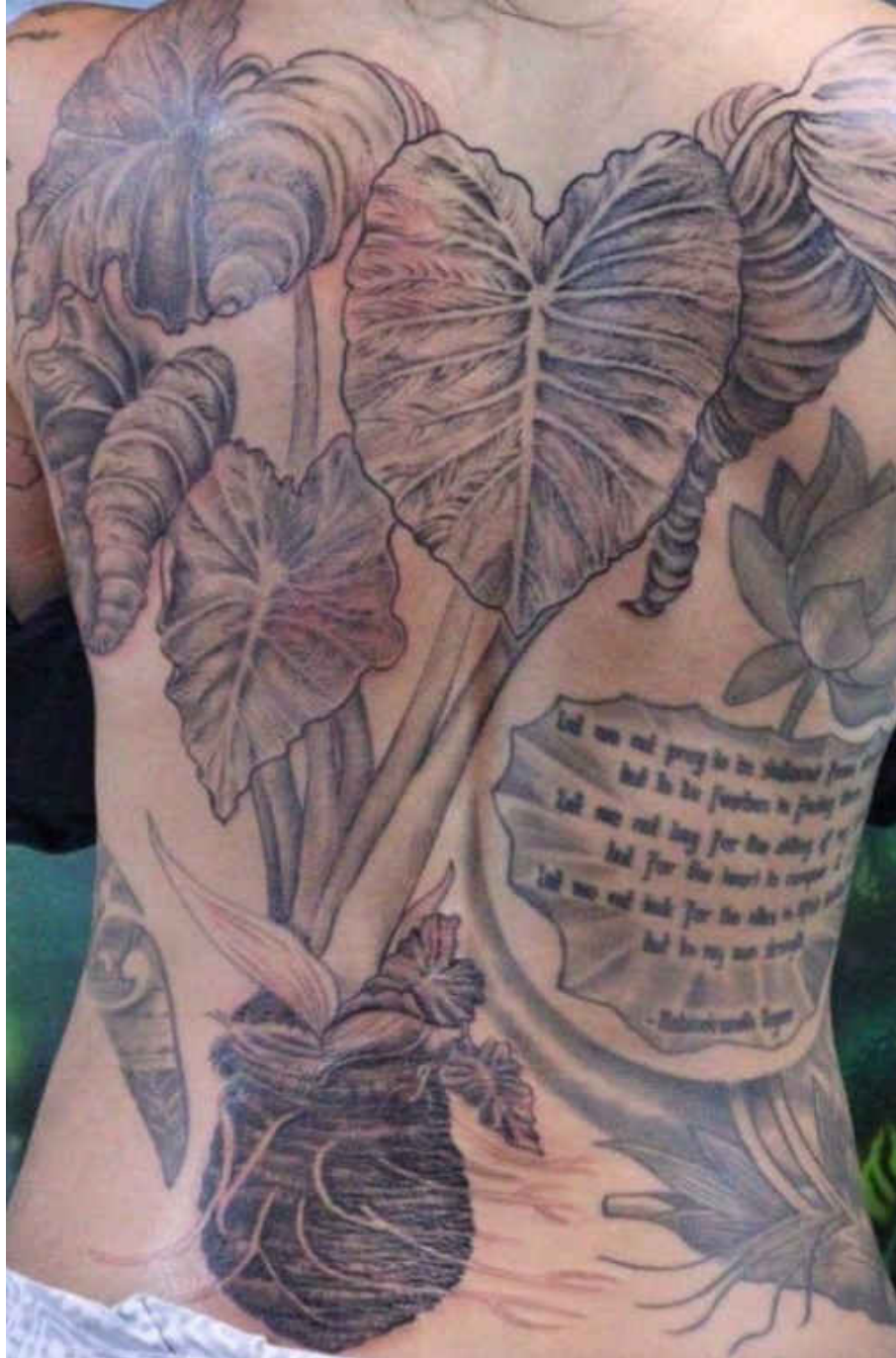


Figure 3. Tattoo of Keala: Life-giving Kalo, my shield, and protector.

I first met Keala at the lo ‘i of the Ka‘ala Farm (Kaneohe, O‘ahu) in early spring of 2019. I was at the farm with local community members, mostly women, to learn about how to harvest, clean and store kalo (taro). While I was there, I also listened to the stories about the farm, its

history, and protocols for planting and harvesting which furthered my understanding of Nohona Hawai 'i. It was during our extended conversations about the history of the lo 'i at Ka 'ala and a long walk to an ancient lo 'i site a bit further away from the original Ka 'ala site that Keala and I started to talk about the importance of kalo, ancient farming techniques, and health and well-being. Ultimately, this conversation and sharing of information led Keala to share with me her tattooed image and the circumstances surrounding getting that work done on her.

Upon seeing this beautiful tattoo, I became quite intrigued as to the importance of this image within the context of my research and from a hānai perspective and how this tattoo created meaning for Keala while evoking deep emotions within her as she began to describe the image. Naturally, I wondered why and how it came to be on her body, looming almost larger than the canvas (her body) reminded me of Meala's work with similar imagery that I previously discussed. Yet, I kept my desire for an interview for another day, as I felt it was not the right time, nor the place. A few weeks later, on February 21, 2019, I had the pleasure of interviewing Kaela. Her story is one of personal discovery, and of courage to leave behind a painful past for a new meaningful life surrounded by love and acceptance. The large tattoo on her back is an ode to the kalo and for her personal transformation.

In her own words, Keala narrates the circumstances surrounding her getting this tattoo in the following way:

There were lessons that I needed to learn before coming to settle here... after having experiences from which I have learned on the continent, and this epiphany and understandings of the truth and reality have made me happy...Now, I am kind of happy retroactively to learn to figure out things that people grew up here (Hawaiian islands) already knew...I am learning things backward (laughs), but I am learning. I am learning

the value of food and the importance of how we feed our body... how do we grow this food and prepare it for eating? It is a spiritual experience.

Spirituality and food are an innate part of Hawaiian indigeneity. To Native and Indigenous Hawaiians, the Kalo is also of great importance because it signifies the birth of the Hawaiian people according to the Creation Chant of the Kumulipo. The kalo (*taro*) is the staple food (taro corms are eaten mostly either by steaming or pounded, locally known as poi) of the Hawaiian people and its genealogy is detailed in the mo ‘olelo of Papa and Wākea, and because of kalo’s divine origin, he is a source that is sacred to the ‘āina and its people. Kalo is considered to be the most precious gift that ‘āina offers to her children, as a source of nutrition and of healing. In fact, every part of the kalo plant can be eaten. Nutrition is an important part of health and well-being while healing is referenced to nurturing the body. In other words, healing occurs when the body’s hunger is satisfied with the nourishment that is brought by the kalo which in turn was *gifted* by the ‘āina.

I took a board and stone workshop at Paepae o He‘eia to learn how to make my board and stone so I can learn how to pound my own kalo to make poi, which I love. Learning these things from my hānai sisters have saved my life. I owe so much gratitude to my sisters and to the kalo. To me, kalo is my lifeblood. (Keala interview, February 21, 2019)

To Keala, kalo is a life-giving plant both “*literally and figuratively,*” because her connection to the kalo and working with it “*rescued her from an unsafe space.*” Keala’s profound gratitude to her hānai family that includes ‘āina is evident when she states that *kalo is my lifeblood* because learning the traditions of relationship and reciprocity and nurturing herself through nourishing foods are what brought her to a safe place. The phrase, *saving her life*, has a special significance within the context of Hawaiian culture. Kalo was the still born son of Wākea and his daughter,

Ho 'ohokulani. In sheer grief at the loss of her son, who was named Kalo, Ho 'ohokulani plants the afterbirth in the ground while her piko is still attached to the placenta and is still quivering. This quivering piko is what gave birth to the first kalo plant that became a gift of endearment and nourishment. The planted placenta became a part of the 'āina to nourish the future Hawaiians. It was Kalo's *life* and *blood* that has constructed the kalo making every part of this plant edible thus providing a life source to his siblings. In her narrative, Keala speaks about her desire to learn how to pound her own taro. This desire is noteworthy, as to do work for one's self and contributing to 'ohana is another fundamental kuleana that is important to Nohona Hawai 'i. By being *grateful* to her sisters, Keala articulates her profound alignment with her understanding of the Hawaiian culture where relationship and reciprocity is a central tenet in maintaining aloha for 'āina, 'ohana and self.

The Kalo as Personal Protection and a Shield

For Keala, the large kalo plant image that seems to be still growing serves both as protection and a shield from unsafe and undesirable forces and circumstances which according to her, is one of the reasons why it is on the back, and very boldly displayed. In Keala's own words she explains the following,

The kalo feeds my physical and spiritual needs. It changed my life. Learning how to pound this beautiful taro on my board and stone which I made myself have helped me to connect with the kānaka and my hānai sisters in a very close way. I am now intentional and purposeful when preparing my food.

According to the Hawaiian indigenous tradition, having your own board and stone to pound kalo is to show ultimate respect and aloha for the kalo and 'āina. This is because one's board and stone are never shared and making and keeping them safe is an important protocol within the

Hawaiian tradition. Making a board and stone is, in fact, a sacred process that requires the guidance from a kupuna or kumu (*teacher*) who is given the ‘ike and the permission to teach the method while adhering to special protocols for their production. Pounding is also a skill that requires the guidance of the kūpuna/kumu which is passed down from generation to the next. This is because, there is a specific protocol and a process to pounding, preparing and storing kalo. For example, the pounding starts and ends with a chant of acceptance of the gift of kalo from ‘āina, followed by permission from the kūpuna to pound, and thanking them for the access of the food making the entire process intentional and honored. Keala’s invitation to closely look at her tattoo honored me. Although this tattoo was on her back, she knew every single detail about it without once stopping to recall any part of a detail—

“of course,... I know my tattoo, I put it there for a reason, it’s on my body for a reason...although I cannot see it, I know its every single detail.” If you look closely, the image is very detailed, and every aspect carries a special meaning for me. For example, the fully opened leaf that is looking at you represents me and my awareness about my life and where I have been, experienced and what I now believe. The five other stalks represent my ‘ohana (family) and my ancestors, some are closer together sort of looking at my direction, but there are two others who are looking away. The smaller leaves that are just sprouting from the corm represent my future family that are not yet in my life but what is manifesting. The large corm with its roots reaching out to gather the nutrients represents my continuous need for physical and spiritual support. Ultimately, it is the kalo corm that central to my steadiness and protection, and that is why I call this entire image my shield, and that is why it is on my back and why it is so large. (Keala interview, February 21, 2019).

In her entire narrative, Keala brings to bear several themes; that align with the Hawaiian worldview. Some of the main themes are the love for and connection to ‘āina with rootedness with the kalo, relationships, reciprocity, kuleana, ‘ohana, gratitude, and self-preservation. Keala’s expressions were emotive during her narration, and the detailed image confirms the important spiritual and physical connection that she has with the kalo, which she learned to honor from her hānai sisters. In many ways, embracing ways of knowing from kupuna and kumu in learning about the making of her own board and stone and preparing food and learning proper protocol marks her aloha to ‘āina and ‘ohana shows her readiness and willingness to extend her learning. This extension of her learning is underscored by her saying, “*to learn to figure out things that people grew up here (Hawaiian islands) already knew*” from the *knowers*, in this case from her hānai sisters and her hānai kupuna which shows her deep gratitude and love for her ‘ohana, epitomizing the importance behind the concept of interdependence for survival.

‘Āina Aloha

The final piece that I would like to bring forward for this continued inquiry is one called *Āina Aloha* (the land that feeds and gives). This large 6ft. x 20 ft. acrylic mural, aptly called a community piece was completed by a community of six well-known kānaka artists of varying ages, Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, Al Lagunero, Harinani Orme, Kahi Ching, Carl Pao, and Solomon Enos, who planned and painted through a series of rotations that did not place any restrictions on any *place* or *space* of the canvas. In other words, all artists freely moved from one space to another until the work was completed. This piece was started in 2013 and was completed after a brief hiatus (needed funding) in 2015. When I interviewed one of the artists, the mural was on display in the Hawaiian Hall of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Hawai ‘i.

For my interview, I had the pleasure of speaking with Meleanna Aluli-Meyer who was also the initiator of this piece. Meleanna is a kānaka ‘ōiwi with a mixed-race heritage. She is not only a well-known island artist but also a mother, an educator, author of several books, a filmmaker, a poet, an environmentalist and a social activist who brings a strong voice and *wahine mana* for young women and the islands’ sovereignty. Meleanna’s genealogy traces back to the Court of Queen Lili’ uokalani from the line of *Kakau ‘olelo*. As Meleanna says,

DNA of my lineage was specific to doing special things like teaching, writing, creating poetry and songs. This is a tradition in my family. When I was growing up, I had a whole range of kūpuna (elders) and special kumu (teachers). Their teachings gave me the mo ‘ōlelo (here to mean history as well as stories). From them, I learned about my origins and the Kumulipo. Before Darwin and his origin of the species, we had our mo ‘ōlelo. Our mo ‘ōlelo told us where we come from through many modalities, like, mele, ‘oli and hula. We are now reclaiming what is ours. We are retelling our stories with truth, with pono, and with righteousness. We are taking back our voice. I have a lot of work to do, but I am a part of that continuum of reclamation. (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018)

Listening to the passion in her voice and her innate awareness of her genealogy and her knowingness her life’s direction invigorated me. This interview took place at Meleanna’s beautiful hill-side home overlooking Diamond Head and Waikiki beach. Since then, of course, we met several times at different venues as well as at her home to speak about Hawaiian history, artmaking, collaborative writing, community involvement, education and of course to have lunch.

‘Āina Aloha (Figs. 4 and 5) a double-sided mural is breathtakingly beautiful as it is emotionally piercing. *‘Āina Aloha* means *love for the land, and that which feed and gives*. This mural can be viewed both as a historical and a contemporary piece simultaneously. This is because its contexts align with both precolonial and post-colonial events and their aftermath. Although two distinctly different artistic styles were utilized for each side of the mural, the story and the events are meticulously and artfully articulated in its rendering. Side one (Fig. 4) of the mural is made to be read from right to left with the image of Kumulipo (Hawaiian creation mythology) at the extreme right. Painted in a classical style, this side is entirely devoted to the creation of the Hawaiian islands, the genealogy of the Hawaiian people (kalo plant), their connection to *‘āina*, akua (god) and spirituality (spirit).



Figure 4. *‘Āina Aloha*, side 1. Creation of the Hawaiian Islands and the Genealogy of the Hawaiian People. Acrylic 6ft. x 20ft. Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, Al Lagunero, Harinani Orme, Kahi Ching, Carl Pao, and Solomon Enos.

At the beginning of our interview, when I asked about their planning process of this work, Meleanna told me that it was really about telling the truth and about healing; *“we were working with the iconography of healing and wellness.”* *The first side is about Hawai ‘i before it was colonized. And on the second side...we were painting away the pain.* (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer).

Iconography of Healing

On this first side, *‘Āina Aloha* depicts the importance of elders and how they hold spaces for future generational knowledge through protocols metaphorized by upward spiraling ‘umeke (bowls). Traditionally, an umeke is where poi was kept, pounding poi and its preparation was a spiritual process as was eating. However, umeke was also a *knowledge holder* and acts as a metaphor for kānaka traditions. Therefore, an umeke is associated with holding family genealogies, prayers and sacred knowledge passed down from ancestors in the form of mo ‘olelo to perform family kuleana to ‘āina. As Abbie Waiwaiole Havre states,

Within my ‘umeke is the birth of my people, kanaka maoli. My ‘ohana, my waiwai (wealth), my heart pu‘uwai. Through mo ‘olelo of my kūpuna (ancestors), I am able to understand the kaona (layers of meaning) of change and pili (to connect), to be one with what surrounds me. (Luke, & Aluli-Meyer, 2008, p. 6)

The three faces of the elders are used as a metaphor for ancestral knowledge that is held up by the mauka (mountains are believed to hold sacred knowledge of the land) that is connected to *spirit* and creativity that are metaphorized by the two manu (birds) at the center of the painting. As Meleanna says, “*when prayers are offered, the Spirit lifts those to the heavens, so the spirit connects the land to the skies. And we are a part of that relationship.*” The importance of prayer to ‘āina are shown through the offerings on the alter extending it to *akua* (gods) in the heavens as triangular *lupe* (kites). These lupe spiral through the winds in upward movements and merges with the clouds that are also a part of *Spirit*.

Personal health and well-being of our people are about balance internally and externally and of body, mind, and, spirit. This balance is what creates stability and grace of spirit, fitted into this (grace of spirit) is love, light, and nature. This is a part of our ancestral

knowledge that has passed down to us. Knowledge to me isn't in the past and fossilized. It is practiced and applied, and that makes knowledge that much more valuable. So, the application of this knowledge to current situations makes this knowledge current which means that we can also apply this knowledge to our future.

On the extreme left is a staff that is used to signify ancestral knowledge that is passed on to the younger generations represented by a single image of a young boy with a staff. “*This boy is not yet born; he represents our future grandchildren. He is wearing a cloak made of lupe...it is a cloak of innovation. His kuleana is to continue our work and save the planet*” (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018). When asked about the realism in the iconographic depiction of the first side, Meleanna said the following,

All our cultural images have the embodiment of vegetation or things that sustain us that's relational, and under all this, is the land, our mother. For us, spirituality is nature, and it's prodigious. Our spirituality isn't a monotheistic dogmatic religion. Our spirituality is one that embraces nature in all its forms and affirms everything we do...for me spirituality is my grounding, it allows me to be who I am...it is my saving grace...there is so much poison and destruction in this world, and without spirit, I would not be here. So, I brought a lot of who I am and my knowledge and my genealogy to this mural, and as did others because it's a collaborative piece and we had many discussions about what we want it to say and what it will look like.

Meleanna tells me that another big idea, a truth that she wanted to convey through this first side was self-sustenance. She punctuates this idea by saying,

In the days of our ancestors, for example, no one starved; we looked after each other. It was all based on, knowledge, practice, and reverence to the land and spirit. Traditional

knowledge is based on po'okela (excellence). The excellence of things; making, utilizing and applying. For example, how are things made, how well are they made, and what are they made for? Traditionally, when you made a lei, it's not to gift just one person. It's a gift to all. This is about excellence in relationships, so this is utilization and application. This knowledge isn't a thin layer of knowing how to do something, but it's about awareness that included self-awareness and knowing the history and knowing your place in that history and your kuleana to the land. (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018)

In speaking with Meleanna, what became abundantly clear is how misunderstood Hawai 'i and its people are to the world. This extraordinary painting dispels the myths surrounding *the little understood indigeneity* from a western orientation. Carefully articulated iconography illuminates the viewer about deep-seated ancestral knowledge that sustained generations of kānaka maoli and 'ōiwi populations for millennia through peoples' interdependence with land and spirit.

Meleanna tells me, that the artists got together originally, in 2013, to map the artwork and paint, they only had one mural in mind. However, as the work progressed, the younger artists who were involved wanted to continue the painting on to the other side, hence making this piece a double-sided mural. *“The younger ones were not done with the pain...they wanted to paint away the pain...our generation hides things, but the younger generation is very open about how they feel...”* (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer)

Painting Away the Pain

According to Meleanna, the second side (Fig. 5) is perhaps comparable to Picasso's "Guernica: because this side shows the effects of the devastation caused by coloniality. Utilizing a cubistic approach, the entire canvas is a sea of red punctuated by tessellations of turquoise, yellow and white. The use of brilliant reds seems to pulsate throughout the canvas giving it eerie

energy to each image, making them *alive and moving*. Occasional images of large hands and dark brown spheres seem to rotate and jut out from various spaces of the canvas conveying a sense of loss and suffering.



Figure 5. 'Āina Aloha, side 2. Painting Away the Pain. Acrylic 6ft. x 20ft. Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, Al Lagunero, Harinani Orme, Kahi Ching, Carl Pao, and Solomon Enos.

Our people have endured, genocide, murder, pillage, and rape by colonizers and this is what this side show. Look at the scale of the hands, they are large...they are actually life-size, yet they are in among pieces of people- dismemberment. This is an abstraction, which is pain. To me, pain is an abstraction, and this is an extraordinary way of showing that, through movement. These large hands are reaching out for help as pieces of their bodies are drowning in their own blood. It's very visceral. But the important thing is that we are also showing our healing taking place. We have used shapes in turquoise (healing), yellow (self-awareness), and white (Spirit) to tessellate throughout the canvas as modalities of healing.

Meleanna feels grateful for her creative abilities which started when she was very young and for her family's support that ensured the continuation of her creative ventures. She also feels deep gratitude for her ancestral knowledge and access to tools for making a difference, especially, in the lives of young women. This is one of the many reasons why she is involved in community

outreach programs as well as using art to create a voice for the k̄anaka. “*Art is a currency, just like language, I have been given the tools so, I must put that into good use. Working on this project has helped me...it gave me my purpose in life...to do healing work especially with our young women who need a voice and support in the work that they must do.*” (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018).

Looking for the Story

In her work, Manulani Aluli-Meyer states that “the separation of mind from body is not found in a Hawaiian worldview”(2013, p. 223). So, when Kumu Hula (Master of the art of hula), Olana Kaiso Ali says, Aloha is the intelligence with which we meet life, what she is saying is that intelligence is *knowledge or knowing* (‘ike) that is embedded in our na‘au. Therefore, our na‘au is also wisdom which translates as heart, emotion, and intelligence that connects to the spiritual act of knowledge (2013).

Coming from my limited experience of Hawaiian epistemology meant that I needed to take a different approach to my work. As I mentioned earlier in the paper, what this meant was that I could not just take my empirical ways of being in my research backpack, but I needed to learn to use the k̄anaka lens to triangulate the meanings and subtleties embedded in various contexts, including that of mind, body, and spirit that are important layers of k̄anaka knowledge. This prompted me not just to *look at* the story but to *look for it*. There is a subtle difference between these two concepts. While looking at the story through interviews, visuals, and historical documentations helps to understand the story (informational), *looking for the story* was more hermeneutical because it entailed journeying into layers (kaona) of knowledge in search of interpretations that aligned with the Hawaiian worldview without personal intrusion. So, in this regard, my choice of utilizing narrative inquiry couple with the portraiture methodology helped

me to navigate these caverns of water which I equate with intelligence to understand innate connections that helped the Hawaiians survive and thrive in the middle of the Pacific on a volcanic rock bed for millennia. Conducting research based on a different worldview was a challenging terrain for me but not foreign coming from a Buddhist philosophical background. Ultimately, it is this philosophical background that helped me to connect with the women and be open to receive information that has helped me to be *objective* in a sense to build this complex and dynamic portrait of all three women and their detailed work.

Moreover, this utilization of portraiture and inquiry offered me pathways to build relationships with these artist women from which to glean emotions that moved beyond the superficial. This is because these two methodologies together with my openness to listen and engage in conversation offered me a space to reflect and contemplate on the themes, humanistic and literary metaphors as well as the aesthetic sensibilities and their application to the kānaka worldview. Understandings gained through this process, at points intersected with the empirical rigor of my research. In other words, I did not have to ask questions such as, what connects people to the land and spirit or how is this connection innately tied to the na ‘au which imparts sacred knowledge? I received the answers through the emotions of the women during interviews together with what was *illustrated* on canvases. This type of inquiry requires one to move from purely objective externalities of empiricism (what is seen and what is familiar to us) to the subjective internal passageways to connect with the intelligence of the universe that has emanated from these individuals with whom I have built relationships. Therefore, when dealing with people and their emotions from different worldview to our own, we cannot use differing worldview other than their own (in this case Hawaiian worldview) to triangulate meanings contained in its contexts. This is because they are the subjects within their own worldviews and

any attempt to interpret their thoughts and emotions from our limited perspective is limited to our judgment and subjectivity. This idea is expanded by Ken Wilber, a theorist who is quoted by Meyer: “Science and the beliefs in the objectivity as the highest expression of our intellect work only in the restricted field of experience and effective only within those fields” (2013, p. 227). In other words, objectivity has its own limitations and to think that all experiences can be explained through objectivity is in itself very subjective.

The Final Portrait

Interestingly, as I mentioned, there is a point when subjectivity intersects objectivity if we give due diligence into understanding a particular worldview and triangulating the findings from that perspective. This understanding made it easier for me to *look for the story*. In *looking for the story*, I found three broad universal themes embedded in the articulation and renditions of the work. These themes are love, respect, and spirituality. However, differentiation of these themes within the Hawaiian worldview is in the *how* of things that connect these themes to a person/people and making them relevant, objective and whole through the works’ positioning-venue.

The largest and the most profound theme that permeated through all of my findings was aloha (here to mean love). Not just self-love but *love* as the *piko (umbilical cord)* that connected one to the land. Then from this land, thousands of other piko connected to every animate and inanimate entity, inclusive of the ocean that touched all the Hawaiian islands. As an unborn child is connected to its mother in the womb for its sustenance by mother’s umbilical cord, the āina (mother) connects all her children and all entities to her by her piko, creating an interdependence and aloha for each other for a life of pono (*balance*).

This metaphorical use of piko is central to the understanding of mother in the Hawaiian worldview, because the mother (‘āina) is a nurturer and familial, therefore, she can never be divided and sold—mother belongs to all kānaka, and as such each individual has a kuleana to maintain and give back to the mother for the prosperity of future generations (Oliveira, 2014). This is because the land was created by the akua, who in turn, supplied the first food source and the ‘ike (*knowings*) to the future Hawaiians through *knowledge holders* whose genealogy traces back to Kalo, the still-born son of Ho ‘ohokulani. Therefore, every entity contributed to the nourishment of the land which in turn nourished the kānaka, the children. Meala’s rendition of giant *rootless kalo corms* suspended in animation lying lifeless on the water speaks to the devastating consequences of the kānaka when their beloved ‘āina’s piko was severed. The intense yellow on the leaves and the spines of the kalo are indicative of both vibrancy as a healthy plant and yet, foreshadows their impending rot because the corms are rootless, therefore, the plants are unable to store their energy and once known vibrancy. Moreover, the leaves’ capillaries hold the waters of the lo’i, yet, the flow of the healing water within these leaves that sustain the plants are also abruptly halted because of the rootlessness of their corms. Perhaps the most disturbing image of this artwork is that of the people collaged on to the corms (children and stewards of the āina), who fought for their ‘āina and lifesaving sacred water. The images of these people are identifiable, yet they are rendered voiceless momentarily, but their anger and frustration are amply etched on to the canvas with crimson red. As for the water, short broad strokes, all in one direction indicates stillness and disconnectedness with life, with water, and with the land.

Keala’s image, on the other hand, speaks to the positive side of the piko’s metaphor. When you juxtapose Meala’s image against Keala’s, the difference between connection and

disconnection is readily evident. Keala's image of the giant kalo displays a nurtured plant and one that is still growing because it is firm in the mud (inferred) because the *movement* of the roots in search of food and nutrients are visually indicated as with the movement indicated by the stalks and the budding young leaves. Thus, the health of the kalo here (Keala's image) to mean that the k̄naka is depended upon their pilina (connection) to 'āina. When this connection and kuleana to 'āina is established, then aloha (love) proper. Keala's experience on the island is a positive one, and her history is recent and has not experienced the dichotomous relationships between the colonials and k̄naka the same way as did Meala. Therefore, Keala's rendition of the kalo gives meaning to her in a specific personal transformational way. So, the balance between good and bad, and how you relate to the kalo and personally connect to 'āina within the Hawaiian worldview is very much depended upon your personal experience and your relationship within that context. Therefore, any actions (good or bad) has a causal effect on that entire system but most profoundly, on the child whose survival depends on the *giving capability* of the land and her environment.

This *giving capability* of the land and how this makes sense within the Hawaiian worldview is beautifully rendered on the first side of the mural, Āloha Āina (fig. 4). This vast image as a whole is a documentary of the Hawaiian worldview. The image of Kumulipo on the far right of the mural establishes the beginnings of the times by its giant kalo (represents Kalo) that seems to jut out of the canvas because it is positioned very much on the foreground, (fig. 6). This juxta positioning of the kalo is metaphorically significant, as it establishes the creation of all Hawaiians, therefore an iconic symbol for the Hawaiians as it also symbolizes the Āina.



Figure 6. Details of 'Āina Aloha, side 1. Kumulipo and kalo.

From this image of the kalo onwards to the left shows how each aspect of life is interconnected to each other by knowledge holders, which are iconized by the mountains and the skies (depicted

by the faces of elders) and their 'ike (*knowings*) are integrated and swirled through the winds and stored in 'umeke by the power of spirit that are manu (*birds*), and are carried high on to the clouds by prayers that are indicated by the lupe (kites). And what is inferred by the farthest image of the staff (of the kūpuna) is kānaka's kuleana to honor the traditions and pass them on to the future generations (depicted by the youth) whose hand is in fact, resting upon the staff of the kūpuna. However, the most important message here is that it is the 'āina that holds the truths because she is shown at the very bottom of the canvas as the anchor (connection with her piko) of the entire image, (fig. 7).



Figure 7. Details from 'Āina Aloha, side 1. Knowledge holders, manu and 'āina.

The second theme is relationship and reciprocity which is embedded within the broader theme of respect. One's connection through the umbilical cord to the land is the *life-giving* metaphor because the land is considered to be the *mother* for all Hawaiians. In the Hawaiian creation chant of the Kumulipo, it is from goddess Haumea's planted umbilical cord (after the stillbirth of her eldest son) that sprang the first kalo, the nourishing staple of the k̄naka. According to the Kumulipo, kalo is considered to be the brother of all Hawaiians. So, for the Hawaiian, both the umbilical cord (piko) and the kalo represents an unquestionable bond that is sacred.

To illustrate this connection further, it is important to understand that to this day, most Hawaiian ask for, and bury their baby's afterbirth and the umbilical cord. After this burial, they plant a food-yielding tree above it as a way to reciprocate the nourishment received from the land. In fact, nothing is ever taken from the land without giving something back. For example, the k̄naka are very mindful as to which plant gets planted where so that they can provide the most benefit to both people and the land. Moreover, before planting or harvesting permission is always sought from land and spirit in the form of an oli. When harvesting, one never harvests all; this respect is extended to all areas whether it is harvesting limu (*seaweed*) and fish from the ocean, kahawai or fishponds, kalo from lo'i or animals in hunting. Any violations of these protocols are considered to be violence against the land and spirit. So, from this worldview, one can see that any violence inflicted on the land (mother) directly affects the health and well-being of its child (k̄naka) and all other entities because they too are connected to the land and are a part of the nourishing cycle of the 'āina.

Infliction of violence against the k̄naka and their beloved 'āina is never more accurately depicted than on the second side of the mural, *Āina Aloha, Painting Away the Pain*. This intense

suffering and the disconnection when relationship and reciprocity are forcefully broken is viscerally illustrated on the second side of *Āina Aloha* (fig. 5). A sea of red used in combination with the artistic style of cubism shows fragments of images that show decapitation of bodies that seem to move in and amongst other pieces of bodies. Occasionally, the audience is shown giant hands emerging from the sea of red as if to call out for help. This highly visceral piece that seems to be in constant movement and negotiation with other elements of healing and spiritual light indicates the complete chaos created by *kānaka*'s displacement from their beloved *‘āina*. Another example of the consequences of their loss when the *kānaka*'s connection to their mother is severed (fig. 8)



Figure 8. Details from *‘Āina Aloha*, side 2. *Painting Away the Pain.*

Therefore, it is from this understanding of relationship and reciprocity (respect), comes the need to *give back* (to the land) by way of leaving something behind, *Akahai* (grace to leave a place better than you found it), so that the land's and the ocean's resources will not deplete causing stress on the child. These beliefs are deeply engrained in the genealogies of the kānaka maoli and *ōiwi* which continually energizes kānaka worldview. My next research paper based on land and food sovereignty of the Hawaiian Islands will address the reestablishment of the movement toward the healing of the land.

The third theme is spirituality. Spirit is in all things that are animate or inanimate. This spiritual connection is meticulously exemplified on the first side of 'Āina Aloha. Within this idea of spirituality, the painting shows how spirituality extends and connects to what is seen bodily and felt in the na 'au. Of course, this connection of spirit, within all things and self is through the aforementioned piko –“the conduit to life source and the point around which all else moves” (Ka'opua, Tamang, Dillard, & Kekauoha, 2017, p. 22). Kānaka's connection to spirit and knowledge is in how they experience and receive life and its application to daily existence through *excellence* in how they reciprocate and revere 'āina. This idea of the *excellence of things* (*po'okela*) was stated by Meleanna during my interview with her in September 2018, *as making, utilizing and applying of things to daily life*. The painting is explicit in its depiction in how the 'āina holds the aloha (here to mean both intelligence and love) that is integral to a life of pono of the kānaka. The total breakdown of this aloha of the people of Waiāhole is well depicted in Meala's painting from the perspective of stagnation (movement/voice) and invisibility (people/culture), whereas, in the community piece of 'Āina Aloha (side 2) depicts the emotional toll experienced by the kānaka.

The kānaka are connected to spirit through their piko to ‘āina and living a life of pono is crucial to the *expressions of intelligence* embedded in kānaka DNA. Therefore, the sacred knowledge gained through the *intelligence of aloha* is in fact, spirit moving through the body that ultimately situates in the na ‘au that in turn, expresses a connection to all things. This connection is how the kānaka experience life, and how life informs them of their continued kuleana and ea (*life/sovereignty*) for the collective health and well-being of the lāhui (*nation/collective identity*).

Negotiating the Portrait for an Aesthetic Whole

When I listened to my subjects, kumu, and kupuna who have now become my friends and partners in community revitalization projects around the Islands, I cannot help but be in awe in their commitment to ‘āina and their efforts in reestablishing aloha to the nation. The arts certainly have taken an important role, as it has over centuries in amalgamating the layers of voices to deliver specific messages of and for a specific time and place.

In the context of Hawai ‘i, and within parameters of building a portrait, I had to look deeply into analyzing various aspects of data in the form of elements and principles of art and how they are used (by artists) to give a specific voice to a particular place and time of a set of constituents, all the while listening to the artists’ articulation of their works. This is because a portrait is context specific, which means, we give it meaning based on the information that is laid bare to witness by an audience. Thus, the audience engages in meaning-making of a text by negotiating and re-directing information to a specific place and time to build a portrait as an aesthetic whole. This is because a place takes on the qualities of its occupants or constituents as Casey (1996) says and they (constituents), ultimately have the upper hand in negotiating the depth and the breadth of the portrait (Denzin et al., 2008; Meyer, 1997). Therefore, in building a portrait, it is also important to see how the artists have used their current voices and the voices of

those who are embedded in the artwork, that was previously (from the perspective of time) rendered voiceless and invisible have now resurfaced for the renegotiation of how this portrait takes shape. This renegotiation is unstoppable, because, “identity is linked to culture, and culture defines epistemology” (Meyer, 1997, p.22) within a specific context and time. Therefore, the emergent portrait/s must be negotiated from that space of identity from that specific time and place which has become current through the renderings of the artists and their voices in today’s contemporary spaces.

In looking at the artwork and listening to the artists, my ultimate finding is that there is no final singular portrait, but there are several that interconnect to strengthen one unified knowing. This is because all the artists and their works carry the ‘Āina as the single most profound familial figure that is the Mother. She is resiliency, she is the nurturer and protector of the kalo, she connects spirit to the winds and the sky, she merges water from the mauka (*mountains*) with the waters of the makai (*ocean*), she supports Pele who lives below her, so new land could be created, she is keeper of the knowings that are passed on to kūpuna by giving value to what was known of the land to her children so that those knowings become current and can be taken into the future. Most of all, the ‘Āina is the strength that supports all above her and unites what is below so that her children can prosper by continuing with their kuleana in reciprocity for their mother.

Into the Light

Indigenous populations are unique in their worldviews, and kānaka worldviews are unique to the Hawaiian islands. Understanding of kānaka portraits and the final creation of its *aesthetic whole* requires understanding fundamentally kānaka’s holistic perspective of life. This perspective has three parts, but they ultimately come together as a single unit embodying mind,

body, and spirit that informs the health and well-being of all lāhui. In the center of this connection are the women who provide the divine connection between the people and akua through childbirth. Although coloniality changed and shifted Hawaiian culture and women's positionality within the traditional family system, they remain as the *kua* (*backbone*) of the family and are regaining their inherent position among the lāhui through increased agency and collective identity (*ea*). Voice in the form of arts (visual/performance), writing, community action in the form of the revitalization of indigenous methods of farming and food preparation are helping the women to *weave the rope of resistance* tighter to protect and nurture kānaka's cultural and spiritual integrity. Observing and listening to Meala, Keala and Meleanna have shown me their commitment to a unified direction in gaining sovereignty for Hawai 'i. Furthermore, these women are continuing to use their art and voice as vehicles to exemplify *wahine mana* and to empower younger generations to be involved in securing sovereignty to the aloha nation.

In my research journey, what I have discovered is that the two directions of research (kānaka and empirical) are not mutually exclusive or in competition with each other, but they both have much to offer in advancing the understanding of the kānaka worldview to *decolonize* indigeneity. To quote from McCubbin and Marsella (2009), "history affirms time and time again the gradual but definitive resurgence of culture, identities, and beliefs buttressed by the realization that indigenous knowledge is vital to the future of peoples whose roots have long and rich histories" (p. 386). With the revitalization of 'ōleo Hawai 'i and other kānaka projects around the islands, demand for Hawaii's sovereignty is clear and present. As Meleanna Aluli-Meyer expresses, "*we are taking back our voice. I have a lot of work to do, but I am a part of that continuum of reclamation*" places an indelible mark in the future direction of the kānaka in

the 21st century with regards to indigeneity and the need for their meaningful existence with pono.

In my role of doing this research, I feel that my task is to offer a way to see and appreciate kānaka experience from their point of view, not necessarily through an objective analysis of an empirical lens but rather from the subjective lens of the kānaka. This pathway offered me space to understand the depth and practice of cultural specificity of the kānaka worldview which is an important factor in understanding the true meaning of indigeneity. For me, engaging in this type of research is a way to invite other scholars to deepen the conversations and analysis surrounding indigeneity. When we create portraits, we enter into people's lives and build relationships. When we gather stories and their emotions from these relationships and articulate them in a body of work such as this, we in a way create opportunities to intervene in academic, social and political settings to further social transformations through dialogs however uncomfortable they maybe at times. However, to be engaged in these dialogs are an important part of engaging in ethical and moral research because they create understandings and appreciation for worldviews that are different than our own. Perhaps, in the long run, these engaged discussions will bring us to new understandings that may play a salient role in guiding non-indigenous researchers and audiences into honoring the health and well-being of the kānaka as well as that of all indigenous peoples around the world for their need for cultural sovereignty.

CHAPTER IV

PUHI IN THE TREE AND OTHER STORIES: UNLOCKING THE METAPHOR IN NATIVE AND INDIGENOUS HAWAIIAN STORYTELLING

Glossary

‘Āina (*That which feeds/Mother/Land*)

Akua (*Gods/ancestors*)

Ali ‘i (*Chiefs*)

Ao (*Day*)

Hula (*Dance*)

Kānaka ‘Ōiwi (*Native Hawaiian people*)

Kānaka Maoli (*Indigenous people*)

Kuleana (*Responsibility, obligation*)

Kūmu (*Teachers*)

Makawalu (*The power of observation/observing with eight eyes*)

Mele (*Songs*)

Mele ko ‘ihonua (*Cosmogonic genealogies*)

Mo ‘olelo (*Story/storytelling*)

Na ‘au (*Innate knowing, gut feeling/gut*)

‘Oli (*Chants*)

Piko (*Umbilical cord*)

Pilina (*Connection*)

Pō (*Night*)

Puhi (*eels*)

*Puhi in the Tree and Other Stories: Unlocking the Metaphor in Native and Indigenous Hawaiian
Storytelling*

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Abstract

Human beings live and tell stories for many reasons, and it is a way to not only understand one another but to give a time and place to events and experiences. Therefore, a *narrational* approach within the context of this research offers a frame of reference and a way to reflect during the entire process of gathering data and writing. This study examines the importance of storytelling among Native (Kānaka ʻŌiwi) and Indigenous (Kānaka Maoli) women of Hawaiʻi and their interconnectedness to land and spirituality through accessing [k]new knowledge. The main focus of this article is to illustrate the resiliency of stories as told by the kānaka women who are connected to a time and a place of traditional and ecological knowledge. Findings indicate that despite forced cultural and political changes generationally, these women's innate beliefs and interconnectedness to land and spirituality has begun to reshape as enduring patterns over time and space. This is evident by a resurgence in moʻolelo (*storytelling*), ho'oponopono (*Hawaiian peacemaking process*), revitalized methods of traditional land irrigation, cultivation, and sustainability programs as testimony. In ancient Hawaiʻi, both men and women equally participated in the activities of food production and cultivation, however, in contemporary Hawaiʻi, it is mostly the Native and Indigenous women who have mobilized to revitalize these traditional practices. All research, data collection and analysis were conducted by Renuka Mahari de Silva. The second author supported this work by editing and offering guidance in the article's orientation within the written context.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, relational, narrative, storytelling, kānaka ʻōiwi, kānaka maoli, resiliency, women.

Understanding Kānaka Worldviews Through the Mo‘olelo

Mo‘olelo (*story/oral traditions of storytelling*) in ancient Hawai‘i formed the foundation for kānaka ‘ōiwi (*Native Hawaiian*) women to pass down Mele ko ‘ihonua (*cosmogonic genealogies*), personal genealogical connections to the ‘āina (*that which feeds*) and the birth of the Akua (*gods*) (Oliveira, 2014). These aspects of mo‘olelo are crucial to understand the kānaka worldviews, and how these stories directly linked the kānaka to their land and spirituality. Therefore, a mo‘olelo carried important information as a way to maintain Native Hawaiian cultural heritage and knowledge systems that connected the past generations to the present. One of the ways cultural and ecological information was embedded in the mo‘olelo was through metaphors that made sense in common, everyday life. A mo‘olelo often began as a personal experience that highlighted one’s connection to geography as a cultural place and context and one’s relationship to a specific event. Women in these spaces played an important role in preserving the ancestral knowledge and cultural values as they were the first caretakers of the children traditionally and were thus children’s first storytellers. Therefore, in telling a mo‘olelo, the storyteller not only embedded rich cultural values, but she also embedded ecological details that deconstructed natural phenomena for people to understand through makawalu (*the power of observation*),

The power of makawalu enabled people to awaken (hō ‘ala) their senses to take action to resolve issues surrounding natural phenomena while honoring nature. A mo‘olelo therefore, was crucial in the preservation of ancestral knowledge while serving as a tool for honoring the land and spirituality that were integral for community survival. (Kealaulaokamamo Leota, November 1, 2018)

The mo‘olelo of puhi (*eels*) illustrates this power of *makawalu*. This following story of *Puhi in the Tree* is an example of a personal mo‘olelo, told to me by *Abbie Waiwaiole Havre*, a kānaka maoli woman, who begins her story by illustrating her special connection to a specific place (geography) and time (event):

When I was a very little girl, my grandma told me a mo‘olelo (story), a story she heard from her great grandma, a story about the great tsunami and the floods of Waimea Valley. My ‘ohana (family) are from Waimea Valley on the big island of Hawai‘i. My great, great, great grandma saved her people, my ancestors in the ahupua‘a (a division of land from the top of the hill to the sea) of Waimea from that great big tsunami and the floods in the late 1800s.

During those days, my great, great, great grandma (we got to know her as grandma Jos) was a young girl about seventeen or eighteen, and she would often go to the forest in the hills to fetch berries, get puhi (eels) from the kahawai (stream) and to be among tall sandalwood trees. Those days, there were many, many sandalwoods in the forest you know, and apparently, it always smelled so beautiful when you were among those trees, so she just loved being in the forest. Well, one day she went about doing her usual thing, picking berries, and looking to collect puhi, but she felt that something was not right. The kahawai looked so calm, and not a ripple, almost as if all the creatures from it had disappeared.

So, begins Grandma Jos’s adventure, the story of Puhi, which we shall pick up later in this work. It is important to point out here, though, that stories such as *Puhi in the Tree* are full of personal and family history, coupled with metaphors and ecological lessons that represent a layer of varied intergenerational voices including that of the storyteller that energizes deep cultural meanings

within a story (mo‘olelo). To glean these layered voices, a narrative methodology is employed to help grasp meanings and lessons embedded in these stories as well as to see how messages are connected to a deeper cosmology that was integral for the survival of Native and Indigenous Hawaiians.

Voices as a Quilt

The use of a narrative methodology offers a different form of research presentation as compared to more traditional research methodologies. In the narrative inquiry, the personal story of participants is used as the center of the study to create a more holistic and socially embodied story (Glesne, 2016) which is an important factor to consider in the storytelling culture of Native and Indigenous communities. As defined by Susan Chase (2011), narrative, as a research methodology has a “...distinct form of discourse: as meaning-making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one’s own or others’ actions, organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (Chase, p. 421). Thus, when a participant shares her story, the researcher uses analytical strategies to make meaning from the story (Riessman, 2005). An important part of the narrative inquiry is to examine and understand how the participant “...links experiences and circumstances together to make meaning, realizing also that circumstances do not determine how the story will be told or the meaning that is made of it” (Glesne, 2016, p. 185). Although the researcher hears the consciously told stories by a person, the researcher also has to look for deeper stories and meanings that a participant might not be aware of during this storytelling (Bell, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

One of the ways to analyze the stories is by way of the narrative inquiry process that takes a holistic view. A holistic analysis is where the *story* is represented in the narrative and

segments of that text are interpreted with respect to other segments of the *story*, tracing connections across the various elements. This is exemplified in the beginning part of the story of *puhi*. Its description helps us to understand how parts of the story's text connect to ancestral knowledge by the protagonist, *she felt that something was not right, this feeling of knowing* is what Hawaiians call *na'au (innate knowing)*. These details inevitably tie the present circumstances of the storyteller to the land that connects to the larger cultural and historical context of the community. As Catherine Kohler Riessman states in Bell (2003) "the culture speaks itself through an individual's story" (p. 96), because the private constructions within stories by the storyteller and language used meshes with "a community of life stories" (p. 96) constituting reality in many ways and from layered voices for the selected audience.

In Native and Indigenous cultures this enmeshing of private constructions and language are especially necessary because the voices of the generations (epistemological agents), stories and cultural textures are embroidered into the story like stitches in a quilt where pieces of fabrics of varying colors, textures and patterns are held together to tell a story (Bell, 2016). The term, epistemology refers to a body of knowledge or a worldview contained within the social relations of knowledge production (Kovach, 2010), whereas, epistemological agents refer to individuals, regardless of their identities, who carry forth beliefs and knowledge claims to maintain cultural norms and patterns (Elgin, 2013).

Conversations as an Important Step in Building Relationships

As a researcher, then, it was important that I maintained a conversational approach with storytellers that was dialogic and congruent to the Hawaiian cultural sense of communication to gather knowledge built upon Native and Indigenous relational traditions and epistemology. This dialogic, conversational method offers a way to gather knowledge of Indigenous linguistic and

educative methodologies while honoring embedded worldviews, rather than those projected by an outsider. Moreover, this method “hold[s] a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others” (Kovach, 2010, p. 40). The use of this approach and the deeply important element of developing relationships allowed me to see that indeed, Native and Indigenous stories are “relational at its core” (2010, p. 40). Moreover, that stories have a beginning, middle and an end, but that end is often not a completion of the story, but a connection to another story, with each part forming important lessons embedded within the holistic knowledge systems, making the stories cyclical in nature and relationally bound.

Furthermore, when the conversational approach is used within Hawaiian Native and Indigenous frameworks, I found that it invoked several distinct characteristics important to understanding the significance of the stories told by the storyteller. Margaret Kovach (2010) points out why and how this method fosters distinctive characteristics. For example, a) a conversational method is linked to a particular knowledge base and situated within an indigenous paradigm, b) it is relational and purposeful involving a decolonizing aim, c) it involves a particular place, d) it involves an informality and flexibility, and finally, d) it is collaborative, dialogic and reflexive. These points are especially relevant in the Hawaiian context because the “*Hawaiian culture is based on relationship and reciprocity*” (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018). This concept of relationship and reciprocity is exemplified in the Hawaiian word, ‘Ohana (*family*). The “O” of the word means eternal and “Ha” means breath, a connection to the past, present and future, and “Na” means relationship, thus when the words *Ha* and *Na* are combined, they come together to mean *relationship*; a relationship that is eternal (Oliveira & Wright, 2016).

These innate cultural characteristics form an important part of Hawaiian people's genealogies because it takes the position that the *relationship* is first and that this relating comes before a *transaction*, be it an interview, dialog or a collaboration. Therefore, knowing these distinctive characteristics and having built relationships before my interviews, grounded me when I engaged in a dialog with my participants. Put another way, after the initial greetings and exchanging of personal stories, I was *allowed to draw closer* to their stories through my inquiring questions because of my established relationship with them.

My findings indicated that explanations of cause and effect of natural phenomena are closely related to people's response to and relationship with a specific phenomenon. Subsequently, how to respond to a specific phenomenon is taught by ancestral lessons that are embedded in the mo'olelo in the form of metaphors that are culturally, environmentally and spiritually interconnected. As elders (kūpunas) gather together as storytellers, their primary objective is to make sure that the lessons are passed down in a way that understanding is felt in the *piko (bellybutton)* which then guides the person or people to act with integrity. Therefore, being in the place and experiencing the phenomenon is an important aspect of a successful response gained through the lessons of the kūpunas.

As one can see, a conversational and relational approach can bring together a host of knowledge constructed by communities rather than by a single individual. This is an important factor to take into consideration when listening and being involved in the storytelling process because in Native and Indigenous communities, knowledge is constructed by epistemological agents as a part of such a community akin to Nelson, who states (as cited in Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001) "such communities are epistemologically prior to individuals, who know" (p. 58). In their work, Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) posit Native and Indigenous epistemology to

mean a “cultural group’s ways of thinking and of creating, reformulating, and theorizing about knowledge via traditional discourses and media of communication, anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture” (p. 58). In pre-colonial Hawai‘i, Native and Indigenous women held powerful positions within their culture in many areas. One such position was their responsibility (kuleana) to maintain cultural stories that contained vast knowledge systems they shared via Ha‘i Mo ‘olelo (*storytelling*). These stories (*mo ‘olelo*) provided the people with a strong sense of cultural identity and love for the land while preserving ancestral knowledge.

Accordingly, by developing piko (*umbilical cord*) to *feel* the culture via women’s storytelling through a conversational approach was an important factor for me and my research. It is from within this cultural lens that I will show how Native and Indigenous stories are crucial to understanding the power behind the voices of the women, whose resiliency has survived millennia against many colonizing and assimilationist forces. This survival was due to the fact that in the ancient times, women represented the physical pilina (*connection*) between the past and the future, of the ancestors and of pō (*night*) and ao (*day*). In Hawaiian culture, according to the creation story of Kumulipo, women were sacred as they were believed to be the descendants of the first human woman, La‘i la‘i from whose womb sprang all chiefs. Therefore, women were equated to the pū‘ao (*lit shell of light*) which was the word for womb. This prominence established women as powerful allies of the chiefs’ in their courts and because of this position, they often advised and guided the ali‘i‘ai‘āina (*ruling chief*) (Ho‘omanawanui, 2010; Linnekin, 1990). It is then no wonder that some of these societies managed to preserve their cultural and spiritual identities in the face of remarkable cultural changes even when they were affected by foreign influences multilaterally.

Dr. Manulani Aluli-Meyer, a world scholar-practitioner of Native Hawaiian and indigenous epistemology has written widely about the richness of Hawaiian culture, lifestyle, social responsibility and maui ola (wellness) from a Hawaiian worldview. Her use of *indigenous* as a synonym for *enduring patterns* in the text, *The Context within: My Journey into Research*, (2013) could be an explanation for such preservation of deep-rooted cultural and spiritual identities. And, perhaps by investigating stories from Native and Indigenous Hawaiian women we can gain access to these enduring patterns. For this study, I spoke with five women to explore the importance of storytelling among kānaka ōiwi (*Native*) and kānaka maoli Indigenous women of Hawai`i. Collecting specific stories from these women have helped me in the narrative process of this work.

These stories offered an opportunity to examine how women's interconnectedness to land and spirituality anchored indigenous knowledge systems which were an important aspect in maintaining the enduring patterns that Aluli-Meyer alludes to in her text. Many of the stories told were enriched and made relevant by their use of metaphors that were important in fostering awareness of embedded Indigenous knowledge systems. These metaphors in these stories often combined common day practices, such as planting and fire-making to make the stories relatable to everyday life. By selecting how to share stories, what to tell, and linking bits of their personal experiences, the storyteller is able to disseminate greater information from localized knowledge systems. This growing awareness aids in structuring the flow of experiences for people to understand spirituality and the deep-rooted cultural identities of their lives (Wertz, 2011).

The Role of Kūpuna and Women

In looking at the role of elders (kūpunas) and women in particular in ancient Hawai`i, it is important to realize that they had a special place and role within their kuleana to the

community. This primary kuleana had to do with rearing children of the entire community as well as their own. Women provided the initial contact for children and bestowed upon the children the knowledge of the land, culture and spirituality through ‘oli (*chants*), mele (*songs*), hula (*dances*), and storytelling (*mo‘olelo*) (Handy, & Pukui, 1977). In fact, the relationship between the mother and child was held in high esteem in early Native Hawaiian culture. It is said that the “first expression of what the Hawaiians termed *aloha* (love) was between mother and child” (Handy, & Pukui, 1977, p. 165). Moreover, the relationship between grandparents and the child was also important, as they were the elders (kūpunas) who held the ancestral knowledge that was passed down in the form of storytelling (Ha’i Mo ‘olelo). This is because, early Hawai‘i maintained an oral tradition as a basis for passing down this knowledge base and other cultural histories. One of my participants, Sophia Carba explained the traditional role of elders and women in the following way,

Traditionally, elders and women had specific kuleana often tied to these ancestral dimensions of spirituality. An important aspect of this kuleana for women was to teach the female children of their own and that of the community’s, because raising a child was everyone’s kuleana; male children, however, from about age seven were the responsibility of men in the educational sphere specific ‘oli. (Sophia Carba, June 2017)

An ‘oli was also an important aspect in storytelling. These were embedded in mo‘olelo by the kūpunas and women for easy transference of information, and for the delivery of important messages. The ‘oli, reflected greetings, used as a method to gain permission to enter or to exit a household or to announce events such as, births, deaths, to convey creation stories, to forgive, to tell stories of wars & warriors, and to record genealogies. On formal occasions, an ‘oli would render a formal genealogy mo‘okūauhau for a person presented to a host or an ali‘i if requested

(Camvel, 2012). These chants often threaded family associations and distinct attributes of the flora, fauna, and the land, a coupling of cultural and ecological histories. Older siblings were required to know the entire lay of the land that was specific to their own ancestors; “from the mountain ridge to the valley floors, streams, the gulches, the levels of forest and canopies, the rain, the mist, the clouds, the wind” (Camvel, 2012, p. 56) as a way of passing on the lineage and ancestral knowledge. Some of the chants spoke to the birth and the beauty of the island of Hawai‘i. In speaking with my participants, I understood the central role Kūpunas and women served as gatekeepers of these important knowledge systems in the Hawaiian Native and Indigenous culture as a way to preserve and to continue their lineage for generations to come.

Narrative Research and Storytelling

There are many stories told in the narrative tradition about disruptions of cultures, colonization and its social, political and economic effects upon populations. Furthermore, there has been a “contemporary fascination with stories” (Polletta, Chen, Gardner, & Motes, 2011, p. 110) where social scientists seem eager to “capture the local and textured character of experience against the simplifying abstractions of behaviorist theorizing” (Polletta et al., 2011, p. 110). Bamberg, however, does not see storytelling as a means to an end, searching for the *who* rather than the *what* of the story (Bamberg, 2007). Bamberg argues that there are many layers to a story and that researchers must explore all layers before assigning specific meanings. He suggests that it is important to invoke, inflect and rework the identities within the story and the storytelling to create a synergy to build boundaries that are less sharp (Bamberg, 2007).

Therefore, to use “narrative inquiry in qualitative research is to adopt a particular view of experience as the phenomenon under study” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 46). Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) note that there are four converging phenomena or turns; a way of thinking from one way

to another within the narrative inquiry (p. 7). These *turns* vary in momentum and intensity, depending upon the experience of the researcher and their experience with doing research; hence, the *turns* refer to how a researcher embraces personal thinking and action across the *four turns*.

These four turns include the following; the relationship of the researched and the researcher, the move from numbers to words as data, a shift from the general to the particular, and finally, the emergence of new epistemologies or ways of knowing. Therefore, for narrative inquirers, both the humans and the stories are “continuously visible” (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p. 7) during the study, situated in the interrelatedness of stories of the participants and their relationship to the researcher allowing for self-reflection. The inquiry offers “the ability to capture the social representation processes such as feelings, images, and time” (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003, p. 5) that allows for the development and expansion of different viewpoints and interpretations of gathered data. An example of this would be an ‘oli embedded story where the information flows not only through the chant and the story but also through the emotions of the storyteller that renews and reinvigorates the information from her perspective inviting the audience into a dialog.

In narrative research, the interaction between the participant and the researcher is important as it allows the researcher to see a story as a version of life at a particular moment of experience for the storyteller. However, a unique aspect to my research dwells in the fact that I am interested in not only listening to all women’s stories but further, participate in a dialog when appropriate. This places me in a position to “collaboratively access participants’ life experiences in the way of accessing [*k*]new knowledge, a term coined by Manulani Aluli-Meyer and engage in a process of storying and restorying” to reveal “multidimensional meanings and present an authentic and compelling rendering of data” (Leavy, 2015, p. 27). It is this unique composite

portrait of collaborative access to participants' life experiences of storytelling and the process of restorying that will set my work apart from other works in similar fields. This process is done through a reflexive, participatory and aesthetic process that enables the researcher to glean and extract emerging themes from the presented data to restory so that it can appeal to the readership's (authors, researchers, educators or social scientists) understanding and imagination (Leavy, 2015, Kim, 2006). The concept of *restory* refers to individual experiences of the storyteller as well as that individual's interaction with others in creating the flow of the *story* in a way it makes sense to the storyteller and her audience when delivering the story (Ollerenshaw, & Creswell, 2002, Foote, 2015). And, importantly for my research goals of developing relationships with these women, all of this resonates with Native and Indigenous Hawaiian ways of knowing and relating.

Ha'i Mo 'olelo (*Storytelling*) in the Hawaiian Culture

Ha'i Mo 'olelo played an important role in Hawaiian culture. It provided a strong sense of cultural identity that linked people to their land. Mo 'olelo embodied various values of the Hawaiian culture that had developed and evolved over generations of experiences of their ancestors. The term *mo 'olelo* is composed of two words. According to Puki and Elbert (1986), as quoted by Lipe (1996) the first "mo 'o is translated as "succession, series, especially a genealogical line, lineage"" (Puki & Elbert, 1986, p. 253; Lipe, 1996, p. 53). And the second word, "ōlelo translates into English as "language, speech, word, statement, utterance; to speak, say, converse"" (Puki & Elbert, 1986, p. 253; Lipe, 1996, p. 53). Hence, the meaning of *mo 'olelo* extended to mean that in "speech there is life and in speech, there is death" (Lipe, 1996, p. 53). In other words, speech carries tremendous power to ignite truth or to destroy it. This is because until the mid 1800s Hawaiian language was solely an oral language, therefore, there was

much emphasis behind “ōlelo. According to Lipe (1996) ōlelo emphasized power because of the following:

Ōlelo was the livelihood of the Hawaiian people-our entire knowledge system depended on the continuity of mo‘olelo as spoken and taught to the next generation. Therefore, I grew up learning that not only that mo‘olelo in its many forms is important but also that it is essential we share those mo‘olelo out loud. I learned that it is critical to listen to mo‘olelo as they are told, to share mo‘olelo with others, and to use those mo‘olelo to learn, teach, connect and make sense of the world. (p. 54)

Storytelling reinforced a love for the land, relationships and the family ties to a place and time (Kikiloi, & Graves, 2010, p. 75). Additionally, the storyteller’s kuleana to kanaka ‘ōiwi was to preserve the knowledge by passing on the information through stories helping to transform geographical spaces into cultural places “enriched with meaning and significance” (Kikiloi, & Graves, 2010, p. 75). Women were held in high regard for their place in storytelling and their deep connection to the land. In fact, women in ancient Hawai‘i, were compared to the ‘a‘ali‘i, a blooming plant that can withstand strong winds. According to Puki (1983), the strength of women is recorded this way; “He ‘a‘ali‘i kūmakani mai au, ‘a‘ohe makani nāna e kūla‘i” (I am the wind withstanding a‘ali‘i. No wind can topple me over; p. 60). In the Hawaiian tradition, a‘ali‘i has been used as a metaphor in storytelling to model “strength, resiliency, and flexibility because it can survive challenging environments and elemental forces and bloom to become a beautiful and useful resource” (Lipe, K., Kanī‘aupi‘o-Crozier, E., & Hind, M. 2016, pp. 57-58; Nakoa, K. A. R. K. A., & Wright, E. K. A., 2015). The story of *puhi* (eel), introduced earlier and shared more fully below, beautifully illustrates this strength and resiliency of a woman in times of challenging environments and elemental forces.

This story has now been passed down for generations, and it was relayed to me quite remarkably at the most unlikely place of a hospital room while visiting my mother. The storyteller, Abbie, was also a patient sharing the same hospital room with my mother, therefore, I suppose we were destined to meet and share stories, even if in passing. Now, as we return to *Puhi in the Tree*, we also return to Abbie's generosity in sharing this account from her family genealogy, generations ago, from the big island of Hawai'i.

Puhi in the Tree

"*Hi sis,*" was how she used to greet me whenever she saw me. With a bright smile and a genuine desire to connect, she always seemed alert and attentive to everything that was happening around her. So, it was natural to get my attention when I walked past her bed to visit my mother. I first met Abbie Waiwaiole Havre at Honolulu's Queen's Hospital on October 19th, 2017. She and my mother shared a large semi-private hospital room on the 6th floor. My mother's bed was opposite to Abbie's, beside the large picture windows that extended to the end of the room and around to the left side. The view was breath-taking because the scenery extended from the immediate foreground to the distant sea miles away. The closer view from the window overlooked tall plumeria trees laden with blossoms of varying hues of pink right below the room. And just beyond the Plumerias were several majestic Banyan trees and other exotic species of trees that I could not possibly name. From that same window, you could also see the square building of the State Capitol and beyond that the Honolulu Harbor into the distance where we would often spot ships and changing cloud formations and playful shadows cast by sun's rays upon the clouds. The scenery was a dreamy landscape from a picture postcard breathing life it seemed.

This was the space from which Abbie's story began. Insisting on my pulling a chair so I could be close to her, she relished in detailing me her mo'olelo. Every now and then, Abbie would pause, and slightly bend over towards me from her hospital bed and say;

Now, did you get that? "Honey, I don't want you to miss any of these details, because it's a very important story for me and for our people." "And when you come back from North Dakota, you come visit me in Laie, so you can meet my kupuna (elder/teacher); oh, you will love her. We have so many important stories about my people and our land that I want to tell you.

Originally, from Kauai, Abbie's ancestors came from the big island of Hawai'i in Waimea Valley which is where the story of *Grandma Jos and Puhi* took place. To put this story's timeline into perspective, I would say that this story took place about fifty years after Captain Cook's landing in Oahu –he actually never did get to the big island. So, it is quite possible that there was very little or no contact with the *new world* at the point of this story. And, this is a significant point, because the story speaks to the ways in which people were connected to the land, and how they communicated certain environmental phenomena to their community. Gleefully, here is how Abbie told her story to my willing ears amidst my copious note-taking.

As previously noted, Abbie begins her story by identifying the time and place and describing the circumstances of her grandma Jos. In her day, as a young woman, one of Grandma Jos's kuleana was to gather food for her 'ohana (*family*). This gathering of food and the *knowing* of ecological particulars were passed down through stories as a way to honor family lineage, Hawaiian cultural traditions, maintain deep connections to the 'āina and to be self-aware of one's surroundings. So, when Grandma Jos went to the kahawai to harvest puhi and seeing their absence, this created a panic within her. Abbie explained that Grandma Jos was puzzled and,

walked along the bank for some distance peering into the water every now and then, but no fish and no puhi to be seen at all. She didn't know what to think. Well, she had some berries with her, so she thought that she could at least take those back to the village. But, not finding puhi really worried Grandma Jos, and the kahawai, it looked so different too. For no reason, grandma Jos started to panic, and she started to run down the hill towards the village. While she ran down the hill with a worried mind, she fell. But, this is when something very strange happened...she heard a voice, very strange she thought because she knew she was alone. As she was gathering herself together, she again heard a voice, only this time, it called her name. The voice said, "Jos, look up." When she looked up, grandma Jos couldn't believe her eyes. It was a puhi in the tree! He was hanging off a branch, and he began to talk to Grandma Jos. Bewildered, Grandma Jos said, "but why are you up there? You should be in the kahawai. "No," said the puhi. We are all up here because big waves are coming up to the land and all your homes will be under water—you must warn your 'ohana right away. Frightened, my Grandma Jos ran down to the beach to warn everyone of the big waves that are coming, and that the waves would swallow up all the land and homes by the sea.

"Very soon afterward, as we know from history," said Abbie, "the big waves of the tsunami hit the shores of Waimea Valley, and severe rainfall caused flooding in the ahupua'a. But, because my Grandma Jos was able to warn her 'ohana in time, they were able to move way up to the hills of the ahupua'a to safety until it was safe to move back down." (Abbie Waiwaiole Havre, October 2017)

This story is one of the many that exposes the audience, both readers and listeners to the multidimensional nature of Hawaiian traditional knowledge and environmental truths. For example, it is a fact of natural history that eels spawn offshore and once hatched, young eels drift inland with ocean currents into streams, rivers, and lakes. Eels stay in fresh or brackish waters until they mature which is when they would migrate back to the sea. In fact, young eels (elvers) are known to climb trees when they sense an oncoming drought, or a change of water temperatures in oceans or floods (Linton, Jónsson, Noakes, 2007). Therefore, it is not unusual that an idiom such as a *Puhi in a tree* was used as a metaphor for the changing nature of ocean currents, its temperatures and rising waters among the Hawaiians. Stories such as this sustained and prospered kanaka ‘ōiwi for millennia through their interconnectedness to sacred land that bound ideas of food production, environmental truths, and cultural beliefs enabling them to encode these practices in storytelling.

In Hawaiian Native and Indigenous storytelling, use of metaphors was an essential aspect of the practice. Hawaiian scholar and storyteller, Pualani Kanahale says “metaphors are like fragrant orchids in your garden or spice in your food, they add dimension to the story and gives special meaning” (Living the Myth and Unlocking the Metaphor, TEDX, Maui, 2012). Metaphors were woven through the stories combined with common everyday practices, such as planting and fire-making, so people understood these stories through their relatability to personal lives, lived experience, and the practical phenomena of daily living (TEDX, Maui, 2012).

According to Kanahale, storytellers were wise, and they knew about the elemental forms that were involved in creating the earth’s weather patterns and eruptions. By cleverly taking advantage of that available information of magnificent and catastrophic events, storytellers wove these events into ‘oli, mele and hula to pass on the information to preserve the knowledge.

Because these stories were retold using diverse methods, people readily embodied the emotions contained within stories making it easier for them to retain and retell stories to their own families to keep stories, such as *Puhi*, alive.

The Theme of Creation as a Central Tenet in Ancient Hawaiian Mo‘olelo

Stories of ancient Hawaii had many themes. The most dominant theme that seems to reverberate is that of creation. The tradition of these creation stories centers on the geologies of these islands and the procreation of two important ancestors of the Hawaiian people – Papahānaumoku (goddess personified as earth) and Wākea (god personified as expansive sky) and various partners with whom they mated, and the consequences of those actions documented as spiritual truths of Hawaiian peoples’ lineage (Kikiloi, & Graves, 2010). One of the most prominent stories to develop from this creation event was the birth of the Taro plant (Kalo). Taro is also the staple food source of the Hawaiian people. To Native and Indigenous Hawaiians, the Kalo is also of great importance because it signifies the birth of the Hawaiian people according to the Creation Chant of the Kumulipo. This story of the Kalo was relayed to me by Hawaiian scholar and writer Manulani Aluli-Meyer in the following way:

When Papahānaumoku and Wākea got together, the beautiful islands of Hawaii were born. In addition to the islands, they also gave birth to a beautiful daughter whom they named Ho'ohōkūkalani. As she matured into a young woman, Wākea desired to sleep with his daughter. With the help of Wākea's religious advisor (kahuna), sacred eating ('aikapu) which was the basis for Hawaiian spirituality was established. This sacred eating ritual separated Papahānaumoku from Wākea for a brief time. This brief separation gave Wākea time to entice his daughter into lovemaking. Soon, Ho'ohōkūkalani became pregnant.

Papahānaumoku became horrified and angry at Wākea. Her anger was felt throughout the islands through great rumblings that came from the islands core, frightening all who were on the islands. Unfortunately, Ho'ohōkūkalani gave birth to an unformed fetus that looked like a taro corm with a long tail. Deeply grieving parents, Wākea and Ho'ohōkūkalani named him Hāloanakalaukapalil and buried him in the ground. Apparently, it was from this place that the first Kalo had sprouted. So, the land (' āina) and Kalo were considered to be the elder siblings of the Hawaiian people, therefore much-honored. (Manulani Aluli-Meyer, June 2017)

What is fascinating about this creation story is the Hawaiian perspective and ritualized practice of giving birth, including what happens with the afterbirth, and how that relates to understanding the value of taking care of the land. *Papahānaumoku and Wākea* are personified as people as with *Ho'ohōkūkalani* because this created relatability to the ordinary kanaka 'ōiwi. During the storytelling, the listener is invited to take part in understanding the ancient Hawaiian cultural value system and the consequences of not honoring those values; even the gods are not spared for dishonor, yet *Papahānaumoku's* resiliency is clearly articulated in the story; *Papahānaumoku* is the *a'ali'i* that will not break in the wind. Aluli-Meyer explained to me how the creation story makes sense to the Hawaiian people. Her witnessing of her sister's third child led her to tell me the following story:

Did you know that after a baby is born, its afterbirth is just as big as the baby? Early on in this century, when women gave birth, they were never given the afterbirth, but now we ask for it. Because this afterbirth is the metaphor behind the dead baby of Ho'ohōkūkalani from which sprang the Kalo or the newborn.

When women get the afterbirth, they wipe down the blood, and you can still see the umbilical cord quiver like the stalk and the leaf of Kalo in the wind. Women eat a bit of the cord for nourishment just as Wākea did during his sacred eating, then we bury the afterbirth in the ground to give thanks to Hāloa, the second human offspring of Ho ‘ohōkūkalani and Wākea, and plant a taro, ulu (breadfruit) tree, or a coconut tree that would take nourishment from the afterbirth and bear food for us in abundance. (Manulani Aluli-Meyer, June 2017.

Aluli-Meyer explains that,

Wākea is infinite time and space’ that bears on its skies the sun, the moon, and the stars. The sun provides ample light for plants to grow on earth (Papahānaumoku) and the darkness of the night when the sun is resting provides a time and space for seeds to germinate in the earth’s womb, and gather nourishment for it to grow, just like how a baby is conceived and grows in the dark womb of the mother taking nourishment from her mother to grow, until it is ready to come out. So, you see, it is essential that we take care of the land and give back love as gratitude so that we can continue to prosper and care for one another. Without this magnificent land, we die. (Manulani Aluli-Meyer, June 2017)

Meyer often says in conversation that there are “no binaries in the Hawaiian culture; binaries are a part of the western culture” (Meyer, June 2017). Hawaiians exist because of nature and with nature and to think otherwise is disastrous. When one respects and listens to nature, it tells you its secrets and ways to coexist with it, and this is the only way people can prosper, ‘āina aloha means exactly this point. In this way, human society and the natural world are interdependent and sustained reciprocally. In Basso and Feld’s edited volume, *Senses of Place* (1996), American

philosopher, Edward Casey states that a “place is generative and regenerative on its own schedule. From it, experiences are born and to it, human beings (and other organisms) return for empowerment” (Casey, p. 26; Feld & Basso, 1996). After millennia, the story of *Papahānaumoku and Wākea* displays this quality of *generative and regenerative on its own schedule* and highlights this sense of empowerment of the people derived from the story and the intrinsic connection to the land through the burial of the afterbirth under a taro corm or another plant. These contemporary, regenerative experiences play a vital role in a *place* and become a “generatrix for the collection as well as the recollection of all that occurs in the lives of sentient beings, and even for the trajectories of inanimate things” (Casey, 1996, p. 26).

Mo‘olelo as a Generative and a Regenerative Process

The following creation story involving volcanic eruption is very much tied to this concept of *generative and regenerative on its own schedule and collection and recollection through ‘āina aloha* (love of the land). According to Casey (1996), the power of these experiences gathered by sentient and other organisms has “its own space and time” and are moved into “one arena of common engagement” (p. 26) in the sharing and telling of stories. In this *one arena*, the storyteller invites the audience to participate in the story by visualizing another’s life or experiences to gain varied and intimate perspectives. In the creation story of a volcanic eruption, storyteller Pualani Kanahale relays the science behind volcanic eruptions that were passed down through many generations. Spoken through a series of metaphors, Pualani Kanahale imparts important scientific concepts to her listener in very simple terms. In her TEDx appearance, Pualani Kanahale illustrated how people were made to understand science through storytelling and chants. She says in her presentation, a chant is “timeless, and it has to do with space, and that is timeless” (Living the Myth and Unlocking the Metaphor, TEDx, Maui, 2012). According to

Kanahele, chants provide us lessons that help with our personal growth process. Kanahele's story begins with Lonomakua (god of fire, rain, and agriculture and uncle to (Pelehonuamea) and Pelehonuamea (goddess and the creator of sacred land, and that of fire and the niece of Lonomakua).

When Pele (Pelehonuamea) reached womanhood at about 11 years, Lono (Lonomakua) took her into an underground cave with a small hole (puka) on its roof, and the light from the sun streamed into the cave from this puka, so the inside of the cave was not dark. Here seated, Lono wanted to teach Pele how the earth was formed with many layers, and how each layer contributed to supporting life that was important in sustaining all life forms. Sitting inside the cave, Lono showed Pele both vertical and horizontal layers of the earth. For example, where they sat was below ground, and he informed her that there were many more layers beneath her. Next, Lono asked her to look above through the small hole to the sky as far as she could see, and that she was told was the vertical sphere. Then she was told to pay attention to what was happening in the sky with the sunlight. For example, when the clouds moved in and out of sun's path, it brought darkness and created shadows, and at night, there were only the moon and the stars, and still created shadows. These were fascinating lessons for young Pele. Many nights passed, still being in the cave, Pele was taught about the importance of soil, rocks, animals, fish, mountain tops, earth's atmosphere and how it interacts with warm and cold air to create the water cycle. However, the most important lesson was yet to be taught, and that was how to make fire.

In order to teach Pele how to make fire, Lono secured a block of wood (Aulima) and asked her to hold it down on to the ground tightly and not to let go no matter what happens. She very obediently says, “Yes uncle,” I will hold it down no matter what. Lono seeing how well Pele was following instructions, broke into a chant. While chanting he took the long stick (Aunaki) and began to rub in back and forth on the Aulima. In the olden days, Hawaiians used this Aulima and an Aunaki to start a fire for cooking and to perform other fire rituals.

Lono continued to rub the Aulima. He sometimes rubbed it hard, and other times, softly, until smoke came from the wood. As time passed, Lono kept rubbing this Aulima with his Aunaki. As some time passed, Pele could feel the stones and the ground around her warming up, and suddenly, sparks began to fly, and now the smoke was thicker and heavier, and “whoosh” came the fire! Lono quickly asked Pele to look towards the small puka on the roof, and she could see that the smoke and the fire with some of the dust and small rocks spewing out of the roof into the open air. And as soon as the fire escaped from the roof’s small puka, the outside air helped it to become bigger, and the wind carried the fire and the smoke higher and higher. Pele was in awe. “This is who you are Pelehonuamea,” said Lono. “You are the fire starter.” “This is your responsibility (kuleana) to keep the fire burning.” “These things I told you about are important for the land to survive.” Of course, what Lono meant was that islands of Hawaii were created by volcanic eruptions, and with each eruption, the land mass become bigger, and after the lava flow dries, new growth takes place, thus renewing the earth, and once again creating an abundance of vegetation for the people.

In this story, Lono is personified by cold air, and scientifically speaking, in the winter months, when cold air descends from the mountains to the earth, their interaction with warm air sets the stage for the biggest volcanic eruptions of Kilauea, Mauna Loa, and Pu'u'Ō'ō. Furthermore, by illustrating fire making, people were made to understand how the action of cold air (*Aunaki*) interacting with Aulima (*warm air*) creates friction, thus creating fire, in this case, a volcanic eruption, akin to starting a fire for daily cooking activities. These types of stories were important so that people not only appreciated the land, but also revered it, and understood the traditional ecological awareness and the knowledge behind the eruptions because their very sustenance depended upon their shared love of the land (*'āina aloha*) and their ability to create fire as Pele did. Moreover, these stories made Native and Indigenous Hawaiians aware of nature's signals so that the communities could be kept safe from what we call natural disasters.

Exploring [K]new Knowledge: A Tapestry of Voices

There were many ways in which women were honored in ancient Hawai 'i. Traditionally, women established the first aloha between a mother and child and as well as rearing children and teaching them their genealogies. More importantly, they legitimized the births of ali 'i (*chiefs*) who were akin to gods on the earth plane. Therefore, women were seen as the pilina (*connection*) through their piko (*umbilical cord*) between the people and the akua (*gods*) in the heavens (Kame'eleihiwa, 2001). Keeping with this belief system, women were not only protected but also revered within the early *Ihi Kapu* governing system which was based on Hawaiian spirituality. This spiritually based system enabled all Hawaiians to live in harmony with family, nature and the spiritual realm. One of my participants, Sophia Carba, explained a part of this kapu spiritual system in the following way;

The order of kapu forbade women with consuming certain types of foods and its gathering or preparation. Food was considered sacred, and there were certain types of food that women were not allowed to consume. For example, food like, pork, bananas, certain types of fish, and coconuts, because, these foods represented anatomical parts of gods such as, Lono, Kanaloa, and Kū, therefore, eating these types of food by women was considered a spiritual disrespect to those gods as well as towards their family ancestors ('aumākua). And also eating these foods meant the loss of women's mana. And losing their mana meant a woman's inability to connect with the gods when giving birth to an ali 'i, affecting her pilina (connection) between earth and the heavens. This fear of loss of mana is one of several reasons why women were disallowed from cooking. Thus, it became the duty of the men to cook and offer food to women in their separate eating houses as a way to safeguard women's mana. (Interview, Sophia Carba, June 2017)

(Sophia Carba, June 2017)

Although coloniality changed and shifted Hawaiian culture and women's positionality within the traditional family system, women remain as the *kua* (backbone) of the family. Today, women are at the forefront reclaiming their 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) rights and ancestral mo'olelo that connects them to their treasured genealogies, thus reestablishing their *mana wahine*. Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, a mother, an artist, educator, and activist is one of the many women who is regrouping with kānaka from all the islands to add her powerful voice to an emerging tapestry of vibrant voices in reclaiming their mana. Meyer feels that her genealogy has provided her with the tools necessary to reestablish their culture and restore balance to the beloved 'āina. This action toward reclamation is evident in her following statement:

I have been given the tools, so, I must put that into good use...to do healing work especially with our young women who need a voice and support in the work that they must do.” “We are taking back our voice. I have a lot of work to do, but I am a part of that continuum of reclamation.” (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018)

Hawaiian Women, the Divine Feminine

As told by the stories, the women of ancient Hawai‘i played important roles in their immediate families and in their communities. Women were held in high regard because they were believed to have been the *Creator* of all beings. In the ancient Hawaiian world, it was believed that Pō the mysterious female night gave birth to a son (Kumulipo) and daughter (Pō‘ele) without “any male impregnating element” who then “by their incestuous mating (in the Hawaiian tradition, incest created divinity) created the world (Kame‘eleihiwa, 2001, p. 3). This Hawaiian cosmogonic genealogy spans over sixteen wā (*time periods*) of eight days and nights where forty thousand Akua (*gods*) were born (2001). Out of these forty-thousand Akua, twenty-thousand were female Akua. The female Akua embodies every aspect of life, of divinity (spiritual power also known as *mana*), sexuality and capability in all women and empower them. The female Akua is the “source of life, of divinity, and of ancestral wisdom” (p. 3). Moreover, it is said that the Akua communicates with humans by dreams in the night to “connote wisdom and customs that come from antiquity” (p. 3). Therefore, when stories are told, a very prominent part of this feminine voice is carried through these metaphors by way of the ancestors who are passing down generational knowledge systems from time immemorial. This passing down of divine ancestral knowledge is what Aluli-Meyer (2013) refers to as [k]new *knowledge* which is an important aspect of the mo‘olelo (*storytelling*).

In telling stories, women bring their divine femininity into the story with their acute sense of belonging to a place or time. This divine femininity is evident in all of the stories that I had the pleasure in which to listen and to be engaged in conversation. For example, in the first story of *Puhi*, young Jos's *knowing* (in Hawaiian, *na'au*) that something was wrong when not seeing any eels in the stream and immediately getting a sense that she needed to warn the community shows her god-like behavior in showing community kuleana (responsibility). Furthermore, when the village kupunas were informed of the eels' strange behavior by Jos, they immediately acted without a question, and this is a good example of the female authority that was honored in women, no matter what their age.

In the second story of the *afterbirth*, it is the woman who has an undeniable agency in what to do with the afterbirth. Nowadays, (realigning with the ancient cultural practice) the women are deciding in some cases to eat part of the afterbirth and bury the rest so that it would provide nourishment for important life-giving and sustaining plants like kalo, ulu, and coconut. This practice emphasizes the important kuleana of giving birth and its sustenance through the planting of important crops for the benefit of the family and greater community, just as the mysterious Pō did in creating the universe.

The third story of *Pele* is also associated with life-giving (volcanic eruption), through the offer of abundance by means of regeneration of the land, climate, and earth. In all of these stories, women are central figures of rebirth and the link to the sustenance of life. Women are the ultimate power-structure of the family and the culture, because, genealogically, the first ancestor is the most powerful, and that ancestor was a woman - Pō. The woman created the universe. Therefore, women have always been seen as the strength and the protector of families and the knowledge-holders.

With my specific use of narrative methodology with a conversational approach, and by listening to women's stories I have come to understand how female presence is deeply embedded within the Hawaiian culture. For a brief moment in history, through colonialism, western worldviews altered Hawaiian worldviews and women's positionality within their culture. Europeans introduced gendered social systems that commodified women, often relegating them to be their husband's chattel reflecting the western ideology of the 18th century (Lugones, 2010). However, with the current resurgence of cultural pride and the idea of what it is to become pono (being in balance and harmony with land and spirituality) Indigenous and Native Hawaiian women have rearranged how they will once again identify themselves with their Hawaiian culture. Realigning themselves with their cultural past, in contemporary Hawai'i, women are reasserting themselves to be the women in how they were believed to have been created by the female Akua and the mysterious Pō. Being a woman means, being *pono* (balanced)-there is no separation in identity between culture and spirituality in womanhood (Kame'eleihiwa, 2001). Speaking with women and understanding these important aspects of their connection to the land helped me to see how each piece of the story, how each voice, could be woven together in an intricate manner to present a composite of a woman that is complex, divine and, and one who is trusted to sustain and nurture the Hawaiian culture and reclaim the mo'olelo and the 'āina.

Cosmos and the Knowledge of Land

Indigenous peoples refer to those who were born of the land and who share an understanding of the relationship they have with the land, language, forms of cultural knowledge, an interaction to their natural resources and living within the environment (Smith, 2013). These indigenous peoples are the Maoli (descendants of the Polynesians) (Cook et., al, 2003). In the text, *The Context within: My Journey into Research*, Meyer uses the word indigenous as a

synonym for “enduring patterns” with regards to philosophy that brings forth [k]new ideas that have made sense “because of the ecology of these times” (Meyer, 2013, p. 251). An example of this [k]new knowledge is relayed intimately in the story of *puhi*, because without the understanding of this peculiar animal behavior, the village may not have been saved by the tsunami. Meyer further iterates that “indigenous is really about culture: best practices of a group of people specific to a place, over time” (Meyer, 2013, p. 251). The quick action by the kupunas in the story of *puhi*, speaks volumes to these best practices of culture and their finely tuned awareness of the environment.

When it comes to Native and Indigenous Hawaiian people and their reverence for the land and its use, one can see that the regenerative culture is embedded in storytelling and vice versa. Because stories helped keep alive the knowledge of the land and the cosmologies which were integral to their survival, we see a blending of culture and nature, a relational awareness. As illustrated by the story of *puhi in the tree*, culture is shaped by the environment and specific needs of the people, developing a dynamic “interdependence” (Meyer, 2014, p. 97). For example, when grandma Jos did not see eels in the kahawai, she panicked, because she knew there was something wrong. It was only when she saw a puhi in the tree that she became overly concerned. It suffices to say that although young Jos was confused by puhi in the tree, the village kūpunas (elders) must have known that such events took place only when a disaster was about to strike the Islanders – a disaster involving water. That knowledge helped the lowland dwellers to make appropriate decisions to keep themselves safe by moving to higher ground out of harm’s way.

Although words such as nature, biodiversity, and sustainability are made famous by western sciences (Posey, 2001, p. 4), indigenous Hawaiians already knew the concepts behind

these words. As *beings* of the land (‘āina), Hawaiians felt directly tied to a generational spiritual base that governed them and their relationships to the land. In this way, “dimensions of traditional knowledge are not *local* knowledge, but knowledge of the *universal* as expressed in the local” (Meyer, 2001, p. 4, Posey, 2001). Hawaiians see themselves as people of the ‘āina who gave thanks and received bounty from it, as evidenced by “‘āina aloha,” the act of care for others and for the earth (Meyer, 2013, p. 99). And certainly, listening to Abbie passionately tell the story of grandma Jos, and her running down the hill to deliver puhi’s message to her ‘ohana illustrated the meaning of ‘āina aloha well. This *collective consciousness* for the community’s well-being is central to Hawaiian Native and Indigenous culture.

Knowledge of the *Universal* as Expressed in the Local

This *collective consciousness* of the community was evident with every question that I posed to my participants during interviews. I say this because all answers garnered from the questions ended up being connected to a tapestry of stories; built upon other stories that layered multiple voices, those of the storytellers, both current and past, that echoed as I listened. Lynne Davis posits that “stories cement together generations of collective memory, embodying the historical, spiritual, social, and spatial... linking past and future in the present. Stories are containers of Indigenous knowledge and thought, just as Indigenous languages are their fiber” (Davis, 2004, p. 3). When we listen to stories, in the end, we look for significant statements contained within the stories and comments to look for emergent themes that form patterns. This offers the researcher and the readers an opportunity to understand the underlying meanings of the context that gives its power to resonate and strengthen belief systems that carry *truths* for a generation’s specific cultural settings. This is because Indigenous worldviews honor orality as “a means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the *relational* which is necessary to maintain a

collectivist tradition” (Kovach, 2010, p. 42). Therefore, a story is a relational process that guides Indigenous research consistent with a particular Indigenous worldview. This is important as stories within the Indigenous worldview highlight beliefs and values that are paramount within that paradigm (Kovach, 2010). Moreover, this relational symmetry between the researcher, the story and its teller contribute to maintaining the authenticity of Indigenous worldviews, which is an important aspect of my research and resounds with the goals of narrative work.

This brings me to reiterate the importance of women and storytelling in k̄anaka tradition. A tradition where women were held in high regard for their role in storytelling and their deep connection to land and spirituality. Since they were also the first connection and nurturers to their own children and that of others in the community, they were central to passing down epistemological knowledge of ancestors or the *[k]new knowledge* and cultural awareness to future generations (Handy & Pukui, 1977). The stories discussed in this paper bear evidence to the centrality of women in this context where women are fundamentally both storytellers and protagonists within the k̄anaka tradition.

Moreover, these women’s stories indicate that despite forced cultural and political changes over time, innate beliefs and interconnectedness to land and spirituality has begun to reshape in multidimensional ways both culturally and ecologically. They not only feel directly tied to a generational spiritual base that governed them, but they also feel that “dimensions of traditional knowledge are not *local* knowledge, but knowledge of the *universal* as expressed in the local” (Meyer, 2001, p. 4). They see themselves as people who give thanks to their land and receive bounty from it as evidenced by “‘āina aloha,” the act of care for others and for the earth. This fact is made evident in contemporary Hawai‘i with the resurgence of traditional practices in

cultivation, the revival of traditional food preparations, revitalized methods of land irrigation, language, and sustainable farming, such as fishponds in local communities.

To illustrate this idea, I will give an example from an interview I conducted with Kealaulaokamamo Leota, whom I got to know as Mamo while visiting Paepae o He 'eia Fish Pond on the northeast side of O'ahu. Mamo is a teacher and practitioner of cultural education and outreach who teaches school-aged children at the fish pond. Paepae o He 'eia is one of the largest and oldest (eight hundred years) revitalized fully functioning fish ponds on the island. It is owned by the Kamehameha Schools, and the project's purpose is three-fold. One is to reintroduce and feed ancient healthy foods to local k̄naka population as it was done in the days of the ahupua 'a. The second is to teach ancient farming techniques in the current context using innovative methods that do not create an imbalance in the environment. The third is to introduce young children to ancestral knowledge of farming and food production using *kilo* (observation) within a system called Makawalu, introduced earlier in the paper. The word, Makawalu means *eight eyes*. Therefore, this system of Makawalu entails learning to *read nature* using *eight eyes*. In other words, to observe *events* or *happenings in nature* deeply, so that you can see, smell, feel, taste and hear what you are observing, so you know how a phenomena function. According to Mamo, it was with the use of these skilled observations that the k̄puna knew when or when not to act with regards to natural events;

Using makawalu, we teach kids to step back and really look at things to understand their function. We use three categories that our k̄puna used, and they are Papahulilani, Papahulihōnue, and Papahānaumoku. The first category of Papahulilani means observation of the heavens; this means the skies, the clouds, winds, and the moon cycles. The second category of Papahulihōnue means observation of nature in natural settings

like water in streams and ocean, mountains, vegetation and animal behavior. And the third category of Papahānaumoku means the observation of birthing; in other words, how things grow. Everything we do is very tide-based because our kūpuna knew how to use the moon cycles because the moon affected the tides and tides affected how we farmed. They say you can't predict the weather, but our kūpuna knew how to predict the weather, and they did that very well. (Interview, Kealaulaokamamo Leota, November 1, 2018)

A knowledge system such as Makawalu is developed over a specific time in a specific location, and in Hawai'i, this knowledge is shaped through space and time by knowledge holders through metaphors embedded in stories and storytelling as in the case of *Puhi* and other stories.

According to Hawaiian educators Eddie Kaanana and Ilei Beniamina, storytelling is directly tied to the kuleana and well-being of the 'ohana or learning community. Therefore, kuleana is about “feeding one's family, caring for one's children, and all other kuleana depends on one's ability to mālama (*Island of Hawai'i*) that primary kuleana, to care for the piece of land and to make it productive” (Lipe, 1996, p. 15). In ancient Hawai'i, rights and privileges were earned only by fulfilling increasing levels of responsibilities by both women and men. Therefore, these rights and privileges were “inextricably rooted in the land itself and in how well we care for it” (Lipe, 1996, p. 15). As quoted by Lipe (1996), Hawaiian educator Mehana Blaich (p.15) says the following.

Learning and knowledge are forms of privilege that comes with attendant responsibilities to a larger collective and to the 'āina on which we depend for life. As learner masters new skills, he or she takes on more complex responsibilities. In turn, it is through the

fulfillment of more challenging duties in caring for the land and the community that one learns. (p. 15)

According to Lipe (1996), ancestral knowledge is embodied within each individual and with that comes power, privilege and the kuleana to listen to the stories to learn from and share with future generations. Although knowledge systems are vulnerable to change, these women's stories have proven that it is the nature of culture to survive evident in women's resiliency embedded in metaphor that has made them to be the 'a 'ali 'i (*a strong blooming plant*) that will not break in the wind.

When we look at the three stories from these storytellers, these traits of strength, resiliency, and flexibility, of *a 'ali 'i*, are evident from the roles women play in telling the stories and in their continued preservation through spirituality, connection, love and care for the land (mālama 'āina). Whether it is Pele's empowerment for the regeneration of land through fire-making, a contemporary women's giving thanks in honor of her spirituality and connection to the earth by offering her baby's afterbirth or a young woman keeping a community safe from a tsunami several centuries ago, women have taken a central responsibility of maintaining the mālama 'āina both as a protagonist and as storyteller.

As Indigenous leaders, women have shown the importance of relationality and interconnectedness to land and spirituality with important stories that have been passed down for generations (Aluli-Mayer, 2001). Demonstrably, women have shown how their resiliency and flexibility have strengthened their relationality to extend beyond families and communities, to include the land, time/place, and Creator. Native and Indigenous women of contemporary Hawai'i are now taking back the ownership of their power to reposition themselves for a renewed mālama 'āina through a resurgence in revitalized methods of traditional land irrigation,

cultivation, and sustainability programs that was central to the cultural identity of Hawai‘i and its women. Most of all, women have now begun to *call back* their treasured mo‘olelo that was forbidden during colonialism to bridge the past with the present and heal years of cultural trauma that was inflicted upon all people of Hawai‘i. In taking back this ownership and the kuleana that comes with it, Native and Indigenous women are reconstituting essential narratives and embedded metaphors in the mo‘olelo that resonate with cultural and ecological truths.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Glossary

‘Āina (*That which feeds*)

Aloha (*Love, intelligence*)

‘Ike (*Knowledge, to see*)

Kipuka (*Places of ancestral knowledge*)

Kupuna (*Elder, ancestor*),

Kūpuna (*Ancestors, elders*)

‘Ohana (*Family, one’s own/community*)

‘Ōlelo Hawai ‘i (*Hawaiian Language*)

Nohona Hawai ‘i (*Hawaiian way of living*)

Mālama ‘āina (*Care for the land*)

Mana (*Power*)

Me Ka Mahalo Nui (*With Great Appreciation*)

My experience in researching and working with the wahine from around the island of O‘ahu (with many family ties to the outer Islands) have helped me to gain a deeper understanding and respect for ancestral knowledge systems. The kūpuna (*ancestors*) gained their knowledge by observing and interacting with their environment. They, then, passed these knowledge systems to ‘ohana (*family, one’s own/community*) with the use of a mo ‘olelo (*story/narrative/historical account*). I now realize that these kūpuna were not just knowledge holders but also theorists. They described and explained phenomena and framed them in a way that ‘ohana could understand and ecologically relate to and apply knowledge systems to address these phenomena. In return, the Kānaka’s (*Native Hawaiian*) application of knowledge systems to various situations was a part of their kuleana (*obligation*) to ‘āina (*that which feeds*).

Use of Mo ‘olelo

In one of my articles, I discussed a mo ‘olelo told by kupuna (*elder*), Dr. Pualani Kanaka ‘ole Kanahale. One of my reason for bringing in this story of young Pele and her fire making lesson, illustrated, by Dr. Kanahale in her TEDx appearance (*Living the Myth and Unlocking the Metaphor, TEDx, Maui, 2012*) is to show the readers how beautifully she renders a mo ‘olelo’s with its underlying messages (*knowings*) to an audience using physical action, sounds and metaphors. Dr. Kanahale exemplifies how a mo ‘olelo may have been relayed in the olden days and the reasons behind the use of action, sounds and metaphors. Knowing the environment was important for kānaka survival because of the Islands’ geographical layout in the middle of the Pacific. Therefore, the kānaka worldview with regards to their cultural, spiritual and environmental belief systems was anchored in how kānaka related to the land or the ‘āina (*that which feeds*). Although, worldviews change because of external and sometimes internal

influences, for example, because of shifting values when we are exposed to differing worldviews, for the large part, however, certain cultural beliefs have held their ground. An example of these core beliefs as discussed in the articles are Kānaka's devotion to 'āina through kuleana and relationship and reciprocity. In fact, in contemporary Hawai 'i, values surrounding relationship and reciprocity have strengthened and have become central in addressing Kānaka poverty through place-based (experiential) education and food sovereignty projects. The main focus of these projects is to bring pride back to Kānaka culture, teach and reintroduce ancient healthy foods and systems of cultivation to be self-sufficient.

Pushing for Change

Despite the dedicated work that many wahine (*women*) are engaged in, the Kānaka continue to be oppressed by inequality in all areas; socially, politically, economically and culturally. However, through all these challenges, and changes, the wahine seem to stand strong and are unified in their mana (*power*) to bring culturally and politically relevant changes. Changes, to bypass many of the long-standing Eurocentric heteronormative pathways to affect positive changes to decolonize emotions, education, and geographies to heal themselves and move beyond current hurdles. Each article addresses either natural phenomena and their ecological truths and their applicability to current knowledge systems or a distinct hurdle that the Kānaka are working with in order to move beyond the present oppressive markers that are keeping them in a cycle of poverty and hunger. Wahine's push for embedding 'Ōlelo Hawai 'i (*Hawaiian Language*) in the public educational system, offering placed-based educational experiences to teach and apply kūpuna knowledge systems at various kipuka sites for the youth and 'ohana, and navigating powerful food and land sovereignty movements are some of the ways in which the wahine are reestablishing their mana around the Islands.

Reconnecting With ‘Āina (*That which feeds*)

As Kānaka leaders, women have shown the importance of relationality and interconnectedness to land and spirituality with important stories that have been passed down for generations (Aluli-Mayer, 2001). Demonstrably, women have shown how their resiliency and flexibility have strengthened their relationality to extend beyond families and communities, to include the land and time/place. Kānaka women of contemporary Hawai‘i are now taking back the ownership of their mana (*power*) to reposition themselves for a renewed mālama ‘āina (*care for the land* -- so it can give back) through a resurgence in revitalized methods of traditional land irrigation, cultivation, and sustainability programs that were central to the cultural identity of Hawai‘i. Most of all, women have now begun to *call back* their treasured mo‘olelo that were forbidden during colonialism to bridge the past with the present and heal years of cultural trauma (Aloha ‘Āina mural) that was inflicted upon all people of Hawai‘i. In taking back this ownership and the kuleana that comes with it, Kānaka women are reconstituting essential narratives and embedded metaphors in mo‘olelo discussed in the articles, (Puhi, burying of afterbirth, Kalo Pa ‘a o Waiāhole) that resonate with cultural and ecological truths.

Examining Limitations and Intersections

In reflection, as I mentioned in one of my articles, I still see myself as a guest on Hawai‘i’s land. Although my personal genealogical trajectory ran somewhat parallel, yet at times intersected with many of my participants’ experiences, I realized that my worldviews were built from my own experiences and values brought into my *cognitive* and *living* (experiential) domains. Having said this, I do understand, that there are many cultural and social values and aspects that intersect with the values of many Kānaka women I spoke with, but because, I was not tied to the land generationally, and learned the knowings of the kūpuna as they were passed

down, my interpretations will always be from my experiences. In spite of the fact, that I grew up in Hawai 'i, attended Nohona Hawai 'i (*Hawaiian way of living*) classes and learned over several months about health and well-being of Hawaiian people and listened to many hours about place specific stories from Aunty Lynette and many other women, not being born of the land to experience it, makes a significant difference in how I relate to the land and ultimately to its people. This personal *knowing* brought me to reflect what Edward Casey (1996) says about the role of body in a place and space:

Lived bodies belong to places and help to constitute them. Even if such bodies may be displaced in certain respects, they are never placeless; they are never *only* at discrete positions in world, time or space, though they may be *also* be at such position. By the same token, however, *places belong to lived bodies*. (p.24)

So, when it comes to my position, I was not a constituent of the places and spaces of my participants and their experiences that they and their kūpuna have constituted. Neither was I a part of the gathering and keeping those places and spaces, so my experiences will always be from an outsider looking in to connect and make meaning within worldviews that I bring to this place of Hawai 'i and the research.

Reimagining a Tapestry and Choosing the Threads

From speaking to these women, engaging in conversations about their artwork and from other texts, I know that colonialism had devastating consequences upon the Hawaiians.

Coloniality and its categorization of women and other forms of social and cultural reorganizations heavily impacted women's positionality in the Hawaiian Islands both culturally and socially. Yet, women's resiliency to overcome adversity seems to have created threads of hope and determination to weave a tapestry that is rich and relevant in addressing immediate

needs of the ‘ohana in contemporary Hawai ‘i. As a group of individuals, these women, are *rebirthing* a renewed sense of mana wahine, because many women before them, like, Queen Lili ‘uokalani, Princess Kaiulani, Iolani Luahine, Dr. Pualani Kanaka ‘ole Kanahahele and Haunani Kay-Trask have shown the importance of reclaiming Hawaiian cultural heritage to stay current with what is important for the prosperity of future generations. As with many colonized nations, Hawaiians were displaced and marginalized, but these women have realized that they need to move beyond the generational pain as depicted on the second side of the “Āina Aloha mural (Painting away the Pain). As Casey (1996) says, although bodies move or are displaced, they are never placeless. In other words, as Hawaiians say, places hold memories and those memories connect people to those places and specific spaces. (Oliveira, 2014; Casey, 1996). After two hundred years, these women are regrouping and gathering in places of Kipuka (*places of ancestral knowledge*) to re-learn and reapply knowledge, to reconnect with places and memories that laid hidden for many generations. As Oliveira (2014) states, reconnecting to one’s genealogical roots on the land, deeply connects them to their kūpuna, opening a space for reflection and forward action. This aspect of connection is self-empowering, which in turn helps to continue with personal objectives as well as performing kuleana to ‘āina through educating future generations by giving back and sharing knowledge (Oliveira, 2014):

“Living in Kuewa (place in Maui) was a life-changing experience. I became more in touch with my environment, and I began to sense the presence of my kūpuna...the experience helped me to gain a deeper respect for the ancestral knowledge systems that that my kūpuna developed as a result of their observation and interactions with their environment...I feel a deep and profound responsibility to my kumu and to my kūpuna to give back to academia and my Kanaka community by sharing whatever little ‘ike

(knowledge) I have about Kanaka place making. This book is my contribution to the next generation, as I feel an incredible sense of kuleana to carry on the knowledge of my kūpuna. (p. xvi)

This sense of unbridled kuleana and connection to ‘āina and ‘ohana was present in all the women I spoke with either about their artwork or about their involvement revitalization projects and placed-based educational programs. Kealaulaokamamo Leota at the Paepae o He ‘eia Fishpond articulated best when she said the following:

Kūmu (teachers) take pride in teaching students and ‘ohana, mauli, full well-being of a person. This means, learning how to eat healthy, as well as, how to have a healthy mind, and body (connection to spirit) ... living free of conflict helps one to be aware and connect with spirituality to gain knowledge, so when the land speaks, one is able to absorb the knowledge and apply and reciprocate in return. (Interview, November 1, 2018)

A reimagining of a rich new tapestry means for the women is getting back to the land through petitioning for land leases and cultivating indigenous foods to reintroduce nourishing foods for the ‘ohana. Currently, Hawai ‘i is not self-sufficient in food, and the people who suffer most are the Kānaka. As I visited many parts of O ‘ahu, and interviewed women, especially, in the east and the west regions, where there is a high density of Kānaka populations, poverty and hunger were apparent. Yet, women’s resiliency shows their determination to succeed in looking after their ‘ohana by looking to kūpuna knowledge. The purpose behind all of the revitalization projects is not just teaching food cultivation but honoring kūpuna knowledge by making sure the ‘ohana never lives hungry. In this regard, any foods grown, and fish harvested are always shared

with each of the local communities. This collective aloha (*love*) for the ‘ohana and unbridled kuleana to ‘āina is the ultimate story that resonated loudest among all women.

Implication to Practice and Moving Beyond

In my role of doing this research, I feel that my task is to offer a way to see and appreciate kānaka experience from their point of view, not necessarily through an objective analysis of an empirical lens but rather from the subjective lens of the kānaka as it applies to their thoughts and values that make sense to their place and space and histories and experiences. This is because as Meyer (2013) says, in Kānaka worldview, there are no separations between people, environment, and spirit. In my research journey, I have discovered that there are two main research directions. They are kānaka and empirical, and they are not mutually exclusive or in competition with each other, but they both have much to offer in advancing the understanding of Kānaka worldviews to *decolonize* indigeneity. This requires opening one’s self to new paradigms to inform new thought processes and praxis to continue with future work. As I mentioned in one of my articles, for me, engaging in this type of research is a way to invite other scholars to deepen the conversations and analysis surrounding indigeneity. When we interview people and engage in conversations, with a view to writing about them and their stories, we enter into their lives. In that process, it is essential that we build relationships and trust so when we unfold *our stories about them*, these stories resonate *true* to the *voices* of the interviewees. When we gather voices and their emotions from these stories and articulate them in a body of work such as this, we in a way create opportunities to intervene in academic, social and political settings to further social transformations through dialogs however uncomfortable they may be at times. However, to be engaged in these dialogs are an important part of engaging in ethical and moral research because they create understandings and appreciation for worldviews that are

different than our own. Perhaps, in the long run, these engaged discussions will bring us to new understandings that may play a salient role in guiding non-indigenous researchers such as myself and audiences into honoring the health and well-being of the Kānaka as well as that of all indigenous peoples around the world for their need for cultural sovereignty.

APPENDIX

Renuka Mahari de Silva, 2017

Native Hawaiian Women

For IRB: Interview Questions

1. What is your understanding of personal health and well-being?
2. What do you know about traditional (Native and Indigenous Hawaiian) knowledge systems and how were these knowledge systems connected women to the land or spirituality? What was the meaning of spirituality in the olden days and what is your understanding of it now? Does spirituality play a role in your life now?
3. How might there be a difference between the traditional (Native and Indigenous Hawaiian) understanding of health and well-being and the contemporary understanding of it? How is it different and how is it similar? Alternatively, are there any similarities at all in your mind?
4. How do you see access to traditional food cultivation and preparation as an aspect to living and nourishing Hawaiian communities?

5. Indigenous epistemology and resilience; the ancestral foods are coming back to the islands as allies to help reverse the damage produced by centuries of historical trauma and colonial violence: What would be your response to this statement?

6. What will help foster a supportive network of solutions-oriented humans and projects that inspire women's health and well-being and a food sovereignty movement that is currently happening in the Hawaiian Islands, particularly in O'ahu?

7. What are some of the traditional stories you have heard and why were these stories important? How were these stories passed down? Why was it important for people to know these stories? What impact did the occupation of the Hawaiian Islands have on Native and Indigenous stories and storytelling?

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