NAVIGATING IDENTITIES: THE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF ETHNIC IDENTITY FOR SECOND GENERATION TONGAN AMERICANS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the process of ethnic identity construction and maintenance for second generation Tongan Americans born in the U.S. It also examines the dichotomy of collectivist goals vs. individualist goals and the way these attitude and practices contribute to the ethnic identity construction and maintenance process. Twelve in-depth interviews were completed and analyzed through qualitative systematic coding methods. Participants were located through personal social connections and snowball sampling. These methods revealed six major themes in the narratives that contribute to the ethnic identity formation and maintenance process: family influence, gender roles and expectations, perceptions of identity, social groups, cultural anchors, and the use of kava on contributing to the maintenance and construction of a Tongan ethnic identity. These themes all intersect and provide a better understanding of the ethnic identity construction and maintenance process for second generation Tongan Americans.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW, AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Immigration has played an important role throughout American history, and this work focuses on one of many immigrant groups. While Tonga is a tiny nation, in terms of geography and population size, interviews with diasporic Tongans highlight the universal challenges for young adults of defining identity. The influx of Tongans to the USA has created a complex terrain for these individuals who navigate contemporary challenges in the US with traditional Tongan values, and in the case of the second generation Tongan Americans considered here, some new strategies are applied, as described in this study.

This research began with a qualitative research course, when I wrote a paper on the ethnic identity of biracial Japanese/white Americans. This preliminary study sparked curiosity about how other group’s develop and maintain an ethnic identity. Because I am surrounded by Tongan community members, who are a part of my everyday life, I deal daily with Tongan views, practices, and attitudes. In this way, my personal life sparked a desire to better understand the process of identity formation for second generation Tongan Americans. Before moving on to the details of this study, first I present some information about this immigrant group.

There are more Tongans living outside of Tonga than in the country itself with 103,036 people recorded in the Tongan Government Census 2011 living in the country and an estimated 216,000 Tongans living abroad (Kingdom of Tonga Department of Statistics). Many of these families have migrated to the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. According to the New Zealand department of statistics concerning the fastest growing immigrant populations to the country, “The fastest rate of growth was in the Tongan community, which grew more than threefold between 1986 and 2006 from 13,600 to over 50,500” (New Zealand Statistics Office).

According to the U.S. 2010 census data there are approximately 57,000 Tongans living in
the United States (2010 U.S. Census). In the U.S., migrants from Tonga tend to settle in areas that have high Tongan populations, the 2010 U.S. census shows the main Tongan populations are found in 3 states: California (40%), Utah (23.1%), and Hawai‘i (14.1%). The influx of the Tongan American population has created an interesting space for young Tongan Americans who have to navigate between asserting and being assigned identities such as Tongan/American/Pacific Islander/ethnic minority. This study explores the construction and maintenance of a Tongan ethnic identity for these individuals to better understand the process of how these identities are created for this population.

To examine this process for second generation Tongan Americans, I have investigated the different factors that contribute to *anga fakatonga*, the Tongan way of life. *Anga fakatonga* is an important component for understanding Tongan identity formation and maintenance. Helen Morton Lee (2003) explains, “this concept encompasses all values, beliefs, and practices that are regarded as elements of Tongan ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’” (2). Understanding *anga fakatonga*, by that definition, is a great concept to decipher how individuals utilize this concept in their lives and in what ways it assists in the creation of their individual Tongan identity.

The American Tongan community and familial relationships are collective institutions based on collective principles. In her writings on collectivism, Willis (2012) states, “Collectivism is a cultural value in which the extended family is the central concept, and the needs of an individual family member are subordinate to a sense of family responsibilities” (202). This is quite different in comparison to the Western model of identity, which is supported by an ethic of individualism rather than the collective (Wurtzburg 2004). By using the dichotomy of collectivism and individualism to understand ethnic identity formation it provides a way to better understand the development and maintenance of a second generation Tongan American
identity where individualism and collectivism values often collide.

This study attempts to record different attitudes concerning Tongan identity: stigmas that are attached to being Tongan/non-Tongan/American by those inside and outside of their community; the tools individuals use to construct and maintain an ethnic identity; gender differences in identity formation; social groups that assist respondents in reinforcing or creating a Tongan identity; and the role that collectivism and individualism has on the construction and maintenance of ethnic identity for these participants. By inquiring about all of these components, this research examines how second generation Tongan Americans create, maintain and navigate their Tongan ethnic identity.

Background Information and Literature Review:

**Ethnic identity construction**

Although the U.S. is often referred to as a diverse “melting pot” of ethnicities, it is a nation where, “boundaries, identities, and cultures, are negotiated, defined, and produced through social interaction inside and outside ethnic communities” rather than all melting into one (Nagel 1994:153). This section begins with an overview of theorists who have conceptualized the construction of an ethnic identity. The meaning and location of these boundaries, identities, and cultures are constantly being negotiated, changed, and rejuvenated by members of ethnic groups; as well as by outside spectators (Nagel 1994). This can be seen as a process of ever-changing social construction of ethnic identity. Identities are fluid, and can be defined at many different levels from the individual at the lowest tier to the nation or government at the opposite end of the spectrum.

Many theories have been developed to understand the process of ethnic identity
formation including the primordial and circumstantial models. The primordial model showcases that ethnic ties and identity is given at birth, fixed and unchanging (Horowitz 1985). In contrast, circumstantialism argues that identities are formed by circumstances and contexts that ethnic groups find themselves in, such as social and historical circumstances that may increase or decrease the salience of the group or individual identity (Cornell and Hartmann 2007).

Neither of these models on their own can adequately encompass how ethnic identities are formed. A combined approach, known as constructionism has been used in this study to investigate the creation of Tongan ethnic identity. The constructionist approach, “focuses on the ways ethnic and racial identities are built, rebuilt, and sometimes dismantled over time. . . it accepts the fundamental validity of circumstantialism, while attempting to retain the insights of primordialism, but it adds to them a large dose of activism: the contribution groups make to creating and shaping their own—and others identities” (Cornell and Hartmann 2006:6).

Identity construction involves active responses to the circumstances that individuals and groups experience. These responses are guided by preconceptions, dispositions, and agendas (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). Boundaries are made to distinguish between group members and non-group members. These dividing lines can be things such as physical appearance, cultural practices, and language. The construction of an identity involves assertion or assignment of the meaning of these boundaries for different ethnic groups. The identity construction process involves aspects of both assigned and asserted versions of identity (Cornell and Hartmann 2007).

This is a complicated process and different for every individual, generation, and location. Nagel (1994) explains, “groups construct their cultures in many ways which involve mainly the reconstruction of historical culture, and the construction of new culture. . . cultural construction and reconstruction are ongoing group tasks in which new and renovated cultural symbols,
activities, and materials are continually being added to and removed from existing cultural repertoires” (162).

Cornell and Hartmann (2007) have made two distinctions between what they call “thick” (comprehensive identities) and “thin” (less comprehensive identities), and between “more assigned” and “more asserted” identities. Assigned and thick: identity organizes virtually every aspect of daily life and action; Assigned and thin: assigned an identity by others, but pay little attention and organize themselves in terms of their own created unassigned identity; Asserted and thick: asserted identity that is a crucial part of self concept and organizes much of their life and action; Asserted and thin: asserted originally, but increasingly organizes less and less of daily life (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). The concepts of “thick” and “thin” ethnicities are useful in understanding the importance of an ethnic identity in individuals’ lives.

Mead explains in his discussion of the self that, “the self is not so much a substance as a process in which then conversation of gestures has been internalized within in an organic form” (Mead 1974:178). Socialization into a culture or ethnicity must be internalized within individuals. He goes on to say, “this process does not exist for itself, but is simply a phase of the whole organization of which the individual is a part” (Mead 1974:178). Thus individuals are socialized into the “organization” of their specific ethnic groups and develop an ethnic identity. Individual conceptions of their personal ethnic identities have been shown to be changeable and situational (Nagel 1994). Each ethnic group in the United States has, “a different history, cultural heritage, and status within contemporary society; and these differences are likely to influence a range of developmental processes and outcomes” (Phinney and Chavira 1995:32).

The constructional approach assumes that ethnic identities adjust through location and time, circumstances of social conditions, and through group members’ reconstructions and
constructions of these identities. This is done by negotiating boundaries, asserting meaning, inferring upon the past, and through the power that is attached to the identities of others and ourselves whether asserted or assigned. Ethnic identities are not formed by action or circumstance alone, but rather through the interface of the two (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). Tongan people who have immigrated to the United States are no exception to this philosophy. This allows a closer look at the different cultural symbols, activities, and materials that this group uses to create and maintain a Tongan ethnic identity in America.

**Tongan Ethnic Identity**

Tongan culture includes many facets that play a role in the construction of one’s ethnic identity, many of which fall outside of the scope of this study. I will concentrate on a few key factors that contribute to the construction of a Tongan identity for children born in the U.S. to Tongan immigrant parents. The material presented here includes the Tongan diaspora, the role stigma plays, gender expectations, family influences, religious institutions, and socioeconomic status. It is important to understand how these different factors interact, perpetuate, and form a personal definition of what *anga fakatonga*, or the Tongan way means. *Anga fakatonga* embodies the central values of love, respect, and cooperation. This “concept embraces all that is said to be Tongan in values and behavior and is therefore often translated as ‘culture’ or ‘tradition’” (Morton 1993:11).

Linnekin & Poyer write, “For Pacific Islanders, much of what determines a person’s behavior, feelings, and self-perception is environmental, consisting in the physical and social relationships that nurture a growing child and form the context in which an adult acts. This concept of person as a node of social relationships profoundly informs such critical Oceanic institutions as kinship, adoption, land rights, and title systems” (1990:7). Tongan culture places a
great significance on maintaining and keeping up these social relationships. Tevita Ka‘ili (2005) discussed in his research the concept of tauhi vā, which he defined as, “the Tongan value and practice of keeping good relations with kin and friends. It is also thought of as a commitment to sustain harmonious social relations with kin and kin-like members” (92).

By exploring the experiences and attitudes of participants, it is revealed thatanga fakatonga can mean many things to different people. Just as their conception of identity is fluid, the role and understanding ofanga fakatonga can be adapted differently from person to person, and from family to family. I will incorporate this into my study to discover the role ofanga fakatonga in the formation of identity for my respondents. To understand Tongan ethnic identity in America a closer look needs to be taken at how this group began to form in America by discussing the Pacific diaspora.

**Pacific Diaspora**

The diaspora of Tongans to the United States is a relatively recent phenomena, with the majority of them migrating in the 1960s (Morton 1993). The population of Tongans in the U.S. continues to increase with population growth in increasing 48% from 2000 (12,110) to 2010 (EPIC 2014 report). As stated previously, the Tongan population outside of Tonga is larger than that found in the country itself. Morton (1998) explains, “conditions in Tonga, such as land shortage, unemployment, and low wages, combined with the increasing cost of living in Tonga and the perceived opportunities for material and educational advancement in Western nations, create a situation that makes emigration imperative for many Tongans” (7). Migrant Tongans maintain strong relationships with kin in Tonga and other areas, through communication and financial support. This migration provides families in Tonga with prestige through education, increased mobility, and cash remittances that have become essential for island families to meet their local
obligations (Small 1997). These remittances can be a source of conflict for many second generation Tongan Americans, who have issues with sending money back to Tonga to people whom they have never met. This conflict will be discussed in detail in a later section.

Similar to migration of individuals from various nations to new locations, Tongans had to learn to adapt and to hold on to their culture simultaneously in their new environment. This relocation can create serious issues of balance. Linnekin & Poyer explain, “throughout Oceania: that people can voluntarily shift their social identities, that a person can maintain more than one identity simultaneously, and that behavior attributes – such as residence, language, dress, participation in exchanges – are not only significant markers but are also effective determinants of identity” (1990:9).

Tongan migrant families may face greater challenges than other minority groups as they strive to balance the expectations of children in their new society with those of their native country (Christiansen 2000; Franklin 2003; Mavoa et al. 2003). They may adapt to their new society or strive to hold on tighter to the traditions of Tonga (Small 2011). These migrants bring with them their ethnic identities and expectations that they have for their children as Tongans (Small 2011). Their identities are an evolving in their new surroundings as they balance their ethnic identity expectations for themselves and their children as Tongans with the American values and customs (Morton 1993).

The balancing act that these individuals must perform between Western modernity and Tongan tradition may cause conflict. For example, “everyday life in the city or suburbs does not always gel with cultural practices (brought over) from the islands” (Franklin 2003:482). This can create an impetus for parents to alter or intensify their expectations for their children, and the ways in which they interact with them (Mavoa et al. 2003). The issue of Tongan modernity must
also be addressed.

Besnier (2011) explains, “Tonga’s modernity since the 1960s has been intertwined with diasporic dispersal. Little takes place in Tonga without reference to Tongan communities around the Pacific Basin who constitute both a secondary audience for all social action and points of contact between Tongan and the rest of the world” (74). There is an intertwining of the changes modernity brings to those who have migrated or are descendants of migrants and those who still remain in Tonga. This connection may fall outside of the scope of this study but the changes that modernity brings in and outside of Tonga contributes to the conception and creation of a Tongan ethnic identity. Family connections are important across the sea as well in one’s own home. One of the foundational locations for ethnic identity is in the home, which leads to the discussion of family contributions to ethnic identity.

*Family Contributions to Identity Formation*

The home and the family are important in the formation of an ethnic identity for children of migrant parents (Christiansen 2000; Franklin 2003; Mavoa et al. 2003). The home is the primary location where an identity can be reinforced or discouraged. In all societies, children become aware of their expected roles by observing and interacting with more expert members of their group, in this case, their older family members. Mavoa et al. expand on this process, “in this way, children begin to demonstrate context-appropriate behavior that reflects the expectations of family members and wider communities” (2003:548).

Cultural traditions may also vary between different families. Parents, when teaching their children, can make choices about which aspects of *anga fakatonga* they will keep and which they will modify or reject (Morton 1993). Morton explains, “the more closely those adults wish to adhere to *anga fakatonga* the greater the likelihood of children being expected to comply
unquestioningly” (Morton 1993:12). Of course not all children comply or wish to continue the traditions of their parents. Descendants of immigrants are presented with what Gans (2009) refers to as the notion of ethnic options. He argues that these later descendants have some choice in the ethnicity with which they identify and in what way they choose to do so. Franklin (2003) suggests that the younger generations of various diaspora do not automatically identify with the cultural conventions and identifications of their parents’ generation. He states, “despite countless reiterations of ‘traditional’ notions of respect and ‘pride’ combined with Christian moral values and/or Tongan/Samoan forms of obligation, all these are regarded as malleable to some extent” (Franklin 2003:482).

The use of physical punishment can be a way for parents to reinforce *anga fakatonga* in the home. Physical punishments are frequently used in attempts to teach and enforce *anga fakatonga* so much so that she also argues that physical punishment has itself become incorporated into people’s understanding of *anga fakatonga* (Morton 1993). Discipline, rules and punishments, along with gender bias will be further discussed in the findings section.

Language is a very important tool in obtaining and maintaining a tie to culture for migrants and decedents of migrants. Some Tongan households in America use Tongan as the primary language spoken at home. Children learn English from their older siblings and at school (Mavoa et al. 2003). The knowledge of language can be embraced or rejected by children who are trying to assimilate into American culture. Parents often enforce a Tongan only policy at home to reinforce *anga fakatonga*. In some instances, rebellious children would go to their rooms and whisper English to each other (Mavoa et al. 2003). The knowledge of *lea fakatonga*, or Tongan language, is an important anchor to culture. This knowledge can create a sense of pride and inclusiveness among those whom speak Tongan and exclusion for those who do not...
The family is where Tongan children are taught their “role” in the family and what is expected of them. In order to be Tongan and stay Tongan in America there are certain role expectations, which Cathy Small (2011:173) explains:

Staying “Tongan” means maintaining one’s identity as a Tongan but more important, it also means thinking and behaving in a Tongan manner – what Tongans call the “Tongan Way” (anga fakatonga) You should help your family and maintain an attitude of love and generosity toward them. You should know your “place” – high and low within the social network and use your full resources to demonstrate you obligations to others. This includes having respect for your father’s sisters and love for your brother’s children. There should be “shame” between brothers and sisters, respect between children and fathers, love between children and mothers. You should feel an obligation to take care of your grandparents.

These actions and roles of anga fakatonga she is describing can all fall under the category of adhering to faka ‘apa ‘apa. The concept of faka ‘apa ‘apa, or respect is an important tool in teaching and socializing children into anga fakatonga. Faka ‘apa ‘apa is a term that can apply to a variety of different situations and behaviors, when certain things are forbidden, or tapu, in family interactions (Morton Lee 2003). Faka ‘apa ‘apa can apply to many settings; it can mean respect for elders or people who hold positions of authority. In the home it establishes tapu gender lines and boundaries that siblings of the opposite sex are not to cross with one another. For example faka ‘apa ‘apa puts an emphasis on the separation and avoidance of brothers and sisters (Small 2011). A sister is not permitted to enter her bother’s room, watch movies with her male siblings, or go to the same parties. (Morton 1996). This leads me to the discussion of Tongan female roles.

**Tongan Gender roles, Patriarchy and Identity:**

Gender is a broad topic. For the purposes of my research I focus on the notion of gender as a “performative act” (de Beauvoir 2011; Mead 1974; Butler 1990; Skull 2004) as well as a social construction that contributes to identity. The role that patriarchy plays in the formation of
identity is also a vital one that aids in the exploration of this process.

Butler (1990) shares in her research how gender is the unwitting product that is jointly created by both men and women as they perform their respective gender roles. Butler states, “the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. . . the authors of gender become entranced by their own fictions whereby the construction compels one’s belief in its necessity and naturalness” (1990:273).

Creating Tongan identity can vary by gender. Tongan society has specific and strict gender roles and expectations. By performing these roles it concurrently reifies and sanctions them (Scull 2004). Tongan culture places great significance on respect of women. For example, “The institution of fahu, once the core of ancient hierarchy, is now espoused by commoner families, each of whom now elects their fahu for family ceremonies” (James 1992:74). Customarily, a sister and her children were fahu over her brother and his children. This meant that they were “above the law” or tapu (rules and boundaries used in adhering to custom of faka’apa’apa) to her brother and his descendent, thus making her the mahekitanga (father’s sister) of her brother’s children (James 1992). Historically and still often practiced today a father’s sister (especially oldest sister) was ranked superior to her brother, as was her children ranker higher to her brother’s children (Ward Gailey 1987). Sometimes the fahu is chosen from a more senior generation but is almost always a woman. James explains, “the fahu continues to play an important ritual role in the naming of children, first birthday celebrations, marriage and funeral ceremonies” (1992:237). This includes and is not limited to receiving special recognition, gifts or presentations of respect at family functions, such as reunions, weddings and funerals.

Although certain women are placed in respected positions (fahu), as is the case in many societies, women also occupy the domestic sphere. Morton stated, “ideally, females should stay
at home and do the indoor, ‘clean’ work while males do the outside, ‘dirty’ work and have more freedom of movement away from the home” (1993:11). In Cathy Small’s (2011) study, she tells the story of Palu who had frustrations with expected Tongan female gender roles by her older siblings. She explains, “I was always mad because they didn't really do anything and they always tell Latu [younger sister] to do this, do that, wash their clothes . . . and it wasn't right for me” (Small 2011:92).

Another gendered tradition that is significant to Tongan identity is the handling, production and distribution of Tongan textiles such as _ngatu_ (tapa cloth made from the bark of mulberry trees) and _fala_ (fine woven mats), which are a heavily female cultural tradition. These textiles and other handicrafts, such as knitted blankets and elaborate hand sewn quilts, are referred to as _koloa fakatonga_ or simply _koloa_. Addo and Besnier (2008) explain, “For people across the social spectrum, _koloa faka-Tonga_ is an important source of stored wealth and affords them the appearance of meeting the material demands of both traditional and modern life” (50). Women who can and do produce these types of valuables are also held in high regard as upholders of Tongan tradition (Addo and Besnier 2008). The making and distributing of these handicrafts at various different cultural celebrations can be viewed as an expression of Tongan identity, especially for women (Addo and Besnier 2008).

There is also a great emphasis on appropriate standards of appearance that center around demonstrating modesty for both men and women. Men traditionally in Tonga are not seen walking around in public without a shirt as is common in many parts of the world. It is viewed as disrespectful in Tongan culture and is actually illegal in Tonga to be shirtless in public areas (Tongan Ministry of Information and Communications 2013). For women, these standards include the way they dress, talk and act. Some of the choices that migrant parents face include, as
Morton explains, “the extent of freedom to allow children, especially girls; whether to let girls cut their hair, shave their legs, pierce their ears, and do other ‘palangi things’; whether to keep to the Tongan sexual division of labor with regard to household chores” (1993:13). These attitudes can have a significant push back by the daughters of Tongan migrants. Changing roles of gender and sexuality can create conflict within homes and families. It is useful to view these practices and restrictions through the lens of patriarchy.

Bennett (2006) defines patriarchy as, “a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men – by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male” (55). Patriarchy is a gender regime that determines male and female roles and relationships as well as the hierarchy between the gender categories (Herzog and Yahia-Younis 2007). The Tongan society is a patriarchal one that is defining roles for females and males with rules, restrictions and strict cultural gender expectations. The practice of faka’apa’apa is one example of patriarchy in Tongan families as well as the female standards of appearance listed above.

This system includes the cultural ideas about men and women that create the structure for their social lives and what Johnson (2006) describes as the, “unequal distribution of power, rewards and resources that underlies privilege and oppression” (38). Patriarchal patterns in gender relations are shaped typically by pre-diaspora cultural beliefs of immigrant families, which they bring with them when immigrating (Lin 2009).

Kandiyoti (1988) explained the notion of "bargaining with patriarchy" where men and women use their resources to negotiate and maximize power options in the patriarchal structure of rules that guide and constrain gender relations (Kibria 1990). The bargaining is unequal, while
patriarchy is maintained, women's power and options will be less than those of men in the same group (Kibria 1990; Kandiyoti 1988). This is useful when looking at the gender roles and expectations of second generation Tongan Americans and the ways that they are “bargaining with patriarchy”.

Male gender roles in Tongan society and the Tongan American community also are significant in the formation and maintenance of ethnic identity. Jackson Katz made the following observation that, “what is considered masculine or manly is ever shifting and contingent on a constellation of economic, social, political, and historical forces” (2012:6). Tongan men have their own set of expected roles and obligations in their families and communities. Many things can determine what is expected and perceptions of being a “real man” in the Tongan community. Areas of masculinity assertion and stages to perform male identity are often through sports, gangs, body image, and consumption of kava. Thus athlete, provider, and gangster are just a few examples of roles that many Tongan American men/boys are often expected to fill and sometimes must break away from (Franklin 2003). Joseph Esser (2011) in his research on Tonga transnational’s discussed the construction of gang identities, masculinity, and youth culture among Tongan male adolescents. He argued that, “young people’s positions in socially, racially, and economically marginalized communities in the United States are generative of certain discourses of identity” (113). Tongan males face conflicting expectations of what it means to be a man from both insiders and outsiders. I will later discuss this in the stigmatizing attitudes and stereotype section.

There is a growing amount of literature surrounding *tangata fakafefine*, literally translated to “a man behaving like a woman” (James 1994). This label was often assigned to males who preferred women’s work. The modern term more commonly used today is *fakaleiti*
(like a lady), which refers to a much wider range of behavior and people, including homosexuality, those who are transgendered, and drag queen beauty contests and cabarets (Besnier 2002; James 1983; James 1994; MacFarlane 1983; Whitehead 1981). This is a significant area of study that intersects with the study of Tongan gender roles and identity that is due mention but falls outside the scope of this study.

This study explores how Tongan traditional gender roles and expectations in the family and Tongan community contribute to the formation of an ethnic identity, as well as the ways patriarchy shapes and defines identity. It also addresses the conflicting attitudes with what is considered traditional vs. conforming to American society. By looking at these issues, the ways the respondents choose to perform their identities as both men and women can be better understood.

**Stigmatizing attitudes and Stereotypes**

Tongan Americans are often accused of being *fie palangi* (wanting to be white/not wanting to follow *anga fakatonga*) when deviating from traditional cultural practices or engaging in activities perceived to be reserved for whites or foreigners. This may be due to the notion that being *fie palangi* holds a negative connotation, thus those accused are stigmatized as not being a “real Tongan”. This can be a source of conflict within families between different generations. Morton writes, “the culture gap between successive generations frequently forces family members to negotiate the differences between ‘the palangi [western] way’ and anga fakatonga, although ‘negotiate’ is a rather euphemistic term for the battles that can occur” (1998:12).

Erving Goffman (1963) explains that, “the term stigma and its synonyms conceal a double perspective: does the stigmatized individual assume his differentness is known about already or is evident on the spot, or does he assume it is neither known about by those present
nor immediately perceivable by them” (4). This stigma can create uneasiness for the targeted individual. A technique used by those who carry a stigma is information control when, “individuals conceal or obliterate signs that have come to be stigma symbols” (Goffman 1963:92). When an individual is perceived as being *fie palangi* they may try to emphasize their Tongan identity by suppressing or controlling the information about certain activities they perform or attitudes that they have to those who may be challenging their ethnic identity. Goffman explains this in his statement, “where the stigma is nicely invisible and known only to the person who possesses it, who tells no one, then here again is the matter of minor concern in the study of passing” (1963:73).

The opposite can also be said when trying to maintain a positive American identity. Whether they choose to try and emulate an American identity or a Tongan one, many Tongans feel that they may be stigmatized by negative stereotypes that they wish to avoid. In Franklin’s (2003) study she discussed the resistance of individuals to being, “seen as gangstas and dole-bludgers and/or overstayers or subject to racial discrimination in the USA” (741).

Not only do these second generation Tongans face being stereotyped and stigmatized by outsiders of their ethnic group, but they may also be labeled and ridiculed by members of their own ethnic community and perhaps even by the perceptions or misconceptions they hold of themselves. Stereotypes and stigmas may lead to members of this ethnic group trying to assert their ethnicity in superficial ways or choosing to be selective about where and when to assert these identities that leads me to the discussion of cultural mirroring, symbolic and recreational identity.
Cultural Mirroring, Symbolic and Recreational Identity

In the Tongan gender roles and identity section above, I discussed gender and identity though the perspective of being a performance (de Beauvoir 2011; Mead 1974; Butler 1990; Skull 2004). In a much more literal example of identity performance, Dorinne Kondo (1997) discusses the performance of ethnic identity in theater. Her research focused on the stage as a site for challenging identity roles, exemplified by the Asian and Asian-American actors and models of her research, who used this platform to challenge existing stereotypes of their cultures and ethnicities (Skull 2004).

In Labrador’s (2002) work on Filipino identity in a performance series at the University of Hawai‘i, he introduces the concept of “cultural mirroring”. This is done by an ethnic community performing a reflective understanding of it self. He explained, “The ‘mirroring’ effected in the cultural production points to a process of creating and understanding a collective sense of self though self representation and public performance. The students construct and perform their own definitions of themselves and, in turn they become what and who they (re)present” (297). He warns that these performances of identity images can become distorted by the reflections being contradictory, reversals, exaggerations and even lies. This concept not only applies to the performing arts but to the identities that people perform everyday. The “cultural mirror” can be used to help gain a greater understanding of their ethnic identity. The mirrored image is not always a clear reflection of culture as it can often become manipulated or distorted (Labrador 2002).

Haunani-Kay Trask (1993) describes in her work on Native Hawaiian culture through the idea of participating in “recreational culture”. This is defined as, “situations in which the subject's everyday lived experience does not mirror that of their traditional culture” (Christiansen
Gans discusses the concept of "symbolic ethnicity," which is "characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior" (Gans 1979:205). This can relate to experiences of children who are second generation Americans. Christiansen shares, “I grew up in a displaced Polynesian community where access to traditional ways was limited to our compliance with the dominant view of Polynesia as ‘paradise’” (2000:190). This was illustrated by her participation in Polynesian youth dance groups to entertain conventions or private parties that just presented superficial stereotypical ideas of what the culture represented. Tongans in America today are being brought up in these “displaced Polynesian Communities”. The superficial participation in cultural activities she shared can be defined as a symbolic ethnicity and mirrors the lives of Tongan youth in America today.

**Kava and Ethnic Identity**

Another cultural practice that has evolved and is seen by some as recreational, symbolic or even superficial is the use of kava in America. Kava, known by a variety of names, is a mixture of water and the dried, powdered root of the pepper tree, *Piper methysticum*. Originally in Polynesia it was chewed and spat into a bowl where it was mixed with water and served in folded leaf or coconut cups. Kava has been used throughout Polynesia and when, “taken in small amounts has a mild tranquilizing effect which sets a mood of amiability. . . dreamy exhalation is a term which has been applied to kava intoxication” (Lemert 1967:333).

Historically kava was used in various formal settings and ceremonies between chiefs, nobles and commoners. The ritual beverage was consumed in forums to handle land ownership, courtship, and marriage. (Lemert 1967; Vakalahi 2012). A young female virgin from the village
where the ceremony took place served men the kava. She was called the *tou’a*. Vakalahi (2012) explains, “the kava ritual has survived perhaps three or four centuries and the Tongan people have kept the tradition. During kava drinking one hears stories, singing of the old Tongan love songs, old folks' songs and gossip” (13).

In this research I focus on the social, more informal use of kava used today in America. There are two main contexts for kava drinking: the private *faikava* and the *kalapu kava-Tonga* 'kava club' (Feldman 1980). Young single girls still act as the *tou’a*, which will be discussed in greater detail in the discussion chapter. The shift from ceremonial kava drinking to social drinking clubs is also evident in second generation Tongan Americans. The use of kava for these individuals perhaps is a source of cultural pride or a construction site to maintain and establish a Tongan ethnic identity.

Kava clubs also serve a financial capacity in the Tongan community. They have fundraisers for local community centers, create savings pools for their members to use for travel or business creation, and provide scholarships (Vaden 1997). Monetary donations inside and outside of the family are an issue in the Tongan community. Often traditional protocol requires monetary gifts which can be a cause of conflict for some second generation Tongan Americans. This will be further discussed when exploring the role of socioeconomic status and Tongan identity.

*Socioeconomic Status and Tongan Identity:*

Poverty and socioeconomic status can influence development of an ethnic identity (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Tongans had a poverty rate of 19.5%, with the reported Median Family Income: 1999 of $46,261. The 2014 EPIC report documented that 47% of Tongan households in the U.S. are classified as low-income. This
socioeconomic status is apparent in the ethnic group’s occupational concentrations. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) explain that, “many societies have what amounts to an ethnic or racial division of labor in which certain occupation, industries or kinds of work have become, for a time at least, the providence of a particular group” (183). For example, many Tongans work in blue collar jobs, such as meat packing, yard work, or manual labor.

High residential concentrations can assist in maintaining an ethnic identity, such as Tongan. Income and economic status may play a role in residential concentrations because members of ethnic groups moving to certain cities to take advantage of a specific type of labor often end up in neighborhood concentrations close to the desired places of employment (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). This was examined in my study to understand the role of socioeconomic status and the construction of ethnic identity for my respondents.

The socioeconomic status of families can have an impact on the prevalence and importance of *anga fakatonga* in the home. Like many other migrants, parents are often busy and struggling with poverty. Despite improvements in recent years, many Pacific Island communities are overrepresented in low-wage jobs and/or ‘under-achieving’ populations in the U.S., Australia and New Zealand (Franklin 2003). Rather than telling children traditional Tongan folklore, migrant Tongan parents tend to tell stories of their own childhoods, primarily to illustrate the advantages that their children enjoy in comparison (Morton 1993). Due to the struggle with poverty and other social problems these parents face, some do not actively teach their children *anga fakatonga* (Franklin 2003). For example the emphasis of gender separation and boundary *tapu* enforced in living *faka 'apa 'apa* with male and female siblings not being permitted to go in each other’s rooms may not be possible if families cannot afford homes with the size to accommodate this separation (Morton Lee 2003).
Sending remittances to family members in Tonga is common for many Tongan families in the U.S. Cathy Small (2011) shares that in 1991 a study found that as much as 42% of total household income in Tonga was from overseas relatives’ remittances. This practice has been intertwined with the concept of fatongia, or obligation to kin (Morton Lee 2003). A term that is associated with remittances is kavenga, which literally translates into “burden or load” and it is used in this context as a familial and cultural obligation (Morton Lee 2003). For many families kavenga and remittances can be burdensome sources of conflict when money is sent away to Tonga for a funeral, wedding, graduation, or other family events, and the American children experience hardship.

Kavenga financial obligations are not solely reserved for island family members, but rather for any family event such as a wedding, graduation, birthday, or funeral, when money is given to relatives. Funds may be sent to relatives in the American states as well as overseas. This can be a source of conflict for many second generation Tongan Americans, who do not understand or agree with the cultural and familial obligation of giving such money offerings to people whom they have perhaps never met. It seems inappropriate to them not to take care of immediate family needs before fulfilling outside obligations (Morton Lee 2004).

There is a greater number of “traditional” Tongan events in America then in Tonga itself, with a much more elaborate display of traditional wealth. The American events provide a place for Tongan Americans to showcase their generosity and status, which often turns into a competition of who can give more (Small 2011). Often people donate beyond their means for the sake of posturing and establishing status, which can negatively impact family finances and build resentment amongst the younger generation. Kavenga and other obligations also occur in settings outside of the family, primarily the church.
Religion and Identity

Anga Fakatonga and Christianity can seem bound together and inseparable for several reasons (Morton Lee 2003). Tonga as a nation is 99% Christian (Kingdom of Tonga, Department of Statistics), including many different Christian denominations. When Tongans migrated to the United States, branches of their various churches migrated to America along with them. Numerous Tongan congregations can be found in the U.S. including Methodists, Wesleyans, Latter-day Saints, Catholics, and many others. In these congregations, hymns, sermons and various other activities are all conducted in Tongan (Morton Lee 2003; Vakalahi 2012).

These churches are institutions that help reinforce Tongan culture and identity. This is done by, “hosting formal debates, seminars, camps, and discussions with invited speakers, during all of which participants self-consciously reaffirm, contest, and refashion aspects of ‘the Tongan way’” (Morton 1993:13). Children participate in church programs where they perform traditional Tongan dance numbers, sing in Tongan, and recite long biblical scriptures in Tongan in front of their congregations (Morton 1993). Thus organized religion can be seen as a stage for the display and formation of a Tongan ethnic identity.

For some Tongans in America religious and cultural practice can be another source of conflict (Morton Lee 2003). The separation of church and culture has and can occur across all denominations. Morton Lee explains this is true for some religions more than others. In one of her examples, she states, “many Tongans claim that Mormons are most likely to use their religious beliefs to challenge Tongan beliefs and practices.” Mormons, members of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or LDS have found ways to maintain their culture by upholding and valuing aspects of anga fakatonga that do not conflict with their religious beliefs, such as faka’apa’apa between brothers and sisters (Gordon 1990). Although religious beliefs have
caused them to remove themselves from participating in certain cultural practices and protocols such as partaking in kava, giving of fakapale (money for performers) in church buildings, and traditional long funerals. In this manner, LDS religious beliefs may put Tongans in a situation where they feel a need to choose between church culture and Tongan culture.

Collectivism and Individualism:

In the previous section, several different aspects of Tongan Americans lives have been presented, including: family, gender, language, socioeconomic status, religion, stigmatizing attitudes and stereotypes, cultural mirroring, symbolic and recreational identity. These all play a part in the formation and maintenance of a Tongan ethnic identity for second generation Americans. To better understand the intersection of these various components I am going to utilize the concepts of collectivism and individualism.

As stated by Willis, “collectivism is a cultural value in which the extended family is the central concept, and the needs of an individual family member are subordinate to a sense of family responsibilities” (2012:202). Collectivism puts greater social emphasis on working together in a manner that nurtures a group goal, rather than that of the individuals within the group (Wurtzburg 2004). Linnekin & Poyer observed, “personal identity in Pacific Island societies is constructed of different cultural materials. . . understanding of community identity must take into account cultural philosophies of personhood” (1990:7). By exploring the juxtaposition between the goals of the group and the individual a better understanding of the formation and maintenance of an ethnic identity for these second generation Tongan Americans is possible.
Collectivism/Individualism Dichotomy and Understanding Tongan Ethnic Identity:

Tongan identity systems are based on this collective mentality. Wurtz burg (2004) explains, “Oceanic identity systems (based on collective values) are contrasted with Western models (supported by an ethic of individualism), which focus more on ancestral links resulting in more fixed and bounded group membership” (52). Collectivist families typically exhibit closeness and interdependence rather than the Western ideal, that independence is the ultimate goal (Willis 2012). Social structures that often connect the groups to other members include and are not exclusive to church, extended kinship connections, and community.

In Tevita Ka’ili’s (2005) research he discusses the importance of “Vā: Space between People or Things”. He argues, “Tongans describe extended family members who are tightly knit and socially close to one another as vāofi (literally, spatially near to one another). This suggests that sociality and spatiality are linked together in Tongan social ontology” (Ka’ili 2005:90). For Tongans overseas who are connected by the kinship ties, no matter how far apart they are dispersed physically, they can still be connected to one another through genealogy (Ka’ili 2005). With these connections come collective responsibly and expectations.

One clear example of Tongan collectivism is the issue of remittances. In the Western world, finances are seen as personal and private. One is free to do what one chooses with the money they earn. The giving of remittances to support family back in Tonga is collective behavior, which can be viewed as collective more than egocentric (McGrath 2002).

Second generational Tongan Americans may not always agree with the collective goals and may strive for more individualist ones. One example of this is what Willis (2012) described as, “acculturation: the process of adapting to the host culture, which may include a shift from collectivism to individualism over time” (202). This concept is related to the discussion of fie
palangi (wanting to be white) or doing things in a “non-Tongan” way (Morton 1998). When Tongan Americans adapt “too much” to the American way and start behaving more individualistically being fie palangi is a common accusation.

Language is a key component of belonging to the collective. In relation to this, Schieffelin & Ochs (1986) stated, “the process of becoming a competent member of society is realized to a large extent through language, by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution, and interpretations in and across socially defined situations” (168). Tongan children, in common with most children are socialized through language, which is critical in the development of their social and ethnic identities (Morton 1996). Many Tongans who migrated to the U.S. chose not to teach their children Tongan, because they thought it was not important and wanted their children to have proficient English language skills, that they themselves possibly lacked (Morton Lee 2003). Often when these children mature into adolescence or adulthood their lack of Tongan language skills becomes a source of anger and resentment (Morton Lee 2003). Collective goals may also be rejected when members of the group feel alienated or ridiculed. In Helen Morton Lee’s research on Tongans overseas she found,

Many Tongans see language as so much the heart of Tongan culture that young people’s poor language skills are perceived as indicative of their loss of “culture” in general. . . . This question of whether a person can be a “real” Tongan without language is a sensitive and divisive one for many Tongans (2003:111).

Being seen as having “lost” culture or not being a “real” Tongan will be explored in this study since respondents discussed their experiences with these accusations as well as the effect of their desires to be part of the collective.

When looking at the Pacific diaspora, and specially Tongan Americans often it is found that migrants choose to reposition themselves on the individualism-collectivism scale, resulting in members of the same family having different viewpoints (Wurtzburg 2004; Linnekin & Poyer
This is evident in such areas are *kavenga* (burdens), gender roles, remittances, *faka 'apa 'apa* (respect), religion, and traditional *tapu* (things that are forbidden) in the home. The examination of Tongan collectivistic concerns, family obligations and other supporting structures, and the transition to more individualistic attitudes all play a role in the maintenance and construction of a Tongan ethnic identity for those involved in this study. How individuals navigate between collective and individual goals in all of these areas will be discussed in greater detail in further sections.

Through the narratives of the participants, the key findings of this research are presented in six major themes: family influence, gender roles and expectations, perceptions of identity, social groups, cultural anchors, the use of kava and how these significant areas contribute to the maintenance and construction of a Tongan ethnic identity. These narratives were the key to understanding how the participants navigated their understanding of the ethnic identity creation and maintenance process as a Tongan American. Conducting one-on-one interviews was the method of collecting the data for this study. Chapter 2 outlines the research design and the methods of data collection and analysis. In Chapter 3, data collected by one-on-one interviews are analyzed and presented in six major themes. Chapter 4, lastly discusses the conclusions of this research.
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Questions:

The objective for this project is to obtain information on the process of formation and maintenance of ethnic identity for second generation Tongan Americans. I used the following research questions to explore this process:

1. How do second generation Tongan Americans develop an ethnic identity?
2. How does the family contribute to the creation of Tongan ethnic identity in second generation Tongan Americans?
3. How do gender roles contribute to the creation and maintenance of Tongan ethnic identity for second generation Tongan Americans?
4. How does collectivism and individualism contribute to the formation of Tongan American ethnic identity?
5. What tools, if any, do these individuals utilize to reinforce, establish, and maintain a Tongan ethnic identity (i.e. tattoo, food, language, cultural exchange music, genealogy, and dance)?

Research Design:

A qualitative research approach was taken in the collection and analysis of data. This method allows focus on the formation of an ethnic identity, as it is quite complex in the embedded ways individuals and groups understand it. I wanted to hear the voices and opinions of the respondents in their own words, and more specifically, endeavor to better understand how they incorporate racial and ethnic attitudes into their identities. A qualitative approach allowed me to hear about their experiences and opinions in a very detailed way, which allowed me to obtain a deeper understanding. I used qualitative methods outlined by Burawoy (1998), Silverman and Marvasti (2008), Saldanda (2009), and Kvale and Brinkman (2008).
To analyze my data I utilized a qualitative approach. This allowed me to use a systematic method to discover patterns, themes or trends in my data. Out of necessity for my topic proposal, I started my research process by gathering background literature about ethnic identity and Tongans. That information was shared in the previous introduction and background section. By doing the literature review I gained some theoretical insights about what I would find when I conducted my research. I allowed for flexibility in altering my theoretical framework as new empirical leads in the data emerged in the different stages of coding and analyzing. As Burawoy (1998) shared, “Fieldwork is a sequence of experiments that continue until one’s theory is in sync with the world one studies. Wild perturbations between observations and expectations signify poor understanding, while occasional shocks force one into a healthy rethinking of emergent theorizing” (18).

**Participants:**

The sample includes twelve second-generation Tongan Americans between the ages of 20-29, whose parents immigrated to the United States from Tonga. I sought respondents of these ages in order to interview “young adults,” who have developed their identities within the same decade, and to keep the variance in their age within a small margin. The ratio of male to female respondents is even, with six men and six women.

To conduct this study I obtained IRB approval from the Committee on Human Studies, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I distributed informed consent forms to my research subjects upon their agreement to participate. I chose respondents from both Hawai‘i and the continental U.S., specifically Utah and California. The 2010 U.S. census shows the main Tongan populations are distributed in three states: California (40%), Utah (23.1%), and Hawai‘i (14.1%). I wanted interviewees who were raised in areas with sizeable Tongan populations to discuss how
they feel their ethnic identity relates to other Tongans. After completing twelve interviews I reached a desired amount of what Charmaz (2010) calls, “theoretical saturation” by identifying common themes and similarities in the data collected.

To recruit subjects, I initially used convenience sampling in the community where I live, which has a dense population of Tongan American families supplemented by Tongan acquaintances that I made while attending UH Manoa. I chose not to interview relatives, in order to avoid bias. Many of my local acquaintances met the desired criteria. I started with the most accessible people and then asked for suggestions about whom else they knew fitting the criteria. I reached the remaining participants through snowball sampling. The participants’ basic background information and pseudonyms are in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Pseudonyms and Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<td>Married</td>
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<td>Jasmine</td>
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Data Collection:

In-depth single respondent semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded. Interviews were conducted in English, but questions were asked about specific Tongan ideals and common sayings in the Tongan language. By conducting one-on-one interviews I was able
to gain a detailed look at the feelings and stories that the respondents shared, which was valuable to my study. As Kvale and Brinkman (2009) argue, “interviews are an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (2). These one-on-one interviews were held in an informal setting and provided an environment where respondents felt comfortable about answering questions without worrying about others hearing or judging them. This relaxed setting also allowed us to discuss a theme of mutual interest, namely exploring the development and maintenance of identity.

Before answering interview questions, several respondents wanted reassurance that the data would remain anonymous. I assured each respondent that the interviews were confidential and would only be reviewed by me, and their remarks would appear under pseudonyms. I was searching for deeper meaning in their responses and by conducting individual interviews, I was able to offer them my undivided attention and follow any interesting empirical leads while conducting the interviews.

Because my target population was located in three different states, interviews were conducted in Hawai‘i and California. The location was determined after I received confirmation of their agreement to participate in the study. Two respondents were interviewed in the California Bay Area. All other interviews were conducted at different locations on Oahu. Several of the respondents interviewed in Hawai‘i were not residents of the state and were either attending school, recently re-located or visiting Oahu.

I used my interview guide questions to structure the flow of the conversation. I encouraged the respondents to think of it as a conversation and not an interrogation. When an interesting empirical lead was discussed that was not in the interview guide I allowed it to develop by asking probing questions if it pertained to the study. I would use the interview guide
to get us back on track if we veered too far off topic. The interviews ranged from 40-70 minutes. With their consent, all interviews were audio recorded in a calm, non-distracting environment.

In this study, I played the role of both an insider and outsider researcher. “An insider is defined as a member of a relationship who is able to provide information on both his/her own feelings and behaviors, and his/her perceptions of the other members. An outsider is any other observer of the interaction” (Olsen 1977:120). Although I am part of the Tongan community by marriage, those in our family and social circle generally accept me as an insider. Nonetheless, I am often called palangi (white) by those who don’t know me after they realize that I am not, as they often assume, half Tongan. Even though I identify with being Japanese, “Hapa” (half) or local I am viewed in the Tongan community as white. Marriage into the Tongan community does not ensure insider access. For many families, marriage of Tongans to people of non-Tongan ethnicity is looked down upon, as I experienced in a recent family meeting. My brother in-law explained that he approved of me and I was accepted by him and our family but that I am an exception. He went on to encourage all of the children at the meeting to discourage the idea of marrying non-Tongans because of the conflicts that cultural differences cause in relationships. These attitudes mean that non-Tongans married into a Tongan family may still be viewed as outsiders.

While this type of experience distances me from the Tongan community, on the other hand I have easy access to the community due to my last name, which is Tongan. This is augmented by the acceptance of friends, community members and associates I have met through school, church, my husband and his family. This mixed insider-outside status was an advantage in my research. To those I interviewed I was considered enough of an insider that I gained their trust and agreement to participate in my study. At the same time, I was enough of an outsider that
they felt comfortable talking about topics that they would otherwise be hesitant to discuss with other Tongans, such as dislike for certain cultural practices, protocols, sexuality, and gender roles. This dual status as an insider and outsider situated me well for gathering data, and I now turn to the interviews.

Interviews:

An early step in the data collection process was constructing an interview guide. I then contacted my three initial potential respondents to inquire if they would participate. We set up times, met at a predetermined location and conducted interviews in an affable environment. I tried to extract specific and detailed accounts from them. Using my interview guide and altering it after different ideas and topics came up in each interview, I was able to conduct the remaining nine interviews with a refined and updated guide.

The updated interview guide was used to ask respondents between 40-50 different open-ended questions focused on the construction of ethnic identity. I also asked basic demographic questions. Qualitative research data collection is an open-ended process that consists of all the contextual information related to a research topic (Silverman and Marvasti 2008). With this type of flexibility, I followed some fascinating empirical leads. The interview questions are attached in Appendix A.

Employing open-ended interview questions allowed me to better determine topical themes that emerged in the data shifting my initial theoretical assumptions (Strauss and Corbin 1990). By following this approach I was not trying to create new theories, rather I was attempting to tie the data to other sociological theoretical frameworks to better understand the construction and maintenance of an ethnic identity for these second generation Tongan Americans.
Asking the same questions did not ensure standardization of the respondents’ interpretations of the questions. Respondents have their individual life experiences that allow them to process questions in their own unique way (Burawoy 1998). I stuck closely to the interview guide wording of the questions, but probing questions were used to follow up on the different responses of interviewees that related to the research topic.

Questions were asked about how respondents understood or defined their ethnic identity as well as how others viewed them. Other questions covered attitudes about their family relationships to understand how these relationships may have played a role in the development of their ethnic identities. To discover if there is a gap between the understandings of their parents perceptions of Tongan identity compared to the respondents’ perceptions, questions were asked about opposing views that respondents may have with their parents concerning Tongan culture and protocols, as well as any conflicts.

To understand the respondents’ attitudes about their ethnic identity, questions were asked about what it means to be a “real Tongan”. I wanted specifically to explore what tools these individuals used to create and reinforce what they considered to be their Tongan identity. These tools may include things such as learning traditional dance, genealogy, joining school clubs, church, and other group events. I included these questions to explore the possibility of respondents having and using tools to create, maintain and reinforce their ethnic identity.

I could not address attitudes on tradition and creation of identity without examining gendered differences in the formation of Tongan identity. Specifically for women, Tongan society has very strict ideas of what proper gender roles entail. I am interested in the evolution or shift in these ideals and practices for Tongan American women. There is also pressure on Tongan males to fill particular expected roles; questions were tailored to explore that issue as
well. I asked all respondents about traditional gender roles and their attitudes toward those expectations, as well as about the pressures they had experienced to fit in those various gender roles and how that contributed to their ethnic identity.

This allowed me to explore “why?”, “why not?”, and how they wanted to associate with attempts to emulate, or reject the different identities they are privileged to such as: Tongan, American, Polynesian, or Pacific Islander. These different questions assisted in understanding how these individuals navigate between their Tongan/American identities and how they construct and maintain these identities.

My interview transcripts are cited verbatim in order to as Wurtzburg (2004) suggested, “to present people’s accounts in their own words, which is a conscious attempt to give their “muted voices” representation” (55). This allows their voices to be heard and views to be candidly expressed. It should also be noted that participants words were spoken, although provided they are in written form, and spoken language typically does not conform to written grammatical standards.

**Data Coding and Analysis:**

Before coding the data, I transcribed all of the audio recorded interviews word for word. I then followed the systematic coding methods outlined by Charmaz (2010) in creating the “bones” of my analysis by coding my data by first initial coding followed by focused coding. Coding shapes the analytical frame from which an analysis is built. Charmaz (2010) argues, “theoretical integration will assemble those bones into a working skeleton” (45). Initial coding allows for the exploration of theoretical possibilities in the data. During initial coding it must be asked: What is this a study of? What does the data suggest? From who’s point of view? As well as, what theoretical category does this indicate? (Charmaz, 2010; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This
process requires a close adherence to the data. I choose to do this by what Charmaz calls “coding incident by incident” (53). This particular method compares incident with incident rather than line-by-line and helps identify the properties of the emerging concept. I found this very useful in discovering and recognizing reoccurring patterns and themes in my data.

After completing this process, I used focused coding, a method where earlier codes I found significant or recurring were utilized to sort through large amounts of data by creating broader categories. “Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize the data incisively and completely” (Charmaz 2010:57).

The next step of memo writing, Charmaz (2010) explains, is the bridge between data collection and the beginning of the writing process (72). I wrote memos pertaining to my focus coding codes. This allowed me to analyze my data and recognize ideas and connections that I was making as the codes emerged to help direct my research to areas I wanted to better understand. This process allowed me to uncover emerging themes and ideas in my study. I then applied my themes to the theoretical literature allowing me to examine the fit with theories of the construction process of ethnic identity formation.

By utilizing these methods I was able to gain a clearer understanding of the way these second generational Tongans construct and maintain their ethnic identities. As well as gain a greater knowledge of the sites that this construction takes place and the tools they use to maintain their identities.
CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In this chapter I analyze the experiences of the second generation Tongan American respondents and draw implications about some of the influences building and maintaining their ethnic identities. I will examine this process by using the collectivist and individualist perspective and what role these concepts have in the identity formation process. I will also discuss the impact gender expectations and roles have in identity formation. Through the narratives of the participants, the key findings are presented as six major themes that contribute to the maintenance and construction of a Tongan ethnic identity: family influence, gender roles and expectations, perceptions of identity, social groups, cultural anchors, the use of kava and how these areas. These six themes will be presented in three different sections: social groups and identity, gender and ethnic identity, and tools to maintaining and developing ethnic identity. I will discuss and examine how these six “construction sites” (Cornell and Hartmann 2007), intersect with collectivist perspective and what happens when an individualist perspective comes into play.

SOCIAL GROUPS AND IDENTITY: FAMILY, FRIENDS AND CHURCH

Family Contributions to Ethnic Identity Formation:

In this portion of the chapter I analyze the influences that the family and the home have on the respondents’ creation and maintenance of Tongan ethnic identity as second generation Americans. The narratives display issues emphasized by their parents and family and what is expected of them as Tongans growing up in America as well as the conflicts that arose from straying from their parent’s cultural expectations. Many studies (Christiansen 2000; Franklin 2003; Mavoa et al. 2003; Vaden 1998) discuss the importance of the home and the family in the
formation of an ethnic identity for children of migrant parents. The home is the primary location where an identity can be reinforced or discouraged. Here I discuss parents’ expectations of faka’apa’apa (respect), representing the family name, socioeconomic status and identity, showing off and keeping up appearances, and kavenga (burdens and obligations).

Faka’apa’apa: The Importance of Respect and Tongan Identity

One of the reoccurring concepts in the narratives was that of respect. Respondents explained how respect was a key component to the Tongan culture and their identities. Tomasi simply put it, “Anga fakatonga (the Tongan way) is being humble and showing respect.” Respect is not only a concept in Tongan culture, but also a code of conduct with specific rules and guidelines that are expected to be understood and followed in many Tongan homes in America (Small 2011). The narratives revealed how faka’apa’apa contributed to respondents understanding of gender boundaries, respect and what it meant for them to be Tongan.

Faka’apa’apa was not just a cultural practice that occurred once in a while; rather it affected their daily lives. Particularly in the home faka’apa’apa had the largest impact on the boundaries between and expectations of brothers and sisters, as well as male and female family relationships such as cousins, aunts, and uncles (Morton Lee 2003). Respondents discussed the importance of the concept when they were growing up and in their lives today as well as the limitations that it put on them.

In what follows I will discuss the rules and boundaries that the respondents classify as faka’apa’apa, the negative and positive attitudes they have about faka’apa’apa, the ways that adherence to faka’apa’apa is a collectivist’s objective that further solidifies their membership in the Tongan community and their families. I will also explain the ways that breaking these tapu cause these individuals to strive for more individualistic goals and often leave them being
accused as *fie palangi*, and the importance that *faka’apa’apa* plays in their ethnic identities.

Malia explained:

> My parents always taught us ever since we were young how to respect your brothers and sisters and older people. When we make a mistake our parents stop us and say, "Oh no, no, no that’s not the Tongan way". I think one time we were at home and I accidently stepped in front of my dad in a way I shouldn’t have and my mom stopped me and said, “that not the Tongan way, that’s not how girls should treat their dads, you are supposed to be respectful to your dad.”

From a young age parents and often grandparents taught respondents about acceptable behavior for Tongan children in the home incorporating *faka’apa’apa* guidelines. This process was socialization into the patriarchal Tongan cultural behaviors. If children did not obey these sets of behaviors, they were quickly punished, sometimes physically. Mana spoke of an example of what happened in his home when he didn't behave appropriately:

> I remember I got smacked because I was laying in the bedroom... a bunch of my cousins and aunties came in the room because they were grabbing something and I was just lying there. But I had to get out and my mom slapped me.

Mana’s example mirrors many of the stories told in the respondents’ narratives. Another common thread is that children are expected to obey parents without question. Noa recalled his experience of what happened when he would step over the line and how talking back was not an option:

> The Tongan way is no matter if you’re right, they [parents] are always right. If they ask you a question, the minute you speak they are going to say something quick to attack you and tell you be quiet... answering, to them its like you are talking back even though they asked you a question. Then they try to hit you, but then its all for the lesson.

Respondents spoke about varying strictness levels of their family adherence to *faka’apa’apa* protocol but there were also some basic similarities that all respondents spoke of and those were mainly the clear boundaries between brothers and sisters (Morton 1996). The respondents who had opposite sex siblings, explained that brothers and sisters occupy different spaces in their
homes. They have their own rooms and are prohibited from entering the room of the opposite sex sibling. For some it was taken for granted, an everyday norm. Others reflected on this separation and how it could have negative effects on the relationship between siblings. For example Semisi reminisced how this affected his life and his relationship with his sisters:

I could never be in the same room as my sisters. My mom and dad made sure me and my brother never stayed in the same room or shared a room with my sisters. In fact my sisters stayed upstairs and my brother and I stayed downstairs and we couldn’t go to each other rooms. Just because that was disrespectful to my mom and dad. It limited me, like I didn’t really have a tight relationship with my sisters because we were separated. I never even hung out with them at all. I wouldn’t want to, even if I was allowed to. Just because if I seen them somewhere, say I was out with my friends and they came to the same place I would tell them to leave because it didn't feel right. It was weird for me to be around my sisters and so that way I felt like it limited me from actually having a relationship with them.

Jasmine spoke about her feelings of the ways faka’apa’apa impacted her relationship with her brothers:

It was beneficial because a lot of the respect is being lost in today’s society. At the same time it’s a little bit too much where brothers and sisters can’t be open with one another and can’t help each other out its taboo. It’s kind of like the way of the relationship for siblings and brothers aren’t close. It holds you back having to be so respectful of one another. It’s kind of both.

Not only were they occupying different spaces in their homes but respondents were also prohibited from participating in activities together. One of the most reoccurring limitations in the narratives was the tapu of watching television together. Opposite sex siblings were prohibited from watching television mainly to avoid situations or programs that contained any sort of sexual content or innuendo to avoid shame (fakama) or embarrassment. Ti spoke of his understanding of the gender separation:

We don’t watch movies with my sisters . . . to make sure it is not suggestive or containing innuendo. To avoid awkward moments where you see something on TV and you are wondering what are they thinking? I definitely believe everyone has their own choice but faka’apa’apa helps to differentiate what roles different people will play in the family.
Malia recalled her experience in abiding by *faka’apa’apa* with her brother:

> We still know when we shouldn’t do things with our brothers and sisters. There are times when my mom tells us, there are certain things we can’t talk to our brothers about. If we want to go out we can’t hang out with each other. We have to be with separate friends, and that was one of the number one things with my parents... there was one time where there was a friend’s party and I went first and it was fun, but then my twin brother showed up and I had to go home because there started to be things that wouldn’t be appreciate for me to be there with him so I had to go home and he got to stay because boys get to stay out longer.

Theses patriarchal guidelines for behavior and restrictions placed on these respondents had a great impact on their ethnic identities. *Faka’apa’apa* in the home was one of the first tools used by respondents to construct their ethnic identities with a specific, very black and white, guide of what *anga fakatonga* (the Tongan way) was and what they needed to do as individuals to fit into this collective. By not adhering to these rules they were punished sometimes physically.

Although respondents had some issues with *faka’apa’apa* in their home when asked if they will raise their children adhering to these rules, all respondents agreed that they would. Lopeti expressed the impact that it had on his life and how he has chosen to raise his own children with this principle even though he rebelled against it as a youth:

> I did everything against whatever they taught us, I did everything against it. Now things are different, but when I was growing up I was confused because I was young I didn’t understand so I had a lot of hard feelings... I like the way old fashioned is, I’m trying to be traditional. As a parent I strive to stick to tradition and raise my kids that certain way.

Living *faka’apa’apa* is very much apart of who they are. They wish to continue these traditions in their own families. The concept of respect is not just a set of household rules, but rather a code to live by, deeply embedded in the Tongan culture and these respondents. When asked what is the most important thing about being Tongan to them, all of the respondents came to the same conclusion: respect. Malia explains, “the most important thing about being Tongan is the respect
you give out.” Ti echoed this opinion as well when he emphasized the importance of respect in his life:

Respect is one of the most positive things the culture has. It is all centered on respecting your ancestors and the lineage you come from. And recognizing there is something important to carry on. Something to treasure form your parents, to continue to the future.

Respect that was taught by their parents shaped their ethnic identities significantly. One of the reasons given by the respondents for their parents’ insistence on and strictness in following these guidelines was that their children’s behavior was a direct reflection of the parents and their family. The behavior and choices of the respondents and the consequences of those choices were perceived as an indication of parental child raising ability.

**The family name: honor and shame**

Personal decisions and behavior in Western society is seen as an individualistic trait (Wurtzburg 2004). Many of the respondents expressed that the pressures, expectations and rules of their parents and other members of their family weighed heavily on them. These outside forces drove the decisions they made and the way they chose to represent themselves. These decisions include career choice, schooling, and even personal appearance such as style of dress and grooming. The actions of the respondents were not seen as their own but rather a reflection on those who raised them. The specific pressures on males and females will be discussed in the section on gender and ethnic identity. Nanu spoke of her perspective on the importance of respect and representing her family:

Kids our age now a day do not respect their elders. It reflects on where they came from and who is teaching them. How they grew up. I know that in my family my grandparents always taught us how important it is to respect them.

There is an immense pressure on these individuals to honor their family name by appearance, scholastic achievements, prestigious jobs, and for boys, often sports accomplishments (Morton
The same can be said for times when something is done that is viewed as shameful or embarrassing. Behavior is seen not only as a reflection of the individual but of his or her parents and family who should have taught him or her better. If a child has inappropriate behavior parents are worried that it is a reflection on them, not just a judgment about their child. Noa remembered what it was like when he went to church. His mother shamed him and commented on his clothing because she perceived his attire as making her appear to be an unfit mother:

The thing I hate about it is we go to church and she asks, "What are you wearing?" in front of people. Jesus said come as you are and she always thinks, you make me look stupid. Because they are going to think you don’t have a mom to iron your shirt.

Respondents explained that parents feel that they are under pressure from the Tongan community specifically to make sure that their children represent them well. This is especially true for girls being reflections of their mothers, which will be further explored in the gender roles discussion. Jasmine spoke of the emphasis her parents put on her that she was a walking image of their parenting abilities and that they are very concerned with the perceptions of others. She stated:

They will say something about you by how you look and act. . . . People will say what is your mom doing? They are looking at you, they are looking at your parents. . . . Thinking especially about the way we look, action-wise not so much, but it was important the way we looked for the girls.

Life events that are typically viewed as individual accomplishments or milestones such as weddings, graduations, funerals and birthdays are viewed in Tongan culture as collective accomplishments. They are often accompanied with celebrations that highlight bringing honor and pride to one's family as well as following cultural protocols with recognizing distinguished guests and family members. Lola spoke about her feelings of the giving of gifts to honor family members at family functions and celebrations:
You have to show the respect to the people the family by proper authority in your family line. It shows the respect to them but acknowledging it. It is a symbol of that. In each family we have fahus and stuff so every family gathering you have to honor them or recognize them.

These events often become a forum for extended family and community members to honor and recognize certain people in the family by giving traditional offerings of handicrafts (Addo & Besnier 2008). Another aspect to these events and the giving of money or gifts is that it is an opportunity for some to showcase status or monetary gain. This is problematic for the second generational Tongan Americans who were interviewed in this study, which leads to the discussion of family protocol and conflicting attitudes.

**Collective vs. the individual: family protocol and kavenga**

All respondents expressed that they belong to large kinship networks filled with hundreds of different cousins, aunts, uncles, and other family members. These extended familial ties link them to the collective with its cultural protocols and expectations (Linnekin & Poyer 1990; McGrath 2002; Willis 2012; Wurtzburg 2004). An example of this is the role of the fahu (family matriarch) and ulumotua (patriarch). These are complicated titles and roles that may be filled by more than one person under specific circumstances. If the rightful fahu or ulumotua is not present the next in line determined by lineage and tradition is there to take their place. These roles can often be a source of contention and conflict. The respondents expressed that many of them wish to avoid these traditions. Lopeti explained how this collective practice is often burdensome and he prefers the individualist model of exclusively providing for the nuclear family. He shared his frustrations:

My parents believe in like the whole family the outer relatives, the kavenga and like uh the ulumotua. Someone who comes and governs your whole family, that I disagree with. My immediate family is my immediate family. The only person who has control should be my father that is supposed to lead. So I don’t believe in the huge kavenga all these people gathering we don’t even know but you are
paying respect to them, I believe in being a participant of it but I don’t believe in exercising that in my own family when it is burdensome especially.

Lopeti objects to the *ulumotua* coming to take charge of family events and feels the father of the home should be the one to make those types of decisions. As he is moving away from this collective protocol he is adapting to Western individualistic goals. He is also moving away from the Tongan patriarchal model that requires him to follow the instructions of his *ulumotua*.

The *fahu* is also a very interesting role in Tongan culture when it comes to cultural protocol and duty. Tongan society is typically male dominated, but there is this distinguishing role of the *fahu* that has great importance in Tongan culture. A *fahu* is commonly derived from the father’s oldest sister (Morton Lee 2003). Historically and still often practiced today a father’s sister (especially oldest sister) was ranked superior to her brother as were her children ranker higher to her brother’s children (Ward Gailey 1987). She and her children are *fahu* to the brother and his children (Ward Gailey 1987). She holds a place of recognition at all family events, and is the guest of honor, with a separate seat often elaborately decorated. The *fahu* can be found at various familial celebrations such as a birthday, wedding, graduation, or funeral. The *fahu* can often overshadow the event that she is there to attend and this is where conflict can arise. Nanu reminisced about an experience she had at her 16th birthday party with her *fahu*:

My fahu is too much! My sweet 16 it was big. . . . My mom respects the *fahu* and she made a huge chair with the blanket and the *ngatu* [tapa cloth] right next to me. I joked around about it, like I swear it wasn’t her sweet 16 and she was doing *pu’is* [telling someone to do something] on me. We were sitting next to each other in front of everyone and she’s like, "go get me a plate" and I’m like ok aunty. "Go throw this away, go get me water". I’m like ok it’s not your birthday you are supposed to be doing this for me. But you have to respect them regardless. She love the *koloa* its gold. If her brothers got some she wouldn’t hesitate to take it. Its causes drama sometimes its so little and I’m like why is she tripping its just a mat, and my dad says just give it to her.
Respondents didn’t feel a need to continue this tradition when it is their generation that will be filling these roles and that they will not practice it when they have their own children. Tomasi explained that if you truly love your sister she doesn't need to fulfill the fahu role to be honored by him. He illustrated:

My sister she didn’t play the role but my mom was making her fill that roll. When it comes to gathering money like in that’s the thing they have this fahu status but they don’t need that when siblings have genuine love for each other where they actually care for each other and if someone needs help they help. . . . But I think my mom pushed her to be the fahu but my sister has a lot of respect for us. I have respect for her.

Tia expressed her frustrations with the extended family protocol and having to listen to her ulumotua (family patriarch) during her father’s funeral. She wanted to follow her father’s wishes of a Western style funeral, just a service and burial not a long weeklong traditional Tongan funeral. This caused great conflict with her extended family that wanted to follow cultural protocol. She recalled:

With my dad’s passing and the whole funeral thing a lot of it is culture. My dad’s siblings are real Tongan-Tongan. They’ll live and do everything Tongan. So it kind of caused, I don’t know if with my dad’s siblings if it caused drama with them and us or with me and my mom and my siblings toward them. . . . It was a lot of stress during that whole week and then after that trying to pay bills. I do enjoy a lot of the Tongan traditions, customs, and protocol but to an extent that I would rather not practice those in my home.

This negative experience caused her to want to shy away from these sorts of traditions and she goes on to explain, “there are some things I would like to understand why they do it, I still wouldn’t do it though. Just to understand why it’s so important to them. Then I think I would be more accepting of it if I knew and could understand it.” Succumbing to the collectivist expectations of her extended family caused conflict for her immediate family both emotionally and financially. This topic brings me to the discussion of finance and Tongan ethnic identity.
Families are often expected to give monetary donations or traditional Tongan handicrafts such as mats, quilts and nagtu (tapa cloth) at these events (Addo and Besnier 2008). For many respondents this was a source of conflict for them when it came to kavenga (burdens), koloa (traditional handicrafts) and fakapale (the throwing of money for a performance). These gift and the reciprocation that comes from them help to continue to bond and maintain familial and kinship ties (Kaʻili 2005). Lopeti expressed his feelings about finances and culture:

To be honest with you I think it’s just the culture, people trying to impress other people. I think it happens during weddings and any kind of celebrations. I think it had a lot more to do with showing status. I think its something that has always been there culturally but in America it has been multiplied.

Noa grew up in a Methodist family in San Francisco that he considers to be very traditional and living anga fakatonga. He recently eloped and married a LDS Tongan girl in the Hawaiian courthouse. By doing this, he avoided all of the cultural protocol and traditions that occur at a wedding. His family was upset that they were not involved in his decision and wanted to throw a celebration where all of the proper protocol could be performed. He decided that he did not want to do that and he explains his family’s reaction when they learned he eloped:

My dad was tearing up, my cousin was saying I wasn’t sure if it was tears of joy or anger. Everyone else wants me to come out there and have a big celebration, like a first Sunday, a eating, and all that Tongan stuff. But no it’s my life. I just want a simple one and move on. They want all this Tongan things.

He feels that these traditions are not a necessary part of his life and finds them to be wasteful. He explained that his mother is very involved in collecting and the reciprocal action of giving and receiving koloa. She always encouraged him to marry a girl whose family has koloa and can reciprocate her giving of these traditional gifts. He discusses his influence from his mother:

My mom was always into all that Tongan stuff. She would always say when you get married make sure you find a wife that has . . . koloa. I’m like that’s just old fashioned to me right there. For what?
Ti also gave his thoughts on the subject:

I believe the tradition was always been something that as a principle to share but I believe it has been manipulated and destroyed to the point where people only do it to get favor from others and look good in the eyes of men. That is not the purpose of it, so I understand the tradition and purpose but I believe the way is practiced is not how it was intended.

Lopeti explained his feelings about koloa and why he thought it wasn't necessary for his life or his family’s:

My mom and these women were trading koloa and not only that the tapa and fala they buy and sell that, like its… I don't know what to compare it to. They buy and sell it like playing cards just to show status.

The majority of respondents explained that this collective idea of traditional wealth was not important to them and their daily lives. The giving and receiving of koloa that is very important to their parents, mostly mothers is seen as wasteful and an unneeded expense. For this reason, they shy away from these traditions. Thus defining their Tongan identities with less collectivist goals that do not require this reciprocation of traditional goods. By pushing these traditions aside they are choosing a more individualistic path.

One of the other collectivist cultural practices that many of the respondents disliked was the sending of remittances. Many Tongans in America still send remittances back to Tonga regularly (Ahlburg 1991; Ahlburg and Brown 1997; Small 2011; Morton Lee 2008). Overseas relatives’ gifts contribute 42% of total household income to island families (Small 2011). Some of the respondents explained that they were more concerned with the needs of their immediate family and individual needs and not those of the collective. Many times by sending money back to relatives in Tonga they felt that they then had to go without. It has been reported that 47% of Tongans in the U.S. are classified as low-income according to the EPIC (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities) report in 2014. This financial situation can cause children to feel they
don't have much to give. Leiola spoke of how this is often a source of conflict between her and her mother:

We bump heads like money issues for one. I know she has the obligation to send money back to Tonga because her mom is still alive and she has all her siblings there and they take care of my grandparents there. We always fight about money but we love them. We fight about it. . . when it comes time to, and you are struggling with things here, it’s hard.

Ti spoke of how remittances have affected his life and how he agrees with it when he feels that it’s for a specific occasion. He explained his objections to sending remittances when he views it as unnecessary and causes family back in Tonga to expect it and causes his family to go without and have to sacrifice certain things:

I disagree with giving money you know at every whim. The remittances that we give out I think we give it so fast that we teach family back in Tonga that money will always be there whenever you ask for it. But it is a complete contradiction to what we live out here in America. I never played football. But people assume I played but it was too expensive. You know my family just couldn’t pay for all that stuff because we had to put all the resources into paying off bills, helping family back home [in Tonga] with funerals and stuff. So I have no problem with helping out people. I have no problem with giving money. My problem is when we always provide this money. It’s not a need, it’s a want so that’s my problem. A lot of the donations are just given at a whim because it is a want not a need.

This step away participating in these traditions directly impacts what it means to be Tongan to these individuals. As they move to more Western individualist ideals of wealth and the handling of finance they are removing themselves from the collectivist tradition of money flowing through their kinship network. In the past family members were expected to give without question, but these respondents are not only questioning it, but rather choosing to not participate at all.

The family is the initial location where these respondents began to construct their Tongan identities. These issues above all influenced respondents’ identities today: the practice of *faka’apa’apa*, representing one’s family’s name, as well as family protocol and conflicting attitudes that may arise from not following those traditions. Pressures to conform to the family’s
collectivist expectations were often a determining factor in positive and negative feelings about Tongan identity. Individualistic feelings and actions were often an area of conflict when respondents resisted the practices and goals of the collective, specifically in areas of family obligation, finance and cultural protocol. Respondents felt that many of the traditions that their family expected them to participate in were no longer cultural necessities but rather ways for people to showcase wealth and prominence. This did not coincide with their opinions of what it means to be Tongan for them. These behaviors were a deterrent to practicing culture and often led them to being accused of being fie palangi (wanting to be white) or not living anga fakatonga. All of these factors, both positive and negative, that occurred in the family shaped and helped in the construction of their individual Tongan ethnic identities.

The family is not the only key institution where Tongan identity is created or reinforced. Another important construction site for the formation and maintenance of the participant’s ethnic identities was church.

**Religion and Tongan Ethnic Identity:**

Respondents expressed how church was an important construction site for building and maintaining their Tongan ethnic identities. It was a place for them to learn and practice Tongan language, cultural protocols and learn traditional song and dance. For some it brought them a sense of pride to belong to a Tongan congregation and gave them a sense of being part of the collective. Noa explained:

> It was all in Tongan. We read scriptures in Tongan and gave talks in Tongan. I loved it growing up. It makes me proud of my culture. I am proud to be Tongan. Growing up knowing how to harmonize in Tongan and sing. Knowing how to joke around in Tongan, knowing how to read a scripture. It’s knowing all the little things. So yah, I mean I learned mostly all my Tongan things from church.
Leiola grew up going to both English and Tongan congregations. She favored the Tongan language congregation and expressed its importance to her and caused her to develop an appreciation of the Tongan culture:

There is a difference; you learn the language you learn different. You learn in Sunday school, they teach you memorizing scriptures. I think it gives an appreciation when you are older. I was lucky enough to grow up in a Tongan Sunday school. Kids now are taught in English they don’t get that they are missing out. School, when you go, you get all the other stuff, but when you come to church you get to learn your culture.

For Tia and many other respondents it was a way for her to hear and practice lea fakatonga or Tongan language skills. By attending a Tongan congregation, she is forced to participate and use the language. She shared, “I don’t feel confident in myself to speak the language. I can say it in my mind, but I can’t say it out loud. . . . That’s one thing that I see that I need to do is to try and speak it more and so being around it on Sundays and hearing it on Sundays helps a lot”.

Church was a weekly chance for many respondents to dress in traditional clothing, tupenu and taovala (men’s wrap and mat worn around the waist as sign of respect) and puletaha and kiekia (dress and traditional belt) for women. Mana explained how the traditional cultural dress that he was encouraged to wear when attending church and the things he learned there contributed to his identity:

I always have tupenu on. Boys have a taovala on, and even if you aren’t listening, you can see the practices. . . . I think the practices of the church helped me recognize a lot of things that are fakatonga.

The narratives revealed that for some, religion and ethnicity were inseparable concepts when disusing their identity. An explanation may be because Tonga is largely a Christian nation, with 99% of all Tongans in Tonga being Christian (Kingdom of Tonga, Department of Statistics). Much of their ethnic identity and what it meant to them to be Tongan and be a part of the Tongan collective was in tandem with religious practice, duty and belief. Jasmine argued, “the most
important thing about being a Tongan is number one respect. Respect is so important and also our duty to god and our kingdom.” For some individuals, religion, duty and respect clashed with traditional Tongan practices and created a tension between religious culture and ethnic culture (Gordon1990). This caused them and their families to pursue more individualistic goals and often be accused of being *fie palangi* by others.

This seemed to be particularly evident in the Mormon respondents. Church culture and values caused some of the respondents and their families to push certain cultural protocols to the side. At times, this caused disagreements between family members, leading to the respondents being accused of being *fiepalangi* or disrespectful. It was expressed that there are some Tongan cultural practices that the Mormon Church discourages that has created a divide between church culture and ethnic culture. For example, the practice of *fakapale* or throwing money in the air or at individuals when they are performing dance numbers at a function such as a wedding is a common Tongan practice (Morton 1996). This is to honor the person dancing and the people she or he is dancing for. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has prohibited this from being done in their buildings, often creating conflict for families who want to continue this tradition, whether they are Mormon or not. At Tia’s brother’s wedding, this caused a conflict when family members who were not of the LDS faith attended the wedding and continually ignored the announcements that prohibited the practice of *fakapale*. They felt that it was their duty and obligation or they simply wanted to fulfill this protocol, much to the groom’s family’s chagrin. This caused a rift between some of her relatives and as a result, their family was banned from holding future events at the wedding venue.

The use of kava is one particular cultural practice has caused a lot of tension in the Tongan community; the LDS church discourages kava consumption. I will go into greater detail
about the use of kava in a later section. For Tia it was the cause of family disagreement that still lingered to this day. At her father’s funeral it was a matter of wanting to obey church culture and her extended family wanting to follow Tongan culture. When Tia’s father died, he said that he did not want a kava ceremony at his funeral because he was against the use of kava due to his religious beliefs as a former LDS bishop. His brothers and other relatives had other plans in mind. Tia recalled her experience:

My dad told us before he passed that this is how he wants it, he wants it simple he doesn’t want it long. He just wants to have the service and be buried after that. But they did the whole faikava thing. That was one big thing he said no faikava but they did it anyway. Because of the ulumotua [paternal patriarch] came over and said no let’s do it, he asked my mom and my older brother who was less active and who doesn’t really apply the Tongan culture or LDS culture in his life he just wanted to do it. So it kind of caused with my dad’s siblings, drama with them and us or with me and my mom and my siblings toward them.

Church was a construction site for many of the respondents, regardless of their religious affiliation. It was a place where they could practice language skills, dress in traditional Sunday clothing and sing in Tongan. Although some had to make the choice between Tongan culture and church culture, they still felt as though church played a large part in creating and maintaining their Tongan ethnic identity. This was true even for those who pursued more individualistic goals as a result of their church policies. Mormon respondents and their families often stepped away from Tongan collectivist expectations in order to obey church protocol.

This straying away from traditional cultural practices often put their “Tongan-ness” into question. Regardless of that they still felt that belonging to a Tongan congregation was essential to the maintenance of their Tongan ethnic identity. Tomasi, a Mormon from Utah, shared that he wants to raise his children in a Tongan congregation to help build their Tongan identities, “the whole point of us going to a Tongan church I want them to know who they are and who their people are.” Church was just one location that contributed to the ethnic identities of the
respondents. I will now turn the focus to another social setting that was crucial in ethnic identity construction: friends and peer groups.

**Friends, Peer Groups and Identity**

The narratives revealed that the respondents all gravitated toward friends who were Polynesian or more specifically, Tongan. Although many of them have friends of different ethnic backgrounds, the friends that they spent the most time with tended to be Tongan. They felt that there was a common understanding and it was easier with Tongan friends. Many of those interviewed felt that there is a unique humor specific to Tongans and they cherish that element of their friendships with other Tongans. It was simply put that with Tongan friends, “they get each other”. Tia explained why most of her social circle is Tongan:

Just being in the community and being with Tongans and being reminded my ethnic background the things that we do as Tongans, just seeing and being around them reminds me of who I am. I’ll be a Tongan but not practice a lot of the culture and traditions. But I do enjoy being around Tongans I think there is a difference in being around Tongans and someone who is a non-Tongan.

There was also the factor of parents allowing their children to socialize with friends outside of school. Particularly for girls as discussed in the previous section, many of them had very strict upbringings that required them to stay home much more than their brothers. One exception was that parents allowed more freedom with Tongan friends because they knew the families and trusted that the children had the same values as their own. Leiola recalled her experience with Tongan and non-Tongan friends:

Growing up it was all kinds [of friends] and not until high school when it started to be more Tongan. I think I kind of changed I feel more comfortable with Tongans. Your friends at school would want to do stuff and I am like I can’t, I can’t, I can’t. Sometimes when I would want to go out I would say I’m going with so and sos’ daughter and make it ok. It was almost better to have Tongan friends where my parents know their family. I think it’s more my mom wanting me to be with Tongans rather than non-Tongans, who grew up knowing her. They have the understanding of what is expected of them as Tongans. Even if they don’t practice
it they know.

Mana conveyed how there is something unique about laughing and joking around with friends in Tongan. He gets a different feeling from those friendships than with friends who are from different ethnic background. He explained:

A lot of the cats I work with now, that I’m friends with, are Samoan. I can still speak to them in their language and it’s cool but it’s nothing like having your own Tongan thing. If I’m cracking with my friends in Tongan its like oh this is my brother right here.

Tomasi recalled that being a Tongan youth there were cultural expectations and pressures on him from his family and community to adhere to collective norms. He explained that he would often have conflict with his parents due to different attitudes about cultural traditions, as previously discussed in the family roles and identity portion of the chapter. He explained that his Tongan friends were also going through similar challenges and understood his situation. They found comfort in each other and could relate to each other’s problems more than non-Tongan friends. He recalled:

That’s the crazy thing about Tongan culture we pretty much go through the same thing. As boys we gravitate towards each other and you find this comfort being around each other filling the voids the family can’t.

The friendship choices and peer groups of respondents were mainly those of Tongan ethnic background. Often this was because parents were uncomfortable with their children spending time with others besides family members. If they had friendships outside of the home with parental approval, it was children who were Tongan from church or the community that the parents knew. Respondents also found that it was easier to relate to Tongan friends because they faced the same struggles and conflicts as they did with their own parents. Thus, respondents adhered to collectivist expectations by mostly retaining Tongan friendships. The freedoms and expectations of friends and family members that respondents socialized with intersected with
their families and communities gender roles, expectations and the role of patriarchy in these individuals’ lives.

Which leads to the discussion of gender roles and expectations for both males and females. This is a pivotal area of identity formation that begins in the home with the family, and can be reinforced or rejected by friends, as well as in church. I briefly discussed the influence faka‘apa‘apa plays in the home and the gender divide there, but I will now go into greater detail about patriarchy, gender roles and expectations and the importance they have on identity formation for these second generation Tongan Americans.

GENDER AND ETHNIC IDENTITY FORMATION

“Know your Role”: Gender Roles, Expectations, Patriarchy and the Formation of Ethnic Identity

In the home, respondents were taught to live anga fakatonga, adhere to faka‘apa‘apa, honor their family name and participate in certain familial cultural protocol. I want to take a closer look at what the respondents felt were the specific male and female obligations and expectations from their families and Tongan society as a whole. The participants in their narratives describe, distinguish, and identify their gender roles and the ways they are intertwined with their ethnic identities. A finding related to this topic is the discussion of the importance gender plays in creating and maintaining a Tongan ethnic identity for second generation Tongans by discussing collective expectations as well as individualistic actions that are a result of female gender roles, gender biases, and Tongan male masculinity expectations.
Female gender roles: purity, adhering to collectivist expectations and identity formation:

The female respondents revealed that there was immense pressure for them to live up to being a “*mau*” or proper Tongan woman. They explained this socialization process and the major areas of concern were being a proper reflection of their mothers, their duties and expectations, gender biases and work that were assigned to them by Tongan patriarchal hierarchy. These factors all had an influence on their identities as Tongan women.

*Reflections of their mothers: female image, duty and expectations*

As discussed earlier respondents both males and females have been taught that their choices and actions reflect not only on them but also on their families. The consequences of those actions can have a lasting effect even on the perception of family members several generations apart. Women said that this was particularly true with them being seen as reflections of their mother. They felt that their mothers made significant efforts to ensure that their daughters were behaving as proper Tongan young woman. The definition of what that meant varied by respondent but there was a common thread in many of their stories. There was immense pressure on them to conform to what their mother deemed acceptable. Jasmine recalled her experience:

> I did feel pressure to dress a certain way, to look a certain way, and me I’m like whatever who cares? But my parents are like come on everyone is watching you. They will say something about you by how you look and act.

She continued and explained how there is more pressure on the way the girls looked in her family than the boys:

> Guys weren’t really pressured. They can just throw on basketball shorts and go. Sometimes I just want to walk to town looking scruffy and they say you are going to look “*mata'i mohe uli*” look like you haven’t taken a shower. People will say, “What is your mom doing?” They are looking at you, they are looking at your parents. I’ve never seen that placed on the boys, it’s mostly the girls, I don't know why. Thinking about it especially the way we looked for the girls.
Many second generational Tongan American girls are not permitted to wear make up, shave their legs, put on nail polish or cut their hair (Small 2011). These things are all considered by their parents to be *fie palangi*. These attitudes and pressures continue into adulthood for some respondents. Lola explained how she has always had long hair and would never cut it short:

> Tongans, especially the old woman, think short hair is unattractive. It’s not beautiful. Even now that I am older and I know that short hair will be easier to take care of it’s hard for me to let go. Even if I want to cut my hair because it is so hot, deep down in side I know that no I wouldn’t. I will never cut my hair. Unless someone died and my aunt came and cut it. That’s acceptable, but for fashion no.

Female respondents reflected that they were not only expected to look a certain way, but behave a certain way as well. Jasmine explained, “it is important for the woman to be *mau* (proper) and not too crazy, you know like you have to be a demure proper woman.” The female respondents shared that this pressure to be *mau* and proper was to protect their virtue and honor. In order to maintain their honor and virtue this meant that they were held to different standards and rules than their brothers and male relatives. Many felt that there was strong gender bias influencing their freedom and parental and community expectations.

**Gender bias**

Female and male respondents both agreed that growing up, the girls were held to a different standard than the boys. The girls had more rules and restrictions and the boys generally had more freedom. Malia summed up her experience and her frustrations about the different rules and expectations of boys and girls in her family:

> I always felt like girls could never do anything. I just felt like sometimes with the rules we have, I always felt like it sucks to be a girl. Because we always had to be home a certain time, we couldn’t really go anywhere, we had to stay home, we had to make sure the house was clean and everything. But our brothers could go out whenever they wanted. We did everything for them at most times I felt it was just unfair. . . its always been like that in the Tongan way. . . men are allowed to
do it, but us girls have to be protected and always watched over. I didn’t think it was fair.

Girls were under strict limitations about where, when, and why they could leave the house apart from school and church. Jasmine argued her opinion of why this was:

Boys can go and do whatever they want. Girls they have to stay home. It’s ridiculous. My boy cousins go concerts, block parties, whatever. But for us girls, no, something might happen to you. Someone might rape you or you know? Boys don’t have to worry about that I guess that’s what they think. They don’t want anything to happen to us, they think we are fragile.

Lopeti spoke of how his parents were much more strict with his sister than with him and his brother. He felt it was to protect her and it is a quality that should be upheld and continued. He argued that it is a Tongan trait and that the pressure to push this practice aside and conform to American ideals of female independence should be avoided. He explained:

I feel like they need more protecting than the boys. Not only that, I know how the man’s world is. I understand why it’s like that. Protecting her and I think a lot of cultures have lost that. They no longer have that respect. A lot of people may say it’s overboard but I think we are starting to conform to American society and their influence. I think it should be upheld.

Leiola expressed that she felt her parents were concerned with protecting her and her sisters’ virtue. She explained, “the reason why we are on lockdown is avoid like, getting pregnant before marriage or loosing our virginity before marriage, they are trying to protect us.” This was a result of their status in the Tongan household that was a result of Tongan patriarchal hierarchy. Girls were to be kept safe at home and had little leverage to “bargain with patriarchy” (resources to negotiate and maximize power options in the patriarchal structure of rules that guide and constrain gender relations) Kandiyoti (1988).

Jasmine spoke of her frustrations with this double standard and limitations that she was placed under. She believed that she had earned her parents’ trust and should have been allowed more freedom. She expressed that too many restrictions can cause later rebellion. She explained:
I disagree and I think it’s unfair. Not every girl is like that. Maybe some girls need to stay home but I feel like they need to trust us a little bit more. I feel like that would solve problems because a lot of times when women get restricted too much they rebel when they leave home.

This double standard for boys and girls also affects individual decisions about appearance. As discussed previously, parents were concerned about their child’s behavior and how others perceived them. They wanted their girls to be pure and proper. This was an issue for Nanu and her parents when she wanted to get a tattoo and her dad explained to her why that was not an option. She recalled:

I know that as a girl I can’t get it done. Me and my friends always talked about getting a tattoo. . . . My dad says it makes a girl look dirty. My brother had like a million tattoos and he’s only one year older than me. My dad is fine with it.

There were also gender differences for some respondents in terms of educational expectations. They felt that their brothers were pushed more towards athletic achievements and they were encouraged to make academic ones. Malia recalled the difference in treatment between her and her twin brother in educational achievement:

My parents pushed us girls more towards getting an education and remembering our standards more than the boys. . . . I was always pushed toward education and to be this person they want their daughter to be. As for my twin he like fell away and he does everything else and they are fine with it. But I know that if it was me they would be heart broken.

Academic achievements were the main focus for parents of female respondents. Males were encouraged to excel at sports, particularly football, which will be discussed in a later section. Sports for females were often viewed as an unwanted distraction from school and often not permitted. Jasmine recalled how she loved to play soccer but she was prohibited from playing. She explained:

I stopped playing soccer because they said playing soccer was going to be bad for my schoolwork and I was going to get hurt. I was really mad. They were worried that soccer would bring it down and it wouldn’t look good for me, or my family
or I would get hurt and it would be a burden. I felt that they didn’t listen to what I wanted. I really liked playing.

As is the case in many cultures, Tongan women are expected to occupy the domestic sphere and the men are encouraged to work outside of the home (Morton 1996; James 1992; Small 2011). There was a clear division of labor for many of the respondents when it came to household chores and responsibilities. Malia expressed that they were to teach her about her future role as a mother. She described what she felt her mother’s intentions were:

She always wanted to make sure we learned how to keep a house and learn the motherly roles. To take care of our siblings, make sure we are doing the cleaning and cooking. . . . She always reminded us that we are the wife of the family and we need to take care of our family because that’s the only way it’s going to survive.

This division of labor and boundaries within the home were similar for many respondents. Boys were expected to do the work outside with the male relatives and girls were responsible for the indoor work. Leiola reminisced about the way it was growing up in her home:

Boys were the ones to work outside like sweeping the grass, raking, taking out the pig’s food, you know doing to the heavy jobs. For us we stayed in and mopped, sweeping, cleaning, cooking that was all us. Inside girls and the outside was the boys.

If one tried to step outside of these patriarchal boundaries they were quickly reminded where they needed to be and what they needed to be doing. Tomasi recalled a story of when he wanted to help in the kitchen with the cooking at a funeral and was reminded of where he was expected to be:

At my grandpa’s funeral I got chewed out over there because I wasn’t supposed to be cooking food with the ladies and all that. I was just helping, but the older ladies came out and got mad at me and said I needed to be out with the men. Here we go with the whole separation thing again. It’s cold outside and snowing. I’m trying to stay in the warm house.
Although in the home, parents enforced strict *faka’apa’apa tapu* and restrictions, many of these families, out of financial necessity, broke away from traditional division of labor and gender separation when earning money outside of the home (Small 2011). This can been seen as "bargaining with patriarchy", where men and women use their resources to negotiate and maximize power options in the patriarchal structure of rules that guide and constrain gender relations (Kandiyoti 1988; Kibria 1990). Women who were normally confined to indoor labor were provided with a way to work outside of the home. The decision of moving away from traditional Tongan protocol to provide for their families and in the process teach both their sons and daughters the importance of hard work and humility. This allowed the girls more freedom by using their ability to provide labor and assist in providing for their family, breaking away from traditional patriarchal guidelines of proper female roles. Ti explained how his family all works together to take care of their financial needs:

I have been doing landscaping ever since I was a little boy. We have been doing *‘iate* (landscaping) as a family and that is totally different from a lot of Tongan families. A lot of Tongan families experience they have just the brother and the dad go work. But in our family we would all go together. My dad believed that everybody can work. . . I think a big deal of it had to do with us living in America.

Tia spoke of how her father would take her and her sisters to his landscaping jobs with him. She viewed this work as something traditionally reserved for her father and brothers. Reluctantly she and her sisters would go with their dad and later they came to appreciate this time spent with him, she shared:

It’s a Tongan thing where yard should be all my brothers. My dad took my sisters and I to cut trees and we picked up the rubbish. He would put us in his *‘iate* truck (work truck) and we would sit in the front all shame. We would roll the window up because we were shame driving to wherever he was working. . . when we were younger we hated it we would always tell my brothers to go. . . my dad would still do that even when he was sick. He still tried to go out and cut trees and do yard
work and he would still take me and my sisters. It was his time with us girls, he was teaching us the value of hard work.

Traditional Tongan culture has very clear gender lines of the appropriate spheres for both males and females. Tongan American culture has put additional pressures on Tongan families that cause them to more away from culture or in contrast grasp tighter to it. The duties and expectations of these Tongan girls contributed largely to their identities. Although they felt that at times it was unfair and sought more individualistic goals, now as young adults the female respondents agree with these past parental restrictions and expectations. Tongan males however face different pressures and expectations.

“Biggest and Baddest”: Tongan Male Masculinity and Ethnic Identity

Respondents explained how there were gendered differences in the expectations of their parents and duties and obligations they had to their families and communities. Males and females all felt pressured by these obligations and standards. Male respondents shared different concerns and a different definition of what it meant for them to be Tongan than their female counterparts. In this segment I will discuss the stereotypes men face and their reactions to them, attitudes on male masculinity, symbolic ethnicity, cultural mirroring and recreational culture.

Tongan male stereotypes: fighting and embracing

Tongan male respondents expressed frustrations with different stereotypes that they are trying to break away from that entangle their peers. Growing up in Los Angeles, Lopeti was surrounding by Tongan gang culture of the “T.C.G.” or “Tongan Crip Gangsters”. He recalled how he had great pride in being Tongan when he was a teen. His perceptions of what it meant to be Tongan shifted when he visited Tonga on a trip. He expressed how this experience altered his attitude:
That was something that I thought was important, something that I would never forget. Growing up I had a pride in being Tongan but the wrong type of pride. My pride was like, oh yah we can beat up anyone and we are the strongest people and more like gang pride in LA all the gangs there. I wasn’t involved in a gang but I was hanging out with them. When I came back from Tonga and I seen them I felt like an idiot. I feel that Tongans here in America, they are stereotypes. A Tongan can gang bang, it’s the only thing he knows how to do. There is no connection to Tonga.

He explained that when he went to Tonga the qualities of what it meant to be a real Tongan man were things like hard work, humility, respect and kindness. This did not coincide with the “biggest and baddest” persona of the Tongan Americans he was accustomed to, who have great pride in being Tongan but for what he felt were the wrong reasons. He argued:

They are completely opposite, the difference is in America it’s about trying to stand out. . . In America they want to stand out with tattoos, proving a point by beating up people. Not even that but just through gangs. It’s standing out the wrong way. It has no connection to what people are doing in Tonga at all. They do it because they want attention, they want to be the biggest and the baddest.

Noa had similar feelings of Tongan American youth culture not being reflective of Tongan culture. He spoke of his frustrations with Tongans in America living up to these negative stereotypes:

I hate how the Americans the Tongans are acting. . . The whole wannabe gangster it’s you know, I look at people right now and it’s stupid. The baggy clothes you know, the gang banging. . . it’s just Tongans these days are just not knowing their culture and I feel sorry for Tongans who haven’t been to the islands and they don’t know the culture.

Both of these respondents expressed a change of heart when they visited Tonga themselves and were embarrassed of their actions and their peers in representing what they thought it meant to be Tongan. Gans (1979) argued that, "symbolic ethnicity. . . is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior" (205). This symbolic ethnicity can also be a distorted idea of what they perceive as being
representative of their ethnicity. The concept of performing identity can be applied as well, where “cultural mirroring” is taking place by an ethnic community performing a reflective understanding of itself (Labrador 2002). This symbolic pride and cultural mirror of what they thought it meant to them to be Tongan was juxtaposed with the reality of life in Tonga. They felt that Tongan U.S. gangster mentality wasn’t a proper representation of what it means to be Tongan. Tomasi recalled the pressures he felt from others to live up to their expectations of Tongan male masculinity:

They expected you to be a gangster, tough, aggressive. . . . I mean there was, as a male you eat that kind of stuff up, but at the same time I struggled to separate myself from the group. I hated that.

This image of the Tongan gangster was not the only stereotype that these respondents faced. Many of them dealt with physical expectations of what Tongans do and don't look like. Some were often questioned about the authenticity of their Tongan identity because they didn't fit assumptions of Tongan appearance. Mana conveyed his frustrations:

My brothers they were bigger than me. When I was in high school I was really skinny. For me people ask, "you are Tongan?”, “How much Tongan are you?”,” “You are full Tongan”?. They expected me to be this huge guy. . . It just kind of made me feel like insignificant or insecure.

These physical stereotypes added pressure to becoming athletes, specifically to play football. For many of them, being Tongan was synonymous with being a football player. Some respondents avoided this stereotype, but others conformed to this collective expectation and gave up other sports that they were skilled at, but were not perceived as Tongan by their peers. Lopeti was an All-American tennis player but quit to play football. He explained why he made this decision:

I was an All-American tennis player. I played since I was 5 and traveled the world. I used to play with the tennis team. Tennis was my sport. I quit before college. I wanted to play football. It was a dumb mistake. . . they always said I
was playing the wrong sport. Like I would go to high school and they would say, “Oh you play football, what position?” I felt pressured to play football and go with the crowd. I went to a high school where I was the only Tongan so they had no expectations other than I was supposed to be a football player not a tennis player.

Another physical stereotype, an outward symbol of male masculinity and Tongan ethnicity that many of the respondents embraced were tattoos. Having body art to identify themselves as Tongan to others brought them a sense of pride. Tomasi spoke of how his tattoos are showcasing his identity:

I just wanted to get it. I think it’s a culture thing to show who you are as a Tongan. Yah, something I’m proud of. . . . I think I felt like it was showing my cultural status of who I am.

Tongan Americans face many stereotypes and expectations of what it means to be a “real” Tongan from their peers, families and outsiders. The collectivist pressures to live up to these roles cause some to try and conform to these expectations of what they think it means to be Tongan. They feel that they have to live up to and attempt “culturally mirroring” (Labrador 2002) of their idea of a Tongan man. The result is often a distorted image of Tongan culture that those who visited Tonga realized didn’t accurately reflect Tongan culture and life. Others choose to break away from these expectations and seek more individualistic goals leading them to be accused of being fie palangi. Either way these stereotypes and role expectations have significant impact on what it means to be Tongan for this population. Another issue that these second generation Tongan Americans face is the accusation that they are not Tongan enough. This leads to the discussion on perceptions and attitudes of the proper “thickness” (Cornell and Hartmann 2007) of Tongan ethnic identity and the issues that Tongan Americans face with insider and outsider perceptions of their identities.
ETHNIC IDENTITY ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

Too Much & Never Enough: Ethnic Identity for Tongan Americans

What does it mean to be a real Tongan? This was a question that was asked when the majority of respondents explained that there is a difference between Tongan Americans and what they called Tongan-Tongans. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) have made two distinctions between what they call “thick” (comprehensive identities) and “thin” (less comprehensive identities). Members of the Tongan community often questioned the thickness of their identities. In this portion of the chapter I will discuss the desire revealed in these narratives of proving that they are Tongan to others, what it means to be a “real Tongan” by asserting their identities and dealing with the identities that others assign to them, as well as how the experience of traveling to Tonga changed many of their perspectives and caused them to question their identities.

Tongan American: picking and choosing tradition

Being a Tongan in America allowed for certain flexibilities that the respondents felt they wouldn’t have if they lived back in Tonga (Small 2001). In the narratives they explained that one of these was the ability for them to be able to pick which cultural traditions they wished to continue. They felt that they didn't have the same pressures as those in the islands and thus had the luxury of being able to select what best suited their lifestyle. Ti explains how he can choose between Tongan and American culture and use what suits him best, “I believe I can pick and choose between both of them because any culture, even the Tongan culture that I love so much has flaws and things that needs to improve. I feel there are good things I can pick up from American culture too.”

Respondents were proud of their Tongan ethnicity but were also grateful that their parents choose to raise them in America. Lopeti touched on this by stating, “I know it’s
important to not lose my culture and to understand it but, I define myself and I describe myself as Tongan American. I’m kind of more prideful of my American side. I’m glad to be a U.S. citizen”. Many of the respondents shared that sentiment.

When asked if their American identity was synonymous with being Tongan American respondents explained that the “Tongan” in the title of their identity was irremovable. They defined themselves as Tongan Americans not just simply American. They felt that their ethnicity separated them from the rest of Americans and allowed them to belong to the Tongan collective.

Several of the respondents expressed feeling that they were too American for Tongans and too Tongan for Americans. Jasmine explained, “I still feel kind of like I don’t fit in the Tongan society but at the same time I don’t fit in the American society.” Their Tongan ethnicity brought them a sense of pride and uniqueness in America. At the same time, they were left feeling insecure and doubtful of their “Tongan-ness” around those they perceived to be “real Tongans” or “Tongan-Tongan”. Malia spoke of the difference of how she felt about her identity in Tonga compared to America:

When you are here in America you feel so proud of who you are because you are different and you have something different. I grew up in an all white community. I felt proud because I’m Tongan and I’m different from you guys. I have different traditions and everything. But when you go to Tonga it’s the same so you don’t have anything different, but you are different because you don’t have what they have. It’s like switching roles where I go. When you go to Tonga it is nothing compared to what you grew up with as a Tongan in America. I feel more proud to be Tongan in America but when I went to Tonga, it was shame because I’m not anything compared to what they are.

The Tongan Americans explained that they were accused of being “fake” or “plastic” Tongans. For some this made them question their whole identity and caused them to re-label themselves from Tongan to Tongan American. This leads to the discussion of the identities the respondents are assigned, assume and reject. As well as what it means to them to be a real or fake Tongan.
Plastic Tongans: proving you are Tongan to yourself and others

The narratives revealed the theme of Tongan Americans never feeling Tongan enough and being rejected by the collective as not being truly Tongan. People felt challenged by others, mainly people from Tonga, to assert and prove their “Tongan-ness”. One of the main ways of doing this was exhibiting a command of the Tongan language. Tongan Americans are often accused of being *fie palangi* (wanting to be white), being labeled and assigned the “thin” identity of a “fake Tongan” or a “plastic Tongan”. Lola a female respondent who was raised in LA explained that when she came to Brigham Young University, Hawai’i she was confronted with this for the first time:

When I came here to BYUH my first year I started working at Polynesian Cultural Center and there was a Tongan girl from Tonga and she came and asked me, “So what are you” I said oh I’m Tongan. “Oh from where?” Oh California. and she told me I was a fake Tongan. It made me laugh but at the same time it hurt me. It made me question my identity. . . The thought of that, it crushed me because I took so much pride in being Tongan especially in America, you have Mexicans, Whites everything but I’m Tongan, I’m Tongan! I’m proud to be Tongan. When she said I was fake I was like dang, I guess I have to be American now. It kind of changed me up to say ok, now I’m Tongan American.

That experience caused Lola to question the “thickness” her identity. Something that she was once so proud of now caused her to be unsure of whom she was. Nanu explained, “I think if Tongans see me, I’m Tongan American. But I see myself as just Tongan”. There is a distinction that they feel is created by people from Tonga that creates an “us and them” attitude, leaving the respondents feeling less than or never Tongan enough. Malia recalled her experience of when her parents sent her to high school in Tonga and her feelings about how she was received by the Tongans there:

I think because I did go to school in Tonga and it was hard for me to make friends with the Tongan-Tongans. I felt like they kind of judge you because you are an American Tongan. They always say to you, you’re *fie palangi* you don’t know anything. I know they say we are kind of shame the way we are because we grew
up in America and not in Tonga. . . I feel like they do kind of judge you because we didn’t grow up in Tonga. I hate when they judge you just because you are from America. I always tell them you know I am Tongan too. I’m full blooded Tongan. Just because I grew up in America doesn’t mean I don’t know as much as you guys do.

These labels of being a plastic Tongan or not Tongan enough had a great impact on their identities. Some choose to reject these descriptors while others assumed them. The counterpart of the “fake Tongan” is the “real Tongan”, which is a label that respondents often found unobtainable.

*Keeping it real: “Real Tongan” or “Tongan-Tongan”*

“Real Tongan” or a “Tongan-Tongan” was the counterpart to fake or “plastic” Tongans, and also the most “thick” comprehensive Tongan identity. “Real Tongans” were described often in the narratives as having attributes that respondents themselves lacked or thought were unobtainable to them. Many felt that they could not qualify as a “real Tongan” or a “Tongan-Tongan”. Tia stated, “a real Tongan is someone who lives the culture and I wouldn’t consider myself a real Tongan because there is some of the Tongan traditions that I don’t agree with”. She was comfortable in stating this, even though in other portions of her interview, she discussed how she was very proud to be Tongan. Because she disagreed with some cultural traditions she excluded herself from the “real Tongan” collective.

In many of the narratives, respondents expressed that they felt lacking in areas such as language skills, cultural protocol, or even farming. Because of these perceived shortcomings they disqualified themselves from being labeled as a “real Tongan”. Semisi expressed his feelings:

When I think of a real Tongan I think of someone who actually came from Tonga, like my mom and my dad they were real Tongans. . . But a real Tongan, they know the culture and the traditions and the language. Maybe that’s why I don’t feel like Tongan.
Nanu explained when she goes to Tongan functions and is expected to participate in certain cultural protocols (the giving of mats and *tapa* cloth) she feels self-conscious because of her lack of language skills and knowledge about the order of ceremonial practices. She stated that a real Tongan “knows their place” and how to behave in these settings. She argued:

> Someone who obviously grew up speaking Tongan is someone who is a real Tongan. Then they understand the language good and knows the culture. Like what to do when it comes to certain occasions. They know their place when it comes to those things. Sometimes I don’t know when we go to funerals and stuff if we are supposed to take *ngatu* I don’t know the order. . . sometimes I don’t know so I get like scared because I don’t know.

Others had a different definition of a real Tongan that broke geographical barriers, and was a title that all Tongans could access. This concept was not specific to “amounts of blood”, location or language skills. Malia expressed her feelings that a real Tongan is someone who is proud, unashamed and unapologetic of whom they are regardless of their nationality. She explained:

> My definition of a real Tongan is someone who is not ashamed to be who they are no matter where they come from. Even if you are not from Tonga, American Tongan, if you are proud of who you are, that makes you Tongan. That’s my definition. Being proud of who you are and keeping your traditions.

Others thought of being Tongan in the terms of “blood”. Genetics were undeniable and conferred a right for all Tongans to call themselves a “Real Tongan” regardless of language skills, cultural knowledge or if they chose to live their lived *anga fakatonga* or not. Tomasi explained his opinion in what a “real Tongan” is:

> anyone with Tongan blood. I mean I’ve got friends that don’t even understand or speak Tongan but to me they are still Tongan. Sometimes people don’t say it to me because my wife is half, but I know a lot of people see when they are half that they are loosing a certain amount of Tongan. But I don’t see it like that. A Tongan is a Tongan.

The respondents had a variety of ways of explaining what it meant to them to be a Tongan, but there was a common thread or a “*Kafa Taha*” in the narratives. *Kafa taha* is translated as a single
rope that was used to bind the pillars in a traditional Tongan house. The term is often used as a reference to be united, just as the kafa taha binds and unites the structure of a house. This kafa taha was the idea of what they felt being Tongan truly meant: having respect, love, and pride in being Tongan. Respect was the first item on all the respondents’ lists of what being Tongan incorporated. Jasmine explained:

To me personally the most important thing about being a Tongan is number one respect. Respect is so important and also our duty to God, and our kingdom, to our families. I think those are the main. . . also responsibility to our family, it goes hand and hand with respect.

Leiloa specified what type of respect was important to her as a Tongan, “it’s more of character. It’s how you respect your family and your beliefs in God. Living anga fakatonga”. Noa had similar feelings that to be Tongan was to have respect, and he argued, “a real Tongan is someone who knows how to listen and respect everything. You know Tongans are really humble.”

The idea of a “real” Tongan or a “fake” one, with “thick” or “thin” identity, was a concept that all respondents had to face at some point. All have their own definition of what that means to them but there is a common thread of respect and a love of their culture. Many of the respondents expressed their feelings about their ethnic identities and attitudes of what it means to be Tongan shifted and grew when they went to Tonga. This cultural reality was different from the ideas that they previously had of what Tonga was and what it meant to be Tongan.

**Going “Home”: experiences in Tonga and ties to the kingdom**

In the narratives, respondents discussed their experiences in visiting Tonga, nine of the twelve respondents have been to Tonga. A few were sent to Tonga as children or teens to learn the “Tongan way” by living there and going to school for a year or more. Some parents wanted them to gain a better grasp of the culture and others were dispatched because they were getting into trouble in America and parents thought they would learn how to behave in Tonga. Going
“back home” was a significant experience for all of them and had an impact on their ethnic identities, for some it was positive, and for others negative.

Some respondents found this to be a “coming home” experience while others felt alienated and less connected to their culture than originally. Some found that their previous ideas about being Tongan had no connection to what occurs in the day-to-day lives of people living in Tonga. Jasmine recalled what happened when she was sent to the islands:

I actually felt at home when I got there. My mom was debating whether to leave us there or not. The purpose of going was to see if she could leave us there for the rest of the year to stay with my grandpa. . . After a month or so she asked me how’s school, do you like it? I loved it. The students were all Tongan and it was a different vibe than back in the mainland. It felt that I was coming home.

After growing up in a school where she always felt different she was comforted by attending a school where her culture was shared with the other students.

Others didn't feel so positive about attending school in Tonga. Malia felt like an outsider and judged by the other students as not being Tongan enough. She recalled how she had a hard time making friends and relating to the other students:

When I first got there my first couple months was a bad experience. I just didn’t get along with them because I felt they didn’t really understand who you are and they just judge you right off the bat. “You are American, you are rich, I don’t really want to talk to you”. So it was hard.

Growing up in America, Lopeti had his views of what it meant to be a Tongan male. It was something that he had pride in, but when he went to Tonga for the first time he realized that he was “culturally mirroring” (Labrador 2002), and that his actions were not an accurate reflection of Tongan culture. What occurred in Tonga had nothing to do with what he had previously thought about being Tongan. This caused him to become embarrassed as well as altering his perceptions, turning his “symbolic ethnicity” (Gans 1979) into a more accurate understanding of what it means to be Tongan. Lopeti reflected on his experience:
I felt like an American and I was embarrassed. I felt like I couldn’t connect with them. I wanted to be like them. Because I went to Tonga, I thought I was Tongan, but you find out the real Tongan isn’t what you expect it to be. The real Tongan is humble and living in a shack and he goes to school with nothing to eat and comes home and helps his family.

As Tongan Americans, respondents felt the need to distinguish themselves from Tongan-Tongans. They were often accused of being plastic Tongans and felt they had to prove their ethnicity to others. They felt that there was an immoveable barrier to belonging to the “real” Tongan collective, simply because they were American. This caused some to doubt and redefine their ethnic identities. The experience of traveling to Tonga also changed many of their perspectives and caused them to further construct and reconstruct their identities. Cultural anchors were also important to respondents in asserting their ethnic identity. This leads to the discussion of language, music, dance, kava and performing identity.

TOOLS USED TO MAINTAIN AND BUILD A TONGAN ETHNIC IDENTITY

Cultural Anchors and Performing Identity: Language, Music, and Dance

*Language: a “cultural anchor”*

All respondents stressed the importance of language knowledge. To them it was the most important thing that defined an individual as a “real Tongan” and one of the deciding factors in what qualified labeling someone as a “fake Tongan”. Although many of the respondents spoke Tongan, few would claim fluency. There was a reoccurring theme of not feeling confident that they had a firm grasp on the language. Insecurities caused them to worry about being ridiculed when speaking. Many felt that lack of language skills left a void and hindered their ability to connect with the older generation.

When asked about language proficiency, every respondent disclosed insecurities. Regardless of their skill level, they all had doubts about speaking Tongan in different settings.
Some were uncomfortable speaking in a formal setting, such as giving a *malanga* (speech) at a church or family function. Noa stated that he speaks fluent Tongan but he spoke of his reservations about speaking in church, “I will fumble words and I wouldn’t say the right grammar. I wouldn’t know how to say it.”

Others had anxieties just speaking to their friends or family members for fear of making mistakes and being ridiculed. Jasmine stated, “they [other Tongans] really tease a lot, so it makes it hard to want to learn. I feel that the best way to learn is to converse and I feel self conscious about it”. Some avoid having to speak Tongan at all. Leiola expressed, “if they speak to me in Tongan I answer in English. That’s how I am, I can’t get past that.” Although she understands the languages she at times lacks the confidence to reply in Tongan and would rather answer in English. Nanu explained that when trying to communicate in Tongan, her grandmother gets frustrated with her. She explained how this discourages her from trying again:

> My dad’s mom doesn’t even speak English. When she speaks Tongan to me I have to say slow down grandma, I don’t understand. I understand but I don’t understand what you are saying, slow down. She will say, "You are so stupid you don’t know Tongan" I’m like, great never mind.

Many of the respondents discussed the frustration of not being able to connect linguistically to their grandparents and other members of the older generation. Informants desire a connection with them and want to learn knowledge from these elders and feel that they are missing out on this experience. Mana expressed his frustrations:

> It kind of sucks when you can’t reach out to your elders that you are trying to have a conversation with. Your elders have so many stories and lessons and if you can’t speak that language, you just lost that knowledge.

Although some have reservations about trying to speak Tongan the narratives revealed that the respondents had a strong stance on the importance of *lea fakatonga* or Tongan language. It was expressed how many words in Tongan are more heartfelt or lose its meaning or impact when
translated into English. Mana explained how the Tongan language has more emotional impact and resonance than English to him. He illustrated:

When we talk about language when you say I love you, *Ofa atu pe*, when you say it, *Ofa* is more than just love. It’s more like I’m willing to do whatever you need. If you need something I’ll do it I’ll go that extra mile. Rather than just saying ‘love ya’.

To him the word *ofa* carried more weight than just the simple English translation of love. It has implications of duty and understanding that he felt you can only feel when it is spoken in Tongan. Lopeti spoke of his similar feelings of things being lost in translation from Tongan to English:

There are some things that you can say in English that you can’t say in Tongan and vise versa. Like, I think we speak in Tongan you really feel the conviction of the person. . . . I feel that there is an interconnection that separates the Tongan language from English and so I feel like my grandma and mom ask for forgiveness, if they were telling me in English I wouldn’t give a crap, but if they tell it to me in Tongan, you know I would really feel it.

Language was a key factor in the respondents’ Tongan ethnic identities. It was also a way for them to connect to family members, and Tongans in the community. It is a necessary tool in their daily lives and validates their membership in the Tongan collective while assisting in further constructing their ethnic identities. This can occur at church, weddings, funerals, or even home. It gave respondents who spoke Tongan a sense of belonging to the Tongan community and contributing to the collectivist goal of what they thought it meant to be Tongan. It also had the reverse effect of leaving others feeling ostracized or marginalized from the collective and even their own family members when they feel that they cannot communicate with them or that lack of language knowledge leaves them feeling less Tongan than those who have a command of the language. Lopeti put it this way, “without it, it is kind of harder to grasp and understand. . . . It’s an anchor to our culture”.

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Music: takes you back to Tonga

Music played a large part in the lives of many respondents. Not only was it a way to maintain culture, but also a way to connect to family members (Kammerer 2008). Music was a way for the older generation to share stories and feelings with the respondents. Music brought a sense of nostalgia to the parents of those in the study. Music opened up a conversation of what life was like in Tonga when parents and grandparents heard an old song that was connected to a memory and story. Nanu explained, “I like listening to it when I’m with my grandparents because you can see how much they are into it. If we were to sing a song my grandpa will like, close his eyes and is on cloud nine. Next thing you know he’s talking about his island, it’s taking him back”. Mana recalled a similar experience about listening to music while working with his dad:

When I listen to Tongan songs it just hits the spot. Because it sounds weird the one time I only play Tongan music all out is when I work rock wall with my. . . So what I do is bring a speaker and I play Tongan music as I’m working with my dad. . . I play the Tongan songs and I can hear him sing away and *hiva kakala*. He just sings all the songs. Sometimes he will just laugh and you will hear stories from your elders. That’s why I love Tongan music. It brings you back to that memory.

Lopeti expressed that listening to Tongan music, “gives me a sense of pride”. Many other respondents shared that sentiment. Thus music contributes to and maintains their ethnic identity, creating pride in their ethnic background, teaching them language skills, as well as passing on traditional and familial stories through song.

Dance: performing identity

Music was not the only performance art that connected the respondents’ ethnic identity. Identity is often argued as being a performance, with people enacting gender and identity (Mead 1974; Butler 1990; Kondo 1997; Skull 2004). In a much more literal example of identity
performance, dance is a way that several respondents felt more in touch with their culture and ethnic identities. Several respondents discussed the importance of dance in their lives and how moving to traditional Tongan dances is a cultural anchor by allowing them to perform their identity (Labrador 2002). Four of the respondents were professional Polynesian dancers at one time. Dance provided a way for them to learn, teach and share their culture. Dancing is also a source of pride for them, pride in being Tongan as well as bringing pride to their families. Mana discussed how dancing was a way to learn language skills and how when you dance, each motion represents what is being sung in the song and the story you are trying to share though your performance. If you are just doing any motion you please, it is nonsensical:

A lot of people say you don’t need to know the language to practice your culture. But a lot of times you do if you are going to do a certain move there is a name for it. In the language you say that you do this, you don’t just do your hands like anyway. There is a name for a reason for each motion. You don’t realize if you don’t do it the traditional way. It actually looks very sloppy. There is a reason why it is proper and stiff. Language is huge in dance.

By learning and understanding each dance number and the story it is telling, Mana felt that a byproduct of putting on a good show is learning traditional stories and myths from his Tongan culture that he otherwise would not have been able to access. Not only is it a way to learn the culture in language but also respondents expressed that it was a source of pride for them and their families to be an accomplished dancer. Nanu explained:

When you ta ‘olunga you are representing you family and if you do it right my grandma says if you have a pretty face and do it right that’s what stands out to everyone and they can see when you came from and your family how much respect that ta ‘olunga meant to you. I grew up knowing a little more about it when I was younger it was oh I get money, but now I see how it reflects on my grandparents and I see her smile afterwards and she tells me how great I did it makes me feel a lot better about me.

By performing traditional Tongan dance the respondents were strengthening their Tongan identities and felt that it made them “feel” Tongan by performing their identity. Lola conveyed
that, “knowing ta’olunga, that made you Tongan too. If you knew ta’olunga you have a sense of your culture”. The performance of their identity through dancing was a way to reinforce and construct their ethnic identities for these second generation Tongan Americans.

Music, dance and most importantly language were key anchors to the culture and tools that respondents used to build and maintain their Tongan ethnic identities. These tools and anchors connected them to their culture and helped them to contribute to collectivist goals. By being able to speak, sing, and dance the Tongan way they further constructed and maintained their ethnic identities. Other tools are used to maintain and construct identity. One ethnic identity construction site in particular was a location where many of these different components of gender roles, language, music and masculinity intersected, specifically, the use of kava for second generation Tongan Americans.

**Around the Kumete: Ethnic Identity, Gender, and Kava**

The use of kava in the U.S. is an area in the Tongan culture where many of the different components of identity previously discussed intersect such as gender roles and expectations, church and family, finances, collective expectations, social groups, cultural mirroring, and performing identity. Collective and individualistic goals are often conflicting concerning kava and respondents had very strong opinions about the use of kava by their generation of Tongan Americans, their parents’ generation, and its general use.

**“The Mix”: ethnic identity construction site**

Historically kava was used in formal settings and ceremonies between chiefs, nobles and commoners in forums to handle land ownership, courtsip, marriage, and other important matters (Lemert 1967; Vakalahi 2012). For the respondents, the consumption of kava was in more modern social settings such as casual gatherings commonly referred to as faikava (literally
translated to doing kava) or kalapu (kava club). The shift from ceremonial kava consumption to
the social drinking clubs is clearly evident in the accounts of second generation Tongan
Americans. The use of kava for these individuals is a source of cultural pride or a construction
site to maintain and establish a Tongan ethnic identity. Even though drinking kava occurs
throughout Polynesia, respondents found it to be a source of Tongan ethnic reinforcement. Mana
shared his feelings about kava:

> Just recently I mixed and faikava to me is, you know Hawaiians they have hula
deep to hold onto traditions and stories, and I think to me that’s what faikava
is. I watched a documentary where Shumway talked about how he went and sat
with these men who were mixing at bar and the man said, "we drink this to hold
on to the land". I thought that was tight and that’s what I think faikava is. You can
always go pickup a 40 or a six pack and go to the bar, to faikava you have
something, pride.

Semisi explained that when he was a teen his friends would mix often and it helped to reinforce
his ethnic identity and make him feel as though he was a part of the collective. He shares,

> “because everyone else was doing it I was doing it. I felt more Tongan when I did it at that age.
Like, I’m more Tongan now I'm drinking kava.” Noa illustrated how the younger generations of
Tongan Americans were forming their own kalapu (kava clubs) but that he preferred going to the
clubs with the older men. He explained why:

> A lot of youngsters are trying to start their own little clubs. I don’t like that. I like going to the ones, the real Tongan clubs. Where they have the whole guitar, old men singing. Because that’s where I learn. . . . They have their own little language in there, their swag talking in Tongan. Plus that guitar music you learn how to sing it. You learn a lot from it. It just makes me more proud of drinking kava, sitting in a group with a bunch of old men. Sitting outside with a bunch of
gangsters trying to mix in the dark with the cooler, and a bunch of guys with Rap
music going on, no.

He felt that the clubs of the younger generation were straying too far from the culture and
preferred the company of the older men where he could gain more cultural knowledge and
further the construction of his ethnic identity. The drinking of kava in the way that he described,
in the parking lot with the kava in a cooler, was not traditional enough for him and can be analyzed as cultural mirroring (Labrador 2002). The practice of drinking kava has been adapted to casual drinking settings of American teens listening to rap music that they might listen to at a bar or party. This performance of identity is one that many of the respondents disagree with.

**Negative opinions of the use of Kava**

Several of the respondents expressed that they disapprove of the way kava is used in Tongan American society by second generation Tongans and the community as a whole. One of the main reasons was the strain it put on family relationships, emotionally and financially. Nanu expressed her feelings about the use of kava:

I have seen what it does to families sometimes. I know it’s supposed to be some part of culture. My dad’s brother *faikava* and his wife will let him. He doesn’t even work, she works. It’s like what we were talking about the gender role and she won’t stand up to him and say you can’t have the money. Because they are old fashioned and grew up in Tonga. He would drink all night come and sleep all day then go back all night while she is working her butt off. I just look at them like what the heck is going on. But she still has to respect her husband and make sure he has food on the table and there are still some of my uncle’s wife is so old fashioned Tongan. I don’t like that… I see them ruin their families.

Nanu found the drinking of kava problematic when the husband puts that before his family. She also didn’t agree with the passive behavior of her aunt, which she viewed as a traditional relationship where the wife cannot stand up to her husband. She then elaborated on her feelings about the use of kava among the youth:

I don’t know how I feel also about teenagers. Our youth now a days they drink kava as if it were beer. They aren’t doing it for the culture or have the understanding of why to drink kava. They use it for the feeling. I hate that.

Lopeti also had his misgivings about the use of kava among his peers. He viewed it as a substitute for alcohol and just another way for them to get drunk. He explained:

I think it’s pointless. Because it’s another wacky way to get drunk, but if you want to get drunk just get drunk don’t do this cheap way, its a way for I don’t
know, now that it’s used it’s just to substitute alcohol.

He went on to explain how people he knew participating in these kava parities have distorted and “perverted” some of the traditional elements of the kava ceremony, specifically, the use of the tou’a (the girl who traditionally served the kava during the ceremonies).

**From the virgin to the whore: perceptions of tou’a by second generation Tongan Americans**

Traditionally being selected as the tou’a was a great honor and a symbol of purity and virtue. She was a virgin selected to serve and prepare the kava in traditional village ceremonies. The gatherings evolved into Tongan casual faikava settings as a way for men to court women. Lemert (1967) explains that a faikava would take place at a single girl’s house, with her parents’ permission. The boys would bring the kava and ask her to mix and serve it for them. The tou’a sits at the head of the circle where the bowl is placed and the male who organized the party sits on her left and he selects who is to sit on her right with her being the object of their affection. In America today with faikava and kalapu the use of the tou’a has become a controversial topic. They can be found serving in formal ceremonies and church fundraisers. The setting that respondents had the strongest opinions about was the informal faikava and the presence of a tou’a there.

The former idea of the tou’a symbolizing purity and virtue has evolved to a position that others hold in disdain. Tongan youth in America have turned the faikava into a place where they can party and hook up with girls, often ensuring a girl’s participation by offering the role of tou’a. Lopeti spoke about his experience with this social setting:

I grew up around a lot of TC [Tongan Crip] people, Tongan gang bangers, and for them it turned into a whorehouse. For girls to be in there serving them. They were Tongan girls, and the guy would literally get up and take the girl to a room. . . . It was just the way for them to hook up, they perverted it.

Tomasi also expressed his opinion about the use of a tou’a at the faikava:
That’s something that I never believed in and I would never be able to get out of the house if we had a *tou’a*. Those guys are perverts, the girl are like whores. . . . When you hear of somebody having a *tou’a* it’s a huge negative thing especially if it’s a Tongan girl you are like what the hell are you doing?

*Tou’a* that serve in the *kalapu* are paid for their service, which respondents associate with being a prostitute. The men are paying for her company and the attitudes from the respondents about this were very negative. Tomasi expressed his feelings on the subject:

I’ve actually heard stories of people having their niece come *tou’a*. Just because they know that more money will be coming in. They don’t see what everybody else sees. I’ve heard my uncle asking some girl. I know we are related and I know it’s his niece and I remember asking her to *tou’a*, and I wondered why the hell would you ask your niece to *tou’a*?

Tongan American youth also are using girls from other ethnicities to come be the *tou’a*. They use the finding of a *tou’a* as a sign of conquest and a way to gain bragging rights. The female respondents view this practice very negatively. Nanu spoke of her feelings:

All I know is they serve the kava and sometimes they can be seen as a, you know a whore. Or someone who gets around and they flirt with the guys at least that’s my understanding. Now our teenagers joke around and they have white girls go mix with them and they are giving the cups. I’m like what the hell are you doing? They don’t know what they are doing and they think it’s cute. They think it cool to be with the poly boys but they look so trashy. Our boys sometimes lose sight of what it is too. Maybe there is another side of being a *tou’a*. It’s not what it used to be, it’s just like a joke now.

These attitudes and stigma of being a *tou’a* can carry over to formal traditional settings as well. Nanu explained that her uncle married a *tou’a* and their family jokes about it often. She recalled:

My uncle married a *tou’a*. It’s weird but you see they are old fashioned. We joke about it all the time because their family has a lot of issues and it’s because of those reasons. My dad says well that’s what he gets for marrying a *tou’a*.

Leiola spoke about how she participated in church fundraisers by being a *tou’a* to raise money for her youth group. She would wear traditional Tongan clothing such as a *puletaha* (dress) and *kiekie* (traditional belt) and sit at the head of a circle and serve to the men while they drank and
donated money. She explained how it didn't bother her because it was in a church setting and her parents encouraged her to do it. It became problematic when she started dating and her boyfriend didn't approve of her being a tou’a. She illustrated how he explained his objections:

The reason why my boyfriend is so against it is when you are drinking kava you are numb and having a girl there makes them feel good. Especially when they throw around money for a fundraiser. Things like that throwing around money makes them feel good. . . . His main reason is he doesn’t want titles like American tou’a, later people to say I was a tou’a and say I already had her.

His explanation and objections caused her to avoid participating in these events and telling her mother that she did not want to do it. Several of the male respondents stated that they had no problem with girls being tou’a and it was her decision if that was how she wanted to make money. When these same respondents were asked if they would agree with their sisters or daughters filling that role they all vehemently objected. This swings the discussion back to the issue of protecting the virtue of women in the family. The traditional female role of the tou’a has become something that women would not want to do because of the negative reputation it carries and the way that kava is consumed among their male peers.

Kava use for some is an identity construction site allowing them to gain cultural knowledge when performed in the traditional setting. In the collectivist perspective that some respondents shared it is a place they are able to learn language skills, Tongan music and poetry. However, respondents all agree that the use of kava by American Tongan youth has morphed into a distorted cultural mirror of what it is intended to be. It is not a correct depiction of what proper kava use should be in their opinion and does not contribute to their ethnic identities. The role of the tou’a has also changed from one of honor to shame.

The six major themes contributing to these individuals’ identities are as follows: family influence, gender roles and expectations, perceptions of identity, social groups, cultural anchors,
the use of kava and how these areas contribute to the maintenance and construction of a Tongan ethnic identity. These areas are all construction sites (Cornell and Hartmann 2007) for the formation and maintenance of these individuals’ ethnic identities. These six themes all intersect with Tongan collectivist goals and expectations, which be seen as positive in some areas such as language, family, respect, and religion. It also can cause conflict with second generation Tongan American attitudes when they don't agree with these collectivist goals and choose to distance themselves and pressure more individualist ones. Ethnic identities are ever changing and evolving for these respondents with many different components contributing to the process. What it means to be a “real Tongan” varies by individuals but it is still possible to reach general conclusions from the narratives of this study, which are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Key Findings:

In this study I have examined a variety of factors that contribute to ethnic identity construction and maintenance for second generation Tongan Americans. Although the main focus of this study was to investigate the identities of young adult (18-29 year old) second generational Tongans, it was impossible to do so without first describing Tongan culture and identity in more generalized terms. By looking at the Tongan communities’ socialization process, collective goals, and expectations it was then possible to compare and contrast the identities of these second generation Tongan Americans with the Tongan community as a whole.

I explored the process of the construction and maintenance of Tongan identity for second generation Tongan Americans. I argued that gender expectations, biases and gender roles have a significant impact on each of the participants’ identity formation process. Using qualitative methods of coding, I was able to discover concepts that were later developed into themes. Through the narratives of the in-depth interviews of participants, key findings were presented as six major themes: family influence, gender roles and expectations, perceptions of identity, social groups, cultural anchors, the use of kava and how these areas contribute to the maintenance and construction of Tongan ethnic identity. I discussed how these six areas or “construction sites” intersected with collectivist perspective and what happens when an individualist perspective comes into play.

I found that family influence played a large role in the identity construction process, since this was the initial location where respondents began to construct their Tongan identities. The specific type of family interactions that contributed to respondents’ ethnic identities are as follows: the practice of faka’apa’apa, representing the family name, as well as family protocol
and conflicting attitudes that may arise from not following those traditions. Pressures to conform to the collectivist expectations from family were often determining factors in feelings about Tongan identity, in ways that were both positive and negative. Individualistic feelings and actions were often an area of conflict when respondents resisted the practices and goals of the collective, specifically in areas of family obligation, finance and cultural protocol. Respondents felt that many of the traditions their family expected them to participate in were no longer cultural necessities and did not coincide with their opinions of what it means to be Tongan. These behaviors were a deterrent to practicing culture and often led to them being accused of being *fie palangi* (wanting to be white) or not living *anga fakatonga*. All of these factors, both positive and negative that occurred in the family have shaped and helped contrast their individual Tongan ethnic identities.

Respondents expressed how church was an important construction site for building and maintaining their Tongan ethnic identities. It was a place for them to learn and practice Tongan language, cultural protocols and learn traditional song and dance. Church was a weekly chance for many respondents to dress in traditional clothing, *tupenu* and *ta’ovala* (men’s wrap and mat worn around the waist as sign of respect) and *puletaha* and *kiekie* (dress and traditional belt) for women. The narratives revealed that for some, religion and ethnicity were inseparable concepts when discussing identity. With Tonga being largely a Christian nation (99% of Tonga is Christian), much of their ethnic identity and what it meant to them to be Tongan and be a part of the Tongan collective fit in tandem with religious practice, duty and belief.

There was an interesting shift for the LDS respondents away from some traditional Tongan practices due to church rules and regulations. Some of these include funeral protocol, the throwing of money in church buildings and the use of kava. At times, this caused disagreements
between family members and others from the Tongan community not of their faith, leading to the respondents being accused of being *fie palangi* or disrespectful. Although some had to make the choice between Tongan culture and church culture, they still felt as though church played a large part in creating and maintaining their Tongan ethnic identity. This was true even for those who pursued more individualistic goals as a result of church policies, straying away from traditional cultural practices and putting their “Tongan-ness” into question.

The narratives revealed that the respondents all gravitated toward friends who were Polynesian or more specifically, Tongan. Although many of them have friends of different ethnic backgrounds, the friends that they spent the most time with tended to be Tongans. Often this was because parents were uncomfortable with their children hanging out with others besides family members. They felt that there was a common understanding and it was easier with Tongan friends. Respondents also found that it was easier to relate to Tongan friends because they faced the same struggles and conflicts as they did with their own parents. Thus, respondents adhered to collective expectations by mostly retaining Tongan friendships. Many of those interviewed felt that there is a unique humor specific to Tongans and they cherish that element of their friendships with other Tongans. It was simply put by Tia that with Tongan friends, “they just get each other”.

The participants in these narratives described, distinguished, and identified their gender roles and the ways they were intertwined with ethnic identities. Gender played an important role in creating and maintaining Tongan ethnic identity for second generation young people. There were major collective expectations as well as individualistic actions that resulted from gender role expectations. These issues were presented by examining gender biases, female appearance, the issue of feminine purity and virtue as well as Tongan male masculinity expectations. I found
that female respondents felt immense pressure for them to live up to being a “mau” or proper Tongan woman. An expectation, as females, that is assigned to them by their placement in the Tongan patriarchal hierarchy. They explained this socialization process and the major areas of concern were being a proper reflection of their mothers, their duties and expectations, gender biases they faced and work. These all had an influence on their identities as Tongan women.

Female and male respondents both agreed, growing up, girls were held to a different standard than boys. Girls faced more rules and restrictions and the boys generally had more freedom. Work was gendered and females were encouraged in stay in the home and learn their “roles as a Tongan woman” while the boys were encouraged to perform manual labor outdoors. This was not always a financial reality for some respondents who needed to assist with their fathers’ work, although this was typically a task of the boys. Out of financial necessity, brothers and sisters worked side by side breaking traditional faka’apa’apa protocol and reinventing what it meant to be Tongan for them. This provided them with a means to engage in "bargaining with patriarchy" (Kandiyoti 1988). Using their resources to negotiate and maximize power options by providing labor and contributing to the family’s work force they broke away from conventional Tongan gender roles out of financial necessity.

The male respondents expressed the gendered roles, expectations and stereotypes that they faced. Tongan Americans deal with stereotypes and expectations of what it means to be a “real” Tongan from their peers, families and outsiders. Some of these expectations for men were to appear big, tough, strong, football players and gangbangers. Some chose to break away from these collective expectations and seek more individualistic goals while others tried to live up to them. Symbolic ethnicity as described by Gans (1976) was found to be prevalent in male respondents’ experiences of their perceptions of Tongan male masculine identity. When faced
with the reality of life in Tonga, respondents shared that their ideas about being Tongan men were completely redefined. They found that the key components were respect, kindness, humility and hard work as opposed to the “biggest and baddest” model they previously followed.

Respondents were faced with proving the authenticity of their Tongan identities when challenged by others to uphold different assigned labels. I found that the respondents categorized Tongans into two categories, “real Tongans” and “fake” (thin) or “plastic Tongans” (thick) (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). By asserting their identities and dealing with labeling by others, they imparted a clear understanding of what being Tongan meant to them. Respondents felt that being a real Tongan was someone who lived the culture, spoke the language, and had respect and love for others. Others, often island residents accused respondents of not being Tongan enough. This resulted in some respondents questioning their identities and sometimes redefining being Tongan to include an “American” component. Others felt that being Tongan is who you are regardless of command of the language, or amount of cultural knowledge, and instead is an undeniable birthright.

Identities were reinforced and maintained by the use of cultural anchors. These anchors kept them connected to their families’ culture and reinforced their identities as Tongans. The cultural anchors that respondents felt were important tools included language, music, and dance. Language was a key factor in the respondents’ Tongan ethnic identities. It was also a way for them to connect with family members and Tongans in the community. Linguistic skill is a necessary tool in their daily lives and validates their membership in the Tongan collective while assisting in further constructing their ethnic identities.

Music played a large part in the lives of many of the respondents. Not only was it a way to connect to their culture, but it was also a way to bond with family members, often bridging
generational gaps. Music allowed the older generation to share stories, memories and cultural knowledge with the respondents. Thus contributing to and maintaining their ethnic identity, creating pride in their ethnic background, teaching them language skills, as well as passing on traditional and familial stories through song.

Dance was a performance of ethnic identity for several respondents (Labrador 2002; Butler 1990; Kondo 1997; Skull 2004). Dance provided a way for them to learn, teach and share their culture. Dancing is also a source of pride for them, pride in being Tongan as well as bringing honor to their families. Performance of identity through dancing was a way to reinforce and construct their ethnic identities for these second generation Tongan Americans.

Collective and individualistic goals are often conflicting concerning kava and respondents had very strong opinions about the use of kava by their generation of Tongan Americans, their parents’ generation, and its general use. In the lives of the respondents, the consumption of kava was in the more modern social settings such as causal get together commonly referred to as faikava. The use of kava, for individuals who partake in it, is a source of cultural pride or a construction site to maintain and establish Tongan ethnic identity. Even though drinking kava is done throughout Polynesia, respondents found it to be a source of Tongan ethnic reinforcement. The practice of drinking kava has evolved and has been adapted to causal drinking settings of Tongan American teens listening to rap music, in parking lots with coolers filled with kava. This performance of identity is one that many of the respondents disagree with. Some respondents felt this was a construction site for Tongan ethnicity when it was in a traditional setting.

Many disagreed with the drinking of kava and specifically the use of a tou’a (the female server of the kava). The tou’a in the past symbolized purity and virtue but has evolved to a
position that others disdain. Tongan youth in America have turned the faikava into a place where they can party and hook up with girls, often getting them to participate or attend the gathering by being the tou’a. Tongan American youth also are encouraging non-Tongan girls to be the tou’a. They use the finding of a tou’a as a sign of conquest and a way to gain bragging rights.

Kava use for some is an identity construction site and avenue for them to gain cultural knowledge when done in the traditional setting. They are able to learn language skills, Tongan music and poetry. On the contrary, respondents all agree that the use of kava by American Tongan youth has morphed into a distorted cultural mirror of its original intentions. It is not an adequate depiction of what proper kava use should be in their opinion and does not contribute to their ethnic identities.

These six major themes: family influence, gender roles and expectations, perceptions of identity, social groups, cultural anchors, and the use of kava have all contributed to the maintenance and construction of Tongan ethnic identity. The intersections of the themes with collective and individualistic goals have become a key locus for identity construction, reconstruction and maintenance.

**Future Directions**

As I analyzed the findings it was apparent that there are still many other facets that contribute to the ethnic identities of population members that fall outside the scope of this study. The six themes of family influence, gender roles and expectations, perceptions of identity, social groups, cultural anchors, the use of kava and the influence on ethnic identity formation could be examined in much greater depth. I was able to gain a general understanding of their identities by examining the intersection of these themes, but there is ample opportunity for future research.
Other areas of interest I would like to explore in the future include but are not limited to comparative studies between Tongan communities in other countries with significant numbers of diasporic Tongans, such as Australia and New Zealand. I would also like to examine the experiences of those being raised in areas with small pockets of Tongan communities in different states such as Texas, Missouri, Washington, North Carolina, and other locations to examine the difference between those growing up in communities with a larger Tongan populations.

Lastly, I want to further explore the use of kava for this group, the negative and positive attitudes that the population have of it, and the significance of kava in their lives. I would like to do this specifically from a gendered perspective comparing the feelings and experiences of men and women to analyze how their feelings differ or coincide. There are countless other topics to further investigate for this population which are fascinating and deserving of further exploration.

**Closing Thoughts**

The objective of this project was to obtain information on the process of formation and maintenance of ethnic identity for second generation Tongan Americans. My ambition was to contribute to the current academic research on ethnic identity, gender roles and identity, and Pacific literature by providing a viewpoint from a cultural group that has largely been understudied and ignored in the majority of these discussions. I also wanted to provide a platform for this population to share and express their experiences as second generation Tongans living in America.

The experiences and perspectives shared by these individuals are interesting in themselves, but there are also implications for policy makers, educators, church leaders, and non-Tongans that interact with this group, as well as the members of the group themselves. For example this work encourages an understanding of general difference between Tongan
community members and other ethnic groups. The collective responsibility that these individuals uphold often has broader influence, affecting family and the Tongan community as a whole. It greatly impacts personal decision-making, financial decisions and individual expectations, which is all valuable information for policy makers.

Respect and shame, which are normally considered individual feelings, are found to have collective consequences. This is significant to policy makers because Tongan youth are pressured to follow their parents’ leads in conforming to the Tongan collective. The data presented also impacts non-Tongans who work directly with the Tongan community. These individuals such as teachers, coaches, and social workers would benefit from better understanding of the Tongan community.

While this study focused on a small group of individuals from three American states, their experiences cannot be viewed as universal and true for all Tongans because it is different for every family and individual. Common themes were shared by respondents, and were highlighted in this work. Through the participants’ generosity in sharing their narratives, they helped to add to the growing literature on ethnic identity and contributed to a greater understanding of the Tongan community as a whole.
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GLOSSARY

anga fakatonga - the Tongan way of life

fahu - generally the father’s oldest sister and is a title of social status

faikava - the act of drinking kava

faka’apa’apa - respect

fakaleiti - “like a lady”

fakama - embarrassment

fakapale - any form of gifts, usually monetary used to reward a performance

fala - fine woven mats

fatongia - obligation to kin

fie palangi - wanting to be “white” or foreign

hiva kakala - love song

‘iate - Tonganized word for “yard” used a reference for any yard work or landscaping

kafa taha - translated as a single rope that was used to bind the pillars in a traditional Tongan house

kalapu kava-Tonga - 'kava club'

kavenga - literally translated into “burden or load”

kiekie - a traditional belt, often made from woven coconut husk fibers or dried pandanus leaves.

koloa - goods or gifts comprised typically of Tongan handy crafts; such as fine woven mats and tapa cloth

koloa fakatonga - traditional Tongan gifts (ie. mats & tapa)

kumete - large wooden bowl kava is served in

lea fakatonga - Tongan language

malanga - to give a speech
mata‘i mohe ‘uli - appearance of sleeping without bathing or cleaning up

mau - proper or in order

mehekitanga - father’s sister

ngatu - tapa cloth made from the bark of mulberry trees

Ofa atu - I love you

palangi - white

pu‘i - reference to being told to perform any given task

puletaha - a particular style of a woman’s dress that consist of a long skirt and a long blouse that usually has Tongan influenced patterns or design and worn in formal settings

tangata fakafefine - literally translated to “a man behaving like a woman”

ta‘ovala - any type of mat worn around the waist over one’s clothing as a sign of respect

tapu - forbidden

tau‘olunga - usually used in reference to a traditional Tongan dance performed by a woman or group of women

tauhi vā - the Tongan value and practice of keeping good relations with kin and friends. It is also thought of as a commitment to sustain harmonious social relations with kin and kin-like members

tou‘a - general term used for the server of the kava in any kava drinking setting

tupenu - reference to a piece of cloth as well as the skirt-like cloth worn around the waist by men.

‘ulumotu‘a - patriarch
Appendix I: IRB Human Studies Approval

July 5, 2012

TO: Kacy Lavaka
   Principal Investigator
   Sociology

FROM: Ching Yuan Hu, Ph.D.
      Interim Director
      Human Studies Program
      Office of Research Compliance
      University of Hawaii, Manoa

Re: CHS #20384- “Ethnic Identity and Maintenance for 2nd Generation Tongan Americans”

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On July 5, 2012, the University of Hawaii (UH) Human Studies Program approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46.101(b) (2).

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/manual/appendices/A/belmont.html

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Human Studies Program. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via email at uhirb@hawaii.edu. (The subject line should read: Exempt Study Modification.) The Human Studies Program may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the Human Studies Program at 956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.
Appendix II: Consent to Participate

University of Hawai‘i

Consent to Participate in Research

Project:

*Formation of an Ethnic Identity for Second Generation Tongan Americans*

My name is Kacy Lavaka. I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa (UH) in the Department of Sociology. As part of the requirements for earning my graduate degree, I am doing a research project. The purpose of my project is to evaluate the formation of an ethnic identity for second generation Tongan Americans. I am asking you to participate because you are a second generation Tongan American.

**Activities and Time Commitment:** If you participate in this project, I will meet with you for an interview at a location and time convenient for you. The interview will consist of 25-35 open-ended questions, and will take 45 minutes to an hour. Interview questions will include questions like, “What does ‘anga fakatonga mean to you?” and “What is the importance of Tongan language in your life?” Only you and I will be present during the interview. I will audio-record the interview so that I can later transcribe the interview and analyze the responses. You will be one of approximately 15 people whom I will interview for this study.

**Benefits and Risks:** There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. I hope, however, that the results of this project will help to understand the process of developing a Tongan identity and lead to further studies. I believe there is little risk to you in participating in this research project. If however, you become distressed or uncomfortable answering any of the interview questions or discussing topics with me during the interview, we can skip the question, take a break, stop the interview, or withdraw from the project altogether.

**Privacy and Confidentiality:** During this research project, I will keep all data in a secure location under password protection. Only my University of Hawai‘i advisor and I will have access to the data, although legally authorized agencies, including the UH Committee on Human Studies, can review research records. After I transcribe the interviews, and my research is complete I will erase/destroy the audio-recordings. When I type and report the results of my research project, I will not use your name or any other personally identifying information. Rather I will use pseudonyms (fake names) that you may select and report my findings in a way that protects your privacy and confidentiality to the extent allowed by law.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time without any penalty or loss.
If you have any questions about this research project, please call me at (808) 987-7847 or email me at kacynahl@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UH Committee on Human Studies at (808) 956-5007, or uhirb@hawaii.edu

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign and date this signature page and return it to:

Kacy Lavaka, Principal Investigator at: [Saunders 716]

Signature:

I have read and understand the information provided to me about participating in the research project,

*Formation of an Ethnic Identity for Second Generation Tongan Americans*

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this research project.

Printed name: ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.
Appendix III: Interview Guide

Demographic

1. Where were you born?
2. How old are you?
3. How many siblings do you have?
4. Were you raised by both of your parents?
5. What is your family’s rank? (Noble, Ho’eiki, or commoner)
6. Are you married?
   a. What is your spouse’s ethnicity?
7. Do you have any children? (tell me about your family)

Socioeconomic Status and Identity:

1. Where do you live now? (neighborhood)
2. What is your parent’s highest level of education?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. What do your parents do for work?
5. What do you do for work

Family Contributions

1. What is the importance of faka’apa’apa to you (Tongan value of respect)?
   a. How does your family practice faka’apa’apa in your home?
   b. In what ways can obeying faka’apa’apa protocols limit you?
   c. What are some conflicts that have occurred for you when following or not following faka’apa’apa in your family or community?
2. In what ways do your beliefs differ from your parents concerning tradition and Tongan culture?
3. What kind of issues do you have with cultural protocols that you might view as old fashion? (In what ways does your attitude differ from the older generation in terms of following cultural protocol or traditions)?

Tongan Gender roles:

1. Are you expected to act a certain way in your family or community because you are a man/woman? (dress, chores, activities)
2. What are ways you have to act or are treated different because of your gender in your family or within the Tongan community?
3. Are boys and girls treated differently in your family?
4. What kind of chores did you have to do growing up? (Different from brothers/sisters)

Sports:

1. What types of sports did/do you participate in?
2. In what way does participating/no participating in these sports contribute to your identity of being a Tongan American?
3. Do you feel that people expect you to take on a role as an athlete because of the way you look or your ethnic identity? Explain.
Religion
1. If you attend church what type of congregation do you belong to
   a. If Tongan congregation what is the importance to you of attending a Tongan
      language church?
   b. What makes you attend this church?
2. In what ways does this church help contribute to your ethnic identity?
3. What are some of the activities or duties that you are expected to perform as a member of
   your congregation? How do these expectations differ from male/females?

Peer Groups
1. Tell me about your friends (Are most of the members of your social group the same
   ethnicity as you)? Why or why not?
2. Do you belong to any clubs or organizations specific to Tongans?

Attitude towards ethnic group:
1. Tell me about your ethnic background
2. Tell me about your ethnic group?
3. What do you feel is the most important part of being a Tongan
4. What does it mean to be a real Tongan?
   a. In what ways do you fit this description?
   b. In what ways do you not fit this description?
5. What does ‘anga fakatonga (The Tongan way of life) mean to you?
6. In what ways does your behavior change when you are around non-Tongans, if at all?
7. What are some aspects of Tongan culture that you wish you had more knowledge of?
8. If you have been to Tonga can you tell me about that experience?
9. Is it important for the next generation to be knowledgeable in Tongan culture and
   tradition, why?

Stigmatizing attitudes and Stereotypes
1. Can you share an instance where you were mistaken for belonging to a different
   ethnic group?
   c. How did you react?
   d. How did it make you feel?
2. What are some stereotypes that you have faced?
3. Do people expect you to participate in certain activities (Play football, rugby)
   Because the way you look?
4. How does it make you feel to be stereotyped?

Cultural Mirroring, Symbolic and Recreational Identity
1. What is the importance to you of being able to speak and understand Tongan language?
2. What is the purpose of participating in faikava? (kava ceremonies)
   a. What is the importance of faikava in your life?
   b. What are your attitudes on faikava?
   c. What is your attitude toward the role of a To’a (female that serves kava) in
      participating in kava drinking?
3. Do you have any tattoos? (meaning behind them)
4. What kind of music do you listen to? (What is the importance to you of knowledge of Tongan Dance or Music?)
5. Do you perform traditional Tongan dance?

Any last comments?