

HAWAIIAN ENOUGH:
INSECURE IDENTITIES, RACIALIZATION, AND RECOGNITION
AMONG KĀNAKA MAOLI

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I am so thankful you all are the center of my world and the building block of our lāhui

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Abstract

Many Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) carry insecure cultural identities, or feel they are not “Hawaiian enough.” In recent decades, scholars have agreed that accusations of “inauthentic” Indigenous people and cultures are relics of settler colonialism. However, authenticating measures of “Hawaiinness,” including racialized criteria based on blood quantum and phenotype, have been internalized and imposed within our community. To address the gap in scholarship that directly confronts this insecurity, I facilitate in-depth interviews with eight Kanaka Maoli participants. Validating felt knowledge from the na‘au (gut, source of feeling and instinct), I employ what I call “na‘auao as methodology” during interviews, encouraging participants to name their emotions, thus elucidating emotional realities and creating spaces for healing. Instructed by these responses, as well as my own lived experience as a Hawaiian, I draw from the ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i term “‘ike” (to see, to know, to feel) to suggest a relationship between feeling, knowing, and seeing in insecure Kanaka Maoli identities. Not *feeling* Hawaiian enough is deeply connected to a lack of *knowledge* (real or perceived) about what it means to be Hawaiian. For Kānaka who do not code as Hawaiian, not *feeling* adequately Hawaiian can be fundamentally linked to not being *seen* as Hawaiian. In particular, Kānaka who code as white or Asian might not *know* their community, nor will they be *seen* as Hawaiian, by virtue of their racial and socioeconomic privilege. Rooted in an intellectual mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy) of Indigenous resurgence and relationality, I propose we refuse state-based logics of identity and protect our relationality through reciprocal kōkua (help, support, work) and reciprocal recognition to affirm that we are Hawaiian enough.

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Introduction

Hō'ike: Making Known

I remember what it felt like: Heat flowing to my cheeks, heart pounding, stomach dropping. A man I met only a week ago but came to respect deeply just articulated what fundamentally separated Hawaiians like him from Hawaiians like me: where we live. “We get cousins who live Honolulu their whole life and they come Hilo and...they different,” he said. “We get one name for them: ‘City Hawaiians.’” Later I learned “City Hawaiians,” or Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) raised predominately in Honolulu, but also in other urban areas throughout the pae ‘āina (archipelago), were positioned in opposition to “Country Hawaiians,” or Kānaka raised in rural areas, like Hilo. As this man, Kawika¹, explained further, it seemed particular experiences solidified this binary for him. “These guys come from Hawaiian studies like they better than us ‘cuz they speak Hawaiian. But do they know how fo dig imu [underground oven]? Do they know how fo hanapa‘a [go fishing]?” For a moment I thought Kawika forgot I was from Honolulu, until he shifted his gaze from the rest of the group to me and said sincerely, “You not as bad, though.”

Immediately, I was relieved I was not “as bad” as the other “City Hawaiians.” Then, I felt defensive that “City Hawaiians” were “bad” in the first place. I could not control where I was born and raised, I thought. I could not help that no one taught me how to dig an imu or go fishing. Then, I was hurt for Kawika because I had also been on the receiving end of other Hawaiians weaponizing ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language)—which already carries a painful legacy of erasure—to assert some kind of cultural upper hand. Even in retrospect, so much from

¹ Names are altered to protect individuals’ privacy and confidentiality.

this relatively quick exchange is cloudy. Kawika did not explicitly state being a “Country Hawaiian” made him “more” Hawaiian, but he did suggest being a “City Hawaiian” was undesirable, particularly in the knowledge it failed to cultivate regarding Hawaiian agricultural and cultural practices. On the other hand, socioeconomic and educational access to “the city,” as with a university-level Hawaiian studies program, also afforded other forms knowledge, like proficiency in Hawaiian language and history.

What is clear to me was this was a not uncommon instance of Hawaiians measuring each other’s “Hawaiianness.” Moreover, these attempts to “authenticate” Hawaiianness cause harm. If my own bodily and psychological responses leave you unconvinced, listen to Kawika’s description of his interaction with Hawaiian Studies students. Listen to the narratives of my project’s participants: Kainoa, who felt he had to constantly prove his Hawaiianness *despite* his blonde hair and pale skin; or Sienna, who felt she was frequently addressed with suspicion in Hawaiian spaces because she did not speak Pidgin (Creole English) or have extensive experience with cultural practices like voyaging. In fact, listen to mo‘olelo (story, history) from any Kānaka Maoli willing to share about a time they did not feel Hawaiian “enough.” Almost all of us have a story like the one I shared. There is ‘eha, hurt, here.

A few years after this conversation with Kawika, on June 21, 2020, investigative news organization *Honolulu Civil Beat* published an article entitled, “Am I Hawaiian Enough?” Written by *Civil Beat*’s Kanaka Maoli digital producer Ku‘u Kauanoë, the piece was the culmination of her exploration of the Native Hawaiian diaspora in the organization’s podcast, “Offshore.” Though her focus was on the diaspora, she interviewed Kānaka residing in Hawai‘i and abroad on issues related to their identities. Insecurity and worries of authenticity resonated with both groups. In fact, Kauanoë voices insecurity in her own identity, even though she was

born in Hawai‘i, raised on Hawaiian homesteads, and attended a Hawaiian charter school: “I always felt like I didn’t *know* enough. I wasn’t like my cousins who danced hula or went to Kamehameha Schools.” Kauanoē describes her perceived disconnection from her culture as “gut-wrenching” (Kauanoē 2020; emphasis added).

When I heard Kauanoē share this sentiment between tears on the first episode of “Offshore,” I was stunned, deeply grateful for her vulnerability. Even before my exchange with Kawika, I also never felt Hawaiian enough, but I assumed my insecurity was a result of my circumstances; if I had gone to charter school or lived in the country, for example, I would feel secure as a Hawaiian. For some Kānaka, perhaps this is the case. However, as Kauanoē and her podcast demonstrate, for many other Kānaka, the “checklist” of qualities that authenticates “Hawaiianess” felt endless; there would always be standards we would not be able to meet. Kauanoē and listeners of the podcast like me discussed all of these issues in *Civil Beat*-facilitated virtual talk story sessions, and even set up one-on-one meetings with some of the participants after. In each of these conversations, I felt my heartbeat slow, my na‘au (gut, core, stomach) center, and ultimately realized I was less alone. At the same time, I also suspected there was a larger system of historical, cultural, and social factors that contribute to the insecurity of Native Hawaiian identities.

A range of elements contribute to a criteria that signifies authenticity as a Hawaiian, many of which Kauanoē touches on in her article. One criterion Kauanoē does not discuss, however, was the issue of race. Such an oversight is understandable, as the focus of her diasporic work was largely on land, but perhaps it also had to do with her own positionality. First, since she grew up on Hawaiian homesteads, in accordance with the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) of 1921, one of her recent ancestors had to have at least “fifty-percent” Hawaiian or

half “pure” Hawaiian blood quantum to acquire the land. As a result, Kauanoe would have had more so-called “Hawaiian blood” than the majority of Kanaka Maoli who do not qualify for homesteads. Second, after meeting her over Zoom, she communicates the experience of one who resonates with racialized descriptions of Hawaiians. A racialized phenotype of Kanaka might include features like dark skin, round brown eyes, ‘ūpepe (flat) nose, or wavy black hair, to name a few. She has never worried about “looking” Hawaiian, and in the face of white supremacist beauty standards, has even been concerned about being “too dark.” By the two dominant racialized standards of Hawaiian authenticity, having adequate “Hawaiian blood” and “looking” Hawaiian, Kauanoe measures up. Of course, both blood quantum and racial phenotype are historically and socially constructed measures of Hawaiianness, so not all Hawaiians do.

In this thesis, I examine the phenomena and lived experiences of insecure Kanaka Maoli identities as they relate to racialization. I demonstrate that not feeling “Hawaiian enough” is intimately tied to settler colonial and racialized efforts to define, “authenticate,” and eliminate the Native—and the more devastating internalization of these efforts within our lāhui (people, nation). Drawing from the ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i term “‘ike,” which carries many meanings, including “to see,” “to know,” and “to feel,” I suggest a relationship between feeling, knowing, and seeing in the lived experiences of insecure Kanaka Maoli identities. Not *feeling* Hawaiian enough is deeply connected to a lack of *knowledge* (real or perceived) about what it means to be Hawaiian. For Kānaka who do not code as Hawaiian, not *feeling* adequately Hawaiian can be fundamentally linked to not being *seen* as Hawaiian based on racialized and state-based metrics. In particular, Kānaka who code as white or Asian might not *know* their community, nor will they be *seen* as Hawaiian, by virtue of their racial and socioeconomic privilege.

Rooted in an intellectual mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy) of Indigenous resurgence and relationality, I propose we refuse state-based metrics of identity and protect our relationality. In particular, I am guided by the ‘ōlelo no‘eau (Hawaiian proverb), “‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku, kōkua mai; pela iho la ka nohona ‘ohana.” Translated to, “Recognize and be recognized, help and be helped; such is family life,” the proverb also means, “Family life requires an exchange of mutual help and recognition” (‘Ōlelo No‘eau #1200; Pukui 2018, 130). If we understand our lāhui as our ‘ohana, healing our insecure identities can begin through reciprocal kōkua (help, support, work), and reciprocal recognition. Ultimately, despite our constrained conditions under settler colonialism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy, I propose we ‘ike—see, know, feel—each other as our kūpuna see, know, and feel us.

This introduction provides the foundations for this project and seeks to hō‘ike, make known, the topic of this work. Guided by the mo‘olelo of my aunty, I begin by contextualizing Hawaiian identity in a history of settler colonialism and assimilation, and positioning myself in this context. I then offer a review of literature regarding identity and “authenticity” as well as racialization among Kānaka Maoli. Significant here are the ways in which colonial and racialized metrics of identity are internalized and imposed within our community. To respond to these concerns, I introduce my proposal for interpersonal recognition in the everyday, and share my methodologies and methods for these ends.

Hawaiian Identity in Context

One of my participants and favorite aunts, Cyndy Hennessey-Aylett, shared what became essential historical, cultural, and social context to understand Hawaiian identities. A 65-year-old woman of Chinese, Hawaiian, and Irish descent who elected to share her personally

identifiable information, Auntie Cyndy is my father's sister, who I contacted directly to participate in this project after she seemed to resonate with the topic. She was born in 1956, and in 1974 she graduated from Kamehameha Schools, a prestigious private school with preference for students of Hawaiian descent to the extent permitted by law. As in much of my life, in her interview she emphasized how different being Hawaiian was during her upbringing. She explained,

Growing up, number one, in terms of the society of the day, being Hawaiian was not...it had a history of being lazy, being always broke, don't care. You know, it's like, "happy go lucky," I guess would be another way to describe it. [...] It wasn't driven, successful, powerful. It wasn't those things from the western perspective. And we were very much influenced in the 50s and 60s by the western perspective. (Cyndy Hennessey-Aylett, interview with author, October 24, 2021)

For many of Auntie Cyndy's formative years, being Kanaka Maoli was shrouded in racist stereotypes associated with laziness and submission that plague many Native peoples, including Kānaka, to this day. Ultimately, Hawaiianness was antithetical to western notions of success and power, so to be Hawaiian was not desirable.

Of course, there is a history here. It is estimated that 800,000 to one million Kānaka Maoli thrived on our islands until westerners introduced diseases to which we were not immune. After nearly ninety-percent of our population died, our leaders sought a new faith system to save their people. When larger groups of Protestant missionaries from New England arrived in Hawai'i in 1820, they filled the religious vacuum recently formed when ruling ali'i (chiefs) at the time, Mō'ī Liholiho (King Kamehameha II) and Queen Ka'ahumanu, abolished the 'Aikapu system. After successfully converting key ali'i, these white American missionaries sought to convert Hawaiians not only religiously, but also culturally. In the next century, missionaries and their descendants forcefully altered our expansive family systems and sexual behaviors to adhere to heteropatriachal standards, banned cultural practices like hula (dance), and prohibited the use

of our Native language. All the while, descendants of these American missionaries became affluent businessmen through the forced sale of our ‘āina, and then illegally overthrew and annexed our islands to the United States in 1893 and 1898 (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992). By 1959, Hawai‘i became a U.S. “state.” Multiple scholars have demonstrated how Kānaka resisted our oppression every step of the way (Silva 2004; Saranillio 2018). However, since dominant histories did not share this truth for much of the twentieth century, Kānaka Maoli were represented to young Hawaiians like my aunty as inherently inferior, with their present material conditions as evidence of their intrinsic subservience rather than their survival under colonialism.

As Aunty Cyndy noted, the latter half of her high school career also coincided with the Hawaiian Renaissance. Out of land-based struggles led by working class people of all ethnicities in Hawai‘i in the 1960s bloomed movements specifically by Kānaka Maoli, for Kanaka Maoli concerns. In the 1970s, the convergence of multiple Hawaiian efforts, including attempts to halt U.S. military bombing on the island Kaho‘olawe, and the navigation of the voyaging canoe, Hōkūle‘a, using solely Indigenous Pacific methods, among others, created a larger movement of resurgence for Hawaiian culture and renewed pride in Hawaiian identity (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua 2014). In the midst of this Renaissance, Aunty Cyndy recalled Kamehameha’s Song Contest of 1972. For the first time she could remember, the intermission of this event celebrated Hawaiian “traditions” by using particular costumes, implements, and choreography. Rather than *seeing* Hawaiianness as poverty or shame, Aunty Cyndy began to *know* Hawaiianness as something beautiful.

Even with more positive representations of Kanaka Maoli culture, the disempowering articulations of Hawaiian identity from her critical early years in opposition to success persisted. When she lived and worked in California for nearly two decades after high school, climbing the

corporate ladder as she had been trained to do, she felt she *enjoyed* Hawaiian culture, especially when visiting home, but did not *live* it. So, without a genuine desire to feel more Hawaiian—since she was conditioned to believe it would not benefit her—it follows she would not be concerned with feeling “Hawaiian enough.” In fact, she expressed, “In terms of looking or feeling Hawaiian enough, I pretty much generally did. ‘Till I got older, then I realized what it meant” (Cyndy Hennessey-Aylett, interview with author, October 24, 2021). It was not until she returned home permanently and began occupying more Hawaiian spaces (e.g., serving on the board for Hawaiian culture-based charter school Hakipu‘u Learning Center) that she began to feel inadequacy for not knowing ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, or certain Hawaiian practices like ho‘oponopono. Only then did she realize what it meant to *live* as a Hawaiian. Given the deep shame that was once associated with Hawaiian identity, Auntie Cyndy’s mo‘olelo reminded me of the relatively recent nature of this desire to be Hawaiian at all, much less “Hawaiian enough.”

My Hawaiian Identity in Context

Auntie Cyndy provided a necessary reminder regarding negative associations with Hawaiianness and their effects on insecure cultural identities today. However, the shame once associated with Hawaiian identity was not new to me, nor would it be news to most Kānaka. Like my auntie, both of my parents graduated from Kamehameha Schools in the 1970s, during the beginnings of the Hawaiian Movement. I imagine they also grew up associating Hawaiianness with laziness and failure, though perhaps to a lesser extent than Auntie Cyndy since they are a few years younger than her. So, I see their relationship with their Hawaiian identities as a complex mix of pride and shame. They were not at the frontline of every protest or rally for Hawaiian rights, though I recall attending a few as a child. But they did have me apply

for Kamehameha, the source through which they gleaned much of their own Hawaiian knowledge, however incomplete at the time. And when I did not get in, they sent me to nearly every culture-based educational program through Kamehameha they could.

Frankly, I have felt my share of anger and frustration toward my parents for the choices they made to do what I perceived as distance me from my Hawaiianness: sending me to Punahou School (an elite private school founded by American Protestant missionaries), not encouraging me to learn ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, not putting me in a hālau hula. And then I mention a piece of language or history I assume as common knowledge for most Kānaka Maoli—no doubt learned from one of the Kamehameha programs they sent me to—and my parents can only offer a blank stare. They did not know what little I knew. In an instant, I am humbled. I am reminded of the Renaissance, the movements that embedded seeds of Hawaiian knowledge in my education, and the many years in which being Hawaiian inspired everything other than pride that separate us. How can I judge the choices my parents made in their constrained conditions? They did their best with what they *knew*, what they *felt* to be right, and they gifted me with a beautiful life. However, that life taught me to, in the words of Auntie Cyndy, *enjoy* rather than *live* my Hawaiian culture. I was only a generation removed from colonial rhetoric that explicitly pitted being Kanaka against being successful, and I attended an elite, private school that more implicitly communicated the same message. Like my aunty, and perhaps like my parents, I had internalized Hawaiianness as a hindrance to my success according to western standards.

At the same time, I was always grateful to be Hawaiian because I was raised to know it was special, imbuing a different kind of connection and kuleana (right, privilege, responsibility) to these islands. But I also did not feel I could claim my Hawaiian identity because I did not feel Hawaiian enough. I am a woman of Kanaka Maoli, Chinese, Irish, and Portuguese descent. I also

have fair skin, almond-shaped eyes, and straight black hair. Since I am often coded as East Asian, I am often not seen or known as Hawaiian. This visual misrecognition was and, in some ways, still is significant to my sense of self and belonging as a Kanaka. However, there is something deeper here: I also felt insecure in my Hawaiian identity because I did not know our mother tongue and our cultural practices. Even though I was blessed to be born and raised in our islands, I did not feel I knew our ‘āina (that which feeds, including land and ocean) intimately, nor our community. I felt a profound loss of not *knowing* who I was as a Hawaiian.

Writing on the diversity of Kanaka Maoli experiences under settler colonialism, Jon Osorio reflects, “Some [of us] have refused to assimilate, and others have suffered great harm by their own confusion over assimilation” (Osorio 2001, 365). Indeed, this ‘eha regarding confusion over assimilation has overshadowed the last few years of my life. It feels like anger for the choices you did not get to make and then sadness for the choices your ancestors felt like they had to make to survive and then guilt for all the opportunities you received as a result of it...yes, confusion and ‘eha are the prevailing sentiments. Perhaps it would be easier to lean into the path of assimilation paved for me; if not less ‘eha, I think there would at least be less confusion. But my na‘au and my kūpuna (ancestors living and dead) will not let me.

I wrote this thesis because I see it as critical to our individual and collective wellbeing as a lāhui. Although issues of identity are often dismissed as superfluous to more pressing political, social, or economic plights, they are essential to our survival and autonomy as a lāhui (Ledward 2007, 261-262). Moreover, too many Kānaka do not feel Hawaiian enough to be left unaddressed. By articulating and addressing our insecure identities and racialization, I hope we can begin to heal the ‘eha, finding new sources of power in ourselves and our community

through reciprocal recognition and kōkua. To begin, we must get a sense of relevant literature on identity and “authenticity,” racialization, and recognition among Kānaka Maoli.

Kanaka Maoli Identity and “Authenticity”

A review of Kanaka Maoli identity benefits from a preliminary examination of the broader concept of identity. Although the *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines identity as “the fact of being who or what a person or thing is,” Stuart Hall asserts identity is not an unchanging “fact” or an essentialist concept, but rather a “strategic and positional one.” Identity is not fixed but fluid; it can never be complete, and is continually constructed in contexts of history and power (Hall 1996, 2-5). Like Hall, bell hooks rejects conceptions of fixed identities and even asserts a critique of essentialism can empower Black identity. When we make room for more than “one way” to be Black—and I would add, Indigenous, or any cultural identity—we allow for the full reality of our experiences and a self that is “oppositional and liberatory” (hooks 1990, 11-12). According to hooks, critiquing essentialist identities also means “we must and can rearticulate the basis for collective bonding” (hooks 1990, 12). Embracing our multiplicity allows us to redefine the foundations of our pilina, our relationships.² However, significant issues arise when those who benefit from our oppression insist on fixed assertions of our identities.

Kanaka Maoli historian Jonathan Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio is oft-quoted saying, “Identity (who we think we are) is the foundation on which Native cultural studies is based. No other question is as important to us, and no other question is so seriously contested by others” (Osorio 2001, 361). Osorio points to the ways in which, based in essentialism, the so-called

² Under the constrained conditions of settler colonialism and white supremacy, hooks also acknowledges well-founded hesitance among marginalized peoples when faced with the prospect of embracing a fluid, nonessentialist identity. She asserts we ought to be suspicious of nonessentialist critiques of identity when they arise precisely when colonized peoples are articulating their identities (hooks 1990, 9-11).

“authenticity” of Indigenous cultural identities, including that of Native Hawaiians, has been emphatically debated. In scholarship on the Pacific, such debates were especially vehement at turn of the twenty-first century. In 1989, white anthropologist Roger Keesing argued Indigenous Pacific identities are both unintentionally derived from western ideology and intentionally constructed as symbols of contrast to western culture (Keesing 1989, 22, 28). Thus, Keesing asserted, Pacific peoples were inaccurately proclaiming an “‘essence’ that ha[d] endured despite a century or more of change and Westernization” (Keesing 1989, 34). In direct response, Kanaka Maoli scholar-activist Haunani-Kay Trask refuted Keesing’s right to speak on issues related to Indigenous authenticity by virtue of his positionality as a western, white academic. Referencing non-Indigenous scholars questioning authenticity like Keesing, Trask maintained that by taking away “from us the power to define who and what we are [...] [they] undermine the legitimacy of Native nationalists by attacking [our] motives in asserting their values and institutions” (Trask 1991, 162-163).

Although few scholars have supported Trask’s call to silence non-Indigenous scholars on Indigenous topics (Teaiwa 2010, 205), she does aptly specify the power in his positionality as a non-Indigenous person to subvert Indigenous claims. Literary and Pacific Studies scholar Paul Lyons maintains that because of historical efforts to erase Hawaiian Indigeneity through cultural and racial assimilation, to assert a space of distinctness for Hawaiians is one critical dimension of self-determination. To limit who and what is deemed “authentic” for Indigenous peoples, then, is to “[tilt] progressive intellectuals, consciously or not, against indigenous claims” (Lyons 2010, 24). Questions of authenticity will never be a purely intellectual exercise; it will always have political consequences for Indigenous peoples.

In attempting to define a “real past” by which Indigenous presents must exist, authenticity debates are predicated on the essentialist notion that Indigenous cultures and identities are static and relegated to the past. In response, aligned with Hall’s and hook’s critiques of essentialism (Hall 1996; hooks 1990), Rotuman scholar and filmmaker Vilsoni Hereniko contends that Pacific Islander identities have never been “fixed and unchanging” but are rather continually “contested, transformed, and negotiated” (Hereniko 1994, 407, 430). Tongan scholar Epele Hau‘ofa asserts that far from being static or homogenized, Pacific cultures have always borrowed from other cultures (Hau‘ofa 2008, 456).³

Moreover, under settler colonialism, Indigenous identities are fixed specifically in the past. If settler colonialism is a structure and not an event, and operates on a logic of elimination of Indigenous people (Wolfe 2006, 387-388), caging Indigenous people in the past is yet another way to eliminate the Native. Put another way, relegating “authentic” Indigenous people and culture to the past makes room for the settler to expand in the present. Hawaiian scholar Emalani Case demonstrates how Kānaka Maoli were and are “charged with being ‘inauthentic’ as a result of our actions and creations being both not ‘ancient’ and not ‘pure’ or untainted by modernity,” thus denying “our right to exist as Indigenous peoples in the current time” (Case 2021, 66). By requiring that Indigenous people remain exactly the same as their ancestors in order to be considered “authentically Indigenous,” the settler state eliminates the Native in the present and future in order to occupy their land and lifeways.

³ Hau‘ofa asserts this static depiction of culture not only erases the ways in which Pacific people have always borrowed from other cultures, but also blatantly ignores how western cultures have incorporated other cultures, often by force (Hau‘ofa 2008, 456).

Internalization of Authenticating Measures and Insecure Identities

However, this project is less concerned with the ways in which the settler state sees and represents us, and more interested in how we see ourselves and each other. In particular, I examine the ways in which these notions of essentialist identities relegated to the past have been internalized and imposed within our own community. On the internalization of authenticating measures, Case writes,

It is not surprising that the settler state—or those benefitting from our suppression—would find ways to discredit Kānaka. What was (and is) distressing, however, is the fact that Kānaka Maoli themselves/ourselves sometimes adopted these policing measures, judging others for authenticity. Perhaps even more problematically [...] is that we sometimes kept ourselves from growing and aging. (Case 2021, 67)

While settler colonial metrics of authenticity may have been the basis of an essentialist understanding of our cultural identities, settler colonial actors are not the only ones to enforce them. On the contrary, as Case notes, Kānaka Maoli ourselves have adopted “policing measures” of authenticity. In turn, individual Kānaka have also begun to judging themselves, regarding themselves as less than Hawaiian enough.

One way we might judge the authenticity of our cultural identities is through an unspoken “Authenticity Checklist” of Hawaiianness. In his commitment to Hawaiian agency in defining ourselves and our self-determination, Lyons refutes that a “checklist of qualities” could deem a Hawaiian “real” (Lyons 2010, 32-33). However, within our community, a criteria for determining “Hawaiianness” is very much felt. Kanaka Maoli anthropologist Brandon Ledward reveals the frequent imposition of a “racialized checklist,” or set of expectations for what makes a Hawaiian, among his po‘e ha‘awina (research participants) (Ledward 2007, 193-195). Without my prompting, one of my participants, Michelle, shared, “If I had to make a list of like, all the different ways that you feel Hawaiian or that you are Hawaiian, like I don't think I would check a

majority of those boxes” (Michelle, interview with author, November 17, 2021). This so-called

Authenticity Checklist varies among individuals and communities, but includes issues related to:

- Residence: whether one was born and raised in Hawai‘i and on which island; whether one was raised on Hawaiian Homesteads or not, in rural or urban areas; whether one currently lives or plans to live in Hawai‘i
- ‘Āina: whether one has an ongoing relationship with ‘āina (that which feeds, including land and ocean) through practices like farming or fishing
- Language: whether one speaks ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, and the conditions under which ‘ōlelo was acquired; whether one communicates in Pidgin (Hawaiian Creole English)
- Names: whether one has a Hawaiian name, a name linked to a Hawaiian family, or a “Hawaiian-sounding” name
- Appearance: racial phenotype, skin color, visual symbols such as tattoos or other cultural emblems
- Blood quantum: how much “Hawaiian blood” one has
- Education: which high school one attended in the islands; whether one attended Kamehameha Schools, a Hawaiian language immersion school, or a Hawaiian charter school in particular
- Knowledge: awareness of ‘ike Hawai‘i (Hawaiian knowledge) and ‘ike kūpuna (ancestral knowledge), including Hawaiian history, ceremonies, and protocols;
- Participation in cultural practices, such as hula, surfing, paddling, weaving, and more
- Community: Integration and acceptance within the lāhui

While some of these criterion are fundamental to Hawaiian identity before and beyond

colonialism (such as our relationships with ‘āina), others, namely blood quantum, are not.

Significantly, when we impose any aspect of Kanaka identity *as* a metric of authenticity, we are

internalizing colonial notions of fixed identities and perpetuating its harm. It is this kind of

criterion that cultivates insecure identities, the sense that one is not Hawaiian “enough,” among

Kānaka Maoli.

Kanaka Maoli scholars have critiqued the inter-community judgements of authenticity

through the lens of items on this Authenticity Checklist. Regarding residence, J. Kēhualani

Kauanui maintains Kānaka living off-island, or in the diaspora, are often charged with

abandonment and “deracinated” from their homeland (Kauanui 2007). Residing in the homeland,

then, is one component of an “authentic” Hawaiian identity. Regarding appearance, Brandon

Ledward connects the experiences of hapahaole (mixed Hawaiian and white) people with feelings of insecurity. Due to their racial phenotype, white-coded Kānaka feel like their Hawaiianess must constantly be legitimized, causing serious negative implications for “individual and collective wellbeing” (Ledward 2007, 40). Finally, regarding language, in the aforementioned *Civil Beat* article, Noenoe Silva suggests the colonial attempt to erase ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i is at the root of many Hawaiians’ sense of disconnection from their culture. She attests to the joy of learning and teaching her mother tongue as a means to know our kūpuna and therefore know ourselves (Kauanoë 2020).

Building these valuable insights, I intend to place our individual and collective sense of insecurity around our identities at the center and the start of my project, rather than a byproduct of other phenomena. For me, centering insecurity humanizes the people to which identities are attached. Given the allusions to mental health and psychology the term evokes (e.g., insecure attachments), naming my sense that I am not “Hawaiian enough” as insecurity fosters a gentler, softer nature with which I approach myself in a process of healing. It also forewarns of the less pleasant components of healing that sometimes do “not *feel* empowering, even though [they] ultimately [will] *be* empowering” (Kauvaka 2016, 137-138, emphasis original).⁴

In addition, acknowledging our cultural identities as insecure calls us to be mindful of the ways insecurities can easily be reproduced. Thanks to Kauanoë’s podcast and Kauanui’s writings on the Hawaiian diaspora, for example, I realized I saw myself as “more” (authentically) Hawaiian than my Kanaka cousins who grew up on the U.S. continent. I was not much different from Kawika from the first mo‘olelo of this chapter in that way, measuring my cousins’ authenticity based on standards outside of their control. When I began to see my cousins as

⁴ Here, Kauvaka is referencing Meleseia 1987 to describe “empowerment” in scholarship related to Indigenous communities, but her message applies to the process of healing as well.

unconditionally Hawaiian, I began to see myself in a similar way. By leaning into spaces sometimes filled with ‘eha and always uncomfortable—our insecurities—I see the potential for healing ourselves and our relations.

Racialization of Kānaka Maoli

Although a number of factors contribute to insecure Hawaiian identities (as the Authenticity Checklist indicates), this thesis will examine the role of racialization. As such, we must first examine race as a concept, as well as race in the context of Hawai‘i. On a rudimentary level, race could be described as a social and historical construct that separates groups of people based on phenotype and associates moral characteristics with each group. Racialization, then, is a process by which a group is ascribed a race even though they did not previously identify as such. Race is sometimes conflated with ethnicity, or an individual’s chosen identity based on ancestry and culture. Whereas ethnicity is chosen, race is “not always a selected identity and is often imputed on people” (Sharma 2021, 20). While ethnicity has been a useful mode of analysis in scholarship on Hawai‘i (Okamura 2008), I choose to center race to illuminate the ways in which white supremacy, along with settler colonialism, have constructed the conditions for insecure identities among Kānaka Maoli. After all, race is not constructed out of a neutral desire to classify people; it is constructed in order to exert power over them (Singh 2012, 276-277 on Omi and Winant 1986). Racism precedes race. In fact, Black abolitionist and scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore highlights the inherent association between racism, power, and material implications in her definition of racism: “group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” (Gilmore 2007).

In Oceania, race, racialization, and racism takes many forms, but is always predicated on white supremacy. Although Pacific people were previously categorized according to quasi-racial

terms, it was not until the early nineteenth century that Europeans constructed racialized classifications in the region. In 1832, French pseudo-scientist Dumont d'Urville proposed two distinct races by equating proximity to whiteness with superiority and conflating appearance with morality and ability. Rooted in anti-Blackness, lighter-skinned "Polynesians" of Eastern Oceania were deemed "advanced" and darker-skinned "Melanesians" of Western Oceania were deemed "primitive" (Douglas 2010, 204). This, along with the later inclusion of "Micronesians" in Northern Oceania, were the foundations of the tripartite racial taxonomy of Melanesians, Micronesians, and Polynesians that persists to this day.

Many Oceanic people agree these colonially-imposed internal divisions are harmful.⁵ Discussing racism toward Melanesians and broader anti-Blackness within the Pacific, Solomon Islander scholar Tarcisus Kabutaulaka asserts "we Pacific Islanders have internalized the racial divisions of Oceania and the prejudices associated with their European constructions" (Kabutaulaka 2015, 125). The internalization of this racial tripartite has given rise to Polynesian exceptionalism, in which Polynesians believe they are superior to Melanesians and Micronesians (Arvin 2019, 29). In fact, I-Kiribati and African American scholar Teresia Teaiwa writes, "Polynesians are able to exercise a kind of privilege that is very much like white privilege, without their being white" (Teaiwa 2017, 170). In Hawai'i, which is considered part of Polynesia, these attitudes (in context of other racial dynamics) have produced anti-Micronesian sentiment and violence perpetuated by Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians alike. Still, even as Europeans constructed Polynesian people and land in proximity to whiteness, they were still defined as objects, ripe for possession (Arvin 2019).

⁵ It should be noted these regional groupings of Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian, have also been reclaimed as a source of solidarity and pride, despite their colonial origins. These descriptors are used in everyday settings among these communities today.

Like the broader Oceania, difference based on skin color was acknowledged among Kānaka Maoli, but race is not an Indigenous concept. Kanaka Maoli anthropologist Brandon Ledward suggests prominent nineteenth-century Hawaiian historians like David Malo, Samuel Kamakau, and John Papa ʻĪʻĪ did not see themselves as “members of fixed and distinct races,” but instead used metrics like rank, family, birthplace, and ability as markers of Hawaiian identity. Due to pseudo-scientific classifications, representations of islanders, and key policy shifts, all of which imported of Euro-American racial ideologies, race as we know it today was slowly but surely introduced and internalized (Ledward 2007, 168-169). Significantly, Kauanui highlights the aforementioned Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 (HHCA) as critical to the racialization of Kānaka Maoli. The HHCA delinates access to extremely limited homestead lands and other resources for “native Hawaiians” (lowercase “n”), who are defined as individuals with “at least 50 percent Hawaiian blood” (Kauanui 2007). Through this policy, not only was Hawaiian identity made measurable based on “blood quantum,” but this imposed racialized identity was also tied to sparse material resources.

It is worthy to note the intersection between settler colonialism and race. Although settler colonialism seeks to eliminate the Native, Patrick Wolfe argues settler colonialism is “inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal” (Wolfe 2006, 387-388, in Kauanui 2018, 9). In other words, Kauanui adds, “the logic of elimination of the Native is also about the elimination of the Native *as Native*” (Kauanui 2018, 9, emphasis original). Settlers need not kill all Indigenous peoples in order to seize control of their land and lifeways; rather, they can construct Indigenous people as something other than Indigenous through cultural assimilation or, for the purposes of this thesis, racialization.

The 2000 U.S. Supreme Court ruling of *Rice v. Cayetano*⁶ demonstrated the material implications of racializing Kānaka Maoli. The Court ruled Native Hawaiian-only voting in elections for trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), a quasi-state agency for the betterment of Hawaiians, was unconstitutional because it was racially discriminatory against non-Hawaiian residents. Even though the Indigenous claims of Kānaka Maoli were recently affirmed in the U.S. Apology Resolution of 1993⁷, the *Rice* ruling classified Native Hawaiians as a racial minority and denied their Indigeneity. More destructively, the ruling made way for assaults on all Hawaiian-specific funding and institutions as racist (Kauanui 2014, 315-317). Reducing Hawaiians to another racial group, the settler state erased Indigenous claims to land and nation, thus eliminating the Native *as Native* and expanding settler interests.

Internalization of Racialization

The aforementioned Kanaka scholars, among others, have shown how settler interests have racialized Hawaiians through pseudo-scientific classifications, popular representations, policies, and Supreme Court rulings. However, this thesis seeks to turn inward, and is concerned with the ways Kānaka Maoli have internalized this racialization and used it as a marker of authenticity within our lāhui. I see the imposition of racialization as authentication among Kānaka Maoli by means of two metrics: blood quantum and racial phenotype.

Although Kauanui maintains HHCA and with it, colonially-imposed logics of blood quantum, was critical to our racialization, she also contends racialization was perpetuated through in-group identity politics, wherein racial purity signified cultural authenticity (Kauanui

⁶ The case was brought to the Court by Harold Rice, a fourth-generation haole resident of Hawai‘i.

⁷ The U.S. Apology Resolution of 1993 states, “the indigenous Hawaiian people never directly relinquished their claims to their inherent sovereignty as a people or over their national lands to the United States.” This clearly affirms Kanaka Maoli claims to their land.

2007). She recounts an instance when a Kanaka Maoli acquaintance repeatedly insisted she respond with a fraction when asked “how much Hawaiian blood” she had. Such a mo‘olelo, she says, is “typical” among Kānaka Maoli, because “we are up against challenges to our racial ‘integrity’ that aim to undercut our genealogical ties. These challenges are tied to popular notions of cultural authenticity and biological difference through the use of blood quantum” (Kauanui 2008, 1-2). Since Kauanui’s interaction in the 1990s, fewer Kānaka might ask each other these painful questions today (though many of my participants recalled instances of being asked by non-Hawaiians). Still, the weight of blood quantum remains a powerful indicator of so-called authenticity as a Hawaiian. Beyond interpersonal exchanges, the internalization of racialized blood logics is also evident in the case of *Day v. Apoliona* (2009), in which Kanaka Maoli plaintiffs demand the state uphold the fifty-percent blood quantum requirement for “native Hawaiians,” as defined by the HHCA. Although the plaintiffs’ claims were ultimately denied, Maile Arvin contends that their demands were an appeal to recognition, fueled by a need for resources (Arvin 2019, 144). In both interpersonal and legal settings, blood quantum has been internalized and imposed as a racialized metric of identity.

As for racial phenotype, Brandon Ledward and his po‘e ha‘awina (research participants) identify “appearance,” or a “Hawaiian look”—which might include features like dark skin, dark wavy hair, dark round eyes, and a flat nose—as one of the “initial markers” of Hawaiianness (Ledward 2007, 203-204). Self-described “fair Hawaiians,” or light-skin Kānaka, recount instances in which they were called “haole” (foreigner, white) by other Hawaiians, or were misrecognized as Kanaka, overlooked when contributions for cultural events are requested (Ledward 2007). On the other hand, one self-described “brown Hawaiian” asserts that while having dark skin “wasn’t necessarily cool” growing up, today it’s a “kū‘ē (resistance) type ting”

(Ledward 2007, 192). Ledward's po'e ha'awina demonstrates the centrality of racial phenotype, especially through skin color, in determining his recognition and political position as a Kanaka. One of my participants, Sienna, even equated skin color with cultural authenticity directly. Referencing her experience in Kanaka Maoli student-focused educational programs, she remembered, "The darker skin you were, the more Hawaiian clout you got. It was almost like opposite of what it is outside of the program" (Sienna, interview with author, October 9, 2021). Much like the metric of blood quantum, these participants and po'e ha'awina show that stronger adherence to a racialized "Hawaiian" phenotype, especially regarding skin color, equates with greater authenticity, acceptance, and recognition as a Kanaka among other Kānaka. Significantly, they also imply that under white supremacy, "looking" Hawaiian also often leads to discrimination.

Privilege and Race in Hawai'i

Building on Ledward's validating and productive discussions on significant "intra-ethnic tension points" in the lāhui, in this thesis I examine an inadequately addressed component of the discourse: racial and socioeconomic privilege. To best understand the context and interconnection of racial and class privilege, we must first examine the specificities of race in Hawai'i. Contrary to pervasive academic and popular discourses that herald Hawai'i as "racially harmonious" and exemplars of "multiculturality," racial dynamics in Hawai'i are unavoidably influenced by those of the American occupying force, which marks whiteness as superior and Blackness as inferior. However, unlike the United States, in Hawai'i, "the Black and White binary is not primary" (Sharma 2021, 12-13). Holding prominent positions of economic and social power are not only haoles, or white people, but also Chinese and Japanese. In contrast,

Hawaiians, Filipinos, Samoans, and Islanders from the region known as Micronesia—Chuukese, Kosraeans, Marshallese, Palauans, Pohnpeians, and Yapese—make up the most disenfranchised populations (Sharma 2021, 12-13). Black people, Latino/as—including Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans—and Koreans occupy a socioeconomic middle ground by virtue of (gendered) variation within their groups, as well as their reasons for arrival, military associations, and thus predetermined class backgrounds (Okamura 2008, 28, 51-53; Guevarra 2018).

Beyond their socioeconomic statuses, the perceived integration and acceptance of these racial and ethnic groups in the “local” culture of the islands is critical to this study. With a focus on Black people in Hawai‘i (including Black Kānaka), Indian and Jewish scholar Nitasha Tamar Sharma observes,

Rather than viewing the Black population as the primary native-born minority, locals consider them (along with Whites) to be sojourners, cultural outsiders, and part of an unwelcome military presence, or else athletes or reggae artists. [...] In a similar reversal of their racialization in the continental United States, Asians are often presumed to be island-born residents who have created local culture through their linguistic, culinary, and other practices from the mid-nineteenth-century plantation times to the present. (Sharma 2021, 13)

Whereas white and Black people are perceived as the “inside” of the American racial imagination and Asians on the “outside,” the opposite is true in Hawai‘i. Due to their numerical majority, multigenerational presence and cultural contributions in the islands, and frequent historical and contemporary intermarriage with other racial groups, Asian folks in Hawai‘i have largely become “insiders” in the islands. Of course, as previously noted, the incorporation of Asians in local culture also has material benefits in political and economic spheres, particularly for residents of Chinese and Japanese descent. The confluence of both favorable material consequences and sociocultural integration among Asians in Hawai‘i reflects Asian settler colonialism, or “colonial ideologies and practices of Asian settlers who currently support the

broader structure of the U.S. settler state,” which will be discussed further in chapter 2 (Fujikane 2008, 6). As I will show, the nuances of racial acceptance and material benefits in the local community diversely affects Kānaka who code as white, Asian, or Black in sometimes overlapping and always significant ways.

These racial dynamics remind us that even as we resist narratives of racial exceptionalism, we must also acknowledge the ways in which race in Hawai‘i is, if not “exceptional,” then specific. In order to examine and explain our specificity, scholars have articulated frameworks based on the aforementioned socioeconomic status and local community acceptance. Many put forth a Hawaiian-haole-local racial triangulation, emphasizing native, white, and island-born identities respectively, and particularly the identity “Hawaiian” and “local” share in opposition to “haole” (Ledward 2007, 2; Rohrer 2010). Others employ a racial lens to propose a white-Hawaiian-Asian triangulation, corresponding with the “white-Indian-black”⁸ U.S. triangulation (Kauanui 2008, 19). Rather than placing Asians as an intermediary in the Indigenous/settler binary, this framework demonstrates the ways in which white supremacy, colonialism, and xenophobia operate together to eliminate the Native (Arvin 2019, 30). As with any theoretical framework, these racial triangulations are structured in ways people are not, and will thus be fallible. Both triangulations fail to account for the large mixed race populations at intersections of these identities. Even when Ledward does attempt to bridge this gap in scholarly attention in the Hawaiian-haole-local triangulation, calling attention to “hapa” identity between “Hawaiian” and “haole,” his articulation excludes mixed Hawaiians without white heritage, but instead of Asian, Black, Pacific Islander, or other descents (Ledward 2007, 3). Despite the inherent limitations of racial triangulations, and our imperfect attempts to shift them to reflect

⁸ Terms and capitalization used in this phrase reflect the original author’s writing.

our realities, they are still eminently useful to understand and change the material consequences of the people these frameworks seek to reflect (Matsuda 2002, 397).

Under these constrained and specific conditions, it is true that possessing a Hawaiian phenotype may allow for immediate acceptance of one's Hawaiianness by Hawaiians, and lacking one may mean failing to be recognized by your own group. It is also crucial to acknowledge that under white supremacy and capitalism, discrimination and disempowerment—the *absence* of privilege—is directly correlated to “looking” Hawaiian. Lacking these so-called Hawaiian features in favor of predominately white or Asian features, or coding as white or Asian, often affords racial privilege in increasing one's proximity to whiteness. On the other hand, coding as Black or another disenfranchised group will not result in racial privilege. Aligned with Indigenous studies scholarship, I use the term “coding” to describe the process by which race is ascribed to a body, regardless of the said body's choice. This term differs from “passing,” a situation in which a member of one racial group is perceived or accepted as another (often more privileged) racial group, usually implying an intentional disconnection from the initial racial group. I employ “code” over “pass” to highlight the lack of consent and agency in our racialization.

Race will always have material implications, and racial privilege frequently correlates with socioeconomic or class privilege. For the purposes of this project, Asian- and white-coded Kānaka often occupy higher socioeconomic statuses, and Kānaka who code as Hawaiian, Black, or another disenfranchised group, do not.⁹ Notably, the lack of recognition afforded to Asian-

⁹ Much of this discussion of privilege focuses on racial phenotype (which is also reflected in the rest of this thesis). However, Jon Osorio also notes an intersection between blood quantum and socioeconomic statuses among Kānaka Maoli: He says most Hawaiians do not begrudge those who access Homestead land (which requires fifty-percent blood quantum, among other things) because they believe that “those who do qualify tend to suffer the most from poverty” (Osorio 2003, 223).

and white-coded Kānaka within the Hawaiian community is often related to their assumed socioeconomic statuses by virtue of their phenotype (regardless of their actual class status). I will discuss the consequences of the interconnection of phenotype as well as racial and class privilege further in chapter 2. While this thesis focuses on socioeconomic privilege as it relates to racial privilege, class privilege can and does exist outside of racialization. That is, a Hawaiian-coded Kānaka can have socioeconomic privilege, which distances them from the majority of Kānaka in resonant, though distinct, ways than Kānaka who do not code as Hawaiian. With a conscientious and reflexive awareness of the intersections of racial and class privilege, I hope to hō'ike, to make known, the internalization of our racialization, in order to begin our collective healing through recognition.

Recognition among Kānaka Maoli

In response to the internalization of “authenticating” identity metrics and racialization among Kānaka Maoli, I suggest we recognize each other and ourselves as Hawaiian in the everyday. I intentionally employ the term “recognition” for its denotations and connotations in political, academic, and everyday spheres. As with most Indigenous nations under settler colonialism, in the Kanaka Maoli context, “recognition,” carries its own meanings intimately tied to our collective identities and our future as a nation. More specifically, “federal recognition” refers to one of two dominant options for Hawaiian nationhood, in which Kānaka Maoli are defined as a nation within the U.S. nation. The second option is seeking independence by appealing through international law (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2014). While both options are distinct in fundamental ways, they both require a dominant, state-centered authority to grant Hawaiians a request, and are thus predicated on politics of recognition.

Beyond the political realm, “recognition” and “misrecognition” are also used in relevant scholarship on racialization and experiences of “discrepancy between the external attribution of race and personal racial identity.” Here, “misrecognition” refers to being inaccurately recognized, or not being “seen as who one ‘really’ is” (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 106). Following these scholars, I also invoke the plain, everyday definition of “recognition”: “acknowledgement of something’s existence, validity, or legality” (*New Oxford American English Dictionary*). I would add recognition is also about acknowledging *someone’s* existence or validity, and for this project, “authenticity.” Of all the metrics of Hawaiianness, one’s racial phenotype (and to a lesser extent, blood quantum), is the most visible criterion, and is therefore the quickest means by which to be recognized or misrecognized as Kanaka. What happens when we recognize other Kānaka anyway, regardless of their racialization? What happens when our recognition is rooted in Indigenous frameworks of refusal and resurgence, committed to cultivating pilina (relationships) between Kānaka and the ‘āina, but also between Kanaka and Kanaka (J. H. Osorio 2021; Aikau 2019, 84-85)?

Given the political, academic, and everyday layers of recognition, I suggest we engage with previously articulated Indigenous concepts of recognition, refusal, and resurgence. Under settler colonialism, Indigenous scholars of both Turtle Island and Hawai‘i call us to refuse the legitimacy of the state and turn away from its politics of recognition (Coulthard 2014; A. Simpson 2014; Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua 2011; Kauanui 2018). As we refuse, they also call us to participate in resurgence, in which we build alternative, decolonial futures that centers our modes of knowing, being, relating, and acting (Corntassel 2021; Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua 2014; J.H. Osorio 2021). In the same way we ought to turn away from the settler colonial state in the political realm, I propose we also turn away in the interpersonal realm, refusing state-produced

“authenticating” and racializing metrics of identity. Instead, following a core tenant of resurgence that emphasizes everyday actions (Corntassel et al. 2017), we ought to recognize each other as Kanaka Maoli on our own terms.

To this end, I engage the previously mentioned ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i word, “‘ike,” which carries many meanings including “to see,” “to know,” and “to feel.” Significantly, the grammar of ‘ike instructs that the term is inherently reciprocal; if I ‘ike, see, another, they must also ‘ike, see, me. Such a linguistic detail reveals the centrality of reciprocity in the Hawaiian worldview, with crucial implications for everyday recognition in this project. Further, I invoke the the ‘ōlelo no‘eau “‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku, kōkua mai; pela iho la ka nohona ‘ohana” (Recognize and be recognized, help and be helped; such is family life), connecting reciprocal recognition with reciprocal action, which will be discussed at length in chapter 2. I further examine the nuances of recognition, refusal, and resurgence, as well as our opportunities for seeing each other as Hawaiian in chapter 3.

Building Our Methodologies

As I approach a project dealing with inherently personal and sensitive subject matter, I must also confront the colonial legacy of academic research. While it may be tempting and sometimes necessary to devote all of our efforts to critiquing western intellectual hegemony, Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggests that, in a decolonizing framework, a key component of deconstruction is creating something new (Smith 1999, 3-4). This thesis seeks to follow in the work of my intellectual ancestors to build as we dismantle, constructing and employing our own methodologies to serve our needs. In this section, I introduce my two core methodological frameworks: na‘auao as methodology and lāhui in Oceania.

Na‘auao as Methodology

Rejecting colonial guises of objectivity in scholarship, this thesis is predicated on validating knowledge that is felt, or “felt knowledge.” Aligned with Indigenous epistemologies, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i reveals just how embedded knowledge is with feeling. Indeed, ‘ike not only means “to see,” “to know,” and “to feel,” but also “knowledge” itself. “Na‘auao,” which is commonly translated as “intelligence” or “wisdom,” offers a particularly useful framework to legitimize and produce felt knowledge. Kanaka Maoli scholar Manulani Aluli Meyer examines na‘auao in its parts: “na‘au,” meaning gut or intestines as well as the source of feeling, and “ao,” meaning day, daylight, or enlightened. I would also add that a term similar to “ao,” “a‘o,” refers to the process of learning and teaching (Pukui and Elbert). Beyond the English definition of “intelligence” and its frequent associations with the mind, na‘auao refers to an “enlightened gut,” or knowing through the body, including both instinctual and emotional responses. Informed by an Indigenous awareness of knowledge derived from the mind and the body, I build on Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million’s “felt theory,” which centers the lived experiences of Indigenous people. Rather than examining personal narratives and ascribing feelings in retrospect, I invite participants to contribute to their felt knowledge by identifying their emotions during the interview process. I expand on the theoretical undergirding of na‘auao as methodology in chapter 1, and show how such an approach was useful not only to illuminate emotional realities for this project, but also to provide spaces for healing in the interview itself.

Lāhui in Oceania

As I engage in this work, I am mindful of the stakes involved in examining what it means to be Hawaiian. Jon Osorio asserts, “For Kānaka Maoli, at least, studying our own culture is no

mere academic exercise. We are trying to survive” (Osorio 2001, 376). If our collective identity is a matter of survival, then all researchers, including Hawaiian ones like myself, engaging on the issue must proceed with care. To guide my project, I follow one of Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua’s “Methodological Ropes for Research and Resurgence,” or central commitments and lines of inquiry that undergird Hawaiian studies scholarship: *lāhui*.¹⁰ *Lāhui* is often translated as Hawaiian people, group, or nation, but for the purposes of this methodology, Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua describes the *lāhui* as concerned with “collective identity and self-definition.” She offers four questions for this ‘aho (rope) that informed my project:

- Does this research help Kanaka Maoli assert who we are as a people on our own terms?
- Does it help us assess and understand our collective status?
- Does it propose ways to improve our collective well-being as a people?
- Does it critically examine what is at stake when defining “Hawaiianness”? (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua 2019, 2)

Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua contextualizes these questions in what she calls the broader and ongoing “who we are/who are we” dialectic in the field of Hawaiian studies. Particularly given the U.S. occupation of Hawai‘i, there is a “need to strategically assert and nurture our collective identity in the face of American discourses of assimilation and citizenship, without getting stuck in idealized and ossified notions of exactly who we are as ‘Ōiwi” (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua 2019, 7).¹¹

While questions pertaining to what makes a Hawaiian, Hawaiian are critical to Hawaiian studies, I am also acutely aware that I am not writing a Hawaiian studies thesis, but a Pacific Islands studies thesis. Teresia Teaiwa makes the difference between Native studies, such as Hawaiian studies or Māori studies, and Pacific studies explicit: “Whether we agree that it is necessary and useful or not, nationalistic ethnocentrism is more likely to emerge from Native

¹⁰ Although all four of the ‘aho (ropes)—*lāhui*, *ea*, *kuleana*, and *pono*—informed my approach, I see *lāhui* as most fundamental to my work.

¹¹ This concern resonates with that of bell hooks regarding postmodern blackness (1990). What is at stake for our collective identity when we resist essentialism? What could be gained?

Studies than Pacific Studies” (Teaiwa 2010, 208). To be sure, Hawai‘i’s status as an occupied nation makes its history and present situation distinct from that of much of the Pacific, most of which is independent. For those of us in Oceania who are still working against settler colonialism (not neocolonialism), nationalist tendencies are more commonplace. But nationalism will not be enough; we must acknowledge and cultivate our relations with the broader Pacific region.

Some may see my specific engagement with lāhui—which is more often understood as “nation” than any other definition in everyday discourse—both in methodology and in the content of my project, as contradictory to Teaiwa’s warning. If I am being honest, balancing my commitments to both Hawai‘i and the broader Oceania is no easy task. However, I have the benefit of modeling my kuleana to both my lāhui and my region after Pacific Studies scholars like Emalani Case, who is Kanaka Maoli and now lives and works in Aotearoa. She points to mo‘olelo of Papahānaumoku, the mythologized deity Earth Mother, to remind us that Papa birthed Hawai‘i but was also from Kahiki, which references Tahiti and our ancestral homeland. Case writes,

Papa herself is proof that we are both Hawai‘i and Kahiki simultaneously, and her stories provide us with the opportunity to reflect on how these identities need not exist in constant tension but, like Hawai‘i and Kahiki themselves, can be coconstitutive parts of what makes us whole. (Case 2021, 29)

If “Kahiki” represents the broader Oceania, Case shows I can be both Hawai‘i and Oceania, both national and regional, simultaneously; they can both be parts of what makes me whole.

In our present conditions, tensions between commitments to lāhui and Oceania do exist, but I see them as productive. In the first place, by elucidating a more expansive notion of Hawaiianness, I see my thesis as an opportunity to further wrestle with the distinction between “lāhui” and “nation.” Lāhui can be defined as “nation, race, tribe, people, nationality; great company of people; species, as of animals or fish; breed, national or racial” (Pukui and Elbert).

Given the racialization and minoritization of Kanaka Maoli under the U.S. settler state, it is not hard to see how “lāhui” has become so closely associated with our nation. However, Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua examines the components of the term—“la” as it relates to lau (leaf) and “hui” meaning a group or to unite—to describe lāhui as “both a singular, organic body with branches that nourish the whole and a gathering of distinct, pre-existing elements combining to form a new entity” (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua 2011, 139). Indeed, lāhui is also a verb, meaning “to assemble, gather together” (Pukui and Elbert). Beyond defining a nation in mere statist or western logics, then, lāhui also embodies the Hawaiian people, as well as the processes by which Kānaka connect. By examining what makes up and defines the lāhui beyond state-centered structures (including racialized logics of identity), we might work to dismantle nationalist tendencies within our scholarship. We might even see Hawaiian sovereignty as, in the words of Joy Enomoto, “something more than narrow nationalism” (Enomoto 2017).

Second, in “turning away” from the colonizer and self-recognizing the lāhui, I see an opportunity to also recognize Hawai‘i as an integrated part of Oceania—not as exceptional to nor at the “center of” the Pacific (as introductory University of Hawai‘i course titles might indicate). In recent years, more and more scholars are critiquing Hawaiian exceptionalism, an ideology that promotes Hawai‘i as the positive deviation from the effects of U.S. colonization and as especially capable of adopting westernization and self-govern (Kauanui 2018, 5-6). Staying true to my commitments to Hawai‘i and Oceania means, for instance, disrupting Polynesian exceptionalism and understanding we Kānaka are just as connected and obligated to our Tongan and Samoan relatives as we are to our Chuukese and Palauan kin. It means acknowledging how our inherited anti-Blackness is embedded in widespread anti-Micronesian sentiment (Tengan 2021; Sharma 2021, 19). It also means acknowledging value in the ways our Pacific and

Indigenous relatives identify with their own homelands and communities that can often teach us about our own Kanaka identities, which will be discussed further in the thesis's conclusion. By both recognizing the lāhui beyond the inherently statist boundaries of the “nation” and recognizing Hawai‘i’s position as part of (not an exception to) Oceania, I attempt to follow Teaiwa’s call to “live up to the Pacific” (Teaiwa 2010, 211).

Conducting Interviews

Employing na‘auao as methodology and committing to lāhui in Oceania, the primary focus of my research is semi-structured interviews. As with the practice of “talk story” in Hawai‘i (Tengan 2008, 19, 164-165), as well as related research methods used in other Pacific contexts (Naepi 2019), these interviews worked to primarily build relationships and understanding between parties and secondarily share information. I facilitated interviews with eight consenting Kanaka Maoli adults who were willing to discuss potentially sensitive issues related to Hawaiian identity and racialization. Since the goal of this thesis is not to assert a universal understanding of Hawaiian identity among all Hawaiians—which I would argue is not possible or even desirable given the diversity of our community—but rather to share the extensive stories of a few Hawaiians, this project has a relatively small sample size. Due to the focus of this thesis, in my call for research participants, I showed preference for those who felt they did not “look” Hawaiian or have “enough” Hawaiian blood, though this was not required.¹² Notably, I also gave preference for Kānaka who have spent most of their lives living in Hawai‘i, or would not consider themselves part of the Hawaiian diaspora. To be clear (as noted in the

¹² Insecure identities, not racialization, is the focus of this project, so being directly impacted by these racializing criteria was not required for participation. Notably, I did not determine whether a participant “looks” Hawaiian so as not to reinforce these racializing structures. I did, however, ask participants to self-identify as possessing or not possessing a “Hawaiian racial phenotype.”

call), I excluded diasporic Kānaka not because they are any less essential to our lāhui, but because work has already been done in the area (see Kauanui 2007, Kauanoē 2020). My project focuses on the phenomena of insecure identities even with the “security” of a homeland.

Aligned with Indigenous Pacific research practices, participants were not selected randomly, but were individuals with whom I shared a pre-existing relationship and intend to continue our relationship beyond this project. In terms of our relationships, participants ranged from blood relatives to classmates, from people with whom I interact regularly and those from whom I was surprised to receive contact. No matter our relation, the fact that we had one was critical, I believe, to our willingness to be vulnerable and ultimately the richness of our conversations. However, given my own positionality, operating within my personal network also limited the range of intersecting identities represented in my participant pool, particularly regarding socioeconomic status and gender identity, as well as age and sexuality, which will be discussed further in chapter 1.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the relevant guidelines outlined by the Center for Disease Control, the State of Hawai‘i, and the University of Hawai‘i, all but one interview was conducted online via Zoom.¹³ While this may have limited the potential for relationship cultivation in-person, it also expanded some opportunities, as two participants called from their residences off-island. Moreover, by the time I conducted these interviews (October-November 2021), we had over one and a half years of experience with online methods of communication and navigated them with ease. Zoom also made recording the audio and visual components of the interviews easy, which I transcribed with the assistance of an artificial intelligence software.

¹³ Only the interview with my aunty was in-person, as was her preference. We see each other regularly outside of this interview anyway, so exposure was limited.

Following the lead of Kanaka Maoli scholar Ty Kāwika Tengan and other Pacific scholars, I engaged contributors in every stage of the project in which they chose to participate (Tengan 2005). As indicated on their consent form (which had to be signed before the interview began), participants had the option of receiving a copy of the thesis either in its entirety or in sections pertaining to them before it was released. While this process allowed for the incorporation of participants' ideas and perspectives in my project, more importantly, it helped protect their privacy and confidentiality. Participants could choose to disclose their identifiable information or use pseudonyms. Even with pseudonyms, since my project articulates in-depth accounts of our interviews, the information included may be used to identify participants. Their review of the final draft before dissemination mitigated potential risk of identification. Through these practices, I hoped to disrupt the trend of academic exploitation and prioritize my relationships with my participants.

Chapter Overview

As previous sections suggest, how I do this work—the methodologies and methods—matters in this project. This thesis thus begins in chapter 1 with a deeper examination of one component of the “how,” na‘auao as methodology. I provide a brief introduction to the salience of felt knowledge in Kanaka Maoli epistemologies, but the lack scholarship on felt knowledge as a methodology. Looking to another Indigenous context, I build on Dian Million’s “felt theory” to propose a collaborative process in which participants produce their own felt knowledge during the interview process by identifying their emotions. I show how employing na‘auao as methodology with my participants clarified their emotional realities and, perhaps more importantly, created spaces for healing.

In chapter 2, I examine the lived experiences of insecure Kanaka Maoli identities through participant interviews. Drawing from the many meanings of “‘ike,” including to see, to know, and to feel, I suggest a relationship between knowing, feeling, and seeing Hawaiianess. I argue *feeling* Hawaiian enough is connected to being *seen* as Hawaiian, but it is also intimately tied to *knowledge* (real or perceived) of what it means to be Kanaka Maoli. In particular, Kānaka who code as Asian or white might not *know* the broader Hawaiian community by virtue of their racial and socioeconomic privilege. Informed by an ‘ōlelo no‘eau that connects “‘ike” to “kōkua” (help, support), I show how reciprocal recognition is connected to reciprocal action.

In chapter 3, I propose a pathway for healing rooted in Indigenous articulations of recognition, refusal, and resurgence. After providing a brief review of the convergences and divergences in these terms, I suggest two key principles to guide our practice to recognize each other as Hawaiian: refuse state-based logics of identity and protect our relationality. Instructed by responses from my participants, I also offer practices to apply these principles in the everyday. Finally, I conclude by looking beyond this project’s focus, relationships between Kānaka Maoli, to briefly highlight the value of cultivating relationships between Hawaiians and other Oceanic and Indigenous peoples in creating more secure identities. By fostering more secure relationships, we can foster more secure identities, building futures in which all Kānaka feel Hawaiian enough.

Conclusion: Gathering Together

In 2019, a Kanaka Maoli woman I had only met a few weeks earlier but came to respect deeply told me what separated Hawaiians like her from Hawaiians like me. This woman, Logan,

introduced me to her friend, Joe, an older haole man.¹⁴ He was mostly well-intentioned, except when the topic of mine and Logan’s shared Hawaiianness arose, and he asked me the dreaded question: “You’re Hawaiian? How much?” I remember what it felt like: heart racing, na‘au tightening, palms sweating. My automatic response kicked in, wanting to escape the situation, excusing him because of his age, and at the time, not quite knowing or understanding just how harmful a question like this was, one I had responded to and even asked others numerous times over the course of my life. I conceded to give him a fraction as a “measure” of my Hawaiian “blood.” Looking at Joe, Logan quickly followed with, “That’s about how much I am, you know.” And the conversation moved on. In that moment, Logan invoked *lāhui* as a verb, gathering us together, conveying that nothing separated Hawaiians like her from Hawaiians like me—not even statist and racialized metrics of identity. In that moment, Logan recognized me as Kanaka and offered me *kōkua*, support.

Years later, I asked Logan to participate in this project and she thankfully agreed, becoming one of my contributors. I recounted this exchange with Joe to her, sharing this occurrence as one of the reasons why I asked her to participate, and expressing my gratitude for this moment of seeing. But she could not recall it. She was glad she said something, but disappointed Joe asked the question at all, exclaiming, “What a dumb thing to say.” While some may interpret her forgetting as a lack of care or intent in her act of recognition, I see it as an indicator that she recognizes so frequently, so generously, that this one event did not stand out. In fact, she could not help but validate me and my Hawaiianness during the course of our interview. For Logan, recognizing other Hawaiians as Hawaiians happened every day. This is exactly the kind of everyday interaction grounded in reciprocal recognition and action that I

¹⁴ Pseudonyms are used to protect individuals’ privacy and confidentiality.

advocate for. With my thesis as a humble contribution, I ultimately hope to build a future in which our lāhui is filled with moments of seeing, knowing, and feeling like these.

Chapter 1

Na‘auao as Methodology

When I sat down to talk story with my contributors about insecure identities and racialization among Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians), I anticipated narratives about not feeling Hawaiian “enough.” I was less prepared to hear accounts of not feeling Hawaiian at all. Recalling a high school hula performance, Michelle¹⁵, a 24-year-old elementary school teacher, remarked, “I [felt] like I shouldn't be in the front row ‘cause I'm, like, not Hawaiian.” This was not the first time Michelle, who is Native Hawaiian, conveyed this sentiment during our interview. I pointed out this pattern to her later, along with an admittedly terse exclamation, “But you *are* Hawaiian!” Between laughs and nods, she replied, “Well, that’s the way I felt.” She *felt* like she was not Hawaiian.

The rest of her mo‘olelo (story, history) reveals that her hesitance to claim her Hawaiian identity is fundamentally connected to her appearance. “I don’t look Hawaiian enough,” she expressed, “so do I have the right to feel Hawaiian enough? I don’t know” (Michelle, interview with author, November 17, 2021). It is this experience of *feeling* that is deeply embedded with insecure identities and racialization among Kanaka Maoli. Here, the many layers of ‘ike (to see, to know, to feel) are visible: Michelle did not *feel* Hawaiian because she was not *seen* as Hawaiian, which will be discussed further in chapter 2. Moreover, as the term “‘ike” also demonstrates, the knowledge that derives from this feeling—or felt knowledge—is central, not only to these issues of insecure identities and racialization, but also to Hawaiian and, more broadly, Indigenous epistemologies.

¹⁵ All contributors are referenced with pseudonyms to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

How can felt knowledge contribute to an understanding of insecure identities and experiences of racialization among Kanaka Maoli? How can it contribute to our visions of genuinely secure futures? In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical foundation for this project's methodology and, with it, the basis of the project itself. I demonstrate that felt knowledge as a methodology can not only refuse hegemonic notions of "objectivity" in the academy, but can also act as the foundation for our own methodologies. Drawing from Dian Million's felt theory, I offer what I call "na'auao as methodology," a process of inviting participants to contribute to and create their own felt knowledge by naming their emotions. I suggest this na'auao as methodology allows for a deeper understanding of Kanaka Maoli experiences, creates spaces of healing, and can transform shame into action for more secure futures. This chapter also briefly introduces the Kānaka who employed this methodology and rest at the heart of this project: my eight participants.

While the introduction strived to show I am deeply invested in the content of this work, this chapter seeks to portray my commitment to the methodologies that frame it. I am a strong believer that *how* you do something matters, and in this instance, I have a kuleana—a right, privilege, and responsibility—to my participants and the ways in which I engage with them. I was taught our kuleana is a profound obligation to our mo'okū'auhau and community that can bring both burdens and joys, and can bring both simultaneously. Indeed, the work of parsing through another's experiences of rejection and loss, and often dealing with my own similar experiences at the same time, can be emotionally taxing. I sometimes feel like I am the last person who should be doing it. Then, I feel the sincere gratitude from my participants for the opportunity to talk about these issues or for contributing to the wellbeing of our lāhui, and I

know I am on the right path. Through the validation of felt knowledges and collaboration in producing it, we might begin to repair the very relationships that colonialism seeks to destroy.

Na‘auao, the Enlightened Gut

Refusing hegemonic notions of a single, knowable truth and so-called unbiased researchers has been a critical element of decolonizing the academy in recent decades. One component of refusing guises of objectivity in scholarship is validating knowledge that is felt. As an inherently subjective embrace of emotion and lived experience, felt knowledge is aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing rooted in the mind and body. Indeed, for Hawaiians, the intertwined nature of feeling, knowing, and seeing is clear in the many meanings of the aforementioned term “‘ike.” According to Pukui and Elbert, ‘ike is defined as:

To see, know, feel, greet, recognize, perceive, experience, be aware, understand; to know sexually (For. 4:275); to receive revelations from the gods; knowledge, awareness, understanding, recognition, comprehension and hence learning; sense, as of hearing or sight; sensory, perceptive, vision. (Pukui and Elbert)

While this thesis engages most directly with the first three definitions, it is fruitful to acknowledge the embodied nature of perception in Kanaka Maoli epistemologies. Knowing, seeing, and feeling engages all of the senses, both physical and emotional. Our knowledge, then, cannot be divorced from our body or our feeling.

Kanaka Maoli scholars have indirectly referenced the salience of legitimizing felt knowledge in scholarship. Manulani Aluli Meyer identifies knowledge deriving from the mind and the body as a key epistemological theme of Native Hawaiian education. She breaks down the term “na‘auao,” which can be translated as intelligence or wisdom, to its parts: “na‘au,” meaning gut or intestines as well as the source of feeling, and “ao,” meaning day, daylight, or enlightened. More than the English definition of “intelligence,” na‘auao refers to an “enlightened gut,” or

knowing through feeling, which, Meyer suggests, is “at the core of our embodied knowledge system” (Meyer 2001, 142).

Like most Kanaka Maoli scholars, Meyer recognizes the significance of felt knowledge in our epistemologies, but she does not directly engage with it as a methodology. Few scholars have engaged with felt knowledge as methodology through discussions of the na‘au, often through a brief mention of the importance of paying attention to one’s na‘au, or gut feeling, in the process of research. In my review, Kū Kahakalau offers the most extensive (while still relatively short) discussion of the na‘au in a methodological framework, describing na‘au as a mode of connection with the “tacit ‘ike (knowledge base) of our ancestors.” Positioned in the “Ho‘olu‘u” (Immersion) phase of the Mā‘awe Pono (the right track of honor and responsibility) methodology, a period of intense contemplation of research material, the na‘au is employed as a means to “measure what is pono, or righteous” and “find solutions” (Kahakalau 2019, 20-21). Even in the infrequent instances when na‘au is incorporated in Hawaiian methodologies, it is often understood as a “gut feeling” and instinct rather than an emotional feeling or affect.

I believe this tendency to describe na‘au in methodology as instinctual rather than emotional is reflective of a broader cultural assumption to the same effect. One might also argue that the embrace of the more masculine “instinct” over the more feminine “emotion” when defining na‘au is particularly reflective of the heteropatriarchy entrenched in Kanaka communities. However, according to Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel Elbert, na‘au refers to “intestines, bowels, guts; mind, heart, affections; of the heart or mind; mood, temper, feelings. *Figuratively*, child” (Pukui and Elbert). When we talk about na‘au feelings, then, both the instinctual and the emotional matter—arguably, the emotional matters more according to this definition—so we must engage our scholarship as such.

To this end, I look to Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million's "felt theory," which centers the lived experiences of Indigenous women to disrupt "objective" narratives written about them (Leonard 2021, 222 on Million 2009). Beyond dismantling hegemonic academic systems, Million argues a felt analysis allows for a "more complex 'telling'" of Indigenous experiences, and a recognition of emotions, particularly anger, as legitimate, "embodied," and "culturally mediated" knowledges that are never individual, but rather collective (Million 2009, 54, 61). With her focus on emotional knowledges embedded in personal narratives, Million offers a valuable framework to carefully apply to the Kanaka Maoli context, particularly regarding emotional interpretations of na'au.

The Interview as an Event

Guided by Million's felt theory and Hawaiian iterations of felt knowledge, I facilitated eight informal, individual (one-on-one) interviews on insecure identities and the experience of racialization with consenting Kanaka Maoli adults—just like the one with Michelle in the beginning of this chapter. Initially, I framed these interviews as talanoa, a Tongan cultural practice and form of discourse founded on building relationships while also exchanging information. Deconstructing "tala" meaning "to tell, to talk" and "noa" meaning "nothing in particular," talanoa is defined as talking "without any particular framework for that discussion" (Vaiotei 2006, 23). In recent decades, talanoa has also been employed as method and methodology in Pacific studies and related fields, with Tongan scholar Timote Vaiotei credited with first establishing talanoa as a method (Naepi 2020). In preparation materials for the interview, and right before the interview began, I informed my participants of this method, likening it to a "talk story" in the Hawai'i context that similarly prioritizes the cultivation of

relationship over the exchange of information. Intent on critiquing western methods and methodologies, I was eager to engage my research in a “Pacific way.” I sought the lack of structure, absence of time restrictions, and natural digressions that characterize a talanoa, and ultimately wanted to continue building pilina with my contributors.

However, as I reflected on my fieldwork, I realized talanoa might not be an accurate descriptor of what transpired. First, some scholars argue the widespread, pan-Pacific use of talanoa as a research method contributes to the colonial work of homogenizing Oceania (Tunufai 2016, 233-235). One participant who has experience with oral histories, Kanoe, asked me why I chose a Tongan word and method rather than a Hawaiian one. I told her my initial reasoning: I wanted to acknowledge and retain the origins of the method. But she left me wondering if I could really know, much less facilitate, a talanoa if I do not have the genealogy from or relationship to the place or people in which it is rooted.

Second, sessions with my contributors simply resembled an informal interview more than a talanoa. While I foregrounded my pilina with contributors, I could not help but think that, for many participants, we would not be meeting if not to exchange information. And the exchange of information did feel like an interview, with the researcher asking questions and the participant answering. Even with my willingness to share my own experiences and follow participant digressions, there was a structure to our conversations that talanoa intentionally lack—particularly with an additional layer of formality given the majority of interviews were conducted online. Participants also occasionally mentioned they had ruminated on or prepared matters to say prior to our meeting, which also resembles an interview. Perhaps most importantly, despite my intent and framing, my participants and I did not truly perceive these

conversations as talanoa, but rather as interviews, albeit informal and loosely structured interviews.

Even so, many elements that distinguish talanoa from the traditional interview were present. It helped that key elements of talanoa also resonated with an everyday practice my participants were much more familiar with, “talk story,” which will be discussed later in this chapter. Most significant was my emphasis on cultivating our relationships over collecting information, which affected each session’s time frame and structure. Rather than the standard 60-minute interview, I prepared contributors to allot 90 minutes to two hours for our session, and we often went over our expected time, once as long as three hours. I made an effort to follow certain conversational tangents, and my adherence to our questions and the order in which they arose was determined by each contributor’s interests. Although I now describe our sessions as interviews, my introduction and initial attention to talanoa, particularly in the pilina it prioritized, made the nature of my interviews possible.

Na‘auao as Methodology

In these interviews, feelings of loneliness, guilt, embarrassment, intimidation, belonging, validation, and fulfillment, among others, were key to many participants’ personal narratives. After holding my first three interviews, my advisor, Kumu Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, suggested I consider transparently articulating felt knowledge as methodology with my participants in order to more actively engage emotions during the exchange itself. Most scholars examining felt knowledge (including Million) retroactively examine contributor narratives for descriptions of emotional experiences, ascribing emotions and feelings according to the author’s interpretation. In contrast, Kumu Kāwika encouraged me to frame the interview design to “not only allow for

emotion but to productively work through them” (Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, email to author, November 3, 2021). By not only validating felt knowledge after the interview, but also creating it in the exchange, we reimaged the bounds of felt theory.

To “work through” emotions, I described felt knowledge as my methodology before beginning an interview, and asked contributors to explicitly name their emotions when they felt comfortable to do so (e.g., stating, “I felt fulfilled” or “I felt embarrassed” when relevant).¹⁶ By asking participants to name their emotions, I also incorporated skills developed through my own experience with talk therapy and peer counselling: Naming our emotions empowers us to cope with our feelings through identifying them and taking control of our thoughts fueled by them. In this way, participants are contributing to na‘auao as methodology, a process in which, through emotion naming, participants are not only aware that their felt knowledge is validated; they are also actively producing their own felt knowledge.

I began employing na‘auao as methodology with the remaining five participants for my project. As was to be expected, some contributors named and discussed their emotions with more ease than others. I found that those who mentioned exposure to talk therapy or peer counselling were able to identify and work through their feelings with less trouble than those who had not. To be sure, determining one’s emotions on the spot is no easy task, of which I was humbled to be reminded when I attempted to name my own. I show how all five of these participants’ engagement in na‘auao as methodology created a “more complex ‘telling’” of their experiences and cultivated spaces for healing. While my first three contributors participated before I employed na‘auao as methodology, the methodology illuminates sentiments from their interviews as well.

¹⁶ I also slightly adjusted some interview questions to include phrases like “What did it feel like?” to more directly prompt emotion-related or emotion-word responses.

Ho‘olauna: An Introduction to the Contributors

Before diving into their narratives, I must ho‘olauna, introduce, my contributors. As mentioned in the introduction, participants were required to be Kanaka Maoli, 18 years or older, and willing to discuss issues related to identity and race. Preference was given to those who had spent most of their lives in the islands and those who felt they did not “look” Hawaiian or have “enough” Hawaiian blood. Aside from participant requirements, the most critical determinant when selecting contributors was our prior relationship. Aligned with Indigenous practices, in which relationship-building is central to all social interactions including research, I hoped to talk story with people I already knew in order to allow for the vulnerability the subject matter requires. To reach these potential participants, I recruited through direct solicitation (emailing or texting specific individuals to gauge interest) and advertisement for a limited audience (an infographic posted to my private Instagram account). I want to note that every individual I contacted directly responded in the affirmative (five Kānaka total), and 16 Kānaka reached out in response to my Instagram post expressing interest in participating.¹⁷ Although this project could not accommodate every interested Hawaiian, these numbers show a glimpse of how pervasive our insecure identities are—and these were just the Kānaka with the courage and desire to speak.

Notably, contacting individuals within my personal network also limited the range of gender identities, sexualities, ages, socioeconomic statuses, and political engagements within my participant pool. Of the eight participants, six identified as women and two as men, one identified as queer, and all attended private high schools. Half of contributors were in their mid-twenties, while the other half ranged from age 36 to age 65. It is no coincidence that a 24-year-old straight, cisgender woman who attended private school amassed this group of participants.

¹⁷ Aligned with my methods (and personal preference), my Instagram and this post was private, so only my followers—not the general public—could view and respond to this call for participants.

Although I initially hoped for a more diverse representation of these identities, I maintain that building on genuine connections, and not encroaching on communities with which I had little relation, was the most ethical and effective way to proceed. Moreover, this project never sought to assert a universal understanding of Hawaiian identity among all Hawaiians, but rather to share the extensive stories of a few Hawaiians. The following is a table to exhibit the brief beginnings of these mo‘olelo with participant biographical information. Apart from those who elected to share their identifiable information, most participants are identified using pseudonyms to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Table 1. Participant Biographical Information. Basic biographical data for project's participants. Under the gender column, "W" indicates wahine (woman) and "K" indicates kāne (man). Contributors who were interviewed before November 3, 2021 did not participate in na‘auao as methodology since it was not yet formed.

Participant name	Age	Gender	High school attended	Remain anonymous?	Participated in na‘auao as methodology?
Alex	36	K	Kamehameha	Yes	Yes
Cyndy Hennessey-Aylett	65	W	Kamehameha	No	No
Kainoa Valente	40	K	‘Iolani	No	No
Kanoe	26	W	Punahou	Yes	Yes
Logan	48	W	Kamehameha	Yes	Yes
Mele	24	W	Punahou	Yes	Yes
Michelle	24	W	‘Iolani	Yes	Yes
Sienna	24	W	Punahou	Yes	No

A More Complex “Telling”

Discussing the possibilities of felt theory for Canadian First Nation women’s narratives, Dian Million suggests, “A felt analysis is one that creates a context for a more complex ‘telling,’ one that illuminates the deeper meaning of their [the women’s] ‘education’ in Canada” (Million

2009, 54). For my Kanaka participants, na‘auao as methodology indeed allows for a more complex “telling,” a deeper understanding, of their experiences of insecure identities and racialization. It engages the feeling embedded in the ‘ike, knowledge, that is too often diminished and overlooked. In fact, without felt theory studies like this—centered on not *feeling* Hawaiian enough—and the emotions, people, and systems tied up in it could be rendered trivial. Like felt theory, na‘auao as methodology allows for a more complex “telling” of participant experiences in at least two ways: illustrating their emotional reality and clarifying the resonances and dissonances between narratives.

To highlight moments of misrecognition among Kanaka Maoli that might contribute to our collective insecurity, I asked each participant, “Can you describe a time you did not feel recognized as a Hawaiian? What did it feel like?” Alex, a 36-year-old male graduate student, departed from most of my contributors in that he felt he “looked” Hawaiian, or possessed a Hawaiian racial phenotype, because he resembled his Hawaiian family members.¹⁸ Still, it did not take long for him to recall his emotions in moments of misrecognition: anxious, embarrassed, and intimidated. He recounted an instance at a restaurant, where he overheard one Kanaka and his friend speaking loudly about Alex in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language). Although he is not fluent in ‘ōlelo, he does have a basic understanding and “know[s] when [he] is being talked about.” The other Kanaka looked at Alex and said he was dressed like a haole (white person).

Alex remembered:

I felt invisible as a Hawaiian, such that he felt comfortable saying that about me less than five feet away [...] in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i to his friend. [...] In that moment, I felt very unrecognized, invisible. Like, a Hawaiian wasn't in the room in the first place. [...] I'm not beyond gossing [gossiping] about. But like, it's something you whisper. But he said

¹⁸ When asked what a Hawaiian “looked” like, Alex was very hesitant to prescribe a particular Hawaiian appearance so as not to exclude Kanaka who did not match it. Still, he was confident in his own “Hawaiian appearance” due to his resemblance with his family, particularly what he jokingly called the family “snout.” This will be discussed further in chapter 2.

this full volume out to his friend. You know what I mean? He *knew* what he was doing. [...] It was to speak in such a loud way that he thought he was proud enough that you know what? [...] No one in the room would know [what I'm saying]. I can say this as loud as I want to be. (Alex, interview with author, November 7, 2021)

Alex was clear that the comment on his “haole” outfit was not the problem; he repeatedly mentioned he was “not beyond a joke.” He even noted that if the person had noticed that Alex understood the statement, perhaps introduced themselves and apologized, he would have found it humorous. Rather, the problem was the assumption that Alex did not know ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, and with it the misrecognition of his Hawaiianess. In fact, this other Kanaka’s expectation that Alex could not understand ‘ōlelo made Alex feel “invisible” as Hawaiian, like “a Hawaiian wasn't in the room in the first place.”

As Alex described his emotions and articulated the way he felt (e.g., “invisible”), his experience became vivid. Through the explicit identification of his feelings and emotional experience we gain a much more holistic and complex understanding of his reality in that moment. Alex’s narrative is just one of many mo‘olelo of misrecognition, mo‘olelo that dominant academic disciplines often dismiss as less legitimate because it is grounded in emotions. Na‘auao as methodology ensures these experiences and knowledge, ‘ike, deriving from it are validated and attended to *because* it comes from the na‘au.

In addition to illuminating contributors’ emotional realities, na‘auao as methodology also helps clarify the resonances and dissonances between participant experiences. In reply to the same prompt on moments of misrecognition, Mele, a 24-year-old woman who is preparing to attend law school, struggled to respond. Mele was aligned with most of my contributors in that she feels she does not “look” Hawaiian. She commented that she presents to most as white. She acknowledged that she was not in many spaces with other Hawaiians (other than her family) while at home in Hawai‘i, so there may not have been opportunities for misrecognition there. But

in spaces curated for people of color in college on the U.S. continent—such as, for example, a sorority event for women of color—she said,

I felt like people who didn't know me directly, like weren't in my grade, or, like, knew who I was, and like, what my deal was, where I definitely felt like, nervous and like, maybe I---just really self-conscious, really self-conscious of feeling like if another, you know, somebody who's browner than me, saw me and just assume that I was white. Like, I would have to explain myself and like be like, 'Oh, no, but like I am [a person of color],' you know? And like, like, kind of like walking on eggshells in a way to like, feel like I *do* belong or whatever. (Mele, interview with author, November 10, 2021)

While moments of misrecognition among the broader category of “people of color” is distinct from those among Kanaka Maoli, for Mele, they do influence each other. Later in the interview, Mele says being recognized as a Hawaiian is “something that doesn't really, for [her], happen that much.” Like Alex, Mele also communicated feelings like nervousness and intimidation. Unlike Alex, Mele also expressed emotions like self-conscious, and the emotional experience of “walking on eggshells” and, earlier in the interview, feeling lonely and like a “fraud.”

Although many factors could account for these differences in emotions, I argue Mele’s feelings related to isolation, shame, and feeling like an imposter, are certainly related to racialization. Whereas most “just assume” Mele is white, Alex is acknowledged, even tokenized as “brown” or Hawaiian. In other words, whereas Alex possesses a Hawaiian racial phenotype, Mele does not, and fails to be recognized as Hawaiian. Mele may like a “fraud” in ways Alex does not because she is not visually recognized as a Hawaiian. By directly naming their emotions, participants offer a means to clarify their similarities and differences in their experiences. They recall what the situations *felt* like and thus create ‘ike. Na‘auao as methodology allows contributors to both reveal their individual emotional realities and reflect our community’s diverse reality.

Spaces for Healing

In calling the participant to name their emotions, na‘auao as methodology also facilitated distinct spaces for healing: a space for articulation, a space for connection, and a space for joy. By engaging ‘ike as feeling and seeing and knowing all at once, as our kūpuna did and continue to do (though perhaps not exactly in this manner), we should not be surprised when aspects of our emotional health are restored. Notably, in line with my peer counselling and more general interpersonal experience, during interviews I strived to both affirm contributors’ emotions and name a few of my own. To ensure participants felt they could be vulnerable, I needed to be willing to share pieces of myself as well. Moreover, since I maintained relationships with each of these contributors before their participation in the project—some as close as blood relatives—and plan to continue our relationships after, such vulnerability was necessary for the health of our relationships. As a result, I believe these spaces of healing were only possible (or at least made most effective) through our mutual vulnerability.

One space of healing was that of articulation. Much like the act of emotion naming, by articulating certain experiences (including but not limited to emotions), one’s situation and context becomes more clear, and any necessary actions from this position may emerge or emerge as more possible. Explaining why she decided to join the project, Michelle referenced my initial call for participants. She expressed she was struck by the title of my study, “Hawaiian enough,” musing, “I think I never really understood how I felt until, like, you quoted it in that way.” After seeing her experience articulated, Michelle reached out to me and participated in this project. Later in the interview, the space for articulation also involved learning and employing specific terms to elucidate one’s experience. Recounting the tension and confusion I faced as a Kanaka “looking” phenotypically Asian, I shared that I only began to find clarity when I was exposed to

the concept of being “coded” as an ethnicity, wherein an individual, often of mixed race descent, presents and is assigned one racial phenotype over others. Hearing this idea for the first time, Michelle nodded, saying, “That’s what I was trying to get at,” and proceeded to use the concept later in the interview (Michelle, interview with author, November 17, 2021). Similarly, another contributor, Logan ended our conversation (somewhat joking) with, “Thank you for the therapy session. I realized so many things during this conversation” (Logan, interview with author, November 11, 2021). With new language or attention devoted to issues of identity and race, contributors were empowered to articulate their realities.

Possibly the most valuable space for articulation was the acknowledgement that the English language may be too limiting to communicate the vastness of our feeling. In my conversation with Ku‘uleialohaonālanī Salzer-Vitale, a Kanaka Maoli counselor, she maintained that, for Kānaka, it may be difficult to explain our emotions in English when ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i would be more appropriate. Because ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i faced attempted erasure for decades, this challenge is compounded by our predominant illiteracy in our mother tongue. While the language can (and ought to) be learned, and approximate phrases can be found in the dictionary, our present, limited command of ‘ōlelo makes describing nearly-spiritual encounters in particular almost unfeasible (Ku‘uleialohaonālanī Salzer-Vitale, conversation with author, November 17, 2021). In an interview with a contributor, Kainoa (prior to this conversation with Salzer and the employment of na‘auao as methodology), the insufficiency of English became apparent when he described experiences with ‘āina, particularly after moving further from the main urban center to Wahiawā.

I don't know if I know how even to put words to it. But I'm like, it's...the greenery. It's the smells. [...] I don't know how to explain and I wish I did [...] Maybe it's a Hawaiian thing, right? You being close to ‘āina, like it's green all around. Like, I look outside my window, and I watch the rhythm of the trees as the wind blows, and I'm at peace. You

know, the stream runs behind one of my neighbor's houses, and I know that it's there, and I know that it's giving life to all these plants out here, and it gives me peace. I don't know what it is. But when I pass Kīpapa Gulch, and I just see all this greenery, this life, I'm like, it gives me peace. (Kainoa Valente, interview with author, October 30, 2021)

Here, Kainoa wrestles to recount in English what it is to feel a connection with this ‘āina, repeatedly stating he does not know how to explain the experience. He settles on the sense of peace derived from simply being in nature, and later confirmed my description of similar experiences as a moment of exhale in awe and gratitude. Even without any indication in this regard, Kainoa demonstrated the limitations of the English language to describe our realities as Hawaiians. Even so, he still considers these feelings derived from the na‘au significant enough to his experience to work through and attempt to elucidate it.

What is possible to articulate with na‘auao as methodology? After I described these bounds of English to describe Hawaiian experiences to Michelle, she related moments when she felt most Hawaiian: at ‘Iolani Palace, Queen Emma’s Summer Palace, singing “Hawai‘i Pono‘ī” before sporting events, and teaching Hawaiian history and culture to her elementary students. “There are times where I feel like, like you're saying, like, I have these feelings I just like, I don't even know how to express them,” she declared, motioning to her chest. “And so like sometimes I'll tear up or I'll, like, feel a certain way” (Michelle, interview with author, November 17, 2021). Michelle did not explicitly name her emotional experience until later, when she voiced feelings of pride and the sense of “filling her bucket.” While she eventually did describe her emotional experience, the initial allowance that she did not have to likely supported this articulation.

Na‘auao as methodology offers a second opportunity for healing in facilitating a space for connection. By making time and space to transparently discuss intimate concerns on something as fundamental as cultural identity, both the participant and I, as researcher, further grow our relationship and foster connection as a means of healing. After Mele shared the

challenge of contemplating the mixed race experience alone, I agreed, and then shared my gratitude for the opportunity to work through these issues with her. She replied quickly, “Yeah, no, me too, I’m super grateful. It’s very healing.” At the end of the interview, Mele repeated, “Aw, this was so nice, Shannon. It was so, um, healing for me.” Given the isolation and loneliness she felt in her cultural identity, as a Kanaka from Hawai‘i but currently living in New England, it followed that she explicitly described our connection as “healing.”

Speaking on the significance of connection in Indigenous contexts, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes, “What’s the opposite of dispossession in Indigenous thought again? Not possession, because we’re not supposed to be capitalists, but connection, [...] intimate interconnection and interdependence” (L. Simpson 2017, 185). Through our interview, and hopefully through our continuing relationship, we will continue to build our connection to work against our dispossession and to heal. In the act of participating in this interview, our connection is also intimately tied to reciprocal recognition and support, which will be discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

Finally, a third space for healing through na‘auao as methodology is cultivating a space for joy. As previously mentioned, I employed na‘auao as methodology in informal interviews informed by Indigenous Pacific commitments to cultivating relationships over exchanging information, which resonates with a similar practice of “talk story” in Hawai‘i. Karen Ito writes, “The point of talk story is not an accurate transfer of information but a social exchange, *affective enjoyment* of one another’s company” (Ito 1999, 12 in Tengan 2008, 164; emphasis added). Despite the online platform, in my conversations with participants, I experienced a similar “affective enjoyment” of our time and space together—a joy that I contend derives from honestly

naming our emotions, our commitment to vulnerability, and recognizing the significance of our na‘au.

After our interview, Alex emailed me to say, “Thank you again for today, it was more fun than anything else. And if it’s work, then it’s profoundly important work” (November 7, 2021). I sincerely appreciated Alex’s sentiment, but I admit that I chuckled incredulously after reading his message. Like every other interview, after my interview with Alex discussing the intricacies of our insecurities and our bold hopes for our lāhui, I was simply tired. So when I reviewed recordings of these conversations for this analysis, I was pleasantly reminded of all the smiles and laughter I shared with Alex, and all of my contributors. As we wrapped up our interview, Alex exclaimed, “No, really, this was fun. And I’m grateful for this. Because I don’t get to talk a lot about this with very many people.” Here, Alex commented on the joy of the interaction itself as well as gratitude for the opportunity to connect and discuss often overlooked issues. Through articulation, connection, and joy, na‘auao as methodology has the potential to cultivate spaces for healing.

Transforming Shame

Through na‘auao as methodology, we also have the opportunity to transform shame. On shame, Leanne Simpson writes, “Shame is a powerful tool of settler colonialism because it implants the message in our bodies that we are wrong,” and later, “Shame cages resurgence in a very basic way because it prevents us from acting” (L. Simpson 2017, 185-186, 188). As Simpson shows, shame has been key to our broader system of oppression, as well as the immediate and continued means of our oppression. However, by insisting on the incorporation of their felt knowledges and lived experiences, Dian Million demonstrates how Indigenous women

create a “new language” for communities to reckon with painful histories and concerns. In this way, they are simultaneously “transforming” the powerful form social control, shame, and paving pathways for healing (Million 2009, 54). Put simply, felt theory empowers us to dismantle shame by taking action.

An atmosphere of shame surrounds, if not fuels, this issue of insecure identities—the shame of not knowing ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, of not residing in the homeland, of not “looking” Hawaiian, to name a few. This shame is particularly insidious when it is inflicted on each other within our own community. Given this situation, I see any actions to feel more secure in our identities, from learning our mother tongue to finding a Hawaiian community in the diaspora, as means of dismantling this shame. In fact, I see the explicit confrontation of our insecure identities—as my contributors did in agreeing to contribute to this project—as an especially powerful act against shame. Moreover, their participation allowed for another form of action in that it facilitated mutual recognition of our Hawaiian identities as researcher and contributor. Indeed, to recognize shared feeling is precisely the point of talking story (Tengan 2008, 164).

Here, my participants’ contributions embody this thesis’s guiding ‘ōlelo no‘eau: “‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku, kōkua mai; pela iho la ka nohona ‘ohana” (Recognize and be recognized, help and be helped; such is family life). I have discussed how I have ‘ike aku, recognized, my participants, but have not yet shown all the ways they have ‘ike mai, recognized me. By taking part in this study, my participants not only recognized their own experiences, and I hope began to recognize their Hawaiianness, but they also recognized me. In a very tangible way, they offered kōkua, support, through sacrificing their time and energy to be interviewed. In one particularly powerful moment, Logan, a participant and mentor, decided to subvert our roles as interviewer and interviewee and talk about me rather than herself. I share our exchange here in

its entirety to show a bit of what this instance and these conversations felt like. After Logan commented that she feels particularly confident about her Hawaiianess in recent years, I recounted a recent moment of realization to the same effect.

Shannon Pōmaika‘i Hennessey (SPH): I don't know if I'm at the point where I feel like I'm a representative yet. But I feel like I'm getting to be a person that I feel like my kūpuna would see and recognize and yeah, that's really cool.

Logan (LX): You're in the process of becoming an expert representative, Shan. Look at you in grad school, gonna get a degree in this shit. Like that's, that's what it's about. You are on the path and that's serving the lāhui and that makes you Hawaiian enough. I know, this is about me, but I just gotta like---

SPH: (laughs) She flipped the script!

LX: (laughs) That makes you absolutely Hawaiian enough.

SPH: Thanks. Okay, so---

LX: Thank you for outreaching your, your brilliance to help other people who have gone through the similar experience of not feeling Hawaiian enough. My hope is that somebody will pick up your, your thesis and is like "Oh, I am Hawaiian enough."

SPH: I know, that's the dream.

LX: That's an important contribution to the well-being of the lāhui, Ti, don't ever forget it.

SPH: Thanks.

Despite my attempts to dodge her compliments, Logan insisted on recognizing me not only as Hawaiian, but also and as one who could kōkua our lāhui. Throughout the particularly challenging moments of writing this thesis, I returned to Logan's words. And hers were not the only words I could return to; I was blessed with so many moments of seeing and support from my participants.

In addition, participants offered kōkua to readers in providing forms of action they or others might take to dismantle our insecure identities. When asked what they might say to someone who does not feel Hawaiian "enough," my participants responded with actions. Alex answered that he would tell someone who did not feel Hawaiian "enough," without hesitation, "a joke." Since his dissertation will focus on comedy in Hawaiian literature, he repeatedly spoke to

the power of comedy as a dialectic, a means of reconsidering the basis of an issue. Drawing from the resonances between “laugh” in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, ‘aka‘aka, and “shadow,” aka, he asserts, “To laugh at something is to, you know, to recognize the shadows [...] to reveal the thing that I think needs to be should be addressed.” The most critical part of a joke in response to a question of one’s measure of “Hawaiianness” is to huli, or overturn, the question. Comedy, Alex claims, “overturns the thing to show you the futility of asking the question in the first place. But without taking away [...] the importance of the question” (Alex, interview with author, November 7, 2021). Through the everyday, almost counterintuitive act of making a joke, Alex urges us to act by huli-ing the premise of our insecure identities.

Paradoxically, Mele calls those who do not feel Hawaiian “enough” to act in a different sense. First, she assures those insecure in their Hawaiian identities that they are not alone. Then, she reminds us of the power in our existence:

You existing is enough [...] To compare, like, a Japanese person's always Japanese, they don't have to be like, "Am I Japanese enough?" Like, they just exist as a Japanese person. And like, I think that should be the case for Hawaiians. And I think there's this feeling that we need to do so much to connect. And I think that's a good thing. It's coming out of like a place of love, like, we really do want to revitalize and like restore these connections, and I think that's so important, but I think just existing in itself is like a beautiful thing that is so overlooked. [...] And if you want to feel more connected, that's a great thing. And I think there are people out there that do want to support you. But, you know, again, your existence is enough. (Mele, interview with author, November 10, 2021)

While acknowledging the beauty of certain activities to revive our culture and our connections to it, Mele consistently maintains “your existence is enough.” Some might see her insistence on satisfaction in our existence as the opposite of action. However, in a system of settler colonialism that seeks to erase us, in one that, as Mele notes, thrives off of us questioning our identities constantly, to feel secure in our mere existence is a critical act of resurgence. By participating in this project, recognizing me as researcher, and offering kōkua to readers to take their own actions

(which will be discussed further in chapter 3) my contributors act and call us to act against shame.

Conclusion

As I have shown, na‘auao as methodology refuses guises of objectivity that pervade the mainstream academy. Through its acknowledgement of every researcher and participant’s unavoidable subjectivity, it is also aligned with Indigenous epistemologies, seen specifically in the Hawaiian context with the word “‘ike,” that recognizes legitimate knowledge deriving from both the mind and the body. In Hawaiian ways of knowing, this knowledge comes from the na‘au, the gut and source of both instinct *and* feeling. To highlight the often overlooked affective nature of the na‘au, I draw from Dion Million’s felt theory, which validates knowledge that is felt, to offer na‘auao as methodology, which encourages participants to produce their own felt knowledge through emotion naming. Here, I seek to answer Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s call to “research back” by creating and employing our own methodologies (Smith 1999).

More than rejecting objectivity, na‘auao as methodology also allows for a more complex “telling” of our own narratives, illuminating our emotional realities and clarifying the resonances and dissonances between our specific experiences. Perhaps more significantly, na‘auao as methodology also cultivates spaces for healing through articulation, connection, and joy. Through my participants’ generous vulnerability and attention to their na‘au through na‘auao as methodology, they are transforming shame through reciprocal recognition and support. With an understanding of this project’s theoretical and methodological foundations, the next chapter will examine my participants’ narratives at length. Placing our na‘auao at the center, I explore what it means to feel, or not to feel, Hawaiian enough.

Chapter 2

‘Ike Hawai‘i: Seeing, Knowing, and Feeling Hawaiianness

There came a time in every interview when I nervously asked the question central to my project. Given the topic of my thesis and our prior relationships, I knew my contributors were prepared to respond. Still, I felt uniquely invasive when posing the question. I often started with, “I gotta ask,” bracing the participant for a tough question, and then inquired, “Do you feel Hawaiian enough?” A long pause almost always followed. Mele, a 24-year-old woman currently based on the east coast of the continental U.S., began to answer,

I think I---I don't know, I don't know that I do feel Hawaiian enough. But I don't know that I'm like, necessarily---(sighs) It's hard to describe, like, I definitely don't feel Hawaiian enough, especially when I'm home. And, like, you know, if I were to go into like, I guess more Hawaiian spaces or whatever, and hear people speaking [‘ōlelo Hawai‘i], I would feel inadequate, definitely [...] In many ways, like I feel....like, sad and kind of like a loss that I maybe, like, missed out or something, like, I should have, like, learned my language earlier. Like, in school, like, I shouldn't have chosen French [language], I should have chosen Hawaiian, like that's what I should have done. [...] There were a lot of ways in which I feel like I've kind of like missed out and like it's too late....which I know definitely isn't true. And there are there are a lot of ways in which I do feel connected to my Hawaiianness and want to, like, reconnect [...] But yeah, sorry, I really don't know how to answer that question, other than I feel conflicted a lot and sad a lot. And, like, I also don't really know how to go about the process of like, being more connected than I already am, especially when I'm away from home. Like, that's like, I don't really know how to do that. And I---I want to feel more connected, but it's just challenging. (laughs) (Mele, interview with author, November 10, 2021)

Mele repeatedly mentioned the difficulty in articulating a response to the question, and the challenging nature of her experiences themselves. In this excerpt alone, we see Mele’s sense of inadequacy is tied to her current place of residence (away from home), and her inability to speak ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. As Jon Osorio promises, and as with my own experience, Mele’s narrative reveals confusion and ‘eha (pain) (Osorio 2001, 365).

As a woman of Kanaka Maoli, Chinese, Japanese, English, Irish, Swedish, and German descent who is often coded as white, Mele frequently used phrases like “it’s hard” and “it’s just challenging” throughout her interview to describe her emotional reality. After responding to my call for participants on Instagram, she expressed gratitude for the opportunity to talk with someone who “gets it,” especially while surrounded by so many in her present residence in New England who did not. In retrospect, I also should have thanked her for being one of the first people who helped me process my experiences of inadequacy and racialization as a Kānaka only a few years ago. We graduated from the same class at Punahou, but I really got to know her a few years later, when we were both in the same U.S. city for different internships. After three years in colleges on the continent, with the experiences and some of the terminology to articulate it, we commiserated over the struggle of being mixed race, of *feeling* Hawaiian especially, but presenting as white and East Asian, respectively.

In this interview, we dove deeper into other factors of insecurity that felt particularly pressing, such as lack of competence in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and the effect of blood quantum logics on limiting access to land and notions of reproductivity. However, I was most grateful for the future she envisioned for herself and her future children: She did not want to be debilitated by feeling she was not Hawaiian enough anymore, nor did she want her children to inherit this insecurity. Rather, she wanted to focus on the ways she did and could connect, which for her involved being on or near a body of water as her kūpuna were, and the sense of wholeness and rightness that came with it. At the same time, the prospect of connecting further to her culture also caused anxiety, as she was unsure how to proceed, especially while away from home.

Following na‘auao as methodology laid out in the previous chapter, I will attend to the feelings related to her sense of inadequacy that, despite her expressed difficulty, she actually

articulates quite clearly. In the above quotation from our interview, Mele explicitly identifies emotional experiences like “sad,” “loss,” and “missing out” to describe not knowing or choosing to learn her mother language, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. In this way, she also demonstrates a lack of knowledge of particular aspect of Kānaka identity, language, and how to further connect with her Hawaiianness. Each participant had specific, though often overlapping, backgrounds and factors of insecurity. However, like Mele, nearly all communicated, explicitly and implicitly, grief over a loss.

In this chapter, I examine the lived experiences of Kānaka Maoli who do not feel “Hawaiian enough.” I ask: What does an insecure Hawaiian identity *feel* like? More specifically, what does it feel like to not “look” Hawaiian? How can these emotional realities clarify the effects of broader structures like settler colonialism and white supremacy on our insecure identities? With foundations in the concept of ‘ike, an ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i term that can be translated as “to see,” “to know,” and “to feel,” among many other definitions (Pukui and Elbert), I draw a connection between knowing, feeling, and seeing Hawaiianness. Based on participant experiences, along with my own, I show how insecure identities are intimately tied to a lack of knowledge about factors that are perceived to make up a Hawaiian identity. Put another way, *feeling* insecure as a Hawaiian feels like not *knowing* what it means to be Hawaiian—not knowing one’s ‘āina, mo‘okū‘auhau, and lāhui. It is this not knowing, this loss of knowledge, that we grieve. Moreover, by a devastating mechanism of colonialism, the cause of our loss—settler colonialism and racialization, to name a few—is too often obscured. Instead, we often interpret our lack of knowledge as our own personal deficiencies as Hawaiians, and our grief is subsumed by shame. Through discussions like these, particularly with a reckoning of racial and socioeconomic privilege, contributors show how we might begin to acknowledge our grief and

transform our shame by taking the steps to *know*, and with it, to *feel* what it is to be Hawaiian. To begin, I must first provide a foundational understanding of Kanaka Maoli identity.

What Makes a Hawaiian?

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the “authenticity” of Indigenous Pacific cultural identities, including that of Kānaka Maoli, were emphatically debated (Osorio 2001, 361). As Hawaiians began to assert distinctive identities in order to regain access to their land and nation, predominately western scholars and leaders questioned the validity of their claims to collective identity, and with it, intentionally or not, their claim to sovereignty (Trask 1991; Lyons 2010, 24). Given attacks on our identities, one of my first (non-biographical) interview questions was more loaded than a non-Indigenous outsider might initially perceive. I asked, “What makes someone Hawaiian?”

Six of my eight participants agreed Hawaiian genealogy, or descent from a Kanaka Maoli ancestor, was required for a Hawaiian identity. Possibly aligned with blood quantum logics, genealogy was commonly described as “Hawaiian blood” or “koko.” Two contributors separately asserted that “one drop” of koko makes one Hawaiian, making allusions to the “one drop rule” used to define Black people according to any measure of Black heritage in the United States in order to exploit their labor. While these contributors sought to embrace all Hawaiians regardless of blood quantum, the blood logics of Indigenous people, who colonizers sought to erase, and Black people, who colonizers sought to exploit, must be marked as distinct.¹⁹

The two participants who did not feel Kanaka Maoli heritage was necessary for a Hawaiian identity seemed to be aware that their perspective was controversial, especially as

¹⁹ For more on the varying logics of blood as it applied to Black and Indigenous people, including hypodescent and hyperdescent, see Kauanui 2008, 14-15.

contestation over Hawaiian identity often manifested in those without Kanaka Maoli ancestry claiming to be “Hawaiian at heart” (Hall 2005). Ultimately, these participants believed actions aligned with “Hawaiian values” or acceptance by community elders outweighed genealogy. To be sure, the belief that Hawaiian identity does not require genealogy is a minority opinion in the academy, and increasingly in our community. With the more recent rise of our collective political consciousness spurred by the movement to protect Mauna a Wākea from further desecration through the construction of the Thirty-Meter Telescope, many know how necessary it is to distinguish our distinctive Indigenous identity through ancestry.

Perhaps in efforts to distance our articulations of identity from blood quantum or state-based logics, two contributors also emphasized our genealogy as our “bones” rather than our “blood.” To describe Native Hawaiians, Alex advocates for the use of “Kanaka ‘Ōiwi,” meaning people of the bones, over “Kanaka Maoli,” meaning true people, drawing attention to one’s physical and tangible connection to our ‘āina as a means of articulating and connecting with our identities. More than a connection, Ty P. Kāwika Tengan shows how the term “‘Ōiwi” also signifies a commitment between Kānaka, ‘āina, and kūpuna.

The term, ‘Ōiwi, means ‘of the bone’, a reminder that we embody the ancestral connections between land/place, gods/spirits and people community that are manifest when we bury our iwi (bones) back into our kulāiwi (bone plains, homelands). Taking up this identity involves the kuleana (responsibility, right, claim, authority) to ‘ho‘ōla i nā iwi’ (to care for one’s ancestors or, literally, to ‘make the bones live’). (Tengan 2005, on Ayau and Tengan 2002)

Similarly, Logan prefers “‘Ōiwi” over Hawaiian, Native Hawaiian/native Hawaiian, Indigenous peoples, and Kānaka Maoli for the agency she feels the term still yields in describing who we are while the others have been convoluted in colonial, especially legal, contexts. She also seemed to appreciate its emphasis on our bones. Describing the not-quite-conscious forms of behavior ‘Ōiwi may exercise that make them ‘Ōiwi, she expressed, “Our bones ring every time our feet

are on the ground in Hawai‘i. I know that. So I think our bones behave differently when we're home, as opposed to when we're not home.” Whether by blood or bone, genealogy is at the core of Hawaiian identity.

Still, there is the sense that something else, something beyond even genealogy, is needed.

On the elements of a Hawaiian identity, Jon Osorio writes,

Natives are natives by blood, location, to a lesser extent by language, and by less quantifiable criteria as social values. *Hawaiians must feel Hawaiian*, necessitating a demonstration of *aloha* and *kōkua* (helpfulness) to other Hawaiians. They cannot be selfish, self-aggrandizing, or bent on capital accumulation without attracting a certain suspicion that they are not completely Hawaiian. As long as one has the blood, the *koko*, no one is beyond remission. Therefore, Hawaiian is also a behavior, although ancestry is paramount. (Osorio 2003, 224; emphasis added).

Osorio identifies at least two critical aspects of our identities: ancestry and behavior. For most of my participants, proper behavior was critical. In our interviews, these “social values” were sometimes mentioned before genealogy, implying their significance (in these situations I later returned to the question and asked directly if ancestry was necessary). One contributor, Kanoe, emphasized the salience of one’s actions in making a Hawaiian. She maintained, “I feel like a big part of being Hawaiian is having that aloha that...that love, that understanding that...just like, general respect and acknowledgement of others as like, just people.” Elucidating the “less quantifiable” nature of these behaviors, Alex contends that there is a “Hawaiian way” of doing things guided by an awareness and commitment to genealogy. For Osorio and these contributors, aloha, kōkua, a deep respect for the humanity of others, and perhaps kuleana (right, privilege, responsibility) to one’s genealogy, are underlying values for expected behaviors among Kanaka.

It is worth noting that in addition to ancestry and behaviors, Osorio also writes, “Hawaiians must *feel* Hawaiian” (Osorio 2003, 224; emphasis added). For him, one can “feel Hawaiian” by practicing the particular social values described above. While this might be true

for some, it is also true that practicing proper Hawaiian behavior still leaves many Kānaka feeling insecure in their culture identities. If we understand the ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i term “‘ike,” which means “to feel” as well as “to know” and “knowledge” (among many other definitions, as mentioned in chapter 1), we might better understand how the sense of inadequacy persists even when Hawaiian values are upheld. I argue to ‘ike—feel—Hawaiian, one must ‘ike—know—what makes up a Hawaiian identity. After all, how can one *feel* Hawaiian if one does not *know* what it means to be Hawaiian?

When asked what makes someone Hawaiian, Michelle hesitated before identifying ancestry (as “Hawaiian blood”). She also described a different form of behavior than previously articulated here to create a Hawaiian identity, rooted in cultural practices like hula rather than social values. After a few other discussions on her sense of Hawaiian identity, and the insecurity she feels in this regard, she expressed,

I don't look Hawaiian enough, so do I have the right to feel Hawaiian enough? I don't know. Like it--I think it just goes back to that. Um, I don't know, I guess I mean....maybe (laughs) I don't know if you've done other, like, interviews, but I don't know. Like, I still actually don't really know what defines like, Hawaiianness. I don't know if you can help me, like explain that to me a little? (Michelle, interview with author, November 17, 2021)

Michelle’s frequent use of the phrase “I don’t know,” and her direct question in this regard, demonstrated her lack of knowledge, of ‘ike, regarding what makes a Hawaiian. A 25-year-old woman of Japanese, Chinese, Kanaka Maoli, and Portuguese descent, Michelle is also my cousin. As we had not discussed this issue in the past, I was pleasantly surprised when she expressed interest in my call for participants on Instagram. After graduating from ‘Iolani School, an elite private college preparatory school in Honolulu, she attended a university in Arizona, where she earned her degree in elementary education. She eventually moved back home to teach, first at a charter school in Waimānalo, and then at a small private school in Honolulu. More than

any other participant, her appearance, her sense that she did not “look” Hawaiian but rather codes as Asian, was an obstacle to a secure cultural identity. She frequently expressed “embarrassment” when discussing any embrace of her Hawaiian heritage because she felt she did not “look” it and therefore could not claim it. Indeed, particularly given our shared family background, listening to her mo‘olelo felt a lot like examining my own wounds.

So with an appreciation for her vulnerability in asking this question of what defines Hawaiianness, and with the heightened awareness that I also struggled to answer this question not too long ago, I eagerly shared what I have learned in the past few years. As in this section, I highlighted the genealogical and behavioral components based in social values Osorio uses to describe a Kanaka identity. In response, she said,

Thank you for that. Because I feel like that's what I was trying to get at, but I didn't really know how to put into words. So I was gonna say, like, oh, giving back like, you know, giving back to the community is how you can be Hawaiian. [...] I think I feel that way, like, I feel like I am giving back to my community, like I'm giving back to kids. And I feel like that fills my cup, maybe not [...] in my Hawaiian culture, but I feel like it is filling my cup in terms of myself. But I like how you said that, because now I'm thinking of [...] our school values, so it's Queen Emma's values [...] A lot of them are like, pono, and make sure you give back to the community. (Michelle, interview with author, November 17, 2021)

With this new ‘ike, knowledge, of the social values that help define Hawaiianness beyond genealogy and her descriptions of cultural practices, Michelle noticed the ways in which she embodied Hawaiian behaviors like generosity and service to the broader community. She even expressed gratitude, because now that she ‘ike—knew—just a little more about Kanaka Maoli identity, she could also ‘ike—feel—more Hawaiian.

In the sections that follow, I examine my participants’ narratives as mo‘olelo of inadequacy, as well as opportunities for hope and action. As this project focuses on issues of racialization, I first look at contributor narratives who feel they do not “look” Hawaiian. Their

stories show how appearance—particularly not *looking* the way you *feel*—is significant, and racial phenotype influences how one sees themselves, and the groups one identifies with as a result. I found that this factor of insecurity, racial phenotype, was fundamental for some Kānaka, but it never stood alone. Rather, it was only the surface, the skin, of other facets of insecurity. Not knowing our language, culture, and history fueled deeper senses of inadequacy. Again, *knowing* what it is to be Hawaiian is crucial to *feeling* Hawaiian. Significantly, under white supremacy, settler colonialism, and capitalism, Kānaka coded as white or Asian are afforded racial and, often with it, socioeconomic privileges that Kānaka coded as Hawaiian or Black do not. Not *looking* Hawaiian might also mean not *knowing* the Hawaiian community, which might contribute to not *feeling* Hawaiian enough. Informed by the ‘ōlelo no‘eau, “‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku, kōkua mai; pela iho la ka nohona ‘ohana” (Recognize and be recognized, help and be helped; such is family life), I show how we might connect recognition with kōkua (help, support, work) for the wellbeing of our larger ‘ohana, ka lāhui Hawai‘i. I encourage Kānaka to offer each other reciprocal kōkua and recognition to begin to dismantle insecure identities.

On Being Seen as Hawaiian

When asked what a Hawaiian looked like, Kainoa Valente, a 40-year-old man of Kanaka Maoli and Portuguese descent, responded,

(sigh) So again, that's just part of the struggle, right? [...] For me now I look at myself in the mirror like, “No, I'm a Kanaka. I know who I am.” But in previous iterations of myself, I would say like, well, I would define a Hawaiian as everything that I am not, physically, right? [...] I would pray every night when I was like a teenager. Like, “God, when I wake up tomorrow morning, can my hair be like my dad's?” You know, brown and wavy, because, you know, you see Hawaiians with brown---the ‘ehu [reddish brown] hair, right, you know, sort of thing. And mine is dirty blonde at best, you know, basically, blonde, which is not, you know, Hawaiian. And I was like, “Okay maybe if I could just have like, brown, wavy hair, I wouldn't have to explain so much.” [...] Now, I think I'm a little bit more open in the sense of---because of the life I've lived of like, okay, no, like

Hawaiian, encompasses a lot more. It's about culture. You know, someone is Hawaiian, by the way they interact with other people. (Kainoa Valente, interview with author, October 30, 2021)

Kainoa shared he once described a Kanaka Maoli's physical appearance as everything he is not. In particular, he emphasized his blonde, straight hair as distinct from representations of Hawaiians with brown, wavy hair, like his father. He yearned for a visual indicator, if only in his hair, to exhibit his Hawaiianness so he would not "have to explain so much." As the existence of my project implies, Kainoa was far from alone in once feeling that he does not "look" Hawaiian, and so earnestly wanting to be *seen* as Hawaiian. Some contributors (somewhat jokingly) similarly would point to certain parts of their bodies—their wavy hair, their round nose, their curvy thighs—to "prove" their Kānaka heritage physically.

Kainoa is a high school teacher at a small private school in Honolulu, but in a former life, nearly a decade ago, he was my youth pastor. He contacted me following my call for participants on Instagram, enthusiastically willing to discuss issues he said he struggled with for much of his life—so much so that he chose to disclose his identifiable information in this project. More than any other factor in our interview, his education at 'Iolani School, or more specifically not at Kamehameha, influenced his sense of Hawaiian identity during his upbringing, which will be discussed further later. For him, the "badge" of Hawaiianness afforded through graduating from Kamehameha was especially coveted since he already felt distanced by virtue of his racialization as white. Today, however, he has found security in his cultural identity predominately through connecting with the 'āina, and, as the above excerpt indicates, realizing a more holistic articulation of Hawaiian identity rooted in genealogical responsibilities and moral behavior.

On the racialization of Kānaka Maoli, anthropologist Brandon Ledward reviews texts from prominent nineteenth-century Hawaiian historians like David Malo, Samuel Kamakau, and

John Papa ‘Ī‘Ī to demonstrate that race was not a Hawaiian concept. While difference based on skin color was acknowledged, metrics like rank, family, birthplace, and ability were more accurate markers of Hawaiian identity than what we know as “race” today. Only through popular representations and pseudo-scientific classifications were Euro-American racial ideologies imported to the Kanaka Maoli context beginning in the nineteenth century, later reinforced in the twentieth century (Ledward 2007, 168-169). If settler colonialism seeks to “eliminate the Native,” then asserting a fixed Native identity relegated to the past is one avenue to eradicate the so-called “authentic” Native in the present and increase settler access to Indigenous land and nation (Wolfe 2006). I contend defining a Hawaiian “race,” by both phenotype and blood quantum, is just one of many components—albeit a critical component—of a fixed Hawaiian identity weaponized to erase us.

Even if not in so many words, I felt all of my participants were cognizant of the sensitivity surrounding racialization and Kanaka Maoli identity, if for no other reason than their own lived experience. Perhaps with this awareness, almost all participants approached my (intentionally) absurd question of what a Hawaiian “looks” like with appropriate caution. After a few clarifying questions, or a sigh or two, contributors often communicated what they specifically described as a “traditional” or “stereotypical” Kanaka appearance, complete with a particular set of physical features. Dark brown skin seemed to be paramount, followed by other attributes like wavy brown hair, big eyes, and ‘ūpepe (flat) nose. Build was also defined for a so-called “Hawaiian” appearance, with participants naming descriptors like tall, muscular, strong, “big-boned,” and curvy. While skin color and facial features applied to both women and men, standards of physique were usually gendered. Height and musculature was expected from men and a shapely figure was expected from women, much like depictions of Polynesian men as

warriors and women as sexually available, respectively. This description would usually be closely followed by a caveat that Hawaiians look differently than this “traditional mold” these days, sometimes with light skin and blonde hair and blue eyes. In fact, one contributor, Kanoe, shared that while working at her consulting firm she encouraged a former client, a prominent Kanaka Maoli organization, to include images of the Hawaiian children of all appearances on their promotional materials to reflect this diversity.

Even with the acknowledgement, the knowledge, of the many ways in which a Hawaiian can “look,” all but one of my contributors did not *feel* they looked Hawaiian. For some of the Kānaka who felt they did not look Hawaiian, their appearance acted as a barrier to claim their Hawaiian culture in profound ways. When asked how her sense of Hawaiian identity might have impacted her life more generally, Michelle demonstrated the salience of her racialization. She shared,

I think my life would have looked a little different, I think my priorities would be a little different if I had chosen to embrace my Hawaiian side. Because honestly, for a long time, I really wanted to be like a teacher that taught Hawaiian [language], or taught Hawaiian studies. [...] My sophomore year was when I took both history of Hawai‘i and Hawaiian studies at ‘Iolani. [...] That was the year I was like, “Oh, I think I'm gonna go to UH [University of Hawai‘i], like, I think I'm gonna learn like Hawaiian studies there. [...] And then I don't know, for some reason, like, it changed because I just felt like....I looked at myself again, I was like, I'm not like....I don't look like I would know anything about Hawaiian [culture]. So I just went back to that. (Michelle, interview with author, November 17, 2021)

As previously mentioned, Michelle did become an elementary school teacher and she even shared her excitement about teaching a unit on Hawaiian history soon in other parts of the interview. But, as she stated, she did not end up pursuing a field like Hawaiian studies largely because she did not feel she “looked” the part. Rather, she felt she is coded as Asian, and when she occupied Hawaiian spaces, she did not feel she belonged. As a result, the trajectory of her career shifted.

Holding Many Truths

Some participants answered the question of what Hawaiian looked like with something other than physical attributes. Alex responded,

I still can't tell you. And I don't want to give a descriptor. Because I don't want that to undo what I know of other folks. If I give you a physical description, then that screws over (laughs)---screws over someone's Hawaiian identity that, you know, doesn't have that. (Alex, interview with author, November 7, 2021)

By refusing to respond to my (again, absurd) question, Alex demonstrated a different kind of ‘ike, knowledge, of Kanaka Maoli identity. Here, Alex also engaged in an “ethnographic refusal,” placing his own limit on the knowledge he chose to share in this research space (A. Simpson 2007, 76-78). Moreover, he refused to participate in the racialization of Kānaka at all. I do not doubt he was abundantly aware of the physical features that dominate popular representations and understandings of a Hawaiian “look.” However, given his background in studying and being in Kanaka spaces, he also knows our multiplicity in all facets of Hawaiian identity, including our appearances. By *knowing* the diversity of Hawaiianness, Alex can also *see* Hawaiianness in a diversity of physical attributes.

While we embrace our diversity, we also must acknowledge the basic truths of heredity and appearances. After inviting participants to describe what a Hawaiian looked like, I then asked, “Do you feel you look Hawaiian?” Even though Alex was reluctant to define a universal Hawaiian phenotype so as not to exclude certain Kānaka, he answered, “Yes. I think so. But it’s based [...] on how I look compared to my family. If I look like the Hawaiian side of my family, then I know.” When I asked another participant, Logan, what a Hawaiian looked like, she exclaimed, “A Hawaiian looks like us!” She said the presence of Kanaka Maoli genealogy, described as “‘Ōiwi blood,” was “as close as [she could] get to characterizing what a Hawaiian looks like. It's... whatever their [a Hawaiian’s] DNA looks like, that’s what they look like.” Like

Alex, Logan has an understanding of the stakes involved in the question of a Hawaiian appearance, and responded accordingly. However, she later shared,

Historically, no, I've never felt that I looked Hawaiian. [...] And I certainly didn't look as Hawaiian as my [Kamehameha] classmates, as you know, physical characteristics. I'm the whitest cousin [...] all of them [my cousins] look like my tūtū [grandmother] and my dad. (Logan, interview with author, November 14, 2021)

Logan, a 48-year-old woman of Hawaiian, Chinese, Irish, and German descent, has a wealth of experience in Kanaka Maoli educational, cultural, as well as broader social justice spaces. I consider her a valued mentor, and we have talked extensively about insecure Kanaka identities in the past, which prompted me to contact her directly to participate in this project. Education, including her time at Kamehameha and later at Kamakākūokalani, School of Hawaiian Studies, were paradoxically central to both her insecurity and security in her Hawaiian identity, respectively. Even after she was equipped with knowledge of her genealogy and culture, it was not until the most recent iteration of the movement to protect Mauna a Wākea (also called Maunakea) from the construction of the Thirty-Meter Telescope in 2019 that she finally feels Hawaiian enough. Through greater access to once-exclusive ceremonial knowledge, as well as the acknowledgement of Hawaiian culture as a source of strength rather than weakness, Maunakea marked a turning point in Logan's sense of security in her Hawaiian identity. Although she *knew* that a Hawaiian looks "like us," she *felt* like she did not look Hawaiian for the first parts of her life especially, which, in some ways, has carried into the present day.

In my initial analysis during the interview, I interpreted this as a tension between what was *known* and what was *felt* about a so-called Kanaka Maoli appearance. In other words, one can *know* that a Hawaiian comes in all shades and forms while still *feeling* one does not look Hawaiian. I pointed this out to Logan, this contradiction between knowing an expansive understanding of Hawaiian physical features, and feeling she does not possess them. She replied,

“My standard of what a Hawaiian looks like, is like my tūtū.” Therapy has taught me that incongruity of knowledge and feeling is not specific to our insecurities as Kānaka, nor is it any less valid as an experience. In other words, one can *know* one truth while *feeling* another in many everyday situations.²⁰ While I do think this phenomena exists in the context of insecure Hawaiian identities, I realize that is not necessarily what was happening here. Like Alex, Logan’s metric of Hawaiian appearance was based in what her Hawaiian family looked like.

Another participant, Kanoe, pointed to a different kind of kūpuna as a means of knowing a Hawaiian phenotype: our ali‘i. She mentioned her cousins look Hawaiian because they resemble our ali‘i. Referencing prominent Kānaka Maoli like David Malo and Duke Kahanamoku, Kanoe highlighted the ways in which images of our ancestors shape our understanding of a Hawaiian appearance today. She remarked,

[Not] to blame our ali‘i [...] for what our idea of Hawaiian looks like, but they have a *big role* in it. So that's part of it, too. [...] There's blue-eyed, blonde hair Hawaiians out there, right? And so like, definitely, I think my understanding of like, what Hawaiians look like, has changed. But like, the fact that if you have more Hawaiian blood, then you're going to look more one way than another, right? So I think---not to say blood quantum matters, blood quantum doesn't matter! But like, if you did have more blood, you would just look more like our ali‘i. But even then, they weren't like---some of them were full Hawaiian, but some weren't, you know? (Kanoe, interview with author, November 3, 2021)

To an extent, Kanoe rejects blood quantum logics while also acknowledging the realities of heredity.

Along with Alex and Logan, Kanoe forced me to reckon with multiple truths. Yes, settler colonialism and racialization have colluded, through popular and pseudo-scientific representations, to produce a Hawaiian racial phenotype that might be weaponized to limit what is seen as Hawaiian and contribute to the elimination of the Native. And, Hawaiian appearance is

²⁰ For example, if I were to get a low grade on a test, I can *know* that a grade does not make me a failure as a student or person, but I can *feel* like I am a failure. I have been taught that this knowledge does not make the feeling less valid, but I do have the opportunity to change how I respond to that feeling.

defined by the way our Hawaiian family and ancestors look. Notably, Kanoe spoke with vocabulary shaped by blood quantum, equating “more Hawaiian blood” with “looking more Hawaiian.” Since race is a social and historical construct, one’s “blood” cannot indicate how “much” Hawaiian one is. Moreover, race and heredity is phenotypically expressed in diverse and unpredictable ways, even among siblings with the exact same parentage. Still, I think Kanoe was trying to communicate that regardless of race, the way we look is influenced by our biological ancestors. If, for example, more of your ancestors had dark skin, there is a greater chance you will also have dark skin. If, as Logan shared, her Hawaiian grandparent looked one way, she would expect many Hawaiians to look the same.

The issue, then, might not be the existence of a sense of a so-called Hawaiian appearance in and of itself, but rather the conflation of racial phenotype and legitimacy and degree of “Hawaiinness.” J. Kēhaulani Kauanui asserts that American policies (namely, the Hawaiian Homelands Commission Act of 1921) made Hawaiian identity measurable based on blood quantum, significantly contributing to the ways in which we internalized and perpetuated our own racialization. That is, notions of racial “purity” became intimately tied with cultural authenticity (Kauanui 2008). As I shared with Kanoe in our interview, I have to acknowledge the truth that I have more Chinese ancestors than Kanaka Maoli ancestors. It might follow, then, that I inherited lighter skin and straight, black hair like my Pākē ancestors. I also must embrace the truth that has been silenced outside of and, more devastatingly, among Kānaka Maoli: *the way I look and the amount of Hawaiian ancestors I have does not determine how “much” Hawaiian I am*. To assert otherwise would be to uphold settler colonial and racialized logics that seek to eliminate us.

While we hold these multiple truths of settler colonialism, heredity, and appearance, it is also critical to acknowledge another truth: the diverse and uneven nature of individual experiences with racialization and insecure identities. On a basic level, there was occasionally a dissonance between how participants perceived their own appearances and how they were perceived by others. For some contributors who felt they did not look Hawaiian, they also communicated moments of misrecognition within their community in which they were perceived to be of a different racial group, which will be discussed further in chapter 3. Here, participant perception and others' perception of the participant's appearances were congruent.

However, for other contributors who felt they did not look Hawaiian, they mentioned instances where their peers have disagreed, saying they do possess a Hawaiian phenotype. Or, these contributors were unable to recall instances of visual misrecognition based on appearances, perhaps because they *were* perceived as Hawaiian, even if they did not perceive themselves as such. In fact, since my call for participants explicitly gave preference to those who felt they did not look Hawaiian, I was occasionally surprised to hear from potential contributors because *I* felt they looked Hawaiian (though, so as not to uphold these racialized metrics, I did not disclose this, nor did I reject potential participants because of it).

These conceptions of a Hawaiian phenotype and individual physical expressions can vary even among siblings of the same parentage. Mele, who has lighter skin, remarked that she always felt her sister (who has the same biological mother and father as Mele) looked “more Hawaiian” because she had darker skin. However, her sister often told Mele that Mele looked “more Hawaiian” due to the shape of her nose and eyes. Even with an awareness of the stereotypical features that make up a so-called Hawaiian phenotype, our conflicting perceptions of who looks

Hawaiian and who does not only confirms the arbitrary and constructed nature of racial phenotypes and race as a whole.

The diversity of individual experiences was also revealed in responses to the relation between physical appearance and security in cultural identity. On the experiences of light-skinned Indigenous Australians, Emma Kowal and Yin Paradies examine “race discordance,” or “a discrepancy between the external attribution of race and personal racial identity” (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 107), much like the experiences of many of my contributors. They write, “While experiencing race discordance can, at times, be distressing, it can also be a trivial event. Someone who identifies as Indigenous and is taken as white by an observer may be oblivious to it, welcome it in certain situations, or be aware but indifferent to how others perceive them” (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 107).

Aunty Cyndy fell into this latter category, aware of others’ perceptions but largely indifferent. For her, a secure Hawaiian identity was not tied to appearance. Describing her time at Kamehameha she says,

In those times, you didn't identify “Hawaiian enough” with the way somebody looked. Most of us were part Asian. And that---what we now think of classically beautiful with the wavy hair, and the ‘ūpepe (flat) nose and you know, that striking set of features. There were not that many people Kamehameha Schools that look like that! Even you know, when you get to seventh and ninth grade, you had boarders that came from outside islands. And there were some, there were always some, but they were just part of the mix. They weren't distinctive for that. So in terms of looking or feeling Hawaiian enough, I pretty much generally did.

Aunty Cyndy maintained that many physical markers of Hawaiinness were not prevalent in a school filled with Kānaka when she attended, so appearance arguably could not be used as a metric of cultural authenticity. At the very least, it did not hinder her own sense of security in her identity. Notably, Aunty Cyndy also contextualized her statement with both time and place—in “those times,” or during her upbringing in the 1950s and 1960s, and Kamehameha Schools—

indicating this might not be the same for every time, place, or person. The diminished widespread Hawaiian pride at the time, as well as the population of concentrated Hawaiians at Kamehameha and thus representation of more diversity among Kānaka, might contribute to Aunty Cyndy's disconnect between racial phenotype and identity security.

However, knowing my aunty, I also acknowledge that matters like these, of others' perceptions of her, simply do not concern her in the ways it concerns others (myself included). As someone who feels she looks more Asian than Hawaiian, Aunty Cyndy also found comfort in knowing she looked like her Chinese mother. Moreover, her life experience at 65 years old, likely played no small role in coming to terms with whatever insecurities related to appearance and cultural identity she may have had. In fact, I noticed the same was true for all participants over the age of 40. When asked how her appearance has affected her cultural identity, Aunty Cyndy shared,

I circle back to it's not what you look like, it's what's in your heart. Genetics gave you the way that you looked. But the way that you choose to live defines who you are. And, you know, I identify that more with Hawaiian than with anything else. [...] This is me, this is where I grew up. This is what I grew up with. [...] I'm lucky I feel that way. I don't know that everybody gets there. And you do, I think, have to go through life experiences to decide that that's you, and that's fine. You know, and some people don't, it's really sad when they don't. (Cyndy Hennessey-Aylett, interview with author, October 24, 2021)

Some might claim Aunty Cyndy's experiences are evidence that insecure identities based on racialization does not exist, or it renders insecure identities invalid, attributable to youth and healed with age. Some might go further to argue it dilutes my claim connecting insecurity and settler colonialism. However, given the number of willing potential participants this project could not accommodate, I would argue this does not negate the efforts of settler colonialism to attack our identities to erase us, but is rather an accurate depiction of diversity among any people. Nor is this proof that age is all that is required to heal; even my aunty implied not

“everybody gets there,” to a secure identity. However, most importantly, I see my aunty’s mo‘olelo as a symbol of hope for all Kānaka currently struggling with insecure identities. I also want to mark it as a moment in which I believe Aunty Cyndy was working to recognize and kōkua me, offering me encouragement and hope in a tangible way. There is a future possible in which we can feel who we are as Hawaiians, regardless of how we look, is enough.

On Knowing Hawaiianness

While Aunty Cyndy’s mo‘olelo of a secure Hawaiian identity is a mo‘olelo I hope all Hawaiians share one day, today, many Hawaiians still struggle to *feel* Hawaiian enough, in part because they do not *look* Hawaiian. However, racial phenotype is rarely the sole indicator of insecure identities; more often, *feeling* inadequately Hawaiian is tied to one’s perceived insufficient *knowledge* about Hawaiianness. In this section, I again engage the multiple meanings of ‘ike to illustrate the ways in which my participants did not feel Hawaiian enough because they did not know enough about Hawaiian language, cultural practices, ‘āina, and education. I end with a discussion on feeling inadequately Hawaiian by virtue of not knowing the broader Hawaiian community as a result of racial and class discrepancies among Kānaka Maoli.

Knowing Language

As Mele’s opening excerpt of this chapter demonstrates, knowledge of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, Hawaiian language, is a crucial aspect of a secure Hawaiian identity. The history of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i mirrors and informs that of Hawaiian identity. The language was banned in educational settings in 1896, strongly discouraged in the public sphere through much of the twentieth century, and was not officially legalized as a medium for public and private school until 1986.

As a result, many Kānaka, including my great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents, associated ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i with shame, and the language (like so many Indigenous languages) was severely endangered. Since then, decades of grassroots organizing built Hawaiian language immersion schools and facilitated a language revitalization movement. However, now, by a tragic irony, the language is embedded with a very different kind of shame: We now criticize our own for not knowing a language ripped from our tongues.

As discussed in chapter 1, one contributor, Alex, described a moment of misrecognition from another Kanaka in which ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i was central. While eating at a restaurant, a stranger looked at Alex and said loudly to a friend, in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, that he was dressed like a haole. Alex was not fluent in Hawaiian, but knew enough to comprehend the statement. He maintained the remark was less insulting than the assumption that he could not understand ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, and with it the misrecognition of his Hawaiian identity. Discussing other instances in which he noticed ‘ōlelo weaponized as a metric for cultural authenticity, Alex declared,

That's how a lāhui falls apart [...] I think that raises the question of what makes a good lāhui, right? Does a good lāhui include ‘Ōiwi, all ‘Ōiwi? Or is it willing to give up, you know, everyone that's caught in the middle, just to regain their idea of a “pure” (laughs), right, ‘Ōiwi? Like a fully pure, like, robustly, like speaks ‘ōlelo, does this, right? Is that what a lāhui should be doing or wants to do? I don't like feeling like, "Okay, you're not prepared to get on the ship. We're just gonna leave you behind." Because that does to me, what I lament, say, my grandparents have going through, that's precisely what they went through, right? [...] Being cut off from [Hawaiian] culture, being cut off from [Hawaiian] language, right? [...] They died here. They're buried here, which is great. But something was missed. For like, a good generation. I don't like feeling like, I need to be left out in order for things to move forward. (Alex, interview with author, November 7, 2021)

Holding the ‘eha of feeling inadequately Hawaiian for not knowing our mother tongue, Alex transforms this ‘eha into critical, thoughtful questions for our people: *What makes a good lāhui? Should we be seeking a notion of Hawaiian purity, at the expense of losing Kānaka who do not know ‘ōlelo, who do not know all of what it might mean to be Hawaiian?*

Moreover, Alex also drew a parallel between policing of the Hawaiian language within our Kanaka Maoli community today, and policing of the language in his grandparent's generation. Of course, circumstances differ: Whereas his grandparents were shamed out of speaking 'ōlelo, cut off from their culture, Alex feels he is being shamed into speaking 'ōlelo to be considered adequately Hawaiian, discouraging him from entering Hawaiian spaces, and again, cutting him off from his culture. Here, Alex makes the intergenerational trauma and loss surrounding Hawaiian identity evident. Like many other contributors, and Kānaka beyond this project, because Alex did not *know* 'ōlelo, he did not *feel* Hawaiian enough.

Knowing Cultural Practices

When discussing Kanaka Maoli identity, many Hawaiians describe cultural practices as a marker of cultural authenticity. Hula and surfing are frequently mentioned (likely thanks to popular and touristic representations of Hawai'i), but other practices, such as farming, fishing, lā'au lapa'au (Indigenous medicine), mele, oli, ceremony, or celestial navigation are also referenced as indicators of Hawaiianness. Describing periods of life in which she did not feel Hawaiian enough, Logan recalled the first years of working as an administrator at a Native Hawaiian culture-based organization.

The big question [of the organization] was: What is your practice? As a Hawaiian, what is your practice? Right, like, are you a fisherman? Are you a farmer? Are you, you know, a hula practitioner? [...] [I] was totally feeling not Hawaiian enough and then being up to my ears in practitioners, because my job was to make sure these practitioners got on planes and they had food and all the stuff and, you know, also being Kanaka, but not doing all of this stuff that made them "super Kanakas," you know, had me feeling some kind of way about not being Hawaiian enough. But then recognizing through that process that my practice is, I'm an office lady. And that's something very unique that many Kānaka you know, I mean [...] I can do this paperwork, spreadsheet craziness. And that's a useful practice for the lahui. (Logan, interview with author, November 14, 2021)

Logan began by detailing a source of insecurity many Kānaka, including myself, have voiced: lack of knowledge about cultural practices and protocol. Because her work did not conform to the criteria of practices perceived as what she called “super Kanaka,” or authentically Hawaiian, her sense of insufficiency only increased. Logan *felt* inadequately Hawaiian because she did not *know* enough “authentic” Hawaiian cultural practices. However, she also came to recognize that her practice as a Hawaiian need not be limited to colonially-imposed boundaries of what a Hawaiian can do. By *knowing* her work was useful for the lāhui, she could begin to *feel* Hawaiian enough.

Knowing ‘Āina

To participate in this project, preference was given for Kānaka Maoli who had spent most of their life in the islands, or did not consider themselves part of the diaspora. As I clarified in the introduction and in my call for participants, this specification was made not because diasporic Kānaka were any less critical to our lāhui, but because work had already been done in the area. In their work on the Hawaiian diaspora, Kēhaulani Kauanui and others demonstrate that not *knowing* one’s ‘āina and one’s homeland contributes to not *feeling* Hawaiian enough (Kauanui 2007; Kauanoe 2020). Indeed, writing from across the Indigenous Pacific diaspora consistently shows how being born and raised outside of the homeland can cultivate insecure cultural identities (McGavin 2014; Tamu 2012; Polamalu 2009). However, I wondered how so many Hawaiians born and raised in our own ‘āina could still feel displaced, insecure in who we are.

For some contributors raised in Hawai‘i and currently residing on the U.S. continent, not being presently on the ‘āina, and not knowing when they might return home, did contribute to

insecure identities. In this way, these experiences are aligned with the diasporic narrative put forth in the aforementioned scholarship. For other contributors, those raised and currently on island, connection with ‘āina was not commonly mentioned as a basis for feeling inadequately Hawaiian, but rather as a means of feeling Hawaiian enough. I take this as an affirmation of the above scholars’ assertions on land and Indigenous identity, as well as my own: *knowing* ‘āina means *feeling* Hawaiian enough.

I also wonder, however, if we do not know what we do not know about our ‘āina—and these layers of unknowing, conscious or not, contribute to our insecure identities. For Hawaiians like me living in urban Honolulu, with generations of Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian ancestors living in Honolulu, my house and my grandmother’s house were always my homes. It did not occur to me until reading Pacific scholarship and talking with other Pacific people, until learning that they knew exactly where their ancestor’s bones were buried, that I realized I did not know my ancestral home. Yes, I am from Hawai‘i, but where are my iwi kūpuna (ancestral remains) buried? Where did my family live and work and play before they moved to Honolulu? How can I be ‘Ōiwi, of my bones, if I do not know where they are? I am in the process of finding my kulāiwi, this homeland of mine. But this realization is just one of many over the last few years in which I had to learn what I did not know about ‘āina. By beginning to *know* ‘āina—not just through finding my kulāiwi, but also learning to work the land on the home I have now—I am already beginning to *feel* Hawaiian enough.

Knowing through Education

For the majority of my participants, the significance of education to their Hawaiian identity cannot be understated. While this chapter cannot delve into all the complex nuances of

Hawai‘i’s education system, some context is required. The Hawai‘i education system is extremely stratified, generally splitting upper and upper-middle class residents into private school and lower and lower-middle class residents into public school. My contributors attended Kamehameha, Punahou, and ‘Iolani Schools—all among the most prominent private schools on O‘ahu. Kamehameha was founded with land and resources dedicated by a Hawaiian ali‘i (chieftess), Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, and gives preference to children of Hawaiian descent. It also signals a “badge” of Hawaiinness coveted within the Kanaka community and offers more affordable tuition, giving middle class Kānaka more access to private education. Punahou was founded by American Protestant missionaries to educate their children, and has become one of the most expensive and desirable schools for affluent Hawai‘i residents. Due in no small part to its founding, it is also considered “the haole school,” perhaps less for its student population these days (which is mostly East Asian, though there is a disproportionate amount of white students) than for perceived student attitudes of superiority and entitlement. ‘Iolani was founded by Queen Emma Rooke and King Kamehameha IV, and, like Punahou, is one of the most costly and sought-after schools for upper-class residents. It is known for its particular academic emphasis and predominance of Asian students.

In our interview, Kainoa outlined the distinctions between these three schools in much the same way I did here. As a white-coded Hawaiian with Kamehameha alumni for parents, he was devastated when he was not admitted to Kamehameha. However, when offered a spot at Punahou, he refused, not wanting to reinforce his perceived whiteness by attending the “haole school.” Because he spent ages four through 14 off-island due to his father’s military station, he knew little of ‘Iolani, but chose to attend because it was not Punahou. Like so many Hawaiians,

his rejection from Kamehameha stung and lingered. Describing his experience playing football games between ‘Iolani and Kamehameha, Kainoa remembered,

I was so mad at Kamehameha for not accepting me that then like Kamehameha became my own personal rival. [...] I would tell by teammates, like, I hate these guys, because they didn't want me. And so like Kamehameha games, like I would just play like super hard because it was a personal thing for me. Like, you know, I should be wearing the blue and silver [Kamehameha school colors]. I should not be wearing the red and black and white [‘Iolani school colors]. But you didn't want me so I'm going to show you how much you should have had me. (Kainoa, interview with author, October 30, 2021)

As Kainoa contends, not getting into and not attending Kamehameha felt personal. When I asked explicitly if rejection from Kamehameha impacted his sense of Hawaiianness, he responded, without pause, “Yes. Absolutely. *Absolutely*. I couldn't have that as a badge.” For him, rejection from Kamehameha directly contributed to his insecure cultural identity.

Knowing Community

Like Kainoa, Sienna's education significantly influenced her Hawaiian identity. More than any other facet of identity, attending Punahou was an obstacle to acceptance by other Hawaiians, and thus hindered her sense of security in her cultural identity. Sienna shared,

We do come with privilege, because we got to attend Punahou. But it feels like, when you go into these like Native Hawaiian situations, like it, it takes something away from you, like you don't--you have to work extra hard, there's a little bit more gatekeeping because for some reason, I don't struggle the way they struggle. [...] I don't speak like everybody else. I went to Punahou and my mom would yell at me if I said, “yeah,” instead of like, “yes.” (Sienna, interview with author, October 9, 2021)

While acknowledging the privilege of a Punahou education, which will be discussed further later, Sienna also said it also prevented connection with other Hawaiians, due to both her socioeconomic status and life experiences, as well as a marker of her class, the way she speaks in Standard English. Only after spending time and sharing experiences with these Kānaka, often

through long-term educational programming, could they “forget,” as Sienna described, that she attended Punahou and build relationships with her.

Beyond (or perhaps because of) the Punahou hurdle, Sienna also communicated difficulty in knowing the larger Hawaiian community. Elucidating her feeling that she is not Hawaiian enough, Sienna remarked,

The people you see on social media, who like embody Native Hawaiian... whatever, you know? They're out in the kalo patches every day. And with their kids, and they live very simple lives. [...] They are all these things. And they can do all these things. And they off-road and they're like, very, like outdoorsy, and like, I would love to, I don't have the-- I don't have the car to do that. I don't have the knowledge to do that. I don't have the "ins" to know where to go. And so in that case, like, I don't compare, or like, I can't compare. (Sienna, interview with author, October 9, 2021)

Here, Sienna expressed a sense of inadequacy for not embodying Hawaiianness in the way others have on social media. Moreover, she lamented over a lack of knowledge—not knowing how to do activities, or not having the “ins,” or the knowledge of who to contact who will know where to go. Since education is so central to social networks and relations, her education at Punahou more likely than not confined her social circle to exclude much (though definitely not all) of the Hawaiian community. By not *knowing* the larger community, Sienna did not *feel* Hawaiian enough. Indeed, not *looking* Hawaiian is far from the only indicator of *feeling* inadequately Hawaiian; not *knowing* key facets of Hawaiian identity, including language, cultural practices, ‘āina, and education is also crucial. Moreover, not knowing one’s community is also essential to understanding an insecure Hawaiian identity. However, distance from community can only be understood through a discussion on privilege.

On Privilege

As we move toward more secure identities, it is critical to continue to be self-reflexive under combined forces of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and capitalism. Given the constrained conditions of settler colonialism and the internalization of racial metrics of authenticity among Hawaiians, Kānaka who feel they do not look Hawaiian can feel ostracized and misrecognized within our community. As this thesis aims to demonstrate, this is a valid concern, and one that if adequately addressed, can contribute to sincere healing for our lāhui. It is also true that under white supremacy, both white- and Asian-coded Kānaka have racial privilege that Hawaiian-coded Kānaka do not. Significantly, Black-coded Kānaka often have neither visual recognition from the Hawaiian community nor do they have racial privilege.

Unfortunately due to the limitations of my personal network and experience, and with it my participant pool, this project will not speak to the experiences of Kānaka coded as Black to the extent the topic deserves.²¹ Moreover, reckoning with privilege requires confronting the groups who possess it, which, in this case, often does not include Black-coded Hawaiians.

While discrimination purely based on a “Hawaiian phenotype” can and does occur, more often, structural and interpersonal prejudice manifests through the conflation of racialized appearances and socioeconomic status. That is, perceived race will always have material implications, and oftentimes one who has racial privilege will also have class privilege. For this thesis, many white- or Asian-coded Kānaka (though not all) also have class privilege. Indeed, all of my participants, almost all of whom felt they did not look Hawaiian but rather looked Asian or white, attended private school and then pursued higher education—a marker of a middle or high socioeconomic status. (Of course, given my own social network as a private school graduate, this

²¹ See Sharma 2021 for an examination of the experiences of Black Hawaiians.

evidence is more anecdotal than proof.) Alternatively, Hawaiian-coded Kānaka often do not have class privilege, as Jon Osorio demonstrates when discussing Kānaka Maoli attitudes toward Hawaiians living on Homesteads. He says most Hawaiians do not begrudge those who access Homestead land (which requires fifty-percent blood quantum, among other things) because they believe that “those who do qualify tend to suffer the most from poverty” (Osorio 2003, 223). Occasionally, a Kanaka who codes as Hawaiian might not have racial privilege, but might have class privilege, by virtue of inherited socioeconomic status or educational background. In these situations, wherein class differences distance these Kānaka Maoli from the majority of the Hawaiian community, they may face their own form of insecure identities primarily as it relates to class, rather than race.²²

When discussing the topic of racial and socioeconomic privilege with my contributors, responses were diverse. Some brought up the issue on their own, and others had not given it much direct thought. Some even felt they did not carry privilege by virtue of their racialized appearances. On racial privilege, Kainoa, who codes as white, framed his experiences in the mostly Asian spaces he occupies, especially after attending ‘Iolani, a school with a predominately Asian and wealthy student population. He said many have assumed that he comes from wealth by virtue of his skin color, but he is the first in his family to receive a master’s degree and most of his family did not graduate from college. He remarked,

Have I experienced privilege? I don't know. Because most of the circles that I roam in, I am the minority. I'm either in a room with a bunch of Asians, who are far more privileged than I could ever hope to be. I mean, I went to school with a girl whose walk-in closet was bigger than my bedroom. [...] But benefiting from the lack of melanin in just the circles that I roam in? I don't---I don't think so. I think if I were more Asian-looking, I would have probably benefited more.

²² Of course, race and class privilege will still overlap in these instances. For example, if a Hawaiian does not speak pidgin, or is from an urban residence, they might be called “too haole” or “haole-fied,” even if they do not “look” haole. Here, not unlike many other Pacific, and more broadly non-white cultures, race and class are conflated.

As is the overlapping nature of race and class, he frequently referenced racial and class privilege interchangeably. He felt he did not experience privilege, did not “benefit from the lack of melanin” because within his networks, he was a minority, and his socioeconomic status did not equate to the affluence of some students at ‘Iolani. Notably, whiteness as a minority in Hawai‘i places white and white-coded people in different positions than they might be on the U.S. continent, where they are often the majority, and will be discussed further later.

However, lack of knowledge or awareness of privilege does not negate its existence. In fact, Mele reflected that her own circles, largely centered on Punahou, were already extremely privileged. It may have been difficult, then, to notice her privilege in these spaces. She mused,

And I think like, maybe, because I'm light, I am missing a lot of experiences where maybe I did have privilege, right? Like, I just didn't even think twice because I am light and I'm not seen as like, I don't know, like “stereotypically Hawaiian,” like dumb, or like, you know, lazy, all the stereotypes. (Mele, interview with author, November 10, 2021)

Here, Mele exhibits the central tenant of privilege: Much of privilege of any kind²³ is reflected in the institutional and interpersonal hurdles one does *not* have to overcome (McIntosh 1989). For Mele, her racial or light-skinned privilege meant she did not have experiences of being racially profiled as a Hawaiian-coded or dark-skinned Hawaiian might be, equipped with not only negative stereotypes, but also less access to resources. Importantly, this profiling according to race and skin color is inherently anti-Black, rewarding all features distanced from Blackness. Even if she were not aware of this privilege until this very moment, she was benefitting and will likely continue to benefit from it for her entire life.

Other participants were aware of these dissonances of racial and class privilege between Asian- and white-coded Kānaka and Hawaiian-coded Kānaka. Moreover, they demonstrated how

²³ In these cases the privilege I am referring to racial and socioeconomic, but this phenomena also applies to other intersecting identities like gender, sexuality, and ability, among others.

discrepancies in socioeconomic status in particular affected their sense of cultural identity. One contributor, Sienna, identified specific markers of class—her inability to speak Pidgin (Creole English), attendance at Punahou, and lack of indicators of “struggle” in her lifetime—prevented her from connecting with other Hawaiians. For Michelle, who codes as Asian, when asked about instances in which she did not feel Hawaiian, she described attending programs and receiving scholarships (with preference for Hawaiian students) funded by Kamehameha Schools.

Those might have been the times where I felt like maybe the least Hawaiian because I was like, yeah, look around like these people do not look like me. I also felt like [...] a lot of the people that were there came from public schools, you know, especially in the scholarship. So I was like, “Oh, well, I mean, I'm Asian, I go to 'Iolani. Like, I'm in college at another place [off island].” Like, some of these people go to UH, or they go to KCC [Kapi'olani Community College]. And, um, I don't know, I just felt like out of....out of place. [...] But it's, it's hard. Because, you know, I apply for those scholarships, like, we both apply for those Kamehameha scholarships. And part of me, for some reason is like, “Well, I mean, I'm Hawaiian, but I'm, like, privileged enough to actually, like, have parents that can pay for my tuition and stuff like that, like some of these people actually don't.” So that's when I feel like I shouldn't be using my “Hawaiianess” in a way to like, get these scholarships. [...] We live very close to other communities that are very, like, almost everyone that lives in the community is Hawaiian. And some of them don't finish high school or don't go to college. So it just makes me feel a little guilty that like, I'm [...] taking away from them. [...] Not that I don't feel Hawaiian [...] but I feel guilty to be [a] Hawaiian that's taking away from someone else.

Michelle began by describing her isolation from this Hawaiian space through her racial phenotype, but her lack of connection with this community was related to something deeper. Through her discussion on education and scholarships for Hawaiian students, she explored a much larger issue: class differences between Kānaka Maoli. She painted two worlds: one in which Hawaiians of higher socioeconomic status graduate from private schools and attend college on the U.S. continent, and another in which Hawaiians of lower socioeconomic status attend public schools, and if they graduate, maybe attend community college or a public in-state university. Aside from specific need-based scholarships, both high- and low-socioeconomic status Hawaiians have access to the same financial resources allocated with a preference for

students of Hawaiian descent primarily through Kamehameha Schools. Michelle's racialized appearance was only the surface of the gap she felt from the Hawaiian community through class differences, predominately through education. Her narrative shows the intersection between racial and class privilege at play.

Education is arguably the facilitator of class differences in Hawai'i, but it is only the beginning, and these class discrepancies reach far beyond schooling. Put plainly, wealthier Hawaiians have access to more resources, including education, than Hawaiians experiencing poverty. Yet, we are all still vying for resources from the same pot. Here, lies the guilt. Kānaka like Michelle who have the financial means to afford elite education feel their opportunities, especially through scholarships, have come at the expense of other Kānaka. To be sure, hoarding resources and corruption is present among particularly wealthy Hawaiians and still must be addressed. However, more than students who apply for scholarship money, I would argue settler colonialism and capitalism are to blame, not only for our disparate resources, but for the framing of our resources as scarce.

'Ike Aku, 'Ike Mai, Kōkua Aku, Kōkua Mai

Regardless of whether Michelle *should* be feeling guilt, her feelings are valid. However, guilt is not productive; as with shame, opposite action in response to guilt is useful. In this situation, if a Kanaka feels guilty for stealing resources from other Hawaiians, she ought to consider redistributing resources back to Hawaiians of lower socioeconomic status. As previously mentioned, 'ōlelo no'eau #1200 proves particularly illuminating here: "'Ike aku, 'ike mai, kōkua aku, kōkua mai; pela iho la ka nohona 'ohana." Directly translated to, "Recognize and be recognized, help and be helped; such is family life," this proverb tells us, "Family life

requires and exchange of mutual help and recognition” (Pukui 1983, 130). In order to be *seen* as Hawaiian, we must put in the work *kōkua*, help. As one of a number of Kānaka with class privilege, I believe it is our *kuleana* to reallocate resources from the wealthier class, especially from non-Indigenous, white and Asian people—the spaces in which we were trained to excel—to our Kanaka relatives of lower socioeconomic statuses. In fact, one contributor, Logan, who feels she codes as white, asserted racial privilege, or “passing”²⁴ as white or Asian, could and ought to be harnessed as a “superpower” for our people. She maintained,

You and I have the luxury also, Shan, of passing, right? Like, I could go to a haole conference would be a haole, you could go to an Asian conference and be an Asian, like, and we can go to Hawaiian conferences and be Hawaiians. [...] My [Hawaiian] dad would never pass as a Chinese guy. [...] We've got this really charmed existence that--- we're shapeshifters. And we can come in and out of spaces.

Rather than framing our appearances as a deficiency in the Hawaiian community, she defined it as a tool for our betterment. In the context of Hawaiian and Pacific mythology, in which figures like the demigod Maui were celebrated for their ability to shapeshift, Logan’s use of the term here was especially empowering.

Later, I asked more directly about how Kānaka who “pass” as white or Asian might contribute to increased resources for all Hawaiians. She responded,

So I think I think there's two sides to that. One is our physical appearances, and I'm talking me and you here, and the other is our access to education, and how we can sound different. Where, you know, I can turn it [Pidgin] on and off. But for the most part, I'm talking like this [Standard English], you know. [I] think it provides access, because we are passing for...and maybe more palatable to folks who may not [want to] hear what we have to say. And that's a privilege. That's a huge privilege that we have. [...] And that's really what it's about, right? Like, it's about us, changing the trajectory of what's happened to our people and having it on an upslope. I think over time, the way people

²⁴ The term “passing” originated in the early twentieth century when Black people who looked white disconnected from their Black community to join and “pass” in white society. Since it implies a intentional disconnection from a community that is not representative of my participants’ experiences, I do not use it in most of this thesis, but instead use “code” or “coded,” as is used in Indigenous studies. I use the term “passing” here to reflect the words of my participant. Moreover, there is some room for gray area regarding whether the “passing” she is describing here would imply a disconnect from the Hawaiian community.

look aren't going to matter anymore. But right now we're in that transition period, where things like access because of how we look and how we---our educational backgrounds and where we come from, are of great importance.

Logan clearly identified two branches of privilege: racial, through physical appearances, and socioeconomic, through how one speaks as evidence of class and educational background. Here, she incorporated another definition of *‘ike*, to understand through all senses, including sound. Through the way she *looks* and the way she *sounds*, Logan *knew* she will be perceived in a way that aligned with and was therefore palatable to the powers that be (i.e., whiteness and wealth). As a result, she used these privileges to her advantage for Hawaiians who might not look or sound like her. In this discussion on insecure identities and racialization, racial and socioeconomic privileges of Asian- and white-coded Kānaka must be acknowledged. However, rather than feeling guilt or shame for our privileges, we would do better to take action to reallocate the benefits we gain under white supremacy and capitalism—perhaps, as Logan suggests, as a shapeshifter.

On the other hand, Kānaka who code as Hawaiian also have a role in contributing to the betterment of our lāhui. Whereas white- and Asian-coded Kānaka can offer *kōkua* by redistributing their privileges, Hawaiian-coded Kānaka who know their communities can support Kānaka, especially those who do not code as Hawaiian, who are working to reconnect. In this way, Kānaka who code as Hawaiian are also recognizing Kānaka who do not—thus offering mutual support and recognition. I witnessed this kind of recognition and *kōkua* in this project: as previously mentioned, Alex, who codes as Hawaiian, refused to define what a Hawaiian “looked” like for fear of excluding those who did not measure up. Other modes of offering recognition and support to fellow Kānaka will be discussed further in the next chapter. As the latter half of our guiding *‘ōlelo no ‘eau* reminds us, “*pela iho la ka nohona ‘ohana*” (such is

family life). If, as Mary Kawena Pukui contends, our ‘ohana are the building blocks of our lāhui, I suggest we expand the relevance of this ‘ōlelo no‘eau to our lāhui. Reciprocal recognition and kōkua in the everyday are not insignificant acts, they are required for the life of our lāhui.

Asian-Coded Hawaiians and Asian Settler Colonialism

Although Kānaka coded as Asian and Kānaka coded as white both receive racial, and with it, often socioeconomic privileges, it is worth noting how their experiences diverge. Favorable institutional treatment toward white- and Asian-coded Kānaka over Hawaiian-coded Kānaka is consistent with the widespread white supremacist racial hierarchy. Some white people living in Hawai‘i, particularly new residents, have equated their status as a minority in the islands with “haole victimization,” failing to acknowledge centuries of colonization that placed white people at the top at the expense of Kānaka Maoli and other racialized groups (Rohrer 2010, 9). Indeed, white people occupy positions of political power and hold white-collar occupations at rates disproportionate to their population (Fujikane 2008, 23-24).

Still, when examining race in Hawai‘i, there is an important caveat: in part because Asian people make up the majority of Hawai‘i’s population, they possess a different, additional privilege in these islands than they might on the U.S. continent. Whereas Asian folks in the U.S. are recognized as “outsiders” or “foreign” to the American polity, Asian folks in Hawai‘i have largely become “insiders.” This move to the “inside” is evident in our political and economic systems, as Asian people, particularly East Asian people of Japanese and Chinese descent, dominate seats in the State Legislature and are among the highest class in the islands, as evidenced by high income, occupational, and educational statuses (Fujikane 2008, 23-25). Building on the work of Haunani-Kay Trask, Candace Fujikane refers to Asian hegemony in

Hawai‘i as “Asian settler colonialism” or “colonial ideologies and practices of Asian settlers who currently support the broader structure of the U.S. settler state” (Fujikane 2008, 6). Along with these political and economic structures, Asians have also moved to the “inside” in the social and interpersonal sphere, creating a “local” identity among Hawai‘i residents of many ethnicities. While scholars have understandably critiqued the “local” identity for glossing over the distinction between those born in Hawai‘i and those Indigenous to Hawai‘i (Fujikane 2008, 26), more recent scholars have also acknowledged its potential for solidarity (Sharma 2021).

It is crucial to understand this context of Asian settler colonialism when discussing Hawaiians who feel they do not look Hawaiian, especially those who feel they look Asian. Many Kānaka Maoli possess Asian heritage, so many Kānaka who do not code as Hawaiian code as Asian. Given the prevalence of Asian heritage in Hawai‘i’s population and frequent intermarriage between Asians and Hawaiians, one could argue there are more Asian-coded Hawaiians than white-coded Hawaiians. Despite this, discussions about Asian-coded Hawaiians are virtually nonexistent in academic and public discourse. In contrast, scholarship on and from those who identify as white-coded Hawaiian is much more prevalent (Ledward 2007). Aree Worawongwasu, a colleague and friend of mine, revealed that the disparity of scholarship on Asian-coded Kānaka when compared to scholarship on white-coded Kānaka further demonstrates the ways in which the academy is still centered on whiteness (Aree Worawongwasu, personal communication, January 22, 2022).

In addition, lack of scholarly attention to Hawaiians coded as Asian also displays a major tenant of Asian settler colonialism: the invisibility of Asian hegemony. Candace Fujikane asserts, “Asian settler power and privilege have become so naturalized in our lives that that they have become invisible to many in Hawai‘i” (Fujikane 2008, 13). One contributor, Sienna, whose

mother is Hawaiian, spoke to this explicitly in contentious exchanges with her father's family of Japanese descent.

What I've recently like, really, really been like, having a hard time with is [...] interactions with like, my extended family, or my grandma, my dad, and like other cousins that are Japanese. It's just like, they don't *see* it. Or like, they don't get that they come with Asian privilege because they look like everybody else in Hawai'i. They make more money because they are Asian, things like that. [...] Pointing that [Asian privilege] out to people in my family is like, punching through a brick wall, like it's impossible. And because of that, they will drop lines, like "Hawaiians are lazy" or like, "You are successful, not because you're Hawaiian, you're successful because you're Japanese, and I made you this way." [...] Me and my dad have like, gotten into like screaming fights about this because he cannot...like he can't...he just cannot...like, *see* it. No, he just can't *see* it. (Sienna, interview with author, October 9, 2021, emphasis added)

Even before reading Fujikane's *Asian Settler Colonialism*, Sienna repeatedly said her Japanese family did not *see* their "Asian privilege" because it was made natural and invisible in our islands. Moreover, she communicated tension within her family when trying to make Asian settler colonialism visible. She was not alone in experiencing anti-Hawaiian sentiment from a non-Hawaiian parent or family member among my contributors.

Sienna also showed the ways in which her family's anti-Hawaiian sentiment has also influenced her own cultural identity. Like Aunty Cyndy, she was taught to see Hawaianness and success in opposition, and trained to view her success as a result of her Japanese rather than Hawaiian heredity. It was her Asian family (and no doubt her private education) that discouraged her from continuing her maritime training with a Kanaka Maoli culture-based program and instead pursue a more lucrative and prestigious career. In diminishing the value of Hawaiian identity to maintain Asian superiority, her father also diminished her sense of security in her Hawaiian identity, how "much" Hawaiian she felt. In another part of the interview, Sienna shared her father frequently communicated a message like: "You are Japanese and you've always been Japanese, and this is who you are. And like, yeah, you might be Hawaiian, but like, not

really.” When I responded with a small gasp, she said, “I know, I know. Welcome to how my [Hawaiian] imposter syndrome begins” (Sienna, interview with author, October 9, 2021).

Sienna directly addressed her non-Indigenous Asian family’s reluctance to contend with their privilege. However, her other discussions on her own class privilege, on not having to “struggle” the way other Hawaiians have, and her belief that she presents as Japanese like her father, might imply she was also contending with her own privilege. As discussed in the introduction, discourses on race in Hawai‘i often put forth racial triangulations like Hawaiian-haole-local or Hawaiian-white-Asian (Ledward 2007; Kauanui 2008). While Hawaiians of mixed descent will always be considered Hawaiian, regardless of phenotype, Asian-coded Hawaiians often benefit from the privileges, both racial and socioeconomic, in the manner of many Asian settlers. As we float between “Hawaiian” and “local” or “Asian,” we do not have to reckon with the ways we have been harmed or harm others if we do not want to. As Logan remarked, we can be shapeshifters, and we can and have failed to use our power in the service of other less privileged Kānaka. Through the normalization of Asian presence and power in Hawai‘i, the tension of being an Asian-coded Hawaiian—between the privileges of Asianness and the dispossession of Hawaiianess, without the blatant colonial taint of whiteness—is often overlooked or fails to be addressed directly, even and perhaps especially among Asian-coded Hawaiians.

Due to the relative obscurity of Asian settler colonialism among the general Hawai‘i population, Asian-coded Hawaiians have a home in Hawai‘i in ways white-coded Hawaiians do not. As a result, I argue Asian-coded Hawaiians have been comfortable to refrain from embracing Hawaiian culture and advocating for Hawaiian liberation. Even as white-coded Hawaiians hold leadership roles in the sovereignty movement, Asian-coded Hawaiians have

remained distinctly less visible. I have spent much of my life, scanning Hawaiian spaces for Kānaka who looked like me at the front of the line or at the head of an organization in service of our lāhui, in part to give me permission to do the same. Given the racialized and colorist violence against Hawaiian-coded Kānaka, especially dark-skinned Kānaka, I must clarify that I see great value in their representation at the helm of our wa‘a. I also know now that I do not need to wait for this kind of permission to take action, but a valid question remains: How is it that I have seen so few Asian-coded Hawaiians contribute to the betterment of our people?

Kānaka who code as Asian, many of whom occupy higher socioeconomic statuses, might feel no need to assert their Hawaiian identity in the ways white-coded Kānaka might. Whereas white-coded Hawaiians might be excluded as a minority representative of colonial oppression, and might embrace their Hawaiianness as a means of belonging, Asian-coded Hawaiians might already fit in among other non-Indigenous Asians and the larger “local” community. When I recall moments I felt unable to claim my Hawaiian identity earlier in life, I also remember feeling I did not *need* to claim it. I blended easily with the majority, the Asians, especially in an upper-class environment like Punahou, requiring neither a rejection nor an embrace of my Hawaiianness. Discussing the aforementioned specificities of being an Asian-coded Kanaka in Hawai‘i, Michelle shared,

It’s so hard because, I think, I love Hawai‘i. And I love Hawai‘i for what it is. But I’m speaking as an Asian-Hawaiian, right? Like, I love it for what it is because I’ve benefited a lot of my life from it. And I learned to appreciate it so much, like I said, because when I went to Arizona, it was mostly white. So when I came back here, I felt like I was back like, with my people that looked like me. But then that’s Asian, like my graduating class at ‘Iolani, we were like, ninety-two percent Asian.

Reflecting on the prevalence of Asian people in her educational and social circles, Michelle realized the home she felt in Hawai‘i was not with Hawaiians, but with Asians. She also reflected that her “people” in Hawai‘i, largely Asian, benefit in these islands often at the expense of

others, including most Hawaiians. Notably, my participants who feel they look white did not describe the same sense of belonging in Hawai‘i by virtue of their phenotype.

So if Asian-coded Hawaiians already feel we belong in Hawai‘i, at least among other non-Indigenous Asians, why would we also seek belonging among Kānaka Maoli? Lack of scholarship on Hawaiians who look Asian, and lack of Asian-coded Hawaiians in leadership in Hawaiian sovereignty spaces, might demonstrate that many Asian-coded Kānaka do not seek recognition from the larger Hawaiian community. For those of us Asian-coded Hawaiians who do seek recognition, honestly, I ask myself this question all the time. My life would certainly be easier if I never confronted my simultaneous privilege and oppression, and took the paths of western modes of “success” already paved for me. So to answer this question, I return to Sienna, and her response when her father asks her why she cares about Hawaiian rights or activism, anyway: “Because I’m Native Hawaiian.” It is as simple as that. Our kūpuna, our lāhui, and our kuleana to them both is beyond skin-deep; it is literally in our bones, which are in this ‘āina. In my na‘au, even when I was too afraid to claim it, I always *felt* more Hawaiian than anything else. As the diversity of any people would imply, this might not true for every Hawaiian, Asian-coded or not. But if you do feel what Logan called that ringing in your bones, especially if you look Asian or white and have benefited from these privileges, I urge you, just as I urge myself, to stop fretting over what you see in the mirror and look down to your hands and feet. Step forward, speak up, write it down, and kōkua your lāhui.

Conclusion

Through their generosity in sharing their mo‘olelo, my contributors demonstrate how ‘ike—to see, to know, and to feel—can be used as a means of understanding insecure identities

among Kānaka Maoli. Hawaiians who do not *look* Hawaiian often do not *feel* Hawaiian enough. However, looking Hawaiian is only the surface of deeper issues of insecurity connected to *knowing* what it means to be Hawaiian. Only by *knowing* Hawaiianness can Kānaka *feel* Hawaiian. Significantly, Hawaiians who do not look Hawaiian, but instead code as Asian or white, must also contend with their positions of racial and socioeconomic privilege that likely distanced them from *knowing* the larger Hawaiian community. If these Kānaka hope to be *seen* as Hawaiian, they must also kōkua, help, using their privileges to serve the lāhui. On the other hand, Hawaiian-coded Kānaka who know their community can also kōkua in recognizing and supporting Hawaiians seeking to reconnect. With a greater understanding of the ways in which we ‘ike—feel, know, and see—our Hawaiianness, the next chapter will further explore the ways we might recognize and support each other to cultivate more secure identities.

Chapter 3

‘Ike Aku, ‘Ike Mai: Reciprocal Recognition as Resurgence for Kānaka Maoli

After waves of heavy conversation, finally, I offered a question that made one participant, Kainoa, glow. “Have you had the opportunity to recognize others as Hawaiian?” I asked, searching for ways we might begin to repair our identities through our pilina (relationships) to each other. Kainoa, who is a high school teacher, did not pause for a moment. He immediately said, “Yes,” and gave a few measured, but enthusiastic nods. He continued:

So I have a student in my homeroom this year and she is just like me. [...] So, you know, white skin, light-colored hair. And we’ve had moments, ‘cause, you know, I’ll share in class about something, and [...] she’ll [indicate], “I know exactly what that is.” (points) And so, getting to sort of affirm her, like shared experience. It’s not like, literally [saying], “I affirm you.” But just like, knowing that we’re together, we’re both Kanaka, we both struggle with this thing where we don’t present it, but we are. *So, I’m letting you know that, I see you and you’re in.* (Kainoa Valente, interview with author, October 30, 2021; emphasis added)

Kainoa’s act of seeing his student as Kanaka, even without communicating this seeing in words, was no trivial feat; it was an act of recognition despite settler colonial and racialized metrics of Hawaiian identity. Even though, as Kainoa states, he and his student did not “present” as Hawaiian in their physical appearance, he recognized her (and by extension, himself) as Hawaiian, and committed to affirming her claim to her Indigeneity. Due to moments of seeing much like the one Kainoa enacted, my identity as a Hawaiian has been recognized and affirmed. It is because of these instances of recognition that I am empowered to take on this project.

In previous chapters, I have emphasized the salience of our na‘au, our source of feeling, in Kanaka Maoli epistemologies. Building on on Dian Million’s “felt theory,” I proposed and employed na’auao as methodology, a collaborative process by which felt knowledge was not

only validated, but actively produced, in order to elucidate participant emotional realities and create spaces of healing. Attending to their na'au, my Kanaka Maoli participants generously offered their own mo'olelo to reveal their lived experiences of insecure cultural identities and racialization. Drawing from 'ike—to see, to know, to feel—I show how feeling Hawaiian enough is intimately connected to being seen as Kanaka and knowing what it means to be Kanaka. Ultimately, I looked to the 'ōlelo no'eau, “‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku, kōkua mai; pela iho la ka nohona ‘ohana” (Recognize and be recognized, help and be helped; such is family life), to promote mutual recognition and help among Kānaka who code as Hawaiian and those who do not. Through seeing and supporting each other as Hawaiians, we can ensure the wellbeing of our extended 'ohana, our lāhui.

In this chapter, I build on this initial call to 'ike aku, 'ike mai—reciprocal recognition and kōkua aku, kōkua mai—reciprocal support—to offer an alternative future to insecure identities and racialization. To ground my work, I look to the source of these particular visions of decolonial futures, largely Indigenous scholars of Turtle Island, and carefully apply them to our situations as Hawaiians. I ask: How do previous articulations of self-recognition, refusal, and resurgence inform the ways in which we recognize each other as Hawaiian despite settler colonial and racialized metrics of identity? What specific practices are required in the Kanaka Maoli context? Guided by Leanne Simpson's two tenants for radical resurgent organizing, as well as other Indigenous scholars, I offer two key principles to guide our practice to recognize each other as Hawaiian: refuse state-based logics of identity and protect our relationality. Instructed by responses from my participants, I also offer practices to apply these principles in the Hawaiian context. Unlike previous chapters that directly emphasizes our relationships to each other, this chapter uses engagements with and refusals of the state as models of the political

realm to apply to our interpersonal realm. In *seeing* each other as Hawaiian regardless of state-based logics of identity, we are participating in refusal and resurgence against the structures of settler colonialism and racism that seek to erase us.

On Recognition, Refusal, and Resurgence

Since I am proposing that Kānaka self-recognize as an act of refusal and resurgence, I am concerned with conceptions of recognition, refusal, and resurgence. Most articulations of these ideas originated with Indigenous thinkers from North America, and have now been rearticulated in other Indigenous contexts, including that of Kānaka Maoli. To begin, a description of recognition offers the foundation for why participation in refusal and resurgence is necessary. In settler colonial contexts, the politics of recognition describes the phenomena in which the colonized requests resources or land from the colonizer. For Indigenous peoples in regions under American imperialism, including Hawai‘i, the politics of recognition regularly manifests when Indigenous communities are positioned to seek recognition and limited resources from the U.S. federal government, often in exchange for Indigenous claims to land and nation.

Glen Coulthard asserts this logic of recognition, in which the colonized requests recognition and resources from the colonizer, “prefigures its failure to significantly modify, let alone transcend, the breadth of power at play in colonial relationships” (Coulthard 2014, 31). Following Coulthard, who, drawing from Frantz Fanon, refutes any necessity of a reciprocal relationship between the colonized and colonizer, I argue that the colonizer need not recognize the colonized; in fact, it benefits the colonizer to explicitly misrecognize the colonized in order to foreclose their access to their land, nation, and resources. Instead, Coulthard, aligned with Fanon, asserts we must “turn away” from the colonizer and “self-recognize,” a self-initiated process of

decolonization wherein the colonized “first recogniz[e] themselves as free, dignified, and distinct contributors to humanity” (Coulthard 2014, 43). Since appealing to recognition by colonial powers will not liberate us, we can instead seek to recognize ourselves and each other.

Similar to the notion of “turning away” in the face of politics of recognition, Audra Simpson proposes we have the option to refuse. Framed as a political alternative to recognition, Simpson says refusal is “a political and ethical stance that stands in stark contrast to the desire to have one’s distinctiveness as a culture, as a people, recognized” (A. Simpson 2014, 11). Those who participate in refusal inherently question the authority of those who are often recognizing. For Simpson, refusal is exemplified in the efforts of the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke to reject governmental and bureaucratic recognition from settler colonial states. Through defining their nation’s membership on their own terms and evicting non-Indian residents of Kahnawà:ke territory²⁵, as well as insisting on using Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy) passports, the Kahnawà:ke Mohawks refuse Canadian or American citizenship, and in turn refuse colonial recognition.

Applying Simpson’s refusal in the Hawaiian context, David Uahikeaikalei‘ohu Maile describes testimonies in opposition to the 2014 U.S. Department of Interior’s (DOI) proposal for a nation-to-nation status with the Native Hawaiian community (similar to that of Native American nations) as an “archive of Kanaka Maoli refusal.” In repeated rejections of the DOI’s plans, specifically articulated in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i as “‘a‘ole,” Maile suggests these testimonies contribute to a larger mo‘okū‘auhau of Kanaka Maoli resistance (Maile forthcoming, 12).

Beyond rejections of colonial governing entities, Maile Arvin traces the Hawaiian community’s

²⁵ The 2003 law enacted by the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke that allowed for these evictions, the Kahnawà:ke Membership Law, attempts to work against the intimately damaging Indian Act of 1876. However, Simpson mentions that the Kahnawà:ke Membership Law may be “equally (some would say) discriminatory” (A. Simpson 2014, 13).

divestments from racialized and gendered hierarchies in law, science, and art as a form of refusal. Termed “regenerative refusals,” or “actions that seek to restore balance and life to Indigenous communities that continue to live with structures of settler colonialism,” Arvin maintains these actions require a rejection of colonial structures of power, but are rooted in Indigenous peoples’ connections to their bodies, each other, and the land (Arvin 2019, 129-132). By refusing colonial attempts to confine our individual and collective senses of self through recognition, we are also unsettling the colonial authority to recognize in realms of governance and racialized and gendered hierarchies, and ultimately unsettling the colonial systems themselves.

As I see it, whereas refusal is a deliberate rejection of colonial “authority” and politics of recognition, resurgence is the future-building you do after you decide to refuse the colonial state, or during the process of refusal. “Indigenous resurgence,” Jeff Corntassel asserts, “means having the courage and imagination to envision life beyond the state” (Corntassel 2012, 89). According to Corntassel, the Indigenous resurgence paradigm includes four primary dimensions: centering Indigenous nationhood, honoring and practicing relational responsibilities, turning away from the state, and engaging in everyday acts of regeneration (Corntassel 2021, 74). Some scholars emphasize this last dimension of resurgence, everydayness, as a means to “make visible” the unacknowledged, relational, and often gendered embodiments of Indigenous nationhood in daily actions (Corntassel et al. 2017, 17-18).

In the Kanaka Maoli context, Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua demonstrates how Hawaiian organizers have participated in “resurgent practices of interdependence and self-determination” in movements to resist U.S. federal recognition and the commodification of kalo (taro) (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua 2011, 147). Prefiguring a future rooted in “belonging, collective authority

and social organization” (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua 2011, 132), these organizers engaged in arguably all four dimensions of Cornassel’s Indigenous resurgence paradigm. Similarly, Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio suggests that Pu‘uhonua o Pu‘uhuluhulu, a place of refuge at the base of the sacred Maunakea cultivated to protect the mountain against further desecration, does more than turn away from the colonial state. Pu‘uhuluhulu also acts as a “living alternative to the settler society,” representing “the potentials of a governing formation rooted in aloha ‘āina, sustainability and Kanaka-led cooperation” (Osorio 2021, 151). This pu‘uhonua, and more broadly, this movement to protect Maunakea is about rejecting the authority of the colonizer and creating our own futures grounded in Hawaiian governance and relationality all at once. Predicated on refusing and turning away from the state, Indigenous resurgence emphasizes what is possible beyond the state.

I have delineated between self-recognition, refusal, and resurgence here, but as with most Indigenous ideas, boundaries between concepts are not rigid nor are their timelines linear. Still, since refusal and resurgence are often used uncritically or interchangeably, exploring these concepts as distinct may clarify their nuances. From this cursory review, it seems these nuances are less fundamental, and more to do with where emphasis is placed. As previously mentioned, refusal emphasizes turning away from colonial authority, while resurgence, along with self-recognition, emphasize future-building beyond the colonial state. However, both self-recognition and resurgence requires turning away from the state, either as a precursor to or as a dimension of the process, respectively. Moreover, this is not to say refusal does not see or work toward a future; it is only through hope in something other than the colonial authority, commonly faith in one’s community, that one can muster the courage to refuse. Ultimately, I do not think most, if

any, of these scholars would want us to become preoccupied with relatively arbitrary delineations between concepts; they would want us to do something with them.

Perhaps most exemplary of blurring boundaries between self-recognition, refusal, and resurgence is Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's call to "resurgent organizing" through "generative refusal" and "reciprocal recognition." Simpson invites us to "refuse colonial recognition as a starting point and turn inwards, building a politics of refusal that is generative" (L. Simpson 2017, 177). Here, she identifies two tenants of what she calls "radical resurgent organizing": (1) stop appealing to the colonial politics of recognition and (2) re-embed our struggles in Indigenous realities to respond to our concerns and build connection. When we take on this second tenant of future-building, when we turn inward, we can self-recognize individually and collectively, offering reciprocal recognition to each other. Drawing from the greeting "Aaniin" in Nishnaabewin, we can "see each other's light." This reciprocal recognition nurtures relationships with each other and with the land, amplifies indigeneity, works against shame, and in turn, builds strong Native identities and nations (L. Simpson 2017, 180-189). Bringing resurgence, refusal, and self-recognition together, Simpson offers a framework counter to so many colonial processes, including issues related to insecure identities and racialization among Kanaka Maoli.

Seeing Our Light: Principles of Our Recognition

Guided by the aforementioned scholars, I offer a framework in which Hawaiians can also see each other's light. Here, as with all comparative studies, Teresia Teaiwa's "s/pacific n/oceans" of honoring the generic effects of colonialism and the specific individual's and community's experiences ought to be employed—this time beyond comparisons in the Pacific to

include Indigenous communities in Turtle Island as well (Teaiwa 1994, 102-103). Indeed, although Leanne Simpson is speaking to the Nishnaabewin context, her call to offer each other reciprocal recognition resonates closely with the exchange put forth by “‘ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku, kōkua mai.” Informed by previous articulations of recognition, refusal, and resurgence, particularly Leanne Simpson’s tenants of radical resurgent organizing, two main principles may guide our practice of recognizing each other as Hawaiian despite settler colonial and racialized metrics of identity: refuse state-based logics of identity and protect our relationality.

My usage of the concepts “recognition” and “refusal” depart from most previous iterations of the terms in that they are not used in an exclusively political context, but rather an interpersonal one, as well. (As previously mentioned, “resurgence” is frequently discussed with everyday practices, so its use in both political and personal realms is commonplace.) Of course, the personal is political, and logics of the settler state are embedded in our most intimate relationships with each other and ourselves. But in this framework, the recognition we seek is not from the state, but rather from each other; the refusals we make are not against the state itself but against settler state logics we impose on each other. To best illustrate the kind of recognition we seek (somewhat paradoxically), Audra Simpson’s articulations of “political recognition” in its (as she describes) “simplest terms” prove useful. For Simpson, political recognition is “to be seen by another *as one wants to be seen*” (A. Simpson 2014, 23). Conversely, according to Emma Kowal and Yin Paradies, speaking from the Indigenous Australian context, “misrecognition” describes the experience where “one is not seen as who one ‘really’ is” (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 106). The seemingly ordinary act of being seen—in a way that either reflects

or conflicts with one's understanding of self—is key to interpersonal acts of recognition. In order to best see each other in practice, however, we must also articulate our theoretical principles.

Refusing State-Based Logics of Identity

Recognizing each other as Kanaka requires first refusing the legitimacy of state-based logics of identity. I use “state-based logics” to refer to the lines of reason, deeply shaped by systems of settler colonialism and racialization that serve the state, underpinning the harmful “authenticating” metrics of Hawaiian identity. Under settler colonialism and its politics of recognition, the settler state seeks to eliminate the Native in order to access their land and resources, and can do this by explicitly misrecognizing the Native *as Native* (Wolfe 2006; Kauanui 2018, 9). One avenue of misrecognition includes the colonizer characterizing Indigenous identities as fixed and relegated to the past. As mentioned in the introduction, the settler state then deems all Indigenous identities that inevitably fall outside of these bounds (e.g., those who do not speak the exact language of their ancestors or do not build canoes in the same way) as “inauthentic,” misrecognizing the Native *as Native*, and delegitimizing their claims to land and nation. The “authentic” identity also relies on racialized metrics like stereotypical phenotypes and “blood quantum,” which falsely quantifies Indigenous heritage. By limiting what makes Indigenous identities “authentic” and using racialized models to determine “authenticity,” the colonizer attempts to fulfill its ultimate goal of eliminating the Native. It is these very logics that seek to erase us that we impose on each other—and must reject as legitimate markers of our Hawaiian identities.

As we refuse state-based logics of identity, discussions on refusal and resurgence call us to also acknowledge the necessity, to an extent, of working within the bounds of the state. Of his

four dimensions of Indigenous resurgence, Jeff Corntassel maintains the most misunderstood component is that of turning away from the state. In response to interpretations of turning away as a wholesale retreat from the state or a rejection of Indigenous agency within it, Corntassel asserts that turning away does not mean complete disengagement with the state. It does, however, require careful engagement with the state that accounts for its limitations and consciously re-centers Indigenous nationhood (Corntassel 2021, 75). In a similar vein, Audra Simpson claims that even in refusing recognition from the colonizer, the sovereignty of Indigenous nations may exist within the sovereignty of colonizing nations, as it does for many Kahnawà:ke Mohawks under Canadian and U.S. imperialism (A. Simpson 2014, 10). In fact, in the context of turning away, Simpson shows that some Haudenosaunee are aware of the unequal relationship between colonizer and colonized, but are still willing to “stay enslaved.” This willingness is motivated by greater principles of Indigenous nationhood, sovereignty, and jurisdiction by those who are truly in power—the Natives—which inherently unsettles settler claims to authority (A. Simpson 2014, 24). By strategically engaging with the state, Corntassel and Simpson demonstrate how we can still effectively turn away from it.

What does it mean to refuse state-based logics of identity and still engage with the state for this framework of recognition? As previously referenced, Kowal and Paradies draw from Coulthard and Audra Simpson to extend notions of recognition and refusal to the Indigenous Australian context, and to the interpersonal realm related to racialization. They articulate the act of “white-skinned Indigenous Australians”²⁶ asserting their Indigeneity to non-Indigenous (white) Australians as a “refusal of whiteness.” Given the Australian state’s history of violently attempting to racially assimilate Indigenous peoples in the twentieth century, the authors

²⁶ Kowal and Paradies use this phrase in reference to Indigenous Australians who present as white.

describe this experience as a “race refusal,” or “instances where a person defies an attributed identity that clashes with their personal identity” (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 107). Through this race refusal, white-skinned Indigenous Australians are refusing assimilation, white sociality, and everyday racialization (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 108-111).²⁷ Their race refusal may be considered a refusal of state-based logics of identity discussed in this framework.

However, Kowal and Paradies are clear that while these white-skinned Indigenous Australians refuse racialization as white, they are also demanding racialization as Indigenous (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 110). Indeed, state-based logics of identity are being both refused and engaged: “Refusing whiteness is not a refusal of Australian recognition regimes but a demand for inclusion in them under different terms” (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 111). While the authors frame the ambivalence of race refusal as a “cautionary tale” of “how refusal can be co-opted by the state” (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 111), drawing from Cornthassel and Simpson, I see it as a simultaneous rejection and strategic engagement with state-based logics. By actively shaping how they are seen, and determining the manner in which they want to be seen—as Indigenous—white-skinned Indigenous Australians are refusing state-based logics of identity.

Practice: Giving the Benefit of the Doubt

This project departs from Kowal and Paradies’ study in that I am less concerned with how non-Indigenous people recognize Indigenous people, and more interested in how we recognize each other. So, we must refuse state-based logics of identity by asserting our

²⁷ It should be emphasized that Kowal and Paradies’ study only examined interactions between white-skinned Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous (often white) people; it did not look at engagements between white-skinned and dark-skinned Indigenous Australians. Perhaps for this reason, their articulation of “race refusal” does not account for the ways in which “refusal of whiteness” does not account for the harm of “refusing” white privilege. I briefly address this the issue of privilege, race, and socioeconomic status within community in the following section.

Indigenous identities as these Indigenous Australians did—this is important. But I believe more critical to our collective wellbeing as a lāhui (people, nation) is our refusal to impose state-based logics of identity on our Kanaka Maoli relatives. Given centuries of the settler state attempting to erase us, and the intimate entrenchment of settler colonial and racialized metrics of identity internalized in our attempts to survive, this is no simple or easy task. Still, as a starting point, we must resist the initial instinct to judge our fellow Kanaka for their degree of “Hawaiian-ness” based on how they look, where they live, where they went to school, or the myriad of other items on the Authenticity Checklist of Hawaiianness.

Instead, in the words of my research participant Kainoa, we ought to first give other Hawaiians “the benefit of the doubt.” We must believe a Hawaiian is who they say they are (until proven otherwise). Kainoa only elaborated briefly to say: “So if somebody says, ‘Yeah, I’m Hawaiian,’ [I respond with] okay, cool, awesome” (Kainoa Valente, interview with author, October 30, 2021). Though Kainoa’s response may seem inconsequential, the statement, “I am Hawaiian” in the everyday, especially for those of us who do not present as Hawaiian, is rarely immediately accepted. Among non-Hawaiians, a Kanaka’s claim to Hawaiian identity is often met with probes of authenticity: sentiments follow like “Really? How much?” or “But you don’t look Hawaiian.” Kowal and Paradies argue these responses could be read as questioning the authenticity of the Indigenous person or an avoidance of blame for misrecognition (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 109-110).

Among Kanaka, however, a claim to Hawaiian identity and the following authenticity judgement is seldom so explicit or confrontational. It may take the form of indirect questions on place of birth, place of residence, or education to assess how “much” Hawaiian someone is. It also may look like the whispers around a person, including children. At parties with extended

Hawaiian family, multiple participants mentioned being singled out in their childhood, often jokingly, as the “haole one” or the “Asian one.” More often, though, it is in the silences: Not being engaged in conversation at all, not being seen as a part of the struggle in protests but an ally to it, and ultimately, not being given the benefit of the doubt to be Hawaiian.²⁸

In part because she has been privy to these misrecognitions first-hand, one of my research participants, Mele, keeps her mind open to who might be Kanaka Maoli, regardless of physical appearance. “So I try to make an effort to not, I mean, it's hard not to, like, racially profile,” she said, referring to the difficulty of countering implicit racial bias. “But I'm trying to think anyone could be Hawaiian out here. We don't know. We don't know.” Her willingness to recognize anyone as Hawaiian resonates with Kowal and Paradies’ description of Indigenous identification in their career spaces “engaged in Indigenous affairs.” They assume anyone is “potentially Indigenous” until more information is obtained, often through indirect questions like how they entered their line of work (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 103-104). While catered to encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, I suggest we could also benefit within the Kanaka Maoli community by assuming anyone is “potentially Hawaiian”—much like Mele does, and much like I am learning to do. By simply giving the benefit of the doubt, we are refusing the racial stereotype of what a Hawaiian “looks” like and, with it, state-based logics of identity.

To be sure, other intersecting issues of racial and socioeconomic privilege complicate issues of misrecognition within community.²⁹ I want to validate any feelings working class or dark-skinned Hawaiians may have toward their upper-middle class or light-skinned counterparts

²⁸ While the majority of my research participants expressed ‘eha (pain, hurt) over their own experiences of misrecognition, some Kanaka may render similar encounters trivial; we are not a monolith.

²⁹ This only accounts for light-skinned Kanaka seeking recognition from dark-skinned Kanaka; it does not account for our relatives of Hawaiian and African descent, who may have dark skin but may not be recognized as Kanaka. Due to white supremacy, this conversation of racial privilege about Kanaka who do not phenotypically present as Kanaka does not apply to Black Hawaiians. See Sharma 2021 for more on the experiences of Black Hawaiians.

for the privileges they gain under settler colonialism and late-stage capitalism, or the internalized colonial harms they may inflict. To my fellow socioeconomically- or racially-privileged Kānaka, I do not think recognition from our larger community can happen without the acknowledgement of how we benefit from our present, constrained conditions. It is true that we probably did not choose it, and we may be distanced from our community because of it, but we do profit from it in material ways. However, I do seek to huli (overturn) the structures of capitalism, racism, and colorism that caused these fractures in our lāhui in the first place. Racial and socioeconomic privileges can help tremendously in this process—as discussed in chapter 2, Logan called “passing” as white or Asian a “superpower” if harnessed for our lāhui’s liberation. Even while we take on these systems, we can still learn to recognize each other through giving the benefit of the doubt. After all, according to another participant, Alex, judging each other for Hawaiian “authenticity,” not *seeing* each other as Kanaka, “is how a lāhui falls apart” (Alex, interview with author, November 7, 2021).

Protecting Our Relationality

After refusing state-based logics of identity, or giving other Kānaka the benefit of the doubt, we can now “turn inward” to re-articulate, in our own terms, the nature of the ‘eha (pain, hurt) of insecure identities and the means of best recognizing each other as Kanaka. Following the leads of Audra Simpson and Leanne Simpson, clarifying the contours of our insecure identities can begin with acknowledging our “fear of disappearance.” Once we realize the causes of our ‘eha we can carefully carve out at least one antithesis to this fear: our connection to each other and to ourselves. In the settler colonial, white supremacist, capitalist system that seeks to

separate us, cultivating and protecting our relationality may be our greatest, and even most viable, hope.

Leanne Simpson asserts our in-community struggles over identity and membership, often reduced to simple identity politics, are actually attributed to, in the words of Audra Simpson, our “fear of disappearance” (A. Simpson 2014, 14; L. Simpson 2017, 176-177). After centuries of attempted erasure by a settler state that gains legitimacy with our elimination, Indigenous peoples—particularly those in settler colonial contexts, and particularly women and queer folks—have fought to survive assimilation and death. To fear our disappearance as Indigenous peoples, then, is a historically and socially produced fact of life. To highlight this premediated force of the settler state rather than the passive victimization of our people, Heoli Osorio suggests modifying the phrase “fear of disappearance” to “fear of erasure” (Heoli Osorio, discussion in graduate seminar, September 2021).

Whether we fear disappearance or erasure, Leanne Simpson warns that when we encode our fear into policy, pain and division within our own communities is inevitable (L. Simpson 2017, 176). In the Kanaka Maoli context, one need look no further than the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HCCA) of 1921, which limited access to allotted lands to “native Hawaiians” with fifty-percent blood quantum (Kauanui 2008). Intended to protect Hawaiian lands and people from foreign encroachment, the act was written out of a deep fear that our land and people would be eliminated. Paradoxically, in some ways the HCCA made it easier to disappear Kānaka, establishing Hawaiian identity as measurable based on racialized metrics with no scientific basis. I would add that just as fear of erasure was encoded in policy, so too was it encoded in our everyday practices, specifically our interpersonal relationships.

Although our fear of disappearance is central to how we have marked our identities, few Kānaka, scholars or members of the larger community, have articulated this fear as the core of the identity issue in the Hawaiian community. Leanne Simpson asserts understanding the role of fear of erasure is essential to our future visions. She writes, “This shift in framing from identity politics to fear of disappearance *enables us to organize around the root, instead of the symptom*, and it allows for multidimensional nation-based approaches” (L. Simpson 2017, 177; emphasis added). If we know our fear of erasure as the cause, rather than a byproduct, of our insecure identities, we can, in the words of Edward Said, take inventory of our collective “traces” of colonialism in order to move forward (Said 1978, 25). If we acknowledge the dispossession and loss that caused this fear, we can begin to cultivate what Simpson calls the opposite of dispossession: “Not possession, because we’re not supposed to be capitalists, but connection” (L. Simpson 2017, 185). Articulating the root of our struggle for identity as fear of erasure equips us to face the pain of our collective loss and begin to heal through connection.

In the politics of recognition under settler colonialism, our connections to each other have consistently acted as a critical component of self-recognition, refusal, and resurgence. Indigenous scholars have emphasized community acceptance and accountability as a core facet of Indigenous identity. Corntassel and Simpson have both articulated our connections to our genealogical relations in terms of recognition, flagging them as defining our identities (Corntassel 2017, 33). Referencing both past and future generations, Simpson asks, “Do my Ancestors recognize me as one of their own?” and “How do I live [...] in a way that ensures I recognize my great-great-great-grandchildren as Indigenous peoples?” (L. Simpson 2017, 179-180). In response to anticipated critiques that the impact of interpersonal race refusals and, I would add, reciprocal recognitions, are trivial, Kowal and Paradies call us not to “underestimate”

their power in “reconfiguring social relations” (Kowal and Paradies 2017, 105, 111-112). It is no question that relationality is significant in our identities and futures as Indigenous peoples.

Some scholars, however, maintain that our relationships are or ought to be at the very core of our resurgence. To be sure, most Indigenous thinkers first insist that our relationships with each other must begin with our relationships with the land (Gilpin 2017, 51). While we must continue to cultivate our relations to our land, Osorio contends that in resurgent efforts to commit to aloha ‘āina (love of land) among Kānaka Maoli, we have embraced pilina (relationship) to ‘āina, but have neglected our pilina to each other. Using mo‘olelo (stories, histories, legends) to demonstrate how essential interpersonal relationships were to our kūpuna (ancestors living and dead), Osorio calls us to “re-imagine a view of sovereignty rooted in our pilina to each other” (Osorio 2021, 24-25). Gina Starblanket similarly asserts resurgence is a “fundamentally relational process” that can and should occur in our everyday interactions. She shows how *practicing* our relationships, as she did when she became a mother, can enable us to embody previously theoretical values in our day-to-day consciousness. Moreover, the practice of holding ourselves accountable to our relationships in and of itself not only subverts the individualism of colonial society, but also honors our ancestors’ way of life (Starblanket 2017, 30-31).

In these relationships, Erynne M. Gilpin highlights love as a force of resurgence that not only teaches us how to acknowledge our interpersonal connections, but also “how to enact a practice of accountability and respect to these relations” (Gilpin 2017, 50). She also insists love requires softness—not only with the other, but also with ourselves. Rather than judging the flaws of another, she calls us to “experience a softening to first ourselves, and then eventually towards others” (Gilpin 2017, 50-52). Notably, she says, “Love demands truth and *freedom from fear*”

(Gilbin 2017, 50; emphasis added). With an awareness of the truth of our ‘eha, perhaps we can be free from our fear of erasure. For these scholars, and for this thesis, relationality is more than significant for our resurgence; it is at the center of it.

Practice: Start Soft, Start Small, Start with Yourself

At the end of every interview, I got to ask my participants my favorite question: “What would you say to someone who didn’t feel Hawaiian “enough”?” Each response was beautiful and worthy of its own space, but most were variations of “You are Hawaiian enough.” However, one contributor, Michelle, wrestled with the question because it felt particularly personal. In response to my question, she expressed,

Hmm. That's hard. (laughs) That's like basically talking to myself. [...] I would just say like, even if you don't feel Hawaiian enough, like, start small, start trying to embrace small things that---it's like, I'm speaking to myself, it's so weird. (laughs) [...] If you don't feel it [Hawaiian enough], and you want to feel it, like just start to do those small things to embrace it, and do the things that make you feel Hawaiian enough [...] So I would try to do those things to embrace it. So that's what I would tell myself, I don't know. (laughs) (Michelle, interview with author, November 17, 2021)

Though I presume most of my participants were speaking to themselves or a past self when answering this question, Michelle was the only one to explicitly identify it as such. She told herself and those like her to “start small,” or start by embracing the “small things,” referring to moments she felt most Hawaiian mentioned earlier in our conversation: going to ‘Iolani Palace, teaching Hawaiian history to her elementary school students, and singing “Hawai‘i Pono‘ī.” Rather than feeling guilt or shame for the ways she does not feel Hawaiian “enough,” she calls us to choose to embrace our cultural identity in “small,” everyday actions.

In reply to the same question, another contributor, Kainoa, assured those who do not feel Hawaiian enough that first, “You are.” Then, like Michelle, he also encouraged them to explore

their culture and ancestry, whether it be learning ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, enrolling in Hawaiian studies classes, working the lo‘i, embracing our music, arts, and science, and even pursuing physical fitness as our warriors did. In a *Honolulu Civil Beat* article, Noenoe Silva urges her students who hope to embrace their culture to take their own initiative. “Don’t wait for an invite,” she says. “Just go and join and do that thing, like go volunteer at a fish pond, go volunteer at a lo‘i, go join a halau and learn hula” (Kauanoë 2020). In the journey to feel more Hawaiian, Michelle, Kainoa, and Silva invite us to start with ourselves. Here, we can protect our relationality with ourselves. We can also embody the softness of love that Gilpin describes, first toward ourselves so that it might expand toward others.

Practice: Recognize Generously

After encouraging those who do not feel Hawaiian “enough” to start with themselves, to explore their ancestry and culture, Kainoa quickly followed with a caveat. Once you have pursued whatever practices bring you closer to your Hawaiian identity, Kainoa urged,

And then leave the door open for everybody else behind you, you know what I mean? Don't just be all like [...] “Yeah, I'm comfortable in my, you know, ‘Hawaiianess’” and then be all like---then be a gatekeeper on other people, you know? Just like, then turn around [to other Hawaiians]. And like, let's, let's bring you along. Come on, come on, Kanaka. Let's go. (Kainoa Valente, interview with author, October 30, 2021)

Kainoa was not the first, nor would he be the last, contributor to highlight gatekeeping, or the ways in which state-based logics of identity are upheld, within the Hawaiian community.

Another participant, Kanoe, described how authenticity policing among Kānaka Maoli often differ from the behaviors of our Oceanic relatives within and outside of their own communities.

Typically, I think the [Pacific Islander] groups that I've interacted with, like, they're all very loving and they're very welcoming, like, excited that you want to be a part of their

culture and you want to come to the family dinner, you want to like try Samoan food or like, learn some Tongan [language] right, or whatever it is. And I think Hawaiians are the complete opposite, as much as they like to pretend they aren't. But they're very much like pulling you down in the bucket. Like, "Oh, you don't know Hawaiian [language]? Why don't you know it? Like, your kūpuna [...] lost their lives for this! And like, you don't know it." [...] I think just Hawaiians are very critical of each other [...] They gotta be sharing aloha a little bit more. E wehe i ka uamauma i ākea. That's an 'ōlelo no'eau [Hawaiian proverb] that's basically like, open your chest wide. Be loving, be kind to all, and I think Hawaiians need to do that. (Kanoë, interview with author, November 3, 2021)

Referencing the metaphor of crabs trapped in a bucket and preventing each other from escaping, Kanoë shows how we can prevent each other from embracing our Hawaiian identities when judging one another based on state-based logics of identity.³⁰ Here, we see the entrenchment of our fear of disappearance—this time not in our policies, but in our everyday practices. Out of the very real fear that our language might become extinct, some Hawaiians may limit their recognition of “real” Kānaka to those who can speak 'ōlelo Hawai'i, thus misrecognizing the majority of Kānaka who cannot. If the colonizer seeks to eliminate the Native, when we misrecognize and erase our Hawaiian relatives as Kanaka, we are not only causing 'eha; we are effectively doing the work of the colonizer.

However, Kanoë offers a solution: E wehe i ka uamauma i ākea. As Kanoë suggests, and according to Mary Kawena Pukui, this 'ōlelo no'eau literally translates to “Open out the chest that it may be spacious,” and more metaphorically, “Be generous and kind to all” ('Ōlelo No'eau #388; Pukui 2018, 47). Such generosity is critical to protect our relationships to ourselves, to each other, and perhaps most importantly, to protect our relationships as our 'āina tells us they should be. “Just like the land embodies abundance,” Gilpin writes, “we are asked to be abundant in the way in which we relate to the world around us” (Gilpin 2017, 52). To recognize each other

³⁰ Many scholars would argue that in the “crabs in a bucket” metaphor, the problem is not the crabs—the oppressed people—but the bucket—the circumstances of their oppression. In this context of gatekeeping Hawaiian identity, I would argue we are “crabs” needlessly pulling our own down under a larger and arguably invisible “bucket” of oppression. We ought to stop pulling each other down while we get rid of the bucket.

generously, then, is to act despite the fear of erasure that the state has ingrained in us, to know that we are not as scarce as capitalism would make us to believe. Indeed, as Jamaica Osorio asserts, the greatest threat to the state is “to live in abundance in the face of a society that is drowning in scarcity” (J.H. Osorio 2021, 151).

This abundance of our relationality might become visible in abundant recognition. It looks like Kanoe, calling us to see and enthusiastically celebrate Kānaka who have just begun their lei making journey or just enrolled in their first ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i course. It looks like Kainoa, seeing Hawaiians who may have spent most of their lives in the diaspora as Kanaka and teaching them how we behave. It looks like another participant, Logan, seeing Hawaiians who do not feel “enough” and committing to invite them her house to eat laulau and read Hawaiian studies books (and knowing her, making good on that promise ten times over). It looks like each of my participants seeing me as Kanaka, and offering their time to share vulnerable mo‘olelo of their lives to perhaps find individual healing, but also collective healing as a lāhui. Through these seemingly small, intimate moments of seeing, we begin to simultaneously dismantle structures that render our identities insecure and build connections rooted in recognition.

Conclusion

In the face of insecure Hawaiian identities rooted in settler colonialism and racism, prior articulations of self-recognition, refusal, and resurgence, call us to first refuse state-based logics of identity and then protect our relationality. Practices like giving the benefit of the doubt, starting with yourself, and replacing gatekeeping for generous recognition may help us begin this process of recognizing each other as Kanaka. In *seeing* each other on our own terms, regardless of how the state chooses to see us, we are actively working against systems that seek to erase us

and separate us. In recognizing each other as Kanaka, I believe we are drawing closer to the lāhui our kūpuna would want us to be, the lāhui we see for our mo‘opuna (grandchildren).

Conclusion

Looking Up

I took my first trip to Aotearoa in the dead of winter, but in that moment I felt warm. Though I was anxious to make a good impression on my partner's family, who are Indigenous to this place, I was calm. Heartbeat slowed, breath exhaled, na'au steady. I entered the marae (meeting house) for an iwi (tribe) to which my partner, Bryce, belonged. Over a hundred photographs were framed on the main wall, some black and white, others faded in color, and all depicted Bryce's ancestors who had travelled to the spiritual realm. As I was admiring the pictures, Bryce's grandfather, a kaumātua (tribal elder), said, "I see your ancestors with you." Before I could truly see myself as Kanaka Maoli, before I felt confident claiming my Hawaiianness and by extension my kūpuna, my partner and his whānau (family) could recognize my ancestors in me.

In this thesis, I have examined the phenomena and lived experiences of insecure Kanaka Maoli identities as they relate to racialization. I have demonstrated how not feeling Hawaiian "enough" is a relic of settler colonialism that, bolstered by white supremacy, seeks to eliminate the Native. Building on Dian Million's "felt theory" and Kanaka articulations of knowledge derived from the mind and the body, I employ na'auao as methodology in my interviews with eight participants. Drawing from "'ike," I show a connection between feeling, knowing, and seeing Hawaiianness. Participant narratives instruct that feeling Hawaiian is intimately tied to being seen as Hawaiian, and knowing what it means to be Hawaiian. Being seen as Hawaiian is complicated under white supremacy and capitalism, in which Asian- and white-coded Kānaka can fail to be recognized as Hawaiian by virtue of racial and socioeconomic privilege. In

response, I call racially privileged Kānaka to offer reciprocal kōkua, reallocating resources to the broader, largely disenfranchised Hawaiian community, and encourage Hawaiian-coded Kānaka to offer reciprocal recognition to those who may not “look” Hawaiian. I propose we recognize each other as Hawaiian despite state-based and racialized metrics of identity in order to protect our relationality.

Due to time and space constraints, this thesis promotes relationality among Kānaka Maoli, but has not examined relationality between Kānaka and other Oceanic peoples, or people Indigenous to other regions like Turtle Island. However, as my interaction with Bryce and his whānau shows, this recognition of Indigeneity between groups is critical for cultivating secure identities among Kānaka Maoli. It is in these contexts, stripped of particular state-based or racialized metrics of Hawaiianness, that Kānaka like myself might first see themselves as Hawaiian enough. If our pilina is at the center of this work and our liberation, we also must imagine and form pilina beyond our lāhui, particularly attending to the connections U.S. empire has sought to sever. Without my prompting, my participants referenced relationships with other Pacific or Indigenous peoples as a means of affirming cultural identities and showing avenues to feel more secure.

For some participants, community acceptance by other Pacific peoples was critical to their validation as a Hawaiian. When asked to describe instances in which he felt recognized as a Hawaiian, Kainoa shared,

Going back to high school, [it] would be when, like, my Samoan friends, my Tongan friends accepted me. And I wasn't the palangi³¹, I was Hawaiian, you know? I was one of them. Yeah, I had different skin color, but we're all Polynesians. We're all, you know, minorities in this Asian school. And we're all together. And so I was like, yeah, like, I'm in. (Kainoa Valente, interview with author, October 30, 2021)

³¹ Samoan word that describes foreigners, but is usually used in reference to white people.

Kainoa demonstrated the centrality of pilina formed with Samoan and Tongan friends on the basis of shared Oceanic roots to his sense of security as a Kanaka. While the mechanisms of racialization persisted—in minoritizing Pacific students in a majority Asian school—Kainoa was accepted despite racialized metrics like skin color. As he shares, he was not “palangi” or “haole,” but Hawaiian. Much like Kainoa, my pilina with my partner and friends Indigenous to Pacific places like Aotearoa, Fiji, Guåhan, Yap, and Tonga, among others, have been fundamental to feeling recognized and recognizing myself as Kanaka.

Beyond Oceania, contributors also pointed to relationships with other Indigenous peoples as means of affirming their cultural identities. Mele related the ways in which her partner, who is Ojibwe, validated her sense of Hawaiianness, particularly in their shared connection with the water. She explained,

That's been, like, a huge part too, is like, you know—and I'm sure you can relate to this—having a partner who's also, like, Indigenous, like, that makes a difference. And that's something that like, I think has really helped heal me in ways and kept me feeling grounded to my identity, even though he's like, not Hawaiian, obviously. But yeah, like a shared experience. (Mele, interview with author, November 10, 2021)

For Mele, having an Indigenous partner was significant to “feeling grounded” in her cultural identity. Although Mele’s partner was not Kanaka Maoli, his “shared experience” as a person of Native descent, and moreover of mixed Native and European descent, even contributed to her healing.

As Mele noted, and as the anecdote opening this chapter shows, I can certainly relate. Although I highlighted his grandfather’s moment of recognition, I cannot begin to recount the many, many ways in which my partner made me feel seen as Kanaka. From a similar but distinct context of settler colonialism without blood quantum policies in Aotearoa, my partner can

recognize me as Hawaiian without the constraints of state-based and racialized metrics of identity specific to the Kanaka Maoli situation. Indeed, Bryce affirmed my cultural identity most not only due to our shared experiences, but also because he insisted on recognizing my Hawaiianness when I could not.

In addition to affirming our cultural identities, pilina with other Oceanic and Indigenous peoples can also show us pathways to cultivating more secure identities. As with all comparisons, Teresia Teaiwa's "s/pacific n/oceans" of honoring the generic effects of colonialism and the specificity of Islander experiences ought to be employed (Teaiwa 1994, 102-103). Still, we can observe and carefully apply certain lessons on identity from our Pacific relatives as they relate to land, heredity, and reconnecting.

First, Pacific peoples demonstrate how we might relate to land. Even though the majority of Kānaka do not live on or even know their ancestral homes, we can cultivate our pilina with our homelands in the manner of our Pacific relatives. Epli Hau'ofa writes,

Wherever I am at any given moment, there is comfort in the knowledge stored at the back of my mind that somewhere in Oceania is a piece of earth to which I belong. In the turbulence of life, it is my anchor. No one can take it away from me. I may never return to it, not even as mortal remains, but it will always be homeland. (Hau'ofa 2000, 470).

Resonate with his transformational articulation of "our sea of islands" that connects rather than separates us (Hau'ofa 1994), Hau'ofa asserts that he will always be anchored to his homeland, regardless of where he may be. When I read this passage in a course early in my graduate career, I thought of one of the members in my cohort, Axel Defngin. As instructed by his elders, he always introduces himself with, "I was born and raised in Hilo, and I'm from Yap." Like Hau'ofa, no matter his physical location, Axel will always be from and of his homeland, Yap. In the same way, all Kānaka, no matter where they were born and raised, no matter how much time

they have spent away, whether they are “City Hawaiians” or “Country Hawaiians,” will always be from and of Hawai‘i. What is possible if, as Axel does, we recognized this truth?

Second, our Islander relatives show how we might understand our heredity. The aforementioned Teresia Teaiwa, a beloved icon in Pacific Studies and woman of i-Kiribati and African-American descent, writes, “According to my father’s Banaban culture, however, no one can ever be ‘part-Banaban.’ You either are or you are not Banaban. So I am” (Teaiwa 2006, 14).³² Teaiwa’s “s/pacific n/oceans” are critical here, as Kānaka Maoli must contend with a history of racial assimilation and erasure, namely state policies that formalized blood quantum logics, that Banabans do not. In fact, an old term, “hapa,” meaning “part,” was given new meaning when it was established to describe the “Part Hawaiians,” who received a different designation in the census than “Hawaiians,” or Kānaka of “pure blood.” Of course, our colonial history challenges our present in serious ways, but it does not prevent us from a decolonial future. As a woman of mixed descent, I have often split myself into pieces—part Hawaiian, part Chinese—seeing myself as “diluted” for being anything other than “full-blooded.” Now, I am witnessing a slow but steady shift in myself and among my peers, in which, like Teaiwa, we drop the “part” in describing our ethnicities. You either are or you are not Hawaiian, so I am.

Finally, our Oceanic kin show how we might engage with other Kānaka who are reconnecting with their culture. Kirsten McGavin illustrates the embrace people from the New Guinea Islands region of Papua New Guinea offer to those from their homeland who have grown up or spent time elsewhere. Those living in the region are “proud to welcome” their diasporic relatives home, accepting them based on their familial connection to the area, and understand that when they are away, they may “forget” the language or customs of their homeland

³² Banaba is an island in the Republic of Kiribati, so i-Kiribati includes Teaiwa’s Banaban (and Tabiteuan, referencing another island in Kiribati) heritage.

(McGavin 2016, 63). Similarly, as discussed in chapter 3, one participant, Kanoe, positioned the generosity of her engagements with other non-Hawaiian Pacific Islanders in opposition to the gatekeeping within the Kanaka Maoli community. Whereas her Samoan and Tongan friends were eager to welcome her to try their foods or learn their languages, she maintained Hawaiians were more critical, judging or even reprimanding each other for not knowing aspects of our culture like our language. She encouraged Hawaiians look to our Oceanic relatives as models and practice more kindness toward one another, showing enthusiasm rather than critique for Kānaka reconnecting with their culture.³³

Many Oceanic and Indigenous people—not just Hawaiians—might gatekeep because cultural identities are significant and always contested. An individual asserting a cultural identity represents and shapes a collective cultural identity, and with it critical values, obligations, and relationships. However, unlike much of the Pacific facing neocolonialism, who have access to their land, for Kānaka (and other Oceanic peoples) under settler colonialism, claiming our cultural identity is also intimately tied to asserting access to our land. For these reasons, we are called again to hold many truths: *yes*, our insecure identities are tied to our insecure relationships to land, *and*, we ought to recognize each other more generously despite it if we ever hope for a more secure future.

Committed to our pilina with each other and with other Oceanic and Indigenous peoples, we can build futures of more secure identities, founded on—perhaps more importantly—more secure relationships. It is my hope that these pilina, bolstered by reciprocal action and recognition, will create a world in which my future children and grandchildren do not even know

³³There is a distinction between welcoming others into one's own culture, and welcoming your "own" back. To be sure, Hawaiians are far from alone in gatekeeping in their community. Though seemingly paradoxical, it can feel easier to embrace "outsiders" who do not share a genealogical connection nor lay claim to a cultural identity than "insiders" who do.

what it is to feel inadequately Hawaiian. I see visions of this world right in front of me, when my cousin's four-year-old child, born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, blond hair and blue eyes, exclaims, "I'm Hawaiian!" while we're visiting a local museum. "Yes you are," I say with a smile and look to his mother, recognizing that she made this knowing and seeing and feeling possible. There is no "Hawaiian enough," only "Hawaiian." From a people ravaged by disease and colonialism, who resisted empires and won and resist still, who are working to return to our 'āina and each other every day, how lucky we are to be alive right now. How lucky we are to be Hawaiian.

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