

DID ANYBODY HEAR ME? THE EXPERIENCES OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND NATIVE  
HAWAIIAN WOMEN TEACHING IN HAWAI'I CHARTER SCHOOLS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

IN

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

August 2023

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Keywords: Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian, women, charter schools

## **Dedication**

Though many say the journey of a doctoral student is a solitary one, there are so many people who have walked this road with me and truly made it possible. I am humbled by this experience and grateful to everyone who helped me accomplish this milestone.

First, thank you to my chair, Dr. Lori Ideta. You have guided me through this process with grace, encouragement, and wisdom. You believed in me from day one of the program. I am grateful for your confidence in me and your encouragement to pursue my research. Thank you for reminding me that my voice and the voices of the women in this study matter.

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to my committee: Sylvia Hussey, Alice Kawakami, Nicole Reyes, and Winston Sakurai. You are all truly the A-Team and I was lucky to have you guiding me along the way. Dr. Hussey, thank you for encouraging me to “come up for air,” when I felt overwhelmed and pushing me to consider policy reform beyond what I ever imagined. Dr. Kawakami, thank you for sharing your knowledge of occupation-based practice and reminding me of the importance of this research. Your encouragement was a gift and your genuine interest and enthusiasm kept me going. Dr. Reyes, thank you for all of our thoughtful conversations. You pushed me to think bigger and to consider new and meaningful perspectives that helped enrich my research and deepen my analyses. Dr. Sakurai, thank you for steadfast belief in me and logical outlook. Our conversations were very grounding and I appreciate all of your kind words.

To the women who participated in this study, I thank you for sharing some of the stories of your lives. Your openness allowed me to complete this study. I know each of you participated in this study with hopes of uplifting other women in the profession. I have the utmost admiration

for each of you and hope that your voices lead to greater understanding of Asian American, and Native Hawaiian women teachers in Hawai'i charter schools.

To my village, Mom, Dad, Corey, Kelly, Jeff, Cody, Raymond and Carolyn: thank you for believing in me and supporting me along the way. Mom and Dad, you have been my source of inspiration my whole life, teaching me to value the pursuit of knowledge and instilling in me the idea that we are always learning. You have always supported me in everything and anything I choose to do and have been there to cheer me on at every step. Kelly and Corey, thank you for keeping it real with me. Both of you helped me through my low moments and celebrated my high moments. Corey, thank you for nerding out with me. You constantly amazed me with your ability to chat through any idea, no matter how big, small, or off-topic it might have been. Jeff and Cody, thank you for taking my boys to the beach and letting them hang out with your families when I needed to write. To my mother and father in-law Raymond and Carolyn, thank you for being there when I could not. Attending all of their baseball games, soccer games and supporting the boys in all their activities. Thank you. To my nieces and nephews: Joel, Emi, Oscar, and Henry I love you all dearly and can't wait to have more "all-cousin sleepovers" at my house now that I am done. Let's party!

To my husband Jon, you really are super-dad! Thank you for being so patient with me as I sat on my computer night after night and for the time you gifted me to write and think. I am happy we can close this chapter together with love and excitement for what has been accomplished and for what we have in store for our future. Love you.

Finally, to my children, Jake, Parker and the littlest brother we are excited to meet. You have inspired me to finish strong! Thank you for all the hugs, snuggles, kisses, and love you

shared with me through this entire journey. I love you more than you can even imagine and cannot wait to watch and cheer you on as you conquer your own goals and dreams.

## ABSTRACT

Parents, students, administrators and teachers all make a choice to be a part of a charter school. Since 1991 when the first charter school in the United States opened, charter schools have grown. As of 2018 over 3.3 million students across the United States attend charter schools and the projection for growth continues. In spite of making up the majority of the teaching workforce in Hawaii's public schools, we have yet to hear why they choose to teach in charter schools and what their experiences are. Using a narrative inquiry approach, analysis of semi-structured interviews and co-authored vignettes with five Asian American, Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Native Hawaiian women provided insights into their teaching journeys. This study revealed the ways in which AAPI and Native Hawaiian women teachers sought careers in teaching to emulate and perpetuate community work their parents engaged in; how the autonomy of charter schools was both a beacon and a burden; and how the women experienced and coped with racialized and gendered mistreatment. Additionally, in spite of the small sample size, this study offers considerations for how the experiences of Native Hawaiian women teachers differ from those of Asian American and Pacific Islander teachers in Hawai'i.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

"Understanding teaching requires that we pay attention to teachers both as individuals and as a group listening to their voices and the stories they tell about their work and lives"

(Elbaz, 2014, p. 3)

### **The Problem of Practice**

Although teaching was once a profession reserved for men, it quickly became dominated by women in the United States in the 19th century. In order to circumvent the gender roles that generally kept women in the home, a narrative of teaching as women's work emerged as an extension of their nurturing roles within the home (Clifford, 2014; Weiler, 1989). According to Weiler (1989), increasing industrialization and urbanization expanded the demand for schools and teachers in the U.S. which, in turn, allowed greater numbers of women to join the workforce. As institutions of education became increasingly bureaucratized, school administrative roles became dominated by men who were seen as naturally possessing logical, scientifically-minded leadership abilities. Women, on the other hand, who were once allowed into the workforce as teachers due to the presumed need for nurturing in the classroom, were now questioned as being incapable of teaching boys scientifically (Weiler, 1989). In spite of the pushbacks on women as teachers, women continued to enter teaching as a career and account for the majority of teachers in the U.S.

According to data published by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2023), titled, in the United States today, women make up 76% of K-12 teachers. The notion of teaching as women's work, especially given the increasing expectations that teachers support the emotional, social, and physical well-being of others often at the expense of their own well-being, is a well-researched phenomenon (Clifford, 2014; James, 2010; James, 2012). When considering the

racial composition of the teaching profession, nearly 80% of all teachers identify as white (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2023). By comparison, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) teachers make up only 2.5% of teachers in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2023). Research suggests that Asian American women regularly face a variety of gendered, racial, and sexual microaggressions within the educational institutions they teach (Endo, 2015).

In Hawai‘i, which has the only statewide public school system in the nation, nearly 171,600 students attended public schools during the 2021-22 school year (Accountability Resource Center, n.d.), and were taught by over 12,600 teachers (Office of Talent Management, 2022). Of these teachers, roughly 75.3% are women, 37% identifying as Asian American alone (Chinese 3.2%; Filipino 8.3%; Japanese, 23.4%; Korean 1.25%; or other Asian 0.55%); <.89% identifying as Pacific Islander (Samoan 0.6% and Other Pacific Islander .3%), and 11.4% identifying as Native Hawaiian/Part-Native Hawaiian (Office of Talent Management, 2022). Hawai‘i’s high cost of living and low salaries even for highly experienced teachers have led to ongoing struggles in recruiting and retaining public school teachers (Augenblick et al., 2020), the teacher retention rate hovers around 50% and the teacher turnover rate among the highest in the nation (The Associated Press, 2022).

According to the Hawai‘i State Teachers Association (HSTA), the starting salary for a new teacher with 0-5 years of experience is \$49,100. It might take that teacher 10 or more years to earn a salary of \$67,000, which is still below what qualifies as low income in Honolulu (Hawai‘i State Teachers Association, 2020). In April of 2023, HSTA, the State of Hawai‘i and the Board of Education reached a four year contract agreement that secured pay raises for Hawai‘i teachers for four years, in part to improve the teacher retention rate in Hawai‘i.

In spite of the well-known issues of low wages and high cost of living in Hawai‘i, thousands of people continue to teach in the Hawai‘i public school system. While much has been made of the perpetual teacher shortage, high turnover and low retention rates and the recruitment efforts that often focus on bringing in teachers from the continental U.S. (Lee, 2021), little attention has been paid to the experiences of the teachers who have stayed in their positions. Given Hawai‘i’s unique racial and ethnic composition and social and historical context, it is especially important to focus on the experiences of AAPI and Native Hawaiian women teachers, as together, they make up nearly half of all public school teachers. Finally, as a subset of public school teachers in Hawai‘i, charter school teachers are understudied in Hawai‘i and there has been little focus on the ways in which the intersection of race and gender shape their experiences.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research is to illuminate the experiences and understanding of Asian American, Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Native Hawaiian women teaching within the relatively autonomous institutions of charter schools in Hawai‘i. This study asked tenured Asian American Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian teachers to reflect on their journeys as educators, their motivations, professional practices, and their lived experiences of working in charter schools. This study employed narrative inquiry and analysis in order to uncover a greater understanding of the ways in which gender and race intersect to frame the participants’ lived experiences, their “sense” and meaning-making.

### **Research Question**

To shine light on the experiences and understanding of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Native Hawaiian women teaching in Hawai‘i charter schools, this study was guided

by the following research question: How do the intersection of race and gender illuminate the experiences of Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools in Hawai'i?

### **Rationale for Study**

Teaching is, by and large, a feminized profession (Clifford, 2014). As of the 2020-21 school year, 77% of elementary and secondary public-school teachers in the U.S. were women and 80% of the teachers identified their race as white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Though the majority of American public-school students are taught by white women, teachers of color have been found to have a range of positive impacts on their students including boosting the academic performance of students of color. For example, longitudinal studies have found that African American students taught by an African American teacher in grades 3, 4, or 5 were less likely to drop out of high school and 10% more likely to take college entrance exams (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Although there is a growing literature on the positive impacts teachers of color (TOC) have on students, these teachers are often marginalized within the profession that has acknowledged their positive benefits (Kohli, 2016). Similarly, there is a sparse but growing body of research on the retention of teachers of color (Kohli, 2018). When considering the experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander teachers in the United States, even fewer studies exist (Kim & Cooc, 2020).

Nationally, Asian teachers made up 2% of teachers in the United States and Pacific Islanders represent less than one half of 1% of teachers during the 2020-21 school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2023). The lack of scholarly research on their experiences is even more apparent when considering the disaggregated ethnic groups comprising the AAPI race group (Choi, 2016). A recent analysis of retaining and recruiting AAPI and Native Hawaiian

teachers showed that within the last ten years 14 studies were published on the topic of AAPI and Native Hawaiian K-12 teachers, with four of the studies taking place in 2018 (Kim & Cooc, 2020). A handful of studies in the last ten years were specifically focused on AAPI and Native Hawaiian elementary teachers (Kim & Cooc, 2020).

This study seeks to contribute to the understanding of AAPI and Native Hawaiian public-school teachers and their experiences in K-12 settings. While this study does not focus specifically on teacher retention and satisfaction, a greater understanding of the experiences of AAPI and Native Hawaiian women teachers will help to shed light on experiences that keep them in their positions as well as those that might make it difficult to stay. This is especially important when considering the aforementioned low teacher retention rates in Hawai‘i and the alarming rate of teachers leaving Hawai‘i which has increased by more than 70% since 2012 (Hawai‘i State Teachers Association, 2020).

### **Positionality**

I am a Hawai‘i charter school teacher and have been for more than 15 years. I love teaching elementary school students. I strive to provide an educational space for them to try new things, try an old idea again in a different way, work on a tough problem alone, work in groups, fail, try again, wonder quietly, wonder aloud, and grow both their academic and social selves. As a teacher, I feel a great responsibility for the well-being and growth of my students and work hard to expand their academic and social-emotional growth.

I first began my teaching journey as an emergency hire while attending night classes to earn my Master's in Education. Upon graduation, I was in the first cohort of teachers hired at a brand new charter school. Our close-knit group of teachers and administrators worked together to establish a learning environment welcoming new ideas and teaching practices. The

administrative team focused much of their efforts on growing teachers into leaders, and I soon found myself serving as a division lead. After some early successes and hiccups, our entire administrative team turned over and the collaborative nature of the school began to change.

After a second and a third administrative turnover and an expansion, the school changed courses. Division lead positions once filled by teachers were replaced by administrative teams. Whereas teachers' perspectives and input were previously valued, they were now overlooked. I no longer recognized the school I started with and began to question my role in it. I felt like I was no longer growing professionally, uplifting my colleagues as I once did and serving my students in the best way possible.

After two short maternity leaves, I found myself overlooked for conferences and feeling like my voice no longer mattered. I learned about the "mommy track" and read about how women should lean in. I joined committees, got involved, and signed up for leadership cohorts, only to find that they were not as focused on individual leadership development and that we were expected to parrot or cheerlead administrative talking points regardless of our opinions. As new administrators were hired, many of whom were new to the islands, and did not speak or look like me or many of our students, my voice, my education, my professional input, and my years of experience were disregarded. What was happening to the charter school I felt so connected to at the start of my teaching career? In talking to other colleagues about my disappointments, I found that other teachers, especially the Asian American and Native Hawaiian women teachers, felt the same way as I did.

This research inquiry focuses on the reported experiences of Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women currently teaching in charter schools on O'ahu. I recognize that I am a third-generation mixed-race Asian American woman born and raised in Hawai'i.

Though I am familiar with many of Hawai‘i’s informal norms and cultural symbols, I am not Native Hawaiian, and I realize that my relationship to Hawai‘i is shaped by this. Some of the women in my study are Native Hawaiian, Asian and others mixed-race Asian American, and their relationships to both Hawai‘i and to me as a researcher are shaped by the social and historical context of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i and their ancestral or immigrant connections to these islands.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)**

The (mis)classification of Pacific Islanders as “Asian Pacific” per the United States Census Bureau poses formidable political and cultural repercussions for all the peoples aggregated into this race category (Hall, 2008, 2015). The term “Asian Pacific Islander” has damaging effects on Pacific Islanders when aggregating them with the more populous Asian American groups from East and South Asia, which often results in disguising the lack of Pacific Islanders in U.S. organizations and institutions, leading to misleading and essentially useless information about Pacific Islanders (Hall 2008, 2015) Although API and AAPI are racial categories commonly used, under such a broad category, their experiences, cultures, and education are not the same (Saelua et al., 2017). I have chosen to use the terms Asian Americans (AA), Pacific Islander (PI) and Native Hawaiian separately when considering my own data and wherever I can disaggregate data to recognize the important cultural differences between the groups and honor Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians’ indigenous identities. My intention entering this research was to have representation from Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian teachers, however I only was able to recruit Asian American and Native Hawaiian teachers and will therefore refer to my participants as Asian American and Native Hawaiian.



## **Native Hawaiian**

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs defines “Native Hawaiian with an upper case “N” refers to all persons of Hawaiian ancestry regardless of blood quantum” (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, n.d.a).

Native Hawaiians are the indigenous, first people of Hawai‘i.

## **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality describes a way of carefully analyzing the channels in which overlapping systems of power include race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age work together to shape different experiences (Collins, 2015; Immerman et al., 2013)

## **Charter School**

The National Charter School Resource Center (2022) defines charter schools as public (tuition-free and not religiously affiliated) schools of choice, committed to diverse but specific educational objectives. To continue operating, they continue to be exempt from many state regulations in their school operations and management.

## **Conversion Charter School**

Conversion charter schools are schools that were once structured as traditional public schools but were converted into charter schools (Buddin & Zimmer, 2005).

## **Blended Charter School**

For the purpose of this study a blended charter school is one where, “student learns at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home” (Horn & Staker, 2011, p. 3), anywhere from two to three days each week. Students also learn via a combination of online learning and self-controlled assignments and lessons.

## **Hawaiian Focused Charter School**

According to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Hawaiian Focused Charter Schools provide innovative and culturally based education for students in Hawai‘i (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, n.d.)

### **Hawaiian Language Medium Charter Schools or Ka Papahana Kaiapuni**

According to the Hawai‘i State Department of Education, Ka Papahana Kaiapuni schools exclusively use the Hawaiian Language as the medium by which instruction is delivered to students through grade 5. After Grade 5, the English language is introduced to students (Hawai‘i State Department of Education, n.d.b).

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the experiences of Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools on O‘ahu. This review of literature is composed of the following three sections.

- (a) Asian American, Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians in the United States
- (b) Teachers and Charter Schools
- (c) Charter Schools

### **Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians in the United States**

According to the United States Census (2022), 6.1% of the population identify as Asian American and .3% of the population identify as Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (AAPI). Though a significant segment of the U.S. population, the category AAPI and Native Hawaiian amalgamates peoples from over twenty-five different groups and was created by the government to facilitate data gathering (Ling & Austin, 2015). This grouping is often considered problematic as the number of diverse ethnicities, cultures, languages, religions, countries and regions of origin that are encapsulated into one category have vastly differing experiences in both their places of origin and in the U.S. (Ling & Austin, 2015).

Soon after the Spanish conquest of the Philippines in 1565, by way of Spanish Cargo ships, Filipino sailors began arriving in Mesoamerica (Matibag, 2016). Escaping their cruel working conditions the Filipino sailors made their way to what is now known as the state of Louisiana where they founded villages with names such as St. Malo and Manila Village, subsisting on shrimping and fishing (Matibag, 2016). The next large scale migration of Asians to the United States came from China beginning in the early 1840s and were mostly businessmen pursuing new opportunities (Ling & Austin, 2015). Soon after, the discovery of gold led to

increased migration and by 1882 estimates of roughly 370,000 Chinese men were documented in the United States working in gold mines and railroad construction (Ling and Austin, 2015). In response to the growing numbers of Chinese laborers, the U.S. government enacted a ten-year ban on immigration from China known as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first and only immigration law that specifically targeted a single ethnic group and place of origin (Muramatsu & Chin, 2022). As a result, large numbers of Japanese workers were recruited to the United States to replace the Chinese migrant laborers blocked from entering the United States starting in 1882, joining the few Japanese workers already living and working in Hawai‘i and the continental U.S. (Ling & Austin, 2015).

### *Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians in Hawai‘i*

Hawai‘i is the fiftieth state admitted to the United States and the only state located outside of North America. Indigenous Pacific voyagers reached Hawai‘i by AD 400 and lived in the islands for at least a thousand years before Captain Cook’s arrival in 1778 (Rosa, 2004). Prior to Captain Cook’s arrival, Hawai‘i had a thriving agricultural economy and religious order based on a traditional subsistence economy that supported between 800,000 to 1 million people (Rosa, 2004). Western contact rapidly transformed Hawai‘i into a capitalist economy and pushed Hawai‘i into the global marketplace with involvement in the sandalwood and fur trades and the whaling industry (Rosa, 2004). In addition to these early capitalists, Euro-American missionaries arrived in the islands beginning in the early 19th century, bringing with them an emphasis on Western-style schooling, values and norms. This rapid influx of Western newcomers portended changes to Hawaiian governance, economy and culture. Wrote Rosa (2004):

Missionaries, whalers, and merchants eventually formed a critical mass of colonial settlers who demanded citizenship rights, private ownership of Hawaiian lands, and a cash-focused system of taxation and wage labor (p. 227).

He furthered that the establishment of a constitutional government in Hawai‘i eroded the power of the Native Hawaiian monarchy and shifted it to the “foreign, non-Native businessmen” who implemented a land-tenure system that allowed them to “acquire extensive landholdings in the kingdom” and disenfranchise Native Hawaiians (Rosa 2004, p.227). This was soon followed by the overthrow of the Hawaiian government in 1893 and illegal annexation by the U.S. in 1898.

According to Fujikane and Okamura (2009), Asian immigration to Hawai‘i began on a large scale when a group of laborers from China arrived in Hawai‘i by 1852 to work in sugar plantations. Soon after, sugar planters secured laborers from China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines. Plantation workers were separated by national origin, and paid differing amounts for the same labor (Okiihiro, 2015). Wage differentials, poor working conditions, and harsh treatment from plantation management led to collective work action that led to the organization of Hawai‘i’s first multiethnic labor strike (Okiihiro, 2015). Many plantation workers made family lives for themselves in Hawai‘i leading to the Asian American settler colony and occupation in Hawai‘i (Fujikane & Okamura, 2009).

Today, Hawai‘i is home to 1.4 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022), where the vast majority reside on O‘ahu. The racial makeup of Hawai‘i reflects the unique history of colonization and immigration. Asian Americans represent the largest population here in Hawai‘i, at 36.8%. The second largest population in Hawai‘i are those belonging to two or more racial groups, 25%. Non-Hispanic whites represent 21.4% of the population followed by Hispanic or Latino representing 11.1% of the population. Finally Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders

represent 10.5% of the population, African Americans represent 2.2% and American Indian and Alaska Natives represent 0.4% of the population.

### ***Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiian Women in Hawai'i***

Early immigrant women began arriving in Hawai'i beginning in 1885-1903 from Japan, Okinawa and Korea primarily as picture brides for plantation workers (Chai, 1996). These women faced similar experiences to their husbands, confronting economic hardship, racial discrimination, and proximity to their homelands, compounded with their gender identity. These women found ways to survive, enter the workforce while simultaneously raising families (Chai, 1996). By the 1940s Hawai'i's women were a significant part of the workforce with numbers far surpassing women working on the mainland United States (Monahan, 2012). As a significant part of the workforce, women in Hawai'i had a vested interest in the labor movements of agricultural workers and as the economy shifted to service industries in the 1960s continued to have a vested interest in and rate of participation in union membership (Monahan, 2012). Monahan argued that working women in Hawai'i were conscientiously engaged in workers' rights and activism with a deep investment in the work women were doing.

### ***Stereotypes and Microaggressions***

Today, Asians make-up 7% of the U.S. population and are the fastest growing racial group in the U.S. (Muramatsu & Chin, 2022). Due to the historical circumstances and reactions to Asian immigration, Asians living in America face many specific stereotypes and discrimination and microaggressions based upon them. Despite this great diversity, many of the Asian stereotypes that exist today arose from the mistreatment of the first Asian American men and women who arrived in the United States in the 1800s (Ling & Austin, 2015).

Early Chinese and Japanese workers were considered temporary sojourners and not “real” immigrants like those arriving from Europe who both comprised the majority of immigrants to the U.S. and aligned with the dominant U.S. ideology of who “belonged” (Ling & Austin, 2015). As the number of Asian laborers migrating to the U.S. increased, the concept of “Yellow Peril,” emerged, a racist sentiment positing that Asian migrants were a threat to Western civilization (Wu & Nguyen, 2022). These fears were the basis for several pieces of legislation specifically targeting Asians and Asian Americans including the Chinese Exclusion Act and Executive Order 9066 which authorized the forced removal and detainment of over 100,000 Japanese and Japanese American citizens living on the West Coast after the bombing of Pearl Harbor (Ling & Austin, 2015; Li & Nicholson 2021; Muramatsu & Chin, 2021).

Many scholars noted the continued characterization and othering of Asian Americans as “forever foreigners” and perpetual outsiders whose loyalties are always in question. Li and Nicholson (2021) note that the nicknaming of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) virus as the “China virus,” “Wuhan flu,” and the “kung flu” and the subsequent uptick in Anti-Asian discrimination and violence during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic were recent examples of this.

In addition to facing the perpetual outsider myth, Asian Americans also face the model minority myth, a construction of Asian Americans as being hard-working, quiet, submissive, and achieving great success in education (Li & Nicholson 2021; Museus & Kiang 2009). While seemingly positive, this myth relies on the “forever foreigner” stereotype, as it suggests that there is something inherent in Asian cultures that results in such high achievement in U.S. systems (Museus & Kiang 2009). This stereotype continues to be perpetuated in popular culture, pushed along by one-note media depictions of Asians. As much as it harms Asian Americans by flattening the Asian American experience into a single narrative, this myth is also used to

critique and criticize other minority groups for not achieving the same levels of supposed success in education, affluence, family cohesion and work ethic (Zhang, 2010).

Built into the model minority myth is the stereotype of Asians as nerds or having innate intelligence (Endo, 2015; Zhang, 2010). This stereotype is pervasive through media that portrays Asians as not interested in fun, assuming that they are gifted in STEM fields, quiet, non-confrontational, and not fluent in the English Language (Endo 2015; Zhang, 2010). Characters such as the Asian college student in the 2012 movie Pitch Perfect who was so quiet no one can hear her voice or the Hangover movies where the villain was a quirky Asian man who was at the receiving end of many jokes.

When overlaying gender, Asian women are particularly prone to race based microaggressions because of the fetishization and objectification they face in the West (Endo, 2015). Stereotypes such as shy, exotic, submissive, overly accommodating, sly, crafty, not trustworthy are commonly put upon Asian American women (Endo, 2015). These microaggressions directed towards Asian women come in the form of questions and comments women may face in the workplace. In one study of Asian American teachers in the U.S. a Filipina participant endured a conversation with a colleague about how he used to date a Filipina woman and commented about her beauty and hair (Endo, 2015). Asian women face specific stereotypes, exoticized and hypersexualized as either a subservient, delicate lotus blossom or a dangerous, deceitful, hypersexualized dragon lady (Azhar et al., 2021; Endo, 2015). Both of these stereotypes serve to reduce Asian women to sexual objects and domestic servants, assuming that they are good wives and housekeepers (Endo, 2015).

As Indigenous people, stereotypes about Native Hawaiians differ from those of Asian Americans. While Asian Americans have been othered as perpetual foreigners, Native Hawaiians



are othered in service of the commodification of Hawaiian culture and peoples in ways that support the tourist industry (Medeiros, 2018; Miyose & Morel, 2019). Native Hawaiians have long been portrayed as primitive and savage, unfit to lead themselves (Medeiros 2019) as well as welcoming, hypersexualized hula dancers (Imada, 2011; Medeiros 2018; Miyose & Morel 2019; Trask, 1993). Miyose and Morel (2019) also argued that Native Hawaiians continue to be portrayed in popular media as benevolent and buffoonish, in addition to the primitive and welcoming stereotypes.

When specifically considering the stereotypes of Native Hawaiian women, the objectification and hypersexualization often rely on the “hula girl” trope (Imada, 2011; Medeiros, 2018). This stereotype developed as early as 1893 after a group of Native Hawaiian women journeyed to the Chicago Exposition to perform the hula (Imada, 2011). Occurring at the same time as the debate around the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Imada (2011) argued that the transnational hula performances served to both create and uphold a hypersexualization of Native Hawaiian women’s bodies as well as write Native Hawaiian men out of the picture:

such colonial exhibitions largely became associated with the bodies and movements of women, as Hawaiian men were relegated to a background role as instrumentalists.

Hawaiian women were subjected to distinct kinds of touristic, scopophilia observation - such as 'peep show' staging and demands to perform nude - because of their perceived sexual difference and racial otherness. Their putative primitive nature, therefore, was co-constituted with sexual alterity and promiscuity (p. 152).

This process, identified by Trask (1993) as the prostitution of Hawaiian culture, a metaphor she chose to demonstrate what has happened to Hawai‘i and its culture as a result of

the government and corporate industries through tourism. The fantasy created by Western ideas is that of an untouched paradise, and the commodification of Hawaiian culture. Hawai'i's tourist industry has played right into these Western ideals and the sexualization of Native Hawaiian women Trask (1993) discussed how many Native Hawaiian men have often transformed themselves into the foreign system of American government through politics and the patriarchy. Trask notes how many Native Hawaiian women were intentional in their leadership, and chose a leadership journey of decolonization. Native Hawaiian women have led the way in sovereignty and spoke up and out about their beliefs. Haunani Kay Trask with her vocal and directness had a reputation as being, "angry" (Matsuda, 1991).

Unlike Asian Americans who are often subject to the model minority or nerd stereotype, Native Hawaiians have been characterized as uninterested in education or lazy or incapable students (Yeh et al., 2021). In their study of Native Hawaiian students, Yeh et al., (2021) found that all students had encountered this negative stereotype and had been labeled "lazy" in their school setting. Additionally, the students reported instances of racism and unfair mistreatment from peers and other authority figures in their schools (Yeh et al., 2021).

Just as individual Native Hawaiian youth are stereotyped as lazy or incompetent in the school setting, Native Hawaiian families face the assumption that they lack an interest in supporting their children's education (Kaomea, 2012). Kaomea (2012) highlighted the experiences of two families as they navigate and prioritize their children's family and educational values and offers ways in which schools and policy makers can work to include and move beyond the stereotype of the perceived indifference attitudes towards education that many educators hold (Kaomea, 2012).

## **Teachers**

### ***Women Teachers***

Since the late 1800s, women have made up the majority of grammar and high school teachers in the United States (Clifford, 2014). When considering the role of teachers, teaching primary and high school has long been viewed as women's work (Conley & Jenkins, 2011; McDowell, 2015). Women's work includes the fields of nursing, social work, and teaching because of the perceived responsibilities in these fields of caring for others, (James, 2010).

Pre-1840, the profession of teaching was the last resort for men, who preferred to pursue fields such as business, law, or medicine; combined with early American industrialization, immigration, and urbanization, these social changes made space for teaching to become a woman's profession (Hoffman, 1981). Some women during this time pursued teaching to escape farm work, and factory work, to earn and be recognized publicly for achievements, and also to earn income (Hoffman, 1981). By the 1860s, the profession of education was feminized and deemed a subordinate profession compared to the study of and professions of law, medicine, or theology (Hoffman, 1981). Current research shows little has changed from the 1800s in the way society views the profession of teachers.

Presently, teaching is still largely considered women's work, it is also commonly viewed as the work of a teacher to nurture the whole child, meaning taking care of the overall well-being of a student's, social, emotional, physical, and in some school's spiritual selves (James, 2010). Caring in these ways can be tied to societal assumptions of women's desire to become mothers and contribute to the notion of teaching as a woman's work all through history (James, 2010). In James's (2010) qualitative study, the researcher sought to understand how women elementary teachers made sense of and carried out care in their school setting. James (2010) found that the

majority of participants held the belief that teaching required that they give of themselves at the cost of their own emotional, social, and physical well-being. When teachers opposed such demands, they were termed, “uncaring” or “selfish” (James, 2010, p. 532). These labels made the respondents frustrated and resentful and ultimately impeded their social and professional engagement in their school (James, 2010).

Conley and Jenkins (2011) asserted that historically, the occupation of teaching was a strong part of societal reform for women in the workplace. Their study of teachers in England and Wales explored the experiences of teachers as schools underwent modernization or the shift for schools to remove themselves from the local education authority to local management of schools, creating a business-minded approach to managing and operating schools (Conley & Jenkins, 2011). Schools were competing for parents to choose them, resulting in increased workload and extended hours (Conley & Jenkins, 2011). The result led to many women exiting the occupation or seeking part-time employment because of the difficulties they experienced balancing career and familial responsibilities (Conley & Jenkins, 2011). As modernization and gender-neutral strategic planning in schools took hold, women’s work lives were put to the wayside for a more masculinized workflow of long hours; making it difficult for some participants in the study to combine working, starting a family, or caring for family members even though women made-up and continue to make up the majority of the teaching workforce (Conley & Jenkins, 2011).

Currently, in the United States, women make up 77% of all teachers in elementary and secondary schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Women make up 64% of the teaching workforce as secondary teachers and 89% of the workforce as elementary teachers

(National Center for Educational Statistics, 2023). Moreau et al., (2007) describe a lack of research focusing on women of color in the teaching workplace.

### *Teachers of color*

The Center for American Progress defined students and teachers of color as comprising those who do not identify as white, including African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans (Boser, 2011). Statistical data reveals an ongoing disparity between the number of teachers of color and the number of students of color in the United States. During the 2020-21 school year 80% of teachers in the United States in elementary through secondary identified themselves as white while comparatively 46% of students identified themselves as white (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2023). There seemed to be a disproportionate number of white teachers in the U.S. public school system to teachers of color. Teachers of color play an important role in the achievement of students of color (Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

Teachers of color have been recognized as an asset to the profession and as an important component of the achievement of American students (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). Villegas and Irvine (2010) described the push to diversify the teaching profession with the themes (1) teachers of color have the potential to serve as role models to all students regardless of race and (2) teachers of color have the potential to improve student's academic achievements and social experiences within a school setting. The findings of this study uncovered three arguments for diversifying the field of teaching, role modeling, building cultural bridges to learning for students of color and increasing the workforce (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Villegas and Irvine (2010) concluded that increasing teachers of color in the workforce could be a critical part of a

strategy to address the achievement gap that has persisted between students of color and white students.

The large-scale study by Kohli (2016) on the racial climate of urban schools and the impact on the professional experiences and retention of teachers of color surveyed and interviewed 218 teachers of color who self-selected to participate in the study. Kohli (2016) found teachers of color often face hostile racial climates and that teachers of color leave the field each year at a rate 24% higher than white teachers. The research argues that urban schools are laden with institutional and individual racism which are directed at teachers of color. The direct and indirect racism perpetuated against teachers of color leads to teachers of color being pushed out of the field (Kohli, 2016). Kohli's (2016) recommendations went beyond increasing the number of teachers of color with the intention of raising student test scores, instead, the focus is on increasing teachers of color based on their pedagogy and advocacy. Kohli (2016) recommended humanizing teachers of color by 1) actively increasing the number of teachers of color 2) providing leadership development and access to networks and 3) confronting racism in schools is a recommendation made by Kohli (2016) to address the addressing the racial climates that push teachers of color out of the teaching profession.

### ***Teachers of Asian American, Pacific Islander and Hawaiian ancestry***

Research has demonstrated that students positively regard teachers of color and that teachers of color have a positive effect on student achievement regardless of the race of the students (Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Cherng & Halpin, 2016). In spite of this, the teaching workforce remains largely white. In 2023, the National Center for Educational Statistics (2023) reported that 20% of teachers were people of color, and of those teachers, 2% identified themselves as AAPI and Native Hawaiian. Cooc and Kim (2021) examined national and state

trends of AAPI and Native Hawaiian representation among teachers and how much proficiency in English plays in AAPI and Native Hawaiian's decisions to enter the teaching profession. Cooc and Kim (2021) found an increase in the number of AAPI and Native Hawaiian teachers, rising nationally from 1.9% to 3.3% from 2000 to 2017. This corresponded to an increase in the AAPI and Native Hawaiian student population from 3.7 to 5.1% in the same time period, though the number of AAPI and Native Hawaiian teachers was disproportionate to the number of AAPI and Native Hawaiian students (Cooc & Kim, 2021). Through descriptive statistics, Cooc and Kim (2021) found that language proficiency can interfere with AAPI and Native Hawaiian people choosing teaching as a profession and also remaining in the profession if entered. This is consistent with other studies which have found similar effects of language proficiency on the likelihood of AAPI and Native Hawaiians entering the teaching profession (Choi, 2016; Endo, 2015). The Endo (2015) study on *Asian American Female Teachers Experiences of Microaggressions* found participants encountered colleagues who committed microaggressions regarding participants' use of the English language (Endo, 2015). The findings from the Endo study (2015) were microaggressions exhausted participants to the point they reported wanting to leave the teaching profession. Similar findings are found in Choi (2016).

Although the gender and race of teachers have remained predominantly women and predominantly white since the 1800s, the content of what is being taught, how it is taught, and the institutions have changed. There are many types of schools in the United States educating students, public, private, charter, Catholic, magnet, online, hybrid, and homeschool. In Kim and Cooc's (2020) study on the recruiting and retaining of AAPI teachers, future implications mentioned the need for further research on the intersectional identities of AAPI teachers and their experiences.

## **Charter Schools**

Systems of education and teaching are in a constant state of evolution. Skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, learning about meta-cognition, civic responsibilities, and global awareness are as much a part of a student's curriculum as literacy and numeracy (Kim et al., 2019). In turn, teachers' pedagogies are also, yet again, in the midst of change. Teachers, administrators, and policymakers are currently navigating the best and most effective ways to enact and enable educators to make these adjustments to their curriculum and teaching practice. One way educators are making these adjustments to their teaching practices and education in the 21st Century is through the opening of charter schools.

The first publicly funded, privately run charter school in the United States opened in 1991 in Minnesota (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Since then, the charter school movement has grown across the nation, fueling discussions of funding, equity, and providing the best education for the most students possible.

As defined by Bulkley and Fisher (2002), "charter schools are relatively autonomous schools of choice that operate under a charter or contract issued by a public entity such as a local school board, public university, or state board of education" (p. 1). Charter schools operate under specific state charter laws, allowing schools to organize and structure themselves with more autonomy than a traditional public school. Early charter school advocates predicted five favorable outcomes for students attending charter schools (Bulkley & Fisher, 2002). First, an increase of choice for parents choosing a public school, second, charter schools would have more flexibility and autonomy than traditional public schools, third, because of their autonomy charter schools could innovate in the areas of curriculum and instruction providing higher quality education, fourth, charter schools would have more accountability to their parents, students, and



also the government agencies who fund them, and last, because of high satisfaction among students and parents combined with innovation and accountability charter schools would have a positive effect on equity in education, particularly for students who may be higher risks (Bulkley & Fisher, 2002). In the thirty years since the first charter school opened its doors, student enrollment trends suggest increasing public interest in charter schools nationally. Charter school enrollment has increased from 1.6 million in 2009 to 3.4 million students in 2019 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

The charter school movement is not without critique. From the beginning, criticism of the charter school model of public funding, private leadership, and limited student capacity may increase educational inequity. The practice of hiring outside agencies by schools to operate non-academic duties within a traditional school was already controversial (Vergari, 2007). A political critique of charter schools surrounds the practice of private businesses contracted by charter schools to deliver instruction to students (Vergari, 2007).

The charter school movement in Hawai‘i has mirrored national trends. Hawai‘i’s first charter school legislation passed in 1994, with Wai‘alae Elementary School converting to charter school status in 1995. In the 2000-01 school year Hawai‘i had 6 charter schools enrolling 1,343 students, in the 2010-11 school year Hawai‘i had 31 charter schools enrolling 8,289 students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). According to the Hawai‘i State Department of Education, there are currently 37 charter schools statewide enrolling 12,097 students during the 2021-22 school year (Hawai‘i State Department of Education, 2020). Based on these numbers the charter school movement in Hawai‘i is showing growth.

The landscape of charter schools in Hawai‘i is vast. Every charter school in Hawai‘i is granted its charter by the State Public Charter Commission and opens with a specific vision and

mission to educate the students of Hawai‘i. Per the State Public Charter School Commission’s Annual Report, the 2020-21 school year had 37 public charter schools. Each Hawai‘i charter school has its own independent vision and mission for education. This gives each school greater flexibility to provide education in a more independent and autonomous fashion. Importantly, this has allowed several charter schools to base their epistemology, curriculum, and instructional practices on Native Hawaiian culture, seventeen of which receive additional funding from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, n.d.a). In Hawai‘i, the majority of charter schools are based in Native Hawaiian culture (Hawai‘i Charter School Commission, n.d.). This is a unique aspect of the Hawai‘i charter schools landscape. Two early charter schools in the state, Hawai‘i Technology Academy and Myron B. Thompson Academy opened as hybrid schools with virtual and in-person components, also known as blended schools.

### ***Charter School Teachers***

With the addition of charter schools to the K-12 educational landscape, attention to the academic achievement of charter school students and the attrition rate of charter school teachers has been of particular interest to educational researchers. While there is existing literature regarding charter school teachers, the small existing body of work points to teacher attrition rates (Stuit & Smith, 2010), recruitment practices (Gross & DeArmond, 2010), and the intensity and demands of charter school teachers (Weiner & Torres, 2015).

Charter School teachers leave the profession or change schools at a significantly higher rate than traditional public-school teachers (Stuit & Smith, 2010). Charter schools that have started from the ground up face higher attrition rates than converted charter schools or schools that changed their status from traditional public schools to charter schools (Stuit & Smith, 2010).

In a review of data from the National Center for Education Statistics Teacher Follow-up Survey, Stuit and Smith (2010) found charter school teachers leave the profession or change schools at substantially higher rates than traditional public-school teachers. With start-up charter schools having the greatest amount of teacher turnover. While higher than public schools, conversion charter schools have less teacher turnover than start-up charter schools (Stuit & Smith, 2010). Additionally, they found charter schools were likelier to hire young teachers with incomplete certifications than public schools and found this to be a contributing factor to increased teacher attrition rates in charter schools. Upon leaving, charter school teachers noted higher rates of dissatisfaction with working conditions than teachers leaving traditional public schools (Stuit & Smith, 2010).

One study by Weiner and Torres (2016) focused on the lived experiences of novice charter school teachers. Interviews were conducted with 19 teachers, examining their personal histories in education, professional identities, perceptions of teachers and the profession of teaching, and reflecting on their own experiences as charter school teachers. The researchers found that novice charter school teachers perceived teaching as a noble and worthwhile profession, but saw themselves as distinct from traditional public-school teachers. Specifically, the novice teachers in this study linked their choosing to teach in charter schools to perceptions of higher standards for teachers, students' behavior, and academic outcomes in charter schools (Weiner & Torres, 2016). Participants in this study early in their careers sought out schools deemed higher performing, however, as they reflected led to doubts about their efficacy and the sustainability of the work they engaged in within their charter schools (Weiner & Torres, 2016). The findings from the study suggest that often teachers are drawn to charter schools because of the perceived higher standards and expectations for students and teachers but find it difficult to stay in such schools

for the long term because of the same standards they initially sought out early in their careers (Weiner & Torres, 2016). What initially drew these young teachers to the schools are the same reasons that the same teachers find themselves in the position where they feel the need to leave their schools.

This literature review laid out insights into women participating in the profession of teaching, the positive perceptions around increasing the presence of teachers of color in the profession of teaching, and the nationally low rates among Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiians represented in teaching. The literature described the beginning of the charter school movement and how it emerged in the Hawai‘i context. The literature also revealed the high rate of teacher turnover within charter schools. This literature revealed a lack of Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools’ narratives.

## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

In the following section, I describe the methodology I employed to answer my research questions. First, I will describe the theoretical framework of my research. I will then outline my methodological framework and describe my research design, including my procedures for participant recruitment, semi-structured interviewing as my data collection method, and the handling of data. Finally, I will discuss potential challenges to this study and recap my project timeline. This research aims to reveal the stories and experiences of Asian American, Pacific Island, and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools on O‘ahu. As my research centers on women's own experiences and world views, I employed narrative interviews as the data collection method focusing on women and their stories.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### *Feminism*

As early as 1792, early feminist thinker and writer Mary Wollstonecraft penned *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), recognizing women as capable beings and complete individuals allowed to think and take charge of their own destinies (Ferguson, 1999; Hanley, 2018). Nearly fifty years later, the first wave of feminism emerged in England and the United States, focusing on women's suffrage and putting policies into place for assuring women as capable human beings and not the property of men (Gray & Boddy, 2010). These early efforts were diverse in their strategies and intertwined with other reform movements such as abolition and temperance (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006).

Methods employed by first-wave feminists included demonstrations outside the White House during World War I comparing the United States to Germany (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006). The National Women's Party organized marches, parades, and picketing, which were

deemed extreme for their time (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006). Less radical tactics employed by the National American Women's Suffrage Association, which included the Seneca Falls Convention, were simultaneously part of the first wave of feminism (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006). The first wave of feminism consisted primarily of and for white, educated, middle-class women.

Second-wave feminism began during World War II when many women entered the workforce. Employment for women and people of color opened during World War II, performing jobs once held by white men (Brock et al., 2015). The phenomenon of women in labor force positions in heavy industry was displayed on posters of "Rosie the Riveter" (O'Neal & Gardner, 2020). When the war ended, it was expected that women would give up their jobs and return to the home (Brock et al., 2015). Some historians credit these women with paving the way for the second wave of feminism in the 1960s (O'Neal & Gardner, 2020). *The Feminine Mystique*, a book written in 1963 by Betty Friedan, gained quick notoriety. In her book, Friedan openly discussed the postwar hardships many homemakers identified with, but never voiced (Coontz, 2012). Coontz described the term "the problem with no name" (Coontz, 2012, p. 24) explaining how it embraces the idea that women were not allowed to grow and fulfill their potential as human beings (Coontz, 2012). Instead, the expectation was for women to find fulfillment in the home, care for their children, and attend to their husbands' needs (Coontz, 2012). When Friedan (2010) described the empty feelings she and her college friends experienced, it led to the "problem with no name" (p. 20). Her writing resonated with many women, and some say it helped ignite the second wave of feminism (Bradley, 2008).

That second wave saw a diversification of philosophies and agendas converge. Liberal feminists sought to challenge the role of women in society by introducing ideas and legislation

for issues such as equal educational opportunities, equal pay, and equal rights, all while working within the parameters of a capitalist economy (Gray & Boddy, 2010). Critical feminism challenged existing social structures, "questioning commonly held assumptions, beliefs and behaviors" (Gray & Boddy, 2010, p. 6). For example, "radical feminists" (Gray & Boddy, 2010, p. 7) participated in political action aimed to advance reproductive rights and choices for women and challenge the patriarchal definition of a nuclear family (Gray & Boddy, 2010). Critical second-wave feminism included socialist, radical, cultural, social-welfare postmodern, and postcolonial feminist thought. All offered perspectives built on concerns for the structural disadvantages women faced (Gray & Boddy, 2010).

Building on the foundations of the first and second waves of feminism, the third wave of feminism began in the 1990s, focusing on furthering "feminist theory and politics that honor contradictory experiences and deconstruct categorical thinking" (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006, p. 16). In 1991, many Americans were especially angered by the Senate Judiciary Committee's questioning and treatment of Anita Hill as she accused Clarence Thomas, Supreme Court Judge, of sexual harassment (Siegal, 2007). Though Thomas was eventually confirmed to the Supreme Court, the public treatment of Anita Hill reignited an interest in a new generation of feminism (Siegal, 2007). Shortly after the Anita Hill hearing, during a women's conference in New York, young activists Shannon Liss and Rebecca Walker said to a large crowd, "we are not post-feminist; we are the third wave..." (Siegal, 2007, p. 128).

The third wave of feminism has been described as pluralistic, beginning with the assumption that women do not have a singular common gender identity. They embody differing experiences and are capable of multiple definitions of feminism coexisting within themselves (Snyder-Hall, 2010). In addition, third-wave feminism grew with globalization and technology

trends. It was disorderly and diverse, defined as "not one, but many" (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006, p. 17).

While academics primarily drove the first three waves, Chamberlain (2017) made the case that the fourth wave of feminism was born of activism, journalism, and academia and broadly spread via the internet. Though the internet was gaining traction as an essential media source at the same time as the third wave, its expansion and near-ubiquitous access ignited the emergence of the fourth wave of feminism (Chamberlain, 2017; Cochrane, 2017; Munro, 2013). Many agree that the internet gave rise to the fourth wave by creating a "global community of feminists" linked together via online networks (Munro, 2013, p. 23). Munro cited Columbia University's Barnard Center for Research, calling women between 18 to 29 years old, the "power users of social networking" (Munro, 2013, p. 23).

Many feminist campaigns were born and spread through online forums, such as the campaigns named, "No More Page 3." Everyday Sexism, Project Unbreakable, and the #MeToo movement (Chamberlain, 2017; Cochrane, 2017; Jaffe, 2018). Chamberlain (2017) credited the rise and acknowledgment of the fourth wave of feminism to journalists on the ground and in the field attending numerous events. Journalists reporting from within felt the need to name the apparent surge in activism, with mainstream media outlets using the term 'fourth-wave' seemingly simultaneously as academics were hosting conferences and symposiums (Chamberlain, 2017). With characteristics and the re-visiting of issues from previous waves, such as "gender-based violence, abortion, sisterhood, and self-determination, " activists' globalized and made up a large part of the fourth wave of feminism (Peroni & Rodak, 2020, p. 5).



In addition to the global, online nature of activism, intersectionality is a second crucial characteristic of the fourth wave of feminism (Chamberlain, 2017, Cochrane, 2017; Munro, 2013). The ideas of intersectionality have been brought up by feminists since the 1980s, by Hooks, who spoke of the differing experiences of working-class black and white women but categorized them both to be a vital part of the fourth wave (Munro, 2013). Intersectionality is a guiding principle of fourth-wave feminism, so much that fourth-wave feminists commonly refer to themselves as "intersectional feminists," as noted by Kelly Temple (Cochrane, 2017, p. 931). Within the fourth wave of feminism, the practice of "privilege checking" arose (Munro, 2013, p. 24). Privilege checking recognizes where one stands in social power structures, advocating and making space for marginalized voices, listening to one's stories, and not putting words in their mouths (Cochrane, 2017).

### ***Intersectionality***

Intersectionality is a conceptual framework that describes a process of carefully analyzing how overlapping systems of power, including race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, ability, and age work together to construct experiences (Collins, 2015; Immerman et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 2018). Initially introduced by Black feminist scholars, the framework of "interlocking systems of oppression" encourages the analysis and understanding of lived experiences resulting from being situated within multiple and overlapping social hierarchies such as race, class, gender, etc. (Collins, 1990, p. 222). For example, Collins (1986) stated, "Black women's experiences highlight the tension experienced by any group of less powerful outsiders encountering the paradigmatic thought of a more powerful insider community" (p. 29).

In her foundational article, legal scholar Crenshaw (2018) developed a Black feminist criticism to examine the likelihood of antidiscrimination law, feminist theory, and antiracist

politics to hold a "single-axis framework" when viewing gender and race (p. 139). Crenshaw (2018) explained the DeGraffenreid versus General Motors case, where five Black women sued General Motors, alleging the seniority system preserved past discrimination against Black women. The trial uncovered that General Motors did not hire Black women before 1964, and all Black women lost their jobs in 1970 due to a seniority-based layoff (Crenshaw, 1989). The court ultimately found no sex discrimination because General Motors had hired (white) women before 1964. Therefore, no sex discrimination had occurred to the five Black women accusers. The court then dismissed the race discrimination case against the same employer because the case was a sex and race case, not purely a race claim. The court's reasoning that the "prospect of the creation of new classes of protected minorities, governed only by the mathematical principles of permutation and combination, clearly raises the prospect of opening the hackneyed Pandora's box" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 142). Crenshaw (1989) argued that the outcome was the result of a legal system that focused on single identities, in this case, "African American" or "woman," but failed to acknowledge the experiences of African American Women. Crenshaw (1980) named this overlap of identities intersectionality.

This concept has gained traction, especially among gender studies and American political scholars. However, the increased scholarly use of "intersectional knowledge projects" has led to a problem of definition; defining the term too narrowly could highlight the interest of one specific group but defining it too broadly could assist in the loss of meaning (Collins, 2015, p. 5). Most recently, Collins (2019) published, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* in which she made a case for intersectionality as a critical social theory. She argued that intersectionality does more than explain, interpret, justify or challenge the social world. Instead, it provides a critique of social inequalities while pushing for and advocating for change. Collins (2019) kept the ideas

of truth, power, and ethics to guide while exploring and presenting intersectionality as a Critical Social Theory. Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory is in progress (Collins, 2019).

### ***Feminist Critique of Research***

Science often views women and other marginalized groups as subjects of objectivity and neutrality (Wiggington & Lafrance, 2019). Early research, science, and scholarship supported and upheld inequalities and sexist beliefs that women were irrelevant, problematic, or inferior to men (Wiggington & Lafrance, 2019). Feminist research brings to light women's experiences, not for the sole purpose of study but for exploration to enact change. The feminist analysis is interested in women's experiences and perspectives, giving voice to previously unheard or unacknowledged marginalized groups. The feminist perspective actively seeks avoidance of re-oppressing already marginalized groups.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Narrative Inquiry***

Narrative Inquiry is a qualitative methodology employed as "a way of understanding experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). The three commonplaces that distinguish narrative inquiry from other methodologies include a focus on (a) Temporality: the past, present, and future of the people, places, and events of a study; (b) Sociality: attending personal feelings of hope, reactions, and moral dispositions and the social conditions such as cultural, institutional, and linguistic contexts; and (c) Place or locality: the physical space(s) where the inquiry takes place (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). After attending to these three aspects, the narrative inquirer can then study people's lived experiences (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

American Philosopher and Educator John Dewey's (1938) philosophical thoughts on an individual's personal and social experience were a central concept to Clandinin and Connelly's

thinking and development of narrative as inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). With Dewey's influence, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) "learned to move back and forth between the personal and the social, simultaneously thinking about the past, present and future, and to do so in ever-expanding social milieus" (p. 3). Grounded in Dewey's philosophy, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described narrative inquiry as "stories lived and told" (p. 20).

Narrative inquiry was first introduced as a practical methodology for research in education by Connelly and Clandinin in their 1990 publication of *Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry* (as cited in Clandinin et al., 2007). Since then, educational researchers have taken a narrative inquiry approach to explore many themes in the field, such as teacher identity, professional development, life stories, the development of new teachers, curriculum studies, voice and discourse in teaching, teacher perspectives on multiculturalism and diversity, knowledge and work (Clandinin & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007). Additionally, the use of narrative inquiry to frame research to understand better how teachers' work lives involve their personal lives (Kohli, 2018). For 25 years, narrative inquiry as a methodology for studying teachers has allowed researchers to pay close attention to the stories teachers tell about their professional and personal lives (Clandinin & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007).

In response to the growing popularity of narrative inquiry to frame research conducted by academics from and within various academic fields, Xu and Connelly (2010) attempted to describe a type of narrative inquiry specific for school-based analysis as the study of "a particular concept of experience as the phenomenon under study" (Xu & Connelly, 2010, p. 352). They propose that narrative inquiry for school-based research begins with an inquirer taking notice of a circumstance that may perplex, compel, or distress a researcher and propel them to improve (Xu & Connelly, 2010). The next step would be to learn more about the situation and what Xu

and Connelly describe as "experiencing the experience and patiently gathering a sense of living the life of a character in a network of stories" (Xu & Connelly, 2010, p. 360). After experiencing the experience, the inquirer would begin narrating their own experience concerning the research (Clandinin, 2006). This step is an integral part of school-based research because it allows for more meaningful analysis (Xu & Connelly, 2010). However, it can also pose risks by giving premature shape to a study (Xu & Connelly, 2010). Narrative inquirers of school-based research will need to reflect upon themselves throughout their investigation, and although not always intentional, this type of inquiry has an inherent autobiographical component (Xu & Connelly, 2010).

As narrative inquiry often begins with a researcher's own lived experiences and stories, turning experiences and thoughts into research questions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), the cornerstone of this research is my own experiences as a mixed-race Asian American and Caucasian woman teaching in a Hawai'i charter school. This narrative inquiry will voice Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools in Hawai'i, elevating their experiences and stories and illuminating their voices.

In this research project centering on the voices of AAPI and Native Hawaiian charter school teachers in Hawai'i, I follow the steps for narrative analysis outlined by Smith (2016) and described below.

- 1. Getting the story.** This occurs when a participant shares a story or experience.
- 2. Collecting big and/or small stories.** Big stories are defined as longer stories when someone has had time to think or reflect on an experience or event. Small stories can be part of a conversation or about small everyday events—often viewed as the mundane aspects of one's life.

**3. Transcribing the Data.** Whereas other methods view transcription as a technical exercise, in narrative analysis, transcribing interviews is a chance for the researcher to reflect on and process what was heard during the interviews. Thus, transcribing can be viewed as part of the analytical process of narrative data analysis.

**4. Writing.** The narrative analysis researcher should write throughout the research project. Writing may include field notes, descriptions of what the researcher notices, memos, emerging theoretical thoughts, ideas and vignette's based on the stories and experiences of participants. Together, these writings will help push forward the iterative process of narrative analysis.

It is important to note that narrative analysis is described as cyclical and iterative rather than linear and set (Smith, 2016). As such, the researcher can move through the steps of their analysis guide in whatever ways they see fit. This may mean moving back and forth between each step, circling back, moving forward, or in some instances, jumping between strategies of analysis within the guides (Smith, 2016).

### **Description of Sites**

For my dissertation, I conducted virtual interviews with female-identifying teachers from various charter schools across O'ahu. As of the 2021-22 school year, Hawai'i had 37 charter schools across the islands. For the purposes of this study, I focused on O'ahu based charter schools.

### **Description of Participants**

Participants in this study were female-identifying teachers from charter schools on O'ahu. I conducted five interviews, recruited via snowball sampling. Snowball sampling, also referred to as chain or network sampling, is a common sampling method used in qualitative studies

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Snowball sampling takes place when a few key participants are identified early in the study and then refer the researcher to other potential participants. Potential participants are then contacted and interviewed by the researcher, then asked to refer more participants, thereby creating a ‘snowball’ effect (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Noy, 2008).

When selecting teachers to participate in this research, I specifically chose participants who self-identified as Asian-American, Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian. In addition, participants had a current Hawai‘i teacher’s license, no less than three years of experience teaching in charter schools in Hawai‘i and were currently teaching in a charter school located on O‘ahu. The following criteria assisted me in selecting potential participants:

1. Identified as an Asian American, Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian woman;
2. Currently taught in an O‘ahu based Charter School for a minimum of three years; and
3. Held a state teaching license.

Before each interview participants completed a five question questionnaire to gather information regarding their name, race/ethnicity(s), name of the school they currently taught in, number of years they have taught in their charter school and the grade level they currently teach. At the end of each semi-structured interview participants in this study self-selected pseudonyms. In Table 1, *Participant Information*, each participant is listed using their self-selected pseudonym, the ethnicity(s) they identify with, pseudonyms of their schools and the type of charter school they work in.

**Table 1.**

*Participant Information*

Participant Name	Ethnicity	Current School Name	Type of Charter School
Makena Sanchez	Hawaiian, Chinese,	Envision Charter School	Blended

Lauren Cruz	Japanese, Korean, Italian Japanese	Island Charter School	Conversion
Eva Smith	Korean	Envision Charter School	Blended
Honu Alexander	Hawaiian, Chinese, and Caucasian	Lei Ilima Charter School	Hawaiian Focused
Sabrina Nishi	Japanese and Chinese	Evolve Learning Academy	Conversion

### **Data Gathering**

As this research focused on women’s lived experiences, I employed semi-structured interviewing as the data-gathering method. Educational scholars Merriam and Tisdell (2016) discuss three structures of interviews to use when collecting qualitative data: Highly structured, Semi-structured, and Unstructured. Structured interviews often use predetermined questions, set order, and specific wording for all interviews; Semi-structured interviews are often guided by questions with the flexibility to use or not use them; Unstructured interviews are characterized as conversations that often create additional questions for future interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This research used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to encourage participants to share experiences and answer questions narratively. The semi-structured interview often uses a protocol as a guide; addressing all interview questions is not required as interview questions can change once the interview has begun. This structure creates a discussion centered around the interviewee’s unique experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Participants were individually interviewed in Zoom and audio recorded for transcription purposes. COVID-19 restrictions made virtual platforms necessary for qualitative research previously completed in person. The literature surrounding the benefits and limitations of Zoom interviews in qualitative research is growing and is at the beginning stages and evolving. There is



much more to learn and share in terms of online interviewing (Olliffe et al., 2021). Before each interview, participants received an email with the IRB-approved information: the purpose of the research, interview questions, anonymity measures, and contact information. A separate email confirmed the interview date, time, and Zoom Link. Each interview occurred in Zoom and lasted between 30-and 60 minutes, depending on the participants.

### **Co-Creating Vignettes**

After each interview, a co-authored vignette was composed and served as part of the data set along with the transcribed interviews. Vignettes have been described as a supportive method with other data collection techniques (Barter & Renold, 1999). In an effort to humanize this research co-authoring vignettes was a way to ensure the women's stories were not the researcher's interpretation of the participant's experiences but rather their experiences told in their own words and therefore they remained the owners of their stories (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). As a part of the methodology, co-authored vignettes were written with each participant within one month of each interview.

Ensuring anonymity for teachers was of utmost importance. Interviews were conducted outside teachers' workdays to not interfere with their professional obligations. Participants chose an interview day and time convenient for them. All data was stored on a password-protected computer. Teacher's names, school of employment, and any other identifiable markers were not used in my writing and aided with keeping identities in confidence. Participants were encouraged to select their pseudonyms for this study.

Co-authoring vignettes of the women's charter school experiences was deeply personal because it reflected personal and sometimes difficult experiences of teaching back to the study participants. Three months after completing the co-authored vignettes, one participant reached

out to change her vignette for fear of being identified as a participant in this study. We re-wrote her vignette to ensure her anonymity. The fear she felt knowing she might be identified demonstrates the personal nature of the stories and experiences the women shared in their interviews and vignettes.

### **Pilot Interview**

Before interviewing for data gathering, I piloted my interview questions with a former colleague who did not meet the criteria for my research. This pilot interview process enabled me to refine my interview questions and the overall interview process. For example, in question three, there were multiple parts to one question. Based on the pilot interview I re-read the question in its entirety with each sub-question.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the data gathered from interviews, I used the following analytical steps outlined by Smith (2016):

**Step 1. Indwelling**, Smith (2016) describes indwelling as familiarizing oneself with the data. This occurs through reading and re-reading transcripts and previously written notes, listening to audio recordings of the interviews, and possibly listening to the recording while reading the written transcription, taking notes along the way. In this step, the researcher positions themselves as someone the participant is choosing to share their story with and remain empathetic to the shared stories and experiences.

**Step 2. Identifying stories**. In this step, the researcher marks transcripts of where stories began and ended throughout an interview. Researchers can also look for elements of story structure such as setting, characters, complicating actions, or resolutions and make notes of each of these details.

**Step 3. Identifying themes and thematic relationships.** In this step, the researcher systematically reads through interview transcriptions, paying attention to identifying themes and key sentences, and writes summarizing notes in the margins. Smith (2016) notes that this process is not line-by-line coding as used in other qualitative methods and argues that line-by-line coding can lead to overcoding and break the text down in a way that detracts from the narratives as stories. Instead, the researcher looks for narrative themes, defined as patterns that run through a single story or a set of stories. To define thematic relationships, the researcher can ask the following two questions:

- a. What is the common theme(s) in each story?
- b. What repeatedly occurs within the story?

### **Putting it all Together**

After developing the vignettes from the interview transcripts, I looked for the themes that emerged across the interviewees' experiences. These themes illuminated the experiences of the Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women teaching in Hawai'i charter schools. As previously stated, there is a need across the nation for more AAPI and NH teachers, though the literature on their experiences is underdeveloped. It is my hope that this research contributes to this body of literature and can be used to assist in the practical matter of poor teacher retention in Hawai'i charter schools.

### **Handling of Data**

I conducted all interviews and managed all the data. Each participant had a self-selected pseudonym that was used to collect, store, and analyze the interview data. Audio files were stored on a password-protected external hard drive; I then transcribed the interview with no identifiable information but the self-selected pseudonym. The audio recording and the

transcription will be stored on an external hard drive and stored in a locked drawer accessible only by the researcher. Digital recordings will be destroyed within six months of the study's completion. In addition, any written reports or notes about this study will be reviewed to ensure no identifying information can be linked to any participant and stored in the locked drawer.

## **Limitations**

Limitations of this study include:

- It is a small sample size of 5 Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian women teaching in Charter Schools on O‘ahu;
- It is not representative of all charter schools across the state of Hawai‘i
- The quality of the research was dependent on the researcher’s ability to keep accurate records, report, and interpret participants’ narratives;
- Due to Covid 19 safety concerns, interviews took place using the online Zoom platform instead of in-person;
- The researcher had a personal bias because she is an Asian American charter school teacher, who fits the criteria to participate in the study.

The next chapter presents the co-authored vignettes using the self-chosen pseudonyms each participant chose for themselves. Within one month of each interview a vignette was composed and sent to each participant for feedback, additions, or changes. All changes requested by the participants were honored and the changes made. After any change to the vignette another draft was sent to the participant for further review and changes. Three months after completing one participant’s vignette she contacted me to make further changes to her vignette, as. Together we took out any words, phrases, or sentences she felt might identify her as a participant in the study. The following are the final vignettes the women felt comfortable sharing.

## CHAPTER 4. CO-AUTHORED VIGNETTES

### **Makena**

Makena spent her childhood traveling between California and Hawai‘i before eventually moving to O‘ahu permanently at the age of 15. She identifies herself as a Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Hawaiian, and Italian woman. She is a mother, wife, daughter, and working professional. Growing up Makena felt connected with her Hawaiian heritage, and less connected with her Asian American ethnicities. With her mother as her guide Makena developed a strong connection with her Hawaiian identity and culture. She grew up dancing hula and is comfortable with the Hawaiian language, history and culture.

When Makena was little she dreamt of a profession in education, but as she grew up she began to question her professional aspirations wondering if she could live in Hawai‘i on a teacher salary. After high school Makena began earning credits as a Med-Tech. Then, while attending the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa she explored Speech Pathology and Paleontology classes before deciding to pursue her degree in education. In her heart she had the intention of positively influencing future generations here in Hawai‘i.

While fulfilling her student teacher practicum Makena was fortunate to experience three different types of schools on O‘ahu, a charter school, private school, and a traditional public school. Those experiences led her to apply to her first full-time teaching position at a Conversion Public Charter School, Evolve Learning Academy.

I felt that what I was seeing at Evolve Learning Academy was this opportunity to be really culturally aware and to integrate Hawaiian Culture into my curriculum, just freely.

I didn't feel like there were any constraints, or I didn't feel like I was gonna have to tip toe at all. I felt like it was welcomed and that I had an opportunity to do that.

After 5 years teaching with Evolve Learning Academy, she accepted a 4th grade teaching position at her current charter school, Envision Charter School where she has currently taught for 5 additional years.

While reflecting on her charter school journey Makena did not initially think about the potential risks to becoming a charter school teacher. Risks included not accruing tenure or years of service in the DOE and if she wanted to transfer schools she would have to start as a "new" teacher regardless of how many years she had taught. She does not have regrets about choosing to teach in charter schools, but does wish there was more clarity when she accepted her charter school position of how it could affect her in the long term. Beginning her teaching journey at Evolve Learning Academy Makena was grateful for a mentor teacher she met while doing her practicum. She was eventually hired as a lead teacher, and her mentor was officially named to work with Makena as she transitioned to full time teaching. Makena credits her mentor for shaping her professional outlook where she learned to express herself, handle difficult situations, and grow.

Soon after beginning her first full time teaching position Makena had her first child. As a young first-time mother she felt her mentor teacher helped her navigate being a mother and teacher. Makena felt valued professionally, cared for personally and able to grow under the guidance of a strong mentor.

After a few years Makena applied for a new teaching position closer to her home. She began teaching for Envision Charter School a blended charter school where students learn from home with a parent or family member a few days a week and attend in person classes with a

teacher a few days a week. She quickly learned she would have different experiences at her new school and her appreciation for her previous school and mentor grew.

Makena's new Charter School is a completely different school environment, one where race and gender seemed to be a part of her experiences as a professional. This was a new experience for her, because at her previous school, Evlove Learning Academy she did not feel as though her race or gender were a hinderance to her career.

Makena spoke of a time when she felt that her gender and ethnicity might have played a role in being overlooked for professional growth. When Makena spoke with her administrators she felt as though she needed to choose her words carefully for fear of having her words misinterpreted and being deemed unprofessional.

There was an opportunity to be in a cohort, a teacher leadership kind of a thing, and I went through the whole year with it, and during that year was Covid year, so you know, I had my two kids home, my husband's also a teacher, it was a very hectic time, as it was for everybody else. And I decided to take one day off a week for the second semester. I had enough PTO.

After Makena spoke with administration she secured a sub, wrote sub lesson plans for the one day a week she would take-off to care for her own children and continued teaching 4 days a week to finish off that first covid school year. She was feeling confident and supported by her administration. During this school year Makena was a part of a Teacher Leader Cohort which continued to meet virtually because of the Covid-19 shut down. At the end of the school year the administrators began forming a new cohort to continue the work of the Teacher Leaders. The new cohort would be focusing on RTI (Response to Intervention), and an email was sent to the

Teacher Leader Cohort encouraging interested teachers to email administration if they wanted to be a part of the RTI Cohort.

I emailed them and the response from admin was, no (laughs). To be honest, I really didn't even think I was asking to be in it. I thought it was one of those if you're interested, you're in. That's kind of how the email read to me. But then I got an email back saying, 'no that I was clearly too busy, and I had a lot going on as a mother and with my family, and that I should focus on that for the next year.' I felt that they put me in this mom category and stripped away my professional opportunity completely because I was a mother, and because I chose to take care of my family and I chose to do something that was going to allow me to be my best self for my kids, both my you know, my students and my, my own personal kids, but in that setting it was for my students too. It was like, we were crazy at that time. It was this crazy time for everyone, and I wanted to do my best everywhere and that was what I needed to do. And instead of respecting my decision, I feel like I was punished for it, and so I missed that opportunity, and for the remainder of that year I didn't do any professional development and I feel like I should have, now I feel like I should have fought, but I think I was really shocked and kind of taken back a little by that decision.

Makena experienced her gender identity intersecting with her identity as a mom and identified this as the reason she was no longer allowed to be a part of the professional growth teams within her school. Administration made the choice for her. In the midst of the early Covid-19 school shut down Makena expressed how she was trying to be a professional and also care-give to her own young children who were at home doing distance learning simultaneously. She worked with her administrators to figure a way to continue serving her students and then was



retaliated against and not allowed to continue growing professionally or serving her school beyond the virtual walls of her online classroom.

Makena spoke of another incident where her race and gender made her feel as though her voice and position were not given the same respect as her male colleague. She spoke of her male team teacher and how by the end of the school year they had an inside joke between the two of them regarding which one of them should speak to administration:

He would bring up things and say things to administrators and it would be held in a very different way than what I was saying and bringing up and we had to use that strategically. I didn't like that, because the why behind that is really terrible. You know the reason we're having to do that is because his voice carries a weight heavier than mine.

As part of a team-teaching duo, Makena initially would propose projects and field study ideas to administration and she was often brushed off, if she brought up concerns she was having with the school she was dismissed. Instead of discussing her talking points she was often given unsolicited professional advice, and told she needed to work on her delivery when speaking to administration or in her administrator's words, she needed to work on her "finesse."

And then my male counterpart would say very similar things. Their conversation was much more about how can we solve this and let's come up with a solution and less about how he approached the situation. I got critiqued for how I approached it and the fact that I brought it up as a woman and he was having this solution-based discussion and we've come out with these ideas.

A multi-racial woman Makena was told to act in a particular way depending on the circumstantial situation she was in:

‘Well, you should harness your Asian side more, or harness your white side more.’ It’s just so terribly inappropriate because I don’t know what that means, you know in a professional setting, and how am I supposed to act, if that means I should be more submissive or I’m being too outspoken.

In meetings with parents Makena found herself in situations where she felt her race and gender did play a negative role in the conversations she had. During one particular parent conference involving a white male father she was having tough conversations regarding his daughter’s grades. During the conferences she would discuss where the grade level standard was and steps she was taking to assist the student. Because of previous meeting behavior, she invited her administrator who was also a white male. During the meeting it became clear that her administrator and the father began discussing the student and leaving Makena out of the conversation completely. She mentioned she did not think this would have happened if she were a male teacher, but because she was with a male administrator and a father who were both white, she was outnumbered and the conversation left her and her professionalism in question and undermined her work and voice.

Makena believes her initial mentor teacher with Evolve Learning Academy prepared her to think about her role not just as a teacher of academics, but as a woman of color uplifting future women of color. She was told to encourage her students, especially the little girls to speak up, to be brave and to practice hearing their voices and seeing and feeling what it is to use their voices and their minds. Her mentor teacher had a profound effect on her and impacted her as a woman of color personally and professionally. She carries her first mentor’s words with her as she navigates her current school’s treatment towards her. Given the circumstances of her current

school Makena believes she will remain in education and a teacher, but is unsure how much longer she will remain at her school.

## **Honu**

Honu is a Native Hawaiian woman teaching in a Hawaiian Focused Charter School. She has taught in the same school for the past eight years and was one of the founding teachers. She identifies as a woman, mother, aunty, and sister. She is also a triplet, with one identical twin sister and one fraternal sister. The triplet sisters also have an older brother whom they were raised with in Palolo Valley. Honu recalls her father telling his children that, “there was more world to see and experience outside of the housing” they grew up in and encouraged his daughters to study hard.

Honu enjoyed school from an early age and has always enjoyed reading. She credits her upbringing and her family with instilling the value of education in her and her siblings. She has memories of being told to “go to school, get good grades, then go to college.” Part of her love of learning and her path to becoming a charter school teacher involves the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association). With assistance from the YMCA, Honu’s father opened a sports club in Palolo Valley. The “Y” was a place where she spent a lot of time in. It was also a place where she worked when she returned to the islands each summer during college, and it is where she worked after college. This love of school and learning is something she knew she wanted to pass along to the children of her community, whether they were Hawaiian, Micronesian or just local.

After high school, Honu and her sisters traveled to the U.S. continent to attend Junior College and play softball for two years. After completing Junior College the three sisters made their way back to Hawai‘i and Honu began working as an Educational Assistant at a public elementary school in Honolulu. She was simultaneously working as the programming director of

the before school and after school care program A+, which coincidentally was run through the YMCA.

Honu reported to school every morning at 6:30 am and stayed until 6:30 pm when the last students were picked up from after school care. During her time as an Educational Assistant (EA) she was inspired by a teacher who she saw advocating for students. The teacher recognized that not all learners learned in the same way and that there are multiple ways to demonstrate learning beyond traditional methods of assessment. Witnessing this teacher in action inspired Honu to go back to school and to continue her education at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa where she graduated with her bachelor’s degree, dually certified in Special Education and General Education. She taught in the Department of Education for a few years before she was hired as part of the inaugural staff of Lei Ilima Charter School.

Honu found her way to Lei Ilima Charter School through a family friend who was also connected to the YMCA. During a road trip in Seattle while playing softball Honu bumped into this friend who shared with her the early dreams of what is now Lei Ilima Charter School. Years later while out with her family, Honu bumped into this same family friend again and was told the school was almost ready to open and was encouraged to apply for one of the teaching positions at this new Hawaiian Focused Charter School.

Before her interview Honu had no idea what a charter school was and she was happily working for the Hawai‘i Department of Education (HIDOE) in a traditional elementary school. After bumping into her friend, she decided to interview with the new charter school and soon after accepted her position at Lei Ilima Charter School. She quickly learned what it meant to be a teacher at a new charter school. After she was hired, she learned that the school did not have a physical campus to report to, there was no set curriculum to use, and that she was going to be a

part of literally building the school from the ground up. She was inspired and enjoyed each moment of the new school. She and her colleagues have coined the term, “#charterschoollife.”

The term #charterschoollife acknowledges that, what seems like a basic standard of working in a traditional HDOE school is not the same when teaching in a charter school. What many teachers think of as “a given” are not necessarily the case at charter schools for instance, the four walls of a classroom or desks and chairs. Honu does not view these discrepancies as a deficit, she views it as a different type of teaching and a different opportunity for children to learn and grow. Honu told a story of a time when a storm brought heavy rains and flooded the school site. She reminisced about how the parents, students, teachers, and administrators all helped to stop the flooding and repair their school because in her charter school, there was no “maintenance crew” to call when a disaster happened or when the school needed repair. Honu said that this event brought her school community closer together and is part of the reason Honu feels so connected to it. Her charter school community is one where they help each other when help is needed.

Honu makes it a point to tell applying teachers, “being a teacher at Lei Ilima Charter School is not a 7:45-2:50 pm position.” She understands that teaching is a “tough” profession, and that teaching in a charter school can be even tougher because charter schools are not afforded the same “luxuries” as traditional schools such as “ready to go” campuses, classrooms, curriculum, maintenance, and larger budgets. However, she also sees that at Lei Ilima Charter School she is able to meet each student’s needs in a way that uplifts all her students beyond test scores. She attributes this partly to the fact that the school gets to be “creative,” due to its charter. When a student of hers was having a hard time learning how to read and write and did not seem to enjoy being in school, she made it a point to connect with him and to introduce him to ideas

and learning that fit him and his needs. She thinks this was possible because of her school's incorporation of Hawaiian values and culture that helped reach this student.

Being a Native Hawaiian woman plays a large role in why Honu chose to teach in a Hawaiian Focused Charter School. She spoke of wanting to uplift the children in her community. She hopes that by teaching students to learn about who they are, where they come from, and their histories, they will gain a strong sense of self and identity. She believes that this is what truly sets her school apart from a traditional HODOE public school. She said, "I get to be a part of the children learning who they are." Honu strongly believes that with an education that includes this type of learning she is a part of uplifting future generations.

Honu is inspired by the leaders of her school. Her administrators push her in a way where she feels she wants to better herself as an educator for her students. She's evolved from feeling as though she is proving she is an effective teacher, to asking herself, "are my students getting what they need?" Honu wants her students to get to a point where they are pushing themselves the way she pushes herself. She wants to see her students helping each other learn and encouraging each other to keep going. The administrators of her Hawaiian Focused school do not press her to push the kids in order to do well on a state test, but instead be a part of creating the leaders for tomorrow. She believes that the Hawaiian culture and the Hawaiian mindset is the foundation for creating such learners and leaders.

Honu has pride and is deeply connected to her work, and her students. Her school recently graduated students from her inaugural Kindergarten class, a proud moment for the school and also a proud moment for Honu. With Honu's background in Special Education she feels drawn to her "special people." She knows they are drawn to each other. She said, "they find me and I find them" they are "magnetized," to each other. Her charter school is known in the

community for being a place of hands-on learning, and is often a focal reason parents seek their school out for their children. One year a student in her class was 4 years behind in his reading ability. He told her at the beginning of the year that “he couldn’t read because the letters danced on the pages” at him. At first she worried about the accessibility of the content, but then remembered it’s not about him reading at the same level as his peers, it’s about him having access to the same ideas as his peers. By the end of the year he was excited about reading, telling her, “the letters danced differently now,” and he was excited to write because “he could tell his story, and that people liked reading his story.” Honu credits the hands-on, Hawaiian focused nature of the work she does with her students to having success stories like this in her classroom.

Honu believes parents at Lei Ilima Charter School are more involved in their children’s school life because they are not a “district school.” To enroll in Lei Ilima Charter School a parent needs to apply their child and with that extra step families are choosing to be a part of the school. To be part of the school community, Lei Ilima Charter School asks for parents to commit to volunteering 10 hours each school year. Honu feels connected and open to the parents and families of Lei Ilima Charter School. She has parents who help her every year doing small tasks such as making name tags for her class even after their children have moved up to the next grade level. Parents also become involved in bigger events with their children such as the 5th grade defense, a time when 5th graders must do and present original research. Parents are often excited to assist and help their children through these year long projects.

Honu has a deep appreciation for learning and growth, both for herself and for her students. She is grateful for her school community. She is excited and proud of the work she and her colleagues do with the students and believes that her charter school has something unique and special to offer students and families that they might not otherwise experience in a

traditional classroom. During our interview Honu was reminded of “kākou (we)” a feeling of “we are all in it together.” Without it, her charter school would not be possible because it is too tough to do by yourself. The kākou is Lei Ilima’s community, the parents, students, families, teachers, faculty, administrators, volunteers, grant-writers, and community partners that make what she is doing in the classroom meaningful and possible. Being a Hawaiian woman and teaching in her school is how she advocates for her culture and this is who she is and why she chooses to teach in her Hawaiian focused charter school. She has no plans to leave Lei Ilima Charter School.

### **Sabrina**

Sabrina is currently in her 11th year teaching high school science at Evolve Learning Academy on O‘ahu. Sabrina identifies as a Japanese and Chinese woman. She is a daughter, wife, mother and teacher. Sabrina’s Japanese relatives are 3rd generation here in Hawai‘i and her Chinese relatives are 3rd generation living in San Francisco. She grew up feeling more of a connection to her Chinese culture which she explains is most likely due to the fact that during and after WWII, Japanese people living in America and in Hawai‘i tried to prove their loyalty to the United States by not practicing their culture or speaking their language. Therefore her father never spoke the language or engaged in many cultural practices connected to his Japanese ancestry.

Sabrina also spoke of her Japanese grandmother who was born in Japan, but lived in London, and spoke “perfect” English. Sabrina mentioned that with no one close to her speaking the language or celebrating Japanese traditions, she did not feel as connected to her Japanese heritage. Sabrina’s Chinese grandfather moved to San Francisco as a young child and spoke English very well. Sabrina’s “*huhu*” (grandmother) spoke Chinese in the home, and so Sabrina’s



mother spoke both Chinese and English growing up and also to Sabrina when she was growing up. When Sabrina's father and mother first met he tried to learn Chinese, but was so terrible at it that her mother gave up on him and refused to continue teaching him because he was so awful.

Sabrina's mother was a teacher in San Francisco before she moved to Hawai'i. Once settled into her new home on O'ahu she found work as a bookkeeper in a school because there were no teaching positions available to her at the time. Sabrina has memories of spending time with her mother at school, interviewing her mother's colleagues many of whom were teachers for class projects and various school assignments. From a young age Sabrina was under the impression that teaching was a boring job and was of little interest to her as a future profession. Sabrina's perception of teaching was that teachers taught the same thing year after year. To her that seemed too monotonous and she was uninterested. Teaching was not a career choice for Sabrina until after college.

Although Sabrina did not initially see herself being a teacher, she reminisced about being a good student and unknowingly forcing her peers to learn along with her. She would refuse to let her friends copy her homework and instead would teach them how to do the work on their own. Remembering a high school teacher's words, "if you can teach it to someone else, then you really understand it," resonated with Sabrina. In high school Sabrina remembers being appointed as a peer tutor in her chemistry class. Although Sabrina did not think she wanted to be a teacher, she realizes her respect for learning was a part of who she was from a young age.

Sabrina spent her early childhood in Mililani before moving to Kaimuki. She attended and graduated from Evolve Learning Academy, (which was not a charter school at the time when she attended) before attending the University of Sacramento where she majored in Biochemistry. Sabrina's long-term career plan was to remain in the field of science as a researcher. After

graduating from the University of Sacramento Sabrina entered the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program where she taught English in Japan for three years. She met a lot of friends and enjoyed her time in Japan.

Following teaching in Japan Sabrina moved back home to Hawai‘i and began her master’s degree studying Cell and Molecular Biology at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Mid-way through her Molecular Biology degree Sabrina began losing steam and the passion for her chosen degree. She found herself spending long hours in the Science Lab where she questioned whether research was where and what she wanted to do with her life. While she was questioning her career path, a friend from the JET program had moved to Hawai‘i and began inviting Sabrina to assist with Robotics classes and competitions at the school he was working in. Sabrina’s friend encouraged her to consider a career in teaching science. Initially brushing this idea off, Sabrina eventually ended up leaving her masters program and began volunteering in a middle school located in Honolulu. Soon after Sabrina began attending classes to become a substitute teacher with her father who had also decided to begin substitute teaching in the DOE as part of his retirement.

In the substitute teaching class Sabrina met another former JET teacher who was also getting his Master’s in Education and his Hawai‘i Teaching License through Chaminade University. Learning that Chaminade University offered a rolling admission. So Sabrina applied and was accepted to Chaminade University where she quickly began classes and even accelerated her degree by taking additional classes each term. While a student at Chaminade, Sabrina also worked part-time at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai‘i which helped Sabrina feel connected to her Japanese heritage.

Learning about Japanese history, culture and traditions while spending time with the Japanese men and women carrying on traditions from Japan connected Sabrina to her Japanese heritage. Many of the volunteers were former teachers in Hawai‘i, and so that also made her feel inspired. Working at the Japanese Cultural Center was a special time in her life. After finishing her Master’s Degree and Licensure Program at Chaminade Sabrina was hired at Evolve Learning Academy.

Sabrina was happy to accept a teaching position with Evolve Learning Academy because it was her alma mater so she felt comfortable and connected to the school. She enjoys working in Evolve Learning Academy and is especially happy now that her school recognizes reclassifications for teachers as the system was intended in the Master Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA) contract. Sabrina’s desire to keep improving can now be financially rewarded via credits earned towards reclassification. Overall, Sabrina enjoys the autonomy she has in her professional practice while teaching in Evolve Learning Academy. If she learns something new and wants to try it in her classroom, she feels supported to give new ideas a try with her students.

However, Sabrina believes her “small stature” combined with being a woman make her easier to dismiss and not always heard by her colleagues. She works in an all female Science department composed of her and three other women. Two of the women are Caucasian from the U.S. Mainland and one is Chinese and also born and raised in the U.S. mainland. Sabrina spoke of having feelings of being unheard or overlooked when she proposes ideas or improvements. When Sabrina first began as a teacher in the Science department, she found herself taking over the organization of the chemical stockroom and having to clean-out the stockroom of unknown and unlabeled chemicals. With her research background she knew the costly and dangerous

effects having unknown chemicals can have on a school. She credits her research training in giving her the background knowledge and “how to” knowledge to understand the proper protocols for maintaining a chemical storage room. The response she got from her colleagues when she brought up improving the chemical storage room was unreceptive.

She questions whether her colleagues value her voice enough to listen and understand the importance of her standards to maintaining the procedures and safety guidelines chemicals. One day Sabrina was talking with a colleague and she mentioned how she had done research and her colleague said, “That's totally how I see you. I see you as a scientist, you know and doing research and all that kind of stuff. Maybe more so than a teacher.” Sabrina was not offended by this comment, but was a little confused to what exactly she meant by it.

Another instance Sabrina felt unheard by her team was when the roll out of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) took place. Sabrina took classes to learn about and how to implement the new standards. When she brought the information back to her team they brushed her off and no one actually wanted to learn or talk about how to implement the new standards. Sabrina was the only teacher to implement NGSS in her department. Sabrina is unsure if being female or being Asian have anything to do with her interactions.

As part of Sabrina’s teaching pedagogy she recalls her own experiences as a student at Evolve Learning Academy. She remembers being on the quieter side, participating and engaging in the classroom dynamic as a student, but not always forthright in raising her hand to answer a question she knew the answer to or volunteer when new opportunities arose. From these life experiences she now encourages students to speak up and seize opportunities when they arise.

In her classroom she wants students to participate and to at least try regardless of if they answer the question correctly. She tries to ensure all students have an opportunity to use their

voice in class. She wants the students who might typically try to hang back or have other students speak for them to practice hearing their voices and speaking up for themselves. To do this Sabrina uses a number of strategies in her classroom, she will ask students to raise their hand if they agree or if they had the same answer as the person who shared. This allows students to see they were not alone in their thinking and also to see for themselves that they were on the right track.

Sabrina spoke of interactions she's had with a few parents where she was again unsure if her race and ethnicity played a part in or if it was purely her gender. Sabrina describes herself as a woman who is "smaller in stature" and she described how she felt "trapped" by parents on a few different occasions. She had a mom who came to her classroom after school unannounced and she knew the mother was advocating for her child, but without an appointment Sabrina was not prepared and was preparing for lessons. The mother kept saying the same thing over and over and the conversation went longer than it should have gone. On another occasion a father of a child was waiting for Sabrina at her classroom in the morning and expected Sabrina to have a meeting with him at that exact moment. Sabrina said she could have asserted herself more by having the parents schedule an appointment, but she didn't. She mentioned that after those incidents her administration did send out reminders to parents to make appointments with teachers for meetings and extended conversations about their children.

Overall, Sabrina is happy teaching at Evolve Learning Academy. The autonomy and support she receives from her administration with the content she teaches, how she teaches her methods of content delivery, and the extra-curricular classes she teaches are gratifying to her. She also has the ability to teach and chair clubs and organizations that are interesting to her

students such as Science Olympiad, robotics and the Future Health Professionals Organization, this freedom allows her to feel she is supporting her students in a way that is meaningful to her.

After a lengthy process involving her, a few other teachers and with assistance from HSTA her school now recognizes teachers' credentials, credits and professional development hours using the salary scale negotiated by HSTA. She hopes her administration continues to advocate for teachers to their school board so that they can keep teachers longer. Sabrina shared how many of her colleagues chose to leave the school because they could be paid more at traditional schools or other charter schools. Sabrina has no plans to leave her school yet, but is not sure what the future for her is with Evolve Learning Academy. She remains hopeful.

### **Eva**

A wife and mother of two teenage children, Eva is a veteran teacher with 17 years in the Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE). Eva's last 5 years have been with her current school, Envision Charter School. Envision Charter School is a blended K-12 school, where students attend in-person classes three days a week and virtual classes two days a week with a dedicated learning coach to assist on virtual home instruction days. Eva's work is slightly different from a traditional school teacher's work.

In Envision Charter School, Eva works with students and learning coaches to ensure student growth and development. Her work as a teacher in Envision Charter School leads to many more meetings and conferences with parents and "learning coaches." Learning coaches are adults who deliver and assist with students' instruction on their "home" days. The learning coaches are to ensure students are doing their work in the home. Eva's path to education was not direct. Within her 17 years of experience in the DOE not all were in the classroom. Eva's desire

to work with students led her back into the classroom and in her current position as an elementary teacher in an O‘ahu Charter School.

Eva identifies as a Korean woman. She was born in South America, in the country of Colombia and moved to California as a toddler with her dad, mom and older sister. Growing up Eva’s father would talk to her about her college and her future, so she knew from an early age that she would attend college. Her dad had hoped she would attend business school and never hid his thoughts about it. Little did her dad know that he would become an influential part in her choosing to become a teacher and not a business woman.

Eva was raised in California where as a teenager she and her sister would assist their father in his martial arts school. Eva eventually became a martial arts instructor herself. After graduating from high school Eva attended Coronado State University until she transferred to a community college in her sophomore year at the university.

While attending community college she earned credits and gained residency before transferring to University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. While attending University of Hawai‘i Eva spoke of the continued pressure she felt from her father to attend business school. She took business classes to appease him and also to see if it was something she enjoyed. However, she found business classes to be generally uninspiring and could not see herself working in the “business” world.

After graduating from University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa with a degree in Psychology, Eva could not shake the feeling that education was where she ultimately wanted to be. She felt “pulled” to the profession. After some personal reflection she realized that her childhood memory of teaching martial arts in her father’s California studio brought her joy and the feeling that “this is something I could do forever.” Eva knew that she was happiest when she was

teaching children and decided to go back to school and pursue a second degree in education and her Hawai'i Teaching Licensure with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

In the DOE Eva spent her first few years teaching in an elementary classroom. She then spent a few years as a curriculum coordinator after which she was hired by the District Complex Office. In her work at the District Complex she found herself working with principals and staff on new curriculum and development. She thought moving into a curriculum coordinator position and then to the District Complex Office would give her the ability to have an even greater impact on more students, but what she found was that with every move she made out of the classroom she felt as though she was moving further and further away from what drew her to the field of education in the first place, the students.

It was then that a friend of Eva's mentioned how happy he was teaching at a new charter school, Envision Charter School. He later told her they were looking for an elementary teacher and encouraged her to apply. She left the District Complex office to re-enter the classroom as a charter school teacher in an elementary classroom, where she currently teaches.

Eva is a seasoned teacher who knows herself well. She wants to be with her students in the classroom and she wants to do a good job. Eva is aware of the stereotypes that follow her as an Asian woman, stereotypes such as being quiet and non-confrontational. She believes she presents some of these qualities, specifically because she has a quiet disposition. However she said, "I'm not passive quiet, I just take some time to think." Eva prefers to listen and reflect and consider new ideas from multiple perspectives before speaking her mind on a topic. She prides herself on thinking before speaking, and listening to others before giving her opinions and thoughts. When Eva does speak up it is because she has listened, she has thought and she feels called to say something or respond. She does not speak for the sake of speaking; she speaks with



purpose. However, because of this trait Eva thinks she has faced repercussions of this stereotype in her school.

Eva's quiet and thoughtful disposition manifested negatively for her in her Elementary Professional Learning Communities (PLC) meetings. At Eva's school PLC meetings were run by her division administrator who chose a subject and a focus for the semester or school year. During each meeting the administrator would set the agenda and run the meeting. At one point in the school year Eva spoke privately to her administrator explaining her learning and participatory style because she was tired of being called on to respond to questions or new ideas. Eva was subsequently picked-on and continued to be the first to be called on during meetings by the very administrator she confided in. Being called on first and to answer every question posed to the group became a self-deprecating joke she would make ahead of meetings to her peers. Many days it would become actualized during PLC meetings. Eva's colleagues knew of the private conversation and also of her personality and would try to come to her aid during the meetings. However, this treatment left Eva feeling bullied by her administrator who took the knowledge she shared and used it against her in her professional setting.

Eva is a wife and mother of two teenage children. Eva thinks her identity as a mother interfered with her administration's view and treatment of her. Shortly after returning to the classroom from the school closures from the Covid-19 Pandemic Eva spoke of an incident when she needed to leave directly after school one day to take her son to a doctor's appointment. This meant she needed to leave after her students were dismissed from her classroom and 15 minutes before she was officially scheduled to leave. Knowing she would not be able to complete her carline duties Eva made arrangements with her colleagues to cover her carline duties for the afternoon, which was a common practice amongst teachers in her school. When she spoke to her

administrator on campus and explained the situation as well as the arrangements she had made for coverage, her administrator told her, if she had not shared that the appointment was for her son she would have been fine to leave 15 minutes early. However, because she told them the appointment was for her child, and not herself, she would have to take PTO for an hour of missed work even though she was leaving only fifteen minutes early. Though unclear, Eva took this to mean she was being punished for being a mom.

This news caught Eva off guard, she felt she was being punished for speaking of the need to care for her own children. Teachers, support staff, and administrators often take these liberties as long as the work duties are not interrupted or coverage is available. In the end, Eva took the hour of PTO her administrator ordered her to take. However, the effects of this interaction have been long lasting. Eva remains cautious when speaking about her family in the presence of administration and also was less open to having a truthful relationship with them.

Eva recognizes differential treatment between her, her female colleagues and the one male teacher on her elementary team. The administration at her school seems to listen and to respect the one male teacher's voice and opinions more than those of the women on the team. This was evident in the way he was often the one who spoke on behalf of the team. He seemed to have the friendliest relationship with multiple administrators which made it seemingly easier for him to share his and the team's opinions when they differed from administrators. When Eva recounted the interactions of her male colleague and administration she wondered aloud if her administrators truly "treated him better because he was a male, or because he had a charming personality?"

Eva had a community of support in her charter school. She built relationships with her fellow AAPI and Native Hawaiian teachers in her division, saying she felt they had

commonalities that she could relate too. Eva could turn to her colleagues to seek professional advice, talk about her children and also her aging parents, and they seemed to understand and listen to her in a way that made her feel supported. In addition to her colleagues Eva spoke of the community of parents and students whom she felt supported by in her charter school. Eva felt being an Asian woman did affect her relationships with AAPI and Native Hawaiian moms and parents:

I would say I feel like the Asian moms when they see me because you know, with my last name being Smith, they don't realize that I'm Asian until they see me. I feel the Asian moms, when they see me, I don't know how to describe it, they are more open to me during the school year. They are more willing to communicate with me and I feel like they reach out more to me during the school year, rather than in the beginning when they first hear of my name, and I could be totally wrong. But that's just like the feeling I get afterwards.

The support she felt from her charter school's AAPI and Native Hawaiian network of colleagues and families helps Eva stay connected to her school. She has no plans to change schools, and knows she wants to remain in the classroom with students as long as she can.

### **Lauren**

Lauren is a 4th Generation Japanese woman, born and raised on O'ahu. Lauren spoke of feeling culturally connected to Hawai'i more so than to her ethnic culture of Japanese. Her family consists of many ethnicities and when they are together they are what she feels is her culture, a "local" culture.

Lauren did not grow up speaking Japanese or practicing many cultural traditions, with the exception of food, which was prominent during many of her family holidays and celebrations.

Beyond food, Lauren shared the family values instilled in her growing up were taking care of family, being kind, and doing well in school. She mentioned how her family prioritizes school, but did not pressure her to study so hard that she was miserable. They wanted her to do well, but also be happy. It was more about balance in her family. Growing up she remembered wanting to make her family proud, opposed to feeling pressured by her family to do well.

When discussing family values and school Lauren was aware of the Asian stereotype of families putting large amounts of pressure on children to do well in school in order to succeed. She said she never felt any of that type of pressure from her family. Instead, she felt her family encouraged her, her sibling and her cousins to go to school to do something where they would be able to take care of their own families.

Growing up in Hawai'i Lauren felt connected to Hawai'i. She danced hula and had friends from all ethnic backgrounds. As she reflected on her grandparents, she recognized that they were the most culturally connected to their Japanese roots, and as she reflected on the generations after she recognized aloud how each was getting further and further away from their traditional Japanese culture. She found the timing of our conversation interesting because her son was recently asking about his Japanese heritage and language. She hopes to learn more about her Japanese heritage with her son.

Lauren had positive experiences in education throughout her childhood, spending her kindergarten through high school years attending public schools locally on O'ahu. Lauren credits her mother as an inspiration to her becoming a teacher. She watched her mother switch careers from a nine to five job to a position with the after-school program A+. Her mother enjoyed working with children so much she became an Educational Assistant at the school. Lauren knew from a young age she wanted to be a teacher and work with children similarly to her mother.

While in high school she worked after school at a pre-school and continued working there while attending University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. She earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Education and opted to earn additional credits to earn a separate degree in Early Childhood Education.

While earning her degree in Education from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa she completed a student teaching practicum where she was placed in Islands Charter School. During this time she said, “I fell in love with the mission and vision [of the school].” The way they did school felt “different” she saw children engaged in learning, “not sitting at desks all day” and felt a connection to that style of teaching. Upon graduating she was hired at Islands Charter School where she proudly remains a teacher today. The students and the way her school engages with students and curriculum is what Lauren loves about her school. She feeds off her students energy and excitement for learning and a big part of that is in the way her school uniquely delivers instruction.

In Lauren’s tenure at Islands Charter School she has found value in building relationships as part of her professional-self. She values relationships with her students, parents of students, colleagues, and administrators. She has experienced a few administrative changes while a teacher at Islands Charter School and keeps an open mind with each new administrative team. She tries to keep students at the center of her teaching practice regardless of administrative changes. Lauren views relationships as an important part of school dynamics and culture, in her opinion these relationships build trust and honest communication that in the end benefit the students.

Early in Lauren’s career she was aggressively harassed by a male parent. She faced constant emails and classroom confrontations where he would question her professional choices. These interactions made her feel uncomfortable and attacked. At the time, Lauren said she chose not speak up or defend herself, which she attributes partially to her newness to the profession and

perhaps her age. Unsure if her aggressor saw a young Japanese teacher whom he figured was timid and shy, or just a woman in general, Lauren did not turn his treatment of her into an issue. However, upon reflecting on this experience she learned a lot about herself and to find her power and speak up and out for herself. She now makes a conscious effort to speak up for herself and for colleagues who may not have the words or voices to express themselves yet. She mentioned that although this was not a good memory, she views this as a turning point in personal growth. She now feels comfortable speaking up on behalf of herself when the need arises.

When reflecting on herself as a Japanese woman and how that may have played a role in her accepting a position with Islands Charter School, Lauren acknowledges that she does serve many Asian students, both Hawai'i born and also first-generation students here in Hawai'i. She recognizes a reciprocal comfortability with the Asian students she serves and considers that it might be because she too is Asian. Students will often recognize that she looks like them and speak to her in their first language. She has had many interactions where she needs to explain that she is Japanese, but does not speak Japanese. She tries to use these moments to learn more about the student's first language. She believes that it does assist in building relationships, because her students will often teach her new words or phrases in their language.

Lauren places high value in education and credits her family and possibly her Japanese culture for instilling this value in her. She believes the families and students she serves recognize this quality in her as a teacher and plays a part in the positive rapport she has with many of her students and their families. As an Asian woman who took on her husband's last name, who is not Asian, she spoke of an unsaid feeling she perceives from her families when they meet her for the first time and see that she is Asian. She mentioned that the parents do not mention it, but she

does feel what she describes as a sense of subtle happiness or almost a comfortability upon meeting.

When discussing the demographics of the faculty at her school, Lauren said during the Covid-19 Pandemic there seemed to be a high number of teachers and administrators who left Islands Charter School. At the current moment she estimates that half of the staff are from the U.S. continent, a ratio she says is high compared to years past when the majority of faculty were from Hawai'i. Lauren has experienced a number of administrators, both male and female both born and raised in Hawai'i and also from the continental United States. Lauren began her current school year with new administrators and is optimistic about the administrative changes. When Lauren spoke of her colleagues, she noted that she is mindful about how she speaks and the words she chooses, because she wants to be inclusive of her new colleagues and administrators, many of whom have recently moved to Hawai'i.

## CHAPTER 5. RESULTS

The purpose of this inquiry is to illuminate the stories and voices of Asian American, Pacific Islander (AAPI), and Native Hawaiian (NH) women teaching in Hawai‘i charter schools, specifically exploring how the intersections of race, ethnicity and gender impacts the experiences of charter school teachers on O‘ahu. This study examines the experiences of five teachers from four different charter schools on O‘ahu. The women teach in three different types of charter schools, a blended charter school, a conversion charter school and a Hawaiian focused charter school. The women each have taught in their charter school for upward of five years and all with between 8-17 years of teaching experience on O‘ahu. The relevant qualitative data in this chapter was collected through an interview and a vignette authored by the researcher and co-authored by each participant. The participants in this study chose pseudonyms for themselves to protect their identity and for them to feel a connection to the vignettes and throughout the research texts. The intent of this study was to hear the experiences of AAPI and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools. The participants identified themselves as Asian American (AA) or Native Hawaiian. From this point on because there is no representation of Pacific Islanders among my participants, I will refer to the women as Asian American and Native Hawaiian.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the themes that emerged from my analyses of the interview data and vignettes. The interviews focused on two main aspects of participant experiences and their teaching careers: how they came to teach at charter schools in Hawai‘i and how they reflect on their experiences over the course of their careers as framed by their intersectional identities. Additionally, a third focus naturally emerged throughout the interviews: the ways in which the participants found their own solutions to the problems they faced as Asian American and Native Hawaiian women teaching in Hawai‘i charter schools.



## **Becoming Teachers: Entering the Profession Within an Asian American and Native Hawaiian Context**

The women in this study reflected on how they became teachers and how they chose to teach in the Hawai‘i charter school system. When recounting their paths, all participants reflected on the influence of family members, special childhood memories, and the positive hope they have for the children they serve. Charter schools offered the women a way to teach the content in a way that felt authentic to who and how the women felt they were called to teach. The first theme, “Becoming Teachers: Entering the Profession Within an Asian American and Native Hawaiian Context” is broken into three sub-themes, First “Following Family,” where the women share how they were inspired by family when choosing to become teachers. Second “Giving the Kids a Fighting Chance,” discusses the intentional thought processes the participants engaged in when choosing to become a teacher; as well as the ways in which they thought about the children of Hawai‘i, their past students, present students, and future students. The final subsection, “Seeking Autonomy in Charter Schools,” discusses the reasons participants chose to teach in the Hawai‘i charter school system, and at their specific charter schools.

### ***Following Family***

All participants spoke of family members inspiring their decision to enter the profession of education. The women reflected on their childhood, families, and upbringing as playing an influential part in their becoming teachers. As children, the women spent time on school campuses as daughters of parents working in education, helping a father teach martial arts classes in a family studio, and by having parents who chose to instill and openly discuss the value of education with them. The women in these interviews spoke at length about their families and how they were an influential part of their journeys into education and teaching.

When reflecting on how and when she knew she wanted to become a teacher, Lauren mentioned she knew from an early age she wanted to work with children. She said, “I’ve always felt like I’ve always wanted to be a teacher. I have a lot of educators in my family.” She spoke of her mother who worked for many years in a traditional 9-5 job, and eventually began working for the A+ after school program at the elementary school Lauren was attending. When speaking about her mother, she said, “She just really loved working with kids and so she ended up being an EA, and I saw, I saw the joy that it brought her.” Seeing her mother so happy with her career change to an elementary school seemed to have inspired Lauren to also want to work with children and played a particularly strong part in her desire to become a teacher.

Eva fondly recalled memories of her childhood growing up in San Diego, spending countless hours with her dad, a martial arts master saying, “I always took martial arts with him and then when I was about 13, my sister and I started helping my dad out in the schools. So then we would teach the children’s classes with him and become instructors.” Eva reminisced about the experience and shared how she held onto it and was a main reason for her to go back to school and complete a Bachelors in Education after earning her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. She said, “I really look back and enjoyed those times when I was teaching and helping the little kids.”

Sabrina did not grow up thinking she wanted to be a teacher. She shared, “My mom actually was a teacher in San Francisco before she moved to Hawai‘i.” Once Sabrina’s mother settled into her new home in Hawai‘i, Sabrina’s mom had a hard time finding a teaching position. Instead, she switched careers to book-keeping in a school. Sabrina spoke about spending time at her mother’s workplace and with her work friends who were teachers. She said:

Every time that you know, we had to do like an interview with someone about a job you'd like to do, like projects when you're a kid, I always interviewed a teacher, and I think it's because my mom worked at a school, so I had access to other teachers, and so I'd interview them about their jobs.

Sabrina's impression of teaching was not positive. She said, "I was thinking, teaching is boring. So I was like, Oh, they teach the same thing every year, like why would I want to do that?" Although Sabrina was not convinced at the time she wanted to be a teacher, she did share about her mother's role in her own journey to becoming a teacher.

Though neither of Makena's parents were teachers, she shared that her mother placed importance on instilling Hawaiian values and encouraged her to learn about her culture and language saying, "My mom really pursued her Hawaiian culture, and that kind of influenced me and I was more comfortable with it because I danced hula my whole life." Makena spoke of how a big part of the reason she chose to be a teacher was to perpetuate and instill her Hawaiian culture and values in her own teaching practice.

Similarly, Honu spoke of the importance her parents put on education in her childhood and how it played a large role in her becoming a teacher saying:

My parents always told us that we needed to go to school, get good grades, you know, like, go to college...I wanted to make clear like, I think it's all the upbringing that kind of impacts my decision making. And the little doors that had opened, because of that to where I am today.

Honu explicitly described how her family's encouragement and influence played a large role in her becoming a teacher.

### *Giving the Kids a Fighting Chance*

All the women in this study had their minds and intentions focused on the students, helping children, and future generations. This section focuses on the hopes each teacher had to positively impact children, and how they tried to make a difference in their student's lives. When reflecting about their journeys to teaching, the women's narratives often included gravitating towards the children. Even when their journeys took them away from the classroom, the teachers in this study described feeling the pull of their students bringing them back. Importantly, the participants in this study described feeling a desire and responsibility to help the children in their classes, especially those who were underserved.

As one example, Eva began her career as a classroom teacher, but soon moved to a position as a curriculum coordinator. In this role, she worked to assist teachers with planning and the resources to use in their teaching practice. After serving as a curriculum coordinator for a few years she then accepted a position at the District Complex office, where she worked primarily with principals, implementing and training teachers and principals in new programs. After the District Complex office, Eva transitioned back to the classroom as she missed being in the class with the students. Eva said:

...my last position, I was at the complex level, and I just was feeling like I kept moving. Every position that I moved up, I was moving away from the kids...I just felt so out of tune with the classroom not being able to work with kids. And then later, just not even being able to work with the teachers directly.

With each new position Eva could feel herself moving farther away from the students and eventually returned to the classroom where she currently remains as a charter school teacher.

Sabrina completed her student teaching practicum in a Honolulu middle school classroom where the majority of the students were not interested in the daily work or curriculum. She said it, “made me realize how much I wanted to try and help them.” Sabrina found connecting with students, helping them enjoy learning, and understand the content solidified her desire to become a teacher. In a moment of reflecting on her student teaching experience that she described as “tough” Sabrina said:

I think I resisted it. You know, like I kind of knew like, oh this is good...I did you know spend a lot of time that one semester like trying to connect with these students and trying to help them and trying to teach them, like oh, it’s fun to learn this you know and it will be useful to you someday...but I guess I see it as kind of a challenge but I also enjoy it a lot, there’s a lot that comes from it. That is rewarding.

Sabrina’s hesitancy to become a teacher seemed to dissipate when she was able to make connections with students whom she thought were un-engaged. The students seemed to solidify her choice to become a teacher.

Lauren and Honu spoke of having an impact on children’s lives. Lauren said, “I was like, I want to do that when I grow up. I want to be someone that makes a difference. And an impact in you know their lives.” Honu began her career as a before and after school coordinator at a Honolulu Elementary school, and then as an Educational Assistant before becoming a teacher. During her time as an EA in a Special Education classroom she said, “I saw a lot of local kids, whether they are Hawaiian, Micronesian, and just local kids being put in special education class. Not because they had a learning disability because of the behavior.” When she saw this happening it fueled her desire to become an educator and to earn her Bachelor's degree in Education. Honu said:

I wanted to impact that, to make sure like, like those kids had a fighting chance that they need an advocate to, to fight for them to say like, yeah, they have a behavior problem, but they should have an equal chance of getting the education that they have. And I dislike that. They were pushed on the side. Right? They were pushed on the side and you know, for life, then you just you cannot kind of behave and you couldn't relate to me and you cannot stay in this small box, then you're out you will suffer on your own and I and I couldn't see that happening to our local kids. Right and so that's why I got into teaching.

Makena's journey to becoming a teacher was not a linear path. As a teenager she thought she might want to be a teacher, but talked herself out of it by the time she entered college at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. As she continued her college education, she eventually found her thoughts turning towards the children. She spoke of "having an influence on the future generations. I wasn't sure if I was gonna have kids at the time and it just felt like it was kind of doing my part to share." She decided on a career in education as a way to positively contribute to society. All participants spoke of the children as a big part of why they became teachers.

### *Seeking Autonomy in Charter Schools*

All of the teachers in this study gravitated toward charter schools for the autonomy the schools seemed to offer. Interestingly, the Asian American teachers spoke of the autonomy of their teaching practice, as well as what they identified as innovative teaching practices of their particular charter schools. Lauren said, "when I found Islands Charter School and I got to know and experience that education and teaching can look different, that was what really grabbed me." She was captivated by the way her school connected curricular subjects into what her school called integrated thematic units. This appealed to Lauren because as she said, "I just saw it wasn't the kid sitting at a desk. They weren't like whipping out their own workbooks and

everyone's doing, you know, page whatever on this day." Lauren was impressed, "I really hoped that I could get into that school." She wanted to teach children differently.

Eva found Envision Charter School through a male friend who was teaching in the same school. She shared, "my friend Wesley was just sharing that he loved his school. It was amazing that they're going to have an opening for another elementary teacher and that I should apply." Eva had been working at a District Complex area and was wanting to go back to the classroom. She felt the innovative nature of the school's blended model would be a great fit for her.

Sabrina did not specifically choose to teach at Evolve Learning Academy because it was a charter school but was already aware of the relative autonomy the teachers in this school had in terms of curriculum development and deployment as she had attended the same school as a student. As an alumni she felt comfortable with, and knew she aligned with, the curriculum and practices of the school. She said, "I stayed with Evolve Learning Academy because I like the autonomy of you know, being able to teach the way I like and you know, and being able to just be like, if I want to try this." Sabrina believes she can try new ideas in her classroom and begin new clubs with more ease than a traditional school teacher. She spoke at length of a number of clubs she began with her students such as robotics and a club for future health care professionals.

While the Asian American women all spoke of seeking and finding individual autonomy in the classroom at charter schools, both Native Hawaiian teachers chose to teach at charter schools for the autonomy to incorporate Hawaiian culture, values, and language in their curriculum and teaching practices. Both women shared that their charter schools allowed them to openly and freely perpetuate Native Hawaiian values and culture, a latitude that might not be afforded them in traditional public schools.

Honu teaches in a Hawaiian Focused Charter School, and said:

It's more about the kind of education that we're fighting for, you know, the hands on, our history, you know, especially pushing like identity so that they know who they are and where they come from as a foundation...we know that we can build and uplift this generation.

Makena believed teaching in a charter school would allow her to incorporate her cultural values, language, and history into her daily lessons. She said:

I felt like what I was seeing at Evolve Learning Academy was this opportunity to be really culturally aware and to integrate Hawaiian culture into my curriculum, just freely. I didn't feel like there were any constraints, or I didn't feel like I was going to have to tiptoe at all. I felt like it was welcomed and that I had an opportunity to do that and so I think it had a huge impact....and I think it's actually probably one of the big reasons I didn't go private, and teach in the private sector.

Though the women in this study entered the teaching profession because they wanted to work with children and have a positive impact for future generations, they specifically sought out charter schools to teach in what they viewed as non-traditional ways. However, most participants encountered mistreatment based upon racial and gender stereotypes while working at the charter schools and unfortunately found that the autonomous nature of charter schools left them feeling isolated at times, they needed help.

### **Experiencing Race and Gender Mistreatment**

In this section I will discuss the mistreatment participants faced as Asian American and Native Hawaiian women teaching in four different charter schools in Hawai'i. These confrontations were based on the intersections of race, gender, age, and motherhood. In subsection one, "Confronting Stereotypes: Being Quiet(ed)," the women address the Asian



American stereotype of the quiet and soft-spoken Asian woman, their relationship to the stereotype and ways it presented itself in their professional lives as teachers. In subsection two, “Being Accosted,” the women discuss the ways in which their race and gender played a part in their mistreatment by campus administrators, parents, and students. Subsection three, “Being Punished for Being a Mom,” two of the women spoke of the compounding identity of motherhood and their experiences they faced as teachers.

### ***Confronting Stereotypes: Being Quiet(ed)***

Almost every teacher in this study encountered treatment based on the stereotypes at the intersection of race and gender of AAPI and Native Hawaiian women. The encounters occurred at different times in their careers at their charter schools. While there were subtle differences in the impacts of this treatment, nearly every woman discussed having to negotiate expectations and mistreatment based on racialized and gendered stereotypes. The Asian American women were aware of existing stereotypes of Asian women and spoke of actively attempting to overcome and resist these stereotypes while simultaneously acknowledging the ways they embodied them. While neither of the Native Hawaiian women identified personally with the behaviors and worldviews typically assigned to Asian American women, the Native Hawaiian teacher in the non-Hawaiian immersion charter school was nevertheless subjected to negative treatment based on stereotypes of AAPI and Native Hawaiian women.

Of the three participants who identified as Asian American, all addressed the demure, quiet, non-confrontational stereotypes of Asian American women. Each described ways in which they both embody and simultaneously resist this stereotype and how the duality of both embodying and resisting was a source of frustration. All the women expressed frustration with

the stereotype itself and frustration when their own behaviors seemed to align with the stereotypes and served as a source of their mistreatment. Eva said:

...you know Asians are typically thought of as more like very quiet and obedient, you know. Sometimes I get irritated by myself that I've been very quiet, but I don't mean it as like quiet obedient. I'm more like quiet reflective person. But sometimes, like with previous admin, I feel like not that she took advantage of it, but it was almost, I feel like she knew that about me and she almost like picked on me for that.

Despite having shared with her administrator that she was a quiet person, an administrator consistently called on Eva to speak first in meetings. This made Eva feel uncomfortable and she perceived the administrator's actions as intentionally designed to make her uncomfortable.

Similarly, Sabrina described herself as being "shy and quiet," a stereotype she described as being ascribed to AA women. She long recognized this aspect in herself, though unsure if it is simply an individual trait or connected to aspects of her Asian American culture, saying, "I think I grew up kind of being a quieter person, I still back down kind of quickly, and I know that's sort of like an Asian trait, too, right? But I don't know if it's necessarily because I'm Asian."

Though she did not consciously ascribe her own quiet nature to her Asian culture, Sabrina carried the narrative of herself as a "quiet" person into her professional career.

In an attempt to counter the way she thought about herself as a quiet person, Sabrina would intentionally speak up in department meetings, to share her professional thoughts and opinions. One such attempt was when Sabrina attempted to have her department align their coursework to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), the Science standards adopted by Hawai'i and other states in the United States. Sabrina proposed her department "... look at the continuum of the NGSS topics grade level wise, [as] it gets brought up again every year." Despite her efforts to

review and align coursework to the NGSS standards, her colleagues ignored her suggestions year after year and the coursework continued to remain unlinked to the standards.

When Sabrina's colleagues dismissed her suggestions for bettering the education they provided to students, it left her feeling frustrated and ignored. As a result, she made it a practice to, "choose [her] battles" when interacting with her department colleagues, backing off and quieting herself when she perceived that she would not be heard: "I find that happens like, I'll say something...and it's like okay, what about this? And I try it a different way. And then after that, I'm just like, okay, never mind, it's just not worth trying to fight for it."

Despite wanting to be heard by her colleagues and trying to overcome her perceptions of herself as a quiet person, Sabrina found herself being dismissed and overlooked in her department meetings. She wondered aloud if it was because she was an Asian American woman, or because she was truly too quiet. Was she quieting herself or were her colleagues quieting her by ignoring her? It seems Sabrina overcame her younger, quieter self because she spoke up during department meetings, even repeating herself multiple times when needed. However, she found herself continually being ignored or talked over by her colleagues, which in turn quieted her. Although she was speaking up, the stereotype of the quiet Asian was following her, even when she tried to confront it.

Just as Sabrina initially expressed a remote association between her own behaviors and her Asian American cultural traits, Lauren also initially presented herself as removed from her Japanese American culture. She described her own cultural affiliation with a more generalized "local" Hawai'i culture. Lauren said, "I'm fourth-generation Japanese American...I don't necessarily identify with my Japanese culture...within my family we have so many different ethnicities and backgrounds, that when I think about it, I'm like, it's a local thing." Although

Lauren spoke of not identifying strongly with her Japanese ethnicity, she does believe that parents of her students have treated her, “aggressively” due to the intersection of her age, gender and ethnicity. She described having her teaching practices questioned and challenged, receiving:

...constant emails or coming to visit like, questioning why I was doing something or like maybe you should do this, or why it was always you know, it didn't come from a place of to me I didn't feel like it was a place, a place of caring and compassion...it felt like an attack all the time, like you're not doing this, you could be doing this instead.

Although she does not identify strongly with her Japanese heritage, she does see how existing stereotypes about her ethnicity might embolden others to mistreat her on the assumption that she would be quiet: “If they're thinking ‘Oh, typical...Japanese, or you're quiet, timid, you know like kind of that more shy you're not gonna say,’ then perhaps maybe they thought that gave them permission to speak to me in that way.”

Lauren came to the conclusion that being a young, Asian woman might have played a part in the mistreatment she experienced when the father of a student confronted her and attempted to direct and correct her teaching practice. Eva is aware of her quiet presence and how the stereotype affected her as illustrated in her quote above about the assumption that Asians are quiet and obedient. With this self-awareness, Eva wants to speak up more, “I do want to try and improve.” Eva attends staff meetings by being present, actively taking notes and thinking about what is being said, and what her thoughts are on the agenda. Because of Eva's knowledge about this stereotype, she tries to combat it by participating and speaking up even when she may not want to or feel completely comfortable doing so.

Similarly, Sabrina, a self-professed “quiet person,” has made frequent attempts to overcome the quiet and timid Asian stereotype with her colleagues, saying “...and sometimes,

even if I suggest things sometimes, I don't know if I'm not vocal enough about it, but I feel like they're like, oh yeah, that's a good idea. And we just never do it." Other times, Sabrina said:

I would say something, and then like, because I kind of talked really soft, they either didn't hear me or they weren't paying attention...and then I would say it again, like try it again, right? Like I don't want to give up easily, like what about this? And then again nobody heard me and then sometimes somebody else would say the same thing I said...and they'd be like, that's such a good idea. And I would be like, did anybody hear me?

Even as Sabrina made conscious attempts to be heard, by repeating herself in a louder voice she was still ignored or overlooked. It was hard for Sabrina to hear her colleagues say the same or similar ideas of hers and be heard. Even as Sabrina tried and tried again to be heard, she was ignored. The stereotype she was actively trying to overcome was following her regardless of her persistence. The quiet stereotype was being put on her even though she was trying to counter it.

Interestingly, though Makena identifies more strongly with her Native Hawaiian heritage, she was silenced by the same stereotypes of Asian American women by a school administrator at the blended charter school where she has taught for the past 5 years. She said:

Administration has made comments to me I think because of the way I look, you know, they've told me things like well, 'you should harness your Asian side more'...it's just so terribly inappropriate because I don't know what that means, you know in a professional setting? And how am I supposed to act, if that means I should be more submissive or I'm being too outspoken?

Makena was surprised to hear her administrator, a white male around the same age as her, tell her to embody a stereotype. This was especially upsetting to Makena because although she acknowledges her ethnicities as Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Hawaiian, and Italian she said, “I didn’t identify too much with my Asian American side growing up.” As Makena strongly identified as a Native Hawaiian woman, her administrator’s admonishment for not presenting the quiet, non-confrontational Asian woman stereotypes shocked her for several reasons.

First, this incident clearly revealed that her administrator held this stereotype of Asian American women and used it as a tool to actively silence her. Secondly, even though she did not identify as an Asian American woman, she did start to question herself, wondering if she was, in fact, being too loud or aggressive, a stereotype that has been assigned to Native Hawaiian women. These comments made Makena question herself, causing her to rethink how she presented herself professionally and ultimately stifled her voice, and in the end, quieted her.

Sabrina was also confronted with Asian stereotypes and microaggressions in her school from colleagues that effectively quieted her. Although Sabrina said she was unsure if her interactions were race/ethnicity based, she said, “I don’t know if it’s my race or ethnicity, specifically, but sometimes I don’t feel like the department necessarily is as science minded as I am.” Sabrina insisted she and her colleagues label all chemicals in the stockroom for safety and to teach proper science research protocols. When speaking to her colleague Sabrina said, “I mentioned how I did research and she goes, that’s totally how I see you like I see you as a scientist. You know, like doing research and all that kind of stuff, more so than like a teacher.” As Sabrina stated, she was unsure if this encounter was related to Asian stereotypes, however it could align with the Asian stereotype of the high-achieving Asian and Model Minority Myth. The nature of microaggressions described by Nittle (2019) as being subtle racism, this interaction

does seem fit both the stereotype of the Model Minority and as a microaggression. Ultimately Sabrina's colleagues used these microaggressions as a way to dismiss her ideas and undercut any power she might have had to lead the department in changing their practices or moving in a new direction.

### ***Being Accosted***

In addition to confronting the stereotype of the quiet and demure Asian woman, the women in this study were also confronted with more serious mistreatment, aggressions and microaggressions from students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. As a teacher in a blended charter school, Makena is accustomed to working closely and regularly with parents, but has noticed a few fathers who have been uncomfortable with her candor. She shared, "I felt a lot of aggression from the fathers," mentioning that some fathers were not used to speaking with a woman who spoke professionally and had tough conversations about their child's academic growth, not in a disrespectful manner, but in a way that was direct and to the point. When meeting with these fathers along with her male administrator, Makena felt like she was on the outside of the conversation saying:

I have a male administrator who would back down to these fathers in that setting and not, not have my back or not defend you know the educational side of it. He very much played the buddy with the dad or kind of took this role where I was left on the outside by myself with the student. That's happened multiple times. And I think, you know, unfortunately, that does have to do with my gender. I don't know if that would have happened if I was my male counterpart.

Makena invited her administrator to a meeting to have an ally. Instead she was excluded in her parent-teacher meeting when the two white males in the room bonded, and she was left on

her own to speak on behalf of her student's needs. She quickly recognized how the interplay of race and gender empowered the two men to make decisions together without taking her input into consideration. As a result, she was forced to listen to the father and her administrator make a plan without her and was then expected to enact it.

Sabrina was also mistreated in her charter school by parents, students and colleagues and experienced disrespect and intimidation. Identifying ethnically as Japanese and Chinese, Sabrina attributed her small stature to her gender, saying, "being a woman and being kind of smaller, I'm kind of short and little." She wondered if her gender and physical appearance played a part in the treatment she received in her school. On multiple occasions parents waited outside Sabrina's classroom in the morning or followed her into her classroom uninvited to discuss their child's progress and grades, taking her attention away from the rest of the students and interrupting her morning class routine. Parents would also walk into her classroom after school without an appointment. She said, "The parents had to be told not to enter a teacher's classroom because it happened to me twice. Two different parents...I felt trapped." She said, "Make an appointment with me, don't like, accost me in my classroom... it was a little bit disturbing sometimes." Sabrina mentioned how she was unsure if parents would have treated her the same if she was male. The intersection of race and gender seem to be a part of the mistreatment she faced from a few parents.

In addition to parents trapping her at inopportune times, Sabrina also experienced mistreatment from students. She recalled how a group of students would walk by her and a few other teachers' classrooms and yell obscenities. She said, "they would walk by my room, and they'd be like, 'Miss Nishi, fuck you!' like, like that, or like to another teacher." She described the students as a group of boy athletes at her school. She recalled that they were targeting a small



number of women teachers and also yelled a racial profanity towards a Hispanic male teacher. Though Sabrina said the student behavior was not racially motivated or based on gender, the stories seem to indicate a gendered and racial component because of who was targeted and what was said. When she reported the incident to her administrators, she was told there was nothing they could do because she did not know which student(s) were yelling at her. The yelling kept on for a few weeks. For her to continue working and to cope with the targeted aggression, she began closing her door and turning off the lights in her classroom when she needed to get work done. Working in the dark made it appear that she was not in her classroom so the group of students targeting her would stop harassing her.

### ***Being Punished for Being a Mom***

In addition to being confronted by Asian American stereotypes, two of the women spoke of their compounding identities as mothers and described how motherhood served as a source of conflict with their administration. When Eva reached out to her administrator to ask about missing the after-school carline duty in order to take her son to a doctor's appointment, she was met with punitive requirements and required to use her Paid Time Off (PTO) leave to cover the 15 minutes. Leaving a few minutes early was a common practice at her school and generally approved by administration as long as duties could be covered by another teacher.

Eva secured coverage with her colleagues then spoke to her administrator about leaving early. Though Eva expected her administrator to simply okay the changes, Eva was told that because she was truthful about the reason for her need to leave, that her informal coverage changes would not suffice. Eva said, "If I didn't share that information, then it would have been fine, but because of the fact that I said I had to take my son to the doctor's that I would have to take PTO." Eva continued, "I feel like my role as a mother, right, that affected me because it

interfered with, I would have to leave work early.” Eva felt she was being punished for asking to leave work early for her child. When she reached out to her administrator, she felt her administrator specifically denied her request and treated her differently than some of her peers because she was a mother. Eva took her PTO and said she now thinks twice before being so open with her administration. Eva is already a self-proclaimed quiet person. This experience made Eva feel that speaking up and attempting to communicate with her administrator was pointless and reinforced to Eva that staying quiet was better for her professionally because it came with less judgment.

Similar to Eva’s experience, Makena also described the compounding intersection of being an AAPI and Native Hawaiian woman and a mother and how that negatively impacted her experience as a charter school teacher. She was overlooked for professional development opportunities because her administration made the assumption she would not want them or could not fulfill the requirements because she was a mother. She said:

I feel that motherhood has put me in a box. You know, I’ve had opportunities that were taken away from me or not available to me because I’m a mom. Because I said no or turned down an opportunity in the past, I was automatically kind of like you know, on the blacklist for the next opportunity.

For Makena, the mistreatment of being a mother was especially noticeable during the initial school shut down when Covid-19 first closed schools around the world. Like families everywhere, Makena was home with her two young children and her husband who is also a teacher. After teaching virtually and feeling disconnected from her own children and helpless because they also needed her assistance to navigate online school, she worked out a plan with her administration to take one day off a week to help her children in their own online schooling.

She continued teaching and attending meetings virtually on the other four days. Initially Makena felt grateful that her administration was open to working with her and felt confident that she could fulfill both her teaching and mothering roles given the accommodations. However, Makena soon felt the repercussions of her request when she was denied professional development opportunities by her administrators:

I was in a Teacher Leader Cohort, and I did it throughout the (Covid year) time. At the end of the cohort there was another cohort that popped up for the following year which was an RTI (response to intervention) cohort...and I was interested in it...we later received an email saying, 'hey can you let me know if you're, if you want to do it?' So, I did, and I emailed them and the response from Admin was, 'No'...I got an email back saying, 'no, you're clearly too busy,' and I had a lot going on as a mother and with my family and that I should focus on that.

Instead of Makena's administration respecting her request and the arrangement they had worked out together, she realized her administration saw her mothering as a deficit that should preclude her from participating in professional development which would in turn stop her access to professional development and growth opportunities. Her administration was gatekeeping professional development. What she thought was a mutually agreed upon temporary solution to help her navigate the global pandemic as a working mother was instead used to cut her off from participating in furthering her continuing professional development. She said:

I feel like I was punished for it. And so I missed that opportunity. And for the remainder of that year, I didn't do any professional development and I feel like I should have said, I feel like I should have fought it you know now; but I think I was really shocked and kind of just taken back a little by the decision.

At that moment Makena did not know who to turn to, because she had asked for one day a week off during the Pandemic and was honest with her administration about why she wanted to take the time off. She also knew it was within her administrators' rights to deny her access to the professional development opportunity in their selection of the cohort.

For Makena and other teachers, being kept out of professional development can prohibit the learning of new advances and practices in education that would support student learning. Being denied access to professional development can also hinder teachers from advancing their careers and affect their earning potential, as professional development opportunities allow teachers to earn credits which are then used to determine pay increases according to the union-approved reclassification matrix. For Makena in particular, being punished for being a mom did indeed have longer-term ramifications. She did not participate or enroll in any school-sponsored professional development activities for an entire year. In fact, she no longer plans to apply for any professional development activities through her school for fear of being denied again. Instead, she plans to do professional development through the state Department of Education where the selection process is much more anonymous, and her motherhood status will remain unknown (PDE3).

The women in this study encountered much mistreatment while working at their respective charter schools. When confronting and being confronted by aggressive and microaggressive hostilities, the women were not always able to find help from their administrators who, at times, were key perpetrators. The women in this study coped with the adversity by trying to solve their own problems.

## **Making Their Own Solutions**

The participants in this study confronted mistreatment based on the intersection of race and gender in their own fashion. While the women were not directly confrontational, they exercised agency and found mechanisms to survive. These mechanisms included finding ways to have their concerns heard as well as creating communities to serve as mutual support systems. In the first subtheme of this section, “Finding a Voice,” the women described finding ways to have their voices and concerns heard. Sometimes they spoke up and voiced their concerns more frequently and repeatedly, sometimes they found the voices of others would be more likely heard and respected, these voices include male colleagues and their union. In the second subtheme, “Creating Communities,” the women describe the communities they created as their own support systems within their individual charter schools. These communities often included fellow AAPI and Native Hawaiian teachers, colleagues, and parents of students.

### ***Finding a Voice***

Finding themselves being both quiet and quieted, the women in this study described finding ways to be heard. Sometimes this meant raising their own voices a bit louder, and sometimes they sought out allies from people whose voices were more likely to be heard. Lauren found, after an aggressive confrontation, that she was more willing to speak up, and she began using her voice for herself and for colleagues in her charter school. Considering some hostility, she encountered early in career as a teacher at Islands Charter School, she said:

...that really affected me, obviously to this day, you know when I think back...I think maybe that just helped me so that if I felt attacked...I was able to be like, upfront from the very beginning, instead of being like, okay okay...not that I'm being aggressive back, but just to stand and be like, hey, this is not okay.

As part of Lauren's decision to speak up more she took on the role of Grade Level Chair (GLC), a position that meets regularly with administrators and the grade level teachers at her school to have her voice heard. She was able to use her experience and the relationships she built as GLC to actively step in when she witnessed an administrator talking in a tone that did not sit well with her, saying, "I was able to share my experience and be able to speak up for somebody else that maybe wasn't in that position yet."

Lauren's solution to being treated aggressively by a parent was choosing to be more active in her school, building relationships with administrators and colleagues as GLC. Because of these relationships she was able to communicate to her administrator, "Hey, I noticed this, and you know, that made me feel uncomfortable, and you know maybe that wasn't the right way to handle it." Lauren used her voice to elevate others as a solution to the aggressions she faced as a young teacher.

Makena noted her voice often went unheard. Her male co-teaching partner took notice and the two began to strategize the best ways to have her concerns addressed. She said:

I also have experienced, you know, my voice and my position, how it's not valued the same by administration as my male counterparts. You know, I had a partner, I was team teaching for a year, and it was a joke and not a joke, but it was definitely noticed that he would bring up things to administrators and it would be held in a very different way than what I was saying and bringing up. And we had to use that strategically. I didn't like that because the, you know, the why behind that is really terrible. You know the reason we're having to do that is because his voice carries a weight heavier than mine.

Makena and her partner worked together to ensure Makena's ideas and thoughts were heard even though it was her male colleague's voice sharing them and not her. It took a little creativity, but

together Makena and her male ally made it happen. Makena's description of this process as a "joke but not a joke" seems to indicate both her frustration with the dynamic and her exasperation in needing to employ this work-around.

Eva also shared a similar experience about using a male colleague to speak on behalf of her, saying, "When Chad was there, he was definitely the voice that shared a lot of our thoughts and concerns....and it could, I don't know if it was because he was a male, or if you know admin really liked him." Eva's male colleague's voice seemed to be valued. Eva noticed that having Chad speak on behalf of her and her team kept the conversation open and dialogue between administrators and teachers flowing. Both women spoke of a male speaking their ideas and giving their ideas a voice, even though it was not theirs.

In addition to the women finding allies in male colleagues, sometimes, it took an organization such as HSTA to speak on their behalf. Sabrina's charter school did not recognize horizontal class movement for teachers to earn raises as they do in traditional public schools and in other charter schools in Hawai'i. When Sabrina inquired about Professional Development (PD) credits, she was told by the administration she could earn them, but could not apply them towards reclassifying herself for higher pay. After multiple attempts to have her school board agree to recognize PD credits, Sabrina was confused why her administrators did not support teachers to earn reclassification credits for pay increases. Sabrina said, "We had to work together as you know, like with the union and with our union representatives to get that done." With the support of HSTA, Sabrina's school eventually began recognizing the credits teachers earned and teachers could apply for reclassification and pay increases as outlined in the HSTA Master Agreement for public school teachers.

HSTA spoke up on behalf of Sabrina when her voice was not enough to convince her administrators and school board that she should be paid using the same compensation matrix other charter school teachers and Hawai'i DOE teachers use. The women in this study became adept at politically navigating their quieted voices in their charter schools. As part of their coping and navigating strategies they needed to find people to ally with to ensure their voices were represented in their schools.

### *Creating Community*

The women in this study spoke about creating communities within each of their charter schools with fellow AAPI and Native Hawaiian colleagues, parents, and students. The communities they created for themselves provided spaces the women felt connected to. When the women spoke of these connections and relationships, they spoke with smiles on their faces and with ease in their voices. They were their safe spaces.

Eva's relationships with her fellow AAPI and Native Hawaiian colleagues were meaningful, saying, "It was a positive at our charter school, especially in our division." Eva worked in a K-12 charter school and was speaking about her elementary division. In her school the elementary division was primarily women, the majority of teachers being AAPI and Native Hawaiian. Having fellow AAPI and Native Hawaiian teachers gave Eva a place to turn when she experienced negative stereotypes or had negative interactions with her families or her administration. She continued, "I feel like I can easily share and speak to them about experiences or when I need to vent, or talk or need professional advice." Eva sought out these colleagues because she felt they could relate to her stories and upbringing. They were understanding and gave advice that made sense to her. Eva built a community for herself within her charter school.



When reflecting on her relationships with parents and families, Lauren shared that her married last name is “Spanish or Portuguese.” Upon meeting AAPI and Native Hawaiian parents for the first time, she spoke of feeling the underlying happiness and ease they emitted. She said, “...being Asian...my last name is Cruz, then when they see me in person, they’re like, oh, there’s almost a sense, you know, of feeling like there’s more of like, oh, okay we have a connection kind of thing...”

Lauren felt once the parents met her, they relaxed a little and the conversations were often more fluid. Lauren’s school has a high population of Japanese families who are often new to the islands. “We’re both Japanese...we’re raised differently too, right? Theirs is more of a traditional Japanese upbringing versus mine is more of that local Japanese upbringing, but yet you know there’s commonalities. I think the parents feel comfortable.”

Lauren interprets the connection she feels as potentially related to her own ethnic identity as a Japanese woman. The parents and students would often try to teach her Japanese words and phrases and she would happily oblige. Making the effort to learn about her families’ cultures and language strengthened her relationships with the students. In this way, Lauren used ethnic identity and cultural similarities to make connections and build community at her school.

Eva spoke of a similar experience to Lauren regarding interactions with families, sharing:

With my name being Smith, they do not realize that I’m Asian until they see me, and I feel like the Asian moms, when they see me, I don’t know how to describe it, they are more open after that. They are more willing to communicate with me and I feel like they reach out more to me during the school year.

Similar to Lauren’s experience, Eva’s perception was AAPI and Native Hawaiian mothers would let their guard down after meeting her and she experienced this with a number of families. She

spoke about a particular family. “In the beginning, she wasn’t as open...afterwards when she knew I was Asian, and especially when she found out I was Korean. Then she was like, talking to me more and even sharing more personal things with me.” Eva went on to mention a number of parents who she felt went out of their way to engage with her and converse with her more than average parents, all of whom were AAPI and Native Hawaiian. Eva enjoyed the personal connections she felt with her families. She felt appreciated and valued as a teacher and a professional.

The women in this study also thought their students related to them because they looked like them. Sabrina mentioned that teaching in Hawai‘i, “I think that maybe a lot of the students because they are Asian American also can identify with me as a teacher because I look like them.” Sabrina also mentioned that she did try to reach out to her students who tended to be shy because she also identified as a shy student and person, saying, “I definitely try to reach out to those shy students, because I know what it’s like to have been like that.” She enjoys encouraging her shy students to speak up more and to try and participate even though she knew it was difficult for them. Sabrina acknowledges that she thinks her students can identify with her because of her race and gender and she can challenge them to challenge themselves because she comes from a place of understanding and relating.

Honu’s experiences in her charter school were unique when compared to other participants. Honu teaches in a charter school different from the other charter schools in this research. She teaches in a Hawaiian Focused Charter School and did not share racial, ethnic, or gendered stereotypes throughout her entire interview. Her stories were centered around community and relationships. Honu spoke of the community she is a part of at her charter school.

It is a community she shares with her administrators, colleagues, parents, students, and neighbors.

Honu shared an example of what she loves about her charter school community. On an extremely rainy day in the early days of her charter school's existence, classrooms began to flood. Classroom instruction needed to be paused to redirect water out of classrooms. In what seemed like a moment, the entire school was helping to save the classrooms. Students began helping, her administrators stopped what they were doing to help, the office staff started to help, and parents began showing up to campus to assist during the school day to assist in redirecting water.

Honu shared this story of her school community coming together and working together to save the school as an example of what she loves about her school. The feeling of community and everyone doing their part. This story is one of many examples Honu shared about her experience teaching in her Hawaiian Focused Charter School. Her experience seems to be one where the members of her school and the families come together for the students and the school with the purpose of teaching students and perpetuating Hawaiian culture, values and language. Honu feels supported, uplifted, encouraged, and valued as a teacher in her school.

## **Summary**

Chapter five presented the findings from interviews and co-authored vignettes with five AAPI and Native Hawaiian women teaching in four different charter schools on O'ahu. The participants in this study taught in three different types of charter schools. Two of the women are teachers in a blended school, where the students attend classes three days a week for classroom instruction and two days a week attending virtual classes and receiving at home instruction with a designated learning coach, often a mother or father. One participant is a teacher at a conversion

charter school, formerly a public elementary school, turned charter school. A fourth participant is a teacher at a Hawaiian Focused Charter School, and a 5th participant, is a teacher at a conversion charter school in a K-12 school. The women teach elementary through high school.

When considering how the intersection of race and gender illuminates the experiences of Asian American and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools in Hawai‘i, the qualitative data yielded three significant themes. In the theme titled, “Becoming Teachers: Entering the Profession Within an AAPI and Native Hawaiian Context,” participants in this section reflected on childhood experiences and the positive impact they hoped to have on students past, present, and future. In the theme, “Experiencing Race and Gender Mistreatment,” participants were self aware about the stereotypes surrounding their race and gender as well as the ways they embody and present the stereotypes in themselves. The women spoke of actively working on defying those stereotypes, sometimes successfully and sometimes unsuccessfully. Facing stereotypes, mistreatment, and microaggressions was part of the ways the women navigated their schools. In the final theme, “Making Their Own Solutions,” the women thoughtfully decided when to push back, by finding allies within their schools who would help carry their voices when they hit a dead end or creating safe spaces for themselves to carry on with the work they set-out to do. The Native Hawaiian woman teaching in a Hawaiian Focused charter school was the one teacher who did not speak of stereotypes or being accosted. She spoke of the school community she was a part of and contributed too and relationships between all members of her school community. In the final chapter, the implications of study are discussed.

## **CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This final chapter provides a summary and discussion of the data gathered in the study. I begin by restating the research question of this study. I then discuss the findings of this study in relation to existing literature and conclude with implications for educational practices, limitations of this study and future research.

### **The Experiences of American and Native Hawaiian Women Teaching in Hawai‘i Charter Schools**

The purpose of this study was to illuminate the stories and voices of Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women teaching in Hawai‘i Charter Schools, specifically exploring how the intersection of race and gender impacted the experiences of charter school teachers on O‘ahu. This study began with the research question: How does the intersection of race and gender illuminate and inform the experiences of Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools in Hawai‘i? Through interviews and co-authored vignettes, five Asian American and Native Hawaiian teachers were asked to focus on their intersectional identities and how these shaped their choice to work in a charter school and their experiences while teaching there.

Each woman was interviewed through Zoom. The interviews were initially structured into two main sections: 1) how the participants came to teach at charter schools in Hawai‘i and 2) an examination of their experiences over the course of their careers. Over the course of the interviews, a third section emerged that encompassed the ways in which the teachers enacted racial and gendered solutions to navigate racialized and gendered mistreatment.

As noted in previous studies of teachers in the U.S., the AAPI and Native Hawaiian charter school teachers in this study are committed to improving the lives of their students. As Asian

American and Native Hawaiian charter school teachers in Hawai'i the women did not always think about their race as a cause of the treatment they received, however, many of the women did end up discussing the racial stereotypes they believed followed them into their schools. The teachers in this study revealed that there is uncertainty about the ways they are treated. The women seem unsure if their treatment was racially based, gender based, or part of their job.

### **The Development of Asian American and Native Hawaiian Women Educators**

All of the women of this study described how they respected and admired the way their parents were involved with their homes and ethnic and cultural communities and wished to emulate this in their own careers. All participants in this study credited their families as a significant part of their decision to pursue teaching as a career and only one of the six participants described parental resistance or discouragement.

In Asian cultures, the family unit is held in especially high regard and emphasized (Lee & Mock, 2005). It comes as no surprise that the women in this study admired their families and wished to emulate them. Though none of their parents had careers in education, all of the women in this study felt that becoming a teacher would honor and perpetuate their parents' values and commitments to community. Previous studies conducted on the U.S. continent have found that AAPI and Native Hawaiian families frequently discourage their children from entering the teaching profession. In their meta-analysis of studies conducted with AAPI teachers, Kim and Cooc (2020), found that families often serve as a barrier to recruitment and retention. They attributed this to the perceived low status of the teaching profession within the AAPI community. According to Kim and Cooc (2020), studies of AAPI teachers commonly found that teachers were discouraged from entering and staying in the profession due to their parents' perceptions of teaching as having a "lack of prestige and low pay" (Kim & Cooc, 2020, p. 206).

In this study, only one of the five teachers mentioned being discouraged by their parents to enter the teaching profession. This may suggest a different experience for Asian American and Native Hawaiian women entering the teaching profession in Hawai‘i in which teaching may not be viewed as an undesirable profession in Asian American and Native Hawaiian communities. Given the historical context of Hawai‘i’s plantation economy and the long history of AAPI and Native Hawaiian women participating in the labor workforce, pursuing what is considered a semi-professional job may not be considered as undesirable in Hawai‘i as on the continent. In spite of this, teacher pay in Hawai‘i remains the lowest in the nation when adjusted for cost of living, indicating the lack of prestige and social equity (McCann, 2022).

The teachers in this study all emphasized how helping the children of Hawai‘i played a large role in their decisions to enter the teaching profession. Each teacher hoped to make a difference in their students’ lives and found that the classroom offered the best opportunity for this. In fact, one teacher described leaving the classroom to advance her career, but later returned to the classroom to make a difference directly with the students.

This finding aligns with other studies of why teachers choose their profession. Moss (2020) found that although the current climate for teachers in the United States is poor, teachers choose the occupation out of altruism. According to Moss (2020), teachers often possess a desire to help society and consider classroom teaching as their means of doing so. According to Moss (2020), teachers choose this profession despite knowing that a career in education is often looked down upon by the public and demeaned by politicians, concluding that teachers teach for altruistic reasons. For the women in this study, “Giving the Kids a Fighting Chance,” aligns with the altruism described by Moss (2020).

It is important to note that for the Native Hawaiian teachers in this study, “Giving the Kids a Fighting Chance” held special and significant meaning. For these women, “Giving the Kids a Fighting Chance” through teaching meant protecting, honoring and perpetuating their Native Hawaiian culture within a social institution that once worked to exterminate it (HIDOE, n.d.). Education in Hawai‘i is noteworthy because public schooling was enacted by King Kamehameha III in 1840 and is said to be the oldest system of education “west of the Mississippi” (HIDOE, n.d.). After the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, by 1896 the Hawaiian Language was banned in all public schools and remained in effect until 1978 when the state’s constitutional convention amended the state constitution to include the study of Hawaiian culture, language, and history in public education (HIDOE, n.d.).

Native Hawaiian teachers in this study saw the classroom as a place where they would be able to teach from a place of authenticity by including Native Hawaiian culture, history and language into their teaching practices. The women also mentioned paying particular attention to their Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students who they witnessed being “left behind” in schools. They recognize this as part of the ongoing effects of colonization and choose to teach in order to preserve, protect their people, culture, and nation in their colonized homeland.

Incorporating Native Hawaiian values and cultural practices was a way for participants to ensure they were giving their students a fighting chance to thrive in school and in their futures. Other studies of Native Hawaiian teachers have identified similar results. Two studies of teachers born and raised on the Leeward Coast of O‘ahu revealed a strong desire to give back to the communities in which they were raised and continued to be a part of (Kawakami et al., 2011).

The Asian American and Native Hawaiian women in this study all chose to teach despite the lack of prestige and low compensation of the career path. Women in this study were driven



by the hopes of raising their students. This was especially salient for the Native Hawaiian teachers as they chose to teach in a charter school specifically to perpetuate their culture, language, and values.

Each teacher in this study described being motivated to teach in charter schools because of their perceptions of charter schools as doing things different and better than traditional public schools and offering a level of autonomy that traditional public schools do not. Though identified as an important and desirable characteristic of an ideal teaching experience, having autonomy took on several different meanings for the study participants. For some, exercising autonomy meant having the opportunity to choose their curriculum and classroom practices and unit topics. For others, it meant that the school itself would be able to have a greater say in the direction of the education it provided outside of the DOE mandated, prescriptions and requirements. For the Native Hawaiian teachers, having autonomy meant having the freedom to incorporate their culture, values, and language into their teaching practices.

Despite the teachers in this study being drawn to charter schools by the promise of autonomy, it is not clear whether charter schools do, in fact, offer this independence to teachers. Several studies have noted that the autonomy and flexibility charter schools can have to organize and structure themselves and have identified the potential for teachers to innovate in curriculum and instructional practices (Bulkley & Fisher, 2002; Crawford, 2001; Oberfield, 2016). In spite of the institutional autonomy and flexibility, however, there is little data on whether public charter school teachers are actually afforded greater autonomy or are held more accountable in comparison to their traditional public-school counterparts (Oberfield, 2016). In this study, the teachers who were initially attracted to charter schools by the perceived high levels of individual

autonomy, often found that the reputed autonomous nature of charter schools often led to their facing isolation when confronting racial and gender mistreatment.

Microaggressions are defined as “brief, everyday exchanges that send disparaging messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group,” (Sue et al., 2009, p. 72). There are often subtle, unintentional, indirect and vague forms of racism that can often be unknowingly held and maintained by well-intentioned white Americans. Furthermore, people who hold multiple or intersecting identities are vulnerable to multiple forms of microaggressions (Endo, 2015). When considering stereotypes for AAPI and Native Hawaiian women, AAPI and Native Hawaiian women are often stereotyped to embody a hyper feminine quality, to be demure and opposite to the idea of white feminism (Azhar et. al., 2021) which can be described as “lovingly, knowingly ignorant about women of color and their experiences” (Ortega, 2006, p. 62). This stereotype was projected onto the majority of the women in this study and informed their experiences of racialized and gendered mistreatment.

As participants described encountering and grappling with negative experiences based on the intersections of race and gender at their respective schools. This theme was further divided into subthemes, “Being Quietened,” “Being Accosted,” “Facing Isolation,” and “Being Punished for Being a Mom.” In addition to the analytical themes. A pattern in the narrative regarding mistreatment at the intersection of race and gender emerged among the Asian American women in which they grappled with the relationship between their values and behaviors and their race and identity.

Throughout the interviews, all of the women were easily able to identify how gender played a role in their mistreatment, but the Asian American women only came to consider how a racial overlay might have impacted their treatment after some dialogue. Many of the women

initially only named gender as the cause of their mistreatment. However, over the course of the interviews, a willingness to consider an intersectional view of their mistreatment seemed to develop. Importantly, there was a difference in the ways that Native Hawaiian women were confronted by race and gender stereotypes. Whereas the Asian American women voiced an internal grappling with whether some of their behavioral tendencies were an enactment of cultural traits that have become stereotypes or were simply their innate dispositions, the Native Hawaiian women did not seem to share this struggle. As Asians are a dominant ethnic group in Hawai‘i, the privilege of the Asian women in not needing to immediately discern the significance of their race/ethnicity was evident. Sadly, reverse was true for the Native Hawaiian, the indigenous people of Hawai‘i, women who are a minority in their own ancestral homeland.

Of the two Native Hawaiian participants, one did not bring up the stereotypes associated with AA and Native Hawaiian women throughout her entire interview. The second said that she never thought of herself in terms of the stereotypes for Asian American women, as she only ever identified as a Native Hawaiian woman in spite of her Asian ancestry, and was taken aback by an off-hand remark implying that she was not conforming to stereotypical feminine Asian behaviors. This may be related to the aggregation of Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women as a race category and the similar ways in which AAPI and Native Hawaiian women have been hypersexualized and positioned as subservient to white men in popular culture. Though not prominent in the literature, there is also a colloquial stereotype of the “angry Hawaiian woman,” one often associated with radical Native Hawaiian academic activists and changemakers such as Haunani Kay Trask who unapologetically challenged the white, capitalist, patriarchal structures of the University of Hawai‘i and the State (Trask 1993; Kirkpatrick, 2021).

While this result is interesting and may hold wider implications for considering mistreatment based on the stereotypes of Asian American and Native Hawaiian women, it must be noted that the Asian American women in this study may have been more open about discussing this aspect of their internal identity development with me, a non-Native Hawaiian and Asian-American researcher. Future research may better reveal how personal identity and professional roles converge for Native Hawaiian women.

The women were sometimes quieted by others and at times chose to silence themselves as they realized that they would not be heard, or their opinions would not be considered no matter what they said. As several of the Asian American women described themselves as having a quiet demeanor, they hadn't attributed this quieting as being the result of being mistreated based on stereotypes for AAPI women at the times of these encounters despite being well aware of the stereotypes. Because the participants had prior knowledge and awareness of Asian American and Native Hawaiian Stereotypes of women, they spoke of the way in which they presented themselves and self-monitored participation levels during meetings with colleagues and administrators. All the while, they managed their understanding of Asian Stereotypes that they knew so well. During the interviews some of the women seemed to talk through their understanding of their treatment based on their intersecting identities. As a result, they discussed the possibility of experiencing racialized or gendered mistreatment in their charter schools. They unexpectedly racialized and gendered their mistreatment triggering what seemed was a realization mid-interview regarding the ways they had not thought about previously.

On the one hand, they could all identify the stereotype and wanted to distance themselves from it in their schools. On the other hand, they often reflected upon how they actually did present themselves as quiet in public spaces and had a quiet demeanor. Collectively the three

women who identified as Asian American (non-Native Hawaiian) spoke about being treated differently because of stereotypes they knew existed and were held towards Asian American women (Zhang, 2010). Interestingly, one of the two women who identified as a Native Hawaiian woman and who proclaimed she did not have a strong connection to her Asian heritage and culture had an Asian American stereotype applied to her which caused her to second guess and re-evaluate her presentation of self.

The teachers reported being confronted with racism and sexism that transformed into outright aggressiveness from some members of their charter school community. This is similar to Hsieh and Nguyen (2021) findings of Asian American Educators in higher education experiencing marginalization and being devalued as professionals based on intersecting identities as Asian Americans and women. The women in the present study faced similar treatment, both in the form of blatant aggressive treatment and violence.

These interactions demonstrate a devaluing of professional opinions similar to Hsieh and Nguyen (2020) findings. This includes a teacher being told she seemed to be more of a research-based scientist rather than a teacher, a stereotype associating Asians with poor communication skills, high intelligence, and nerd-like qualities (Zhang, 2010). These incidents echo the current literature on stereotypes and microaggressions surrounding AAPI and Native Hawaiian women and teachers (Endo, 2015; Hsieh & Nguyen, 2020).

The women in this study shared that, when they reported these mistreatments to administrators there were occasional resolutions, and sometimes not. The women were often told there was nothing that could be done to help them in their situations. The mistreatment the teachers confronted included being devalued, marginalized, and berated by students, parents, colleagues and, in some instances, administrators. When teachers' voices were ignored or

pacified it led to teachers not knowing when to speak up, or who to speak to. This could also further compound teachers' feelings of isolation in their charter schools.

Studies of teacher isolation have largely focused on the ways in which a lack of adult interaction and the effects of teacher isolation can have on student achievement (Padwa et.al., 2019; Sindberg, 2011). Teachers may experience feelings of isolation because they often work alone as the sole adult in their classrooms and have minimal interactions with other adults or fellow teachers beyond surface-level pleasantries (Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikahmadi, 2016). Notably, the Asian American and Native Hawaiian teachers in the current study found teachers did not report feeling isolated as a result of a lack of adult interactions or professional learning opportunities; rather, they described feeling isolated as a result of the negative behaviors and direct mistreatment received from other adults on their campus.

This isolation was both the result of specific mistreatment such as when one teacher noted she felt “trapped,” away from other colleagues and administration when parents entered her classroom to confront her unannounced. Her coping strategy was to hide in her classroom with the lights turned off to avoid harassment by parents and students. This participant believed that these hostile behaviors were displayed toward her due to her stature as a petite Asian American woman.

The isolation was also reported to have been imposed upon the teachers, as when another teacher reported being kept out of a professional development cohort that would have allowed her to meet regularly with administrators and with colleagues in the capacity of a teacher leader. The participants in this study often attributed this isolation as being related to their positionality as Asian American and Native Hawaiian women in that their shorter statures and the assumption that Asian American and Native Hawaiian women are submissive and easily disregarded when

others are emboldened to mistreat them. One teacher mentioned that she was curious about what other teachers from different charter schools would say in their interviews because, “charter schools can feel very isolating.” This specific aspect of teacher isolation may constitute a new finding and be a consideration for future research to determine whether this behavior is unique to women Asian American and Native Hawaiian charter school teachers.

The subtle or overt or subtle discrimination the women faced is corroborated in research by Brown (2010), and Verniers and Vala (2018) that found mothers face discrimination in the workplace even when employers have family-friendly policies and support in place. The women in the current study described instances when leaders alluded to the participants' families as getting in the way of their professional duties even though in both instances the women were not asking for favors beyond the school cultures. In one instance the participant was even blocked from professional development which inhibits both her ability to increase her professional knowledge and leadership consideration, it also impedes her ability to increase her salary. This is also similar to findings of limited professional advancement opportunities for working mothers (Brown, 2010; Verniers & Vala, 2018).

This study highlights, even in careers dominated by women, that anti-discrimination laws and policies affect teacher-mothers who are being discriminated against. It also further explains the gender earning gap. The two women who experienced workplace discrimination based on motherhood faced compounding discrimination resulting in further marginalization and oppression despite anti-discrimination laws and policies. In addition, because many Asian cultures place high value on the family unit, for Asian American and Native Hawaiian mother-teachers, there is the potentially specific and added weight they may place on themselves as mothers and teachers. The women chose teaching to serve children and give them a “fighting

chance,” but are simultaneously discriminated against for being mothers and wanting to take care of their families. The desire they have to be a good teacher and also the desire to be a good mother seem to be at odds.

When specifically asked to consider how race and gender may have contributed to their experiences of mistreatment at their respective charter schools, the three Asian American women in this study stated they did not think race was a part of their treatment. This might be attributed to the Hawai‘i context, where they embody a racial majority, as Asian settlers (Trask, 2000), particularly in education. Along with the status as a racial majority comes privileges such as not needing to think about race, which might be why race was not identified by the three Asian American participants. Race was not an intersecting identity at the forefront of their minds, until they began to tell their stories of (mis)treatment. Once the women began considering their intersecting identities, the mistreatment they faced was spoken to as potentially both race and gender based.

In considering the Hawai‘i context, it is important to remember that Hawai‘i’s racial demographics are vastly different from that of the continental United States. U.S. Census Bureau (2022) reports 36.8% of Hawai‘i residents identify as solely Asian, 10% of residents identify as Native Hawaiian, 25% of the residents identify as two or more races and 25.3% of residents identify as white. As compared to the U.S. where according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2022) 59.3% of the population identified as white alone, 18.9% identify as Hispanic, 2.9% identify as two or more races, .3% identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 6.1% identify as Asian, 1.3% identify as Native American or Alaska Native, and 13.6% identify as Black or African American. In spite of AAPI and Native Hawaiian people comprising the racial majority in Hawai‘i, they face similar types of mistreatment reported by AAPI and Native Hawaiian women



on the continental United States. Similarly, the majority of teachers in Hawai‘i DOE schools identify as AAPI and Native Hawaiian women (Accountability Resource Center, n.d.) and face similar mistreatments reported by the non-dominant AAPI community in the wider United States.

In terms of Hawai‘i’s interracial and interethnic relations, the dominant narrative has long been one of multicultural harmony, a “melting pot” in which each racial and ethnic group contributes and is treated fairly (Okamura, 2011). This narrative, however, has been challenged by more critical scholars who point out that this myth of racial harmony glosses over the lasting and devastating effects of colonization on Native Hawaiians, as well as the wide disparities between other Asian and haole settler groups living in Hawai‘i (Okamura, 2008; Trask, 2000; Rohrer, 2010; Rosa, 2000). Okamura (2011) argues that perpetuating Hawai‘i as a multicultural model perpetuates White, Chinese American, and Japanese American power and dominance in Hawai‘i. The Asian American women in this study might not have recognized the importance of the race overlay and grappled with their identity because of their dominant status, so the mistreatment they faced based on stereotypes came as a surprise. In fact, one of the teachers described herself as “local.” As opposed to Japanese American. The term “local” is said to have first been brought into prominence during The Massie Case of 1931-32 (Rosa, 2000).

Throughout the twentieth century, Hawai‘i residents of Native Hawaiian, Asian, Portuguese and Puerto Rican ancestry have used this term to separate themselves from newcomers to the islands (Rosa, 2000). The term “local” has been recognized as problematic because it does not distinguish between indigenous Native Hawaiians and Asian settlers (Rosa, 2000). The Native Hawaiian teacher teaching in a blended school was subject to Asian American and Native Hawaiian stereotypes despite not identifying as such. Whereas the Native Hawaiian

teacher teaching in a Hawaiian Focused Charter School never brought up Asian American and Native Hawaiian stereotypes or the mistreatment she faced based on her intersecting identities as a Native Hawaiian woman teaching in a charter school.

Previous studies have shown workplace meetings are a place where gendered inequities play-out (Brescoll, 2011; Tannen, 1994). This makes the voices of those in this study important.

This aligns with research on racialized and gendered oppression Asian American women in higher educational institutions experienced and from which a coalitional resistance framework was developed (Hsieh & Nguyen, 2020). The Coalitional Resistance framework names the importance of teacher educators of color, specifically those from multiple marginalized groups to support one another by discussing the importance of collective solidarity, resistance and surviving in teacher educational spaces (Hsieh & Nguyen, 2020). This was also true for most of the women in this study who spoke of their relationships with colleagues and families who seem to be a large reason why the women carry-on with the work they do in the schools they are in.

### **Implications for Policy**

Policy implications for charter schools have a specific complexity as they were created to have autonomy and serve and report to multiple stakeholders. Considering this, four potential policy implications arise from this study and are based on the findings from the AAPI and Native Hawaiian women's experiences of teaching in charter schools. The four policy implications that might assist in addressing the women's experiences are, 1) Clarifying what policies already exist and defining the entities and agencies who oversee charter schools and their relationships 2) ensuring representation on governing boards, Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission and the Board of Education, 3) implementation of charter school leadership development and 4) disaggregation of the category AAPI.

First, entities that oversee, grant charters, and are a part of operations already exist. Clarification of these entities and their relationships to each other as well as their relationships to individual charter schools might help charter school teachers counter feelings of isolation. Entities that oversee charter schools include, The Hawai‘i Board of Education, The Hawai‘i Department of Education, The Hawai‘i Public Charter Commission, Individual School Governing Boards, Individual School leadership teams all of whom oversee charter schools and Hawai‘i State Teachers Association. The numerous entities involved with charter schools leads to confusion for teachers and the general public as to which entity does what and when. For teachers, not understanding the structures contribute to feelings of isolation when mistreatment or lack of action from school level leaders occurs. Defining the roles and relationships between these entities might be beneficial to all individuals who are a part of the growing charter school community, including but not limited to, school governing boards, school level leaders, teachers, and parents. Such clarifications would not detract autonomy from individual schools or from classroom teachers. Instead, the charter school community and those interested in charter schools will have a better understanding of how charter schools function.

Second, policy should be developed for individual governing school boards and the charter school commission to require teacher representatives. Teacher representation is not currently required on charter school governing boards nor is representation granted within the Hawai‘i State Charter School Commission. Currently, the Hawai‘i Public Charter School Commission states, “Not more than one-third of the voting members of a governing board can be employees, former employees or relatives of employees” (Hawai‘i Charter School Commission, n.d.). With an understanding that teachers intentionally choose charter schools to have a greater say in curriculum, instruction, and school level decision-making, it will benefit charter schools in

Hawai'i to have teacher representation on each school's governing school board. Teacher representatives on individual school boards could be voted in by teachers and also in a ratio dependent on the number of teachers employed by the school. Similarly teacher representation within the Hawai'i State Charter School Commission should represent the vast differences of Hawai'i Charter Schools, with representation from varying types of charter schools. In addition, charter schools should have representation on the Hawai'i Board of Education. Data suggests Hawai'i charter schools are a growing sect within the Hawai'i's public school system.

Third, leadership training will help to ensure charter school administrators have the skills necessary to lead schools here in Hawai'i. Currently no leadership training or degrees are required to become a charter school administrator or leader. However, in the Hawaii State Department of Education there currently is a requirement for potential leaders to attend and graduate from the DOE Leadership Institute. As stated previously, autonomy and flexibility sustains many charter schools, and school boards should still have the authority to hire and fire school level leaders. However, once leaders are selected, I propose they should attend a Hawai'i Charter School Leadership Institute designed by the Hawai'i State Charter School Commission to prepare and coach new charter school administrators for their leadership positions. This potentially will have a positive effect beyond the findings of this study. I would hope to see such an institute incorporate anti-racist training and address gendered mistreatment for employees that look beyond family leave policies and further humanize the teacher workforce that is unique to Hawai'i.

The last policy implication which arises from my findings and discussion, is based on the marked differences between the way the Asian American women discussed stereotypes from the women who identified as Native Hawaiian. This finding supports disaggregation of the AAPI

and Native Hawaiian race category. This study brings attention to the differing experiences of the women in the category AAPI and Native Hawaiians and the need to disaggregate the racial category of AAPI. Of the five participants, the three women who identified as Asian American all had experience with stereotypes and mistreatment they attributed to their intersectional identities as Asian women. The two participants who identified as Native Hawaiian women did not discuss embodying Asian American stereotypes.

One of the Native Hawaiian women discussed the stereotypes associated with Asian women only when she was forced to reckon with an administrator forcing her into the stereotype. Although she is Korean, Japanese, Native Hawaiian and Italian, she identifies with her Native Hawaiian heritage. Calls to disaggregate data on the category AAPI have been raised in previous medical research (Quach et al., 2014) and research in higher education (Poon et al., 2017). This study corroborates the call to disaggregate the AAPI category.

### **Implications for Practice**

Practical implications are action items for consideration at the individual charter school level and in higher education based on my findings in this study. There were four school level implications and one practical implication for the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. The school level implications are 1) clarity for teachers and staff on the structures and entities that are a part of charter schools. 2) the creation and implementation of safe and supportive workplace culture 3) For non-Hawaiian Focused Charter Schools to consider the Hawai‘i context in terms of the place and people whom they serve and 4) understanding that Asian American and Native Hawaiian women are the teaching majority in Hawai‘i and do not face the same familial barriers to Asian American and Native Hawaiians as on the continental United States. Thus, recruitment and retention strategies might consider a different approach to finding and keeping teachers in

Hawai'i. Additionally, The University implication is to consider Asian America, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian identity coursework into the curricular map for students in the College of Education.

First, when on-boarding new charter school teachers and during faculty meetings for returning teachers, clarifying the agencies and stakeholders of individual charter schools would be incredibly helpful. This first practical implication is based off of the first policy implication above: making sure that information makes its way to charter school teachers and is explained in a way that is accessible for teachers to understand these challenges. This will assist teachers to understand that they are a part of a system bigger than their singular school.

The second practical school level implication is focused on supporting teachers, specifically teachers of color and AAPI and Native Hawaiian teachers. A practical implication is for administrators to create a workplace culture where teachers can report incidents of mistreatment. Administrators can then follow-up with the teacher reporting the mistreatment to discuss any action taken and possible next steps.

The third school level practical implication for charter schools that are not Hawaiian Focused would be to consider the people who make up the charter school community, both those who are employed by and those they serve. Consider new ways in which to engage AAPI and Native Hawaiian women who are the teaching majority in Hawai'i. Based on my findings a well-intended effort to facilitate a meeting by calling on an AAPI or Native Hawaiian woman to share her ideas might be construed as aggressive and may have the opposite of the intended effect. Instead, give space for teachers to meet collectively and make autonomous decisions.

Fourth, Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women are the dominant gender group making up the majority of teachers in Hawai'i public schools (Accountability

Resource Center Hawai‘i, n.d.). The experiences the women in this study faced mirrored that of the continental United States where they are a minority. Although the women in this study were initially unable to recognize their intersecting identities as Asian women and how it played a role in their treatment. The implication is sexism and racism are deeply ingrained in the education systems, even in Hawai‘i where Asians are the majority.

With charter schools having high rates of teacher attrition, this might be important to understanding why teachers stay or how to help teacher retention. Programs on the continental United States and at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa titled Grow Your Own (GYO) point to the importance of communities creating a pipeline of future teachers to assist with teacher shortages and to build diversity in schools so student demographics reflect teacher demographics (Hunt et. al., 2012).

Finally, a practical implication pertains to the University level during pre-teaching training. Four of my five participants received their teacher training, licensure and degree from the College of Education at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. The College of Education should consider incorporating more course requirements exploring gender and race. This is corroborated by Kim and Cooc (2020), that also encourages teacher training to include identity work to promote healthy self-concept. This will ensure AAPI and Native Hawaiian teachers are engaging with their identities before entering the teacher workforce.

### **Limitations**

While the findings in this study are backed up by the data, there are limitations to this study. There are three caveats and limitations to my study: small sample size, O‘ahu centrality, and the researcher’s social location (multi-racial non-Hawaiian). The sample size of five participants from four charter schools on O‘ahu is small when compared to the 37 charter

schools in the 2021-22 school year (State Public Charter School Commission Annual Report, 2021-2022) and 328 licensed charter school teachers in the 2020-21 school year (Accountability Resource Center Hawai‘i, n.d.). Although six participants were projected to be a part of this study, one person was unable to participate. Three meetings were scheduled for the final participant and the researcher waited for half an hour at each established meeting day and time. After the third missed meeting, the researcher decided to move forward with data analysis. The data from this study is O‘ahu centric. It is not representative of Hawai‘i in general, because all teacher participants are currently in schools located on the island of O‘ahu. The researcher, although born and raised in Hawai‘i, is not native Hawaiian, and although familiar with customs and traditions of Hawai‘i cannot assume the two Native Hawaiian participants were as forthright as they might have been than with a researcher who was also Native Hawaiian. I may have missed certain cues or ideas shared. Last, in spite of attempting to uncover the experiences of Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools. Pacific Islander women were not represented in this study and therefore the lack of representation is also a limitation to this research.

### **Considerations for Future Research**

The knowledge gained from this study points to the following potential research opportunities in charter schools in Hawai‘i. The first consideration could be to include a larger sample size. Second, the unique perspectives of the Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools, both Hawaiian Focused and otherwise deserves further exploration. Particular attention could be given to ways in which Native Hawaiian women experiences differ or vary across the types of charter schools here in Hawai‘i. Third, conducting a study on the continent and comparing the findings to the Hawai‘i based findings in this research could be revealing. Such a



comparative study could yield interesting similarities and differences. Fourth, future research might also explore the expectations of autonomy teachers have when first hired in charter schools to their experiences after teaching in charter schools for a more extended period. Were teachers' expectations of autonomy met or not met and how? Fifth, there seems to be a gap in the literature of the teaching experiences of AAPI and Native Hawaiian women in Hawai'i even though they represent the majority of the teachers in the state. Of the teaching majority in Hawai'i who are represented under the umbrella term AAPI and Native Hawaiian during the 2021-22 school year, 21.2% identified as Japanese, 10.6% identified as Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian, 8.2% identified as Filipino, 3.1% identified as Chinese, 1.2% identified as Korean, .6% identified as Samoan, and .1% identified as Native American (Accountability Resource Center Hawai'i, n.d.). Future research can explore AAPI and Native Hawaiian women's teaching experiences in the continental United States and compare them to Hawai'i findings. Last, a comparative study of the administrators of the subject schools and the gap between the Asian American and Native Hawaiian women in the study and the administrators. Any future research that creates deeper understanding into the lives of charter school teachers and uplifts the profession and their work is deeply needed.

Further considerations for future research specific to Hawaiian Focused Charter Schools and Hawaiian Medium Charter Schools presents entirely new research opportunities. First, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian women teachers experiences teaching in these schools since they represent the majority of charter schools in Hawai'i, representing 17 of the 37 schools or 46% of charter schools in the state of Hawai'i. Second, with Hawai'i island having the second largest concentration of charter schools the experiences of Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian teachers in these schools warrants further research.

## **End Notes**

This study is an initial step in understanding the experiences of the people who make up the majority of Hawai'i's public school teachers: AAPI and Native Hawaiian women on O'ahu. With Hawai'i's teacher retention rates hovering just above 50% (The Associated Press, 2022), understanding AAPI and Native Hawaiian women's experiences as teachers in Hawai'i public charter schools is an important component in addressing these decreasing numbers. These findings may also give important insights for developing and employing teacher retention and recruitment strategies within the specific context of Hawai'i public charter schools.

The women in this study chose to be teachers for the children. They entered their careers with the intention of enriching the communities they lived in and chose to teach in charter schools believing them to be the best way to do so. As AAPI and Native Hawaiian women represent the majority of public school teachers in Hawai'i, it is time we start listening to their stories and their experiences. They want to be heard and it is time we hear and support them so they are recognized and treated as professionals and included in school based decisions and policy.

## **Appendix A Consent Form**

My name is Dana Adler. I am conducting a study about AAPI and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools on O‘ahu. The main purpose of this study is to illuminate the voices of AAPI and Native Hawaiian women teaching in Charter Schools. I am conducting this project in order to complete my Educational Doctorate at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed one time. You will be asked questions about identifying as a woman, belonging to your racial/ethnic group, teaching in a charter school. Your interview will take between 30 to 90 minutes. Approximately 12 people will participate in the whole study.

### **Procedures**

If you are interested in participating in this study, you can contact me directly. If you don't want to participate, there are no consequences. If you do want to participate, I will work to find a time that works best for you. Interviews will take place in my Zoom Room. When you sign up to participate in this study, you will receive information about the study and be informed that participation in the study is completely voluntary.

When you attend the interview, I will go over the main purposes of the study with you. I will also let you know what will happen step-by-step. Next, you will answer a few background questions like your sex/gender, age, years of teaching experience. I will ask you to share your chosen pseudonym name to be used throughout the research. When we start the interview, I will ask you questions about yourself including questions about your childhood, your ethnicity, being a woman and about teaching in a charter school.

### **Risks, Stress, or Discomfort**

At times during this interview, you might feel uncomfortable sharing certain types of information or your opinions. You always have the right to skip questions. I would also like to tape record the interview. If this makes you uncomfortable, please let me know and I will do the interview with no recorder. If we start the interview with the recorder on, you can ask me to turn the recorder off whenever you want. You can stop the interview at any time. After we finish the interview, you can ask me to delete or destroy any of your answers.

Please feel free to ask any questions about this project. I will answer any questions or concerns you have about this study. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may stop participating whenever you want with no consequences. Everyone will be treated equally by me.

### **Benefits**

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. One positive outcome you may experience is an opportunity to discuss your experiences and concerns in a non-judgmental, confidential environment.

### **Confidentiality of Information**

The records of this study will be kept private. Your transcribed responses and all other information you provide will be given a unique pseudonym that you may choose while I compile the data. All the information I collect will be stored on a secure external hard drive and kept in a locked file cabinet. The tape recordings and notes I take during the interviews will be destroyed after I compile the data. No identifying information can be linked to you or any other participant in the study.

If you have any questions about the research, please call me at (808) 375-3440. If you have any questions about your human subjects rights, please call the University of Hawai'i's Committee on Human Subjects (808) 956-5007.

### **Participant Statement**

I certify that I have read through this form and that I understand the purpose of this study. I understand my role as a participant in this study, and I understand the risks and benefits to me. I have been told that I may stop participating in this study at any time with no consequences. I have received clear answers to my questions regarding this study.

I hereby consent to participate in this study. This consent does not give up any of my legal rights, nor does it release Dana Adler, the University of Hawai'i, or any employee or agent of the University from liability for negligence. I may take back my consent to participate at any time and receive no penalties or consequences. I know that I may ask questions throughout my participation in this research project. I know that I may ask questions about the study to the researcher Dana Adler or her academic advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Lori Ideta

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this project, you can contact the University of Hawai'i, Committee on Human Studies (CHS), by phone at (808) 956-5007 or by e-mail at [uhirb@hawaii.edu](mailto:uhirb@hawaii.edu).

I agree to participate in this study:

Participant Name (Printed)

Participant Signature and Date

## Appendix B Recruitment Email

**Subject:** Your Experiences as an AAPINH woman teaching in a Hawai'i charter school.

Hello,

My name is Dana Adler and I am pursuing my EdD in Professional Educational Practice at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am conducting a research study on the experiences of Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools. I am looking to gather information from your personal experience to address this inquiry, and hope you will consider participating.

### *Participant Criteria*

I am seeking individuals identifying as female and Asian American, Pacific Islander, and/or Native Hawaiian who are currently teaching in a charter school in Hawai'i with 3 years of experience teaching in their school.

### *What will happen if I decide to take part in this study?*

If you participate in this project, you will be asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire and participate in a short semi-structured, open-ended interview via Zoom scheduled on a date and time convenient to your schedule. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete, but we can schedule up to 90 minutes. Based on our interview I will write a short vignette and ask for you to read through it, make any changes you see necessary and approve it.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me via email at [adana@hawaii.edu](mailto:adana@hawaii.edu) expressing your interest to participate, including your name and email address. Further instructions will follow in a separate email.

There are no known risks involved in participating in this research study. If you have any questions, please let me know. I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Dana Adler  
Doctoral Candidate  
[adana@hawaii.edu](mailto:adana@hawaii.edu)

## **Appendix C Demographic Questionnaire Questions**

Question 1: Name (First and Last)

Question 2: Please list the races(s) and ethnicity(s) you identify

Question 3: Name of the charter school where you currently teach

Question 4: Number of years you have taught in this charter school

Question 5: Grade level you currently teach

## **Appendix D Semi-Structured Interview Protocol and Questions**

### **Introductory Protocol**

Thank you for participating in this research study and speaking with me today. My name is Dana Adler and I am a student investigator pursuing my doctorate in education. As we begin, I would like to review a few logistical details. To assist in my note-taking, I would like to audio record our conversation today. The audio portion will be recorded using Zoom audio and Otter.ai software. Do you give your consent to have the audio portion of this interview recorded? For your information, only myself and the Principal Investigator for this project, my committee chair, Dr. Lori Ideta, will have access to the recording; and the recording will be stored in a secured location for one year and then destroyed.

You have completed the consent form. Do you have any questions about that form before we begin? All information shared will be held confidential. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable or want to exit the study. I have planned this interview to last approximately 90 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover pertaining to your experiences as an Asian American Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian woman teaching in a charter school on O‘ahu.

### **Introduction**

My research project as a whole focuses on illuminating the experiences of this population of teachers. My hope is this information will be useful in offering insight on how to better support and retain Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian women teaching in charter schools. I would like to also share, there are no right or wrong answers today, I am really here to listen and hear about your experiences. Do you have any questions before we begin?

### **Interview Questions**



1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself and your background
2. Please share with me your gender, racial and ethnic identities; and any other identities that you hold that are important to you
3. Please tell me about why you chose to become a teacher?
4. Please tell me about your journey to becoming a charter school teacher?
  - a. Do you think being a \_\_\_\_\_ woman affected your journey to becoming a charter school teacher? If so how.
5. Please tell me about a time or times when your race/ethnicity, gender or other identities played a role in your professional life while teaching in a charter school.
  - a. With administration/leadership
  - b. With other teachers
  - c. With students
  - d. With parents
6. Do you have any other stories you would like to share with me that I did not ask you about?

Based on what we have discussed today, what have you learned about yourself - your race, ethnicity and gender and other identities - have had an influence on your current position?

Before we finish our conversation today I would like to ask if you have a pseudonym in mind that you would like me to use as I write up our transcription, vignette, and ultimately my dissertation? Do you have any final questions or comments for me?

### **Closing**

Thank you for sharing your experiences with me today. Once I have completed the transcript from this interview, I will email it to you and ask that you review it. You may make any

changes, corrections, and additions as you see fit. The transcript will identify you by the pseudonym you provided in your demographic questionnaire.

After transcriptions are complete I will compose a vignette based on our interview. I will then send it to you for your review. Any corrections, changes, and additions you wish to make will be made. The vignette will identify you by the pseudonym of your choosing.

Thank you for participating in this interview and sharing your voice and experiences. Should you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me via email at [adana@hawaii.edu](mailto:adana@hawaii.edu)

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