Exploring Goals of Marshallese Adolescents in a Non-Academic West Hawai‘i Youth Development Program

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Kamela T. Souza

Thesis Committee:

Lois Yamauchi, Chairperson

Nicole Lewis

Katherine Ratliffe

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Abstract

Academic and economic indicators for students from low-income and minority backgrounds continue to draw concern, and disparities should not be addressed without first determining what goals are relevant to students. This case study centered on a group of primarily Marshallese students from a low-income housing complex participating in a non-academic summer youth development program in West Hawaiʻi. Utilizing observations of program activities, semi-structured group and individual interviews, and archival documents, I gathered insights about these students' goals, connections, and obstacles. In addition to asking about the cultural relevance of the program, the study explored how the students' future plans were related to their own personal interests and those of their families and their communities. Implications from the findings could inform culturally relevant teaching efforts and future youth development programs.

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Exploring Goals of Marshallese Adolescents in a Non-Academic West Hawaiʻi Youth Development Program

Chapter 1. Introduction

Much of the research that has been conducted on programs attempting to influence the school success of youth from minority and low-income backgrounds has neglected to address whether this endeavor is relevant to students' cultural values or future goals (Lee, Hill, & Hawkins, 2012; Renbarger & Long, 2019). Regardless of the means, breaking the cycle of poverty and its associated negative outcomes continues to motivate educators and community organizers. Pacific Islanders, including Native Hawaiian people and immigrants from various Pacific islands rank among the lowest for a number of educational and economic measures, though Native Hawaiians tend to fare better than other Polynesian and Micronesian groups (Hawaiʻi State Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism Research and Economic Analysis Division, 2018; United States Census Bureau, 2014). The data show that Pacific Islander students tend to struggle to succeed in school and in their transition to education and employment after they leave school. Thus, researchers, nonprofit organizations, and school leaders with whom I was in contact as I planned this study identified the disparities affecting Pacific Islander populations in Hawaiʻi as important issues to address. Among other factors, the cultural relevance or irrelevance of traditional American academic assessment goals may play a part, as an emphasis on competition and comparison of students based on a prescriptive path for success has been argued to be a reflection of White, middle class American values (Rogoff, 2003). Although efforts to improve these outcomes are not new, more research is needed to explore what works for different groups throughout the State before pursuing further initiatives to address the challenges Pacific Islander groups face.

This case study centers on low-income, primarily Marshallese students, and those who serve them. I sought to qualitatively explore how culture was related to participants' goals at the individual, family, and community level, as well as to identify supports and barriers primarily through interviews. The inspiration for the study and basis for selecting participants was a pilot West Hawaii youth development program with the mission to empower participants to find their place in the community based on their own goals, rather than a prescribed path to success. Due to a high proportion of Marshallese students and an approach that allowed students to develop and share their own goals, I felt that the program would be a good starting point for exploring goals, culture, and community connection with an understudied population in an understudied area. Additionally, the group that planned and implemented the program, among other stakeholders, encouraged me to investigate whether the approach they chose was culturally relevant for the selected group of students. While the original scope of the project sought to include family members and community leaders, the bounded system (Yin, 2009) for this study encompassed the pilot run of the program, its participants, and its staff. In addition to contributing to the literature on low-income and Marshallese students, findings from this study could also help determine whether future programs should consider adopting a similar model.

Inception of the Research Project

In late 2018, I began communicating with my graduate assistantship provider and contacts from within the Honokaʻa-Kealakehe-Kohala-Konawaena school complex area (which covers the area known as West Hawaiʻi within Hawaiʻi Island) to develop a research project about Pacific Islander families and cultural relevance, as well as community partnership, engagement, and connection. I spoke with several people within the education system who were interested in factors outside the classroom. At a meeting with the complex area's community engagement team, I learned about an upcoming summer youth development program targeting middle and high school students at a low-income and transitional housing complex in West Hawaiʻi, which I will refer to as “Housing Complex.”

About the Summer Program

The program (which will be referred to as “Summer Program”) was the basis for selecting interview participants. Summer Program was created for 12-15 middle and high school students at Housing Complex, a residential site which housed primarily Pacific Islander families, most of whom were Marshallese, Chuukese, or Native Hawaiian. Though Summer Program began with 10 students on the first day, by the second week there were 12 youths, ages 11-16, with one Native Hawaiian, one Chuukese, and ten Marshallese students. Summer Program utilized ideas from previous programs conducted at other sites for a pilot program at Housing Complex in partnership with the community support staff there. The purpose was to provide support for students that might help them remain in West Hawaiʻi and thrive in their desired life goals after leaving school. By combining site-based and experience-based learning with encouraging the development of community connections, personal growth, career exploration, and life skills, Summer Program directors hoped to encourage students to continue developing skills learned in the program after leaving with a sense of empowerment and purpose. The Hawaiʻi Department of Education’s HĀ outcomes of strengthening senses of belonging, responsibility, excellence, aloha, total wellbeing, and Hawaiʻi (Hawaiʻi Department of Education, 2015) influenced development of the program’s philosophy. I was particularly intrigued by the program’s focus on non-academic indicators of progress and success. Summer Program explicitly sought to promote the development of empowered youths who would be better citizens without necessarily being better students. I was drawn to the program leaders' clear passion for empowering youths and the communities of West Hawai'i.

Under the supervision of four program facilitators, including myself as a volunteer, the program ran three days a week over a period of three weeks, with time spent ranging from 4-6 hours between leaving and returning to the Housing Complex. Each day we traveled to specific sites, usually involving a new community partner; we visited some sites twice, and sometimes went to two sites in one day (see Table 1 for a summary of partners and sites, activities, instructional styles, and themes). Each partner chose their own approach to teaching and covered different topics, but most sites we visited utilized a single adult facilitator and a mixture of lecture, dialogue between facilitator(s) and students, site tour, and activities, with topics most commonly relating to future planning, career exploration, and culture. At the end of most days, students journaled a short paragraph or two about their experiences following prompts from one of our program facilitators. Information from the journals are not included in this report, as they were part of that other facilitator's own research and assessment project.

To the extent possible, Summer Program planners implemented input from a survey answered by 10 prospective participants in the spring preceding the program (see Appendix B for summarized results). The survey covered students' preferred learning methods, activities and topics of interests, career ideas, and areas with which they wanted help. Summer Program activities and topics included financial literacy, leadership, higher education, creative expression, career exploration, natural and cultural resources, and volunteer service. Community partners included a credit union, health center, community and cultural groups and practitioners, local business owners and professionals, a community college, and other nonprofit organizations (see Table 1 for a breakdown of each day of the program). On the last day, the culminating event was an informal hōʻike (exhibit) to show families, sponsors, and community partners what the students had created, gathered, and written about, as well as pictures from throughout the program.

The program facilitators and Housing Complex staff regarded the pilot as a success, and we continued to meet regularly throughout the time I spent writing this paper, developing plans to continue and improve Summer Program. Thus, findings from interviews were intended to help in this regard, in addition to providing information for researchers and practitioners in general.

Table 1.

Summary of Summer Program Activities

Day	Partner/ Site	Activities	Instruction type	Themes
1	Cultural practitioner	Storytelling, walk, gathering, weaving	Lecture w/ audience interaction; hands-on	Place, culture, crafting, local resources
2	Community nonprofit	Icebreaker games, games to demonstrate topics	Games, lecture, discussion (small and large group), journaling	Leadership, relationships, self-improvement
3	Credit union	Activities to demonstrate topics, deposit	Lecture w/ audience interaction, hands-on	Financial literacy, life planning
3	College	Tour	Lecture	Life planning, college options (local focus)
4	Cultural practitioner/ resort	Tour	Lecture w/ some audience interaction	Culture, history, career options, planning/finding a path
5	Credit union	Deposits, opening accounts	Panel lecture	Career options, future planning
5	Health center	Tour	Lecture w/ slideshow and some audience interaction	Career options, future planning, making a difference
6	Cultural nonprofit/ fishpond	Manual work, free time to swim	Lecture, hands-on	Ecosystems, traditional resource usage, restoration
7	Art studio	Painting	Demonstration, hands-on w/ walkaround assistance	Art, job skills, career options
7	Auto shop	Tour	Lecture	Career options, ongoing learning
8	Cultural center (using their space; facilitated by Summer Program)	Acrostics, decorate masks, make vision board collages	Lecture, hands-on w/ walkaround assistance	Personal identity, vision for the future
9	Housing Complex	Hōʻike event: view pictures and products; socialize; interview sign-ups	N/A	Showing families and partners what the students did during the program

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Immigrant and Migrant Challenges

This section focuses on broad Micronesian literature as well as a more in-depth discussion of studies featuring Marshallese populations. Although Summer Program also included a Native Hawaiian and a Chuukese participant, the majority (10 out of 12) were Marshallese, and all student interview participants were Marshallese.

Along with Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia, the people of the Marshall Islands have been covered by Compacts of Free Association (COFA) since 1986, allowing them to freely enter, live, and work in the United States as migrants without need for visas or a path to citizenship (Levin, 2017). Although people residing in the United States under COFA may be migrants rather than immigrants, I utilized the literature on immigrants since the Summer Program participants had been living in Hawaiʻi on a long-term basis and may remain indefinitely. However, without interviewing all students in the program, I cannot say for certain how many were first generation immigrants, as is the focus of much of this section. There is also the "1.5 generation" of immigrants who move to a new country at a relatively young age and attend school in the new country, but can still remember life in their origin country; this group's unique development and experiences mean that they differ from the more easily defined generations (Danico, 2004). Overall, the Marshallese population in the United States is relatively young, with the largest age group being 5- to 9-years-old (Levin, 2017). The high population of minors accounts for the roughly 40% rate of U.S. birth in the Census data, while most adults are foreign-born (91.1% in Hawaiʻi) (Levin, 2017).

Thus, there is a fair chance that some of Summer Program's participants were born in the United States; however, those I interviewed indicated that they came to Hawaiʻi when they were young children, so they may align more with the second generation classification despite not meeting the requirement of U.S. birth. Although generations may differ significantly, they often share common traits such as having immigrant parents and a likelihood of low socioeconomic status, extended family living situations, and residence in an area with others of the same ethnic group (Suárez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

The findings and recommendations discussed in the following paragraphs covering the general immigrant literature may not be applicable for Marshallese and other Micronesian populations within the State of Hawaiʻi, as they are largely based on minorities with greater numbers in the continental United States. Hawaiʻi is unusual in having a population with a non-White majority race, and also in having unique cultural contexts that arose from its extensive immigrant history. For this reason, I first searched the literature for Hawaiʻi-centric works, and then focused on studies in schools with majority non-White students.

Educational Challenges. Studies of host country language acquisition make up one of the largest areas of research with immigrant students. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) found that English language ability was one of the biggest predictors of test scores for immigrant students in a large-scale, longitudinal study of Haitian, Dominican, Central American, Mexican, and Chinese students. They also found that high percentages of students thought that English was important, but that a lack of friendships with native English-speakers among many of the participants might have inhibited their success in school. The few students who did have at least one native speaker as a friend learned better English and did so more quickly. At a meeting I attended while developing this research project, some principals in West Hawaiʻi also expressed concern that Micronesian students did not tend to interact with other ethnic groups, particularly at the secondary school level and above.

Standard U.S. pedagogy may be unfamiliar and unpalatable to immigrant students, so it is understandable that some do not put much effort into conventional learning (Dentler & Haffner, 1997). In Suárez-Orozco et al.'s (2008) longitudinal study of 9-14 year-old first generation students – excluding those who immigrated in early childhood – the researchers modeled educational paths based on test scores over time and found that 53% of their participants showed either slow or precipitous decline. The percentages for each educational path could change drastically between ethnic groups, however, so it would be difficult to generalize to Marshallese students without replicating the study. Another finding from Suárez-Orozco et al.'s study was that behavioral engagement, the second best predictor of GPA after English ability in a model including school, personal, and family factors, dropped at an accelerating rate as students progressed through grades, highlighting the need to begin interventions early and maintain engagement to preserve school performance.

Still, even with poor showings on standardized tests, 81% of the participants in Suárez-Orozco et al.'s (2008) study wanted to go to college, and teachers described first generation immigrant students as *more* hardworking and motivated than other students. The students also had more positive attitudes about school, compared to those born in the United States, which may reflect their view of school as a useful way to get ahead and make their parents proud. The researchers also noted that a lack of scholarship opportunities for non-citizens often makes college financially unattainable, and that this knowledge could lead to disengagement for many. Suárez-Orozco et al. concluded that while culture may have influenced some immigrant students' low achievement, poor school performance had much more to do with external factors largely beyond students' control.

Teachers. Authors concerned with immigrant student success have advocated for greater integration of culture, experience, and language into the classroom (Dentler & Haffner, 1997; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). However, these sources also have much to say about the importance of not just having welcoming teaching methods and curriculum, but also speak to the importance of teachers who are willing to compassionately carry out these strategies and take the time to learn about the cultures they need to welcome.

Along with English language acquisition, another major issue confronting immigrant students can be teachers who are poorly informed about the students' home cultures or who may hold negative views based on their own prejudices or experiences. Rather than blaming the school system, the inherent difficulty of being a non-English-speaking immigrant, or their own teaching styles, teachers in one study frequently attributed non-Chinese immigrant students' struggles to their families (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008). These teachers supposed that immigrant parents did not value school due to their lack of participation. However, teachers' impressions conflicted with the testimonies of students, who overwhelmingly reported having parents who highly valued education. Teachers' impressions that families were uncaring may be due to immigrant parents having to work multiple jobs or being given undesirable shifts, their inability to help students with their schoolwork, embarrassment speaking to teachers, or cultural norms about the role of parents, students, and the school. There is also the possibility that some parents really did not prioritize school, and they may have been well justified in emphasizing other areas of their children's lives instead. Additionally, students may not have teachers who share their ethnicity or understand their home language. These learners probably lack viable role models for educational success, making it more challenging for them to find their place within the walls of our country's public schools.

Local community. Location is important for every immigrant story, and it interacts with other factors to influence outcomes, both for individual students and whole immigrant communities. In the 1990s, Dentler and Haffner (1997) conducted a West Coast study to see what made some schools with high immigrant populations more successful than others. They reported that safe, proactive, adaptive, multicultural communities that allowed minorities to integrate and have influence had better outcomes than communities who did not exhibit these factors as strongly, or at all. While school size and funding as well as socioeconomic status of immigrants were also important, poor ratings on these factors were not damning to schools within communities that utilized strong community-school partnerships. Dentler and Haffner found that, ideally, an area would benefit from a slow influx of immigrants from just one or two groups, allowing for easier adjustment. While this may seem to be the case for West Hawaiʻi, the Latinx and Micronesian populations have come from many different nations and have not necessarily worked together after arriving to create supportive, welcoming communities for subsequent immigrants and migrants.

Having strong churches, groups, and schools – which should all be connected in a strong community – can be a great support for immigrant students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) wrote that immigrant students generally lacked support outside the family, and highly valued more experienced peers from the same country who could help them succeed in school and in learning English. They wrote that community institutions and small groups have to do more for immigrants due to the present lack of support in place to help immigrants transition, as well as to address mainstream misgivings directed at relatively recent immigrant groups. While collective efforts are important, it could also be helpful to target individuals for mentorship, or to at least provide activities involving caring adults (Roffman, Suarez-Orozco, &

Rhodes, 2003). Roffman et al. (2003) suggested that immigrant youth, who may be unused to being a minority and often have overworked parents who are unable to monitor them adequately or draw on a network for help, may especially benefit from having quality relationships with nonrelative adults to help them adjust. Recent immigrant groups may also lack many positive bicultural role models, both personal and celebrity, making them especially vulnerable to negative stereotypes and media coverage.

Marshallese and Micronesian Students and Families in Schools

In the United States, Arkansas, Hawaiʻi, Oregon, and Oklahoma all have notable Micronesian populations. Little has been written specifically about Marshallese immigrants and those of Marshallese descent in the State of Hawaiʻi, so this section will also cover research on Micronesian populations in general, as well as other groups such as the Chuukese and Pohnpeian peoples. Though these populations are distinct in language and culture, they share some history of colonization, some cultural considerations, geography and lifestyle (K. Ratliffe, personal communication, November 30, 2019). Findings from these groups are presented here due to the dearth of research spotlighting Marshallese participants. Thus, further research is needed to determine whether all these findings and recommendations can be applied to Marshallese populations. It should also be noted that none of the research presented here focuses on Hawaiʻi County, and the difference in contexts could influence the generalizability of the previous literature to the participants in this study.

Marshallese culture. Marshallese people view themselves as voyagers while also holding a strong sense of belonging that is tied to land and the system of land ownership in the Marshall Islands (Heine, 2004). These two pulls may account for the willingness to migrate far beyond their homeland while wishing to return. Indeed, 2015 Census data showed that only 10%

of foreign-born Marshallese respondents became naturalized U.S. citizens. Some found a supportive community with better opportunities in the United States and stay long-term without ever having planned to, such as in the Springdale, Arkansas Marshallese community (Carpenter, 2011). Mirroring the settlement patterns in the Marshall Islands, Marshallese migrants also tend to live among clans when moving abroad, though they often cannot form multifamily households of the same size due to economic and legal restraints (Heine, 2004). In 2015 U.S. Census data, average household size overall was 2.4, while Marshallese homes in Hawaiʻi had almost seven people per household (Levin, 2017). These households can be confusing to those unfamiliar with Micronesian cultures, and may even arouse concern or legal trouble since children may be away from their parents and only informally adopted to allow them to attend school in the United States (Robinson, 2018). Additionally, a tendency toward clannishness and social reserve when dealing with others has led to outsiders to perceive Micronesian people as slow, resistant or apathetic (Paul, 2003), when they may have been trying to convey respect or their own good character by not speaking unnecessarily (Henning & Ching, 1979).

Generally, Marshallese migrants maintain “immigrant optimism” by comparing what native-born citizens might consider poor living conditions and prospects to a frame of reference based in the home country rather than the ideals of the host country (Heine, 2004). This optimism may support them in remaining in Hawaiʻi despite its expenses and lack of supports, as many Marshallese people prefer our the Hawaiian islands to the continental United States in the interest of living an island life closer to home (Hawaiʻi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019).

Though this is true of most immigrants, Micronesian groups may need help adjusting to the culture, laws, and expectations of the US, as well as the special sociocultural context of

Hawaiʻi. Social norms around ideas such as how free time should be spent, ownership, punctuality, gender relations, directness, and honesty have been a source of confusion and consternation, despite research on this topic going back many decades in Hawaiʻi (Henning & Ching, 1979). Misunderstanding of or disagreement with cultural norms can be exacerbated by locals perhaps not understanding differences between the various Micronesian islands. Paul (2003) suggested that someone seeking to address problems through understanding would need a cultural insider from each Micronesian group, and that it would be especially challenging due to the difficulty in getting even one cultural insider to share freely unless there is already a trusted contact.

Lastly, there may also be very specific cultural considerations related to the Marshallese social structure at work. Robinson's (2018) cultural informant shared how differences between *irooj* (chiefly) and *kajoor* (commoner) classes maintained a largely unspoken influence on Marshallese people in the United States. The Marshallese students that Robinson interviewed, however, did not mention these classes to the researcher at all. It is possible that children are unaware of or do not pay much attention to class in the United States, or there may be invisible social rules that outsiders may never truly see, much less navigate.

Preservation of language and culture. When four Oʻahu Marshallese adults were asked what was most important to teach to Marshallese children, two said values and customs, one said Ratak Chain (the less common Marshallese dialect), and one said knowing where you come from (Uchishiba, 2018). All four chose agendas related to the preservation of language, culture, or heritage – which was described as an important part of their social culture, something to be discussed when meeting someone new. Preservation of their own culture was more important than learning to navigate the new culture; in a later focus group, only two out of seven endorsed bicultural competency, which has been emphasized as beneficial in previous literature (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008).

Marshallese families on Oʻahu used morning and evening prayers and grandparents telling traditional bedtime stories to preserve their language in their homes (Uchishiba, 2018). The 2015 U.S. Census data found that only 14% of Marshallese people in Hawaiʻi spoke English exclusively at home (Levin, 2017). While children have been expected to speak Marshallese with older people and at gatherings, they may use English with each other or when responding to parents speaking Marshallese (Uchishiba, 2018). This indicated flexibility with children knowing when to switch to the appropriate language, as well as a general emphasis within families and the larger Marshallese community to use the native language frequently. Celebrations such as Manit Day, an annual cultural holiday also celebrated in the Marshall Islands, specifically targeted cultural preservation and celebration. Although culture may not be the explicit focus of something like Marshallese Education Day, which spotlighted the academic achievements of children in the community, culture and language were also included in past celebrations. A search of public Facebook groups and pages revealed that such celebrations are also held on Hawaiʻi Island, or at least have been planned in the past. Funerals are another type of event in Hawaiʻi with a strong cultural element for Marshallese families (K. Ratliffe, personal communication, November 30, 2019).

Religion and culture. Christianity has been a pillar of Marshallese culture for many, and the presence of a Marshallese church can act as an indicator of a permanent enclave, as it serves an important role in community life and can demand significant time from patrons (Heine, 2004). A major theme for the Marshallese participants in Uchishiba's (2018) dissertation was the dominance of the church and religion in daily home life as well as community life. Uchishiba found that while his Chuukese participants created a formal school to maintain their culture and language, the Marshallese community in one Oʻahu area chose to purposefully integrate language and culture preservation into their church services, church groups, and community activities. This goal was manifested in the ubiquity of Marshallese language at church functions, as well as the inclusion of traditional song and dance. Participants said that in a large church, there might be as many as six meetings a week for various church groups and activities. Church sermons and youth groups also followed more of a classroom model than the typical U.S. church; and church leaders called on people to read or answer questions, used visual aids, and encouraged note-taking.

Family challenges. Generally, Micronesian immigrants and migrants in Hawaiʻi have faced heavy economic and social challenges, which may be related to mutually-reinforcing discrimination from governmental systems and the citizenry (Hawaiʻi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019; Hezel & Levin, 2017). In Hawaiʻi in 2015, the average income for Marshallese households was just $36,000 annually, and there was a large employment gender gap, with 71% of males being in the workforce, compared to 43% of females (Levin, 2017). Overall, the Marshallese situation in the Hawaiian Islands has been difficult, as the Marshallese population shows significant disparities compared to the rest of residents, while the Marshallese people in Arkansas have comparatively better employment and wage statistics than Marshallese people in Hawaiʻi (there was insufficient population for the Oregon and Oklahoma groups to be analyzed in Levin’s data analysis). Levin (2017) summarized that 46% of Marshallese in Hawaiʻi qualified as being in poverty according to federal guidelines, rising to 49% for households with children.

While tackling the broader community's views toward Micronesian people may require much time and effort, Marshallese homes and communities have their own challenges and areas for growth that may be important to address, as well. In reflecting on her experience as a research assistant, Uchishiba's (2018) Marshallese co-researcher noted a generational divide among adults, finding that the younger ones were less reserved and unafraid to present differing opinions. Uchishiba's co-researcher also noted that the community center that they studied helped to build bridges with schools and address some of the education-related challenges others have found with this population in Hawaiʻi (Heine, 2004; Paul, 2003). In addition to divides between Micronesian communities and schools, there may also be divides between families based on educational history. Paul (2003) interviewed one educated couple that disparaged other Micronesian families who they reported to be mistreating their children and not managing their drinking problems. However, the couple was not entirely without sympathy, noting that people lacked a network of family members to help care for children and stop family members from doing shameful things, such as drinking excessively. Uchishiba (2018) found that Marshallese people in Hawaiʻi tended to keep narrow social circles, limiting their potential network of resources and emotional support. Paul also wrote that, in general, Micronesian people were a proud people who wanted to be seen in a positive social light, echoing findings from decades ago (Henning & Ching, 1979).

Challenges for young people. Students are not safe from discrimination within the school system. A study in the Hawaiʻi school system found that other English-learners used "Micronesian" as an insult, along with other stereotype-based bullying, in a way that placed Micronesian students at the bottom of a hierarchy of immigrants (Talmy, 2010). Even teachers have been reported to show discriminatory attitudes and behaviors, such as assuming

Micronesian students were at fault for classroom theft, assuming they cannot learn effectively, assuming families do not care about education, and generally perpetuating negative stereotypes (Hawaiʻi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019; Heine, 2004). Micronesian stereotypes tend to lump the different groups together, and many stereotypes are rehashed insults that have been assigned to different immigrant groups in past years. For example, earlier this year, the Hawaiʻi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2019) shared testimony about how Micronesian students were bullied for their lack of English ability and their "dirtiness."

Micronesian students have also been sent to Special Education classes when teachers misattributed language barriers and communication styles to student disinterest or low ability (Hawaiʻi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019; Paul, 2003), a situation common to other immigrant students in the United States (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Such placement in classes beneath their abilities can lead to disengagement and then problem behaviors like skipping classes. Even Marshallese students who have succeeded in school lacked opportunities to practice English with native speakers, as they largely spent time with ingroup acquaintances when outside of school (Heine, 2004).

Cultural differences are important in considering Marshallese student success, as well. Though research shows that many families and students value education, they also may have different ideas of what that means (Heine, 2004; Ratliffe, 2018; Robinson, 2018). Heine (2004) found that Marshallese students who were "successful" (3.0+ GPA, leadership in clubs or groups, good attendance, participation in extracurriculars, and no substance use) tended to have families with high expectations who closely supervised them. This did not appear to be the norm, though, as many parents were unprepared to see so much homework at a higher difficulty level than they experienced in the Marshall Islands, where formal education was something taken care of by teachers at the school without spreading into students' free time (Heine, 2004; Paul, 2003). Completion of school regardless of performance could be the marker for success in Marshallese families, rather than an emphasis on good grades and a resume that appeals to college admissions departments (Robinson, 2018).

Additionally, a recurring challenge that has frustrated educators as well as Marshallese students and families is a cultural difference around time. In the Marshall Islands, timeliness is often of little concern as people arrive late based on the assumption that everyone else will also be late (Heine, 2002; Heine, 2004). In the United States, where punctuality and prioritizing work is often viewed as a characteristic of success, Micronesian people can feel confused and stressed (Heine, 2004; Henning & Ching, 1979). Family, community, and church time is generally more important to Micronesian people, and these social demands can make it difficult for students to manage homework, get to programs on-time, or even attend school regularly (Heine, 2004; Ratliffe, 2018). Ratliffe (2018) wrote that Micronesian families' cultural mismatch with strict school attendance policies can be particularly problematic, as missing class for other responsibilities would be much more acceptable in their homelands. Uchishiba's (2018) research assistant wrote that although children adapt faster to life in Hawai'i than their parents' generation, they still need more support at home.

Teachers with Marshallese students in their classes discussed the prevalence of extended families and communal habits, as well as the emphasis on sports, playtime, and religion (Robinson, 2018). One mentioned issues with timeliness, and another said that low parent involvement led them to believe that parents did not value education. All said that there were problems communicating with parents, largely due to language barriers. Unfortunately, despite students' self-reports of the importance of education, they gave teachers the opposite impression. This may be because teachers observed that the Marshallese students had trouble focusing, staying quiet and still during class, and caring for school supplies. Still, despite these issues with students, families, and poor academics, the principal reported good attendance and participation. Language barriers and lack of understanding of appropriate classroom behavior may be important factors behind the achievement gap, as students were generally able to do what the teachers wanted if they were given sufficient time and explanations. Heine (2002) provided some insight as to why these issues might happen in classrooms, explaining that classroom culture and what constituted respectful behavior to adults was different in the Marshall Islands; however, she also wrote that being quiet in the presence of adults was one of these values, which conflicted with the behavior observed in Robinson's (2018) study 16 years later.

Cultural differences can be exacerbated by the "model minority" view of East Asians held by some educators. In a national study, teachers attributed all groups of immigrant students' lack of success to their families, except for Chinese families (Suárez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Paul (2003) found that Hawai'i elementary teachers openly compared Micronesian and East Asian success, bemoaning that Micronesian parents could not be more like the East Asian parents in promoting education. Although the percentage of Asian-descent teachers in Hawai'i has decreased while the percentage of "Other" (which could include mixed-Asian heritage) has increased over time, in the 2017-2018 school year over one-third of public school teachers were of East Asian or Southeast Asian descent (Hawai'i Department of Education, 2019). Thus, many teachers may find East Asian students to be easier to relate to, or else may be biased in their favor because of shared heritage and educational values. Other teachers in Paul’s (2003) study wanted to “rescue” kids from their backgrounds or families so they could be successful in the traditional Western sense.

What helps students. Heine (2004) wrote that Hawaiʻi schools generally did not support Marshallese students well, but found that the successful students used their personal strengths, strong family support, and commitment to giving back as internal motivation to succeed in the face of challenges. There was no single strategy that worked best for every student; the ones Heine interviewed pointed to family and culture as sources of strategies, but they also picked up some strategies in the United States. She wrote that schools need to ensure their teachers are better informed about Marshallese students and their families, and should also discourage teachers from perpetuating stereotypes and discriminating against students because of perceived cultural shortcomings. Outreach to Micronesian families is difficult, however, and many teachers are desperate for ways to better serve students and reach families (Paul, 2003). Schools’ difficulties making connections with families could be due to parents having to work often, low emphasis on school compared to social demands, or parents’ general shyness and hesitancy to speak English with school personnel (Paul, 2003; Ratliffe, 2010; Ratliffe, 2011). Marshallese parents may also carry stereotypes Westerners had for them in the Marshall Islands, expecting those in the United States to also think of them as lazy and impoverished (Heine, 2004). It has also been found that Micronesian families knew little about available resources that might have been helpful to them both in and outside of school (Heine, 2004; Paul, 2003).

Robinson (2018), concerned with educational disparities between Marshallese and non-Hispanic White students, suggested that culturally connected activities and activities that would intrinsically motivate students should be used to promote inclusion, and to include *all* students in these activities. Robinson also encouraged the use of technology in the classroom as a way of breaking barriers and responding to Marshallese students' interest in technology. Sports have also been suggested as a way of building bridges with Micronesian students (Iding, Cholymay, & Kaneshiro, 2007; Robinson, 2018). In Robinson's (2018) study of Marshallese students, participants were interested in learning about their own and others' culture and history alongside non-Marshallese classmates, similar to the suggestions given by some Chuukese students in Hawaiʻi that schools should provide opportunities for students to share their culture (Iding et al., 2007). Robinson wrote that allowing group work, Marshallese language, and extra time and instruction in classrooms were all ways to accommodate a more group-oriented culture. While teachers in Robinson's study shared a variety of strategies for working with Marshallese students, the two common ideas used to help students feel valued were talking about students' interests regularly and making a personal connection with students.

Goals of and for Marshallese students. Uchishiba (2018) asked Marshallese adults about their dreams for their children and grandchildren. Six of the eight participants wanted their children and grandchildren to do well in school, but only one wanted them to go to college. Interestingly, only four wanted high school graduation for the children, suggesting that the remaining respondents did not view doing well in school as something that necessarily included completion. Robinson's (2018) student participants reported that education was important and connected to having a desirable future as well as making parents proud; all planned to go to college. Students also discussed sports frequently, and some of their interest in college was linked to the opportunity to play sports at that level. The interest in college amongst students is encouraging, as 2015 Census data found that only 3% of Marshallese adults 25-years-old or greater in Hawaiʻi were college graduates, and 80% were high school graduates, though Hawaiʻi had higher rates than Arkansas for both (Levin, 2017).

It seems that the perception of Marshallese families being uninterested in their children's education and achievement is not accurate. Indeed, education is celebrated at Marshallese Education Day each year, an event that praises and recognizes honor roll students while tying in traditional culture (Uchishiba, 2018). Furthermore, many Micronesian migrants and immigrants came to the United States or sent their children here for the purpose of providing them with a better education (Heine, 2004).

Place and Community

The cycle of poverty works by making it difficult for those from disadvantaged backgrounds to get out of poverty, so that their children lack the opportunities available to their wealthier peers and have little chance of climbing in socioeconomic status. Often, children from low-income, primarily minority communities see only a similar lifestyle to their parents' as an option for themselves, or else view their community as something to be escaped from in pursuit of a more exciting or luxurious life (Mills, 2008). Thus, a number of programs have advocated for community revitalization or enrichment with the aim of strengthening communities in order to promote positive child development (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 2012). Similarly, Luter, Mitchell, and Taylor (2017) suggested that efforts that fail to target children's home surroundings are unsuccessful in part because they exist only in and around school buildings. One way to bridge the gaps between schools and communities is to have outside programs and organizations promote learning and youth development in ways that draw from and seek to pay service to students' surroundings.

Youth Development

Much has been written about youth development, especially involving minority and high-risk students. Unsurprisingly, Pacific Islander students are lacking in the literature, so the contents of this section may not reflect best practices for Pacific Islander students. Still, research involving families with low-income, immigrants and children of immigrants, multilingual, and marginalized groups may be helpful in establishing starting points to develop specialized programs and strategies for these significant groups in Hawaiʻi.

The Search Institute's Developmental Assets framework. One popular model of youth development is the Search Institute's Developmental Assets framework, which covers 40 internal and external assets which are supposed to influence better outcomes (Nakkula, Foster, Mannes, & Bolstrom, 2010). Based on positive psychology, this model rejects older deficit models by focusing on protective rather than risk factors (Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011). Still, many of the protective factors are simply avoidance of risk factors, so this model could be seen as a deficit model dressed up in a more positive way. Still, the framework, at least ideologically, espouses a strength-based approach, encouraging practitioners to promote the development of positive traits, as youth with more developmental assets have been shown to do increasingly better as their number of assets increases (Benson et al., 2011). However, the body of research using the Developmental Assets framework is inconsistent, which has been blamed on studies failing to use longitudinal designs. Benson et al. (2011) found that predictive traits tended to cluster into particularly strong groups; one such cluster of interest to Summer Program is that middle school community involvement predicted a GPA three times higher than for those without the community involvement cluster. They also found that girls and younger children were more likely to fit into better trait clusters, with expected differences between socioeconomic and racial and ethnic groups.

Another favorable aspect of the Developmental Aspects framework is that practitioners ware encouraged to adapt the framework to each community, even if this means blending other frameworks into it. Rather than advocate for a strict application of their framework, the Search Institute was aware that context matters, making this model of youth development well-aligned with place-based and culturally-attuned approaches (Nakkula et al., 2010). After all, an asset for one ethnic group may not necessarily be an indicator for success with other groups, and programs likely need to make significant changes to accommodate different populations (Olive, 2003). Similarly, the Search Institute also recommended that practitioners not target specific groups too exclusively, as it may be difficult to recognize students in need because they do not present with obvious problem behaviors, but may nonetheless lack developmental assets (Nakkula et al., 2010). While the Developmental Assets framework had little to say about systemic change, and focused instead on the day-to-day interactions that promote positive development, the Search Institute recommended partnerships and funders who are willing to support ongoing projects. Proponents pointed out that sustainability was important for maintaining positive change in the community and developing a recognizable presence. In this way, they argued, the paradigm can shift to the “New Norm,” which “views youth as critical resources who need ample supports and opportunities to fully develop rather than as problems who cost the community its resources” (Nakkula et al., 2010, p.15).

Youth development programs. High quality youth programs create good environments for young people, which can then benefit them academically, physically, mentally, and socially, as well as lowering risk behaviors (Bartko, 2005). Creating a program is one task, but promoting engagement and attendance can be another challenge. Youths have different needs and interests, which can be affected by their immigrant status (Borden, Perkins, Villarruel, & Stone, 2005). While all respondents in Borden et al.’s (2005) study gave personal development and confidence as their top reason for attending youth programs, those from the first or second generation reported that their other top interests were learning job skills, having a safe haven, learning life skills, and improving the self and community. Third generation or greater students reported interest in socializing, emotion regulation, improving self and community, and then job skills. There was also commonality in the top reason for *not* attending a program: other obligations, including home, work, or school.

Place-Based and Community-Based Education

There is much overlap between place-based and community-based approaches, and I believe most advocates support both. Place-based education (PBE) proponents have made this connection explicit, naming community-minded citizenship as an important goal for PBE (Anderson, 2017). Utilizing community resources and promoting relationships with the community often goes along with a PBE approach, as is the case for Summer Program.

Community youth development. Community also overlaps youth development, as the community youth development model focuses on making youth “engaged partners” in the program and their communities rather than just preparing young people for success (Perkins, Borden, Keith, Hoppe-Rooney, & Villaruel, 2003). By making participation meaningful, youth can develop stronger senses of both belonging and ownership in their communities beyond the program (Villarruel, Perkins, Borden, & Keith, 2003). This approach targets everyone for empowerment rather than those with specific problem behaviors or readiness indicators (Olive, 2003). It also emphasizes the importance of context beyond the individual. Contexts can include culture and family as well as systemic challenges, and these community contexts as well as preexisting supports should be identified before designing a youth development program (Cheshire & Kawamoto, 2003; Olive, 2003). Relationships can also be an important context, especially for youth who have been alienated (Villarruel et al., 2003). In this vein, some have recommended that youth development programs also involve family members, even if the involvement is as simple as program staff having positive relationships with families, which staff could then use to gain insights about what would be relevant and comfortable for students (Yohalem, 2003).

Defining place-based education. Place-based education encompasses multiple educational traditions and has no prescribed methods (Smith, 2002), but should be recognizable by a focus on incorporating the local area in learning (Smith & Sobel, 2010). The local area can include people and cultural aspects, not just the physical environment. While the authors of nearly every place-based book explore the philosophical meaning of place, even those referring to place primarily as a social construct acknowledge that place is still grounded in time, space, and sensory experience (Shannon & Galle, 2017). Geography and physical elements are important and obvious aspects of a place, but what constitutes a uniquely identified place is often a matter of tradition and systems which were constructed by humans. Anderson (2017) wrote that PBE only required that a project be situated firmly in some aspect of place, but more commonly featured multiple facets. The view I take for this project is that place-based learning should be designed primarily around the neighborhoods that schools and students occupy. Furthermore, program developers and educators should not just familiarize themselves with the history, culture, and ecology of the places around them, but also develop connections with the local community (Tan & Atencio, 2016). Lastly, although sustainability and eco-literacy are often topics covered in place-based approaches (Shannon & Galle, 2017), these themes should not be the theoretical basis. Exploring the local can be done in any environment; everywhere there is culture, history, landscape, and life to study and service (Pyle, 2008).

Generally, PBE emphasizes out-of-classroom learning, which makes a consideration of physical space important. Indeed, place-based ideas may be a reaction against classroom learning that emphasizes abstract skills and lessons while separating students from their communities (Shannon & Galle, 2017). However, some argue that there is still a place for traditional learning, such as rote memorization of the names of plant and animal species, in combination with direct learning (Pyle, 2008). This might be especially important for preserving the traditional names of natural objects and phenomena in places like Hawaiʻi.

PBE may overlap with approaches such as environmental education, project- and problem-based learning, experiential learning, community-based education (CBE, which will be discussed next), and an emphasis on youth voice (Anderson, 2017). The PBE literature also references John Dewey heavily as inspiration, as Dewey was against the tendency schools had of separating students from community and nature (Altman, Stires, & Weseen, 2015; Anderson, 2017; Luter et al., 2017; Smith, 2002; Theobald & Siskar, 2008). The American Nature Study movement of the late Victorian Era was another influence, as it was concerned with students' disconnection with and lack of knowledge of nature, and sought to remedy this problem using hands-on learning in the field (Pyle, 2008).

Defining community-based education. Defining CBE may first demand a discussion of what community means. While some might describe a holistic "sense of community," community can be based simply on geographic proximity rather than shared identity or experiences (Theobald & Siskar, 2008). For the purposes of this paper, community can be based either on location or less concrete concepts such as similar background, shared interests, common values, and interactions. In this study, I allowed the participants to interpret community as they wished, and I took the same approach in selecting sources for the literature review – that is, nothing was excluded based on the author's definition of community.

In my view, CBE is a close relative of PBE and should be an integral part of a well-designed PBE program, so that it could just as aptly be described with either label. According to Gruenewald (2008), both approaches used communities to develop curriculum and provide direct experiences, and the two approaches were distinguished by whether nonhuman elements were utilized. In a very simplistic sense, you could think of CBE as promoting an emphasis on the people, with PBE encompassing everything else, but both are grounded in the local.

Commonalities and Strengths of the Approaches

Social and historical contexts. Particularly in recent years, PBE also emphasized community and history, not just the natural environment (Anderson, 2017; Wurdinger, 2017). This can also tie into the increasing interest in critical pedagogy, which might be described as an urban interpretation of place-based learning. Indeed, PBE can often have a strong sense of social justice or political action, by revitalizing struggling communities and promoting politically and socially conscious citizens (Anderson, 2017; Theobald & Siskar, 2008; Tompkins, 2008). While educators in urban locations may not incorporate as much of the physical environment in their instruction, those in rural locations may focus excessively on the natural resources at a site while neglecting the social sphere (Shannon & Galle, 2017). Attention should be paid to issues such as who wrote the local history and who benefits or loses out due to the way land is presently used, even if it means confronting uncomfortable interpretations of place and past (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2008). A place beloved by multiple groups may hold histories of conflict and injustice, and PBE should not neglect these histories.

CBE can help to promote diversity issues by allowing different perspectives to shine and make possible the visibility of underrepresented people that might lead to positive change (Theobald & Siskar, 2008). Theobald and Siskar (2008) encouraged those passionate about multiculturalism to work together with PBE proponents to build strong communities that honor diversity and create positive relationships among a variety of groups. PBE and CBE both hold potential to promote multiculturalism among youths to transform the local culture, so that students care not just about their streams and songbirds, but are also supportive and protective of all members of a healthy, cooperative community. Even something as simple as informally sharing spaces and projects such as a community garden has shown potential to foster "everyday multiculturalism," which can encourage both cultural exchange and discovery or renewal of one's own culture (Shan & Walter, 2015).

Relevant, specific programs. One aspect of PBE and CBE that I find particularly exciting is that programs for students should be built around the culture of those served, rather than being superficially adapted from a one-size-fits-all model (Perkins et al., 2003). In working with American Indian youth, for example, Cheshire and Kawamoto (2003) first participated in the community and learned about the culture, leading them to emphasize family and desire to help the tribe rather than encouraging individual goals in the tradition of mainstream education. By building from community voice and being cognizant of contextual realities throughout the development and implementation process, programs can serve people to the fullest in a way that is culturally respectful and sustainable in the long-term.

One of the main draws of PBE is that it can be more relevant than less flexible classroom-based instruction (Smith, 2002). PBE proponents argued that the locally-focused and usually hands-on nature of PBE naturally lends itself to being more engaging and relevant to students (Anderson, 2017). Emphasis on experiential learning and being outside traditional classroom environments may be especially helpful to students who do not thrive under normal learning conditions. Wurdinger (2017) suggested that outside-the-classroom projects were inherently more student-oriented and intrinsically motivating than traditional education. However, he wrote with a higher education audience in mind, and his assumptions may not apply to younger students who may have less freedom to select and pursue projects which interest them personally.

Community involvement. Both PBE and CBE can also be powerful tools for community strengthening, or even complete revitalization, particularly with a collaborative, network-minded approach. They both encourage the establishment of partnerships to build stronger community ties as well as relieving burden from the schools to provide such programming on their own (Tompkins, 2008). Partnerships between educators, nonprofits, local government, and businesses are important for economically struggling areas both urban and rural. Utilizing partnerships in this way can also help with social relations and address divisions in ways that different sectors cannot achieve individually.

Critical pedagogy, which is often a facet of PBE and CBE, calls attention to systematic injustices, and thus encourages strengthening of communities through education about and advocacy against issues such as structural inequality (Shannon & Galle, 2017). Place-based efforts can focus on communities' as well as nature's interests. Similarly, youth development, can look beyond the individual and try to change whole communities. Others have advocated for individual and collective change together, as both sustained one another (Morris, 2008). Some youth development authors have also encouraged an emphasis on community or group belonging for all, including those from individualistic cultures, as a way of promoting strong networks and a sense of shared responsibility to the community and society (Pace, 2003). As discussed earlier, some leaders in the youth development field believe that systems change can come about by strengthening the developmental assets of individuals, and they espoused the importance of external factors from communities in the prospects of youth (Nakkula et al., 2010). Others working with the Developmental Assets framework looked to promote change within "developmental ecologies," such as schools and youth programs, in order to bolster assets from a systems level (Benson et al., 2011).

In a summary report of afterschool programs targeting disadvantaged, minority elementary and middle school students, Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce (2007) concluded that high quality programs should span the community, and that youth fared better when they had more extracurricular enrichment in the community, even if it was not part of a formal program. Similarly, McLaughlin (2000) advocated for more partnerships between schools and community and emphasized that community programs for poor, primarily minority youth improved confidence in their academics, future prospects, and themselves. Another benefit was that students were more likely to have a sense of civic duty and a desire to give back to their community. Youth programming has been shown to increase volunteering in adulthood (Borden et al., 2005). Developing confident, civic-minded youth could be one way of counteracting the cycle of poverty by shifting the prevailing mindset away from defeatism.

Contexts and interaction. Both youth development and place-based education, in their best forms, are made to match their participants and surroundings. In line with the sociocultural theory described in a following section, youth development authors (Perkins & Borden, 2003; Weiss, Little, & Bouffard, 2005) emphasized the importance of interactions between the individual, family, and community – among other factors, like systemic or historical contexts –

in determining outcomes. Even the best of programs can fail to make measurable impacts if there are significant contextual barriers. This may be part of the reason why youth development and PBE and CBE approaches focus on communities as well as students, as making positive changes among contexts can affect how much youths are able to gain from efforts directed at them.

Another important contextual wisdom is that programs should match the needs, interests, expectations, cultures, and limitations of the students and areas served. Authors throughout both the youth development and PBE literature emphasized the importance of not using one-size-fits-all programs, and encouraged deep adaptation, if not outright rebuilding for each context. While it may be a challenge to find a consensus, the voices of community members are invaluable to these approaches, and it is important to listen to what they find important (Morris, 2008). The use of CBE in partnership with schools can also help to cover topics neglected because of the demands of testing standards, and gives voice to all facets of the community, including community members from lower income backgrounds who may not usually be well-represented in schools (Tompkins, 2008). Indeed, PBE and CBE can draw from the diversity of a place from the bottom up, unlike the more constrained diversity initiatives of schools (Theobald & Siskar, 2008).

Previous Studies Similar to Summer Program

After searching the literature, I was unable to find any published research on a program that covered the same goals as the Summer Program. There was very little on non-academic educational programs in general. While place-based programs for low-achieving or at-risk youth in Hawaiʻi have been studied before both within and outside of schools, these have focused on primarily academic outcomes, as well as programs emphasizing Native Hawaiian students, cultures, and values (Fukuda, Sam, & Wang, 2010; Hishinuma et al., 2009; Kanaʻiapuni, Ledward, & Malone, 2017; Kuwahara, 2013; Yamauchi, 2003; Yamauchi & Purcell, 2009). As for studies utilizing Marshallese informants and participants, Uchishiba (2018) conducted a series of community focus groups with individuals in a low-income area, both Chuukese and Marshallese, with the help of cultural insiders as research assistants. The overall purpose of the research was to foster community leaders and strengthen the community, which aligns with place-based and community-based approaches, though his efforts did not target students specifically.

Poverty and race interact in producing negative outcomes (Gordon & Cui, 2018), but protective factors such as summer and afterschool programs and community, family, and peer connections can lead to better academic outcomes (McLaughlin, 2001; Vandell et al., 2007; Williams, Bryan, Morrison, & Scott, 2017), while personal beliefs such as educational aspirations can lead to better economic outcomes (Lee et al., 2012). For example, a study of rural schools in the Southeast found that even a small number of school-community partnerships was associated with better academic outcomes and college prospects, and it was particularly helpful for low-income students in need of more opportunities outside the classroom (Alleman & Holly, 2013). A study of critical project-based community learning at a low-performing urban middle school indicated that program participation was related to increased test scores and engagement, along with promoting “critical consciousness,” which encouraged students to think critically in a way that might inspire them to enact change in their neighborhoods (Luter et al., 2017). This echoes others’ (Cheshire & Kawamoto, 2003) insistence that youth workers acknowledge oppression and institutional discrimination facing minority groups in the United States and build realistic expectations with these considerations rather than creating more frustration (Olive, 2003).

A study on a community-focused entrepreneurship curriculum used by multiple programs for middle and high school students found that the program encouraged pursuit of entrepreneurship and relevant education for these goals (Zimbroff, Schlake, Anderson-Knott, Eberle, & Vigna, 2017). Participants were also more likely to utilize local mentors and stay in the area after leaving school, either taking over local businesses or starting their own. In a study of multiple community-based youth development programs in South Korea, a three-pronged approach was taken: exposing disadvantaged children to broader experiences, encouraging students to be motivated by their self-selected goals, and targeting the community's deficit view of students in the child welfare program (Kim, 2014). Similarly, organizers of the Summer Program hoped to encourage more positive views toward students by involving them in the community and encouraging development of positive relationships with community partners.

Theoretical Lens

Sociocultural approach. Though the importance of culture in learning and development has been approached in a variety of ways by different researchers and theorists, I used a sociocultural lens which emphasizes how participation in cultural activities contributes to what individuals learn and allows for the reproduction and transformation of cultural learning (Rogoff, 1995). Education must attend to the role of culture, as efforts to impose Western standards disadvantage people unused to the expectations of the United States' formal education system, causing them to test poorly despite being otherwise skilled and intelligent (Fukuda & Hoomanawanui, 2011; Rogoff, 2003). Schools have often turned to increasing standardization to address achievement gaps, when culture, politics, and place need to be considered in order to truly help a diverse range of learners thrive (Gruenewald, 2008). Gruenewald (2008) wrote that schooling itself lacked diversity in the way education is delivered to students. He argued that most schooling was too rigid and did not make appropriate considerations for culture, among other issues. Understanding culture in order to make education more welcoming should take into account that each culture is unique, as is each permutation of that particular culture as practiced by a group or individual belonging to it. Communities also play an important role in child development, and each community has its own particular culture (Benson et al., 2012). Of course, accounting for culture alone is insufficient for facilitating minority children's success, but family cultural norms and beliefs about education and their children's development are an important component, as school has different meanings for different families (Okagaki, 2001).

Rogoff's Planes. One of the cultural considerations of interest to the project is how goal orientation relates to different social levels. With this question in mind, I used Rogoff's (1995) sociocultural planes as a basis for developing some of my interview questions and informing my analysis. Working from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of cultural and social contexts in learning and development, Rogoff advanced the importance of considering the individual, their family, and their greater social network. Thus, my analysis will cover the individual as a unit; the individual in the context of their family, peers, and program leaders and teachers; and the individual as part of a broader community with a culture that may not match well with theirs. Rogoff wrote extensively about different cultures, including immigrants in the United States, making the approach a natural fit for this study.

Addressing Gaps in the Literature

Place-based programs in Hawaiʻi covered in the literature have tended to emphasize academic and behavioral outcomes (Fukuda et al., 2010; Hishinuma et al., 2009; Kanaʻiapuni, et al., 2017; Kuwahara, 2013; Yamauchi, 2003; Yamauchi & Purcell, 2009). Previously published research has also covered programs primarily emphasizing Native Hawaiian youth and Native

Hawaiian learning, or else only sought to link cultural connection with Native Hawaiian students in Hawaiʻi (Lino, 2010). Further research on factors influencing Micronesian students' success has been suggested in the literature (Ratliffe, 2010; Ratliffe, 2011), as well as a need to shift away from traditional Western assessments in the United States by highlighting the strengths of Indigenous minorities (Coles-Ritchie & Charles, 2011; Kanaʻiapuni et al., 2017).

While organizers and volunteers of the Summer Program wanted to explore alternative ways of assessing success, time constraints prevented us from conducting a formal assessment. Still, we wanted to see whether a summer program without a focus on academic outcomes could work as a positive force by giving students more confidence in their abilities and a better idea of what their place in the community could be. However, it will take time before we can determine the long-term success of our pilot participants based on our holistic impressions.

I also thought it was important to examine a specific COFA group in a rarely-studied part of the State. Residents of the less populated Hawaiian islands face different challenges and live different lifestyles than those on Oʻahu. There is also a lack of published literature regarding Micronesian people in general. Although "Micronesian" commonly refers to people from the Pacific region of Micronesia, there are many distinct cultures among people from the various islands, and much more research is needed which distinguishes these groups (Heine, 2002). This study will add to the sparse literature on Marshallese students, who belong to one of the most populous and – from what I have heard and observed in my own experience – maligned immigrant groups in West Hawaiʻi.

Purpose of Proposed Research

Primarily, the study sought to learn about how Summer Program's students saw their place in the community, and how to help them discover and achieve their goals while respecting their cultural backgrounds. Additionally, I was interested in the opinions of students' families, community leaders, and people who worked with such communities about these kinds of students' goals, and what supports or barriers they might have faced in attaining them. I also wanted to learn about the cultural relevance of Summer Program's non-academic learning experiences by asking how it was perceived, and to learn about participants' cultures in general. With these purposes in mind, the research questions were (a) How do these students relate their learning and goals to themselves, their families, and their community? and (b) What do the participants believe to help or hinder these students from reaching their goals and feeling connected to the community?

Though this research assessed some aspects of Summer Program and may comment on its relative success in these areas, it was not designed as a program evaluation. Still, I hoped to benefit community organizations interested in improving their programs, school leaders looking for ideas, and anyone interested in the possibility of school or community reform based around preparing disadvantaged children for a future of *their* choosing, and any insights into how current assessments and prescribed paths to success may be mismatched with the attitudes of low-income Pacific Islander students and their families in West Hawai‘i. There may be more effective strategies to address disparities waiting to be uncovered.

Chapter 3: Methods

For this project, I chose an exploratory qualitative approach, which is appropriate for studying topics about which little is known (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Quantitative measures would be weak in this situation due to the low number of possible participants and lack of previous literature to inform what to measure and how to do so. This case study involved observations of Summer Program, followed by semi-structured individual and focus group interviews and the use of some archival documents. Summer Program ran for three weeks in the summer of 2019, three days a week. I was part of the program as a volunteer, and I continued to volunteer with the program coordinators throughout the time I worked on gathering data and writing this paper. Program coordinators, myself included, periodically met with some of the students (mostly older students who indicated they wanted us to check in on them) to see how they progressed with their goals. We also met without the students to discuss students' progress after the program and to plan future directions for Summer Program.

Participants

Participants for the interviews included two students and a Summer Program staff member. I originally wanted to interview Summer Program participants and their adult household family members. However, it was difficult to get signed consent forms returned. In order to gather more data, I revised my research plan to include Housing Complex and Summer Program staff, as well as community leaders with ties to the complex or local Marshallese communities. Despite having Native Hawaiian and Chuukese participants in Summer Program, I did not seek out other Pacific Islander community leaders because the student interview participants were all Marshallese. All participants required either an ability to understand and speak English or Pidgin, or to provide a certified translator. I sought to invite all who were eligible, though I had to rely heavily on staff to extend the invitations.

Students. The Summer Program was limited to middle and high school student residents at Housing Complex. Each student was chosen for the program by Housing Complex staff. A total of 12 students participated in the program, with an even gender distribution. Since ability to regularly attend program events was required, students with mandatory credit recovery or other large time commitments were excluded. Of the 12 students, one was part Native Hawaiian, one was Chuukese, and the other 10 were Marshallese. Ages ranged from 11-16. Of these twelve potential student participants, two participated in the study, five refused to participate or gave no answer, and the other five agreed to be interviewed but did not return parental consent forms.

The two student interview participants were both female; one was expected to be in high school in the coming fall, and the other would be in middle school. Both were born in the Marshall Islands and came to Hawaiʻi as younger children. They came to know each other after arriving at Housing Complex. Both girls' parents and grandparents were also born in the Marshall Islands, though not all were from the same islands the girls were from.

Staff. In order to participate, staff participants had to either have a role in planning, implementing, or otherwise assisting in the realization of Summer Program, as well as be 18 years of age or older. Summer Program and Housing Complex staff were all invited. Of the three Summer Program staff excluding myself, two agreed to be interviewed, and one completed the interview. None of the three Housing Complex staff were interviewed due to one moving away and the others being busy while they sought a replacement. The single staff participant was female, between ages 35-45, and identified as Native Hawaiian or local from West Hawaiʻi. She had a graduate-level education and worked in human services.

Adult family members and community leaders. No community leaders or adult family members were recruited for the study, but their requirements are described here in the interest of transparency. Adult family members had to reside in the same household as a Summer Program student and self-report responsibility for the child; biological or legal relatedness was not required. Community leaders had to self-report some connection to the Housing Complex community, a Marshallese community, or another community which overlapped either or both communities. I am unsure of how many family members saw the consent forms that were sent home, nor how many community leaders were invited by staff.

Recruitment activities. Since there was no orientation session or time to invite participants at the start of the program, I conducted recruitment primarily during the last week of the program and at the closing event. First, I made a verbal invitation to the group and handed out forms to everyone who was present, then later asked students individually if they were interested. When students were interested in participating, I provided a minor assent form and asked them to take another parental consent form, or else to instruct their parents to come to the Housing Complex's offices to fill one out. I also asked students to let their families know that I wanted to interview them, as well, and sent them home with the consent forms for adult family members. I did not speak to any adult family members directly, however, and most students indicated that their parents would be uninterested in participating in my research, or that their parents did not have adequate English skills.

Later, Housing Complex staff extended invitations again to families and students, assuring me that language was not an issue at each household and at least one adult could understand the forms or be interviewed. Still, no forms were returned after this effort.

After updating my research plan to include staff and community leaders, I extended invitations via email and in-person to staff members, with consent forms attached. At the same time, I also requested that they either suggest community leaders for me to contact, or else contact community leaders themselves and help them get in touch with me. Community leaders were invited by staff via whatever methods they chose to communicate. Staff preferred to ask community leaders they knew directly rather than give me the information to contact them. I had also hoped for snowball recruitment of community leaders by other community leaders.

Recruitment Challenges. Unfortunately, I was unable to interview all the students who agreed to participate (7 of the 12) because I did not get their parental consent forms returned. I can only speculate whether forms were even seen by parents or other household family members who might have been interested in the family interviews, or if any potential community leaders were invited at all. Another possibility is that some Marshallese invitees could not understand the forms. Of course, it is also possible that the forms were either forgotten, lost, or ignored after those who might sign them looked them over. It is also unfortunate that although there were some guardians and family members present at the hōʻike, I did not catch any of them personally, as I was occupied with gathering minor assent forms and getting final answers from undecided students, and most family members did not stay long. Some students also advised me not to speak with their attending family members directly because they did not speak English or would not want to be interviewed.

Procedures

Observations. I traveled to Housing Complex and excursion sites on each day of the Summer Program and took field notes in a journal (see Table 1 for a summary of each day of the program). The purpose of the observations was to create a detailed record of the program and provide reference for interview questions that might relate to specific program events. I did not observe participants or take note of any individual's behavior or speech.

Interviews. I asked each participant to attend only one individual or focus group interview after Summer Program concluded. Participants could request to be interviewed alone or with others of their choice from within the same participant group (e.g., students would be interviewed with students). I conducted the student focus group at Housing Complex in a private office, though we were interrupted twice by people looking for the office's owner. I interviewed the staff member at a public location convenient for the participant.

Once all participants and their paperwork were accounted for, I reassured participants that they would not be judged on their answers and encouraged them to speak as freely as they were comfortable with before turning on an audio recorder. The student focus group took less than an hour, and the staff interview went for nearly two hours including breaks. The latter exceeded the expected time, but the participant was interested in discussing extra topics after we finished the questions, which was an option available to all participants, time and location availability permitting. Transcript verification as well as member checking of analysis was offered to and refused by all participants.

Questions. I first asked student participants background questions about topics such as their grade level, ethnicities, and birthplaces of themselves, parents, and grandparents. I asked the adult participant demographic questions at the end, since some might find questions about occupation or education level distressing to answer. The number of main interview questions varied by group, but all were designed to be open-ended (see Appendix A for interview questions and prompts). While there were also pre-written probing follow-up questions, the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed for spontaneous follow-up questions and flexibility to discuss topics not covered by the planned questions and probes.

Storing forms and recordings. After participants left, I transferred recorded files onto my laptop and verified that the copies were of good quality before deleting the original files on the recording device. Upon returning from the interview site, collected forms were securely stored, and backup copies of recordings were uploaded to a cloud storage location.

Transcription. I listened to and transcribed all recordings, using pseudonyms or redacting names of people, sites, and organizations throughout. Transcriptions were securely stored alongside audio files, including backup cloud copies.

Analyses. Data were qualitatively analyzed to uncover themes. I did this using version 0.2-8 of the RQDA (R Qualitative Data Analysis) package (Huang, 2016) in Rstudio by creating an evolving code book while carefully reading through and annotating transcripts. Most codes fell easily into initial categories based around the interview questions. Participant characteristics, community, culture, goals, supports and challenges, and Summer Program were the major code categories. The other major category had to do with phenomena not directly related to answers to questions, such as participant hesitance, failure to answer a prompt, or the need to restate or rephrase a question. (See Appendix C for a complete list of codes.)

Archival documents

The Summer Program leaders allowed me to consult program development notes and other documents for this study. These documents included the summarized results of the initial interest surveys, which were administered by a Summer Program staff member and filled out anonymously by 10 potential participants a few months before the program began (see Appendix B for the summary that was provided to me). The surveys collected no identifying or demographic data, and they did not record which or how many survey-takers eventually joined Summer Program, so these findings may not accurately reflect the preferences and interests of the Summer Program students. Another main document was Summer Program's original proposal, which I used primarily in writing Chapters 1 and 5, and have not attached here in the interest of privacy. While I did not have direct access to the student roster, a staff member who did have access confirmed the age range, grade range, and ethnic backgrounds represented in the program. Other documents included notes from post-program meetings with Summer Program and Housing Complex staff.

Positionality

I had no prior affiliation with the community partners, my graduate assistantship funder, or Hawaii Department of Education contacts who helped me conceptualize the research project. However, both sides of my family have been on Hawaiʻi Island for 100 years or more, so some stakeholders and Summer Program staff I worked with knew at least one of my relatives. I believe these connections were helpful in forming relationships and explaining my interest in the project. I did not discover similar connections with any of the student research participants, however.

Though my age (early 20s), ability to speak Pidgin, and familiarity with West Hawaiʻi may have helped me gain the trust of student participants, my lack of experience communicating with Micronesian youths could have resulted in misinterpretations, especially since participants declined the offer of member checking my analysis. I did share a similar background with Summer Program and Housing Complex staff, coming from a mixed heritage which includes Portuguese, Japanese, Native Hawaiian, and Chinese ethnicities. Although I primarily identify with the “melting pot” local culture and Native Hawaiian culture, I am not reliably recognized as either, so my ethnic ambiguity may have influenced the way people responded to me.

Preventative interventions are part of my kuleana (reciprocal sense of responsibility) for addressing disparities on my home island. Additionally, as part of my intention to be helpful to the community while conducting research, I helped to plan the program and continued to assist the program directors in expanding and improving it. Their interest in using my findings as well as my role in the program may have affected my objectivity. Considering these factors, I may have presented results with an unduly positive lens, or inadvertently focused more on findings supporting values that motivated me to give my time to programs like these.

I sought to counteract bias by not reading very much of the literature I gathered on people from Micronesia before I interviewed students and coded their transcripts. However, I did skim some literature about basic behavioral norms and consulted with an advisor about how best to work with Micronesian participants. I also invited participants to check my transcripts and analyses, but none accepted, so I tried to tie impressions to the literature and note where what I wrote differed from previous work. Still, without a cultural insider as a consultant, I cannot be confident that I successfully counteracted bias and lack of knowledge.

Ethical Concerns

The primary ethical concern was and still is participant confidentiality. Due to the small number of low-income housing complexes in West Hawaiʻi, those familiar with the area, and certainly anyone familiar with Summer Program, would likely be able to identify the primary site of my research and even guess at the specific program. Additionally, the small number of students in the program could make it possible for someone familiar with them to identify these participants. This could be particularly problematic if family members or staff identify adolescents who expressed views in disagreement with theirs. The staff member, though in a less vulnerable population, is also at risk of being identified due to the small number of both Housing Complex and Summer Program coordinators. Although I did not discuss which staff member participated in the interviews with others in the group, the staff member that was interviewed could still be identified by other staff and even the students based on the characteristics described.

Although I was concerned that my role in Summer Program and other staff's interest in my results might pressure potential participants into feeling obligated to be interviewed, this concern was averted since very few people signed up. Most students who indicated interest seemed unenthusiastic, but not opposed to research participation. Although they may have felt obligated to agree, the need for parental consent allowed students to avoid participating without having to refuse me directly. As for staff, I extended one informal invitation to the group and then formal invitations individually to avoid making them feel pressured at meetings. I did not discuss participation with anyone in a group setting after the informal invitation, and did not send reminders to anyone who did not indicate interest.

Chapter 4: Results

Archival Data: Pre-Summer Program Interest Survey

The findings from the initial interest survey summary, completed by 10 potential Summer Program participants in the preceding spring, yielded interesting results (see Appendix B). Most survey respondents indicated that they preferred field trips, games, videos, teamwork, and creativity. The least popular learning and teaching styles were competition, discussion, and classrooms, which were disliked by about half of respondents. The most popular topics were the ocean, making food, helping people, health and wellness, and Hawaiian culture. Career interests were broad, covering sports, medical, trades, military, engineering, public safety, the arts, and culinary fields. The areas respondents asked for help in also revealed a diverse range of needs and interests: language and math, anxiety and bullying, learning new recipes, and figuring out their future.

Interview Data

Student data was drawn from one group session with two students (Lani and Hoku[1]) conducted shortly after Summer Program ended. Lani and Hoku were both girls from the Marshall Islands in the middle of the Summer Program participant age range (11-16); they also shared other similarities which are withheld here to prevent them being easily identified. Lani was more talkative than Hoku and often answered first, while Hoku tended to state or nod agreement rather than provide a distinct answer. All the prepared questions were asked of the students, but not all questions were answered (see Appendix A for a list of questions and prompts). The staff interview was conducted approximately two-and-a-half-months after Summer Program ended. In that interview, all questions were answered, including optional questions that were requested by Summer Program developers to get ideas about how to troubleshoot specific issues as well as how to improve the program (see Additional Questions under Staff Interview Questions in Appendix A).

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[1] All participant names are pseudonyms.

Staff and organization goals. The staff participant, Mahina, was motivated by an interest in youth programs, particularly "culturally-grounded, project-based, ʻāina-based type" programs. Outside of Summer Program, she worked with homeless youth and their families, and had a vested interest in the wellbeing of the community. At a basic level, covering immediate needs was one of the most important things she and her organization addressed, but she shared that long-term concerns were also important, if not always addressable. She believed that the way forward would be to have a domino effect of one life changing another, using education connected to culture in all subjects.

Self-Identification. When asked what cultures or ethnicities they identified with, a question I had written as a simple demographic question, the student participants were unable to or unwilling to answer. After I gave examples and clarified that they could identity as more than one, or even none, they conversed with each other in Marshallese but did not provide an answer in English. I cannot be sure whether this was because they were still confused by the question, genuinely unsure of their self-identity, or embarrassed to share. Still, I refer to them as Marshallese due to heritage and birthplace, which they shared readily. They also described themselves as fluent in both Marshallese and English; they did not speak Pidgin but could understand it.

Mahina quickly self-identified as Native Hawaiian and local, and also specified a diverse ethnic heritage when asked about her parents and grandparents. She was born in another state but primarily grew up in Hawai‘i, and so she identified as being from Hawai‘i rather than from her birthplace.

Students’ frequent relocation. In asking about participants’ backgrounds I inquired about where they had lived in the past and how long they had been in the State of Hawai‘i as well as the Island of Hawai‘i. Hoku and Lani had both moved at least twice within West Hawai‘i, and Lani had also been on a different Hawaiian Island before coming to the Island of Hawai‘i.

Future goals. The two students shared very similar goals. Both said their short-term goals were to pass all of their classes, which would then tie into their long-term goals of finishing high school and matriculating into college outside of Hawai‘i. Lani preferred the continental United States and Hoku preferred the Marshall Islands for college, but both wanted to settle in the Marshall Islands at some point after completing their education. They also reported that their families did not plan to return to the Marshall Islands at the time. Hoku said she would try to “stick with family,” but Lani planned to move away even if her family members did not change their plan of remaining in Hawai‘i.

Commonality returned in the students’ choices of future careers. Both described interest in two traditionally female-dominated jobs: nurse and flight attendant. Lani did not look up jobs on her own, but took suggestions from a counselor at her school. The counselor had helped her with career options, and she, “went to the easy steps first,” which meant that she picked out a path based on the counselor’s input, which included helpful strategies like getting college credits during high school. Hoku said that she “just came up with” her job ideas.

Both students were motivated to reach their goals by a desire for a “good life” or “good future.” Neither wanted to discuss what their good life would be like, but both assured me that they had a vision of their desired futures in their heads. Hoku preferred not to share, while Lani said that she did not know how to explain her vision.

Mahina related information on goals that she gathered from speaking with students during Summer Program. Some students wanted to go to college, though not all knew what they wanted to study, while some were interested in other paths, such as being a mechanic. She discussed that one student wanted to play college volleyball despite not playing organized volleyball in school. Overall, Mahina felt that many Micronesian students – not just those in Summer Program – had aspirations but did not understand how to attain them. She also felt that Micronesian students were less realistic or practical in their goals than the Native Hawaiian students she had more experience working with. This was not necessarily due to Native Hawaiian students picking "easier" goals that would not be so challenging to realize. She explained,

> Native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders seem to be more realistic as far as, "This is my goal and this is how I can get there," whereas Micronesians, they – there's a disconnect somewhere: "This is my goal, but I'm not even doing the basic things that I should be doing now." So I'm wondering if that's just still trying to matriculate into this community, even this role, so to say. . . .Native Hawaiian students, they understand, they know that there's a connection between the type of grades that you get now and getting to college. And they understand that being lazy and not going to school, like, not going to your class – there's a long-term effect to that. I don't know if the other population of students, the Micronesian students – I'm not saying they don't, I'm just saying I don't know if they get that correlation. I don't *know*, maybe other people know, but I don't know.

She later noted that lack of understanding how to attain goals was not so much a problem with Micronesian students whose families had been in Hawaiʻi for a while. She concluded that most Summer Program students' goals were reasonable, but might not be achieved because of the students' lack of understanding. She suggested that one way to address this problem could be to encourage thinking about short-term goals, especially for younger students that have time to come up with a plan for high school.

Reaching goals and supports. When asked what would help them in reaching their goals, Lani answered, "Work hard or study hard," which Hoku promptly agreed with. They did not have anything to share about external supports that might be helpful to them. However, when I asked specifically about community, family, school, and friend support, they agreed that they had each. Though they did not offer more information when asked to elaborate about community and family support, Hoku shared that friends were supportive by encouraging her. Neither had ideas for new or better supports from any of the sources I inquired about.

Since Mahina came from a background in homelessness work, she explained that youth under such conditions were affected by trauma. While I do not know whether our participants were in transitional or low-income housing, Mahina explained that many families in Hawaiʻi were only one paycheck away from being homeless. Another challenge she shared was that struggling people were often hesitant to reach out for support from institutions because of past mistreatment from government and community organizations. In some families' views, such entities claimed to help, but instead made life more difficult. Mahina found that networking and building a knowledge base of what organizations provided which services was one way to combat community challenges such as homelessness. Another important strategy was to build positive relationships so that people felt comfortable referring one another to trusted organizations.

As for challenges specifically observed among Summer Program students, Mahina shared about some of the family expectations students had to balance with program attendance:

> There was a few times where the students are communicating to us that the reason why they're late is because they were up until two, three o'clock in the morning helping their families with their cleaning business. And so…I can see why you're not gonna get up by eight o'clock if you're not sleeping until three-thirty, four. But, you know, how do you tell your parents, "No, I'm not gonna help you." Uh, that's a tough thing to navigate as a child, and you know, it's my assumption that situations like that happen quite often in our communities.

Hoku also shared how family expectations affected her attendance. She had to miss one day of Summer Program because of babysitting responsibilities. Although she wanted to attend, she said that there was nothing that could have been done to address this challenge since her babysitting did not follow a set schedule we could have worked around.

As for helping youth in general, Mahina suggested a holistic approach considering overall wellbeing and health. Exposing students to possibilities and talking with them was also important to her, and she emphasized the value of youths having a supportive, trusting relationship with an adult who genuinely cared about them. She tied this suggestion into being able to help youth incorporate short-term goals into their long-term ones, a task made easier by already having established trust. Mahina believed that a good relationship would be needed in order to help students understand "realistic hopefulness." One way to help build positive relationships that she shared, and which I also noted from my experiences in Summer Program and interviewing students, was that use of Pidgin tended to make the students more comfortable. Another principle that was important to Mahina in working with youth was that rules should be fair and consistent to students. She said that kids test boundaries to make sure that adults treat everyone equally, and that how adults respond to these tests would influences students' trust.

For more institutional supports, Mahina explained that there were many organizations assisting Housing Complex, including nonprofits, governmental programs, and schools. Therefore, she felt that adding more services might not be necessary. It was imperative in her work to consider who would not receive services because she chose to help in one location rather than another. However, she was not dismissive of offering help to Housing Complex entirely, but instead wanted to consider how to provide "other stuff" beyond necessities like school supplies and food.

On the whole, Mahina believed that the community did the best it could for its youth, but that it still lacked many resources and facilities to serve them. She said that these limits have helped foster creativity and collaboration, however, as people worked together out of a need to collaborate in order to address important gaps. She had a similar impression of school-based support, lamenting the lack of capacity to meet the needs of students as well as that of teachers. She believed some schools were too large and that they could not cover needs despite their dedication. She wanted to see more funding in the hands of the right leaders, and discussed how the teacher turnover rate negatively affected schools. She shared a story of a homeless teacher who approached her for help, which was saddening but not entirely surprising to her given the economic challenges faced by teachers. She felt that leadership in the State was perhaps not making the best decisions for everybody, as homelessness grew each year and cultural interests were not respected.

Mahina was unsure about the general West Hawaiʻi community's reception of Marshallese families. She seemed concerned that she did not know how well the community was accepting all Micronesian families, either. She had heard from Micronesian families that, "They don't like it here because they know that they're being mistreated." However, she had also heard complaints from non-Micronesian families who had negative experiences with people from Micronesian backgrounds. Her assessment was that, "Everybody's [local and Micronesian people] just trying to figure each other out," and that negative experiences might have been due to cultural differences and a lack of tolerance. She believed that tolerance would be needed first in order for Micronesian and non-Micronesian communities to learn about and then work with each other.

C**ommunity.** The students initially found the question about groups they were part of to be confusing – it was intentionally worded ambiguously so they could identify with whatever groups they felt they belonged to and define "group" in whatever way they wished. They were able to answer after I provided some examples of types of groups. Hoku was not in any groups, while Lani was involved with school and Housing Complex groups. Both participated in different activities at the Housing Complex. Neither were part of Marshallese or Micronesian groups.

The students' definition of community revolved around helping, for both people and places. They would not elaborate about what "helping" might involve. Despite frequent relocation, the girls indicated that they felt they were in a helpful community, though they struggled to specify what that meant, both in terms of what the helpfulness might encompass, or whether they meant Housing Complex or Kona in general. It was also unclear whether community support was one-sided, or if Hoku and Lani also helped others. Neither had anything to say about the communities around activity-based groups they might be part of.

When I asked what Mahina associated community with, she thought of a network of families as well as their “various dynamic needs.” Later, she built on her definition by explaining that community was integral to her work because connecting students and families to community organizations was a large part of what she did. Community, then, was not just families, but families trying to figure out how they could help each other. She linked this definition to her own culture, explaining that with the concept of ‘ohana, “you don’t turn people away, you try and help them to the extent that you can.” Mahina then made further connections to her interest in promoting food sovereignty and educating children about food issues as a force for positive change. She said that the old system of sharing and distributing food to different people in the community had faded among Hawai‘i Island families, and that she had not seen it within Micronesian communities here despite the practice being something talked about in Micronesian cultural workshops she attended. She wondered if displacement had inhibited Micronesian immigrants and migrants from access to resources, or whether they did not fish here because they were unfamiliar with the coastlines. Still, she believed that Micronesian culture and knowledge could be very helpful to Hawaiian interests. She noted that the cultures shared similarities and that Indigenous knowledge could be shared in very useful ways between Native Hawaiian and Micronesian people. She gave an example of a Marshallese woman who helped her figure out how to preserve ulu (breadfruit) for a canoe voyage, knowledge which she could not find among her Native Hawaiian network. She ventured that there were more similarities to build upon as both groups continued making connections.

Explaining that she was a cultural outsider for Marshallese students and had limited experience working with Micronesian people in general, Mahina mentioned a few times that she was still uncertain of and learning about Micronesian culture. From what she had learned at workshops and from personal observations, she identified a disconnect between what she was taught – that there should be many similarities between Micronesian and Hawaiian culture – and what she saw with the Micronesian students and families with whom she worked. She was reluctant to go into detail about specific discrepancies due to her limited knowledge, stating:

> But as far as the Micronesian population, some things that I seen the students do – it looks different to me, so I'm trying to understand what that means, why they do that. I don't want to respond in a way where it's not – or it might be a one-sided lens, so to say. I've been to a couple workshops; one was put on by [a health center] and it was a panel discussion and they talked about culturally this is Micronesia. And it was interesting because a lot of what they shared I don't see regularly enough with that population when I interact with them, so . . . for me it's still just a learning. I'm still learning about that.

Summer Program influence and impressions. Hoku thought that the program “felt fine,” and Lani thought that the program was “good.” Both thought Summer Program was helpful. The students said that Summer Program had some influence on their goals by talking about different careers and how to reach goals. Though Hoku was already thinking of being a nurse before Summer Program, she found it valuable to learn more about being a nurse during the health center visit.

Though she did not have specific feedback to share, Mahina said that the students liked Summer Program and had asked her if it would return the following year. Some students had also asked her why some activities or topics they were interested in learning about or doing were not included. Mahina, too, had places in mind that she wanted to take students to which were not included in the program. The omission of some activities was likely due to scheduling constraints, as Summer Program was shorter than projected in the initial proposal.

Favorite sites and activities. Lani and Hoku both liked the field trips and variety of the program. The activities they liked best involved Hawaiian culture, especially how one day of the program explicitly tried to connect Hawaiian culture to their own. That Hawaiian culture field trip (Day 4 in Table 1) stood out to them because it showed them a different side of a location they had been to before. Lani said she liked that she got to, "See different new things like I haven't seen before. I've been there, but –" Hoku interjected that she liked, "Learning about the histories." On that day, I observed that the facilitator took time to ask students about their own culture, and then related what they shared to the Hawaiian culture and history she was teaching them about.

Lani and Hoku also named the leadership building workshop as one of their favorite days (Day 2 in Table 1). They enjoyed sharing embarrassing stories and playing games, and they also liked the teen peer leaders who helped the main facilitator with games and small group discussions. While Hoku and Lani both agreed at first that the Hawaiian culture day and the leadership day were their favorites, Hoku later added that she enjoyed shoveling mud at a restoration workday (Day 6 in Table 1) above the other two favorite days.

Complaints and suggestions. I also asked the students about the pre-program interest surveys, which they did not recall right away. After I jogged their memory, both students easily remembered what they wrote down before Summer Program. They said that Summer Program mostly followed their suggestions, but they could recall things they had asked for that we did not do: specifically, learning about animals and the ocean. They did not point out these omissions until after I asked directly whether we had missed anything.

As for cultural acceptability, neither student indicated that they learned or did anything in Summer Program with which their families would have a problem. However, Hoku said that just participating at all was something that her parents were not too happy about because it interfered with her babysitting responsibilities. It was unfortunate that Hoku's babysitting duty conflicted with her desire to attend the program, but her parents' disapproval was at least unrelated to program content.

Mahina felt that Summer Program lacked a clear purpose and goals beforehand, making it difficult to assess success after the program concluded. The program also did not stick as closely to Mahina's expectations and interests as she would have liked. She wanted more of an emphasis on culture and connections to place, as well as doing more service at places we visited. In the future, she wanted to see the program look at cultural similarities and proceed from that foundation, trying to address some of the disconnect she saw between what she was told Micronesian cultures were like and what she observed in interacting with members of those cultures.

Additionally, Mahina felt that some activities were not very relevant to students because they were not grounded in realities that the students would have to deal with in the future. She gave an example of explaining to a few students about real-world costs of living versus salaries of different careers during a financial literacy day (either Day 3 or Day 5 in Table 1):

> "[The students] weren't interested in, okay this is how you deposit [money]. They were asking, "How can I get that money?". . . We started talking about real-world financial stuff. Like how much is rent, how much does a mechanic make. So, this is how much a

> mechanic makes, this is how much they pay for taxes, okay what are your other expenses? And calculating at the end, you could see like, you could see the lightbulb go on for some of these kids and they're like, "Wow, so rent isn't $500 a month?" Like, nope. Nope, I don't know how much you pay at [Housing Complex], but outside of [Housing Complex] I know it's not $500 a month.

Also in the interest of promoting students connecting lessons to their personal lives, Mahina wanted more consistent time for journaling, with room for students to reflect on what they had learned rather than rushing to and from excursion sites and Housing Complex. She felt that because journaling was often rushed or else skipped, students did not have the opportunity to get into journaling and see its value, which meant that they did not do much reflecting or connecting the days' lessons to their own lives.

Practical issues with Summer Program. One consistent inconvenience throughout Summer Program was that there were at least a few late students every day, to an extent far beyond anything Mahina had experienced in previous youth programs. She noted that some students who had consistently shown up early or on-time at the start of the program began to leave after seeing us. They would return later, probably because they realized that we usually waited a while before actually departing, and that someone would be sent to fetch missing students if they did not return quickly enough. The best incentive to combat this seemed to be offering breakfast or snacks. Mahina was not sure if the tardiness problem had something to do with only targeting Housing Complex, but it seemed to her an obvious variable to consider, since it was her first time working with a program that only targeted students from that site. She did not outright blame the Complex or the students' families, however, since we did not try a stricter approach to handling tardiness.

Mahina was also displeased that the policy of waiting for tardy students before leaving affected the schedule, and felt that it was inconsiderate to the community partners to arrive with little time to engage, sometimes arriving late and staying longer than planned. She would have preferred better logistical planning and fewer far-away trips. She was in favor of being able to go more in-depth and get more deeply connected to a place using the extra time not taken up traveling or waiting for latecomers. She also reported other organizational issues, such as one student going on a trip early in the program despite not having a signed parental permission form. She felt that communication directly with kids or their families rather than through Housing Complex might have worked better, as we did not recruit students and did not know what might have been promised as far as activities, expectations, or incentives.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Impressions of Interviews and Connections to Previous Literature

General impressions. Student participants mostly offered short answers or non-verbal answers. The students were hesitant in answering some of the main prompts, sometimes providing no answer at all. Student participants' difficulties answering more abstract, conceptual questions, as well as difficulty offering ideas for program or support improvements could be due to age, culture, gender, or individual character, to name a few possibilities. The intermediate school Micronesian students in Robinson's (2018) dissertation took a while to process more abstract questions about what education meant to them, similar to the uncertainty Hoku and Lani displayed when asked questions about what community meant to them or in defining their self-identity. Such difficulty with less concrete questions may not be due to culture, however, and have more to do with the age or other characteristics of the participants. Fortunately, they were largely able to answer questions about their goals, though they preferred not to share everything. Some of their hesitancy in answering questions might have been due to the factors listed above, or even a lack of trust, as I did not have the opportunity to build much of a relationship with these students during Summer Program.

Background and identification. I found it interesting that the students did not self-identify with a culture or ethnicity in the interview. I wonder if it might have something to do with the negative associations surrounding being Marshallese or Micronesian in Hawaiʻi. I do not know what they personally experienced, nor did I ask about negative experiences with the community, but the literature has indicated that they would not be treated well because they were Marshallese (Hawaiʻi Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019; Ratliffe, 2018; Talmy, 2010). Bullying was mentioned by one potential participant in the interest survey, but I do not know the ethnicity of that respondent. If Hoku and Lani were indeed treated poorly for being Marshallese, such experiences may also have tied into their interest in moving away. Unfortunately for Summer Program creators, who sought to encourage students to remain in West Hawaiʻi, the students I interviewed were clear in their desire to eventually return to the Marshall Islands, though they did not give an explanation for why they wanted to return. Another factor affecting their decision to move away may have been that their frequent relocation made it difficult to connect with the area. They did not get much chance to settle in and make connections to the community wherever they moved, and frequent moving itself could also be a negative experience. Both were born in the Marshall Islands but left at relatively young ages, putting them potentially into the "1.5 generation" capable of remembering a childhood in their home country (Danico, 2004). It may be that happy early childhood memories were drawing them back. Lani wanted to move to the Marshall Islands with or without her family, showing that it is not necessarily family loyalty which makes people want to return, as well as illustrating that not all Marshallese people prefer to stick close to their families. However, it is also possible that the presence of other family members in the Marshall Islands may have been a draw, and that the participants may have had a broader definition of family (K. Ratliffe, personal communication, November 30, 2019). I should have clarified which family members the students were referring to when I asked whether they planned to stay with their families. The students' desire to return also shows that it is not just temporary adult migrants who plan to eventually return to their homeland.

Goals. I found it interesting that the student participants shared the same ideas for career options. I suspect there was some peer influence at work for Hoku, who just "came up with" her job ideas, even if she was not aware of peer influence. The student participants may have based their answers on each other's responses, either in the moment of the interview or through their normal interactions with one another. It is also interesting that both wanted to go to college before picking a career, despite one of their choices, flight attendant, not requiring a college degree. Perhaps they wanted to be qualified for both their chosen possibilities before making a choice, or perhaps a career as a flight attendant was the backup plan if nursing school did not work out. Another possibility is that they gave the "right" answers, or else they have been told so often to go to college after high school that they saw it as a necessity despite potentially not needing to attend college to achieve their desired job. However, both still had years to refine their educational and career plans, and said that they were still deciding. I suspect that many people also needed to refine their educational and career plans when they were around the same age as these students. Still, Hoku and Lani each had a vision of what their good futures would look like, although they did not share their visions with me. I found their non-disclosure on this topic puzzling since Summer Program had a creative activity where they made collages of what a dream future would look like (Day 8 of Table 1). Maybe Lani and Hoku were embarrassed to share their dreams for the future with me, with a peer present, or within the interview context. It is also possible they could not explain their visions verbally in a way with which they would be happy.

Mahina also shared valuable insight into the goals of students. Helping students implement short-term goals as she suggested could be a future route for Summer Program, although building trusting relationships within a few weeks could be challenging. As has been emphasized in the literature, caring adults are important to youth development (Ferrari, 2003; Roffman et al., 2003). Mahina similarly believed that having an adult connection outside the family in which students feel heard and seen would be hugely important to them. She observed that Summer Program students opened up when given the chance to speak one-on-one with her, even if they were usually quiet with the rest of the group. While my student interviewees did not mention the specifics of any of their relationships with adults, they shared that they did receive support from family members and that people in the community helped each other, indicating acknowledgment of adult supports without any indication of how that support affected them.

Another idea involving adult influence that Mahina suggested was to utilize partners who followed career paths that students were interested in. She said that students might be more willing to listen to a former college athlete about how realistic a career in sports might be, and how tough of a track they would have to follow. Sharing this information would not be in the interest of discouraging students; indeed, seeing the magnitude of a challenge might produce greater determination. In a more general sense, focusing on realities not just in specific career paths was another suggestion for facilitating student success. She believed that discussing the realities of challenges like cost of living versus salary, and giving a concrete idea of what college requires rather than simply going on a campus tour showcasing the amenities and availability of scholarships might benefit all students. This could certainly be a good way to make the most of a short program that might not be able to cover each student's specific career interests.

Although the student participants I interviewed did not mention sports as part of their college aspirations, another college-related connection between Summer Program students and previous research was an interest in athletics. Like in Robinson's (2018) study, some of the Summer Program students, according to Mahina, were interested in college because of the possibility of playing college level sports such as basketball and volleyball.

Summer Program. Based on participants' impressions of Summer Program, I believe that Summer Program staff made some good choices in designing a relevant and enjoyable program. Hoku and Mahina reported that they enjoyed learning about different careers, including nursing, which they were already considering as a primary career option before the program. I think this visit (Day 5 in Table 1) may have been especially helpful because the health center had a staff member who ran a girls' program at Housing Complex, so many of the students already knew her. This health center staff member was also Marshallese and encouraged them to be proud of their heritage and use their language abilities to their advantage when looking for a job in the future. This kind of successful bilingual role model may have been particularly inspiring for Marshallese youths in West Hawai‘i, as to my knowledge there are no local celebrities or public figures that might also serve this role.

I was also interested in my participants' favorite days of the program. I think it is encouraging that Lani and Hoku were so interested in learning about the history of a place and connecting Hawaiian culture with their own. This would make PBE a great choice of approaches to incorporate more in future programs. Furthermore, the students' enthusiasm for sharing culture and finding similarities could be leveraged to help improve relationships between Micronesian and local people, which was also discussed as a possibility by Mahina.

The students' positive feelings toward the leadership workshop might also be encouraging as far as indicating an interest in taking on leadership positions. However, the Summer Program facilitators' consensus shared in meetings was that the students enjoyed the leadership day mainly because they got to play games and share embarrassing stories with the group. Although that excursion may have been remembered fondly for the "wrong" reasons, the students' appreciation of it indicates that fun, laughter, and sharing were memorable activities that the students would be excited to do more of. This finding is encouraging, since listening to youth, matching their interests, and meeting their expectations are all important components for making youth voice meaningful in youth development. Additionally, students' appreciation of the teenaged peer leaders is encouraging for programs using such an approach or looking for ways to better connect with adolescents.

Ferrari (2003) wrote that career development programs should, among other things, expose children to a wide variety of options and role models, including those that may not be common for their gender, race, etc. Unfortunately, I did not find previous literature on similar students' career interests with which to compare the results of the pre-program interest survey (see Appendix B). Ferrari also emphasized that career learning should be experiential and allow time for reflection while fitting into a bigger picture. That is, isolated, hands-off learning experiences without connections are not ideal. Mahina's suggestions would align well with Ferrari's, as she wanted Summer Program to improve by attending more to reflection and making connections between activities. Even without much connection, however, the students I interviewed enjoyed the career-focused excursions, including trips related to careers they were not personally interested in. Reflective journaling, however, was done reluctantly by most students, and program facilitators often had to encourage students to stay on task during writing time. Sometimes staff or peers helped students come up with the minimum number of sentences. It is possible that journaling might have been better received if students could write in whatever language they chose, rather than English. Another way to improve acceptability of the journals could be to keep them private to lessen pressure and encourage authenticity. Taking such an approach, however, would limit program staff's insights. Overall, it seems that both discussion, which was disliked in the interest survey (see Appendix B), and written reflection might have been less relevant to Summer Program students than to the students Ferrari had in mind.

Mahina repeatedly stressed the need for a more structured approach in her interview. While more program organization would likely have made facilitation of the program easier, strict adherence to a schedule may also have been at odds with the more relaxed values toward time demonstrated by many of the Summer Program participants. It is difficult to decide whether it would be best to honor attitudes toward punctuality that are generally maladaptive in schedule-driven North American society, or else leave latecomers behind and risk them disengaging from the program entirely. I agree that more consistent journaling time could be attempted in the future so that it would not be shoehorned in to an already-strained schedule. Although the potential students did not indicate interest in writing in their surveys, journals could provide valuable insight to Summer Program developers as we continue to refine our approach, in addition to the learning benefits suggested by Ferrari (2003).

Community. It is telling that the students' first thoughts about the word "community" revolved around helping. Perhaps they had a general sense of what community felt like to them but could not think of any examples at the time. While I wish that they had elaborated more, even such a simple concept of community fit with potential Summer Program students' interest in helping people indicated in the initial surveys (see Appendix B), and the literature suggesting that Micronesian people value harmony, helpfulness, and being seen as a good person (Henning & Ching, 1979). Apart from the expected, occasional adolescent obstinance, I recalled Summer Program participants to be very willing to help facilitators and each other.

Similarly, Mahina first defined community as connected families, but added helping later, so that all participants mentioned helping each other in their concepts of community. Nobody mentioned geographical definitions, or anything based on group membership, although a network of families, as mentioned by the staff member, might imply that people in a community network are related. It was interesting that those I interviewed did not mention that community members might have one or more traits in common to indicate membership. Communities, in their view, were instead tied together by personal connections and helping one another.

Although Mahina was generally candid and explained her answers well, I noticed some hesitance when discussing her experiences with and knowledge of Micronesian people and culture. She was hesitant to say that Micronesian people were making a poor impression on local people, and she also did not want to describe local people as being unwelcoming to Micronesian people. She concluded that when it comes to relations between local people and Micronesian people, “everybody’s just [trying to] figure each other out.” While her assessment may be accurate, Micronesian people have been in West Hawaiʻi for decades. If misunderstandings and negative encounters are still a problem, I think that is a clear indication that more should be done to address the issue rather than allowing people more time to build negative opinions. I did like her idea of starting with cultural similarities and building connections, but in my personal experience this can be difficult to do when local people start out with poor impressions. Negative opinions may need to be addressed first before people open themselves up to learning more, as she suggested.

Although I like the idea of building a more intertwined community through finding cultural similarities, the staff member also said that what was taught about Micronesian cultures in workshops she attended was different from what she observed. While there could be many reasons for this, the differences observed might be at least partially due to the differences between youth of the second or 1.5 generation and their older family members who grew up entirely in the home country. Mahina agreed that one can tell the difference between more recent arrivals and second or third generation individuals. Mahina’s experience indicated that trying to understand local Micronesian cultures by learning about them through experts may provide an inaccurate or incomplete impression. The applicability of sources on Marshallese and Micronesian culture that I consulted for this project was also weakened by Mahina's observations, while the need for research specific to the area was strengthened. Cultural education efforts may require greater nuance, or at least a disclaimer that what is traditional or common in some areas may not be readily observable throughout the diaspora. Cultural educators should make efforts to realistically present not just broad depictions of Micronesian culture, but to also share what goes on locally. With this knowledge, people may be able to better serve students and families in achieving their goals and flourishing here.

Rogoff's Planes. While I was unable to collect much information on students' families and communities, those I interviewed were at least willing to share something about their personal motivations and interests, and a small amount about other influences. On the personal level, Lani and Hoku were motivated by a desire for an unspecified good future and said that hard work would be the way to achieve their future, reflecting an individualistic approach to success that one might generally associate with mainstream North American culture. However, they also said that those in their social circles were supportive, including friends and family. They also reported support from less immediate connections, namely school and community. I hesitate to speculate too much about the role of Marshallese culture since the students did not self-identify with that culture during the interview, and neither mentioned their own or their family's culture. However, their hesitance to disclose much information with me or disagree with one another during the interview may have been a reflection of cultural norms, individual traits, the relationship between the two girls, or some combination of these and other considerations.

From the information I did gather, however, I was able to tease out interaction between the sociocultural planes. For example, Lani chose her career goals using what her school counselor told her, and Hoku wanted to go to the Marshall Islands but would not go without her family. The first instance might reflect how personal goals were influenced by social expectations and realities (that is, the suggestion that students go to college and then select a female-dominated field). The second instance might reflect how family expectations, which are likely tied to cultural expectations, influenced personal goals. Similarly, everyday family duties such as babysitting or helping at work could also get in the way of the individual's desire to attend Summer Program.

While it was not touched on by the students, the community level outside of the Marshallese community was discussed in my interview with Mahina. From her viewpoint as a Native Hawaiian embedded in the West Hawaii community, she spoke of confusion toward Micronesian behavior as it related to supposed norms within their culture. She also reported negative interactions from both Micronesian and non-Micronesian families in the area and felt unsure how to navigate the cultural level of working with Micronesian families due to ongoing misunderstanding. In the absence of better understanding of how members of the Marshallese community in West Hawaiʻi navigate what may be inaccurate or overly-general cultural norms, researchers and educators may need to continue to rely on insights shared by individual students. While I did not gather information on all the planes with similar levels of success, some of the interactions speculated about here may incite more research with strategies that might better examine planes of interest and how they overlap for Marshallese adolescents. Although family and community influences were certainly at work as Lani and Hoku considered their short-term and long-term goals, further research is needed to examine these interactions more closely.

Limitations

Sample limitations.

Staff and community leaders. Due in part to the late addition of staff and community leaders as potential participants for the study, I had to rely on referrals from staff members I was already in frequent contact with in order to recruit these kinds of participants. The desired staff sample was narrow (six candidates, then five after one moved), and had I also recruited community leaders from my staff contacts, they would have been the result of highly biased selection. Staff and community leaders' prior knowledge of and relationships with the Summer Program, me, and other staff members may have influenced their willingness to participate, as well as their responses during the interviews. Additionally, I only interviewed a single staff participant. While she provided valuable insight, it is difficult to generalize findings gleaned from this interview to other staff members.

Students. The Housing Complex staff's selections for Summer Program may have been nonrepresentative of the general adolescent population at the site, particularly if they choose students who they already expected to be successful or those they determined to be most in need of guidance. By pulling from one or both extremes, purposeful selection could have left out more average students. The program also excluded students with mandatory credit recovery or students with significant work obligations because of potential time conflicts with the program. This is unfortunate, since students in these situations may have unique perspectives on what is valuable and relevant to those who are struggling the most in school and those who have already joined the workforce. The specificity of the student participants chosen for the Summer Program, as well as the hand-picked selection strategy, makes generalization difficult even within Housing Complex. Still, the recruitment of Summer Program participants from a single neighborhood might have provided an interesting set of insights into that neighborhood despite the low overall number in the sample, which may have been more meaningful than trying to make conclusions based on a greater number of participants with much less in common. Unfortunately, sample limitations were exacerbated by very low recruitment success for interviews.

Recruitment. The biggest obstacle to the research project was recruitment. Despite most students (7 out of 12) saying they were interested – some even signing assent forms and choosing groups to be interviewed with – I was unable to obtain parental consent for all but two students. This was despite having the cooperation of Housing Complex staff to assist with reminding families and sending more forms home. Though I can only speculate as to why forms were not returned, staff informed me that English comprehension was likely not an issue for the families of the Summer Program students. The two parental consent forms I did get were obtained by asking those students to get their parents to sign at the final hōʻike event of the program. Though some students' parents did not attend the event, and many attended only a short while, my time may have been better spent speaking to them directly rather than getting student assent forms signed first and then asking the students to speak to their parents on my behalf.

The Summer Program schedule was tightly filled, with no time for formal introductions and little downtime to make invitations, as we often left the Housing Complex late and returned late. In future research, I would try to obtain parental consent before the program begins, so that the study papers would be part of the packets with general permissions, so that they might be more likely to get attention. The consent forms might also have a higher chance of being returned since parents would need to sign and return the other forms, as well. However, such an approach may also present ethical concerns, as parents might assume that signing the research consent forms would be necessary for their children to participate.

As for family recruitment, I am unsure what strategies might have helped. The students almost all told me that their eligible family members would not be interested, though they did not explain why. It was unfortunate that there was no opportunity to get to know the students' family members and invite them personally until the final event. In the future, I would like to try having more parent involvement throughout, or at least have the opportunity to meet with families before or at the start of the program, perhaps at an informational or opening event.

Recruitment of staff and community leaders was constrained by the need to rely on staff contacts to extend invitations. Those who helped with Summer Program did so primarily on a volunteer basis, and had other responsibilities to attend to following program completion. I did not press my contacts for details about why I received no community leader referrals.

Lack of participation incentives may have also influenced the poor recruitment outcomes for all groups. Working adults may have found it especially unappealing to give up an hour of free time for no tangible reward. Ethical concerns arise again, however, in offering incentives to those at a low-income housing site, who may find it more difficult to refuse incentives than the average research participant.

Researcher. Although I believe that volunteering in Summer Program allowed me to build positive relationships with students and staff before the interviews, it also may have affected my objectivity as a researcher, along with my potential biases and lack of cultural perspective based on personal characteristics and beliefs. The limitations presented by a single participant-researcher might be addressed by having more researchers, perhaps at different stages of the research project. For example, program volunteers might use their rapport to recruit students for interviews with a researcher who had not yet met any of the participants.

Another major limitation was my and other staff's inability to speak Marshallese. Although the participants I spoke with were all proficient in English, I cannot be sure how many potential participants were excluded by the need for a certified translator. I also observed participants speaking Marshallese with one another during their interview, so I may have missed valuable information there. I may have gotten more answers and perhaps more accurate or fully expanded answers had I been able to speak in Marshallese with these participants, or if I had someone who could interpret for me during or after the interview.

Future Directions

Apart from obvious improvements such as increasing sample size, the study could also be replicated in other communities or among more diverse samples from within the same community. Though it was not the intent to have a group of Summer Program students of which all but two were Marshallese, this disproportionate group perhaps gives insights more applicable to intermediate and high school Marshallese students from low-income families than adolescent students in Housing Complex. Program and research staff may have also been unprepared for the demographics of the Summer Program participants, as we lacked a cultural or linguistic insider – an issue luckily mitigated by the students' English skills and freedom to speak to each other in Marshallese. Still, some insights may have gone unnoticed or unspoken if students could not express them adequately in English. In the future, I would like to have a bilingual program facilitator, or at least a consultant. Having an insider from the community might also help with study recruitment. Previous dissertation research with Marshallese and other Micronesian students has found success using bilingual cultural insiders as research assistants (Uchishiba, 2018). I believe that using the first language in interviews and having a cultural insider to provide insight could provide otherwise inaccessible perspectives.

As Morris (2008) recommended, I allowed participants to define big ideas such as community and support on their own, only providing them with examples if asked. I felt this was especially important since my student participants were from largely unstudied groups. With more participants, I might have been able to come up with an idea of how members of the same culture under similar circumstances might feel about particular concepts, and find some sense of consensus with definitions along with answers to the questions. These definitions could then be applied within future research and programs.

More research on Marshallese communities in general is needed, especially in different parts of the state. It may be that findings present in the current literature on Marshallese culture, family, and goals, do not accurately reflect those living in West Hawaiʻi. Furthermore, those working with youth in the area need a better understanding of all the Micronesian cultures living there. While research on culturally relevant programs is important, it may be that researchers and practitioners need to first conduct more research on what the culture is like in the area before trying to design something based on literature featuring other locations.

Directions for Summer Program. I would like to see more community development in the vein discussed in Uchishiba's 2018 dissertation. That is, aspects from the community he studied on Oʻahu, such as a steering committee, could be instated at Housing Complex. The further research already suggested could be a starting point, as Uchishiba also noted that understanding the language ideology, culture, and identity of the community was key in developing a supportive community center for them. Also in the vein of community development, I would like to see the emergence of community leadership from amongst the Summer Program participants, although this may take more time to realize. Leadership from within the community in partnership with external organizations such as schools and nonprofits could help to address various concerns and assist in a variety of endeavors with a clear community voice. Throughout this research project and as Housing Complex staff, Summer Program staff, and I continued to develop Summer Program, we have certainly wished for the existence of such a group to help create culturally relevant programming based on the interests and concerns of the community we hoped to benefit. Ratliffe (2018) suggested that the strength of the Marshallese community she studied in Hawaii could be a great asset, and perhaps those interested in youth and community development could find representatives of a similarly strong community here in West Hawaiʻi, or else help to build one.

Beyond finding or building strong community leadership, I would like to use information gathered from the community in developing future programs. From my experiences with this project, it seems that formal research interviews are not the best way to gather information about culture, goals, and community with the population I chose. Pace (2003) and Morris (2008) both emphasized getting community consensus on which values should be the focus of youth development and how these values would look in practice, but it would be difficult to honor the desires of this community without having much community input at all. As Yohalem (2003) recommended, I would also like to find ways to engage parents more effectively, or at the very least build better bridges of communication. A positive relationship with participants' families could help students tremendously, as adults have significant power to promote developmental assets in the home, as well as facilitate access to outside resources and programs (Benson et al., 2011).

Due to staff limitations, Summer Program was unable to follow up with all pilot participants and selected mostly older students to tap as potential leaders for the next year. Still, we followed Pace's (2003) advice to include leaders who may not be obvious choices, including those who were not very assertive and those who seemed to mostly keep to themselves. None of the selected students sought leadership roles, and it will be interesting to see their progress as we continue to meet with them and determine what their role in our collaboration will entail. The goal is not just to have peer leaders for Summer Program. As discussed previously, we hope to promote leadership and continue monitoring our students to hopefully see them become respected members of the community who act as leaders and advocates.

Long-term indicators of student success, such as whether students leave West Hawaiʻi or subsequent job placements, will require some time to assess. However, Summer Program could also benefit from a formal program evaluation using quantitative measures of the traits that stakeholders wish to see improved. Summer Program might start by formalizing the assessment of student satisfaction and collecting anonymous feedback about the program from students and families using surveys. Interviews and staff impressions are useful and could still have a place in future assessments, but there was a much better response to the pre-program paper survey. A more in-depth assessment would also allow for charting progress over time as well as comparison of results between Summer Program sessions. Future program evaluation would not necessitate the potentially intimidating or suspicion-arousing consent documents that go along with university research. Thus, interviews of Summer Program students might not be as difficult to gather as they were for this pilot phase.

Generally, I believe there should be more programs that act in the interests of students and their communities that also either directly partner with schools or else make efforts to cover curriculum and service gaps. Non-school-affiliated advocates might be seen as more trustworthy if they prove their care for the community rather than bureaucratic interests (Morris, 2008). Mahina shared similar insights in her interview, remarking that some families who may most benefit from services would prefer that their services not come from institutional sources. While I cannot speak for other organizations or the community here as a whole, the passion to carry out such work was at least present in the staff I met during my time as a volunteer-researcher, and I am hopeful that we can facilitate positive change by continuing in the direction of youth development begun during the pilot run of Summer Program.

Conclusion

Although this research project did not provide enough participants to draw strong conclusions, the information gathered can hopefully still guide future research and programs as described in the Limitations section. From the Marshallese students I interviewed, I found no reported ethnic identification, a history of frequent relocation, interest in returning to the Marshall Islands, interest in leaving Hawaiʻi after high school, college aspirations, specific career interests in traditionally female-dominated fields, definitions of community involving helping, personal motivations based on a desire for a good life and willingness to work hard, appreciation for Summer Program's field trip-based design, and an interest in connecting Hawaiian culture to their own. The only area where the students' goals differed was whether they would follow their families. Unfortunately, I was able to learn little from the students about what kinds of supports would benefit them, although they did report already having support from a variety of sources. The staff interview provided further information from someone experienced in working with low-income families but with limited knowledge of Micronesian cultures. Her suggestions will be considered for implementation in future iterations of Summer Program, and might also prove valuable to others working on youth development or tackling socioeconomic issues like those discussed in Mahina's interview.

What I learned from this project is that although there is still much to learn about the needs, goals, and interests of Marshallese students and their families in West Hawaiʻi, there is great potential to help them flourish and become integral members of the community. The students shared an interest in helping the community and learning more about Hawaiian culture along with sharing their own culture and making connections. Hands-on cooperative activities that expose students to a variety of career options, areas for personal development, and practical skills were all acceptable to Summer Program students and were not in conflict with any cultural or family values of the students I interviewed. Others might try these same kinds of activities along with traveling to sites to engage similar students and sustain their interest in out-of-school programs. Whether Summer Program accomplished the goal of getting students more connected and willing to stay in this community remains to be seen, but I look forward to following how the program evolves in the future, as well as learning from the ideas and outcomes that other programs and research projects produce in the areas of place-based and community-based community and youth development.

Addressing educational and economic disparities is a sizeable challenge that could never be fixed by such a small pilot program and this accompanying exploratory case study. However, this project has encouraged me to keep volunteering with Summer Program and the students that I and other program staff have begun forming relationships with. So long as facilitators continue serving the best interests of students and families – which should be made easier as we learn more – there are great gains to be made for the little-studied communities of West Hawaiʻi. Whether or not the results presented in this paper prompt future research, I hope that by continuing to learn more about students’ views regarding their current and future place in the community, we might be able to better help them in achieving their goals, all while respecting the values which underpin their interests, whatever they may be.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions and Topics

Students

Characteristics:

1. Name (ask for desired pseudonyms later, so it isn't a distracting question)
2. Age
3. Grade they will be in next year
4. Languages spoken
5. Ethnicities/cultures they identify with
6. Where born, specific place
    a. If from outside Kona, how long they have been in Kona. If from outside Hawaiʻi, how long they have been in Hawaiʻi. If from outside the U.S., ask how long they have been in the U.S.
7. Where parents born, specific place
8. Where grandparents born, specific place

Icebreaker:

1. What groups are you a part of?
2. When you think about community, what comes to your mind?
    a. Alternatively: What does community mean to you?
3. Tell me about the community here.
    a. Broader Kona community, neighborhood if needed.
    b. How do you fit in to that?

Main Questions:

1. What are your goals?
    a. Short and long-term
    b. If family roots are elsewhere, ask if there are plans for moving home.
        i. Which would you prefer?
    c. What would be your family's role?
2. What do you think will help you to reach your goals?
    a. What kind of support do you get in reaching your goals?
        i. Probe for family and community if not mentioned. Also consider: friends, school
        ii. What could people do to better support you reaching your goals?
    b. What motivates you?
        i. Personal motivation probe if needed.
3. Tell me about the most interesting or helpful days of the program. It's okay if you didn't like any of the things we did, though.
    a. How were they relevant to the goals we talked about earlier, if at all?
4. We covered a lot of topics in this program. What would you add to the program, if anything?
    a. How would that help you with your goals?
5. Was there anything you learned in the program that your family or community might not agree with?
    a. Describe/elaborate on the thing(s)

Staff

Screening:

1. Are you at least 18 years old?
2. Are you from an organization that was affiliated with [Summer Program]?
3. Are you comfortable listening to and speaking English? Or pidgin if preferred.

Background:

1. Tell me about what you do.
2. Tell me about your role in [Summer Program].
3. How long have you been [doing x]?
    a. How long have you worked in [field]?
4. What kinds of people are you most experienced working with?
    a. Age, nationality, area, risk factors
5. What kinds of people do you mostly work with now?
6. When you think about community, what comes to mind?
7. Tell me about [community of interest].
8. What are the goals of your program/organization?
    a. Have these changed over time?
        i. What influenced the changes?
9. What are your personal goals working in this position/for this program?
    a. Have these changed over time?
        i. What contributed to the changes?

Program:

1. How does your program incorporate or focus on community?

   a. Successes/challenges

2. How does your program incorporate or focus on family?
   a. Successes/challenges
3. How does your program incorporate or focus on culture?
   a. Successes/challenges
4. How does your program incorporate or focus on the individual goals/needs of those you serve?
   a. Successes/challenges

Goals:

1. Thinking about the [Summer Program] students, what do you think their goals are?
   a. What do you think about these goals?
      i. Level of ambition/realism
      ii. Relative to others worked with
      iii. What kinds of goals you would like them to pursue/you think would be good for them to pursue
2. Thinking about the [Summer Program] students, what helps them meet their goals?
   a. Specific experiences
   b. What more could be done
3. Thinking about the [Summer Program] students, what is hindering them from meeting their goals?
   a. Specific experiences
   b. How could we address those?
4. Thinking about the people you serve in general, what do you think their goals are?

    a. What do you think about these goals?

5. Thinking about the people you serve in general, what helps them meet their goals?
    a. What have you/your organization done to assist in the past?
    b. What else could be done?
        i. What could we do to help?
6. Thinking about the people you serve in general, what hinders them from meeting their goals?
    a. What have you/your organization done to address these in the past?
    b. What else could be done?
        i. What could we do to help?
7. [same questions, but community connection]
8. What are your thoughts about how the community supports and welcomes youth?
    a. Specific community and broader community
    b. What could they do to support the youth more, if anything?
        i. In general, and helping them be successful/meet their goals.
9. What are your thoughts about how the schools support and welcome youth?
    a. What could they do to support your child/grandchild/etc. more, if anything?
        i. In general, and helping them meet their goals.

Additional:

1. [getting permissions]
2. [getting people to agree to interviews/other research]
3. [getting people to show up on time]
4. [strategies for cross-cultural communication]

5. Could you share any feedback about the program you have gotten from students/families/community partners?
6. What are your thoughts on [Summer Program]?
7. What are some changes or additions the [Summer Program] could try in the future?

Characteristics

1. Education level
    a. Where educated
2. Job
3. Birthdate (use to calculate age)
4. Languages spoken
5. Ethnicities /cultures
6. Where born, specific place
    a. If from outside Kona, ask how long they have been in Kona. If from outside Hawaiʻi, ask how long they have been in Hawaiʻi. If from outside the U.S., ask how long they have been in the U.S.
7. Where parents born, specific place
8. Where grandparents born, specific place

Appendix B

Pre-Summer Program Interest Survey Brief Summary

These are the results just as they were shared with me, apart from minor format changes. I did not have access to individual responses or counts for less popular options. The survey was completed by 10 potential Summer Program participants in-person at an interest meeting in the spring before the program began.

How you like to learn:

Field Trips 10

Playing games 10

Watching videos 8

Teamwork 8

Being creative 8

Don’t like:

Competition 7

Discussions 6

Classroom 6

Activity Interests:

Ocean/beach 9

Making food 8

Helping people 9

Health wellness 7

Hawaiian culture 7

Job interest:

Baseball

Medical

Mechanic

Military

Engineer

Nurse

Firefighter

Photography

College

Artist

Chef

Construction

Help needed:

What I want in the future

Math

Speak better English

Anxiety-bullying

New recipes

Appendix C:

List of Codes

This is the list of codes used in analyzing interview data, along with explanations in parentheses.

Challenge (challenges facing students, families, or community)

Challenge_solution (potential solutions for challenges)

Chars (characteristics)

Com_meaning (meaning of community)

Com_own (related to participant's own community)

Confusing_q (confusing question)

Culture_Micronesian (related to any Micronesian culture)

Culture_own (related to participant's own culture)

Goals_fam (goals related to family)

Goals_long (long-term goals)

Goals_motiv (motivations and reasons for goals)

Goals_short (short-term goals)

Goals_wherelive (goals related to where people want to live in the future)

Goals_why (why goals were chosen, other than motivation)

Grp_compare (comparing different cultures, practices, people, etc.)

Hesitant (participant hesitated to answer)

Motiv_org (motivation of participant's organization, for non-students)

Motiv_personal (personal motivation for doing the work participant did, for non-students)

No_answer (no answer provided to question)

Support_adult (support from adults)

Support_com (support from community)

Support_peer (support from peers)

Support_school (support from school)

Support_self (support from self)

Tips_students (ideas for working better with students)

Tips_SP (ideas for improving Summer Program)

SP_fav (favorite parts of Summer Program)

SP_good (positive things about Summer Program)

SP_ help (helpfulness of Summer Program)

SP_influ (influence of Summer Program)

SP_nega (negative things about Summer Program)