Abstract

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

Keywords: Kānaka, narrative, portraiture, ʻōiwi, spirituality, artmaking, storytelling

Dr. Renuka de Silva is currently an Assistant Professor of Indigenous Language Education in the Department of Teaching, Leadership, and Professional Practice in the College of Human Development at the University of North Dakota.

Dr. Cheryl Hunter is currently an Associate Professor and Department Chair of Teaching, Leadership, and Professional Practice in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of North Dakota.

Glossary

Akua *(Gods/ancestors)*
'Āina *(That which feeds/Mother/Land)*
Ali 'i *(Chiefs)*
Ali 'i *(Ruling chiefs)*
Ea *(Life/lifeforce/sovereignty)*
'Ike *(Knowing/to see/to know)*
Kānaka 'Ōiwi *(Native People)*
Kānaka Maoli *(Indigenous People)*
Kua *(Backbone)*
'Ōlelo Hawai 'i *(Hawaiian language)*
'Ōlelo no 'eau *(Hawaiian proverbs/ poetical sayings)*
Oli (*Chant)*
'Ohana *(Family, one's own or extended)*
Kapu *(Ancient Hawaiian laws and regulations)*
Kuleana *(Obligation/responsibility)*
Kumu *(Teacher)*
Kūpuna *(Elders/ancestors/grandparents*)
Lāhui *(Nation/collective identity)*
Limu *(Seaweed)*
Lo'i kalo (*Irrigated taro patch)*
Maka'āinana *(General population)*
Makai *(Ocean)*
Mana *(Sacred powers)*
Manu *(Birds)*
Mauka *(Mountains)*
Mele *(Song)*
Mo 'olelo *(Story/historical accounts)*
Na 'au *(Gut/gut feeling)*
Nohona Hawai 'i *(Hawaiian way of living)*
Piko *(Umbilical cord)*
Pilina *(Connection*)
Pono *(Peaceful and balanced life)*
'Umeke *(Containers)*
Wahine *(Women/woman)*
Wahi pana *(Storied places)*

RENUKA MAHARI DE SILVA
CHERYL ANN HUNTER

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

Connecting to a Kānaka Perspective
Kānaka Identities and Their Formulation

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

common genealogy (Ho ʻomanawanui, 2010, Oliveira, 2014).

This sharing of common genealogy is an important cultural aspect of the kānaka (Native Hawaiians) identification, ancestral knowledge, and ʻāina *(that which feeds/land/mother).* A central tenet that incorporates all that is kānaka is ʻŌleo Hawai ʻi. This is because ʻŌleo Hawai ʻi served as a bedrock for knowledge transfers by kūpuna *(elders/ancestors/grandparents*) by way of mo ʻolelo, oli, mele, and hula since time immemorial (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, 2016). Since ʻŌleo Hawai ʻi was an oral language until the mid-eighteenth century, its orality rendered well to the complexities of kānaka ea, in this context, ea to mean *life* (2016). This ea is "based on the experiences of people on the land, on relationships forged through the process of remembering and caring for wahi pana, storied places" (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, 2016, p. 10). In these storied places is where ancestral knowledge is illuminated for the future preservation of ʻāina and the health and well-being of the kānaka. Therefore, in using ʻŌleo Hawai in the way of a mo ʻolelo offered the kānaka to "learn, teach, connect and make sense of the world" (Lipe, Kanīʻaupiʻo-Crozier, & Hind, 2016, p. 53). Thus, a moʻolelo carried important information as a way to maintain Hawaiian cultural heritage and knowledge systems that connected the past generations to the present that was integral for survival. This connection was made through embedding important ecological information in the way of metaphors that were often tied to ʻŌleo no ʻeau, Hawaiian proverbs or poetical sayings that made sense in common, everyday life. As Lippe (2016) notes, an ʻōleo no ʻeau usually condensed longer collection of lessons to "easily memorizable phrases" (p. 54). For example, listening to gather knowledge was an important kuleana, *an obligation,* by an audience. So, in the ʻōleo no ʻeau tradition, when one is called to listen with one's third ear, and see with one's third eye, means to deeply observe important cues to gather knowledge to serve ʻāina, impart lessons, special memory, or experience with others (in conversation with Aunty Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, Nohona Hawai ʻi, 2018, Meyer, 1997). This act of deep observation was also an important aspect of Nohona Hawai ʻi. Nohona Hawai ʻi refers to living in the Hawaiian way in keeping with the ideals of Pono, peaceful and balanced life.

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

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

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

The use of an ʻōiwi lens enabled me to flesh out the assertion of how the kānaka are defined by their ancestry and how that is tied to ʻāina which in turn informs the work of my participants and defines their identities and positionality within contemporary Hawai ʻi. These key data points offered me valuable information for the final analysis of the aesthetic whole in the building of my ultimate portraits of participants' artwork. Therefore, it became important for me to look at my research in Hawai ʻi from the methodological lens of kānaka ʻōiwi. This lens combined with narrative inquiry and portraiture methodology aligned with my research direction more

accurately. This is because my ultimate responsibility of this research lies with the power of the kānaka community and that power means adhering to their community protocols and speaking the truth of the kānaka people. *Kānaka 'Ōiwi Methodology* was developed by kānaka scholars of Hawai 'i. (Nakoa, & Wright, 2015) as a way to decolonize and dehegemonize Hawaiian research done by non-kānaka scholars who have routinely used epistemic frameworks to humanize the colonizers which are no longer acceptable to the Kānaka and other Native Pacific Islanders (Gegeo, & Watson-Gegeo, 2001).

The 'Ōiwi Methodological Lens

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

Hawaiian people, so, I know how to accurately interpret my findings and inform my research. Therefore, this ōiwi lens provides me a pathway to understanding (with the support from my community elders) how ancestral ʻike continues to connect the kānaka to their beloved āina, and environment. Furthermore, this ōiwi lens illuminates how these connections are made current through ancestral ʻike that is contained within the mo ʻolelo and reverberates to give once lost agency back to the women and their artwork.

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

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

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

Kānaka 'Ōiwi Methodology
Mana Hawai 'i: A Hawaiian Epistemology

The word *Kānaka* as we know refers to all Native Hawaiians while the word *'Ōiwi* means "*bones"* in Hawaiian. However, the term 'Ōiwi is also used when referencing Native Hawaiian people (Kanaiaupuni, 2009). Therefore, when I use terms, Kānaka or Kānaka 'Ōiwi, I use these terms to mean Native Hawaiian people and the very essence they embody within the diverse Hawaiian worldview because Hawaiians believe that 'ōiwi carries the mana *(sacred powers)* of the people (Lynette Paglinawan, 2018, Kanahele & Kanahele, 1992). Mana refers to the energy found in all things animate and inanimate. The kānaka believe that mana evokes respect for one's akua *(gods),* therefore, spiritual. For example, mana emanating from ecological elements or nature has the power to calm, energize, heal and relax" (McCubbin & Marsella, 2009, p. 376). For the kānaka, it is the mana that binds and connects people, family, land and the spirit world contributing to the centrality of the relationality of the kānaka to all things. The research methodology that encompasses this kānaka worldview is referred to as the Kānaka 'Ōiwi Methodology (Nakoa & Wright, 2015). Therefore, this methodology is based on Hawaiian epistemology, and its utilization in my research opened diverse pathways for me to comprehensively understand and appreciate the depths of work that was presented to me by my participants. Epistemology refers to in a broad sense, what makes up *knowledge*. As quoted by Gegeo & Gegeo (2001), epistemology is,

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

Manulani Aluli-Meyer (2013), a Hawaiian scholar and a community activist, however, takes this knowledge construction and its understanding to another level to identify Indigenous epistemology to a quantum level where "observable knowledge can be valued once more" (p. 1) in a holographic way. According to Meyer, in ancient times there were three main ways in which people viewed and

experienced knowledge. Elevation of Indigenous epistemology to a holographic level challenges people to view these three ways in a non-linear sequence. In other words, to view events as they happen simultaneously and holographically (Meyer, 2013). Meyer identifies these three ancient ways in which to view and experience knowledge the following way,

(1) via the objective, physical, outside world, the world of science and measurement, density and force; (2) via the inside subjective world, the space of thought, mind, idea and interiority that helps us understand meaning and our linkages with phenomenon; and finally (3) via the quantum world shaped by transpatial descriptors and intersections, a spiritual dimension un-linked to religious dogma, described in ethereal, mystic, and yet experiential terms: i.e. All my relations; or in Science: the Implicate Order. Simply put, body, mind, spirit. (p. 94)

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

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

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

Together with this knowledge of holographic epistemology, Meyer identifies Hawaiian epistemology within the following philosophic structures: " (a) spirituality and knowing, (b) culturally defined senses, (c) relationships and knowledge, (d) utility and knowledge, (e) words and knowledge, (f) the na 'au" (Meyer, 1997, 22, Kaulukukui, & Nāhoʻopiʻi, 2008). For the Hawaiians, the na 'au refers to both thinking and feeling in an instinctual manner that aligns more with a

"*sixth sense*," rather than with the notion of "*intelligence"* as we know in the western world. This sixth sense knowingness is a "distinct and legitimate part of a part of Hawaiian epistemology" (2008, p. 100, Meyer, 1997). Therefore, according to Meyer, (1997), "identity is linked to culture, and culture defines epistemology" (p.22). As a researcher of kānaka and their artworks, this understanding of wholeness and its interconnection to all parts of the Hawaiian epistemic philosophical structures is important when navigating through artists' narratives and their articulation of the artwork. This is because the analysis of the artwork depends upon the subjective nature of the Hawaiian epistemology as well as the time and space of the work's occurrence. The indigenous framework of the ʻōiwi lens lends itself to the understanding of the specifics of the space and time intertwined with kānaka worldview to make sense of the story associated with the artists and their works.

Engaging in Indigenous Research

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

There is a vast difference between the Eurocentric worldview and the worldview of the kānaka. According to Cajete, as stated in Camvel (2012), Western understanding of phenomena are based on objectivity, abstraction, weighing and measuring. Precisely, this focus on objectivity "can block deeper insights into the metaphysics of the reality and process of the natural world. Western science

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

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

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

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

are meaningful to the scholarships of the Indigenous as well as for the western.

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

Narrative Inquiry and Portraiture as a way to Illuminate the Voices

Resonance of Narrative Inquiry

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

As defined by Susan Chase (2011), narrative, as a research methodology has a "…distinct form of discourse: as meaning-making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (Chase, p. 421). Thus, when a participant shares her story, the researcher uses analytical strategies to make meaning from the story

(Riessman, 2005). An important part of the narrative inquiry is to examine and understand how the participant "...links experiences and circumstances together to make meaning, realizing also that circumstances do not determine how the story will be told or the meaning that is made of it" (Glesne, 2016, p. 185).

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

The Art of Portraiture

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

There are five key features of portraiture which are context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole. Using these features in combination with the narrative inquiry, portraiture methodology gives resiliency to capturing many aspects of contexts, to the interpretation of participants' talk and actions. This is an important point for my research. For valid interpretations and multiple entry points in the discussion of artworks, I need to know what motivates people's actions, and their intentions and how meanings are attached to those intentions through expressions and see how all this is embedded in the context. It is only then that I feel I can capture the multiple dimensions of the visual, auditory and the tactile which allows for the illumination of metaphors, allusions, images and repetitive refrains that encompasses bodies of work. Therefore, when I use these features to document, record voices of the artists and their visions coupled with the corresponding artwork, I make the artists *visible* and situate their knowledge, wisdom, and authority in the context to shape the evolving image that is important to the kānaka. In other words, I am intentional in locating the power within the Indigenous communities where I had the privilege to interview and listens, to the voices of the artists while observing the arts. As Russel Bishop (2005) posits, this type of research engagement is what "encourages self-determination and empowerment" (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008, p. 6) of the indigenous people. This respectful way of research engagement is important to me because ultimately, I am held responsible for my work in indigenous spaces and how my findings are reflective of my values.

Navigating the Process of Analysis

Respectful ways of engagement in my research meant being in a space where the participants felt comfortable in my presence and they were willing to speak about their experiences that informed their artwork. What this meant was that I had to be in honest conversation with my participants that went beyond just gathering information about their work. In other words, our initial conversations comprised of layered personal and professional experiences. By divulging my own experiences of coloniality

in my spaces shed a light into my own vulnerabilities as a racialized woman of color living, working and studying in very White spaces. Willingness to be vulnerable, Boveda & Bhattacharya, (2019) say, is a "de/colonial move" (p. 17). In exposing my vulnerability, it invited my participants to do the same and "connect in shared humanity that is not in the realm of superficial interest convergence, but in the realm of knowing and being agents of love for each other and ourselves" (Boveda & Bhattacharya, 2019, p. 17) and work. This collaborative, conversational approach was an important part of bonding that allowed for an unbridled process in gathering data and its analysis. When we make safe spaces for participants to engage in collaborative conversations "the culture speaks itself through an individual's story" (Catherine Kohler Riessman in Bell 2003, p. 96), because the private constructions within stories by the storyteller and language used meshes with "a community of life stories" (p. 96) constituting reality in many ways and from layered voices of selective works for the selected audience.

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

This concept of relationship and reciprocity is exemplified in the Hawaiian word, ʻOhana (family). The "O" of the word means eternal and "Ha" means breath, a connection to the past, present and future, and "Na" means relationship, thus when the words *Ha* and *Na* are combined, they come together to mean *relationship*; a relationship that is eternal. These innate cultural characteristics form an important part of Hawaiian people's genealogies because it takes the position that the

relationship is first and that this relating comes before a *transaction,* be it an interview, dialog or a collaboration. Since my relationship was established with my participants, I was seen first as ʻohana who needed support with my research, rather than as a researcher who needed to gather data to fit into a colonial structure with disregard for the kānaka communities.

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

Voices Echoed
An Artist's Journey

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

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

I first met Carol Mealaaloha Bishop, a kānaka maoli at the *Waiwai Ola Art Show: A Waterkeeper Tribute to Hawai*

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

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

Subsequently, interviewing her on the very grounds where the water struggle started and ended gave an added surreal dimension to the contextual meaning embedded on the canvas of *Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole*. In fact, artwork can be made using any method anywhere, but the "circumstances of their production may contribute towards the effect they have" (Rose, 2012, p. 27). In other words, producing *Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole* at the actual site of the struggle reignited (for Meala) a sense of loss and emotional suffering of the people while transporting the audience to a specific time and space. This shifting of time and space adds a complex layer of previously unheard voices and unseen images of real people from a time past take center stage for the contemporary audience. These complex layers add intensity to technologies used "in the making of an image determine its form, meaning, and effect" (p. 27). In the visual text,

technology is defined as "any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil paintings to television and the Internet" Mirzoeff (1999) quoted in Rose (2012 p. 25). Therefore, this visual technology is relevant to "how an image is made but also how it travels and how it is displayed" (p. 25) contributing to the meanings and relevancy to the artist and the audience.

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

In fact, from the 1880s through 1980s sugar exports became a formidable force of O 'ahu's social, economic, political and environmental landscapes and water was central to all these forces. To provide some background, out of all the export agriculture, sugar irrigation required the most water. Sugar, a thirsty crop required 4,000 tons of water on average to produce one ton of sugar which meant that it took one million gallons of water a day to irrigate 100 acres of sugar cane fields (Tvedt et al., 2006). In this way, water needs for sugar were different from that of lo'i kalo (taro patches). Kalo cultivation depended upon the

cool waters of streams that constantly flowed through loʻi back to the streams, whereas sugar cane needed sunny, dry land with great amounts of water for its sustainability, hence the need for water diversion from the Waiāhole Valley to Ewa Plains. By the time the water restrictions were firmly in place through provisions contained in Water Rights Act, the lo ʻi of Waiāhole were barely getting enough water for its cultivation and the healthy sustenance of fish populations and streams' ecosystems. This directly affected kānaka's' health and well-being.

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

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

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

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

became homeless in the cities. It was terrible; we were angry. (September 27, 2018).

Meala describes in great detail the systematic colonial usurpation of her ancestral land. Her painful account speaks to ecological and human displacement caused by the water diversion. For the kānaka, every aspect of nature carries mana *(sacred power).* A well-balanced pono lifestyle creates good mana to sustain the ʻāina holistically so it can feed her children abundantly. This was not the case at Waiāhole because the destruction created a grave imbalance causing violence to ʻāina which in turn affected the health and well-being of people and the environment. Meala's collective consciousness about the ʻohana, the fish, the lo ʻi *(irrigated kalo patches*), the streams and the waters shows how the *essence* of her being as a woman and a kānaka is connected to the environment keeping with her alignment with the kānaka worldview. A loss to any part of that whole is a loss of a direct connection of her kuleana to space and place and their cultural histories. Since "places not only *are*, they *happen*" (Edward Casey, 1996, p. 27), Meala's narrative (re)frames the historical context within the contemporary context to show how as a past occupant she is now reconstituting through her agency and art the *place* to reintroduce the cultural values that were once forbidden.

Kalo Pa ʻa o Waiāhole

Pa ʻa in ʻōleo Hawai ʻi mean steadfast. During the water struggle in the Waiāhole Valley, the kānaka of the valley earned the nickname, "*hard-headed*" by the people in surrounding areas. This term, hard-headed translated into Hawaiian is Pa ʻa o. The word *kalo* is not only the staple food of the Hawaiians, but it is also used as a metaphor to identify the Hawaiians and their connection to the ʻāina. To the kānaka, *kalo* is of great importance because it signifies the birth of the Hawaiian people according to the Creation Chant of the Kumulipo (Liliʻuokalani, 1978, Oliveira & Wright, 2016). So, when Carol Mealaaloha Bishop named her artwork, *Kalo Pa ʻa o Waiāhole*, it directly reflected the struggle of the people. Many of those who struggled were women who stood steadfast in defiance against governmental and corporate powers in demanding and

ultimately winning the restoration of the water back to the Waiāhole Valley. Mealaaloha, was one of the front runners of that struggle, and she believes that as an artist and a kānaka farmer who lived on the land for many generations, her kuleana *(obligation)* was to tell the story and take back the land for the ʻohana of future generations as a step towards claiming, sovereignty of their ʻāina. When it comes to the land, there is no separation between women, spirituality and their connection to the land. This inseparability is best stated by Meleanna Aluli-Meyer during one of my earlier interviews,

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

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

Building a Portrait

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

The Canvas

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

seem to bring the attention of the audience to the foreground of the artwork as a starting point for a discussion (fig. 4 and 5). Finally, the corms of kalo (Fig. 6) are emblazoned with images of the real people who came back to brazenly stand against the injustices by corporate entities by occupying the land which eventually stopped the land clearances and issuances of eviction notices to the farmers.

Artist's Perspective

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

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

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

If Edward Cassey (1996) says that a *place* takes on the qualities of its occupants, then, *Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole* certainly shows how these qualities are evident in the painting's bold interpretation through its documentation of events. As Meala put it, *Pa 'a o* of the people who defiantly stood their ground until their demands were met are unmistakably present on the canvas and in her voice. Seeing sections of archived news articles collaged throughout the canvas coupled with images of well-known,

recognizable activists create an indelible presence in Hawaii's political landscape. Furthermore, this piece can be effectively juxtaposed against the current sociopolitical landscapes of many spaces around the world containing many audiences. Words and phrases of articles collaged seem to eerily echo the voices from those images of the activists some of whom are still alive, like Meala and those who have passed. In some parts of the world where similar struggles are taking place, this art piece acts as a trophy. A trophy won by the collective consciousness of *hard-headed* native peoples who were directly responsible for achieving their social, cultural and political objectives from the oppressive dominant power base. In fact, the passage below substantiates, Meala's unapologetic use of primary colors that are utilized to show her anger and frustration toward her oppressor. This intentional brandishing of color on the canvas as a weapon is significant and effective. It helps the art piece to beckon the audience to engage (as I did) in a discussion around veiled imperialism in the form of a dominant ideology which still exists today. Imperialism, an ideological standpoint created through power structures in governance in this case, in Waiāhole, dissolved land rights and desecrated a cultural belief system. Thus, reducing the kānaka of Waiāhole to a state of dependency.

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

To give you a little bit of background, I can tell you that as women, we were the ones who really pushed for this struggle in the valley, because we saw how our families were being destroyed. Now I can relate to Haumea and the

Mauli Ola reverence of ancient times and how women had a strong presence in Hawaiian affairs, but for me, it was my aunties and mom, tūtū lady, tūtū liʻi li ʻi, & tūtū nui. But that memory is part of that exotic land where I lept from only to land in a cultural void where passing for a haole, learning to do modern ways was the way. Hula is brutal, and the language and people eventually will die out I was told. Please do not speak pidgin. The ocean filled that void, confusion, questions, washed away in the ocean. This is one of the reasons why I became a surfer. In many ways during that struggle and even afterward, I was in very difficult spaces. (Interview, Meala Bishop, September 27, 2018)

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

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

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

We are still not in the clear. We now have a new struggle. After the struggle of the 70s and 80s, and our winning back the land and water in the 90s, we were given new leases for our lands. And some of our leases are now running out, and we want extensions so that our 'ohana can continue to live and farm these lands. It's an uphill battle, and now blood quantum has come into question. Our government is using this blood quantum as a tool to take back the land so they can develop it and make money. But that's okay, more and more women are taking up this battle, except there are so many battles that wahine mana is needed for, now we need to regroup and extend our collective to include the youth so they can join us and continue the fight. This is our land; this is our aloha. (Interview, Meala Bishop, September 27, 2018)

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

LIVING SOVEREIGN is my philosophy of life. Its helps me identify the part of me that needs nurturing in order to achieve health, happiness, and prosperity. Think being energized by farming, ocean activities, and family interactions and incorporating Ōlelo in your daily life. From that a feeling of contentment. To be satisfied with one's purpose in life. Incorporating more culturally based foods, plant-based meals, self-grown and shared produce fare in daily life. Knowing where your food comes from. You are sovereign within your space. Living, sovereign is living in this place, at this time, without labels, State affiliations for aid, grants, subsidies. Along with the aloha 'spirit' we possess as Hawaiians, that mana is in our DNA, it is not a

place, or thing, you cannot buy it or possess it, although many tries. We share it, and you reciprocate.

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

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

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

Hawaiians were so progressive. Being Hawaiian was not a referendum in blood. What we cared about was peoples' allegiance to our nation of Hawai ʻi. When our country was taken, there were people from many parts of the world, from Germany, Russia, China, Greece and they all pled allegiance to our kingdom and we valued that. This blood quantum valuation is a western orientation which benefitted them; it's a method created for divisiveness that helped them to create power structures for easy governing, owning native lands and making money. (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018)

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

A Hānai Daughter
A Tattooed Canvas

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

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

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

I first met Keala at the lo ʻi of the Kaʻala Farm (Kaneohe, O'ahu) in early spring of 2019. I was at the farm with local community members, mostly women, to learn about how to

harvest, clean and store kalo (taro). While I was there, I also listened to the stories about the farm, its history, and protocols for planting and harvesting which furthered my understanding of Nohona Hawai ʻi. It was during our extended conversations about the history of the lo ʻi at Ka ʻala and a long walk to an ancient lo ʻi site a bit further away from the original Ka ʻala site that Keala and I started to talk about the importance of kalo, ancient farming techniques, and health and well-being. Ultimately, this conversation and sharing of information led Keala to share with me her tattooed image and the circumstances surrounding getting that work done on her.

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

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

There were lessons that I needed to learn before coming to settle here... after having experiences from which I have learned on the continent, and this epiphany and understandings of the truth and reality have made me happy…Now, I am kind of happy retroactively to learn to figure out things that people grew up here (Hawaiian islands) already knew…I am learning things backward (laughs), but I am learning. I am learning the value of food and the importance of how we feed our body… how do we grow this food and prepare it for eating? It is a spiritual experience.

Spirituality and food are an innate part of Hawaiian indigeneity. To Native and Indigenous Hawaiians, the Kalo is also of great importance because it signifies the birth of

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

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

To Keala, kalo is a life-giving plant both *"literally and figuratively,"* because her connection to the kalo and working with it "*rescued her from an unsafe space*." Keala's profound gratitude to her hānai family that includes 'āina is evident when she states that *kalo is my lifeblood* because learning the traditions of relationship and reciprocity and nurturing herself through nourishing foods are what brought her to a safe place. The phrase, *saving her life*, has a special significance within the context of Hawaiian culture. Kalo was the still born son of Wākea and his daughter, Ho 'ohokulani. In shear grief at the loss of her son, who was named Kalo, Ho 'ohokulani plants the afterbirth in the ground while her piko is still attached to the placenta and is still quivering. This quivering piko is what gave birth to the first kalo plant that became a gift of endearment and nourishment. The planted placenta became a part of the 'āina to nourish the future Hawaiians. It was Kalo's *life* and *blood* that has constructed the kalo making every part of this plant edible thus providing a life source to his siblings. In her narrative, Keala speaks about her desire to learn how to pound her own taro. This desire is noteworthy, as to do work for one's self and contributing to 'ohana is another fundamental kuleana that is important to Nohona Hawai 'i. By being *grateful* to her sisters, Keala

articulates her profound alignment with her understanding of the Hawaiian culture where relationship and reciprocity is a central tenet in maintaining aloha for ʻāina, ʻohana and self.

The Kalo as Personal Protection and a Shield

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

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

According to the Hawaiian indigenous tradition, having your own board and stone to pound kalo is to show ultimate respect and aloha for the kalo and ʻāina. This is because one's board and stone are never shared and making and keeping them safe is an important protocol within the Hawaiian tradition. Making a board and stone is, in fact, a sacred process that requires the guidance from a kupuna or kumu *(teacher)* who is given the ʻike and the permission to teach the method while adhering to special protocols for their production. Pounding is also a skill that requires the guidance of the kūpuna/kumu which is passed down from generation to the next. This is because, there is a specific protocol and a process to pounding, preparing and storing kalo. For example, the pounding starts and ends with a chant of acceptance of the gift of kalo from ʻāina, followed by permission from the kūpuna to pound, and thanking them for the access of the food making the entire process intentional and honored. Keala's invitation to closely look at her tattoo honored me. Although this tattoo was on her back, she knew every single detail about it without once stopping to recall any part of a detail—

"*of course,… I know my tattoo, I put it there for a reason, it's on my body for a reason…although I cannot see it, I know its*

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

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

'Āina Aloha

The final piece that I would like to bring forward for this continued inquiry is one called *Āina Aloha* (the land that

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

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

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

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

writing, community involvement, education and of course to have lunch.

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

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

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

Iconography of Healing

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

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

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

Personal health and well-being of our people are about balance internally and externally and of body, mind, and, spirit. This balance is what creates stability and grace of spirit, fitted into this (grace of spirit) is love, light, and nature. This is a part of our ancestral knowledge that has passed down to us. Knowledge to me isn't in the past and fossilized. It is practiced and applied, and that makes knowledge that much more valuable. So, the application of this knowledge to current situations makes this knowledge current which means that we can also apply this knowledge to our future.

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

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

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

In the days of our ancestors, for example, no one starved; we looked after each other. It was all based on, knowledge, practice, and reverence to the land and spirit. Traditional knowledge is based on poʻokela (excellence). The excellence of things; making, utilizing and applying. For example, how are things made, how well are they made, and what are they made for? Traditionally, when you made a lei, it's not to gift just one person. It's a gift to all. This is about excellence in relationships, so this is utilization and application. This knowledge isn't a thin layer of knowing how to do something, but it's about awareness that included self-awareness and knowing the history and knowing your place in that history and your kuleana to the land. (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018)

In speaking with Meleanna, what became abundantly clear is how misunderstood Hawai ʻi and its people are to the world. This extraordinary painting dispels the myths surrounding *the little understood indigeneity* from a western orientation. Carefully articulated iconography illuminates

the viewer about deep-seated ancestral knowledge that sustained generations of kānaka maoli and ʻōiwi populations for millennia through peoples' interdependence with land and spirit.

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

Painting Away the Pain

According to Meleanna, the second side (Fig. 5) is perhaps comparable to Picasso's "Guernica: because this side shows the effects of the devastation caused by coloniality. Utilizing a cubistic approach, the entire canvas is a sea of red punctuated by tessellations of turquoise, yellow and white. The use of brilliant reds seems to pulsate throughout the canvas giving it eerie energy to each image, making them *alive and moving*. Occasional images of large hands and dark brown spheres seem to rotate and jut out from various spaces of the canvas conveying a sense of loss and suffering.

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

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

Meleanna feels grateful for her creative abilities which started when she was very young and for her family's support that ensured the continuation of her creative ventures. She also feels deep gratitude for her ancestral knowledge and access to tools for making a difference, especially, in the lives of young women. This is one of the many reasons why she is involved in community outreach programs as well as using art to create a voice for the kānaka. *"Art is a currency, just like language, I have been given the tools so, I must put that into good use. Working on this project has helped me…it gave me my purpose in life…to do healing work especially with our young women who need a voice and support in the work that they must do."* (*Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018).*

Looking for the Story

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

Coming from my limited experience of Hawaiian epistemology meant that I needed to take a different approach to my work. As I mentioned earlier in the paper,

what this meant was that I could not just take my empirical ways of being in my research backpack, but I needed to learn to use the kānaka lens to triangulate the meanings and subtleties embedded in various contexts, including that of mind, body, and spirit that are important layers of kānaka knowledge. This prompted me not just to *look at* the story but to *look for it*. There is a subtle difference between these two concepts. While looking at the story through interviews, visuals, and historical documentations helps to understand the story (informational), *looking for the story* was more hermeneutical because it entailed journeying into layers (kaona) of knowledge in search of interpretations that aligned with the Hawaiian worldview without personal intrusion. So, in this regard, my choice of utilizing narrative inquiry couple with the portraiture methodology helped me to navigate these caverns of water which I equate with intelligence to understand innate connections that helped the Hawaiians survive and thrive in the middle of the Pacific on a volcanic rock bed for millennia. Conducting research based on a different worldview was a challenging terrain for me but not foreign coming from a Buddhist philosophical background. Ultimately, it is this philosophical background that helped me to connect with the women and be open to receive information that has helped me to be *objective* in a sense to build this complex and dynamic portrait of all three women and their detailed work.

Moreover, this utilization of portraiture and inquiry offered me pathways to build relationships with these artist women from which to glean emotions that moved beyond the superficial. This is because these two methodologies together with my openness to listen and engage in conversation offered me a space to reflect and contemplate on the themes, humanistic and literary metaphors as well as the aesthetic sensibilities and their application to the kānaka worldview. Understandings gained through this process, at points intersected with the empirical rigor of my research. In other words, I did not have to ask questions such as, what connects people to the land and spirit or how is this connection innately tied to the na ʻau which imparts sacred knowledge? I received the answers through the emotions of the women during interviews together with what was *illustrated* on canvases. This type of inquiry

requires one to move from purely objective externalities of empiricism (what is seen and what is familiar to us) to the subjective internal passageways to connect with the intelligence of the universe that has emanated from these individuals with whom I have built relationships. Therefore, when dealing with people and their emotions from different worldview to our own, we cannot use differing worldview other than their own (in this case Hawaiian worldview) to triangulate meanings contained in its contexts. This is because they are the subjects within their own worldviews and any attempt to interpret their thoughts and emotions from our limited perspective is limited to our judgment and subjectivity. This idea is expanded by Ken Wilber, a theorist who is quoted by Meyer: "Science and the beliefs in the objectivity as the highest expression of our intellect work only in the restricted field of experience and effective only within those fields" (2013, p. 227). In other words, objectivity has its own limitations and to think that all experiences can be explained through objectivity is in itself very subjective.

The Final Portrait

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

The largest and the most profound theme that permeated through all of my findings was aloha (here to mean love). Not just self-love but *love* as the *piko (umbilical cord)* that connected one to the land. Then from this land, thousands of other piko connected to every animate and inanimate entity, inclusive of the ocean that touched all the Hawaiian Islands. As an unborn child is connected to its mother in the womb for its sustenance by mother's

umbilical cord, the āina (mother) connects all her children and all entities to her by her piko, creating an interdependence and aloha for each other for a life of pono *(balance).*

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

Keala's image, on the other hand, speaks to the positive side of the piko's metaphor. When you juxtapose Meala's image against Keala's, the difference between connection and disconnection is readily evident. Keala's image of the giant kalo displays a nurtured plant and one that is still growing because it is firm in the mud (inferred)

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

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

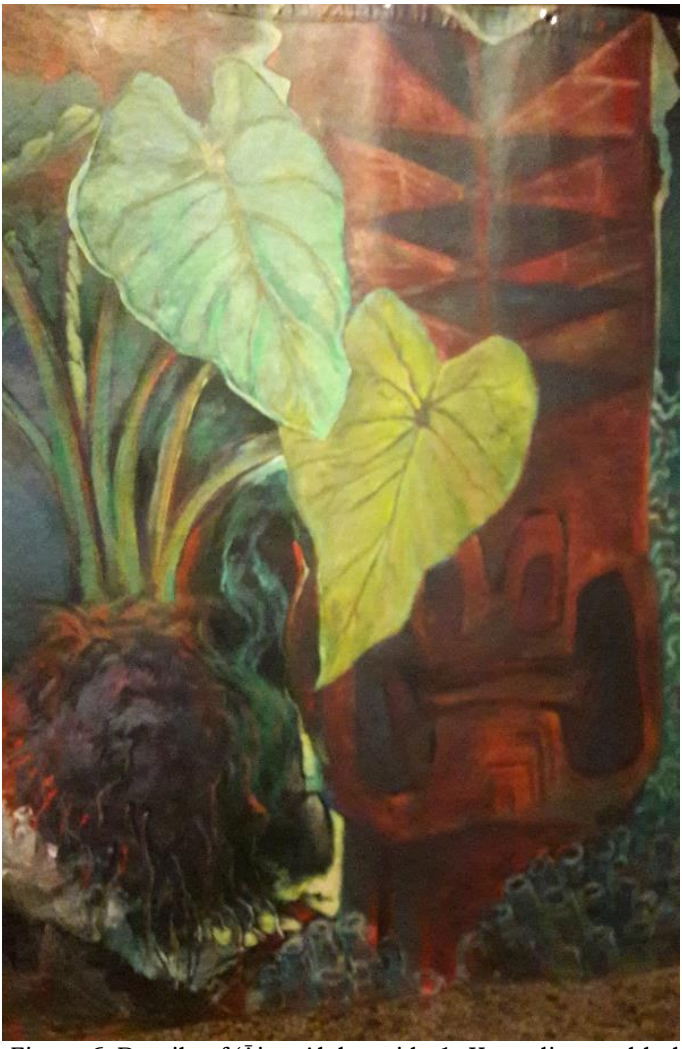

Figure 6. Details of ʻĀina Aloha, side 1. Kumulipo and kalo.

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

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

Figure 7. Details from ʻĀina Aloha, side 1. Knowledge holders, manu and ʻāina.

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

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

Infliction of violence against the kānaka and their beloved ʻāina is never more accurately depicted than on the second side of the mural, Āina Aloha, *Painting Away the Pain*. This intense suffering and the disconnection when relationship and reciprocity are forcefully broken is viscerally illustrated on the second side of Āina Aloha (fig. 5). A sea of red used in combination with the artistic style of cubism shows fragments of images that show decapitation of bodies that seem to move in and amongst

other pieces of bodies. Occasionally, the audience is shown giant hands emerging from the sea of red as if to call out for help. This highly visceral piece that seems to be in constant movement and negotiation with other elements of healing and spiritual light indicates the complete chaos created by kānaka's displacement from their beloved 'āina. Another example of the consequences of their loss when the kānaka's connection to their mother is severed (fig. 8)

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

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

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

The kānaka are connected to spirit through their piko to 'āina and living a life of pono is crucial to the *expressions of intelligence* embedded in kānaka DNA. Therefore, the scared knowledge gained through the *intelligence of aloha* is in fact, spirit moving through the body that ultimately situates in the na 'au that in turn, expresses a connection to all things. This connection is how the kānaka experience life, and how life informs them of their continued kuleana

and ea *(life/sovereignty)* for the collective health and well-being of the lāhui *(nation/collective identity).*

Negotiating the Portrait for an Aesthetic Whole

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

In the context of Hawai ʻi, and within parameters of building a portrait, I had to look deeply into analyzing various aspects of data in the form of elements and principles of art and how they are used (by artists) to give a specific voice to a particular place and time of a set of constituents, all the while listening to the artists' articulation of their works. This is because a portrait is context specific, which means, we give it meaning based on the information that is laid bare to witness by an audience. Thus, the audience engages in meaning-making of a text by negotiating and re-directing information to a specific place and time to build a portrait as an aesthetic whole. This is because a place takes on the qualities of its occupants or constituents as Casey (1996) says and they (constituents), ultimately have the upper hand in negotiating the depth and the breadth of the portrait (Denzin et al., 2008; Meyer, 1997). Therefore, in building a portrait, it is also important to see how the artists have used their current voices and the voices of those who are embedded in the artwork, that was previously (from the perspective of time) rendered voiceless and invisible have now resurfaced for the renegotiation of how this portrait takes shape. This renegotiation is unstoppable, because, "identity is linked to culture, and culture defines epistemology" (Meyer, 1997, p.22) within a specific context and time. Therefore, the emergent portrait/s must be negotiated from that space of identity from that specific time and place which has become current through the renderings of the artists and their voices in today's contemporary spaces.

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

Into the Light

Indigenous populations are unique in their worldviews, and kānaka worldviews are unique to the Hawaiian Islands. Understanding of kānaka portraits and the final creation of its *aesthetic whole* requires understanding fundamentally kānaka's holistic perspective of life. This perspective has three parts, but they ultimately come together as a single unit embodying mind, body, and spirit that informs the health and well-being of all lāhui. In the center of this connection are the women who provide the divine connection between the people and akua through childbirth. Although coloniality changed and shifted Hawaiian culture and women's positionality within the traditional family system, they remain as the *kua (backbone)* of the family and are regaining their inherent position among the lāhui through increased agency and collective identity (ea). Voice in the form of arts (visual/performance), writing, community action in the form of the revitalization of indigenous methods of farming and food preparation are helping the women to *weave the rope of resistance* tighter to protect and nurture kānaka's cultural and spiritual integrity. Observing and listening to Meala, Keala and Meleanna have shown me their commitment to a unified direction in gaining sovereignty

for Hawai ʻi. Furthermore, these women are continuing to use their art and voice as vehicles to exemplify *wahine mana* and to empower younger generations to be involved in securing sovereignty to the aloha nation.

In my research journey, what I have discovered is that the two directions of research (kānaka and empirical) are not mutually exclusive or in competition with each other, but they both have much to offer in advancing the understanding of the kānaka worldview to *decolonize* indigeneity. To quote from McCubbin and Marsella (2009), "history affirms time and time again the gradual but definitive resurgence of culture, identities, and beliefs buttressed by the realization that indigenous knowledge is vital to the future of peoples whose roots have long and rich histories" (p. 386). With the revitalization of ʻōleo Hawai ʻi and other kānaka projects around the islands, demand for Hawaii's sovereignty is clear and present. As Meleanna Aluli-Meyer expresses, "*we are taking back our voice. I have a lot of work to do, but I am a part of that continuum of reclamation"* places an indelible mark in the future direction of the kānaka in the 21st century with regards to indigeneity and the need for their meaningful existence with pono.

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

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

References

Aluli-Meyer, M. (2013). Indigenous and authentic: Hawaiian epistemology and the triangulation of meaning. In *The global intercultural communication reader* (pp. 148-164). Routledge.

Bell, J. S. (2002). Narrative Inquiry: More Than Just Telling Stories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(2)

Boveda, M., & Bhattacharya, K. (2019). Love as De/Colonial Onto-Epistemology: A Post-Oppositional Approach to Contextualized Research Ethics. *The Urban Review*, 1-21. 207-213.

Casey, E. S. (1996). How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: Phenomenological prolegomena. *Senses of place*, *27*, 14-51.

Cajete, G. (2000). Native science: Natural laws of interdependence. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light.

Camvel, D. A. (2012). *Land and genealogy ofIolekaa: mapping an indigenous identity* (Doctoral dissertation, [Honolulu]: [University of Hawaii at Manoa],[August 2012]).

Chase, S. E. (2011). Narrative Inquiry. In N. K. Denzin and Y. Lincoln's *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (4th edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. P. 421

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing*

Among Five Approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Deer, B. C. & Roussillon, S. & Bournois, F.(2002). *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Leadership Development.*

Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S., & Smith, L. T. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. Sage.

Flynn, E. A. (1990). Composing "Composing as a Woman": A Perspective on Research. *College Composition and Communication*, *41*(1), 83. doi:10.2307/357885

Gaard, G. (1993). Living interconnections with animals and nature. *Ecofeminism: Women, animals, nature*, 1-12.

Gegeo, D. W., & Watson-Gegeo, K. A. (2001). "How we know": Kwara'ae rural villagers doing indigenous epistemology. *The contemporary pacific*, 55-88.

Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction* 5th edition. Boston, MA: Pearson. P. 185.

Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, N. (2016). Reproducing the ropes of resistance:Hawaiian Studies methodologies. *Kanaka ʻŌiwi methodologies: Mo ʻolelo and metaphor*, 1-29.

Guthrie, R. V. (2004). Even the rat was white: A historical view of psychology (2nd ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon

Ho ʻomanawanui, K. U. (2010). Mana wahine, education and nation-building: Lessons from the epic of Pele and Hi ʻiaka for kanaka maoli today. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *12*(4), 206-212.

Hope, B. E., & Hope, J. H. (2003). Native Hawaiian health in Hawaii: historical highlights. *Californian Journal of Health Promotion*, *1*(1), 1-9.

Jayawardena, K. (2014). *The white woman's other burden: Western women and South Asia during British rule*. Routledge.

Josselson, R. (2011). Narrative research: Constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing story. *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry*, 224-242.

Kanahele, G. H. E., & Kanahele, G. S. (1992). *Ku kanaka stand tall: A search for Hawaiian values*. University of Hawaii Press.

Kanaiaupuni, S. (2009). *Hulili: Multidisciplinary Research, 2008*. Kamehameha Schools Press.

Kaʻopua, L. S. I., Tamang, S., Dillard, A., & Kekauoha, B. P. (2017). Decolonizing knowledge development in health research cultural safety through the lens of Hawaiian Homestead residents. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development Volume*, *5*(2).

Kaulukukui, G. H., & Nāhoʻopiʻi, D. K. (2008). The development of an inventory of exemplary Hawaiian leadership behaviors. *Hülili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being*, *5*, 95-151.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2016). Commentary: Portraiture methodology: Blending art and science. *LEARNing Landscapes*, *9*(2), 19-27.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Davis, J. H. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture*. Jossey-Bass Incorporated Pub. P. 243

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2008). *The good high school: Portraits of character and culture*. Basic Books.

Lili'uokalani, Q. (1978). The Kumulipo: An Hawaiian Creation Myth. *Trans. from orig. manuscripts by Lili'uokalani). Kentfield: Pueo Press*.

Lipe, K., Kanī'aupi'o-Crozier, E., & Hind, M. (2016). Mo 'olelo for Transformative Leadership: Lessons from Engaged Practice. In Nakoa, K. A. R. K. A., & Wright, E. K. A. (Ed.), *Kanaka 'Ōiwi Methodologies: Moolelo and Metaphor* (pp. 53-71). University of Hawai'i Press.

Lugones, M. (2010). Toward a decolonial feminism. *Hypatia*, *25*(4), 742-759.

Luke, R., & Aluli-Meyer, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Umeke writings, an anthology*. Hau'ula, HI: Na Kamalei-K.E.E.P.

McCubbin, L. D., & Marsella, A. (2009). Native Hawaiians and psychology: The cultural and historical context of indigenous ways of knowing. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *15*(4), 374.

Meyer, M. A. (1998). Native Hawaiian Epistemology: Sites of Empowerment and Resistance. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *31*(1), 22-28. doi:10.1080/1066568980310104

Meyer, M. A. (2001). Our own liberation: Reflections on Hawaiian epistemology. *The Contemporary Pacific*, *13*(1), 124-148.

Meyer, M. A. (2003). *Ho'oulu: Our time of becoming: collected early writings of Manulani Meyer*. Ai Pohaku Press.

Meyer, M. A. (2013). Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense. *China Media Research*, *9*(2).

Nakoa, K. A. R. K. A., & Wright, E. K. A. (2015). *Kanaka'Ōiwi Methodologies: Moolelo and Metaphor*. University of Hawai'i Press

Oliveira, K. A. R. (2014). *Ancestral places: Understanding kanaka geographies*. Oregon State Press.

Oliveira, K. R. K. N., & Wright, E. K. A. (2016). Kanaka Ōiwi methodologies: Moolelo and metaphor.

Pang, Y. K. (1999, October 22). Water drilling led to political career. Honolulu Star Bulletin. Retrieved from http://archives.starbulletin.com/1999/10/22/news/story7.html

Pukui, M. K., Haertig, E. W., & Lee, C. A. (1972). *Nana I Ke Kumu (Look to the Source): Volume 1*.

Riessman, C. K. (2005). Narrative Analysis. In: *Narrative, Memory and Everyday Life.* University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, pp. 1-7. Retrieved from:

http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/4920/2/Chapter_1_-_Catherine_Kohler_Riessman.pdf

Rose, G. (2012). Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual material.

Sai, D. K. (2008). A slippery path towards Hawaiian indigeneity: An analysis and comparison between Hawaiian state sovereignty and Hawaiian indigeneity and its use and practice in Hawai'i today. *JL & Soc. Challenges*, *10*, 68.

Semali, L. M., & Kincheloe, J. L. (1999). Introduction: What is indigenous knowledge and why should we study it. *What is indigenous knowledge*, 3-57.

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2003). Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice (4th ed.). New York: Wiley.

Swadener, K. M. B. B. (2004). *Decolonizing research in cross-cultural contexts: Critical personal narratives*. SUNY press.

Tvedt, T., Jakobsson, E., Coopey, R., & Oestigaard, T. (Eds.). (2006). *A History of Water: Volume III: The World of Water* (Vol. 3). IB Tauris.

Vizenor, G. (Ed.). (2008). *Survivance: Narratives of native presence*. U of Nebraska Press.

Wertz, F. J. (2011). Narrative Research. In *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry* (pp. 224-242). New York: The Guilford Press.