School as a Context for “Othering” Youth and Promoting Cultural Assets

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Background/Context: Schools are cultural contexts that have the power and potential to promote students' cultural assets or “other” youth in a way that keeps them from creating meaningful academic identities. In this study, we build on existing research and theory by defining “othering” as a personal, social, cultural, and historical experience involving (a) cultural and racial ambiguity, (b) categorization and labeling, (c) hierarchical power dynamics, and (d) limited access to resources. In addition, we further define and understand youths' cultural assets from a collectivist perspective. We are interested in identifying and understanding community and indigenous strengths of “othered” youth as embedded in social and ecological systems.

Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study: We used an ecological approach to dissect the experiences of “othered” youth through an investigation of their marginalization and assets. The questions guiding this research explore how “othered” students make sense of stereotypes and racism in the school context: How are these incidents handled? What are the norms in school for dealing with racialized and cultural encounters? What are the buffers or factors that may help students maintain a sense of cultural pride in the face of marginalization? What cultural assets emerge in schools and how are they related to students’ experiences with “othering?”
Research Design: This sequential 18-month qualitative study included observations and interviews. Multi-informant data with ten Native Hawaiian adolescents and five teachers and counselors of Native Hawaiian youth were used in an attempt to give voice to their experiences in urban public schools in Hawaii. These two perspectives provide points of convergence and divergence in conceptualizing how schools "other" youth. Grounded theory and Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) were used to generate themes that arose from student interviews that were then compared with interview data from school personnel. These separate, but related data sources offered perspectives across generations, power relationships, and cultural identities.

Conclusions/Recommendations: Our findings revealed five emergent themes: multiple identities, stereotypes, racism, coping strategies for racism, and cultural pride that highlight cultural assets and experiences with being the "other" at school. We discuss these findings in terms of how they relate to our definition of "othering" and from an ecological and relationally informed approach to community and cultural assets that are reciprocal and interactive. We call on practitioners and researchers alike to provide opportunities that promote and reinforce indigenous strengths in schools.

Many scholars have argued that the institution of school is a place and a space where notions of academic success are embedded within the values and beliefs of an assimilationist agenda (see e.g., Fine, Burns, Payne, & Torre, 2004; Kliwer, Biklen, & Rasa-Hendrickson, 2006). Pedagogical strategies, testing, and curricular activities, for example, dictate how students make sense of their academic identities and expose youth, as Ghosh, Michelson and Anyon (2007) say, to the "norms, values, and the hegemonic ideology of the larger society" (p. 277). Due to the strength and endurance of these definitions of what it means to be a student, youth quickly learn the extent to which they "belong" in school (Borrero & Yeh, 2010; Horvat & Antonio, 1999; Nasir & Saxe, 2003; Tyler et al., 2008).

The school context is also a powerful socializing agent that reinforces an "institutional ideology," and shapes students' expectations. Grant and Sleeter (1988) consider schools to shape students' expectations "to continue their parents' place in a stratified society" (p.19). Academic and cultural worlds are often at odds, in particular, for youth of Color (Xu, 2006). For example, many African American youth believe that in order to be academically successful, they must "become raceless" (Fordham, 1988) or "act white" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Similarly, some Middle Eastern and Latino/a youth feel they have to give up their ethnic identity in place of an academic identity (Nasir & Saxe, 2003; Olsen, 1997). Although students of color can feel disconnected, they do not lack personal agency (Nieto, 2002) and offer many cultural assets to their schools (Borrero & Bird, 2009; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Paris,
2010). Student interest in learning (Bergin, 1999) and sense of belonging in school (Yeh, Okubo, Cha, Lee, & Shin, 2008; Zhou, 1996) can be enhanced when the curriculum and instructional context reflects their cultural values and identities (e.g., Bartlett, 2007; Palmer, 2008).

The study described here investigated how youth can be both “othered” and empowered in schools by presenting the voices of a sample of Native Hawaiian youth from two public high schools in Honolulu, Hawaii. We purposefully sought a small sample of Native Hawaiian students and school personnel in Hawaii as a way to give voice to a silenced and understudied cultural group (native Hawaiians) with many cultural assets. Hawaii, as a site of investigation, embodies the dislocation, cultural alienation, and historical and political practices of oppression that lay the groundwork for the perpetual “othering” of youth (Kana‘iapuni & Ishibashi, 2003).

We began with the assumption that Native Hawaiians, in particular, would epitomize the “othered” experience (Caballero, 2009). We built upon current definitions, theory and research on the “othering” of youth, and collected data to describe how cultural assets are often linked with experiences of marginalization defined in part through collectivistic coping strategies, cultural strengths, and community resources.

DEFINING THE “OTHER” EXPERIENCE

The concept of “othering” has been developed through theory and research, and used for sociopolitical purposes. In this paper, we follow Kumashiro (2000) and define the concept of “other” (the noun) with reference to groups “that have been traditionally marginalized in society, i.e., that are other than the norm, such as students of color, students from under- or unemployed families, students who are female or male but not stereotypically ‘masculine,’ and students who are, or are perceived to be, queer [i.e. lesbian or gay]” (p. 26). The concept of the “other” has also been used to distinguish children and students who are not part of the norm and who do not belong to dominant cultural or national identity groups (Devine, Kenny, & Macneela, 2008). We extend and further define “othering” (the verb) as a personal, social, cultural, and historical experience involving (a) cultural and racial ambiguity, (b) categorization and labeling, (c) hierarchical power dynamics, and (d) limited access to resources.

Theory and research on “othering” has its foundations in anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Much academic research on “othering” explores notions of racial and/or ethnic identity in different sociocultural contexts (Palfreyman, 2005) and focuses on discourses that include
or exclude members of certain groups. The creation of an “us” versus “them” binary based on perceived differences from the “norm” has also been studied internationally in the social sciences (e.g., Gokar, Pillay & Kahard, 2010; Lewis, 1998; Terren, 2004; Young, 2005). Central in much of this work are discussions of the hegemonic power structures that serve to “other” particular groups and the deleterious effects of being “othered” (see Horvat & Antonio, 1999). Our main interest for this paper is the “othering” of ethnic minority youth in school. We therefore draw upon multi-disciplinary literature while also focusing on the American school context that largely privileges white, middle class practices (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Fine, 2003; Fine et al., 2004).

CULTURAL AND RACIAL AMBIGUITY

Native Hawaiians are often conceptualized as racially ambiguous because of their multiethnic backgrounds and lack of visibility in the popular media. The idea of racial ambiguity represents spaces in between racial and cultural identities (Borrero & Yeh, 2010) and “denotes instability and multiple meanings” (Twine, 1996, p. 307). Thus, the act of “othering” minority youth strengthens the homogenization of ethnicity and race and justifies the halting of multidimensional cultural identities (see Asher, 2005). Specifically, when ethnic minority youth are “othered” they are labeled as being different from the norm, they are lumped together as a group, and the complexity or diversity of their identities is not fully realized. In Western culture, the notion of a contained, stable, unitary self is prioritized and valued, whereas fluid, multiple, or ambiguous identities are often interpreted as not having an ethnic identity at all (Yeh & Hwang, 2000). The literature on multiracial identities has highlighted the “What are you?” experience (Williams, 1996, p. 203) that many individuals of multiple races and ethnicities face (Anzaldúa, 1987; Root, 1996). According to Root (1996), cultural ambiguity is a conceptual dilemma; to the extent that Native Hawaiians perceive themselves as culturally ambiguous, it contributes to the idea that Native Hawaiians do not belong because the typical categories used for understanding ethnic identification do not apply. Omi and Winant (1986) refer to this dilemma as “a momentary crisis of racial meaning” (p. 62).

CATEGORIZATION AND LABELING

Native Hawaiians have also been victim to being labeled as the “other.” Census policy has historically mandated a specific format for inquiring about racial and ethnic information. For example, in 1990 the Office of
Management and Budget (OMB) developed the Statistical Policy Directive 15 that put forth five racial/ethnic category options including “white, black, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Hispanic” (Fernandez, 1996). In 1997, The Revisions of the Statistical Policy directive No. 15, Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting revised that category into “Asian” and “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.”

The continued labeling of Native Hawaiians has represented political practices in controlling ethnic and cultural identification and has put forth barriers to accurately understanding their social and economic situations, discrimination in housing, employment opportunities (Office of Management and Budget, 1997), public health, education, and immigration needs (Srinivasan & Guillermo, 2000). The revised “mark one or more” option in the 2000 census for identifying as multiracial and multi-ethnic is also highly relevant in understanding cultural identities of Native Hawaiian youth, in part because, of persons identifying as multiracial, at least 30% are Asian American or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). These practices in reporting and identification currently and historically have strong ramifications for identity-making and representation among Native Hawaiians. School is yet another place where students are blamed and face labels such as “gifted,” having “special needs,” and being “at risk,” when in fact it is the institution itself that holds the power to enforce such labels (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Fine, 1992). These imposed categories further separate students into groupings of “normal” and “other.”

HIERARCHICAL POWER DYNAMICS

The notion of “othering” has been conceptualized in terms of dualisms in identity or the belief that “others” are reliant on the co-construction of contrary identities (Weis, 2003, p. 71). These oppositional identities represent hierarchical structures and dynamics (such as black versus white, insider versus outsider, etc.). Binary relationships embody strategic assertions that diminish the importance of one group in comparison to another group with more social capital or resources and opportunities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). In this regard, “othering” is viewed as a socially constructed practice that defines customs in silence and voice. Groups that have power maintain their status through protective actions that distance them from the marginalized. For “othered” youth, schools are places that reinforce and socially reproduce these relational structures.
LIMITED ACCESS TO RESOURCES

“Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (PI)” is a term used to describe people with origins in Hawaii, Samoa, Guam, Tonga, or other Pacific Islands. These individuals are Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian in their cultural backgrounds (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Currently, the number of Native Hawaiians in the U.S. is approximately 154,666 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Because Native Hawaiians in particular have been considered as part of an “other” category until recently, there has been limited information provided on the economic, educational, structural, and social needs of this growing group (Srinivasan & Guillermo, 2000). In fact, being “othered” promotes invisibility since the Census cannot specifically describe what this group looks like beyond basic characteristics derived from combined numerical data. Due to these oppressive practices in categorization and their lack of presence in fair data collection strategies, Native Hawaiians, like various “othered” communities, have been denied important resources, such resources that would offer support, recognition, visibility, and cultural validation (Srinivasan & Guillermo, 2000). The impact of limited resources in society is replicated in schools where ethnic and cultural invisibility offers an unspoken and unfair rationale for the continued educational marginalization of “othered” youth.

SCHOOLS AS A SPACE FOR ‘OTHERING’ YOUTH

Schools have the powerful potential both to “other” and privilege students (Kumashiro, 2000). Specifically, schools can be considered “spaces where the ‘other’ is treated in harmful ways” (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 26) through specific actions by teachers, staff, and other students, as well as by inaction from teachers, administrators, politicians, and various individuals and groups with power over students (Horvat & Antonio, 1999; Kumashiro, 2000). Harmful actions may include overt and direct forms of racism, discrimination, and harassment (Pollock, 2001), as well as more subtle forms of oppressive acts including vicarious racism, microaggressions (slights that reinforce power structures), and barriers to equitable resources (Alvarez, 2009). Researchers have documented the blatant forms of oppression that contribute to unwelcoming school conditions such as limited educational resources, unsafe buildings, and overcrowded classrooms (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001; Kozol, 1991; Olsen, 1997; Ready, Lee, & Welner, 2004). However, it is the invisible ways that “othering” occurs in schools that are often overlooked.

The assumptions and biases that teachers, administrators, and students
have about "othered" youth are often unrealized and ignored (e.g., Pollock, 2001; Rist, 1970). Native Hawaiian youth in particular have been found to be victims of longstanding stereotypes that label them as being lazy, poor, primitive, uneducated, unmotivated, and unresponsive to interventions and programs (Kana’iaupuni, 2005). These stereotypes can reinforce the persistent belief that indigenous and minority students are low achievers and uneducable (Howard, 2003), and perpetuate the culturally alienating power structures in schools through the promotion of white middle class norms (e.g., Zentella, 1997).

CULTURAL ASSETS

In examining the experiences of "othered" youth, it is critical we further define and understand their cultural assets from a collectivistic perspective. While many theorists and researchers advocate for the development and use of cultural strengths and assets (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 1998; Borroco, 2009; Moll, et al., 1992; Nieto, 2002; Paris, 2009, 2010), the educational literature needs to operationalize further what is meant by these terms. Specifically, we are interested in identifying and understanding community and indigenous assets of "othered" youth as embedded in social and ecological systems. These settings include but are not limited to families, peers, schools, neighborhoods, cultural groups, institutions, the political climate, etc. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Yeh, Kim, Pituc, & Atkins, 2008b). We assume that youths' active engagement within and across these contexts (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Zentella, 1997) allows their strengths to emerge.

THE CURRENT STUDY

We used an asset-based, ecological approach to dissect the experiences of "othered" youth through an investigation of their marginalization and assets. We explored the cultural context of school, how youth can create and experience their cultural and academic identities, how they can cope with racism, and how they understand their lives in and out of school. We purposefully sought a small sample of Native Hawaiian students and their school personnel in Hawaii as a way to give voice to this silenced community.

For our guiding research questions, we wanted to explore how "othered" students make sense of stereotypes and racism in the school context: How are these incidents handled? What are the norms in school for dealing with racialized and cultural encounters? What are the buffers or factors that may help students maintain a sense of cultural pride in the
face of marginalization? What cultural assets emerge in schools and how are they related to their experiences with “othering”? Our research seeks to give voice to the “othered” experience of youth through an exploration of oppressive and privileging practices in school and through an examination of community indigenous strengths as providing opportunities for fluid, multidimensional identity-making (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Nasir, 2004).

METHOD

This 18-month study began in the fall of 2008 and followed a sequential design (Hansen, 2008) to shape the specific timeline and allow for multi-informant data (Yeh et al., 2008b). Findings were derived largely from student interviews that were checked in comparison to interview data from school personnel who work with Native Hawaiian high school students. These separate, but related data sources and samples allowed us to identify places of thematic convergence, divergence (Strauss & Corbin, 1991), and perspectives across generations, power relationships, and cultural identities. Also, the schoolteachers and personnel were intentionally chosen because they were a group identified as capable of advocating for and supporting Native Hawaiian students in transformative and socially meaningful ways (see Mitra, 2006; 2009).

SCHOOL CONTEXT

For context, we provide observations based on the experiences of one of the authors over a two-year period interacting with two public schools in Hawaii. Her observations were recorded over a series of conversations and email exchanges during the past year and help frame our interest in understanding how schools “other” and “empower” Native Hawaiian youth. For example, in one particular school, about a third of the students are at least part Native Hawaiian (reflecting the larger demographics of Hawaii) and the remaining students are Asian, Caucasian, and Polynesian. In many ways, the school lacks resources and this in turn impacts Native Hawaiian students’ experiences. We provide some information about the school context for our study that highlights the limited access to resources (see our definition for “othering”) that students experienced.

Specifically, the physical plant of the school is run-down and many classes are in temporary trailers due to a fire. The vast majority of the staff and teachers are white, European-American and the students interact primarily in culturally segregated circles such as the Native Hawaiian
students who stick together on campus. Due to recent budget cuts, many of the culturally-focused classes (like Hawaiian language) have been cut. While there are Hawaiian literature books, these are not prominently accessible for the students in the library. Finally, many of the Native Hawaiian students must rely on public transportation to get to school because there are no school buses. Hence, many of them must wake up as early as 4 a.m. to take different buses in order to get to school on time. These observations underscore the limited access to resources that students of Color, and Native Hawaiian students in particular, may experience in a school setting and the kinds of barriers they face when pursuing an academic identity.

Conversely, in many ways, Native Hawaiian students’ cultural assets are valued by the school we studied. For example, native plants were integrated into the school courtyard, student artwork is displayed in the hallways, and there is a class called the “Pono Project,” which is based on the Hawaiian values of relational obligations to family, culture, and nature. There are also plans for more Hawaiian classes in the future such as the Hawaiian chant class. While these options are not fully integrated into the daily school lives of Native Hawaiian students, they represent attempts to create a more culturally welcoming environment for these students.

SAMPLE.

Our sample included a total of ten Native Hawaiian students; four were male and six were female. The mean age of the sample was 17 years and the ages ranged from 15 to 18 years. All ten students were juniors or seniors from two different public high schools in the Honolulu area. Most of the students live in Honolulu, which is an urban setting with varying income levels and ethnic diversity. Students commute to school, either via car (parents dropping them off) or public transportation. A few of the students live in the Hawaiian Homestead communities, where residents are of mixed ethnicity and or race.

In addition, five teachers and school personnel (counselors and program coordinators) from the same schools as the student participants were interviewed for the study (one male and four females). The mean age of the sample was 37.8 years (range = 26-55 years). In terms of educational background, three of the school personnel had a Master’s Degree and three were enrolled in Doctoral Programs (in Education-related fields). In terms of ethnic background, the five school personnel identified as follows: Japanese-American, Japanese-Pacific Islander,
Hawaiian-Chinese, Hawaiian, and Tongan. All of the school personnel participants were born in Hawaii.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Because the sample was non-random and selected in a deliberative manner to achieve a specific goal, it was considered purposive (Galloway, 2005). However, the sample was also considered to be convenient and close at hand because we selected potential participants who were at the specific school sites that we had access to (Castillo, 2005). Student participants were selected if they identified as Native Hawaiian, were juniors or seniors in high school, and were available for an in-person interview. Juniors and seniors were purposefully selected because of their ability to share about multiple years of experience in high school. All participants had also taken the state-mandated courses in Hawaiian history, Pacific Islands, and modern Hawaiian history so they were exposed to similar content in the curriculum (these courses are required in 7th and 9th grade) (Hawaii Department of Education, 2010). Students included in the sample were also within the range of low-achieving to high-achieving and were not considered very low or very high achieving. We wanted to be open to a range of experiences in educational contexts without using outlier experiences. Students, who had already graduated from high school, were in 9th or 10th grades, or who did not identify as Native Hawaiian, were excluded from the sample.

RESEARCHERS

In the present study, the research team included two faculty members (one Taiwanese-American female and one biracial (Puerto Rican and Caucasian male)), two female Master’s level counselors working in Hawaii with Hawaiian youth (one Japanese-American and one Filipina), and a Chinese-American male (the auditor). All members of the research team came from a local School of Education. Using Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR, Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997), the research group reported and discussed potential biases, expectations, and assumptions related to the research topic to allow individuals in the group to be aware of how such preconceptions may influence findings.

Our assumption for the project was that, as researchers, we were integrally bound to the research process as we shaped and constructed data, interpretations, analysis, and representations of meaning (Yeh & Inman, 2007). The research team met and discussed possible biases, expectations, and assumptions about the data (Hill et al., 1997) and discussed
potential power dynamics within the research group as well as between participant and researcher (Polkinghorne, 2005). In order to avoid romanticizing marginalized voices (Fine, 1992) we openly shared our impressions and discussed many of the positive (e.g. “kind,” “proud,” “welcoming,” etc.) as well as negative (e.g. “dumb,” “lazy,” etc.) stereotypes that we had heard about Hawaiians. This self-awareness was critical in understanding our metatheoretical predispositions (e.g. conceptual assumptions) and unpacking ways in which we may have been essentializing or labeling Hawaiians through the research process. The researchers also shared how we could approach this work with an open and natural attitude (Wertz, 2005). Prior to, and throughout the research process, we openly discussed how our own racial, gender, class, and background experiences may have influenced our work with different students of Color, as well as our positionality and perspectives (Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Mattis, & Quizon, 2005).

INSTRUMENTATION

A semi-structured interview was developed and used for data collection since this format can provide in-depth information about participants’ experiences as Native Hawaiian youth. Each section of the interview first began with open-ended questions then specific follow-up questions were used as needed (Hill et al., 1997). The protocol was based on the research literature on Pacific Islander youth (Borrero, Yeh, Tito, & Luavasa, 2009), the “othering” of youth of color (Kumashiro, 2000; Weis, 2003), stereotypes (Lee, 1996), racism (Alvarez, 2009; Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2006; Pollock, 2001), cultural assets, and identity-making, (Moll et al., 1992; Paris, 2009; 2010; Yeh et al., 2005), and coping (Yeh, Arora, & Wu, 2006). Two Native Hawaiian collaborators also provided guidance on the wording and terminology used to insure cultural relevance. Interview questions were developed by the research team and discussed among the researchers. Questions were given to two program coordinators in Hawaii who work closely with Native Hawaiian youth. They provided feedback that was incorporated into the final version of the interview protocol.

The interview questions were divided into the following areas: (a) background information (which asked about participants’ age, gender, education level, grade point average, individual and family immigration status, ethnicity, and years in the United States); (b) description of self with different relationships (family, friends, etc.) and cultural settings (i.e. with Native Hawaiian and non-Native Hawaiian individuals); (c) stereotypes experienced by Native Hawaiian youth; (d) awareness of, and
experiences with, racism; and (e) Native Hawaiian youth practices for dealing with problems (see Table 1 for the list of interview questions).

Table 1. Main Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. What are strengths you witness in the Native Hawaiian youth community? (other parts of the Native Hawaiian community?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q2. How would you describe what your cultural identity means to you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q3. Do you notice that Native Hawaiian youth act/behave/think/feel different around other people in your cultural group than when you are with White, European-Americans? Why/Why not?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4. What are some stereotypes you have heard about the Native Hawaiian cultural group? Do you experience these stereotypes in school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q5. Do you believe that you have ever been bullied or harassed because of your cultural background as a Native Hawaiian youth? Have you ever experienced this in school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6. Have you ever witnessed racism against members of your own Native Hawaiian cultural group? Have you ever witnessed these encounters in school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q7. Do you believe you have ever experienced subtle insults or differential treatment based on your Native Hawaiian cultural group? Have you ever experienced these in school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8. Do you believe you have been the target of racism historically?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q9. How do you cope with experiences with stereotypes and racism? Who do you ask for help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10. What areas of improvement are needed in the Native Hawaiian youth community? (In other parts of the Native Hawaiian community?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These questions are worded for the students; the same questions, worded a little differently, were used for school personnel. Background demographic questions and additional probing questions used are not included here. If a respondent answered the first question with a short answer "yes" or "no," the follow-up questions served as probes.

PROCEDURE

Participants were recruited via flyers and announcements made during Hawaiian language and Senior Seminar classes at various public schools in Honolulu. There was a 20% response rate and the sample appeared to be fairly representative of the two local public schools. Two program coordinators recruited participants and conducted the interviews at the school sites or in a nearby community setting. Potential participants were informed that the research project was strictly voluntary and that they would receive monetary compensation for a 45-minute interview. The interviews were then audio taped and transcribed verbatim in English.

CODING DATA INTO DOMAINS

We used a combination of Grounded Theory and CQR (Hill et al., 1997) for our data analyses. CQR is a well-documented, systematic, qualitative
research method that emphasizes consensus-building while incorporating rigorous points of analysis, abstraction, and member-checking (Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2005). Specifically, CQR is based in Grounded Theory but relies on interrater discussion and consensus as a way of determining and counting emergent domains and categories. CQR assumes that theory emerges from the data or the data extends existing theories.

The research team met initially to discuss the process for determining codes based on the interview transcripts. Next, each member read transcripts independently and began to underline recurring units (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) from the data. Units were phrases, sentences, or longer quotes that shed light on students’ perceptions of identity, stereotypes, racism, and coping. Each rater then began taking notes in the margins of the documents to start categorizing the different units from a section of the data. These categories were concepts that emerged from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and began more specifically to address factors like multiple identities and students’ experiences with racism at school. This “open coding” was used to generate as many codes as possible.

The research team then met and created an initial “start list” of emergent codes. As part of the CQR method, we then independently coded the transcript data into primary domains and subcategories (see Hill et al., 1997). Next, the three raters met, debated, and discussed all of the domains and categories until there was consensus about the findings. We derived a final list of five domains and eight subcategories, consistent with previous studies using CQR (Yeh et al., 2003). After the final domain list (referred to as “themes” below) was established, the raters coded the rest of the data for all the transcripts using this scheme. The auditor and one participant independently reviewed the transcripts to insure that our initial domains and subcategories were trustworthy. The auditor provided specific written and verbal reactions and feedback, which was discussed among the researchers, and incorporated into the final version (see Table 2 for a list of domains, categories, and frequency counts derived from our data).

RESULTS

Our findings revealed five themes that emerged from the data: multiple identities, stereotypes, racism, coping strategies for racism, and cultural pride (see Table 3 for sample interview responses and how they were coded). We discuss these themes and integrate direct quotes from the Native Hawaiian youth to give voice to their unique experiences. For each of the main themes, participants’ experiences being the “other” at school and
Table 2. Domains and Categories Emergent from Native Hawaiian Youth Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain/Category</th>
<th>Frequency of code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Multiple identities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Shifting identities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Negative stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Emotional reactions to stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Racism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Individual, historical, and inter-ethnic racism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Microaggressions, vicarious and institutional racism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Coping strategies for racism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Support from family and friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cultural pride</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Historical knowledge</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Strength and survival</td>
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</table>

their cultural assets are highlighted. We discuss these findings in terms of how they relate to our definition of “othering” and to provide a more layered contextual understanding of emergent cultural assets in school settings. Specifically, we are interested in interpreting our data in terms of our definition of “othering” as: (a) cultural and racial ambiguity, (b) categorization and labeling, (c) hierarchical power dynamics, and (d) limited access to resources.

Table 3. Student and School Personnel Sample Responses to Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Response</th>
<th>School Personnel Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Haoles from the mainland—they're the ones who made the whole paradise thing. Like, even before we [became the 50th state, they was bring all the people over here already. And it's like ‘Welcome to Hawaii-the paradise' or whatever.&quot;</td>
<td>“the most important thing is being able to understand and get a grasp of their cultural capital: the land...their ancestry, their culture, and their language.&quot; “Cohesion I think because there can be so few of us often times Hawaiians will come together and find, strength in numbers.&quot; “their culture, their language, their ethnic background, their practices for me is a big strength for them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;we've been the target since, like, the beginning. Before we was even a state we was a target.&quot; “I love myself. Like, being Hawaiian is the bomb. I mean, we ain't got a lot of stuff we want, but shoot, it's unique 'cause there's not a many of us left.&quot;</td>
<td>[Historical knowledge] [Strength and survival]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Student and School Personnel Sample Responses to Interview Questions (continued)

Q2. How would you describe what your cultural identity means to you?

“I am Hawaiian, Japanese, Portuguese, French, Indian, English, Irish, and German.” “I am Hawaiian, Irish, Portuguese, Chinese, Filipino.”


Q3. Do you notice that Native Hawaiian youth act/behave/think/feel different around other people in your cultural group than when you are with White, European-Americans? Why/Why not?

“quiet”, “respectful”, “dependable”, “trustworthy”, “furry”, “outgoing”, “laid”, “good son” “Like for my own culture I am relaxed, giving to those around, to other cultures I try and be like a professional”

“the local identity is an amalgamation of native cultures with hegemonic culture all together and hence has created a specific type of identity, a specific kind of language...it’s very much a part of who we are and identifying if you are local-if you are from this place.”

Q4. What are some stereotypes you have heard about the Native Hawaiian cultural group? Do you experience these stereotypes in school?

“lazy”, “uneducated”, “primitive and barbaric” “dumb” others think of them as abnormal and inferior [Negative stereotypes] “our way of life is very interesting, like the chants and the dances” [Emotional reaction to stereotypes]

“lazy”, “uneducated” “That they are criminals, and in a sense they are lazy and stupid and then I guess homeless, obviously.” [Negative stereotypes] “they are generous, they are accepting, they are easy going” “So schools we have a value system of Lohi-respect, Ha’ahu =humbleness, they bring out these words and they throw them out in Hawaiian as they are values they posses, and they try and bring them up as much as possible.” [Emotional reaction to stereotypes]

Q5. Do you believe that you have ever been bullied or harassed because of your cultural background as a Native Hawaiian youth? Have you ever experienced this in school?

“speak English”, “stop acting like a dumb Hawaiian”, “they (Haole) think they are better than us-smarter than us. And they tell us.” [Individual racism] “He’d actually separate the class. Like the smart people would sit by the door and the dumb people sit by the closed door. And then you have to raise your hand, and every time people that sat on the dumb side of the class raised their hand, he wouldn’t even look at us.” [Institutional racism]

“Often times I get that they are harassed not necessarily by other students but by educators /administrators and counselors, that’s what I hear more of. Often times I think the Hawaiians and the Pacific Islanders are a group that many other social and ethnic groups don’t mess with.” “Of course yes, definitely, they are minority of the island, they are seen as someone that’s different,” [Institutional racism]

Q6. Have you ever witnessed racism against members of your own Native Hawaiian cultural group? Have you ever witnessed these encounters in school?

“No”, “people were just running from me and then they kind of, I don’t know they just judged me, I don’t like it.” “My friends make fun of me because I listen to Hawaiian music on my iPod and they tell me that I don’t even understand the words so why should I be listening to that?” [Microaggressions]

“when the situation comes up when they don’t want a particular person in there then the rules are then subsequently changed just to limit Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander representation. I witnessed that.” [Institutional racism]
Table 3. Student and School Personnel Sample Responses to Interview Questions (continued)

Q9. How can you cope with experiences with stereotypes and racism? Who do you ask for help?

"It depends on the scale of the problem. If it's like school-girlish or something like that, I usually ask my friends. But if it is something dealing with my personal life, I ask my family. I've grown up in a very family-oriented family type thing. Does that make sense? So like one family is really tight and we just, we can depend on each other. So I am very comfortable asking them." [Support from family and friends]

"Some of them get angry/violent, I think that's a very small percentage, but one end of the spectrum. The other end, would take the knowledge and build on it, learn more, share it with others and figure out what one person can do to help the larger cause." [Strength and survival]. "If their parents, if available, may maybe immediate family members, they will ask them." [Support from family and friends].

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

Our sample’s multiple ethnic identities signify critical opportunities for “othering” as well as attendant expressions of their cultural assets. Renee, a seventeen-year-old female, shared, “I am Hawaiian, Japanese, Portuguese, French, Indian, English, Irish, and German.” Jamie, a seventeen-year-old male, said, “I am Hawaiian, Irish, Portuguese, Chinese, and Filipino.” These responses reflect our definition of “othering” as related to cultural and racial ambiguity. Specifically, the number of ethnicities that are part of their self-identities represents practical and political dilemmas for Native Hawaiians whose cultural ambiguity and status as the “other” ethnic category reinforce their marginal location. The multietnic identities typical in our Native Hawaiian sample call to question the one-dimensional racial structure, which is so deeply ingrained in our national consciousness (Williams, 1996). The Native Hawaiian youth in
our sample, given their multiple identities, may threaten the social organization of interrogators in power (Bradshaw, 1992), which would only further their isolation as the “other.” Their multiple identities contest their cultural ambiguity, the homogenization of race, and introduce possibilities for multiple selves.

Teachers and school personnel enhanced our understanding of multiple identities through sharing their own perspectives and explaining how Native Hawaiian students are labeled and segregated at school. For example, Jon, a 35-year-old Chinese-Hawaiian teacher spoke of the “exclusionary” practices facing Native Hawaiian youth as they apply for certain programs or scholarships: “One of the things I have seen is policies and practices that actually make Native Hawaiians ineligible because of their situation with the U.S. Because we are seen as U.S. [citizens], we are not seen as Pacific Islanders. So that even segregates us from other Pacific Island communities.”

Although the multiple identities in our sample represent unfair justifications for “othering” practices that limit resources, there are also indigenous strengths that characterize Native Hawaiian shifting identities and pride. Specifically, while most of our participants listed many different ethnicities as part of their identity, when probed about how they describe their ethnic identity, all students said “Hawaiian.” These responses reveal that not only do students conceptualize their identities as complex and multidimensional, but they also feel a strong sense of pride in their Hawaiian identity (McCubbin, 2004). The experiences that students discussed in talking about their Hawaiian identity stretched across different social and cultural contexts as they revealed that being Hawaiian encompassed different qualities at different times.

SHIFTING IDENTITIES

Students in our sample also described how their identities were informed and changed across different relational settings. For example, students used words such as “quiet,” “respectful,” “dependable,” and “trustworthy” when describing how their family members viewed them. In contrast, they stated that their friends saw them as “funny,” “outgoing,” and “loud.” Students discussed their cultural flexibility and the ways they reciprocally interacted across interpersonal settings in order to meet specific expectations and obligations. For example, when Jerry (a seventeen-year-old male) reflected on the fact that his family sees him as “quiet” and his friends see him as “loud,” he discussed an understanding of a difference
in his prescribed identity (Lewis, 2003; Pollock, 2001) in different ecological spaces and the fact that, for him, this was a part of being a “good son.”

Both students and teachers talked about these identity shifts as a part of a “local” identity that Native Hawaiians recognized. Jon (a teacher) stated, “the local identity is an amalgamation of native cultures with hegemonic culture all together and hence has created a specific type of identity, a specific kind of language...it’s very much a part of who we are and identifying if you are local—if you are from this place.” Shifting identities represent experiences being the “other” and the cultural assets that emerge and thrive in the face of marginalization.

Youth shared that these feelings of isolation were prevalent at school—especially in class with Caucasian American students. This experience of being alone and in between cultural worlds has also been found in Pacific Islander youth who also embody the “othered” experience in urban schools (Borrero et al., 2009). For our participants, this feeling of non-belonging merged with their Hawaiian “label” in certain contexts and deemed them “powerless.” Cal, an eighteen-year-old male, shared that the reputation of the Native Hawaiian cultural group was at stake when he was around White Americans at school: “Your culture is your culture. You don’t want to give a bad impression.” Hence, for Native Hawaiian youth in our sample, connecting with their Hawaiian identity at school contributed to hierarchical power structures delineating “us” versus “them” distinctions and the experience of the “other.”

STEREOTYPES

During the interviews, every student and school personnel shared experiences facing stereotypes about Native Hawaiians. Most of these stereotypes were negative and reflected perceptions of Native Hawaiians as “lazy” and “uneducated” (Kana‘iaupuni, 2005). Stereotypes underscore the categorization and labeling and hierarchical power structures that Native Hawaiian students can experience being the “other.” For example, students’ awareness of these stereotypes, and their prevalence at school, not only reveals the Native Hawaiian experience as the “other,” but it also shows how school is a cultural context that can reinforce the hierarchical power structures that tell youth they cannot succeed and they are not welcome (Carter, 2008; Devine et al., 2008; Howard, 2003).
Negative stereotypes

While most of the students spoke of stereotypes via their daily interactions, teachers framed their discussions of Native Hawaiian stereotypes in both historical and personal terms. Alli, a 34-year-old teacher, talked about her own and students' experiences: "I see it—I've seen it when growing up, I still see it today. Maybe there's someone whose like 'yeah, you stupid Hawaiian' or 'you lazy Hawaiian.' So I see it every day. Do my students? Yeah—All the time."

Students themselves reflected on how these stereotypes play out in their school lives and reinforce the notion that they are simply not very good at school. Students reported that both teachers and students from other cultural groups held these stereotypes (Kana'ipuni & Ishibashi, 2005). Hawaiian students discussed how they live up to this negative expectation, which is a common reaction among youth of Color who are vulnerable to stereotype threat (Steele, 2001). Jerry, for example, said, "I admit it. I procrastinate a lot and when I get home...I only do, like, the small homework assignments; not major ones like projects and stuff." This attribution of a stereotype suggests that this feeling was persistent for this group of students—they were not expected to do well in school, so they felt that they should not bother trying. They were unable to be seen (or see themselves) as successful students and could not find their place in school (Kumashiro, 2000). The systematic silencing of "othered" youth in school further divides members from non-members (Weis, 2003) and buttresses the power of the "majority." In this case, however, the "majority" is Native Hawaiian. Yet, White, middle-class notions of what it means to be a successful student held power in even this school context, and these students, even though they knew they were the majority, still felt the "other" due to hierarchical power structures (Borrero et al., 2009; Delpit, 1995).

In addition to stereotypes about being lazy and dumb, participants also shared stereotypes that Hawaiians are primitive and barbaric. Lea, a 17-year-old female, said, "people think we live in grass shacks, we ride a canoe to school, and we wear grass skirts every day." Mekhi, a 17-year-old male, added to this by sharing a story of a Caucasian student moving to Hawaii, attending school and being surprised that his Native Hawaiian classmates had running water in their homes. These stereotypes reinforce categories and labels of indigenous people as uneducable (Howard, 2003) and further reinforce their "otherness" by highlighting their limited access to resources (Srinivasan & Guillermo, 2000). Reaction to such sentiment embodies the fear that being the "other" can create for youth who learn that others may think of them as different and inferior (Kliewer &
Biklen, 2007; Kliwer et al., 2006; Kumashiro, 2000). Specifically, when stereotypes center on cultural practices and traditions (such as grass skirts as traditional Hawaiian dress, in this case), youth are further isolated from “normal” and victim to the categories and labels that exemplify the experience of “other” (Aoki & Mio, 2009; Borrero et al., 2009).

**Emotional reactions to stereotypes**

Stereotyping, as an act of labeling and categorization, places youth in a socially, psychologically, and politically vulnerable place, as their sense of self and connection to their cultural identity are “othered.” Anger and confrontation were the most common emotional reactions to stereotypes our small sample of native Hawaiians reported. Jerry, for example, said, “It makes me mad [when people call us lazy]. We work hard for what we do and we get things done. We strive for our goals.” Others spoke more specifically about school, and how stereotypes made them feel that they had to be a “spokesperson” for Native Hawaiians. Kai, for example, discussed the stereotype of Hawaiians being “dumb” impacting the pressure she puts on herself to do well at school and get good scores on standardized tests. She said that she fears that if she doesn’t do well, she “brings down my culture” or her sense of “what I am.”

This ownership of having to prove categories and labels wrong unfairly positions youth in a place where they cannot win—if they prove the stereotype correct, they are failures as “typical Hawaiians” (Kana’iaupuni, 2005) and if they prove the stereotype wrong, they are “acting white” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) or further reinforcing their racial ambiguity—both actions that highlight their place as the “other.” This experience as the “other” academically can have the effect of making school a confrontational, potentially hermetic, cultural space where youth cannot be both Hawaiian and academically successful (Borrero & Yeh, 2010; Nasir & Saxe, 2003).

**RACISM**

Students’ experiences with racism were multi-tiered and occurred in different contexts (Pollock, 2001). Students discussed racism against them as Native Hawaiians at individual and cultural/institutional levels, and at the intersection of contexts where different ethnic groups mingled. These contexts included school, local neighborhoods/communities, and the larger community on “the island” (Fong, Braun, & Umilani Tsark, 2003). Students also shared their experiences with microaggressions and vicarious racism (Alvarez, 2009, p. 401). These experiences with racism
enforce the “othering” of Native Hawaiians but also highlight that school can be a stronghold for racist practices and hierarchies (Pollock, 2001; Rist, 1970).

**Individual, historical, and inter-ethnic racism**

Students talked about classmates from other cultural groups trying to bully them and make them feel inferior at school. They talked about Caucasian students (also known as “Haoles” in Hawai‘i) telling them to “speak English” or “stop acting like a dumb Hawaiian.” Fighting was a commonly reported outcome of this tension, and some students talked about a sense of “protecting each other” as Native Hawaiians. When asked about why they thought these confrontations happened at school, students discussed the different roles that cultural groups have at school. Kini said, “they [Haoles] think they are better than us—smarter than us. And they tell us.”

These stereotypes representing deeply embedded cultural expectations at school establish the hierarchy of power that works to “other” Native Hawaiians students. Further, the fact that students reported these racist actions from fellow students suggests that this structure is not just based on authoritarian dynamics between elders and youth or teachers and students, but is reinforced by racial categories that demark students of Color (in this case, Native Hawaiians) as inferior and having less social and cultural capital (Delpit, 1995; Mickelson, 2003; Weis, 2003).

Students also spoke of racism and the historical tensions between Caucasians and Native Hawaiians impacting life in Hawai‘i. Renee talked about these tensions going way back: “you know, our land and everything was taken away and we are still trying to get it back.” And Makai, a 15-year-old male, discussed racism going back to land rights and Caucasians over-throwing of the last reigning Hawaiian monarch: “the whole Queen Lili‘uokalani deal. Yeah. They overthrew the Queen—the White people.” Teachers were able to add a layer of depth to our understanding of students’ reflections on historical racism—especially in school. Teachers discussed the role of Hawaiian History in the curriculum and they also expressed their work with Native Hawaiian youth to expose educational injustice as a part of Hawai‘i’s history. Jon framed this through describing Native Hawaiian schooling experiences and the impact of the tourist industry:

...the idea of Hawaiians and Hawai‘i being this idyllic place, a paradise. And it’s a tourist setting, so when tourists come here they often times expect us, as the brown people, to serve them and be
hospitable despite our current economic and political situation...[Some Native Hawaiian schools] were created to create blue collar workers, sewing, parenting, woodshop—they weren't initially for reading academics or professionals.

Quotes like this help to contextualize students' knowledge of historical racism (Alvarez, 2006; Fong et al., 2003) and their understanding of the larger, institutional factors that make them the "other."

**Microaggressions, vicarious, and institutional racism**

While students could easily recall incidents of overt racism, they also shared more subtle and indirect encounters in the form of microaggressions and vicarious and institutional racism (Alvarez, 2009). They discussed times when they received seemingly harmless slights or insults from teachers or peers that were aimed to make them feel inadequate or inferior as a Native Hawaiian (Alvarez, 2009). Jamie reflected that he constantly faced the stereotype that Hawaiians are inferior intellectually at school: "I've said some things in class and the other person said, 'such a Hawaiian'."

Native Hawaiian students also reported institutional and vicarious racism (Alvarez, 2009) that included the differential, inferior treatment of Native Hawaiians at school and in their communities. For example, students shared experiences with racism at school where a teacher's own racist beliefs would interact with school policies and/or classroom procedures to oppress Native Hawaiian students. Renee shared an incident in a Caucasian teacher's class when the Native Hawaiian students were all asked to sit on one side of the room and other students were asked to sit on the other: "He'd actually separate the class. Like the smart people would sit by the door and the dumb people sit by the closed door. And then you have to raise your hand, and every time people that sat on the dumb side of the class raised their hand, he wouldn't even look at us." She then shared how this teacher refused to respond to students if they spoke anything other than what he considered to be "correct English." She recalled a time when this teacher verbally insulted another female Native Hawaiian student in front of the whole class: "You have to speak English when you talk to me.' And she's like, 'I am speaking English.' And he's like, 'No. You are speaking, what is that you call it—bird.' Because, you know, we speak Pidgin sometimes. And I was like, 'Mr., it's called Pidgin.'"

This encounter can be viewed as reflecting not only one teacher's individual racist practices in the classroom, but the institutional racism that
reinforces the educational marginalization of youths’ cultural identities and position as the “other” (Kumashiro, 2000; Pollock, 2001). In referring to students’ language as “bird,” the teacher silenced their voices and carelessly insulted a native language rooted in Hawaiian history and identity. Hawaii Creole English is known to have originated as a pidgin during plantation life in Hawaii and reflects languages from at least six different ethnic groups: English, Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Portuguese (Ohama et al., 2000). The teacher’s racist actions appear embedded within the larger, institutional factors that alienate Native Hawaiian students. For example, Renee described this practice within the “confines” of the school classroom—a codified cultural context where students sit, teachers stand, students ask, teachers respond, and students are “sorted” or grouped every day in ways that support and encourage hierarchical power dynamics (Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 2002).

The role of categorization and labeling in “othering” has influenced Renee’s understanding of who is labeled as “smart” or “dumb” as these terms are synonymous with being White or Native Hawaiian and highlight school as a place where academic citizenship is defined by culture (Delpit, 1995; Weis, 2003). Jon described his perspective as both teacher and student by saying:

The very rules and way or form of learning through the high school system and even up to college is a Western-based system, the system that is based on your particular merit, your knowledge and your accomplishments ... where you have to put yourself forward, say how cool you are, how intelligent you are, how effective you are, and how great you are. This is very contrary to Hawaiian spirit and our own cultural belief of how we should represent ourselves. So that means for Hawaiians who don’t brag about themselves and boast about themselves and their accomplishments, they are shit out of luck.

Students’ navigation of racism across different cultural contexts (Jones, 2000; Paris, 2010) demonstrates their awareness that racism occurs in different forms and in different spaces (Fong et al., 2003; Yeh et al., 2008b). They see that Native Hawaiians are treated unfairly and that there are political and ecological forces that help sustain and encourage racism. These unspoken, yet understood, practices at school provide a foundation that supports the racist actions of teachers and furthers the alienation and “othering” of specific youth (Kumashiro, 2000). This awareness, combined with students’ historical knowledge and cultural
belonging, represents a cultural asset that emerges in the face of being “othered.”

COPING STRATEGIES FOR RACISM

For the Native Hawaiian students we sampled, past and current experiences with multiple forms of racism have contributed to enduring and interdependent coping strategies that represent indigenous community strengths and collectivistic priorities. Students shared different strategies for dealing with microaggressions and individual, institutional, and vicarious racism. The majority of these coping strategies highlight a cultural preference for peer, intercultural (someone in the same cultural group), and familial support (Borrero et al., 2009).

Support from family and friends

Students reported that they could talk to their friends about most of their everyday problems, but when asking for help or advice about an experience with racism, students most often turned to family. This inclination to rely on immediate and extended family underscores the Native Hawaiian emphasis on strong harmonious relationships (Durdle, 2002). In fact, many indigenous forms of healing in Hawaii such as Ho'oponopono (Durdle, 2002; Shook, 1985) focus on connection and conflict resolution among family members. Participants did not always mention a specific family member or sibling when describing the filial support that they sought, but rather described the entire family unit as a prominent support structure in their lives. For example, Eddie said:

It depends on the scale of the problem. If it’s like school—girls or something like that, I usually ask my friends. But if it is something dealing with my personal life, I ask my family...I’ve grown up in a very family-oriented family type thing. Does that make sense? So like our family is really tight and we just, we can depend on each other. So I am very comfortable asking them.

For youth of Color, coping strategies that build on community assets often have the best chance for success (Gutierrez, Alvarez, Nemon, & Lewis, 1996). The specific use of intercultural, familial, and peer coping strategies also reveals a prevalent indigenous emphasis on unity (lokahi) that has evolved from Native Hawaiians’ longstanding history with dislocation, marginalization, and racism. In fact, coping in Hawaii is often viewed in terms of community level (malama‘okana) support as providing
a place of refuge (pu'uhonua), especially in times of dislocation and cultural alienation (Durdle, 2002).

Students' coping strategies reveal a strong connection to their families, communities, and culture (Borrero & Yeh, 2011; Kana'iapuni, 2005). The fact that youth feel they can rely on their family members when dealing with racism or other difficult issues shows that they trust their family to understand the cultural tensions they are experiencing outside of the home. This is not the case for many students of Color in public schools on the U.S. mainland, as vastly different home/school contexts make school a place where youth are left to fend for themselves (Borrero & Yeh, 2010; Valdés, 2001).

CULTURAL PRIDE

Participants shared a cultural pride in terms of a respect and admiration for their land, a deep appreciation for the accomplishments of their ancestors, and a dedication to community and Native Hawaiian vitality on the island (Durdle, 2002). Particularly salient in students' discussions about the pride they felt in being Hawaiian were students' historical knowledge of Native Hawaiian culture and a focus on strength and survival as foundations of their cultural group. These cultural assets emerged in many different forms but perhaps the most powerful testament to their indigenous strengths was the students' strong knowledge of Hawaiian history. This knowledge exposed a tremendous pride in how their ancestors had survived and thrived throughout a history of dislocation and oppression (Kana'iapuni, 2005).

HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

Native Hawaiians have a longstanding history with racism (Baker, 2001), which, in part, has shaped their cultural identity and fueled their sense of pride. Teachers talked about confronting historical racism by educating students about historical traditions on the island. For example, Kim, a 55-year-old teacher, said, "The most important thing is being able to understand and get a grasp of their cultural capital: the land...their ancestry, their culture, and their language." The students we interviewed spoke about traditional customs and celebrations, respect for their elders, and the time-honored connection to the land that Hawaiians embody. Some students discussed this connection to their past and their cultural roots via specific historical examples. For example, Eddie talked about the cultural conflicts between Native Hawaiians and missionaries as original acts of oppression against Hawaiians, and Renee reflected on the
"White Man's" colonization and glamorization of the Hawaiian Islands: "The Haoles from the mainland—they're the ones who made the whole paradise thing. Like, even before we [be]came the 50th state, they was bringing all the people over here already. And it's like 'Welcome to Hawaii—the paradise or whatever.' For both students, these are historical acts that are a part of the Native Hawaiian struggle, and at the same time, this knowledge has led to a sense of pride and resilience for what it means to be Hawaiian (Novas, Cao, & Silva, 2004).

Other times students spoke of more recent history. For example, Renee expressed her cultural pride through discussing the controversy surrounding Hawaiian schools that are only open to Native Hawaiian students. When elaborating on her response to claims that the school admissions policies are unfair, she said, "Too bad. I mean they have those private schools. Like in a Catholic school, you have to be Catholic. It's the same as Hawaiian. If you don't like it, don't even try to get in." Students also shared that they learned about Native Hawaiian history in their classes at school.

Strength and survival

Students acknowledged the struggle of their ancestors to stay connected to the land and maintain their customs in the age of tourism and the constant influx of visitors to the islands. Youth expressed a strong desire to continue this legacy and insure that others see the beautiful culture that they have. Cal said that it is important for him to showcase his pride in his Native Hawaiian culture not just because it is what he believes in, but because he wants to be a positive representative of his culture: "Your culture is your culture. You don't want to give a bad impression." Renee commented on this idea of Hawaiians having to overcome a lot, but always persevering. She said, "We've been the target since, like, the beginning. Before we [were] even a state we [were] a target." She then went on to say that in spite of the oppression and historical racism faced by her people, "I love myself. Like, being Hawaiian is the bomb. I mean, we ain't got a lot of stuff we want, but shoot, it's unique 'cause there's not as many of us left."

Research has indicated that Native Hawaiian identity is associated with stronger coping strategies and resilience (Kana'iapuni, 2005). Having a strong sense of cultural pride can buffer the effects of psychological problems so ethnic identity is both a cultural asset and an indigenous coping strategy (McCubbin, 2004; Yoo & Lee, 2005). Hawaiian pride not only reveals a strong knowledge of cultural history, but an understanding of previous struggles. This awareness comes from school in part of
course, but it also comes from a strong sense of community and belonging that encourages adolescents to feel safe and comfortable with who they are. Given their experiences being the "other" in school, this sense of belonging as a Native Hawaiian is a tremendous cultural asset. It is not just something that individuals feel, but it is something that youth know the community creates and encourages (Kana’iaupuni, 2005). Thus, the pride that these youth feel in being Native Hawaiian helps them confront the individual, cultural, historical and institutional racism that they face (McCubbin, 2004).

IMPLICATIONS

Kana’iaupuni (2005) describes the importance of indigenous community strengths in research:

Strengths-based research begins with the premise of creating social change. In contrast to the expert-driven, top down approach assumed by deficit models, it means treating the subjects of study as actors within multilayered contexts and employing the multiple strengths of individuals, families, and communities to overcome or prevent difficulties. It is also about empowerment, where the purpose of strengths-based research and evaluation is to benefit the people involved in the study by giving them voice, insight and political power (Fetterman, 2000; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) (p. 35).

As educators it seems critical for us to understand how indigenous strengths may be used to encourage the positive cultural development of youth (Caballero, 2009; Kana’iaupuni, 2005; Paris, 2009; 2010). Schools have the potential to support youths’ ethnic identities (Bartlett, 2007; Yeh et al., 2008a) and assist students in making the transition into adulthood by offering important resources and opportunities to grow (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Natriello, 1986; Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990). In fact, the daily lexicon about students of Color often focuses on their problems, failures, and weaknesses (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000; Kliwer & Biklen, 2007; Kliwer et al., 2006). Whereas, we assert that students’ cultural assets must be central in the language of school success (Borger, 2008; Paris, 2010).

The experiences and stories of the Native Hawaiian youth in our sample remind us that cultural assets need to be viewed as ecologically-grounded and communally-created (Kana’iaupuni, 2005). These indigenous strengths are multilayered and are created within family,
peer, social, and community relationships. It is the dynamic nature of these contexts that promotes their relational and responsive presentation. For example, our evidence suggests that Native Hawaiian youth simultaneously hold multiple identities and a strong coherent Hawaiian identity. Their ability to negotiate their identities in a way that is interpersonally flexible underscores the complexity of this cultural asset (Xu, 2004). Such identity-making, even in contexts steeped in historical and institutional racism, should become a part of our discourse and theoretical orientation when studying “othering” in different cultural contexts (Borrero & Yeh, 2010; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Caballero, 2009).

Mickelson (2003) describes the complexities of multiple identities in the context of reciprocal and socially constructed racial and ethnic meanings. Youth of color not only interpret and express their own identities (reflection) but they also negotiate and respond to others’ perceptions of them (refraction) (O’Connor, 2001, p. 159). Further, “one of the most critical functions of a well-integrated school is the development of “culturally flexible” students who, over the course of their social development, effectively navigate diverse social environs such as the workplace, communities, and neighborhoods” (Carter, 2010, p.1). These ideas about multiple and socially created identities, coupled with our previously stated definition of the “othering” experience, further both practical and theoretical understandings of students of Color (Caballero, 2009; Paris, 2009, 2010) in our schools.

Although our evidence is derived from a very small purposive sample, our ecological approach to understanding the experiences of the Native Hawaiian students’ we interviewed was enhanced by our multi-informant, sequential design. We incorporated the additional perspectives of teachers and counselors of Native Hawaiian youth to add complexity, breadth, and validity in understanding students’ experiences. These interviews were methodologically and conceptually meaningful because they allowed us to triangulate the student data and reinforce student voices. Both groups also shared similar perspectives on stereotypes and racism, identities, cultural pride, and coping strategies. Voices of school personnel provided a contextual understanding for our presentation of students’ experiences with “othering” as they shared their own cultural insights as well as their perceptions of students’ experiences. As cultural informants, they also provided a multi-generational perspective on Native Hawaiian cultural assets and their vision for transformative change (Borrero et al., 2009).

Native Hawaiian students’ indigenous strengths highlight a strong and coherent cultural pride that is rooted in a deep appreciation of their history and dislocation. This pride seems to serve as a foundation for cul-
tural selves and a fuel for resilience and coping strategies in the face of racism (Caballero, 2009). These indigenous priorities emphasizing cultural bonds have the potential to empower youth and give voice in the face of “othering.” Educators and researchers can benefit by considering specific advocacy-oriented methods of interaction that reinforce giving voice, creating equity, and blurring the lines between “normal” and “other” (Borrero & Yeh, 2010; Fine, 2003; Kumashiro, 2000; Paris, 2010).

The complex negotiation of cultural identities, stereotypes, racism, and experiences of being the “other” is not particular to Native Hawaiians. Especially in schools, youth are continually “othered” from and by the monolithic White, middle class beliefs and practices that make the institution itself powerful (hooks, 1990; Kozol, 1991; Kumashiro, 2000; Rist, 1970). What the Native Hawaiian youth we studied offer uniquely; however, is a strong understanding of community connectedness and cultural pride along with a view of the forces at work against them as the “other.” In this context, these understandings are not necessarily at odds; youth seem to know that they are victims of a system that subjugates them, yet at the same time, they are part of a historically resilient and cohesive cultural group that will support them (Caballero, 2009; Kana’iaupuni, 2005).

Our findings offer evidence that Native Hawaiian high school youth exemplify the “othered” experience through: (a) cultural and racial ambiguity, (b) categorization and labeling, (c) hierarchical power dynamics, and (d) limited access to resources. The account of a teacher segregating, ignoring, and verbally assaulting Native Hawaiian students and their language represents how students can be categorized as the “other” and how hierarchical power dynamics in the school context can alienate students of Color (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Horvat & Antonio, 1999; Olsen, 1997; Rist, 1970). Renee, who shared this story, used such “othering” experiences to bolster her own knowledge of and connection to Hawaiian history, tradition, and identity. She ended her interview saying proudly, “I am Hawaiian, right on!”

Our findings reveal that cultural strengths are enhanced through opportunities to learn about cultural history and from connections to other Native Hawaiian students. Hence, many ecological factors such as geographic location, student demographics, and pedagogical priorities provide some opportunities for the validation of cultural assets. This is not the case for most youth of Color in mainland public schools (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Deschenes et al., 2001; Rist, 1970) but it is certainly a worthwhile goal for educating all students (e.g., Paris, 2010).

The Native Hawaiian school experience that these youth share embodies both the oppressive factors of the institution that is school and the
possibility for the understanding of larger cultural contexts to offer youth voice and a sense of belonging (Caballero, 2009; Paris, 2010). This requires educators, practitioners, and researchers to be open to the multidimensional, fluid aspects of context and identity-making that youth are experiencing daily. For many "othered" youth in urban public schools, their daily experience is one of alienation, silence, and life in the margins. Hence, positive cultural identity-making may be fostered and supported through educational opportunities, visions, and interactions that prioritize cultural assets (Borrero & Yeh, 2010; Paris, 2010). This focus on assets not only requires cultural competence and meaningful collaborative community engagement, but it also means that the more covert, unspoken codes of school should be discussed, questioned, and modified by those in power (Apple, 1995; Delpit, 1995; Kumashiro, 2000). When combined with an appreciation and utilization of the cultural assets of youth and their communities, we feel that such actions can help transform schools from oppressive contributors in the silencing of "othered" youth to powerful cultural contexts working to give voice to all students.

References


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