

PATHS TO LEADERSHIP OF NATIVE HAWAIIAN WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS
IN HAWAII'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Farrah-Marie Kawaihani Gomes

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PATHS TO LEADERSHIP OF NATIVE HAWAIIAN WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS
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Farrah-Marie Kawaihani Gomes, Ph.D.

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Advisor: Marilyn L. Grady

The purpose of this study was to obtain a deeper understanding of the pathways to leadership for Native Hawaiian women administrators at the University of Hawaii by exploring and describing the experiences along their education and employment journeys. Eight Native Hawaiian women administrators shared the supports and challenges they encountered along their education and employment journeys, provided advice for Native Hawaiian women aspiring to be leaders, and suggested ways that the University can facilitate the development of more Native Hawaiian women leaders.

Using methods consistent with qualitative research, this narrative study utilized semi-structured interviews, field notes from the interviews and observations, and document review of curriculum vitae, publications, and presentations. Critical Race Theory in Education served as the theoretical framework for studying the construct of educational administration leadership by women of color. Each journey was different, yet emergent themes converged to provide a rich understanding about the education and employment journeys of these women.

Analysis of the data using open and axial coding revealed three themes: Key Relationships, Personal Characteristics, and Social Justice. Findings suggest key relationships begin with family as foundation. Mentors as well as peers and colleagues provided education and career support along the journey. Embracing opportunities as presented and actively pursuing professional development were critical for continuous

advancement. Being Native Hawaiian strengthened the position of these women for career advancement options within the University system. Gender combined with race further bolstered the position of these women. Despite the challenges of navigating the labyrinth to leadership being experienced by some, all women persevere because of a responsibility (kuleana) they feel they have to Hawaii and its future.

PREVIEW

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my paternal grandparents. They were an amazing couple who loved me unconditionally, supported me in everything I did, encouraged me to reach for goals beyond my own belief and imagined a future for me that was full of hope...for myself, my family and my community. It was Grandma's dream that I would get my doctoral degree and I promised her that I would. After she passed, I realized that it was time for me to make good on my promise. Papa watched me work tirelessly to balance work, family and school. He passed before I was able to finish. He gave me the last bit of encouragement I needed to cross the finish line.

In honor of my Grandma Sandra.

Emelia "Sandra" Bailado Gomes

(February 18, 1936 – November 7, 2007)

She believed in giving back to the community.

She was a leader and fought for what she thought was right.

She demonstrated exceptional work ethic, even during retirement.

My contributions to the community are a tribute to my beloved Grandma.

In memory of my Papa Tony.

Antone Gomes, Jr.

(September 3, 1931 – May 20, 2015)

He loved the simple things in life.

He didn't know how to say no – I get that from him.

He was a great listener, always knowing more than he led on to knowing.

We need more men like my Papa, who aren't afraid to support strong women.

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I thank God first for it is through Him that all things are possible. I am not a very religious person, but I am very spiritual. I believe that God will never let me endure something that I can't handle and this project shows how my faith in Him has allowed me to achieve this accomplishment. My greatest strength came from God in the darkest times and the weakest moments along the journey.

Several people knew that many years ago I started a doctoral program and realized that it wasn't a right fit for me or my life at that time. I made a promise to myself that I would one day go back and get my degree. After my son was born, life had new meaning and as he entered school, I decided it was time that I do the same. Koa Kawika, I thank you for being the biggest inspiration along my journey. Among many other things, you often gave me reason to pause and refocus on the big picture and what the important priorities are in life. You and your dad have such a weird way of keeping me grounded.

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The literature on women and those of ethnic minorities serving in higher education leadership has continuously increased over the years. Still, there are education and career experiences that have not been shared by Native Hawaiian women administrators in higher education, a population of underrepresented individuals whose stories have yet to be told. As a Native Hawaiian female in a leadership position in the State of Hawaii's only public higher education system, I have come to realize that while I am not alone, there are only a few other Native Hawaiian women like me in executive leadership positions at the University of Hawaii. This has led me to question why this is so and what can be done to rectify this.

My career path to leadership in higher education does not follow the traditional path of a higher education administrator who worked up to the position through the faculty ranks (Glover, 2009), nor does it follow the education model of someone who pursued an advanced degree with the objective to obtain an administrative position within the higher education field. Instead, I was recruited by the University of Hawaii at Hilo more than nine years ago to assist with the establishment and oversight of an education center in a rural community near my hometown. The institution was looking for someone who would work with the university and community to develop the center, physically and operationally. Without my knowledge, a representative on the center's community advisory board who was aware of my education background and work experience recommended that the administration reach out to inquire if I was interested in becoming the center's founding director. After two months of discussion and deliberation, I started

as a casual hire for the institution before securing the permanent Executive and Managerial (E&M) position two years later.

Perhaps it is because my path to leadership was unplanned that I am particularly interested in this topic. Of special interest is whether an unplanned path to leadership is shared by other Native Hawaiian women administrators in higher education in Hawaii and if not, what did other Native Hawaiian women administrators in higher education do as part of their preparation for educational administration leadership.

Background of the Study

The University of Hawaii (University) was founded in 1907 as a land-grant institution. The University system is comprised of 7 community colleges, 2 baccalaureate universities and 1 research university. Governance of the University is vested in a 15-member Board of Regents (BOR). The BOR has statutory authority in all areas of system policy, budgeting, programming, evaluating, and governance.

Chapter 4-1 of the BOR policy establishes the University system's common mission of which a section reads:

As the only provider of public higher education in Hawaii, the University embraces its unique responsibilities to the indigenous people of Hawaii and to Hawaii's indigenous language and culture. To fulfill this responsibility, the University ensures active support for the participation of Native Hawaiians at the University and supports vigorous programs of study and support for the Hawaiian language, history, and culture.

University System Offices provide coordinated support for the ten campuses across the state. A portion of the University System Offices mission statement as indicated in the *University Reference Guide* reads:

On behalf of the Board of Regents, the University of Hawaii System ensures that higher education in the State of Hawaii affords improvement in the quality of life and the social, economic, and environmental well-being of its citizens, particularly those who in the past have been less well served, including Native Hawaiians.

Earlier this year, the University released *University of Hawaii Strategic Directions 2015-2021* to guide the priorities for achieving outcomes directed by the BOR. The four strategic directions specified in the document include Hawaii Graduation Initiative (HGI), Hawaii Innovation Initiative (HII), 21st Century Facilities (21CF), and High Performance Mission-Drive System (HPMS). Each strategic direction includes a goal, action strategies with corresponding tactics, and productivity and efficiency measures.

The Hawaii Graduation Initiative goal outlined in the document is to increase the educational capital of the state by increasing the participation and completion of students, particularly Native Hawaiians, low-income students and those from underserved regions and populations and preparing them for success in the workforce and their communities (pg. 1). Notable tactics for this strategic direction include reducing gaps in college completion for Native Hawaiians, low-income and underrepresented groups as well as improving and stabilizing student support services for Native Hawaiians, veterans, returning adults and part-time students. The productivity and efficiency measure that

these tactics are in place to address is the enrollment to degree gap for Native Hawaiian students.

The High Performance Mission-Drive System goal outlined in the document is to ensure the University's ability to provide a diverse student body throughout Hawaii with affordable access to a superb higher education experience in support of the institutional mission of the university, which includes commitments to being a foremost indigenous-serving university and advancing sustainability. One of the action strategies for this goal specifically focuses on services and programs for Native Hawaiians. The action strategy reads:

UH aspires to be the world's foremost indigenous serving university and embraces its unique responsibilities to the indigenous people of Hawaii and to Hawaii's indigenous language and culture. To fulfill this responsibility, the university ensures active support for the participation of Native Hawaiians and supports vigorous programs of study and support for the Hawaiian language, history and culture. In addition to the Native Hawaiian student success agenda within the Hawai'i Graduation Initiative, the following tactics align with the thematic areas set forth in *Hawaii Papa O Ke Ao*, UH's plan for a model indigenous serving university.

Hawaii Papa O Ke Ao includes comprehensive recommendations from a Model Indigenous-serving University Task Force that convened from 2011-2012. In the opening comments of the plan, University President at the time, MRC Greenwood, stated:

It is incumbent on Hawaii's only public institution of higher education to both educate Hawaiian youth of our islands to prepare them for productive lives, and

continue to play a key role in preserving and perpetuating the culture that exists no where else on earth. It is a gift and an obligation of which we are keenly aware of.

The three thematic areas of the plan are Leadership Development, Community Engagement, and Hawaiian Language and Cultural Parity. One of the characteristics of a model indigenous-serving institution outlined in the plan is that there will be Native Hawaiians holding leadership roles in the University administration. Goals two and three of the Leadership Development thematic area directly address this characteristic. Goal two is to prepare faculty and staff of Hawaiian ancestry to assume leadership positions within the University and in their community, while goal three is to ensure Native Hawaiian values are practiced at all levels of institutional decision-making (p. 6). Objectives under goal two include researching, defining, implementing and expanding leadership development programs across the system as well as formalizing and institutionalizing commitment at all levels to ensure Native Hawaiians are in decision-making roles at every level. Objectives under goal three include developing and expanding system-wide training programs in Hawaiian values for all levels of faculty and staff as well as formalizing commitments of all University institutions to include Native Hawaiian values that impact decision-making.

Goal two from the Leadership Development thematic area of the plan is used as one of the tactics for the HPMS strategic direction that specifies preparing more Native Hawaiians to assume leadership roles within UH and the community. It is straightforward that the productivity and efficiency measure that these strategies and tactics are in place

to address is the number of Native Hawaiian employees (faculty/staff/administrators) and graduate assistants employed at the University.

Statement of Problem

An inquiry to the University Data Governance Office yielded the result that to date, while there has not been a University of Hawaii President of Native Hawaiian ancestry before, there have been Native Hawaiian males in the positions of Vice President at the system level and Chancellor at the campus level. Unfortunately, Native Hawaiian women have not yet been able to break through the level past Vice Chancellor as there has not been a Native Hawaiian female Chancellor at the campus level or Vice President at the system level.

According to the United States Census Bureau (2010), women in Hawaii represent 49.9% of the population. As for race, 10.0% of the population reported being 'Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone', while a total of 26.2% reported being 'Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone or in combination with one or more other races.' Based on the way the US Census Bureau collects data on race, specifically in how Native Hawaiians are combined with Other Pacific Islanders, it is not possible to get an accurate account for what percentage of the population in Hawaii is actually Native Hawaiian alone or in combination with other races.

At the University of Hawaii, Fall 2014 census data indicated a total of 57,052 students enrolled across all 10 campuses (University of Hawaii, 2014). More than half (56.9%) of the students reported being female. Like the US Census Bureau, the University of Hawaii allows students to report as many races as they wish. However, the University also separately captures data specific to Hawaiian ancestry. In the Fall 2014

census, 23.8% of students reported being of Hawaiian ancestry (University of Hawaii, 2014). This percentage of students is close the percentage of people who responded being Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone or in combination with one or more other races on the US Census.

In terms of faculty and staff at the University of Hawaii, Fall 2014 census data indicated a total of 10,318 faculty and staff employed (University of Hawaii, 2014). Like the student population, more than half (53.7%) of the faculty and staff reported being female. Unlike the student population though, only 10.6% of faculty and staff reported being of Native Hawaiian ancestry.

The University of Hawaii has several categories for classifying employees. Executive and Managerial (E&M) staff are hired by respective campuses or the system and confirmed by the UH Board of Regents (BOR). Fall 2014 census data indicated a total of 215 executives employed. Of those executives, 46.0% reported being female, while 15 (7.0%) reported being of Native Hawaiian ancestry (University of Hawaii, 2014). Of the 15 executives who reported being Native Hawaiian, nine were women. This means that in total, only 4.3% of the University Executive and Managerial staff are Native Hawaiian women. That group of women served as the pool of potential participants for this research study.

As the data shows, the percentage of Native Hawaiian administrators in higher education remains disproportionate to the percentage of Native Hawaiian students enrolled in higher education and in the community. The percentage gets more disproportionate when focusing on Native Hawaiian women leaders in the same context. This, coupled with the mission statements and strategic directions set forth by various

units of the University of Hawaii focusing on serving the Native Hawaiian population, makes it worth studying the factors that influence the paths to leadership for Native Hawaiian women administrators in Hawaii's higher education system since as Dixon (2005) stated, university leaders should reflect the different cultural and ethnic groups that make up their school populations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to obtain a deeper understanding of the pathways to leadership for Native Hawaiian women administrators at the University of Hawaii by exploring and describing the experiences along their education and employment journeys.

Although women now earn the majority of all advanced degrees in the United States (Calizo, 2011), few women persist to positions of leadership within higher education (Baumgartner and Schneider, 2010). For many women, the path to administration is not clearly documented and charted in a predictable manner. It appears that the specific and individual needs of minority women go largely unnoticed and remain unaddressed, which may contribute to the low numbers of minority women in higher education administration in 2016.

Native Hawaiian women traditionally have been included in ethnic categories with Pacific Islanders or Asian Americans. No specific studies exist that primarily focus on the leadership paths of Native Hawaiian women in the field of higher education. This study builds on findings from studies of other minority women leaders in higher education by exploration of the factors that influenced the path to leadership of Native Hawaiian women administrators at the University of Hawaii.

This study provides a summary of the status of Native Hawaiian women leaders in the higher education environment in an attempt to highlight where these minority women were successful in breaking into the higher education environment and where more attention is needed to help bring equity to representation of Native Hawaiian women in the field.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is twofold with potential implications for Native Hawaiian women aspiring for career advancement and for institutions interested in supporting and promoting Native Hawaiian women leaders within the higher education environment. By understanding the factors that influence career advancement to positions of educational administration, Native Hawaiian women can better prepare themselves for leadership positions when they become available. From an organizational perspective, institutions of higher education seeking to support and promote Native Hawaiian women leaders will be interested in the factors that influence career advancement, which they can facilitate through more systemic and structured approaches.

Overview of Methodology

This qualitative study utilized a narrative methodology to obtain information from 1-hour to 2-hour recorded personal semi-structured interviews with eight Native Hawaiian women administrators employed at the University of Hawaii. The University Data Governance Office helped identify potential participants for the study since gender and ethnicity are confidential characteristics.

Once IRB approval was granted, a letter of introduction to me and the study (Appendix A) was sent via email to all potential participants. I followed up with a phone

call to two individuals who had not responded within the requested two-week period. The phone call script is attached as Appendix B. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection tool for the study. Interview questions are attached as Appendix C. Prior to beginning any interviews, participants were required to complete the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). I served as the primary research instrument to collect data through the semi-structured interview questions. To ensure clarity and effectiveness of the Interview Protocol (Appendix E), I first pilot tested the interview questions and process with the two female members of my advisory council.

Throughout the research process, the anonymity of the participants was closely guarded. All data was stored in a locked file cabinet in my office. The audio files of the interviews were shared only with a professional transcriptionist. I will retain all audio files, field notes, and corresponding forms for five years after study completion, at which time all materials will be destroyed and erased.

To ensure internal validity, all participants were invited to review and confirm the accuracy of their interview transcripts. For external validity, I built in an external audit to the study. The role of the external auditor was to examine whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions drawn were supported by the data. Since the external auditor should have no connection to the study, I requested this service of a private consultant with demonstrated proficiency in conducting qualitative research and with a track record of evaluating research studies involving Native Hawaiian participants.

Research Questions

The research questions for the study were answered through a qualitative narrative methodology as explained in Chapter Three. Research on the topic of women

leaders in higher education has been conducted among African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian American women. Similar findings have resulted from those studies focusing on women of color as leaders in higher education, which suggested that the supports that benefit women of those ethnic minorities may also have similar benefits for Native Hawaiian women. I sought to address this issue.

The central research question guiding the study was:

How do Native Hawaiian women administrators at the University of Hawaii describe their experiences leading to higher education administration?

The sub-questions for the study included the following:

1. Where did Native Hawaiian women administrators find support for obtaining positions of higher education administration?
2. What were the challenges Native Hawaiian women experienced on their path to higher education administration and how did they overcome those challenges?
3. In what ways, if any, did gender influence the career paths of Native Hawaiian women higher education administrators?
4. In what ways, if any, did race influence the career paths of Native Hawaiian women higher education administrators?
5. What role, if any, did the University of Hawaii have in the development of Native Hawaiian women leaders?

Organization of the Study

The dissertation is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter includes the introduction and background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, overview of the research methodology, limitations of the study

and organization of the dissertation. Chapter Two includes a review of the literature on historical and socio-cultural contexts for women in higher education. A review of literature pertaining to Critical Race Theory is also included in Chapter Two. The rationale for use of qualitative methods and narrative inquiry, along with the research questions, role of the researcher, selection of participants, data collection and data analysis are discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four outlines ethical implications of the study and presents Theme One. Chapter Five presents Theme Two while Chapter Six presents Theme Three. Chapter Seven focuses on discussion of themes that emerged from the findings, summarizes the study and provides recommendations and implications for future research.

Summary

This chapter provided the context for a qualitative research study aimed at obtaining a deeper understanding of the pathways to leadership of Native Hawaiian women administrators at the University of Hawaii by exploring and describing the experiences along their education and employment journeys. I presented background of the study, a statement of the problem, and the purpose and significance of the study. I also provided an overview of the research methodology, limitations of the study and explained how the dissertation is organized.