Decolonizing Native Spaces: An In-Depth Examination of Native and Indigenous Space Creation as it Pertains to Native Hawaiian Identity

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A SENIOR CAPSTONE PROJECT
Presented to
The Department of Anthropology
The Colorado College

By
Sydney Story
2021

Approved: Sarah Heentzinger

Date: April 21, 2021

Abstract

This paper refutes a claim made by Roger Keesing in his 1989 essay, in which he states that the current state of cultural identity in the Pacific is a reactive creation that only exists due to the implementation of colonialism and its western ideals. I draw from local movements and organizations such as #ProtectMaunaKea and Waiwai Collective in arguing that the creation of these metaphorical and physical spaces should be deemed responsive rather than reactive due to their driving intention. The concept of reaction versus response will be analyzed through three theories – time-space compression, third space, and oppositional consciousness. Through a combination of these theories as well as literature and ethnographic study, this paper will explain how purposeful identity creation grants agency to the oppressed party rather than the oppressor, and this intentional creation directly contradicts Keesing's claim that culture creation is a reaction to colonialism. In choosing how and in which ways to respond to the systemic oppressions of colonialism, I argue that those being oppressed under these systems have the means to reclaim the agency that was forcibly taken from them upon the imposition of these ideals.

Honor Code Upheld

On my honor, I have neither given, nor received, unauthorized aid on this project.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Anthropology department at Colorado College for their continuous support throughout both my college career and the development of this paper. Professors Sarah Hautzinger and Christina Leza provided invaluable input and edits, without which this paper would not remotely resemble what it is now. Finally, mahalo piha to my parents, my wonderful friends, and to everyone who has enabled me to embrace and educate myself about my Native Hawaiian heritage. Hoʻomaikaʻi nō i kou alakaʻi.

Introduction: From Mauna Kea to Ka Waiwai

In the summer of 2019, the #ProtectMaunaKea movement in Hawai‘i came to a head. The five-year culmination of civil unrest and the government's willful ignorance of *kānaka maoli* (Native Hawaiian) voices resulted in the peaceful occupation of Saddle Road by *kia‘i* (warriors) who were determined not to allow the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope atop the peak of the mountain Mauna Kea. The Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) was, in short, the proposed construction of NASA's largest telescope to date. It was to join a number of previously constructed telescopes at the Mauna Kea Observatory atop the peak of the highest mountain in the world – when measured from base (ocean floor) to peak, Mauna Kea sits at 33,500 feet, while Mt. Everest measures 29,029 feet. The height of this mountain, the highest point in the Pacific ocean, makes the peak of Mauna Kea a particularly sacred place to a number of Pacific cultures. Not only is it the closest point to the heavens, but the peak is also considered to be the domain of the snow goddess Poli‘ahu and contains several *hēiau* (sacred temple sites) dedicated to various gods. The construction of telescopes located at the Mauna Kea Observatory have already caused the destruction of several of these sites. Additionally, the sheer size of the TMT meant that more of these sites would be destroyed and that significant environmental impacts would befall the ecosystems found only atop Mauna Kea, and would mark yet another intrusion onto this sacred land. The existing telescopes that make up the Mauna Kea Observatory were constructed without building permits, which were obtained only after the structures were built, and have been points of contention between Native Hawaiian activists and researchers for years. Protests arose when the original building plans were proposed in 2014, and in 2015 the Supreme Court of Hawai‘i declared the permits invalid. The plans were reevaluated and proposed again in 2019, granted approval, and on July 10th 2019, *kia‘i* began their protest. These activists

peacefully occupied Saddle Road at the base of Mauna Kea, the only road accessing the peak, effectively preventing construction equipment from traveling up the mountain. As tensions rose atop Mauna Kea, protests around the state began in support.

This occupation and movement spread across my home state like nothing I'd seen before. Growing up in Hawai'i, I'd heard stories about local social justice movements (i.e. The Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, Kū i Ka Pono, etc.) but I had never attended or experienced one myself. We as Native Hawaiians are incredibly privileged in that we grow up and live on our ancestral lands, providing a unique place connection to our islands. As such, when corporations or governments try to abuse the land we love so much, we feel it is our duty to step up and do what we can to protect it. During the summer of 2019, we were mobilized as a people *en mass*, and I spent that summer making signs, attending protests, and – most memorably – flying to Hawai'i island to visit Mauna Kea herself and volunteering my time there. I was only able to be there for one day due to the limitations of time and finances, but the visit settled something in me that I hadn't realized was adrift. In a journal entry after the trip, I wrote:

> Just sitting at the base of [Mauna Kea] brought over me a sense of calm that I've never experienced before. I have never felt more sure of myself or of my identity. I knew, beyond a doubt, that I was being called to this place to understand something within myself that I had been struggling with for a while.

It was this visit and this movement that solidified what I wanted my senior thesis to analyze. Around the world, Native and Indigenous peoples have been standing up for their land rights and their autonomy and have been unified in protecting the land that they consider sacred and once

called home. Before our spaces were occupied and colonized and long after those colonizers leave, we will have a deep personal and spiritual connection to the land from which our ancestors came. It is this understanding that became clear to me as I visited Mauna Kea that summer, and what I have been striving to academically conceptualize ever since.

This movement started me on a path to understand Native and Indigenous place attachments. Following the summer of 2019, I began to draft a grant proposal in the hopes I would receive funding to travel to New Zealand, where *mana whenua* (Native Māori) have been occupying the land at Ihumātao for three years in a similar fight to the one atop Mauna Kea. The unique nature of Pacific Islander place attachments drew me in – we, the colonized, still occupy our ancestral lands. We know the history of these places and what they mean to our cultures, and yet we are engaged in ongoing battles with our colonizers to convey this importance. What is the barrier here? Why are these place attachments so difficult for so many non-Natives to understand? My intention in applying for this travel grant was to visit New Zealand and volunteer my time at Ihumātao, working with and learning from the incredible *mana whenua* who have been fighting for their land for the past three years. I was going to take the knowledge gained from this experience and compare it to the peaceful protests at Mauna Kea in an attempt to understand the unique place attachments of Pacific Islander culture, and to unpack the ideas of pervasive colonialism that inhibit our everyday existence.

In March of 2020, the global COVID19 pandemic shut down the world. I went home for what I thought would be an extended spring break and stayed there for eight months. The *kia'i* at Mauna Kea were forced to halt their occupation, and the world stood still. The world continues to stand still, in fact, and that occupation has not yet resumed. I was faced with a difficult dilemma: how could I reimagine my senior thesis in light of the global pandemic? How could I

take this research that I was already passionate about and apply it to my current situation? I could no longer travel to New Zealand, and the protests at Mauna Kea had been paused. All the ethnographic work I had planned on completing was no longer an option. What was I to do?

I had also planned on applying to a multitude of internships to occupy my summer, all of which ended up being cancelled. I was stuck at home, with nothing to keep myself busy but reading articles on the internet for a thesis I wasn't even sure I could complete. Then, I was offered an internship with a company called Waiwai Collective. This company was created by community members who recognized that there was no space for the Native Hawaiian community to gather and learn from one another, despite living and working on our ancestral lands. We have other ethnic spaces, such as a Chinatown and a Koreatown, yet no specific place for Native Hawaiians to exist in a professional setting, no place created with just us and our culture in mind. Thus, Waiwai Collective was born. The collective itself focuses on the perpetuation of Native Hawaiian values, and both celebrates and elevates our voices within the broader community. The term '*waiwai'* translates to 'wealth', and the founders of Waiwai Collective strive to redefine the idea of wealth as being strictly monetary. Rather, Waiwai Collective works to convey the importance of spiritual and cultural wealth in furthering Native Hawaiian culture and individuals. In the physical co-working space of Ka Waiwai ("Ka" indicating the physical space itself rather than the collective organization) we are allowed to grow as individuals and also as a community.

I explained my original project in the hopes of establishing to the reader my focus going into my work with Waiwai Collective. This important background informed many of the questions and intentions I brought to our relationship, and also heavily influenced the projects I took on with the company. The purpose of Ka Waiwai is to provide a professional setting for

Native Hawaiian entrepreneurs in which we would be able to strive for excellence among our peers. This idea of intentional space is what has ensured the success of Waiwai Collective.

When Ka Waiwai opens each morning, our primary responsibility is to make the space look clean and inviting. We turn on music: local artists, oftentimes good friends and colleagues of our coworkers, at a low background hum. The curtains are thrown open to let the sunlight stream in through the floor-to-ceiling windows, and the floor is swept and vacuumed. The room is a giant circle – a refurbished bank lobby, complete with a heavy vault door that leads into the one enclosed meeting room. We call this room, aptly, The Vault, and it is both where we store the money, extra drinks, and large staff refrigerator, and also where commissioned artwork lines the walls and a long, handcrafted table sit prominently in the middle of the room. The rest of the space, outside of the three-foot thick walls of The Vault, is open and airy. We serve local food and drink at the bar (or at least we did, pre-COVID), and the workspaces are purposefully set up to be mobile.

Each and every aspect of this space was carefully curated to be an unapologetically Hawaiian space. One of the founders of Waiwai Collective, Dr. Mahina Paishon-Duarte, has explained to me in detail the painstaking care that went into the creation of this workspace. All art is commissioned by Native Hawaiian artists. We partner exclusively with local farms and vendors to promote Hawaiian businesses and sustainability. We host events for the community to gather and learn from one another, and to have the hard conversations that stem from creating a purposefully Native Hawaiian space in a colonized, occupied state. Waiwai Collective as an entity was created in response to the needs of the community – the founders of this space, all of whom excel in their professional fields, noticed a lack of Native Hawaiian voices at the table, so to speak. In considering this, they realized that we as a society have grown complacent in our

categories – as businessmen, as farmers, as educators – and that the in-between space of who we are as Native businessmen, Native famers, Native educators, was being ignored. Thus, Ka Waiwai was born as a space with the belief that we as a community can do anything we set our intentions towards, and that the only way for us to be excellent is to be authentically, unapologetically ourselves. At the heart of Ka Waiwai's creation was *intention*. When those who enter the space come with the intention to further the Hawaiian community, to be respectful, and to work together, the nature of Waiwai Collective is easily understood. We exist to lift each other up, to learn from one another, and to reach our highest potential – something we can only do when we understand who we are and where we come from.

I began to realize that both this physical space as well as the metaphorical space we'd created for ourselves with the #ProtectMaunaKea movement were indicative of a modern type of identity creation – we were reclaiming our identities as Native Hawaiians and purposefully declaring our "otherness" as we did so. Roger Keesing (1989) suggests that all existing culture in the Pacific is the result of a reactionary creation – a last-ditch effort to preserve dying cultures. I would argue, however, that culture creation was instead a responsive action – something equally as conceptual, political, and economical as it was cultural. In choosing to create spaces that distinguish our identity as Native Hawaiians, such as Ka Waiwai or the literal and metaphorical spaces that comprise the #ProtectMaunaKea movement, Native Hawaiians have staked a claim over the distinction that we are, in fact, "other," and that this otherness is what constitutes our culture creation. This reclamation of our identity we attribute to the fact that we have recognized that historical narratives have left little to no space – here I refer to both the literal and metaphorical – for us to establish our own identities, and that we must create this space for ourselves. In responding to this neglect, we have put into play our own agency rather than

relying on the systemic nature of colonialism to structure the narratives on our behalf. Reclaiming our otherness has given us the ability to take back the narrative that colonialism has taken from us. Saying that Native Hawaiians are "reacting" to colonialism indicates that we are simply pawns in our own history and lack the ability to tell our own stories without colonialism imposing a dominant narrative. Comparatively, in claiming that we have chosen to *respond* to colonialism through identity reclamation and cultural resilience the agency of change and control over the narrative is returned to the oppressed party. The conscious performativity of a space like Ka Waiwai shows that Hawaiian cultural values are able to be upheld in our "modern" society, and that not only is this action doable, but it is also profitable. We *can* intentionally exist in this Western world as Native Hawaiians, and this existence is in fact beneficial to our growth as a Native community.

Could this same theory, then, be applicable to metaphorical spaces such as the #ProtectMaunaKea movement as well? I argue that space and identity creation can be equally applicable to both physical and metaphorical spaces, and that these aspects of identity creation are responsive to the needs of the community, rather than a reaction to an imposition of Western ideals. The use of the term 'space' is intentional. In this essay I will touch on the differences between the terms "space" and "place," suggesting that the difference between the two informs how a given setting is viewed by both Western society and Native/Indigenous individuals. Further, this distinction impacts our interpretations of the figurative spaces we occupy. We as Native Hawaiians exist within a colonized, occupied space. Why not declare that space our own? What is stopping us? Dr. Mahina Paishon-Duarte, one of the founders of Waiwai Collective, said in an interview that "[…] in order for us to be excellent, we have to be ourselves." The

emergence of our distinction as Native Hawaiians is a necessary response to the colonial space in which we exist.

The intention of this essay is to argue that the creation of these spaces, both physical and metaphorical, should be deemed responsive rather than reactive due to their driving intention. The analysis of reaction versus response will be analyzed through three theories – time-space compression (Harvey 1991), third space (Perez 1999), and oppositional consciousness (Sandoval 1991). Through a combination of these theories as well as literature and ethnographic study, I intend to explain how purposeful identity creation grants agency to the oppressed party rather than the oppressor, and this intentional creation directly contradicts Keesing's claim that culture creation is a reaction to colonialism.

Methodology

My research consists of literature review, participant observation, and research interviews conducted over the span of nearly five months. As an ethnographer, I carried out participant observation at cultural and physical sites, such as the Mauna Kea protests and occupation of Saddle Road, protocol ceremonies and educational lessons, and of the day-to-day atmosphere at Ka Waiwai spanning a total time period of three weeks. This includes a brief 36 hour stay at Saddle Road with the peaceful protestors stationed there. Most of the data analysis, however, relies heavily on literature content and theoretical analysis. Also included in the literature is an ethnographic review of select ancient Hawaiian practices and their transformation and applicability to today's society. My data also includes interviews with members of Waiwai Collective as well as some of the founding members themselves, conducted over the span of two months over the summer of 2020. These interviews consist of one formal interview with one of the founders of Waiwai Collective and the manager of the space, two informal conversations

with members at Ka Waiwai, and four interviews with individuals who had used the space in the past but weren't necessarily regular members. Therefore I have chosen to first lay out the theoretical framework of this paper in order to situate my data analysis within it. Furthermore, I'd like to acknowledge that I am writing this work from the point of view of a Native Hawaiian anthropology student. I have the privilege of growing up within and experiencing the cultural renaissance of Native Hawaiian culture and heritage. I have also had the privilege of receiving an education that allows me to critically analyze my cultural positionality and the positionality of others. It is from this perspective that I am able to critique the Keesing (1989) work and carefully and intentionally read through additional literature.

Theory and Literature: Restructuring the Narrative

This paper will draw on three main theories: Time-space compression (Harvey 1991) , third space (Perez 1999) and oppositional consciousness (Sandoval 1991). In tying these three theories together, my goal is to convey to the reader the altered way in which we must begin to examine how we construct culture in relation to history – by examining the gaps in these historical narratives to determine what, and more importantly who, is absent from these depictions. Time-space compression (Harvey) suggests that our conceptualization of space is constantly changing over time as our knowledge of the world expands. My hope is that in tying in third space (Perez) and oppositional consciousness (Sandoval), this paper will be able to not only show where the gaps in Native Hawaiian history have created the narrative we work with today, but also to convey the necessity of a response by Native/Indigenous individuals as we restructure our identities to fit within the established framework. This response derives not only from the suppression of our culture by colonial powers, but it also aids in the trauma-processing

response that comes from processes of colonialization. Historical trauma, according to *Nānā i ke Kumu* (2020), "refers to the effects of a series of intentional and systemic acts that specifically target a group of people" (2020: 29). With regard to Hawai'i, specifically, this trauma can be traced to the first contact with Europeans continuing on to the present, with impacts including but not limited to changes in social structure, introduction of disease, the decline of land and natural resource management, and the gradual but inevitable increase in the influence of foreign powers. However, researchers (Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1979 [2], 314 cited in Kanuha et. al, 2020) have shown that Native Hawaiian cultural resilience is in part due to the importance and respect placed on ancestry and homeland. Furthermore, recent research has examined cultural resilience and has defined the term as "a culture's capacity to maintain and develop cultural identity and critical cultural knowledge and practices" (Neill 2006, cited in Kanuha et. al, 2020). Examining the language here depicts a clear acknowledgement that culture does in fact shift over time, and that in some cases it *must* shift in order to adapt and persevere amidst changing times. In the case of Hawai'i, specifically, this cultural resilience is in part due to the place attachments and the value placed by Native Hawaiians on our homeland.

Therefore, the responsive nature of culture creation does far more than speak against the hegemonic systems in which we are entrenched; it helps us as a people process and unpack the disproportionate power dynamics stemming from the act of colonization as we work to understand our identities within and despite these power structures.

Time-space Compression

The Condition of Post-Modernity (1991) by David Harvey outlines his theory of time-space compression. Any system of representation is in itself a fixed spatial construct, according to

Harvey, who continues on to define his theory as "processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter […] how we represent the world to ourselves." Harvey further uses the word 'compression' in order to refer to the ways in which the capitalist society we live in has been characterized by the increasingly fast pace of life while overcoming spatial barriers that seem to situate the world in a much smaller context (1991: 240). Interestingly, Harvey seems to situate his arguments around the capitalist nature of society. While I acknowledge that this is the original basis of his argument, I'd like to analyze time-space compression in a historical and cultural context instead. For the purpose of this paper, I am choosing to focus on the aspect of time-space compression which acknowledges that all knowledge is socially constructed, and that the way in which we view the world is inherently tinged with biases. As time has increased and space has decreased, our perspective of the world has changed to fit these alterations.

This emergence of cultural distinction, then, is in part due to time-space construction – it is a necessary response rather than a reactionary one. To be authentic and grow as an individual one must set oneself apart, and this means not only acknowledging one's Native identity but also choosing to purposefully nurture and celebrate said identity rather than ignore it. How can we be excellent in our ways if we ignore the very real existence of colonial powers that have served to eliminate this aspect of ourselves? Reclaiming and reinventing our spaces is not indicative of culture reinvention. We are simply trying, amidst a society that is finally beginning to honor the histories of Native and Indigenous peoples, to be ourselves.

Third Space

The concept of third space was theorized by feminists of color. Created in response to the idea of the "third world," the idea of third space differs from the metaphorical first or second space in its intention. While first world feminism focuses on the positionality of white women in first world countries, third world feminism and third space exists outside social norms – rather, as the *defiance* of social norms. It refers to the ability to exist within and create from this space in opposition to hegemony. Once one begins to question the gaps between legitimacy and social order, one begins to exist within third space and therefore becomes a decolonizing subject. This individual can then construct new identities to uphold current ideologies. Third space can also be referred to as interstices or interstitial spaces.

The term 'third space' was coined by Emma Perez (1999) and can also be interpreted as interstices or interstitial spaces (Sandoval 2000). These spaces exist within the gaps of history – where missing narratives *create* a narrative. In identifying where these gaps lie, historians are able to identify the "unseen and untold" parts of historical narratives (Sandoval 2000). An important aspect of third space is that this concept was originally theorized by third-world feminists in an attempt to create a space for themselves within a hegemonic feminist movement that would not value input from women of color. For the purposes of this paper, I use the term "hegemony" to refer to a dominant, overarching system imposed and perpetuated by oppressive powers. For example, the hegemonic feminist movement mentioned above is indicative of white, western ideals of what equality and power look like, and is severely lacking in Native/Indigenous representation. Third space was a response to this exclusion, and an attempt to define and exist within a space that defied hegemony and social norms. The concept of mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa 1999) helps explain this idea of third space existing as a defiance of social norms – it

was born out of an awareness of the ways in which societal structures create oppressed subjects. While specifically created for those who identify as Mexican, American, and Indigenous, mestiza consciousness at its core is an attempt to create a space for those who society deems "other."

Waiwai Collective was created in direct relation to this concept of third space. In recognition of the fact that there are a lack of Hawaiian spaces in Hawai‘i, the organization was formed in order to create safe spaces for us to gather, work, and learn together. I asked Dr. Paishon-Duarte how Waiwai Collective had navigated creating a specifically Hawaiian space amidst the increased call for inclusion in our current society. She mentioned that she wouldn't consider Waiwai Collective to be exclusionary, simply that it was formed for the sole purpose of perpetuating and elevating Hawaiian voices and values. It was created for the benefit of the Native Hawaiian community as a response to a lack of space for the Native Hawaiian community, and therefore should be used as such. "Separatist" spaces for minorities have long been recognized as distinct from exclusionary majority spaces in social movement theory (1989) as a means of meeting recuperative, empowerment, and organizational needs. The co-working space of Ka Waiwai demonstrates this ideal in its execution; in being a strictly Hawaiian space, we open the door to those who want to learn more about themselves and their culture and show that this method of cultural evolution is both successful and necessary for the perpetuation of our values.

Oppositional Consciousness

Chela Sandoval's 1991 theory of oppositional consciousness permits functioning within yet beyond the confines of society. This theory celebrates the idea that narratives are constantly

shifting; there is no such thing as “one mode fits all” when we discuss history or positionality. Oppositional consciousness is, in short, a tool used by third-world feminists to help make sense of their positionality. This concept has always existed within hegemonic feminism but, similarly to third space (Perez 1999), was seldom included in the broader narrative of social justice movements. This demonstrates a new mode of thinking - it relies on the ability of the oppressed to read and understand the current dynamics of power and self-consciously choose to adopt an ideological form that is suited to push against these configurations. She adds that, unlike these strategic forms under a typical hegemonic comprehension, differential consciousness situates these oppositional ideological positions as tactics (1991: 15). Oppositional consciousness “delineates the set of critical points around which […] groups seeking to transform oppressive powers constitute themselves as resistant and oppositional subjects.” Rather than being determined by the existing social order, these constitutions are deployed by those oppressed classes which have sought subjective forms of resistance (1991: 11). Despite originating in the realm of Chicana feminism, the concept of oppositional consciousness is applicable to Pacific cultures as well. Our positionality on a global scale is that of fetishization, of tourism, of grass skirts and coconut bras and tiki torches. While we understand what our culture truly means, it has been greatly commercialized by many aspects of our governments and tourism authorities. In choosing to exist within the realm of differential and oppositional consciousness by creating these spaces for ourselves, we as Native Hawaiians are able to view our history and our current existence in a way that no longer glorifies the Western - we are not performing *lū‘au* for tourist entertainment, we are not painting our faces and putting on costumes for cheers and camera shutters. Sandoval states that oppositional consciousness “provides repositories within which subjugated citizens can either occupy or throw off subjectivities in a process that at once both

exacts and yet decolonizes their various relations to their real conditions of existence" (1991: 11). We choose to perpetuate our cultures in spite of the imposition of these Western views, because we know that in doing so we reject the existence of the hegemonic, exotic narrative.

These theories do more than heighten our awareness of the narratives that shape our history. The work of third world feminists and theorists has enabled us to put a name to the normalized ignorance of marginalized voices. As Sandoval (1999) states, "any social order which is hierarchically organized into relations of domination and subordination creates particular subject positions into which the subordinated can legitimately function." Once these subject positions are consciously recognized by their inhabitants, they have the ability to be transformed into more effective modes of resistance to the current power structures (1999: 11).

In thinking about these theories alongside Harvey's time-space compression we begin to comprehend the necessity of restructuring the way we interpret history, including the importance of hearing the voices that have been selectively ignored. It is this understanding that enables us as Native Hawaiians to engage in our own method of cultural transformation, and that empowers organizations like Waiwai Collective to find a way to promote and engage with Native voices in order to elevate the community as a whole. By identifying that Native Hawaiian voices and stories were being left out of the historical narrative, by realizing that some in our community don't know their identity as Native Hawaiians, Waiwai Collective has created a space where Native Hawaiians can gather with the intent of learning from each other. In doing so, we are able to elevate the community to a place where we can not only excel in our daily lives but also grow as a collective unit, using the success of our peers to bolster the Native Hawaiian community. Similarly, movements such as #ProtectMaunaKea exist to provide a figurative space for the

oppositional voices of Native communities against the imposition of Western powers. Shortly, I will begin to outline the problems with reducing the #ProtectMaunaKea movement to solely centering around a specific place, but I'd like to first introduce the idea of social justice movements as a figurative mode of third space in which Native Hawaiian or other marginalized voices have found a way to express their positionality and make social change. In defiance of the ideals imposed by Western ideals, when "a new standard of culture and conduct was held up for Hawaiians to meet" with its basis being that West is best, the increasing truth became that the acceptability of Hawaiians would be judged by Western criteria" (Kanuha et. al 2020: 33). This imposition meant a deep adherence to Western thought, a mode of thought and action that has perpetuated throughout generations. The gradual return to a Hawaiian way of thinking through emphasized connections to land and a reemergence of Native Hawaiian spirituality that has in the past been forcibly opposed, signifies an acknowledgement of this trauma and a commitment to collectively recover from it. This acknowledgement and its widespread influence on the political and social aspect of the colonial power structure in Hawai‘i indicates that social justice movements have given our community a means by which to declare our identities as distinctly Native Hawaiian, bolstered by the values and ideals we choose to uphold in these spaces.

Within the context of this essay, these theories serve to situate the reader within the metaphorical landscape of culture creation from the perspective of the oppressed. It is my hope that by providing this theoretical context the following literature analysis will be viewed through more of an oppositional lens, and that its applicability will be more easily translated to consider a Native/Indigenous perspective.

Anthropological Claims of "Reactivity" on Native Hawaiian Culture

In 1989, Roger Keesing published an essay in the University of Hawai'i Press entitled *Creating the Past: Custom and Identity in the Southern Pacific.* This essay states that the current formations of 'tradition' amongst Pacific cultures are inventions shaped by colonialism. The early pages of the work claim that in the rhetoric of postcolonial nationalism, "visions of the past are being created and evoked" (1989: 1) and this term "recreation" is frequently used throughout the work, idealizing past culture and implying that existing forms of culture in the Pacific are inauthentic. Keesing further states that Hawai'i and New Caledonia exhibit "idealized representations of precolonial society deployed to assert common identity and to advance and legitimize political demands" and that the discourses surrounding cultural identity in the contemporary Pacific "are in many ways derived from Western ideologies" (1989: 22) reducing culture to a politicized agency only emergent following the imposition of Western ideology. Keesing continues on to make claims that Native and Indigenous "elites" are exposed through education to Western ideologies that "idealize primitivity" and the ecological wisdom and knowledge of those who live closely with nature and that assertations of identity are based on idealizations of ancestral past and are heavily informed by anthropological concepts as they have entered and developed through Western popular thought (1989: 23).

These claims are oversimplifications and indicative of biases. Of course there is an element of invention in cultural resilience. I choose this term carefully – to use 'resilience' rather than 'creation' critiques the notion that, as Keesing argues, anything that remains of Pacific Islander culture has been a reactive invention following the impacts of colonialism. The idea that tradition can be true places a dangerous amount of power in the past, almost implying that we have devolved away from what is authentic or pure. This, of course, introduces an argument of

cultural authenticity and the complications of defining the authentic. I am not here to argue what makes a culture or tradition authentic. However, I would like to claim that the very nature of culture is to evolve and change over time (Harvey 1991), and that this evolution is a natural development as our conceptualizations of space and how we interact within it changes, as seen in Harvey's theory of time-space compression. We cannot remain static as a culture while we develop in our understanding about others – rather, we must adapt and change as time goes on to accommodate both what we are learning and what others are learning about us. As cited in *Nānā i ke Kumu* (2020) Native Hawaiians "demonstrate our risilience by practicing our native cultural traditions in defiance of Western society's dismissal of them – for example […] by opposing the installation of yet another scientific complex on sacred Mauna Kea" (Kanuha et. al 2020, 37).

One particular argument Keesing makes is relative to land and place attachments. "Pervasive elevation of 'land' as a political symbol," he claims, is one of the ways Pacific Islanders have asserted their unity and identity amidst struggles against domination. He continues by stating that "an ideology of attachment to and spiritual significance of the land could achieve such prominence only in a historical context of invasion and colonization" (1989: 29). While the first claim may hold some truth to it, the second is blatantly indicative of bias and shows Keesing failed to consider the agency of any given past cultural actors to be inventive. The importance of land as a political actor has predated Keesings claims regarding the Pacific and in fact has historically been a highly influential aspect of Native Hawaiian culture and society.

Firstly, the very concept of "land" is territorialized and commercialized. The belief that land is something to be conquered and assigned monetary value is a notion very much introduced to the Hawaiian islands by Western contact. Manifest Destiny, the Spanish Acquisition, and

countless other historical instances only add to this claim. However, this commercialized aspect of place has no part in Native Hawaiian history. *He ali'i ka 'āina, he kauwā ke kanaka* is a well-known Hawaiian proverb translating to "the land is the cheif, man is merely its servant." Native Hawaiian culture, similarly to many Native/Indigenous cultures worldwide, firmly believes that we as people exist only as stewards of the land on which we live, and that we exist only to care for and nurture it. Furthermore, Native and Indigenous cultures worldwide have deep historical ties to their homelands. Claiming power through "land as a political symbol" does not mean that these places did not already exist as sacred or important sites to a given culture, nor does it mean that they had no political gain prior to the introduction of Western power. Keesing also states that "Land, and spiritual connection to it, *could not* have, other than in a context of invasion and displacement and alienation, the ideological significance it acquires in such a context" (1989: 33) in reference to the political stances being taken towards the mechanisms of identity construction in the Pacific. Once again, this statement conveys Keesing's biased understanding of place attachment in the Pacific and an ignorance of the long-established history of politics surrounding it.

Here I would like to introduce the concept that "space" and "place" have two different meanings. Keesing seems to draw on the idea that spaces are generic – that nature can be commercialized into the idea of "land," similarly to how the summit of Mauna Kea is reduced to the "best *place* in the world" for astronomy. The idea of "place," however, is not as easily standardizable. The concept of land can be territorialized and commercialized, but that doesn't mean that the places themselves hadn't already held political and cultural connotations throughout history. Keesing's argument that land only became political following the colonization of the Pacific suggests that prior to the Western concept of "land," Natives had no

need to be political amongst themselves, which is not the case. In ancient Hawai‘i any given *ahupua‘a* (land sector) was ruled by its own chief, and only once Kamehameha the Great united all eight islands under his rule did Hawai‘i become unified – this is one example of many. The act of conquest is not a colonial one, however it is the imposition of Western ideals such as capitalism that is, in most cases, most detrimental to the cultures which they are attempting to eradicate.

A 2007 study of place attachment in the residents of Kangaroo Island (Australia) was conducted to determine which aspects of setting most powerfully influenced their place attachment. They found that the concept of "home" or "place" extends beyond one's place of residence, rather "[…] it is the individual's willingness to associate spiritual value with a landscape that best predicts the psychological state of place attachment" (2007: 108). In addressing the spiritual value of a given space, we are able to understand how deeply these place attachments affect cultural ties. Similarly to the sacred nature of a cemetery or the reverence that accompanies the holy ground of a church, these spiritual attachments greatly impact our psychological connections to a given place as well as our spiritual wellbeing, particularly when our attachments to that place are called into question. Researchers who have critically studied the state of Native Hawaiian families, communities, and *lāhui* (community) throughout time held the belief that Native Hawaiians were grounded in their spiritual resilience and that our deeply spiritual and loving relationship with our ancestors, which we extend to our ecosystem, has enabled us to survive (Kanuha et. al 2020: 37). According to the same chapter, "*‘oia‘i‘o,* the sacred truth as we feel it in our *na‘au* (gut) is the foundation for the resilience of the Hawaiian people and our relationship to the *‘āina* (land)" (2020: 27). This ongoing reciprocal relationship with the land solidifies both emotional and spiritual attachment between people and place

(Kikiloi, 2010). Asserted by Pukui in a Hawaiian Culture Committee meeting in 1967, "Hawaiians identify themselves with the homeland, the land where they belong." Clearly, the distinction between Native Hawaiian place attachment and cultural resilience is directly tied to the continual relationship between place and Native Hawaiian values. According to Kikiloi, the *ʻāina* (land) sustains our identity and health by centering our attitudes, instincts, perspectives, values, and character within the contexts of our sacred environment (2010: 102)

We can further define place attachments as a link that people establish with a given setting where they tend to remain and feel both comfortable and safe (Hernandez et al. 2007: 310). Hernandez also claims that while those residing in a given location placed greater emphasis on their place attachment in general rather than its impact on their identity, identity and attachment tend to coincide in Natives. In viewing these definitions through a Native/Indigenous lens, studies show that in these communities, health and wellness are inextricably tied to land and that colonial experiences such as dispossession and oppression are related to the loss of land, traditional knowledge, and culture (McMullin, 2005; Trask, 1993). Trinidad's 2006 essay examines critical Indigenous pedagogy of place as a method that encourages young adults to question the social inequalities that exist within their communities, including but not limited to the essence of critical consciousness of authority and power, a sense of agency, and a focus on commitment and action as key outcomes. Indigenization, a parallel process to decolonization and rehabilitation, brings out spatial and historical dimensions to reclaim one's own story of past – local and global, the present, communities, cultures, languages, and social practices. This process could then become a space of resistance and hope by foregrounding Indigenous knowledge (2006: 211).

Robert Norton's 1993 article *Culture and Identity in the South Pacific* is written in response to Keesing (1989) and claims that "studies have been preoccupied with general features of discourse […] at the expense of systemic analysis of the connection between discourse and its social context" and continues on to say that the effect of this analysis is to obscure the variable sociological conditions that pattern discourses and determine their social impact. Norton argues, compellingly, that Keesing paints islanders as "subjects of western hegemony" and that "his implicit critique of colonialism seems almost to be a celebration of its power." Keesing grants little to no agency to the colonized peoples "creating" these cultures, and instead places the power in the hands of Western hegemony. This mode of thought has de-centered Native agency and instead granted power to the colonialist systems that have decimated so many Native and Indigenous cultures worldwide.

Keesing argues that as subjects of Western hegemony, "the former colonial subjects remain in mental captivity" (1989: 742). Norton dubs these claims objectification of culture, stating that "the notion is that discourse on identity involves the making of a cultural symbol or practice an object for contemplation, dialogue, and affirmation." In claiming that all culture is reinvented to account for the past, Keesing has ignored the fact that 'traditions' are shaped selectively by the survival of historical ideas and practices. These methods of invention were not simply constructed with no consideration for the past. Furthermore, Keesing's aforementioned statement implies a lack of cultural development and change prior to Western encounters, further perpetuating the racial stereotype of pre-contact Native peoples being "untouched" or "pristine."

A historical Hawaiian proverb reads, "*Mai kāpai i ke a'o a ka makua, aia he ola malaila,"* meaning 'do not set aside the teachings of one's parents, for there is life there'. The existence of this proverb proves that, historically, Native Hawaiians were conscious of the ever-

evolving nature of culture and in fact emphasized the continuation of one's cultural history and practice. Considering this, how would Keesing's argument function against a culture that has historically placed emphasis on remembering the teachings of one's ancestors? For a culture to be totally reinvented in the wake of colonialism, every trace of these teaching would have to be eradicated, and even the totalizing power of colonialism couldn't fully erase all traces of Native Hawaiian culture within the islands. As long as we were connected to our cultural lands, the teachings of our ancestors would remain relevant. Furthermore, recent researchers have examined cultural resilience and have defined the term as "a culture's capacity to maintain and develop cultural identity and critical cultural knowledge and practices" (Neill 2006, cited in Kanuha et. al, 2020).

Interestingly, Keesing's argument seems to echo Harvey's regarding the understanding of the way history has compressed our social, economic, and political boundaries. Harvey suggests that maintaining any sense of "historical continuity in the face of all the flux and ephemerality of flexible accumulation is difficult." He claims that historical traditions are reorganized and commodified as being museum exhibits of local history and marketed as objects or images. This claim is then tied to Harvey's focus on capitalism in that through clinging onto place-bound identities, oppositional movements become a part of the fragmentation perpetuated by an increasingly mobile capitalism. He states that "'Regional resistances,' the struggle for local autonomy, place-bound organization, may be excellent bases for political action, but they cannot bear the burden of radical historical change alone" (Harvey 1991: 303).

One cannot help but wonder if Harvey's focus on the economic and capitalistic nature of this theory has impacted his interpretation of cultural continuity. Though there can never be a completely accurate reconstruction of historical practices, does space-time construction itself not

indicate that change is not only inevitable but *necessary* to ensure survival in an ever-changing world? Bourdieu (1997 cited in Harvey 1991) suggests that spatial and temporal experiences are primary vehicles for the coding and reproduction of social relations, and Harvey responds by claiming that changing the way in which these experiences are represented – in other words, reclaiming the representative narrative – will generate a shift in the production of social relations as well (1997: 247). He then goes on to state that spatial and temporal practices are never neutral in social affairs. Similarly to McMullin's (2015) & Trask's (1993) statements, "they always express some kind of class or other social content, and are more often than not the focus of intense social struggle" (1991: 239). According to Harvey, then, these social and temporal affairs, when restructured in a cultural analysis, are also inherently political.

The politics of place are entrenched in power structures. Harvey recognizes this. "… Those who command space can always control the politics of place even though […] it takes control of some places to command space in the first instance" (1991: 234). In communities around the world that have been colonized and Westernized, where cultures have been forcibly diminished, those who command contested spaces are the colonizers rather than the colonized and therefore the colonizers are those who implement power structures and impose politics as they see fit. As Harvey states, in some instances it takes control of a place in order to command the space. When companies like Waiwai Collective and movements like #ProtectMaunaKea strive to reclaim these spaces to fall under the power of the Native Hawaiian community, this is in many ways a reclamation of power that has been forcibly taken. Harvey also claims that "Ideological and political hegemony in any society depends on an ability to control the material context of personal and social experience" (1991: 227). What does that mean for the hegemony of a society when material and physical context begin to be reclaimed? I would argue that this

disruption isn't inherently negative. In fact, I would argue that in communities such as those of Native and Indigenous peoples, where a loss of power was at one point absolute and irrefutable, this disruption was inevitable and acted as the cost of attempting to rectify injustices. "Frustrated power struggles," states Harvey, "within a given set of rules generate much of the social energy to change those rules" (1991: 227). In enacting that change, the power to control which narratives are voiced is reclaimed. While the restructured cultural systems won't be identical to those which have been forcibly eliminated by an incoming colonial power, it is the very act of reclaiming this narrative that reinstates power. Harvey agrees that any system of representation itself is a fixed spatial construct (1991: 253) and as our interpretation of space shifts, so will the systems of representation that we submit to. While I believe shifting these systems of representation to be more difficult than simply changing one's worldview, I do believe that as time progresses and untold narratives emerge we will be put in a better position to resist these systems.

Lefebvre (1974 cited in Harvey 1991) suggests that there is a permanent tension between the free appropriation of space for individual and social purposes, and the domination of space through private property, the state, and other forms of class and social power (1991: 254). Foucault, similarly, considered space a container of social power. Therefore, "the reorganization of space is always a reorganization of the framework through which social power is expressed" (1991: 255). Linnekin's 1992 essay in American Anthropologist states that culture is an ongoing human creation and that while "modern ethnographers may feel they cannot honestly concur with the antiquity of traditionalized phenomena, […] we can avoid saying that today's culture is invalid or inauthentic." Linnekin states that this should be a matter of clarity and a means of confronting and, specifically, rebutting this claim. In order to better understand this relationship

of ethnography as it pertains to cultural analysis, we must equally apply the concept of culture invention to Western discourse and colonialized culture representations. In doing so, anthropologists must put themselves in a liminal role, acting as questioners of both the structures of nationalism and any given dominant political structure "unless they are willing to eschew the study of modern political and social movements" (1992: 449).

Isn't the concept of time-space compression to acknowledge that our concepts of realities are always changing? How are we to argue that the history of a people can never accurately be represented if views of time and space itself were constantly shifting? We are not attempting to recreate a single history or reinvent a culture that "once existed." Rather, we are trying to imagine ourselves as part of a history in our current moment in time.

Conclusion

As Norton writes, "the manner in which cultural discourses on identity are related to concrete social relations and activities, the variable nature of the social existence of these cultural meanings, has not been theorized" (1993: 756). This paper makes a concerted effort to begin understanding the complexities between cultural identity creation and space creation, and how this relationship defines the positionality of Native/Indigenous individuals in modern times.

The existence of Waiwai Collective and, more specifically, Ka Waiwai itself, is essential to the foundations of this cultural reclamation. In purposefully creating a space to uplift and uphold Native Hawaiian values, the founders of Waiwai Collective have begun to establish a new narrative in the evolution of the Hawaiian culture. In recognizing the narratives gaps in the history of Hawai‘i, we are able to acknowledge the colonialist realities of our past and in doing so reclaim ideals that will further not only our culture, but the achievements and identities of our

people as well. The idea that the creation of Native spaces can be political, as Keesing (1989) suggests, is true. However, Keesing argues that the politicization of these spaces is merely reactive due to the influence of colonial powers, implying that Native Hawaiian culture had no need for change or power prior to western contact. Rather, Hawaiian history has deeply entrenched political values and power dynamics, and to suggest otherwise is to minimize Hawaiian culture. The creation of spaces is political – the very act of reclaiming identity is political – by nature of colonialism and the power dynamics it introduces. Ka Waiwai exists as an intentional defiance of these colonial systems. In creating this space, Waiwai Collective demonstrates a clear understanding of the importance of a cultural response to the power dynamics in which we live, and that this response is the only way to fully encompass the Native experience of cultural resilience following centuries of oppression.

The #ProtectMaunaKea movement further allowed this cultural evolution to take place. Though revolving around the maintenance and sacred nature of the summit of Mauna Kea, this social justice movement acted similarly to the intention behind Waiwai Collective; Native voices were continually elevated to the spotlight in order to argue against the construction of the TMT that would be yet another egregious action taken against the Hawaiian community in the name of furthering Western ideas. Though Keesing (1989) argues that land has become politicized, I argue that the very idea of "land" itself represents a mode of thinking which considers place as an already-commodified entity. The physical place of the Mauna Kea Observatory has existed for hundreds of thousands of years, and though it was considered sacred to Native and Indigenous individuals across the Pacific only recently has the imposition of the observatory reduced the summit to a place of *contention*. However, the defiance of the furthered implementation of Western ideals is what enacted an incredible cultural movement in Hawai‘i’s

history. Through our rejection of the TMT and therefore the Western ideals that created and maintain the Mauna Kea Observatory, we were able to claim ownership over that cultural space and what values we as a people would choose to uphold in the face of such an imposition. In creating a space of contention, the social dynamics between a colonized nation and its colonizer enabled the oppressed party to create a space for us to express our views. This dynamic is unique to Hawai‘i’s history, as Native Hawaiians are not, by definition, a displaced people. We are able to remain on our cultural homeland, learn from it, work with it, and prosper from it, allowing for a unique place attachment that only furthers our attempts at cultural evolution. It is this place attachment that leads to our own creation of spaces, and as Harvey (1991) states, those who hold a space are the ones to dictate the power dynamics within it.

Perhaps most importantly, Harvey’s time-space compression (1991) defines the basis of this argument – that our perceptions of reality are ever-changing. What we know and understand about the world will never truly be stagnant as technologies continue to advance. In creating intentional spaces like Ka Waiwai, Native Hawaiians are choosing to reclaim our existence as Native individuals, whose culture and ways of life have been forcibly taken from us. Though the debate of authenticity draws attention to the existing power structures of western colonialism, we know that no forms of culture are entirely stagnant either. These practices change with the times just as technologies advance and movement increases around the world. In choosing to embrace our culture and our community, Native Hawaiians have acknowledged our positionality not only in Hawai‘i but as a global entity as well. It is this acknowledgement that allows us to be intentional in our perpetuation of Hawaiian culture and practices. Choosing to act as agents in our own identity construction has directly contradicted Keesing’s claim that all culture creation is a reaction to colonialism. Rather, our culture revitalization has come about because we have

chosen to embrace who we are and what our existence means – that despite all attempts at the opposite, our culture and people have managed to survive over 200 years of colonialism and oppression. Our narratives have historically been left out of the broader scope of history, and we have decided that it is time for us to make that change. If we are not able to do this for ourselves, then we truly *are* lost. If, however, we begin to live and work with each other while harboring the intent of promoting excellence and power within the Hawaiian community, there is no limit to what we will be able to accomplish.

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