
Abstract:
The purpose of this thesis is to explore the lived experiences of contemporary Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) women voyagers and navigators from the double hulled sailing canoe Hōkūleʻa. The research is unique because it addresses the historical and contemporary gaps in scholarly texts and publications that have scarcely included women's perspectives and contributions as traditional and present-day voyagers and navigators (Kalakaua, 1888; Emmerson, 1915; Kamakau, 1991; Nelson, 1991; Howe, 2006; Finney, 2003). The theoretical and methodological framework is embedded in moʻokūʻauhau (genealogy), a concept that is interwoven throughout the doctoral project.

The thesis begins by introducing the topic and examples of legendary women who voyaged from Kahiki (Tahiti) and are ancestors of several women interviewed. The creation of the Hōkūleʻa is explained as part of the Hawaiian cultural revival, which itself sprung up in reaction to the forces of colonisation and neo-colonisation. The thesis follows the voyages of Hōkūleʻa and the literature that subsequently became a part of the canoe's legacy. The thesis also analyses the way that Kanaka Maoli women academic leaders have informed diverse areas of scholarship with contemporary meanings of moʻokūʻauhau (genealogy), (Kameʻeleihiwa, 1999; Meyer, 1998 and 2003; Kaomea, 2003; Silva 2004). As a synthesis of the two central themes of this thesis, (1) the influence of Hōkūleʻa to the Hawaiian cultural revival and (2) the importance of Kanaka Maoli women to this broader movement, in-depth interviews with five women who voyaged on Hōkūleʻa are presented.

The women's stories are included in the findings chapter and integrated with scholarly texts in the discussion chapter. The stories that the women shared were diverse, yet the interviews brought forth reoccurring themes, which guide and inform the thesis discussion and conclusion. The themes are (1) Hoʻomanawanui: Patience and Perseverance, (2) Laulima: Cooperation and Joint Action, (3) Hōkūleʻa Ea: The Spirit of the Canoe, and (4) Moʻokūʻauhau: Linking Past, Present and Future. When aligned with the scholarship available about the canoe, the stories of the women reveal the gendered nature of the Hawaiian cultural revival and Hōkūleʻa. The stories also support contemporary practices of Hawaiian epistemology and cultural perpetuation, including an acknowledgement of the spirit of the canoe and ancestral guidance. Thus, the thesis begins and ends with an acknowledgement of nā kūpuna (ancestors) and the continuity of moʻokūʻauhau.