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Ethnic Identity and School Belonging Among Pacific Islander
High School Students in Utah

Mari N. K. Oto

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Ethnic Identity and School Belonging Among Pacific Islander High School Students in Utah

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Master of Arts

Pacific Islander high school students in the state of Utah specifically, but across the United States generally, face significant challenges such as high levels of high school dropout and low levels of academic attainment. The purpose of this study was to examine if components of an achieved ethnic identity (exploration and commitment) are positively related to high levels of school belonging among Pacific Islander high school students in Utah. I further investigated whether self-esteem was a mediating factor in any observed relationship between ethnic identity and school belonging.

Participants in this study were Pacific Islander youth between the ages of 13-19 years old and attending high school in the state of Utah. The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure—Revised, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory, Simple School Belonging Scale, and demographic questions were combined in a survey and taken by 111 participants. Results indicate a significantly positive relationship between school belonging and self-esteem ($r = .39, p < .001$). However, no relationship was observed between ethnic identity and school belonging. Results also suggests that self-esteem is not a mediating factor, nor is it related to ethnic identity individually for these students.

Another purpose of this study was to better understand Pacific Islander students in our public education system, and especially in the state of Utah. Results revealed that ethnic identity may not operate in the same way for students in this study as has been suggested in the literature for other ethnic minorities. Specifically, ethnic identity, as measured by the MEIM-R may not represent the same construct, which leads to questions about how this sample was different than other national samples. The context of Utah may have been a determining factor and may play a role in the formation of ethnic identity for Pacific Islander students who live in Utah, especially for those who are also Latter-day Saint. Future research should look closely at the relationship between religiosity and ethnic identity for Pacific Islander students in Utah schools. The findings from this study also highlight the role of self-esteem in school belonging. They suggest a need to move beyond generalizations of this group of students as “minorities” to understanding how to increase their self-esteem in hopes of boosting their sense of belonging in our schools, thus leading to greater high school retention and academic achievement for this population.

Keywords: Pacific Islander students, ethnic identity, self-esteem, school belonging

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Ethnic and racial minorities consists of about one third of the U.S. population and are expected to be the majority by 2042 (Allen, Garriott, Reyes & Hsieh, 2013; Bernstein & Edwards, 2008). In particular, the number of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the United States increased 40% between 2000 and 2010, and are considered one of the fastest growing racial groups in the United States (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities & Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2014). Currently, there are approximately 1.1 million Pacific Islanders in the United States and that number is expected to double to 2.6 million by 2050 (Bernstein & Edwards, 2008).

Although one third of Pacific Islanders consists of Native Hawaiians, this racial group is quite diverse and includes (but is not limited to) people from the Kingdom of Tonga, Western and American Samoa, New Zealand (Allen et al., 2013) and the Micronesian Islands (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities & Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2014). Most Pacific Islanders in the United States live in Hawai'i and California, but there are fast growing populations in Arkansas, Nevada, Alaska, and Utah (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities & Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Historically, the challenges and struggles of Pacific Islanders have been obscured by government data, such as census reports, that grouped a variety of ethnicities under one homogenous umbrella known as, "Asian/Pacific Islander." This group consists of Americans with origins in East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Hawaii, Samoa, Guam and other Pacific Islands (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education [CARE], 2008). Members of this census group are often lumped together and stereotyped as

‘model minority’, generally assuming that they are more affluent and academically successful than other minoritized groups in the U.S. and thus considered a ‘model’ for other minority groups to emulate (Allen, Kim, Smith, & Hafoka, 2016). Pacific Islanders have often been considered together with Asian Americans, sometimes similarly stereotyped, and so are often overlooked in terms of helping them access the resources they might need to be successful in schools (CARE, 2008).

The perpetuation of the “model minority” myth has masked the challenges and hardships of groups like Pacific Islanders, as well as students from Asian backgrounds (CARE, 2008). As of 2010, the U.S. Census now rightfully separates Asians and Pacific Islanders, into two separate categories, respectively (Allen & Heppner, 2011). However, the history of being included in the pan-ethnic category of “Asian/Pacific Islander” has left this group of people, also known as Polynesians, misrepresented and misunderstood in many aspects. As noted, members of this census group are wildly diverse and each face unique difficulties and challenges as minoritized people in the United States. One arena where Pacific Islanders have struggled specifically has been related to the challenges and barriers in educational achievement, as well as in personal and social wellbeing in schools more generally (CARE, 2008).

Alarming statistics reveal some of the problems Pacific Islanders face, especially related to educational outcomes. In May 2015, the ACT, a college preparatory exam, released a report that showed only 17% of Pacific Islanders who took the ACT met all four college readiness benchmarks in English, math, reading, and science, a rate much lower than the national average of 28% (ACT, 2015). When looking at the ACT college readiness benchmarks being met by race/ethnicity, only 26% of Pacific Islander high school graduates met three or more benchmarks compared to 50% of White high school graduates (ACT, 2015). Forty-eight percent of Pacific

Islanders met zero benchmarks compared to the national average of 31% (ACT, 2015).

Interestingly, many Pacific Islander students who took the ACT identified as first-generation high school graduates (ACT, 2015). Of this group, only 9% met all four of the ACT college readiness benchmarks, and 52% met none (ACT, 2015). In addition, the national status dropout rate for Pacific Islanders in 2014 was 10.6%, compared to 4.4% for White high school students (National Center of Education Statistics [NCES], 2016).

Not surprisingly, educational attainment measures for post-secondary Pacific Islander students are similarly dire. In 2014, only 0.1 million Pacific Islander college-aged adults were enrolled in college in comparison to the 9.6 million White undergraduate students enrolled in college nationwide (NCES, 2016). In addition, according to the United States Census Bureau (as cited in Ogunwole, Drewery Jr., & Rios-Vargas, 2012) only about 14% of Pacific Islander adults 25-years and over have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the 29% of White adults 25-years and over. Samoan American and Marshallese adults are less likely to earn a bachelor's degree than those from any other racial group (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities & Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2014). Educational scholars are rightly concerned with the high drop-out rates and low college enrollment of Pacific Islander adolescents and further research is needed to understand how to help this minoritized population.

Utah is a particularly interesting place to examine issues related to academic achievement and the wellbeing of Pacific Islander students in schools given the growth of this group in the state in recent years. For example, between 2000 and 2010, there was a statewide 72 percent growth in the Polynesian population (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities & Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2014). Unfortunately, many Pacific Islander students in Utah face similar struggles as their peers nationwide. In 2017, 13% of Pacific Islander youth in Utah

dropped out of high school, as compared to the statewide average of 9% (Utah State Board of Education, 2017). In addition, only 1% of Pacific Islander Utah students took the ACT as compared to 68% of White Utah students with an average composite score difference of four (ACT, 2016). Educators and administrators are seeking to understand the specific challenges related to educating Pacific Islander youth in Utah schools and thinking of ways to effectively meet the needs of this growing population.

Statement of the Purpose

Little is known in regards to why Pacific Islander students struggle academically; however, studies have consistently shown that for racial/ethnic minority youth in general, school belonging can positively predict academic outcomes (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Osterman, 2000). Strong scientific evidence suggests that when students feel a positive connection to their school, educational motivation, classroom engagement, and school attendance improve (Sha, 2010; Wingspread, 2004). These three factors have been shown to contribute to an increase in academic achievement for all racial, ethnic, and income groups (Wingspread, 2004), making school belonging an important area to study and understand better in the context of Pacific Islander students.

Research has also shown that students who feel more connected to school not only are more likely to have positive educational outcomes, but also overall positive health (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2009). Evidence has also shown that students who feel connected to school are less likely to participate in disruptive behavior, school violence, substance and tobacco use, emotional distress and sex at an early age (CDC, 2009; Wingspread, 2004). Second only to family connection, belonging in schools was found to protect individuals against emotional distress, eating disorders and suicide (CDC, 2009; Marraccini & Brier, 2017).

In addition, studies have shown that students who feel accepted at school are more highly motivated, committed to school, and engaged in learning (Osterman, 2000).

Although feelings of belonging are important for all students, they may be especially important for minority students who face negative stereotypes, stigmas, and prejudices that can devalue their sense of position in a social setting (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). Minoritized students can be particularly vulnerable to the effects of stereotype threat, (Steele et al., 2002), which is the risk of having one's academic, or other, performance negatively impacted because of undue negative stereotypes about one's cultural or ethnic group. For example, Steele and Aronson (1995) demonstrated that stereotypes about a person's ethnic group can have significant effects on a person's behavior, ranging from performance on standardized tests to simple tasks like hitting a golf ball. Thus, attention and efforts directed at increasing feelings of belonging in schools for minority students are likely to aide not just in retaining and attracting minorities in schools, but also in improving their overall academic performance (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015).

For ethnic minorities, an increased sense of belonging to one's ethnic group and ethnic identity, can be a protective factor in terms of educational attainment and psychosocial wellbeing (Gummadam, Pittman, & Ioffe, 2015; Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006). For example, studies have found that students with a stronger ethnic identity also reported higher levels of self-esteem (Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007). However, the existing research base (Farrelly, 2012; Lee & Yoo, 2004; Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, & Guimond, 2009; Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007) regarding ethnic identity, self-esteem and belonging is mostly focused on Hispanic and Asian students in the U.S. Limited research can be found regarding how ethnic identity relates to the variables of self-esteem and belonging in schools for Pacific Islander students specifically.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand if an achieved ethnic identity correlated with high levels of self-esteem, and to further investigate whether self-esteem might play a mediating role in a relationship between ethnic identity and feelings of belonging among Pacific Islander high school students in Utah.

Research Questions

This research study looked at the relationship between ethnic identity, self-esteem and feelings of school belonging for Pacific Islander high school students across the state of Utah. As schools in Utah continue to become more diverse and increasingly populated with Pacific Islanders, it is important to have a better understanding of the role that ethnic identity plays in these students' sense of belonging at schools, and how that relationship might contribute to and/or be mediated by students' self-esteem.

In this study, I address the following research questions:

1. Do component aspects of ethnic identity, namely exploration and commitment, predict feelings of belonging for Pacific Islander high school students in Utah?
2. Are relationships between ethnic identity components (exploration and commitment) and feelings of school belonging, if found, mediated by levels of self-esteem for students in the study?
3. How do these relationships differ for Pacific Islander students across background characteristics such as gender, grade, religious affiliation, ethnicity, time in Utah, different levels of SES as indicated by participation in the free/reduced lunch program and household income, and levels of parental education?

CHAPTER 2: Review of Literature

In this chapter, I review empirical research on the formation of ethnic identity, and its connection to self-esteem and feelings of belonging in schools. I specifically look at the ways ethnic identity affects self-esteem in both positive and negative ways. I further summarize the literature on school belonging, describing both positive and negative aspects of this construct, and describe the factors that contribute to and influence one's sense of belonging on an individual and school level.

Adolescent Identity Development

Adolescence is a crucial time of identity development and the building of individual self-esteem for children. Philosopher, and theorist, Erik Erikson (1968) has described identity formation as the central focus and purpose of adolescence. During this time, an identity is hopefully established as adolescents embark on an exploration of, and a commitment to personal beliefs, values, and goals (Erikson, 1968). Failure to explore and develop an identity, can result in role confusion for an individual, leading to more vulnerability for high-risk behaviors, such as alcohol and drug use, violence, and school withdrawal (Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development [CCAD], 1989).

James Marcia (1980) later expanded on Erikson's work and defined identity as an internal self-constructed and complex organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history. The more developed an individual is in their identity, which comes through exploration and commitment, the more aware they are of their uniqueness and similarity to others, as well as their own strengths and weaknesses (Marcia, 1980). More specifically for minority youth, identity development can be a period of exploration and determining how their ethnicity contributes to who they are as an individual (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Ong, 2007). The

development of ethnic identity is dynamic, evolves over time and changes as one's awareness and understanding of other ethnic groups develops (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Marcia (1980) theorized identity development as involving two components—exploration of identity issues and commitment to the identity discovered. He furthered his research by defining four identity statuses that adolescents are categorized by—foreclosure, identity diffusion, moratorium, and identity achievement. I will explain these four categories in greater detail specifically as they relate to ethnic identity in future paragraphs. Erikson (1968) further expressed identity development as “in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture...” (p. 22). Thus, one of the aspects of understanding and developing identity, is to explore and commit to one's culture and ethnic background.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity can be defined as a sense of self as a group member of a cultural or ethnic group (Phinney & Ong, 2007). It develops over time through personal experience and requires an active process of exploration, learning and commitment (Phinney & Ong, 2007). More particularly, ethnic identity involves discovery about one's group, its cultural behaviors, values, and attitudes, including its heritage, traditions and often language (Phinney & Ong, 2007). According to Phinney and Ong (2007) a commitment, or sense of belonging to one's ethnic group is one of the most important components of ethnic identity.

Building upon Marcia's (1980) four identity statuses cited above—identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement—Phinney (1989) created and tested a model of ethnic identity development for minority adolescents. The first stage of Phinney's (1989) ethnic identity development model can be compared to Marcia's (1980) diffusion status, or a state of confusion in which one is not interested in exploring or committed to an identity

(Phinney & Chavira, 1992). An example of this would be a teenager who is asked about her heritage—whether she considers herself to be more Japanese or White. After pondering for a moment, she says that she does not identify with either ethnicity and does not know much about her family heritage.

The second stage of Phinney's (1989) ethnic identity development is foreclosure. This is when individuals have adopted the attitudes and values of a culture without question. It is unclear if in this stage adolescents have explored their own ethnicity and formulated positive or negative views of it, or just accepted it blindly without question (Phinney, 1989). An example of this would be a youth who accepts his parent's values and beliefs as his own without questioning them.

The third stage, moratorium, is when an adolescent is in the process of exploring, but has not yet made a commitment to that identity (Phinney & Ong, 2007). In this stage, an adolescent explores implications for their ethnicity in relation to their personal self (Phinney, 1989). For example, Phinney (1989) provides empirical support for this stage from a study done among middle-class African American and White eighth graders in an integrated school. One-third of the African American participants were engaged in some form of ethnic exploration. They talked with family and friends about ethnic issues and were actively interested in learning more about their culture. Most importantly, they thought about the effects of ethnicity on their personal life in the present and future (Phinney, 1989).

The most developed status of ethnic identity development is identity achievement. It is obtained when exploration leads to a secure sense of oneself as an ethnic group member (Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007). It is characterized by both a high exploration of one's ethnic heritage and a high commitment to it. Moreover, an achieved ethnic identity allows a person to

take pride in who they are and thus be able to explore other groups and cultures without feelings of threat or intimidation (Marcia, 1980; Phinney et al., 2007; Phinney & Ong, 2007). For example, an adolescent with an achieved ethnic identity might consider herself as Asian American, but also feels comfortable and proud identifying as Asian and American equally (Kim, 1981).

Identity scholars have emphasized the role of the social context, including the role that stereotypes and discrimination play in the development of identities (Steele et al., 2002). Stereotype threat, or being at risk of living up to negative stereotypes about one's ethnic group (Steele & Aronson, 1995), can affect adolescents in positive and negative ways when trying to shape their own ethnic and racial identities at a young age (Phinney et al., 2007). Research has indicated that minority middle school students are focused on not becoming and even resisting stereotypes identified with their ethnic group (Way, Hernández, Rogers, & Hughes, 2016). For example, African American adolescents spoke of wanting to avoid becoming a thug, a teenage parent, an academic underachiever, or a gang member. Chinese American students spoke of wanting to avoid becoming a victim of bullying or being labeled a "nerd." Dominican Americans spoke of wanting to avoid becoming unsuccessful, being labeled an underachiever, or someone who participates in negative behavior (Way et al., 2016). For ethnic minorities, identity formation can be connected to developing an understanding and acceptance of one's own group in the presence of opposition, such as stereotypes and racism (Phinney, 1989). Although stereotypes, and stereotype threat can directly affect a minority's ethnic identity development in a negative light, an achieved ethnic identity can be protected against such forces, as it can provide desirable side effects such as acceptance of self, acceptance of other ethnic groups, and

the promotion of high self-esteem (Breland, Coleman, & Steward, 1999; Umaña-Taylor, 2004; Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007).

Self-Esteem

According to Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem is defined as a positive or negative attitude towards oneself. It can be placed on a scale of high to low, and connotes different meanings depending on how the word is utilized (Rosenberg, 1965). High self-esteem, as defined by Rosenberg (1965) includes a feeling that one is “good enough,” a person of worth, and a sense that one is respected by self and others. Other terms that are synonymous with self-esteem include, but are not limited to, self-acceptance, self-satisfaction, or self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965). On the other hand, a low self-esteem implies a lack of respect for oneself, and is similar to other terms like self-rejection, self-denigration, or self-contempt (Rosenberg, 1965).

Self-esteem for adolescents is a continually growing field of research. Studies have found that self-esteem contributes greatly to global life satisfaction for adolescents (Marcionetti & Rossier, 2016). In addition, self-esteem had more of an impact on global life satisfaction than self-efficacy did, implying that adolescents care more about respect for themselves, than the perception of their capabilities (Marcionetti & Rossier, 2016). Another study revealed that adolescents who had low self-esteem or whose self-esteem declined in adolescent years, were more likely to have symptoms of depression in adulthood (Steiger, Allemand, Robins, & Fend, 2014). In contrast, high self-esteem among adolescents was found to contribute to good school performance and overall happiness (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). In summary, the long-term positive effects of self-esteem for adolescents noted in the above cited literature suggests a need to better understand how it may be implicated in promoting academic and general well-being for the Pacific Islander adolescent students in this study.

Self-Esteem and Ethnic Identity

Existing empirical work (Lee, 2003; Phinney, 1992; Toomey & Umaña-Taylor, 2012; Umaña-Taylor, 2004; Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007) has found positive relationships between ethnic identity and self-esteem across various groups of minorities. For example, Phinney (1992) administered measures of ethnic identity and self-esteem to Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, Whites, and other mixed raced students. Participants ranged in age from 14-19 years old, from various socioeconomic backgrounds. The results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between self-esteem and overall ethnic identity for the minority high school students in the study. In addition, there was also a positive relationship between grades and ethnic identity, such that students who self-reported higher grades (A's and B's) also had higher ethnic identity scores than students who self-reported lower grades (C's and D's) (Phinney, 1992).

In another study conducted by Umaña-Taylor and Shin (2007), there was a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and an achieved ethnic identity among Asian American, African American, Latino, and European American university students in the Midwest. This result was consistent with previous work in which those who reported having had an achieved ethnic identity tended to report higher levels of self-esteem, in comparison with adolescents who were still exploring their ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992).

Phinney et al. (2007) conducted a study with Latino and African American adolescents that revealed a positive relationship between an achieved ethnic identity and high self-esteem for these students. The same study also revealed that Asian and Latino young adults with a more developed sense of ethnic identity reported more positive and open attitudes toward outside groups than those who were in ethnic identity diffusion, thus suggesting that ethnic identity is

independently related to positive attitudes both about oneself, and others (Phinney et al., 2007). Similarly, a study conducted by Bartimole, Booth, Collet, Curran, Frey, and Gerard (2015), showed that having higher scores on a measure of ethnic identity was related to having positive self-esteem for African-American and Latino students. Thus, research suggests that self-esteem may be related to ethnic identity for some ethnic minority adolescents (Bartimole et al., 2015).

Although some research has already been done regarding understanding ethnic identity and self-esteem for Asian Americans, Latinos, and African Americans, little research has explored this topic for Pacific Islanders. The present study looks more closely at the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem and further investigates whether self-esteem might play a mediating role in any observed relationship between ethnic identity and feelings of school belonging among Pacific Islander high school students in Utah.

Belonging in Schools

Belonging in a school setting has been shown to be critically important for academic outcomes and the psycho-social wellbeing of students (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Libbey, 2004; Osterman, 2000). Sometimes referred to as school connectedness, school belonging can be described as the extent to which a student feels personally accepted, respected, included and supported by peers, teachers and other adults in the school environment (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Libbey, 2004). Libbey (2004) defined school connectedness to include teacher supportiveness and caring, the companionship of good friends, commitment to academic progress, fair and effective discipline, and participation in extracurricular activities. Students who experience a sense of belonging have more positive emotions about school and thus are more engaged in and motivated to participate in schooling, leading to success in student performance and academic achievement (Lam, Chen, Zhang, & Liang, 2015; Osterman, 2000).

Students who feel accepted at school also reported having more pride, happiness, hope, satisfaction, calmness and relaxation (Lam et al., 2015).

The Wingspread Declaration (2004) described school connectedness as the belief by students that adults in the school care not just about their learning, but about them as individuals (Wingspread, 2004). High academic expectations, positive adult-student relationships, and physical and emotional safety were all highlighted as critical components for students' to feel a sense of belonging or school connectedness (Farrelly, 2012; Wingspread, 2004). In addition, if students believe there are people available to help them, they are more likely to believe that they will have access to the fundamental resources necessary to be successful. Student confidence is thus based not just in one's own performance, but also in the belief of available supportive resources (Goodenow & Grady, 1993).

Current research has suggested that there are several factors that foster belonging within a school—adult support, belonging to a positive peer group, commitment to education, and school environment (CDC, 2009; Sha, 2010; Wingspread, 2004). Adult support can be described as a school staff that dedicates their time, attention, interest and emotional support to students. Belonging to a positive peer group includes having a secure network of friends that positively impacts the student's perceptions of school. Commitment to education, in conjunction with fostering school belonging, is the belief by the student that school is important for their future and that adults at the school support them. This can positively affect a student's motivation to learn and participate in school activities. Lastly, school environment contributes to the psychosocial climate and physical environment that can influence positive student perceptions of school (CDC, 2009).

In contrast to shown benefits of having a sense of belonging in school, research has also shown that a lack of school belonging has been associated to negatives outcomes such as loneliness, emotional distress, psycho-social disturbance, fatigue, boredom, mental illness, depression, and sometimes suicide (Allen & Bowles, 2012; Lam et al., 2015; Osterman, 2000). These feelings can undermine a student's ability to academically perform and achieve, especially when they perceive a lack of support from peers and teachers in their school (Lam et al., 2015). In addition, school connectedness has shown to be the strongest protective factor for both boys and girls in middle and high school in decreasing such behaviors as substance abuse, early sexual involvement, school absenteeism, and violence (CDC, 2009). Second only to family connection, school belonging has been found to protect adolescents against emotional distress, eating disorders and suicide (CDC, 2009).

In a study conducted by Faircloth and Hamm (2005), African American, Asian-descent, Latino and European American adolescents were analyzed in regards to four domains of school belonging that could affect academic achievement. Those domains were bonding with teachers, placement in friendships, perceived discrimination and time spent in extracurricular activities. Findings from this study also showed that school belonging acted as a mediator between motivation and academic achievement for African American and Latino students. However, for European American and Asian descent students, school belonging was only somewhat correlated to academic success. These findings raise empirical questions about how feelings of belonging in school may similarly impact academic achievement and general well-being for Pacific Islander students in U.S. schools.

Ethnic Identity, Self-Esteem, and Belonging in Schools

A recent study, conducted by Bartimole et al. (2015), examined the connection between ethnic identity, self-esteem and perceptions of school climate among middle school and high school students. Using the MEIM (Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure), which measures exploration and commitment to an ethnic identity, results showed that both Hispanic and African American students expressed significantly stronger ethnic identity than White and Multiracial students. For all students, self-esteem (as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) and ethnic identity were positively, but weakly related. More specifically, for African American students there was a weak correlation between ethnic identity and self-esteem. However, for Hispanic students, ethnic identity was strongly correlated to self-esteem.

Perceptions toward school climate and school attitudes for middle and high school students in this study were positively related to ethnic identity for White, Hispanic and African American males, as well as for White female students. In other words, having a stronger sense of ethnic identity was related to more positive perceptions of school climate and having positive attitudes towards school for these students. African American, Multiracial, and Hispanic females expressed the least favorable perceptions of school climate, including measures of school belonging (Bartimole et al., 2015).

Although some research has already been conducted regarding understanding ethnic identity self-esteem and school belonging for African Americans and Latino students, little has been examined for Pacific Islanders. The purpose of this study was to understand if component aspects of an achieved ethnic identity (exploration and commitment) predicted feelings of belonging among Pacific Islander high school students in Utah, and to further investigate

whether self-esteem might play a mediating role in any observed relationship between ethnic identity and school belonging for these students.

CHAPTER 3: Method

I start this chapter by restating my research questions and hypotheses. I then explain the setting for the study and describe the participants. I follow this with descriptions of the demographics information survey, and the three measures used to gather information regarding student's ethnic identity, self-esteem, and school belonging. To measure ethnic identity, I used the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure—Revised (MEIM-R), to measure self-esteem I used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), and to measure feelings of school belonging I used the Simple School Belonging Scale (SSBS). I then describe the procedures for data collection, including obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and parental consent. Lastly, I describe data analysis and model building for the study.

A cross-sectional survey design was chosen for this study to determine if exploration and commitment to an ethnic identity predicted feelings of belonging in school for Pacific Islander high school students in Utah, and to explore the mediating factor of self-esteem in that relationship. In this study, I addressed the following research questions:

1. Do component aspects of ethnic identity, namely exploration and commitment, predict feelings of belonging for Pacific Islander high school students in Utah?
2. Are relationships between ethnic identity components (exploration and commitment) and feelings of school belonging, if found, mediated by levels of self-esteem for students in the study?
3. How do these relationships differ for Pacific Islander students across background characteristics such as gender, grade, religious affiliation, ethnicity, time in Utah, different levels of SES as indicated by participation in the free/reduced lunch program and household income, and levels of parental education?

My hypotheses for these questions were as follows:

1. Students who have explored their ethnic identity, but have not committed, or committed, but not explored, will have lower feelings of school belonging. I also hypothesized that students who have both explored and committed to their ethnic identity would have higher levels of school belonging.
2. The effect of ethnic identity on feelings of school belonging would be positively mediated by higher levels of self-esteem.
3. These relationships would differ for Pacific Islanders across background characteristics such as gender, grade, religious affiliation, ethnicity, time in Utah, different levels of SES as indicated by participation in the free/reduced lunch program and household income, and levels of parental education.

Setting

Participants for this study were recruited across the state of Utah through various school districts, schools, and through family and friends. The majority of participants came from two cities in Utah—Glendale, and Pearl City, which are approximately 45 miles in distance from each other. Pseudonyms have been used for all cities and schools in this study. The demographics of these two cities are quite different from each other, yet share some similarities. Glendale has an overall higher population of Pacific Islanders at 4% of the city's population, and Pearl City with 1%. But in general, both cities have high populations of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS); Glendale with 61% of its population as LDS and Pearl City with 93% of its population as LDS (Sperling, 2018a; Sperling, 2018b).

My main purpose in selecting these schools was because of their population of Pacific Islander students. As noted in Table 1, 6% of Granite High School's student population is

Pacific Islander, and Pear Tree, Taylor High School, and Klein's Pacific Islander population make up 3%, 3%, and 4% respectively. Those are above average percentages for the state of Utah, which reports 2% Pacific Islander students in the overall student population in Utah public schools (Utah State Board of Education, 2017). Table 1 lists the school, school population, number and percentage of Pacific Islanders at the school, the city of the school, the percentage of Pacific Islanders and White people living in that city and the number of participants from the school.

Table 1

Participating School's Demographics

Name of School	School Population	Number of P.I. at school	Percentage of P.I. at school	City of School	Percentage of city is P.I.	Percentage of city is White	Number of students participated from school
Granite	2,929	176	6%	Glendale	4%	48%	38
Taylor	1,998	60	3%	Pearl City	1%	76%	29
Pear Tree	1,917	58	3%	Pearl City	1%	76%	10
Weber	2,230	22	1%	Silver Springs	1%	89%	9
Klein	2,307	92	4%	Klein	2%	60%	6
Alpine	2,181	22	1%	Alta View	1%	89%	4
Granite	1,758	35	2%	Centennial	<1%	68%	3
Alpine	2,455	25	1%	Levi	<1%	90%	2
Alpine	1,160	23	2%	Olive	1%	75%	2
Jordan	2,387	48	2%	Brigham	1%	78%	1
Canyons	2,184	44	2%	Jackson	1%	78%	1
Davis	1,746	35	2%	Newton	1%	78%	1
Davis	1,466	29	2%	Blaze	1%	90%	1
Canyons	2,243	22	1%	Johnson	1%	78%	1

All information for Table 1 was gathered through the greatschools.org website (Great Schools, 2014) and the United States Census Bureau Factfinder website (2017). See reference list for details.

Participants

The participants were 111 Pacific Islander high school students with a majority from two cities in Utah. Forty-three (41%) were boys and 62 (59%) were girls. Six students did not report their gender. Thirty-three (32%) were 9th graders, 18 (17%) were 10th graders, 25 (24%) were 11th graders, and 28 (27%) were 12th graders, with 6 students not reporting their grade. When students were asked to describe their ethnicity, 21 (20%) said Native Hawaiian, 44 (42%) said Samoan, 26 (25%) said Tongan, 1 (<1%) said Maori, 7 (6%) said Micronesian and 6 (6%) reported other categories. Six students did not report their ethnicity. For religion, 82 (74%) students reported to be Latter-day Saint (LDS) and 29 (26%) said other. Fifty-seven (54%) students participated in the free/reduced lunch program and 48 (46%) reported not. All demographic characteristics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequencies of Background Characteristics of Survey Respondents (n=111)

Variable Name	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	43	41%
	Female	62	59%
	Total	105	100%
Grade	9 th	33	32%
	10 th	18	17%
	11 th	25	24%
	12 th	28	27%
	Total	105	100%
Religious Affiliation	LDS	82	74%
	Other	29	26%
	Total	103	100%
Ethnicity	Native Hawaiian	21	20%
	Samoan	44	42%
	Tongan	26	25%
	Maori	1	<1%
	Micronesian	7	6%
	Other	6	6%
	Total	105	100%
How long have you been living in Utah?	1 year	12	11%
	2 years	6	6%
	3 years	8	8%
	4 years	6	6%
	5 plus years	30	29%
	Born and Raised	42	40%
Total	104	100%	
Free and Reduced Lunch	Yes	57	54%
	No	48	46%
	Total	105	100%
Parent's range of household annual income	0 - \$19,000	22	21%
	\$20,000 - \$39,000	23	23%
	\$40,000 - \$59,000	22	22%
	\$60,000 - \$74,000	12	12%
	\$75,000 and above	22	22%
Total	101	100%	
Highest level of education for mother	High school or less	38	37%
	College	62	61%
	Doctorate	2	2%
	Total	102	100%
Highest level of education for father	High school or less	43	42%
	College	60	58%
	Doctorate	0	0%
	Total	103	100%

School	Granite High School	38	35%
	Taylor High School	29	27%
	Pear Tree High School	10	9%
	Other	31	29%
	Total	108	100%

Notably, 74% of the participants were LDS, and more than half (69%) of the participants had been either born and raised in Utah, or been living in the state for over five years.

Instruments

Demographic questionnaire. The participants completed a demographics information survey that included factors such as gender, age/grade, religious affiliation, ethnicity, time living in Utah, participation in the free/reduced lunch program, parent's range of household annual income, and highest level of education for parents. See APPENDIX A for the questionnaire.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure—Revised (MEIM-R). The MEIM-R (Phinney & Ong, 2007), is an adaptation of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: A New Scale for Use with Diverse Groups created by Jean Phinney in 1992. This measure emphasizes that at the core of ethnic identity is a sense of self as a member of a group that evolves over time through a process of exploration, learning and commitment. The measure consists of six questions of which three questions assess exploration of ethnic identity and three questions assess commitment to ethnic identity. The usual response options are on a five-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5) with a neutral position at 3, and a total of 30 points. Higher scores on the first three questions indicate a higher exploration of ethnic identity and higher scores on the last three questions indicate a higher commitment to ethnic identity. This measure has been validated with college students of Latino, Asian American, European American and African American ethnicities, but little has been explored in ways of Pacific Islander high school students. The MEIM—R was shown to have an internal reliability of .88 in

a recent meta-analysis (Herrington, Smith, Feinauer, & Griner, 2016). See APPENDIX B for measure.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (RSE). The RSE, created by Morris Rosenberg, is a 10-item scale that measures global self-esteem in relation to both positive and negative feelings about oneself (Rosenberg, 1965). Sample questions include, “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself” and “I certainly feel useless at times.” Items were answered using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” 1 point, “Disagree” 2 points, “Agree” 3 points, and “Strongly Agree” 4 points, with a total of 40 points (Rosenberg, 1965). The negative items on the scale were reverse coded. It has been used with racially and ethnically diverse populations; however, there has been limited use with Pacific Islanders. One sample of Pacific Islanders (adults) on which this instrument was used had an internal reliability of .92 (Allen et al., 2013). See APPENDIX C for measure.

Simple School Belonging Scale (SSBS). The SSBS, (Whiting, Everson, & Feinauer, 2017) is a unidimensional measure consisting of 10 items. Five items were taken from the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSM) and five items were newly created. This scale measured if and how students feel connected to their school. Sample items included “People really listen to me when I am at school” and “People at this school are friendly to me.” Items were answered using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from “YES!,” “Yes,” “No,” and “NO!,” with a total of 40 possible points (Whiting et al., 2017). Strong school belonging is indicated by higher scores. Although a new scale, results thus far have revealed the SBSS to be psychometrically sound with preliminary evidence of construct validity (Whiting et al., 2017). The SSBS has an internal reliability of 0.91 (Whiting et al., 2017). See APPENDIX D for measure.

Procedure and Data Collection

At the start of the 2017-2018 school year, I began by selecting four high schools to target (Pear Tree, Taylor, Granite, and Klein) from three cities (Pearl City, Glendale, and Klein) in Utah. My main purpose in selecting these schools was because of their population of Pacific Islander students. As noted in Table 1, 6% of Granite High School's student population is Pacific Islander, and Pear Tree, Taylor High School, and Klein's Pacific Islander population make up 3%, 3%, and 4% respectively. Those are above average percentages for the state of Utah, which reports 2% Pacific Islander students in the overall student population in Utah public schools (Utah State Board of Education, 2017).

Through main offices, I collected mailing addresses for all Pacific Islander students enrolled at these schools, and then mailed home cover letters and parental consent forms. The cover letter explained details of the study, and incentives for student participation. The incentives included students receiving a candy bar for returning the consent form, and upon completion of the survey their name was entered into a drawing for a \$10 iTunes gift card.

Students were then asked to return their parental consent form to the main office, in return for a candy bar. I also attended parent teacher conferences and POP (People of the Pacific) classes, where I gave presentations introducing the study and inviting participation. Participation was also advertised through Polynesian Clubs, posters around the schools, daily school announcements, school websites and Facebook pages, and school emails to parents. In total, I mailed out 500 letters and consents, but received just 50 in return, which is a return rate of 10%. Of the 50 students who returned consent forms, only 25 took the survey once a link was emailed to them. This number fell far short of my initial recruitment goal of 200 participants, so at this point, I decided to expand my recruitment efforts in specific ways.

Upon reflection, I determined that the somewhat burdensome two-step process of having participants turn in parental consent forms to the main office, and then having to take the survey at a different time electronically, was one of the barriers to participation. To consolidate steps for the participant, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to make the parental consent digital so signed copies no longer needed to be turned in prior to taking the survey. Parents could grant consent for their child to participate, and students could take the survey all at the same time. While still recruiting from my four original schools, I also recruited from another four schools, whose Pacific Islander students were contacted only via email to participate. In conjunction with this, I received IRB approval to expand my recruitment efforts to family and friends in high school, across the state of Utah, making it a convenience-snowball sampling. Participation increased after I added these recruitment strategies, and in total, 111 surveys were completed. See APPENDIX E, F, and G for parental consent form, youth assent form, and adult consent form if participant was above 17 years old.

Data Analysis

I first used descriptive statistics to describe the students in my sample, looking for measures of central tendency and variability across demographic and background characteristics. The demographic variables included in this study were gender, grade, ethnicity, religious affiliation, time in Utah, participation in the free/reduced lunch program, household annual salary, and highest level of parental education. An examination of the distributions and measures of central tendency for these variables led me to further organize and reduce the data by collapsing categories across a few of the demographic variables. The purpose for doing so was to more effectively and accurately describe the main characteristics of the students in the study, and to equally distribute participants across categories for ordinal variables.

Ethnicity was collapsed from six categories to four categories, combining Maori, Micronesian and other into “other,” and keeping Native Hawaiian, Samoan, and Tongan as individual categories. This decision was made because there was only one Maori participant, seven Micronesian participants, and six participants that declared “other” when asked about ethnicity. Religious affiliation was collapsed from five categories to two, LDS and non-LDS. Parent’s range of household annual income was collapsed from seven categories (0-\$19,000, \$20,000-\$29,000, \$30,000-\$39,000, \$40,000-\$49,000, \$50,000-\$59,000, \$60,000-\$74,000, \$75,000 and above) to five categories (0-\$19,000, \$20,000-\$39,000, \$40,000-\$59,000, \$60,000-\$74,000, \$75,000 and above). Lastly, highest level of education for mother and father were both collapsed from seven categories (less than high school, high school graduate, some college, 2-year degree, 4-year degree, professional degree and doctorate) to three categories (high school or less, college, and doctorate).

After data reduction, I then calculated and compared mean scores and standard deviations for the MEIM-R (composite scores and total), the RSE, and the SBSS across these demographic variables in order to look for patterns in these outcome variables by background characteristics of the students. I further conducted *t* tests (for dichotomous variables) and ANOVAS (for categorical variables) to test for statistically significant mean differences across groups of ethnic identity components (exploration and commitment), composite ethnic identity score, self-esteem and school belonging.

I then ran a series of bivariate correlations to look for associations between ethnic identity components (exploration and commitment), composite ethnic identity score, self-esteem, and school belonging. I was looking to see if there were any observable relationships between my predictor variable (ethnic identity) and my outcome variable (school belonging), as well as

looking at any relationship that might exist between self-esteem and ethnic identity and school belonging. In this way, I was able to foreshadow any predictive relationship I might observe in the regression models, as well as foreshadow any mediating effect self-esteem might have on the relationship between ethnic identity and school belonging.

I then ran bivariate correlations to look for associations between the background demographic variables, ethnic identity components (exploration and commitment), total ethnic identity score, self-esteem, and school belonging. My purpose in doing this was to learn if a specific demographic variable was correlated in any way to levels of ethnic identity, self-esteem or school belonging for students and to foreshadow any potential interaction effects in future regression analyses.

These descriptive data were used to inform a series of nested multiple regression models that I constructed to look for predictive relationships between ethnic identity components (exploration and commitment) and school belonging (SSBS), and whether self-esteem (RSE) had a mediating effect on any observed relationship. I also considered any observed relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem for the students in this sample.

I constructed a series of multiple regression models to answer my research questions. I began by constructing a baseline multiple regression model that contained all the relevant background characteristics, including gender, grade, ethnicity, religious affiliation, time in Utah, participation in free/reduced lunch, parent's annual income, and level of parental education. I looked at the effect of these background characteristics on school belonging as a baseline model into which I would enter my independent predictor variables of ethnic identity (exploration and commitment) as well as self-esteem.

Next, I looked for a relationship between ethnic identity and school belonging by adding the components of ethnic identity (exploration and commitment) to the model to see how each of these predicted school belonging individually, while controlling for background variables. Keeping all the previous terms in the model, I then added self-esteem to the model to see if any previously observed effects of ethnic identity components on school belonging changed with the inclusion of self-esteem.

CHAPTER 4: Results

I used statistical analyses to examine the relationship between ethnic identity and school belonging with self-esteem considered as a mediating factor, while taking into consideration demographic variables (gender, grade, religious affiliation, ethnicity, time in Utah, participation in free/reduced lunch, parent's annual income, and highest level of parental education). The data analysis process and results for each research question are described below.

Descriptive Statistics, *t* tests, and ANOVAs

I first calculated and compared mean scores and standard deviations across the demographic variables using the MEIM-R composite scores and total scores. I further computed *t* tests and ANOVAs looking for statistically significant mean differences in terms of the MEIM-R across background demographic characteristics. There were a few notable differences at the $p < .05$ significance level, as indicated in Table 3.

First, there was a significant difference in mean scores on the MEIM-R commitment component for boys ($M = 11.70, SD = 2.72$) and girls ($M = 13.55, SD = 1.72$) such that girls had higher mean scores on ethnic identity commitment than boys; $t(65.16) = -3.94, p < .001$.

Second, girls displayed higher mean scores ($M = 26.41, SD = 3.34$) on the MEIM-R composite score than boys ($M = 23.88, SD = 5.17$); $t(66.04) = -2.81, p = .006$, due largely to the impact of the commitment component of the overall ethnic identity composite variable. Third, the non-LDS participants displayed higher mean scores ($M = 13.52, SD = 2.01$) than the LDS participants ($M = 12.20, SD = 2.53$) on the MEIM-R exploration component; $t(61.49) = -2.83, p = .006$.

Non-LDS participants similarly displayed higher mean scores ($M = 27, SD = 4.38$) than the LDS participants ($M = 24.72, SD = 4.43$) on the MEIM-R composite score; $t(44.85) = -2.34, p = .024$.

These results suggest student sense of ethnicity may vary by gender and religious affiliation for

Pacific Islander high school students in this study. Specifically, the results suggest that girls are more likely to have committed to their ethnic identity and non-LDS participants seem to have been more likely to explore, and commit to their ethnic identity.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics, t tests, and ANOVAs for Ethnic Identity Measures across Background Characteristics (n = 111)

Variable	n	MEIM-R Exploration		MEIM-R Commitment		MEIM-R Total	
		Mean (SD)	Min-Max	Mean (SD)	Min-Max	Mean (SD)	Min-Max
Gender							
Male	43	12.19 (2.69)	3-15	11.70 (2.72)	3-15	23.88 (5.17)	6-30
Female	62	12.85 (2.26)	3-15	13.55 (1.72)	7-15	26.40 (3.34)	17-30
<i>Mean Differences</i>		$t(79.94) = -1.33,$ $p = .186$		$t(65.16) = -3.94,$ $p < .001$		$t(66.04) = -2.81,$ $p = .006$	
Grade							
9 th	33	12.94 (1.77)	9-15	12.54 (2.36)	6-15	25.48 (3.80)	16-30
10 th	18	12.11 (1.75)	9-15	12.94 (1.95)	8-15	25.06 (3.06)	18-30
11 th	25	12.68 (2.88)	3-15	13.24 (1.81)	9-15	25.92 (3.95)	18-30
12 th	28	12.29 (3.10)	3-15	12.50 (3.00)	3-15	24.79 (5.86)	6-30
<i>Mean Differences</i>		$F(3,100) = .59, p = .622$		$F(3,100) = .57, p = .631$		$F(3,100) = .33, p = .802$	
Religious Affiliation							
LDS	82	12.20 (2.53)	3-15	12.52 (2.44)	3-15	24.72 (4.43)	6-30
Non-LDS	27	13.52 (2.01)	8-15	13.26 (2.67)	3-15	27 (4.38)	11-30
<i>Mean Differences</i>		$t(61.49) = -2.83,$ $p = .006$		$t(41.35) = -1.27,$ $p = .212$		$t(44.85) = -2.34,$ $p = .024$	
Ethnicity							
Native Hawaiian	21	12.86 (1.74)	9-15	13.00 (2.41)	6-15	25.86 (3.85)	16-30
Samoaan	44	12.41 (2.82)	3-15	13.11 (1.96)	6-15	25.52 (4.17)	11-30
Tongan	26	12.58 (2.62)	3-15	12.31 (2.74)	3-15	24.88 (5.06)	6-30
Other	14	12.71 (1.94)	10-15	12.36 (2.73)	7-15	25.07 (4.53)	17-30
<i>Mean Differences</i>		$F(3,101) = .17, p = .916$		$F(3,101) = .85, p = .472$		$F(3,101) = .23, p = .875$	
How long have you been living in Utah?							
1 year	12	12.25 (3.28)	3-15	12.50 (2.07)	9-15	24.75 (3.93)	18-30
2 years	6	13.50 (2.35)	9-15	14 (1.26)	12-15	27.50 (2.43)	24-30
3 years	8	12.75 (1.75)	10-15	13.63 (2.00)	10-15	26.38 (3.16)	21-29
4 years	6	11.83 (1.83)	9-14	12.33 (1.03)	11-14	24.17 (2.79)	20-28
5 plus years	30	12.70 (2.04)	8-15	12.77 (2.33)	7-15	25.47 (4.01)	16-30
Born & Raised	42	12.48 (2.73)	3-15	12.57 (2.75)	3-15	25.05 (5.21)	6-30
<i>Mean Differences</i>		$F(5,98) = .35, p = .883$		$F(5,98) = .66, p = .658$		$F(5,98) = .55, p = .738$	
Free and Reduced Lunch							
Yes	57	12.63 (2.44)	3-15	12.89 (2.27)	6-15	25.53 (4.05)	11-30
No	48	12.52 (2.50)	3-15	12.67 (2.48)	3-15	25.19 (4.71)	6-30
<i>Mean Differences</i>		$t(99.10) = .23, p = .820$		$t(96.53) = .49, p = .627$		$t(93.34) = .39, p = .697$	
Parent's range of household annual income							
0 - \$19,000	22	12.41 (1.89)	9-15	12.50 (2.26)	7-15	24.91 (3.31)	17-30
\$20,000 - \$39,000	23	12.61 (3.27)	3-15	13.26 (2.30)	6-15	25.87 (4.97)	11-30
\$40,000 - \$59,000	22	12.27 (2.90)	3-15	12.27 (3.12)	3-15	24.55 (5.88)	6-30

\$60,000 - \$74,000	12	13.00 (1.13)	11-15	13.25 (1.22)	10-15	26.25 (2.09)	22-29
\$75,000 and above	22	12.60 (2.32)	7-15	12.64 (2.28)	6-15	25.23 (4.09)	16-30
<i>Mean Differences</i>		$F(4,96) = .18, p = .947$		$F(4,96) = .68, p = .608$		$F(4,96) = .43, p = .784$	
Highest level of education for mother							
High school/Less	38	12.63 (2.44)	3-15	12.79 (2.61)	3-15	25.42 (4.68)	6-30
Some college	62	12.48 (2.55)	3-15	12.76 (2.26)	6-15	25.24 (4.27)	11-30
Doctorate	2	13 (1.41)	12-14	14.50 (0.71)	14-15	27.50 (2.12)	26-29
<i>Mean Differences</i>		$F(2,99) = .07, p = .928$		$F(2,99) = .52, p = .598$		$F(2,99) = .26, p = .771$	
Highest level of education for father							
High school/Less	43	12.67 (2.68)	3-15	12.91 (2.67)	3-15	25.58 (4.98)	6-30
Some college	60	12.48 (2.36)	3-15	12.73 (2.14)	6-15	25.22 (3.90)	16-30
<i>Mean Differences</i>		$F(1,101) = .15, p = .700$		$F(1,101) = .13, p = .715$		$F(1,101) = .17, p = .678$	

I then calculated and compared mean scores and standard deviations across the demographic variables on the RSE and SSBS. I further computed *t* tests and ANOVAs looking for mean differences in terms of the RSE and the SBSS across background demographic characteristics. As indicated in Table 4, there were only two significant mean differences at the $p < .05$ level. First, boys displayed higher mean scores ($M = 31.76, SD = 5.12$) on the RSE than girls ($M = 29.33, SD = 4.74$); $t(83.76) = 2.44, p = .017$. Second, participants whose mothers had some form of college had higher means scores ($M = 31.35, SD = 5.38$) on the RSE than those whose mothers did not go to college ($M = 28.86, SD = 4.14$); $F(2,98) = 3.28, p = .042$. These results suggest that student self-esteem might vary by gender and mother's level of education. More specifically, these results reveal that the boys in this sample are more likely to have higher levels of self-esteem and students whose mothers are college educated are also more likely to have higher levels of self-esteem. It is also interesting to note that mean differences in school belonging approached significance ($p = .089$) across categories of parental income. Although not significant at the .05 level, this finding suggests an effect of income on school belonging for these students.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics, t tests, and ANOVAs for RSE and SSBS across Background Characteristics (n = 111)

Variable	RSE			SSBS		
	Mean (SD)	Min-Max	n	Mean (SD)	Min-Max	n
Gender						
Male	31.76 (5.12)	16-40	42	29.95 (5.72)	20-40	42
Female	29.33 (4.74)	19-40	61	29.90 (4.63)	28-40	62
<i>Mean Differences</i>	$t(83.76) = 2.44, p = .017$			$t(75.51) = .05, p = .963$		
Grade						
9 th	31.13 (5.43)	19-40	32	30.10 (3.67)	20-37	32
10 th	29.28 (4.66)	24-40	18	31.17 (4.78)	23-40	18
11 th	30.21 (3.74)	23-36	24	28.68 (6.14)	12-38	25
12 th	30.25 (5.83)	16-39	28	30.07 (5.68)	17-40	28
<i>Mean Differences</i>	$F(3,98) = .53, p = .665$			$F(3,99) = .87, p = .459$		
Religious Affiliation						
LDS	30.54 (5.29)	16-40	80	29.72 (5.29)	12-40	81
Non-LDS	29.71 (3.91)	23-36	24	30.46 (4.23)	20-38	24
<i>Mean Differences</i>	$t(50.81) = .84, p = .408$			$t(46.39) = -.71, p = .481$		
Ethnicity						
Native Hawaiian	30.90 (5.97)	19-40	21	30.19 (5.62)	17-39	21
Samoaan	30.56 (5.18)	16-40	43	29.75 (4.95)	12-38	44
Tongan	30.31 (4.60)	23-40	26	29.88 (5.74)	20-40	26
Other	28.62 (3.55)	21-35	13	30.15 (3.36)	25-36	13
<i>Mean Differences</i>	$F(3,99) = .62, p = .603$			$F(3,100) = .05, p = .987$		
How long have you been living in Utah?						
1 year	32.18 (4.85)	25-39	11	29.25 (6.90)	12-38	12
2 years	32.33 (5.72)	25-40	6	29.33 (4.32)	25-37	6
3 years	29.88 (4.55)	24-36	8	30.50 (4.00)	23-35	8
4 years	31 (5.62)	24-39	6	29 (5.57)	22-34	5
5 plus years	29.37 (4.92)	16-39	30	30.67 (5.49)	20-40	30
Born and Raised			41			42
<i>Mean Differences</i>	$F(5,96) = .75, p = .587$			$F(5,97) = .28, p = .922$		
Free and Reduced Lunch						
Yes	30.05 (4.45)	21-40	55	29.19 (5.44)	12-40	57
No	30.63 (5.63)	16-40	48	30.80 (4.48)	20-40	47
<i>Mean Differences</i>	$t(89.20) = -.57, p = .574$			$t(101.99) = -1.66, p = .100$		

Parent's range of household annual income						
0 - \$19,000	29.52 (4.64)	25-40	21	27.32 (5.52)	12-38	22
\$20,000 - \$39,000	30.61 (4.31)	23-37	23	30.78 (4.70)	17-39	23
\$40,000 - \$59,000	28.86 (5.03)	16-36	22	29.67 (5.51)	20-40	21
\$60,000 - \$74,000	31.91 (5.94)	23-40	11	30.58 (4.91)	24-40	12
\$75,000 and above	31.86 (5.36)	19-40	22	31.23 (4.34)	20-37	22
<i>Mean Differences</i>	$F(4,94) = 1.43, p = .231$			$F(4,95) = 2.08, p = .089$		
Highest level of education for mother						
High school or Less	28.86 (4.14)	23-37	37	29.92 (4.97)	17-40	38
Some college	31.35 (5.38)	16-40	62	30.20 (5.13)	12-40	61
Doctorate	27.50 (3.54)	25-30	2	29.50 (3.54)	27-32	2
<i>Mean Differences</i>	$F(2,98) = 3.28, p = .042$			$F(2,98) = .05, p = .953$		
Highest level of education for father						
High school or Less	30.00 (4.36)	23-40	42	29.84 (4.64)	20-40	43
Some college	30.58 (5.49)	16-40	60	30.25 (5.25)	12-40	59
<i>Mean Differences</i>	$F(1,100) = .32, p = .567$			$F(1,100) = .17, p = .679$		

Pearson Correlation Tests

I performed simple bivariate Pearson correlations tests to determine if there were associations between ethnic identity components (exploration and commitment), total composite ethnic identity score, self-esteem, and school belonging. The results, as presented in Table 5, show that there was no statistically significant correlation between ethnic identity and school belonging. However, the data does reveal that there was a moderate, positive, and statistically significant correlation between self-esteem and school belonging ($r = .394, n = 103, p < .001$), such that higher levels of self-esteem were correlated with higher levels of school belonging.

Table 5

Correlations Between Ethnic Identity, Self-Esteem and School Belonging (n = 111)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Exploration	1				
2. Commitment	.639**	1			
3. Ethnic Identity	.904**	.907**	1		
4. Self-Esteem	0.023	-0.021	0.001	1	
5. School Belonging	0.144	0.144	0.159	.394**	1

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Next, I ran bivariate correlations to look for associations between the background demographic variables, ethnic identity components (exploration and commitment), total ethnic identity score, self-esteem, and school belonging. My purpose in doing this was to investigate whether associations might exist between background characteristics and levels of ethnic identity, self-esteem, or school belonging for these students. The number of participants reported in the sample varies by questions since some students only answered certain questions in the survey. As noted in Table 6, there were a few significant correlations at the $p < .01$ level. There was a positive correlation between gender (boys = 0; girls = 1) and the ethnic identity commitment component ($r = .387, n = 105, p < .001$), as well as the total ethnic identity score ($r = .286, n = 105, p < .003$), which revealed that on average, girls had higher levels of commitment to their ethnic identity, which contributed to their overall higher levels of ethnic identity. However, there was a negative correlation between gender and self-esteem ($r = -.240, n = 103, p = .015$), such that, on average, boys had higher levels of self-esteem than girls. There was also a significant correlation between religious affiliation (LDS = 0; Non-LDS = 1) and the ethnic identity exploration component ($r = .236, n = 111, p = .012$), and religious affiliation and the ethnic identity total score ($r = .220, n = 109, p = .022$). This revealed that, on average, non-

LDS participants had higher levels of ethnic identity exploration and overall ethnic identity.

Lastly, there was a moderate positive significant ($p = .031$) correlation between parent salary and school belonging ($r = .216, n = 100, p = .031$). There were no significant correlations between grade, ethnicity, time in Utah, free/reduced lunch participation, and parental education for ethnic identity (components and total), self-esteem and school belonging as noted in Table 5 previously.

Table 6

Correlations Between Demographic Variables and Measures (n = 111)

Demographic Variable	MEIM-R Exploration	MEIM-R Commitment	MEIM-R Total	RSE	SSBS
Gender	.135	.387**	.286**	-.240*	-.005
Grade	-.082	.014	-.039	-.055	-.046
Religious Affiliation	.236*	.127	.220*	-.070	.062
Ethnicity	-.039	-.020	-.033	.064	-.025
Time in Utah	.030	.040	.039	-.075	.094
FRL	-.023	-.048	-.039	.057	.159
Parent Salary Highest level of education for mother	.033	.000	.019	.159	.216*
Highest level of education for father	-.017	.032	.007	.190	.019
	-.038	-.036	-.041	.057	.042

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression Models

Once descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVAS, and correlations were calculated and organized, I constructed a series of multiple regression models to answer my research questions. At this point, I selected household income (five categories) over free/reduced lunch participation as the variable to represent income in my models. This decision was informed by the fact that these two variables were significantly correlated at .44, and that household income is a more discrete variable than free/reduced lunch. I also decided to use only mother's education as the

variable to represent parent education since mother and father education were significantly correlated at .60. Father's education levels are traditionally more related to levels of income, and I was mindful of keeping variables in the model that were as independent from each other as possible to meet the underlying assumption of independence in multiple regression analyses.

I began by constructing a baseline multiple regression model (Model 1) that investigated the overall effect of the background variables (gender, grade, religious affiliation, ethnicity, time in Utah, income, and level of mother's education) on school belonging. As indicated in Table 7, the only variable that was statistically significant in predicting school belonging in the baseline model was household income ($b = .90, p = .025$). Specifically, for every change in category of household income there was an associated difference of .90 in school belonging. However, the overall model at this stage was not significant ($R^2 = .083, p = .573$), and explained less than 1% of the variation in school belonging.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables on School Belonging with Self-Esteem as a Mediating Factor (n = 111)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	p	β	p	β	p
Gender	-.25	.822	-.74	.550	.15	.900
Grade	-.27	.563	-.24	.613	-.15	.727
Religious Affiliation	1.52	.300	1.11	.466	.97	.487
Ethnicity						
Native Hawaiian	.02	.911	-.29	.893	-.92	.650
Samoan	.17	.930	-.17	.928	-.96	.590
Tongan	.51	.804	.41	.842	-.48	.802
Time in Utah	.29	.251	.27	.289	.36	.138
Income	.90	.025*	.89	.027*	.78	.037*
Mother's Education	.09	.944	-.04	.974	-.64	.572
Exploration			.09	.758	.06	.819
Commitment			.22	.507	.16	.598
Self-Esteem					.41	<.001*
R squared	.083		.097		.245	
Change of R-square	.083		.014		.148	

Research question one. My first research question was: Do component aspects of ethnic identity, namely exploration and commitment, predict feelings of belonging for Pacific Islander high school students in Utah? In order to answer this question, I looked for a predictive relationship between ethnic identity and school belonging. I began by adding the component variables of ethnic identity (exploration & commitment) to the model (Model 2) to see how each of these predicted school belonging individually, while controlling for background variables. Exploration ($b = .09, p = .758$) and commitment ($b = .22, p = .507$) did not significantly predict school belonging. Once again, the only statistically significant variable in model two was income ($b = .89, p = .027$), which had a positive relationship with school belonging. Specifically, for every change in category of household income there was an associated

difference of .89 in school belonging, which was very similar to the finding in Model 1.

However, once again, the overall model was not significant ($R^2 = .097$, $p = .630$), and ethnic identity did not have a significant predictive effect on school belonging for Pacific Islander high school students in this study. See Table 7.

Research question two. Noting that ethnic identity did not predict school belonging for students in this study, I tested for my second research question which was: Are relationships between ethnic identity components (exploration and commitment) and feelings of school belonging, if found, mediated by levels of self-esteem for students in the study? Keeping all the previous terms in the model, I added self-esteem to the model that included ethnic identity components as well as background variables (Model 3). In this model, self-esteem had a moderate, positive, and significant effect on school belonging ($b = .41$, $p < .001$), such that, on average, for every one point difference in the RSE, there was an associated .41 difference in the SSBS. With the addition of self-esteem, the overall model (Model 3) was also significant ($R^2 = .245$, $p = .018$), with predictors in this model explaining about 25% of the variation in school belonging. See Table 7.

Research question three. I examined my final model (Model 3) to answer my third research question: How do these relationships differ for Pacific Islander students across background characteristics such as age, school, ethnicity, income, time in Utah, and mother's education? As seen on Table 7, in addition to self-esteem, income was statistically significant, ($b = .78$, $p = .037$) such that for every change in income category there was an associated .78 difference in school belonging. However, exploration ($b = .06$, $p = .819$) and commitment

($b = .16, p = .60$) were not significant predictors in this model. In the presence of self-esteem, income was the only background variable that contributed to student's sense of belonging in schools. See Table 7.

I checked for interaction effects between school belonging and income, which were not significant. Thus, the relationship between self-esteem and school belonging did not appear to be mediated by the background variable of income. This was somewhat expected, given the lack of significant correlation observed between income and self-esteem when conducting the bivariate correlation analysis. In conclusion, the final model, including background variables, ethnic identity components, and self-esteem, indicated that income had a significant predictive effect on student's sense of belonging in schools, but that self-esteem had the biggest effect on school belonging for students in this study. The final model (Model 3) was statistically significant and explained 25% of the variation in school belonging. See Table 7.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

The overarching purpose of this study was to understand if component aspects of ethnic identity (exploration and commitment) predicted feelings of belonging in schools among Pacific Islander high school students in Utah, and to further investigate whether self-esteem might play a mediating role in any observed relationship between ethnic identity and school belonging for these students. The following sections will discuss the key findings of this study as related to the research questions. I will also discuss the limitations of this study as well as implications for future research and practice with Pacific Islander high school students.

The main findings from this study reveal that ethnic identity is not related to feelings of school belonging for these Pacific Islander high school students. This was a surprising finding considering that previous research with other adolescent minority groups had found a positive relationship between ethnic identity and academic and social outcomes in schools. For example, Bartimole and colleagues found a positive relationship between ethnic identity and perceptions of school climate as well as positive school attitudes for White, Hispanic and African American males, and White female students (Bartimole et al., 2015). Similarly, a recent study found that ethnic pride, which is an attribute of ethnic identity, had a significant positive effect on school belonging for Latino middle school students (Hernandez, Robins, Widaman, & Conger, 2017). The unexpected results from the current study raise questions, among others, about how ethnic identity and school belonging might be experienced differently for Pacific Islander adolescents, especially in the context of Utah.

Another main finding from this study was that self-esteem was not implicated in how ethnic identity might contribute to feelings of school belonging, because such a relationship was not found for students in this sample. Further, no association was found between ethnic identity

and self-esteem. This lack of association was another divergent finding from previous extant research in the field that suggests a reliable relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem for minoritized students. For example, Umaña -Taylor and colleagues have conducted various studies with Latino, Asian American, African American, and European American students across different age groups that show a strong relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem (Toomey & Umaña-Taylor, 2012; Umaña-Taylor, 2004; Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007). Similarly, Phinney and colleagues (Phinney, et al., 2007) conducted a study with Latino and African American adolescents that revealed a positive relationship between an achieved ethnic identity and high self-esteem for these students. This same study also revealed that Asian and Latino young adults with a more developed sense of ethnic identity reported more positive and open attitudes toward outside groups than those who were in ethnic identity diffusion. These findings from previous research suggest that ethnic identity is independently related to positive attitudes both about oneself, and others for the ethnic minoritized groups in those studies (Phinney et al., 2007). However, the results from the current study, which did not find a significant relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem, suggests that ethnic identity might not be as salient for supporting self-esteem among Pacific Islander students in Utah as for other minority groups across the U.S.

Overall, the lack of significant relationship between ethnic identity and school belonging, as well as between ethnic identity and self-esteem, raises important questions about how ethnic identity is experienced by and conceptualized for the Pacific Islander students in this study. For example, the MEIM-R (Phinney, 1992), to my knowledge, has never been used in previous research with Pacific Islander adolescents. It is unclear how well ethnic identity is measured by the MEIM-R for Pacific Islanders in general and for adolescents in particular. Findings from this

study further raise questions about the ways in which ethnic identity, as a general construct, may operate in different ways for Pacific Islanders. Finally, the unique context of the state of Utah may play a critical role in the ways that students in this study experience, understand, or think about their ethnic identity. Each of these ideas will be explored in the following paragraphs.

As noted in the introduction of this thesis, there is a glaring lack of empirical research with Pacific Islander adolescent students. Up until 2010, Pacific Islanders were grouped together with Asian Americans on government documents (Allen & Heppner, 2011) and this conflation of groups may have led to the observed current lack of research with this group. At this point in the research literature, it has been established that the empirical work with Pacific Islanders is scant and understanding their challenges warrants much more exploration and study.

One contribution of the current study is the use of the MEIM-R with Pacific Islanders. This measure, previously validated with college students of Latino, Asian American, European American and African American ethnicities (Phinney & Ong, 2007), had never, to my knowledge, been used in previous research with Pacific Islander high school students. The surprising findings from this study, with regard to ethnic identity, suggests that Pacific Islander adolescents' ethnic identity may not accurately be measured by the MEIM-R. Or, alternatively, that the construct of ethnic identity for Pacific Islanders may be fundamentally different in some way from other ethnic groups in the United States.

According to Jean Phinney (1992), who created the MEIM-R, each ethnic group contains its own unique history, traditions and values, making it difficult to measure ethnic identity on a global scale across various groups. Some literature has noted the relevance of spirituality and religiosity for Pacific Island cultures (Allen & Heppner, 2011). One important way that the construct of ethnic identity may differ for Pacific Islander students is in the relevance and

importance of their spiritual or religious identity as a major contributor to these students sense of ethnic self. The questions on the MEIM-R do not specifically ask about spiritual aspects of ethnicity, but focuses on ethnicity in general terms. If ethnic identity and religious identity are indeed more interconnected for Pacific Islanders, ethnic identity may become conflated for these students and may not be adequately captured or represented by scores on the MEIM-R. This is an empirical question and future studies should seek to validate measures of ethnic identity, such as the MEIM-R, with Pacific Islander adolescents and young adults.

Ethnic identity may also be experienced differently for Pacific Islander students in the state of Utah, where this study was conducted. Utah is a unique context, where there are high numbers of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), otherwise known as Mormons. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) has had a significant historical and colonial influence in the Polynesian Islands (Allen & Heppner, 2011). The LDS faith appeals to many Pacific Islanders because specific doctrines and teachings of the church share similar values to that of their cultural and family principles (Allen & Heppner, 2011). It is likely that many Pacific Islanders who have relocated to Utah may have come because of their religious affiliation and in search of joining the larger LDS community (Allen & Heppner, 2011).

Perhaps not surprisingly, 74% of the students in this study marked Latter-day Saint when asked about their religious affiliation. It is possible that the LDS participants in this study felt a stronger affiliation to their religious identity, than to their ethnic identity, which is supported by the fact that the non-LDS participants in this study had higher mean scores on the MEIR-R. In other words, a religious identity, for young LDS Pacific Islander students in the Utah context,

may act as a *proxy* for ethnic identity, and thus not be captured by a traditional measure of ethnic identity such as the MEIM-R.

Finally, the context of Utah might come into play in terms of the homogenous nature of the student body. As noted, Utah schools report only 2% of their student body as Pacific Islanders. Thus, Pacific Islander students in this study may not spend a lot of time with other Pacific Islander students when at school. For these students, it is possible that their connection, or sense of belonging, at school (and with other students) is through religious affiliation rather than through their Pacific Islander ethnicity. In addition, given the importance of the LDS church in this context, a sense of belonging in schools in Utah might center around religious identity, rather than an ethnic identity or school setting.

Research (Allen & Heppner, 2011) has shown that having a strong religious belief and being committed to that religion was highly associated with healthy psychological well-being for LDS Polynesian adults. It could be suggested that this might be the same for LDS Polynesian youth as well. Student's religious values, and behaviors are highly influenced by the religious climate within a school (Barrett, Pearson, Muller & Frank, 2007). Utah would be an appropriate context to examine the empirical questions raised by the findings in this study because of the large population of LDS students. Future research should look closely at the relationship between religiosity and ethnic identity and religiosity and self-esteem for Pacific Islander students in Utah schools.

Lastly, it is possible that students in this sample identify more collectively as Pacific Islander, or as a pan-ethnic Pacific-Island-American group, given the fact that 69% of participants had either been born and raised in Utah, or had been living in the state for over five years. Specifically, I wonder if Pacific Islander youth in Utah affiliate themselves primarily by

the more prevalent notions of religious culture and activity, rather than by their Pacific Islander heritage. One area of research to investigate in Utah is the salience of racial and ethnic identity as compared to religious identity. For example, it may be that the color of your skin, or the language that you speak, is not nearly as important as your religious background, commitment, and participation (Allen & Heppner, 2011), especially for students who are second or third generation immigrant. Based on the results of this study, future research should revolve around discovering what aspect of adolescent life brings Pacific Islander students together and helps them feel like they belong in a school setting.

It is important to note that, although ethnic identity did not predict school belonging, self-esteem did have a positive and significant effect on school belonging for the Pacific Islander students in this study. This is a critically important finding given the historical difficulties these students face in terms of academic outcomes (ACT, 2015; NCES, 2016) and psycho-social well-being in schools. As noted previously, a body of current scholarly work has shown that belonging in a school setting is critically important for psycho-social wellbeing of all students (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Libbey, 2004; Osterman, 2000) and findings from this study reveal that a high self-esteem can promote school belonging for Pacific Islander students in Utah.

A recent report by the Utah Department of Health noted that minority youth were at higher risk of contemplating and attempting suicide than White youth (Annor, Wilkinson, Zwald, 2017). Thus, having a sense of belonging in schools is even more high stakes for these students, including Pacific Islanders. Interestingly, this same report showed that LDS and religious youth in general, were less likely to contemplate and attempt suicide than less religious youth (Annor et al., 2017) across ethnic groups. This raises further important empirical questions about how religiosity and spirituality may act as a protective factor for the Pacific Islander students in this

study, perhaps in the same way that ethnic identity operates as a protective factor for other minority student groups in different social contexts across the U.S. Findings from this study highlight the importance of attending to self-esteem for Pacific Islander students as a way to foster their sense of belonging in schools in support of positive academic and social well-being outcomes for these youth.

Limitations

The first obvious limitation of the study was that it was limited to Pacific Islander students in Utah, which has a high population of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For this study 73.9% of the participants were LDS. This is a unique population and that limits the generalizability of the findings. It could be advantageous to conduct this study again, but with a religiosity scale included in addition to the MEIM-R.

Second, recruitment to participate in the study was limited to a few schools and family and friends, through a snowball recruitment strategy. It was originally a very difficult community to access, which required that I recruit through family and friends, which were outside of the school boundaries I had originally chosen. Because of this, I was unable to control for school contexts, which could have had a significant bearing on the findings. Future studies might be successful if conducted in areas with high populations of Pacific Islander students where controlling for school climate and context would be more feasible. In addition, the limited scope of recruitment calls into question how representative a sample this was of Pacific Islander high school students across Utah.

Finally, I acknowledge the inherent bias in my chosen methodology, including using a measure normed on other populations. Specifically, the MEIM-R has been used multiple times on college students of Latino, Asian American, European American and African American

ethnicities, but has not been used with Pacific Islander high school students. Further, the MEIM-R only has 6 questions total. In the future, researchers should carefully consider different measures to examine ethnic identity among Pacific Islanders and carefully consider how using the MEIM-R may have yielded results that were not similar to those found among other minority populations.

Implications for Future Research and Practitioners

The findings from this study suggest several implications for future research among Pacific Islander high school students. The first suggestion for future research is to replicate this study with a larger sample size and in an area outside of Utah that is not highly concentrated with Latter-day Saint members, or even those of another religion. Other states with significant Pacific Islander populations, such as Hawaii, may yield different results. Similarly, conducting this same study in areas with low populations of Pacific Islander adolescents may help in understanding if ethnic identity differs based on location and environment.

Further research in this area could include conducting the same study but adding in a religiosity scale to better tease out the differences between religious identity, religious practice, and feelings of belonging to an ethnic group and/or social institutions such as schools. Part of this work would be to establish if religiosity, religious participation, or religious affiliation increases self-esteem for Pacific Islander high school students. Likewise, an examination of how religious affiliation and identity may contribute to an increased self-esteem for minority groups could also aide in better understanding how Pacific Islander adolescents are similar or different from other minority groups across the U.S. According to Yonker, Schnabelrauch, and DeHaan (2012), increased self-esteem is related to higher levels of spirituality and religiosity for all adolescents. Teachers, especially in the state of Utah, may find it beneficial to understand if and

how aspects of religion impact their minority students, specifically their Pacific Islander students, in terms of self-esteem and school belonging.

Furthermore, a qualitative study to learn about how Pacific Islander adolescents think about, understand, and describe ethnic identity, within Utah and across the U.S., could contribute to a better understanding of the results of this study. In general, this future work should focus on what Pacific Islander adolescents perceive and choose as their ethnic identity, how they have explored it, and how it contributes to who they are as individuals. Finally, it is noteworthy that self-esteem predicted school belonging for these students. This finding underscores how critical it is for Utah educators to investigate ways to boost Pacific Islander's self-esteem in hopes of increasing school belonging and thus academic achievement and high school retention for this population.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to better understand Pacific Islander students in our public education system, and especially in the state of Utah. Previous empirical work in this field has emphasized the positive and beneficial role that ethnic identity plays in increasing self-esteem for minority groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos (Lee, 2003; Phinney, 1992; Toomey & Umaña-Taylor, 2012; Umaña-Taylor, 2004; Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007). However, the results from this study suggested that ethnic identity might look very different for Pacific Islander students in the state of Utah because of the high percentage of Latter-day Saints, and the possibility that ethnic and religious identity might be overlapping or intersecting for these students.

Although ethnic identity did not predict self-esteem or school belonging for the Pacific Islander students in this study, the topic is still of importance for practitioners and researchers

nationwide considering the growing Pacific Islander population. It would be especially consequential to better understand what self-esteem looks like for this group of students and how that relates to belonging in schools for them. Overall, for Pacific Islander students nationwide, the results have suggested a need to move beyond generalizations of this group of students to understanding how to increase their self-esteem in hopes of boosting their sense of belonging in our schools, thus leading to greater high school retention and academic achievement for this population.

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APPENDIX A: Demographic Questionnaire

You are almost done with this survey! The following questions will allow me to know a little about you and your background. Remember there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible. And once again, your answers will remain anonymous.

1. Are you male or female?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

2. What grade are you in?
 - a. 9th grade
 - b. 10th grade
 - c. 11th grade
 - d. 12th grade

3. How old are you?
 - a. 13 years-old
 - b. 14 years-old
 - c. 15 years-old
 - d. 16 years-old
 - e. 17 years-old
 - f. 18 years-old
 - g. 19 years-old

4. Which best describes the ethnic group you most closely identify with?
 - a. Native Hawaiian
 - b. Samoan
 - c. Tongan
 - d. Maori
 - e. Micronesian
 - f. Other

5. Which of the following best describes who you are living with?
 - a. Father and Mother
 - b. Father only
 - c. Mother only
 - d. Parent(s) and Grandparent(s)
 - e. Grandparents only

6. During the past school year, did you participate in the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch program at school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

7. How long have you been living in Utah?

- a. 1 year
- b. 2 years
- c. 3 years
- d. 4 years
- e. 5 plus years
- f. Born and raised

8. How long has your _____ been living in Utah?

	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	Born and Raised	N/A
Mother							
Father							
Mom's Mother							
Mom's Father							
Dad's Mother							
Dad's Father							

9. What is the highest level of education your _____ has completed?

	Less than high school	High school graduate	Some college	2-year degree	4-year degree	Master's degree	Doctorate
Mother							
Father							
Mom's Mother							
Mom's Father							
Dad's Mother							
Dad's Father							

10. Please indicate your parent's range of household annual income currently.

- a. 0 - \$19,000
- b. \$20,000 - \$29,000
- c. \$30,000 - \$39,000
- d. \$40,000 - \$49,000
- e. \$50,000 - \$59,000
- f. \$60,000 - \$74,000
- g. \$75,000 and above

11. What is your religious affiliation?
- a. LDS
 - b. Catholic
 - c. Other Christian
 - d. Buddhist
 - e. Muslim
 - f. No Religion
 - g. Other

6. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

APPENDIX C: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Remember there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX D: Simple School Belonging Scale (SBSS)

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about your school life. Please indicate how strongly you agree (YES! or yes) or disagree (NO! or no) with each statement. Remember there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible.

1. People here notice when I am good at something.

YES! Yes No No!

2. Other students in this school take my opinions seriously.

YES! Yes No No!

3. People at this school are friendly to me.

YES! Yes No No!

4. I am included in lots of activities at this school.

YES! Yes No No!

5. Other students here like me the way I am.

YES! Yes No No!

6. I like to think of myself as similar to others at (school name).

YES! Yes No No!

7. People at (school name) care if I am absent.

YES! Yes No No!

8. I feel like my ideas count at (school name).

YES! Yes No No!

9. I feel like I matter to people at (school name).

YES! Yes No No!

10. People really listen to me when I am at school.

YES! Yes No No!

APPENDIX E: Parental Consent Form

This is what the parent/participant will see when clicking on the link to the survey.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome! This survey is for youth between the ages of 13 to 19 years old. If you are a parent of a youth under the age of 18 years old and giving consent for your child to participate, please proceed through the first and second questions about parental consent. Your child can then complete the rest of the survey independently.

If you are the participant and over the age of 18, please proceed with the rest of the survey.

All questions asked will focus on the participant's ethnic heritage, self-esteem and school life. Additional questions will follow allowing me to understand a little about the participant's background. This survey should not take longer than 25 minutes to complete. Be assured that all answers provided will be kept anonymous. Thank you once again for participating. I greatly appreciate it.”

The next screen says:

Who are you?

- I am the parent of a participant who is under the age of 18 years old.
- I am the participant and over the age of 18 years old. I do not need parental consent.

If they click on the first answer (I am the parent of a participant who is under the age of 18 years old), they will be led to a screen that says:

PARENTAL CONSENT

I give permission for my child to participate in this survey.

- Yes
- No

If they click on the second answer (I am the participant and over the age of 18 years old. I do not need parental consent.), the next screen is the Adult Consent. If the youth agrees to participate, they will be able to start the survey.

****See Adult Consent form that is APPENDIX G Adult Consent Form.**

If the participant’s parent gives consent, the student will be led to the youth assent form (APPENDIX F). If the student agrees to participate, they will be able to start the survey.

APPENDIX F: Youth Assent Form (13 – 17 years old)

What is this study about?

My name is Mari Oto and I am a graduate student at Brigham Young University. Dr. Erika Feinauer, professor at Brigham Young University is working with me on this study and we would like to invite you to take part in it. Your parent(s) know we are talking with you about this study. This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to be in it. Your responses to this survey will NOT be shared with your parents or anyone other than the researchers.

In this study, we want to learn about how your ethnic identity contributes to feelings of school belonging for kids your age.

What am I being asked to do?

If you decide to be in the study, you will answer a 37-question survey about your ethnic identity, self-esteem and how you feel you belong at school. This survey should not take longer than 25 minutes to complete.

What are the benefits to me for taking part in the study?

Taking part in this research study may not help you in any way, but it will help us in knowing how to better meet the needs of Pacific Islander students and help them progress towards graduation and move on to post-graduation educational plans.

Can anything bad happen if I am in this study?

We think there are a few risks for you by being in the study. For example, you will be asked to explore personal feelings about your identity, self-esteem and how you feel you belong at school, and this may cause you to feel uncomfortable answering such personal questions. You may also be prompted to explore personal issues that were previously unexamined, which might also be uncomfortable for you.

Who will know that I am in the study?

We won't tell anybody that you are in this study and everything you tell us will be private. Your parent may know that you took part in the study, but we won't tell them anything you said or did, either. When we tell other people or write articles about what we learned in the study, we won't include your name or that of anyone else who took part in the study.

Do I have to be in the study?

No, you don't. The choice is up to you. No one will get angry or upset if you don't want to do this. You can change your mind at any time while you are taking the survey.

What if I have questions?

If you have questions at any time, you can ask us, and you can talk to your parents about the study. If you want to ask us questions about the study, contact Mari Oto at 808.383.9712, or mariserrao84@gmail.com.

For completing the survey your name will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win a \$10 iTunes gift card.

One in ten participants will win a \$10 iTunes gift card.

If you want to be in this study, please check yes and proceed with the survey. If you do not want to be in this study, please check no.

APPENDIX G: Adult Consent Form (18 – 19 years old)

What is this study about?

My name is Mari Oto and I am a graduate student at Brigham Young University. Dr. Erika Feinauer, professor at Brigham Young University is working with me on this study and we would like to invite you to take part in it. This section will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to be in it. Your responses to this survey will NOT be shared with anyone other than the researchers. In this study, we want to learn about how your ethnic identity contributes to feelings of school belonging for kids your age.

What am I being asked to do?

If you decide to be in the study, you will answer a 37-question survey about your ethnic identity, self-esteem and how you feel you belong at school. This survey should not take longer than 25 minutes to complete.

What are the benefits to me for taking part in the study?

Taking part in this research study may not help you in any way, but it will help us in knowing how to better meet the needs of Pacific Islander students and help them progress towards graduation and move on to post-graduation educational plans.

Can anything bad happen if I am in this study?

We think there are a few risks for you by being in the study. For example, you will be asked to explore personal feelings about your identity, self-esteem and how you feel you belong at school, and this may cause you to feel uncomfortable answering such personal questions. You may also be prompted to explore personal issues that were previously unexamined, which might also be uncomfortable for you.

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