

Practitioner's Essay

More Than an Afterthought: Centering Critical Pacific Islands & Oceania Studies in Ethnic Studies

Jeremiah C. Sataraka

ABSTRACT

In the field of education and Ethnic Studies in the United States, Critical Pacific Islands and Oceania Studies (CPIOS) is the latest academic response to the growing needs of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (NH/PI) communities. California Assembly Bill 1460 was a victory for Ethnic Studies, but the lack of recognition of NH/PI communities by Ethnic Studies educators runs the risk of continual NH/PI erasure. This article calls on Ethnic Studies scholars and Asian Americanists to separate Asian American Studies from CPIOS and introduces Kava and Loi-On's (2022) CPIOS framework as an important curricular intervention.

INTRODUCTION

I see no more ties of obligations between Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (as groups) than I do between African Americans and Pacific Islanders, or Latinos and Pacific Islanders. I think the connections between any of these communities need to be forged, as appropriate, *issue-by-issue* in each historical moment (Kauanui, 2005, 134).

California Assembly Bill 1460 (AB 1460) is celebrated as a great legislative victory because it mandated Ethnic Studies as an undergraduate graduation requirement for all California State University

(CSU) students (California, 2020). By the 2024-25 academic year, CSU undergraduate students will be required to take at least one three-unit course in Ethnic Studies. With CSU standing as the “nation’s largest and most diverse four-year public university [system]” at twenty-three universities and almost 460,000 students, the addition of an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement sent a strong message to CSU students, the United States, and the world about the importance of the field (The California State University, 2023). Considering both the historical and contemporary social and political contexts of the United States as an imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchal nation-state, the passage and implementation of AB 1460 by community advocates, CSU faculty, and legislative leaders are cause for celebration (hooks, 2015).

It is in this spirit of celebration and care of Ethnic Studies and the communities it represents—especially as a first-generation, queer, cis-gender, non-disabled Samoan Korean CSU faculty teaching Ethnic Studies at CSU Bakersfield—that I call attention to the danger that many Pacific Islanders and Pacific Studies scholars have been stating for decades: that the Asian Pacific Islander (API) and Asian American labels, and all their iterations, do not meaningfully include Pacific Islander histories, experiences, and issues. Consequently, the unfortunate legacy of erasure and superficial inclusion of this incredibly vast and profound field related to the knowledge of and produced by Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (NH/PIs), whether intentional or deliberate, may remain if we do not stop to seriously consider the lack of Pacific Islander representation and knowledge in the field of Ethnic Studies.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is a two-fold call of action: (1) to encourage Ethnic Studies faculty generally, and Asian Americanists specifically, to make a deeper commitment in including NH/PI histories, contemporary experiences, and knowledge into their AB 1460-related courses and (2) to hire NH/PI scholars to develop this growing field called Critical Pacific Islands and Oceania Studies (CPIOS) (Kava and Loi-On, 2022). I offer Kava and Loi-On’s CPIOS framework as a productive starting point to help scholars cover some of the important basics in CPIOS. While I understand that the API label has had a historical precedence within the U.S., and uncritically so within Ethnic Studies, it is time to recognize that this label significantly dismisses and hides the importance and relevance of NH/PI communities, scholars, and activists today.

ASSEMBLY BILL 1460

I think that whenever I talk about Ethnic Studies, I always say that there's critical points to Ethnic Studies and definitely within the state of California, even more pronounced, because of the fact that Ethnic Studies rose from a political struggle. It rose from Black, Chicano, Latino, Indigenous students at San Francisco State and elsewhere arguing for a curriculum that reflected their realities, both their historical and contemporary social political realities. (Montaño, 2020).

Ethnic Studies's origin stories are part of these critical points to Ethnic Studies that Dr. Montaño mentions. They are important parts of contemporary narratives because they remind us of both our roots and our routes. Therefore, I begin with a discussion on some of the critical moments within Ethnic Studies origin stories because CPIOS has its roots in Ethnic Studies. Ethnic Studies in higher educational institutions was created within the CSU system at San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University, or "SF State"). In 1969, SF State created the nation's first, and until recently the only, College of Ethnic Studies. The other College of Ethnic Studies is at California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA), and is the first such college to be created in the last fifty years. In fact, Cal State LA created Chicano/a Studies in the Fall of 1968—then called the "Mexican American Studies program" and coordinated by Dr. Ralph Guzmán. Not only is it credited as the academic inception of Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies, but also as another birthplace of Ethnic Studies before SF State.

If we want to go back a little further at other critical points to Ethnic Studies, we could trace some origin stories of Ethnic Studies to the 1968 Chicano "blowouts"—often credited as a major part of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. Around twenty thousand students, most of whom were Mexican American, walked out of their classrooms at seven East Los Angeles high schools to protest the racist school system. Students protested issues such as under-staffed and under-resourced schools, high average class sizes of around forty students, and Mexican American students being funneled toward vocational and domestic training instead of academic courses that would help them get into college (García and Castro, 2011). Alkalimat (2021) states the term "Black Studies" emerged during the 1960s, but traces its origin stories back to the 20th and 21st centuries. Morris (1986) traces critical points to the emergence of Native American Studies to the activism of

Native American students, community leaders, and activists (e.g. the American Indian Movement) during the 1960s. Schlund-Vials, Tamai, and Spickard (2022) state that Asian American Studies was born in the Third World Liberation strike at SF State in 1968. CPIOS origin stories do not share similar critical points to the 1960s, but remain rooted in Ethnic Studies.

Wherever we begin our origin stories regarding the formal and informal birth of Ethnic Studies and all of its fields, one thing is very clear—it has, and always will be, centered on fighting an imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchal society that has de-centered Asian, Black, Chicana/o/x, Latinx/a/o, NH/PI, and other marginalized communities of color. Therefore, an important part of the Ethnic Studies' origin stories and future vision must be centered on the field's activist origins (Bañales, 2012). The version of the story regarding the birth of Ethnic Studies that I was told was that in 1968, SF State's Black Student Union (BSU)—along with Bay Area community members, including SF State staff and faculty, and the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF)—led a six-month walkout to demand access to education for all people of color through curricular changes that included people of color histories and contemporary experiences, the hiring of staff and faculty of color, and increasing student of color enrollment at SF State (High, 2019). It is also important to emphasize the leadership of Black students and organizers like Jimmy Garret and Jerry Varnado who helped create the first BSU; years before, they also helped organize the largest student strike in U.S. history, fighting for a Black Studies department and more Black student admissions (Bates and Meraji, 2019).

Another important figure was George Murray, an SF State graduate student who taught freshmen English and was the minister of education for the Black Panther Party. Murray's political beliefs led to his suspension from SF State, which ultimately led to the November 1968 Ethnic Studies strike (Bates and Meraji, 2019). In many instances, and often unknown to many, these student activists were met with state-sanctioned violence, including an increased police presence at SF State (Cardoza, 2022). Speaking to the lack of knowledge most people have of the sacrifice the student activists made, SF State historian Jason Ferreria (as cited in Bates and Meraji, 2019) states:

People did time. Relationships were stressed to the point of crumbling. Word would come back to members of the Third World Liberation Front and the Black Student Union from police saying, "We have bullets with your name on it."

The TWLF was created in part as a response to the systemic racism of SF State, but more importantly, was a movement of solidarity between students of color (namely Chicanas/os, Asian Americans, and Native Americans) who took note from their Black peers and demanded systemic solutions to institutional racism. More than fifty years after the SF State student strike, California has crossed another threshold in the pursuit of equity and justice in the form of AB 1460.

Passed by the California State Legislature in 2020, AB 1460 mandated a graduation requirement for all CSU undergraduate students to take a three-unit Ethnic Studies course. Shortly after, the California State Legislature passed AB 101—requiring California high school students take an Ethnic Studies class to graduate, starting with the graduating class of 2030. Both AB 101 and AB 1460 were authored by legislators of color: former Assemblymembers Jose Medina and Shirley Weber, respectively. Although both are no longer in the California State Assembly, they remain politically engaged. Dr. Weber is currently California’s Secretary of State—the first Black American to hold this position and a Professor Emeritus of Africana Studies at San Diego State University, where she was a member of the department since it began in 1972 until 2010. Medina plans to run for the Riverside County Board of Supervisors in 2024.

Behind the authors of these bills were numerous community members—both inside and outside of the traditional high school and college spaces—who for years championed the cause of incorporating Ethnic Studies courses and content into our educational systems. AB 1460 defines the four historically racialized core groups of Ethnic Studies as Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina and Latino Americans. NH/PIs are not named, which should be of concern to Ethnic Studies scholars, and Asian American scholars specifically. While NH/PI scholars and community advocates have critiqued the Asian Pacific Islander (API) label, the fact remains that the grouping of both communities still takes place today. This critique does not negate the fact that Asian American Studies scholars and activists have worked tirelessly for the inclusion of NH/PIs in Ethnic Studies; there are people who are allies advocating for NH/PI peoples. However, the fact remains that many Asian Americanists have often used the API label without critically engaging with the PI. This has contributed to the continued erasure of NH/PIs. This can be seen not only within Asian American Studies, but in many facets of U.S. society.

The aggregate and dominant label API is seen everywhere and has existed for decades in the U.S. For example, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month began as Asian Pacific American Heritage Week when a joint resolution was passed by both the House and Senate and signed by President Carter in 1978. Eventually in 1992, Congress passed Public Law 102-450, which designated the month of May as Asian Pacific Heritage Month (United States Senate). The US Census Bureau had an “Asian or Pacific Islander” race category for the 1990 Census until the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) made the decision to separate the Asian or Pacific Islander race category into two separate categories, which was reflected by the 2000 Census (Office of Management and Budget, 1997). The White House has the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI) and President Biden recently established the President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (Commission). The API label is reflected in names of many national organizations like the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), the National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA), the Center for Asian Pacific American Women, the OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates, Stop AAPI Hate, and more. In addition, many California State University Asian American Studies programs, departments, and student resource centers often state that Asian Americans and NH/Pis are part of their field’s scope.

The California State University, Los Angeles Asian and Asian American Studies program website states that their program includes the experiences and histories of “Asians and Pacific Islanders as a racial minority in the US” (Cal State LA). Sacramento State has the Asian Pacific Islander American Research & Resource Center (API-ARRC) in the College of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Studies. Channel Islands has the Asian/Asian American Pacific Islander Association which focuses on bringing faculty and staff together. Long Beach has an Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi Resource Center (APID Resource Center) dedicated to supporting Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi students. San Francisco State University’s College of Ethnic Studies has an Asian American Studies baccalaureate major and minor and does not specifically name Pacific Islanders. However, they have a newer program called Race and Resistance Studies, which includes a minor in CPIOS.

An important note needs to be made regarding the title “Critical Pacific Islands & Oceania Studies.” This name and field have its

roots at the City College of San Francisco, which was the first institution to adopt the name Critical Pacific Islands & Oceania Studies. At California State University, Bakersfield, the President created an Asian Pacific Islander advisory council. When I applied for the current Ethnic Studies assistant professor position that I currently hold, the job was advertised as an Asian American/Pacific Islander Ethnic Studies position. There are also iterations of the API label, such as Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA). If Ethnic Studies, and specifically Asian American Studies, is to continue progressing, it must confront the issue of conflating Asian Americans and NH/PIs. This issue extends to a general ignorance of how the field of Pacific Studies, Pacific Islands/Islander Studies, and CPIOS has developed separately from Asian American Studies and therefore warrants attention considering AB 1460.

CRITICAL PACIFIC ISLANDS AND OCEANIA STUDIES

Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically, and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places, and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom (Hau'ofa, 1994, 160).

As writer and anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa (1994) has famously discussed, Oceanian people must continue to fight against hegemonic views that ultimately aim to relegate Oceania into tiny spaces. This epiphany came after a critical moment when Hau'ofa realized that he had internalized ideas of Oceanian smallness and inferiority as a university teacher. As a result, Hau'ofa was spreading imperialist white supremacist capitalist views of Oceanian people and countries as hopeless to his own students. "Is this not what neocolonialism is all about? To make people believe that they have no choice but to depend?" (Hau'ofa, 1994, 151).

One of the ways Hau'ofa challenged this imperialist and capitalist view of Oceania was by using *Oceania* over *Pacific Islands*. While some may find the use of the term Oceanian odd, especially since the use of NH/PI has gained increasing popularity in the U.S., I use it

here because of Hau'ofa's seminal work. He discusses the immense differences in using the terms *Pacific Islands* and *Oceania*, not just in phrasing, but in their underlying assumptions. *Pacific Islands* is most often used and emphasizes "dry surfaces in a vast ocean far from the centers of power" (Hau'ofa, 1994, 152). The underlying assumption in *Pacific Islands* is focused on the remoteness and the smallness of small areas of land. *Oceania* conveys a wholistic understanding of our people. *Oceania* signifies a connectedness of the islands instead of a separation. The critical use of *Oceania/n*, in the way Hau'ofa uses it, calls for a powerful (re)connection to our ancestors who lived in the Pacific for thousands of years and viewed their world "as a sea of islands rather than islands in the sea" (Hau'ofa, 1994, 153).

Hau'ofa recognized the immense possibilities of critiquing imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchal ideas of Oceania by remembering and (re)connecting with our ancestors' epistemologies. Smallness is a relative idea and a state of mind, which is perpetuated in the view of the Pacific as *islands in a far sea*, signifying a smallness and remoteness of the islands (Hau'ofa, 1994). Instead, it is important for people to view the Pacific as *a sea of islands* because this framework emphasizes Oceanian connection and acknowledges our ancestors' great skills in navigating the waters and building complex knowledge systems based on their experiences (Hau'ofa, 1994). Hau'ofa is not the only scholar to challenge oppressive views of Oceania, but his work holds a sacred place for many NH/PI scholars and has continued to inspire disciplines like CPIOS.

Critical NH/PI scholars like Haunani-Kay Trask, J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Lisa Kahaleole Hall, Teresia Teaiwa, David Palaita, and Levalasi Loi-On have been at the forefront of challenging oppressive views of Oceania through their scholarship, teaching, and community activism, amongst many others. For example, Kauanui (2005) notes that Pacific/Pacific Islander(s) is/are often included in a range of Asian American Studies scholarship (e.g., API), but the material leaves out NH/PIs completely. In fact, the construction of the term *Asian American* as a pan-Asian ethnic identity did not include Oceania's extremely diverse NH/PI groups. University of California, Berkeley graduate students Emma Gee and Yuji Ichioka are often credited as two of several Asian Americans who came up with the label *Asian American* (Kambhamptay, 2020). They took their inspiration from activists in the Black Power, anti-war, and American Indian movements and created the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA). Chinese Americans,

Japanese Americans, and Filipino Americans were among the first Asian Americans to come up with the term to push back against the term *Oriental* and to unite Asian American ethnic groups together. None of these original members were NH/PI.

Additionally, NH/PI ethnic groups were not included in the Asian American identity imaginary. Perhaps the reasons scholars and activists continue to aggregate the terms and identities of Asian Americans and NH/PIs are because of data convenience, historical precedence, and/or ignorance. Whatever the reasons, the practice of lumping Asian Americans and NH/PIs together has upheld an imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchal society. For example, a significantly detrimental impact of the continued use of the API label on NH/PIs is the erasure of Native Hawaiian identities as Indigenous peoples.

Hall (2009, 23) notes the Asian American label is an immigrant-based identity and within this immigrant framework, “Hawaiians’ indigenous identity disappears.” In addition, Hall’s scholarship delineates the differences even between Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (specifically, islanders with genealogical roots to Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia), an important part of many NH/PI scholars and activist work today. Hall’s (2019) scholarship centers Native Hawaiian feminisms and epistemologies as distinct and separate to US based feminisms.

Trask (1996, 910) also discussed the distinction between U.S.-based feminisms and Native Hawaiian feminisms, stating “First World feminist theory is incapable of addressing indigenous women’s cultural worlds.” Teaiwa (2010, 112) notes the importance of positionality and that the “academic discourse on the Pacific is still dominated by nonindigenous practitioners” and therefore demands Pacific Studies make genuine commitments to things like centering Indigenous epistemologies. From the foundational heart/hard work of our NH/PI scholars, activists, communities, and ancestors comes the latest iteration of Pacific Studies—the creation of CPIOS.

The CPIOS program and field has its origins in the early 2000s with the San Francisco NH/PI communities, David “vika” Ga’oupu Palaita, the City College of San Francisco (CCSF), and the College of San Mateo (CSM) (Kava and Loi-On, 2022). An important note to make about documenting the development of new fields like CPIOS is acknowledging the work of unknown and unnamed individuals who helped pave the way to create space for something like CPIOS to exist. For example, CCSF students and allies advocated for the creation of a

NH/PI course that was distinct from an API course because of the lack of NH/PI curriculum content. Eventually, this initial NH/PI focused course at CCSF became the first CPIOS certificate and associate degree programs in the country.

Palaita, who started teaching at CCSF in 2007, established the Bay Area's first CPIOS program in 2013, which was also adopted by CSM (Ordonio, 2016). Palaita notes that the field of Pacific Studies has existed, though restricted to universities in the Pacific Islands and the University of Hawai'i (Moua, 2016). The shift towards separating the PI (Pacific Islander) from the A (Asian/American), especially during the early 2000s, was partly due to first- and second-generation state-side born Oceanians who advocated for this (Moua, 2016). The struggle for NH/PI recognition and a separate NH/PI field from Asian American Studies has been a struggle since the 1960s, mostly because third generation of NH/PIs (many of whom were born in the U.S.) recognized the blatant disregard and missing or misrepresentation of NH/PI histories, experiences, and communities within Asian American Studies and Asian American community organizations (Moua, 2016).

Scholars like Kauanui have been calling for a critical look and separation of API labels since the late 1980s. Kauanui (2005) states that during the 1980s, Sucheng Chang noted the differences between Asian Americans and NH/PIs were much greater than they were similar. Government officials and funding agencies were more interested in maintaining the aggregate Asian Pacific Islander label because it simplified their work. It is worth noting that since 1997, the OMB revised the race and ethnic standards for federal statistics and administrative reporting of the previous API category into two separate ones: *Asian* and *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander* (Office of Management and Budget, 1997). This change was reflected in the 2000 U.S. Census, yet very few federal agencies have modified their data collection records (Kauanui, 2005).

This insitutional and significant change did not come easily and was met with resistance. In July 1997, a federal task force actually recommended that Native Hawaiians remain in the API category. Former Senator Daniel Kahikina Akaka (D-HI), the first U.S. senator of Native Hawaiian descent, helped organize opposition to that recommendation and worked with Native Hawaiians from public and private agencies to ensure that the social and economic experiences of Native Hawaiians would not be masked by the overly Asian-dominant API label (Kauanui, 2005).

While some may find this work to separate Asian Americans and NH/PIs as negative or something to be concerned about, it is an opportunity to critically reflect on the future of NH/PI communities. It is less about not wanting to be associated with Asian Americans, and more to do with centering NH/PI people, histories, experiences, and fields of study! The act of disaggregating the API label is an act of justice for NH/PIs because we are also recognizing the work of NH/PI ancestors like Trask, Hau'ofa, Teaiwa and many others who have contributed greatly to the field of Pacific Studies—not “Asian Pacific Islander Studies.” API Studies does not exist, but it does not mean solidarity does not exist between these communities. Scholars like Kauanui (2005) have noted that any solidarity work between communities should be taken up issue by issue. There are many examples of NH/PI people working in solidarity with Native American, Black, Chicana/x/a/o, Latinx/a/o, and Asian American communities. There are mixed-race, mixed-cultural Asian Pacific Islanders (such as myself), but the automatic and uncritical use of the API label must cease.

As Kava and Loi-On (2022) note, CPIOS is rooted in student activism in San Francisco and builds its foundation on both Pacific Studies and Ethnic Studies. Although Ethnic Studies is commonly portrayed as a U.S.-based project, it has a global impact especially within Oceania because of its emphasis on empowerment of ethnic and racialized communities of color worldwide, Indigenous peoples, and centering the stories and histories of community activists fighting against imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchal domination (Mawyer et al., 2020). CPIOS' origin stories include an important event that occurred at SF State when in 2016, students and faculty came together to protest budget cuts to the university's College of Ethnic Studies. Students went on a hunger strike to demonstrate to SFSU administration that Ethnic Studies needed to remain an integral part of institutional funding (Enomoto et al., 2021). More than five thousand students participated in protesting these proposed budget cuts.

During this time, Oceanian students, including SFSU's Pacific Islander's Club, demanded that the College of Ethnic Studies include more Pacific Islander representation, and they were successful (Enomoto et al., 2021). In 2019, SF State created a CPIOS minor program in the Race & Resistance Studies department with two tenure-track faculty members, Drs. Leora Kava (who is Tongan and White from Sacramento, California) and Ponipate Rokolekutu (who is iTaukei/

Indigenous Fijian from Vunimono, Tailevu Province in Fiji). As Enomoto et al. (2021, 67) notes:

The passion and critique of power from a Pacific perspective that Kava and Rokolekutu bring to SFSU is part of the long history of social justice activism and organizing in the Bay Area and upholds the long history of cross-cultural solidarity and social justice organizing that comes out of Oceania. Their work is inherently tied to the social activism of their students and their work helps to bring the critical concerns of Oceania to Pacific Islander students living in the diaspora and to Pacific Islands studies overall.

From these examples alone, Asian American Studies's history and trajectory has been much different than NH/PI communities and CPIOS. In fact, other U.S. institutions have started comparable CPIOS programs. The University of Washington (Seattle, WA) has created a minor in Oceania and Pacific Islander Studies housed in their American Indian Studies department. Another important element to consider in these CPIOS and Pacific Islands/Islander Studies programs being developed at U.S. colleges and universities is the history of the field being developed from area studies modeled programs, often seeped in imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchal ideologies. Although not the scope of this paper, other scholars have documented the development of Pacific Studies as an area studies program at the University of Hawai'i (UH) (Quigg, 1987) and its troubling origins (especially at UH), the decades' worth of changes to become a Oceanian-driven and centered Pacific Islands Studies program currently housed at the Center for Pacific Islands Studies, and the beautiful scholarship being disseminated through its academic publication *The Contemporary Pacific*.

CPIOS FRAMEWORK

The CPIOS framework developed by Kava and Loi-On (2022) is an incredibly helpful tool in building CPIOS content into introductory CPIOS, Asian American Studies, and Ethnic Studies courses. While the ideal situation in teaching from a CPIOS framework about Oceania would be to have a three-unit course devoted entirely to CPIOS, for many CSUs this may not be possible. At California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB), the Ethnic Studies Department is new—after unanimous approval from the Academic Senate in December 2021. Like other institutions, previous courses may have had Ethnic

Studies-related content, be it in a history or sociology, but with AB 1460, this has reinforced CSU institutional commitments towards the field by hiring Ethnic Studies faculty experts and developing those courses. When I was hired as a full-time Ethnic Studies lecturer, I was tasked with creating CSUB's first Ethnic Studies, Pacific Islander Studies & Asian American Studies course in addition to teaching four courses each semester. As I enter my third year of teaching at CSUB (2023-24 academic year), second year teaching Pacific Islander Studies and Asian American Studies, and first year as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Ethnic Studies, there are a couple of important curricular tools I would like to share.

The CPIOS framework is divided into three units: (1) history and identity, (2) self-determination and sovereignty, and (3) disaggregation and solidarity. Each unit includes essential questions, key concepts, and additional resources for educators. For example, in Unit 1: *History & Identity*, Kava and Loi-On (2022) define the Pacific Islands as Oceania to emphasize the specific ways U.S. imperialism and colonialism have impacted the histories, movements, and identities of Oceanians to the U.S. Some essential questions for Unit 1 include *Who are Pacific Islanders?*, *What are their relationships to the U.S.?*, and *How do they identify themselves in the U.S.?* One key concept discussed during this unit are the terms *Pacific Islands* and *Pacific Islanders* and the colonial roots of the name *Pacific* tied to the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, who named what we now call the Pacific region (meaning peaceful) because of his experiences with calm ocean waters and favorable winds during that specific time and place (Mawyer et al., 2020; Kava and Loi-On, 2022). By the late sixteenth century, the ocean was labeled the Pacific Ocean on European maps, and soon the entire region was commonly labeled the Pacific Islands until Hau'ofa's (1994) work and reclaiming of NH/PI identities through the term *Oceania*.

Another important concept discussed in this unit are the three common cultural regions used to divide up Oceania: Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Although we continue to use these cultural regions to refer to NH/PI people in the U.S., especially at official government agencies like the U.S. Census Bureau, a CPIOS framework recognizes that these terms were created by European cartographers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries based on European racial lenses (Mawyer et al., 2020). Specifically in 1832, French cartographer Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d'Urville published "Sur les îles du Grand Océan" and made the names Melanesia

(*melas* in Greek meaning black and *nesos/-nesia* meaning islands, and therefore “black islands”), Micronesia (*micro* in Greek meaning small and *nesos/-nesia* meaning islands, and therefore “small islands”), and Polynesia (*poly* in Greek meaning many and *nesos/-nesia* meaning islands, and therefore “many islands”) popular (Kava and Loi-On, 2022). While a Pacific Studies rooted in an imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchal framework would not go beyond stating these types of facts, a CPIOS framework delves deeper to critique and make known the imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchal ideologies attached to the names of these three cultural regions of Oceania. The act of Europeans naming and dividing up Oceania into Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia were as scholar Tarcisius Kabutaulaka states, “fraught with essentialist, racist, and social-evolutionary elements” (2015, 134).

However, a CPIOS framework goes even further to discuss the nuances of concepts like the imperialist and colonialist history of naming Oceania to include community empowerment elements to move away from the problematic idea that Oceanian communities were only helpless victims to a history of U.S. imperialism and colonialism. For example, Melanesians have since used this same name, Melanesian, once used as a derogatory term, now as a term of pride and self-identification. As Kabutaulaka (2015, 134) states, since the 1980s, “[Melanesians] have appropriated a colonial concept and deployed it as an instrument of empowerment.” This is a critical part of CPIOS and, in many ways, *any* Ethnic Studies content—the acknowledgement of community agency and acts of resistance and empowerment. We must not forget to include this into Ethnic Studies curriculum.

Additional CPIOS framework concepts included in Unit 1 are indigeneity, genealogy/land/water, imperialism, colonialism, (im) migration/diaspora, U.S. relations to Oceania, Pacific Studies, and CPIOS. NH/PI communities, histories, and experiences are not only worthy of Ethnic Studies course content, but also necessitate the distinction from Asian American Studies course content. With the passage of AB 1460, Asian American Studies as well as all Ethnic Studies scholars must take advantage of this opportunity to disrupt the decades-long exclusion of NH/PI Ethnic Studies content by utilizing curricular tools like the CPIOS framework. The naming of the *Pacific* and its cultural regional names (*Melanesia*, *Micronesia*, and *Polynesia*) as part of an imperialist and colonial history that has sought to dominate *Oceania*, and the history of reclaiming these labels from Oceanian

communities, are prime examples of the significant differences from Asian American Studies and the history of the label *Asian Americans*.

AB 1460 has provided a great opportunity for the CSU system to hire Ethnic Studies faculty, and this must also mean hiring NH/PI faculty too. Similar to the higher educational birth of Ethnic Studies being connected to the CSU system, SF State is also one of the first CPIOS programs to exist in the U.S. It is also important to note that the City College of San Francisco's CPIOS program was created before SF State's minor program, but nonetheless, there is a clear connection between the CSU system and creating programs that are responsive and inclusive of communities of color. This call to action is rooted in the belief that Ethnic Studies has always responded to the growing needs and demands of communities of color, instead of shying away from it. Asian Americanists have always been rooted in movements of justice, equity, and solidarity; for example, the rights of Palestinians are not a new consideration within Asian American Studies. The Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) adopted a resolution supporting the academic boycott of Israel in support of Palestinians back in 2013—they were the first US academic organization to do so. Ten years later, the AAAS issued a Palestinian solidarity statement in 2023 (Sirkanth, 2018). Therefore, it is with this spirit and rooted belief in the community responsiveness of Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies that the work to unravel the API label must be taken quickly and swiftly. If Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies is serious about its activists' origins and responding critically to communities of colors' needs, then we must reflect this in the separation of Asian American Studies and CPIOS through course content and hiring Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander faculty to lead the way.

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JEREMIAH C. SATARAKA, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in the Ethnic Studies Department at California State University, Bakersfield. Dr. Sataraka teaches Critical Pacific Islands and Oceania Studies, Asian American Studies, and Ethnic Studies courses and is the co-chair of the LGBTQ+ Pride Faculty & Staff Affinity group. His current research project includes conceptualizing an emergent Ocean Critical Race Theory and increasing the visibility of QTPI (Queer and/or Transgender Pacific Islander) activists and communities like U.T.O.P.I.A. (United Territories of Pacific Islander Alliance). He is on the advisory board, and co-founder of, the Central Valley Pacific Islander Alliance.

Dr. Sataraka received his Ph.D. in Cultural Studies & Social Thought in Education from Washington State University, and B.A. in Sociology from Whitworth University. He currently lives in Bakersfield, California with the love of his life, Pedro Navejas Rodriguez, and enjoys singing karaoke, watching RuPaul's Drag Race, and figuring out how to deal with their emotionally dependent dog, Katara (#ATLAB).