

**Washington State University**

**College of Education**

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**Will defend the dissertation**

**Date: May 28, 2020**

**Time: 1:00 P.M.**

**Location: Zoom by request**

*Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend.*

## **TOWARD AN OCEAN CRITICAL RACE THEORY**

Chair: Paula Groves Price

This dissertation project conceptualizes an emergent theoretical framework called Ocean Critical Race Theory (OceanCRT). Grounded in the lived experiences of Queer and Transgender Pacific Islander (QTPI) activists, OceanCRT builds upon three distinct theoretical frameworks: Queer Indigenous studies (Barker, 2017; Driskill, Finley, Gilley & Morgensen, 2011), Pacific studies (Hau‘ofa, 2008; Teaiwa, 2001 & 2010; Wendt, 1982; Wesley-Smith, T, 1995; Wood, 2003), and Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2006; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001 & 2002; Wright & Balutski, 2016). Used in isolation from each other, these frameworks do not help researchers and educators understand the unique experiences of Oceanians or Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (NHPI) in the US. In addition, the lived experiences and unique knowledge of Queer and Transgender Pacific Islander (QTPI) activists are often neglected when considering Oceanic populations, which contributes to normalizing heteronormative Oceanic Indigenous ideas of gender and sexuality (Barker, 2017; Driskill et al., 2011).

Therefore, this research project uses Talanoa (Vaiioleti, 2006) as an Oceanic Indigenous research methodology to center the knowledge of QTPI activists to disrupt oppressive systems. While OceanCRT is an emerging theoretical framework with 3 main ideas that are articulated as ocean currents, this project explores the first and main ocean current, which is “vā,” a relational space (Wendt, 1996). The findings include a nuanced and deeper understanding of vā, as a relational space, by exploring how QTPIs relate to society in three spaces: 1) K-12 spaces, 2) Christian spaces, and 3) Queer and/or Pacific Islander spaces. The ultimate goal of OceanCRT is to continue addressing institutional and interpersonal oppression of Oceanians in order to contribute towards a more equitable and just world.