

“I NEED COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT THROUGH”:
UNDERSTANDING COLLEGE READINESS AMONG NATIVE HAWAIIAN STUDENTS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

IN

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

August 2023

By

Amy K. Bumatai

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Nicole Alia Salis Reyes, Chairperson

Dr. Erika Cravalho-Meyers

Dr. Jan Javinar

Keywords: College readiness, college admissions, Native Hawaiian, higher education

Dedication Page

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, Andrew. Trust that who you are is enough,
always.

Acknowledgements

Nicholas, no words can capture my gratitude for your unwavering love and support of my dreams, especially this doctoral journey. You not only took care of Andrew and I throughout this process but also cheered me on enthusiastically the entire time. Thank you for being the wonderful, patient, and optimistic person that you are. This degree is for us.

Andrew, you may not know this yet, but you have been patient with me from the very beginning because we have been studying together since before you were born. Thank you for giving me the hope, purpose, strength, and love I needed to finish this degree.

Mom, thank you for your endless support of my wild ambitions and raising me to be a strong, capable woman. Watching your compassion, selflessness, and advocacy throughout my life has shaped who I am as an educator and mother. Thank you for being there for me and caring for my family, especially during the hardest parts of this journey.

Dad, when I joined this doctoral program, I learned the same lessons that you have been telling me about Hawai‘i since I was a child. Thank you for sharing your gift of storytelling with me, teaching me about Hawai‘i, and believing in me always.

Ace, thank you for being my listening ear, giving me thoughtful feedback, and showing me new ways of thinking about the world. You have been doing this for me long before I was in school and I am always grateful to learn from you.

Grandma and Grandpa, so much of who I am comes from the both of you. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, values, and joy of life with me. Attending UH Mānoa was the right choice for me, and I am so proud to be an alumna of this university. I felt close to you both every moment I was on campus.

Aunty Sharon, thank you for introducing me to Launani Valley, which has now become a comforting home. It was the home where I enjoyed my rainy days, had a family, and wrote this dissertation. I am so grateful to be reminded of you and your strength every single day.

Patricia, George, Courtney, Zach, Zayna, and Karah, thank you for trusting and believing in this chapter of our family's journey. Your messages of encouragement and love meant the world to us, and I feel lucky to be on your team.

Dr. Nicole Salis Reyes, knowing you has been a gift. At times it felt impossible to balance being a mother, a student, and an employee, but you made me feel seen and validated as I walked this path. Writing this dissertation under your guidance and learning from you has been the best part of my doctoral degree. Thank you for being the person that you are because you have made an impact on my life that I will never forget.

Dr. Lori Ideta and Dr. Walter Kahumoku, III, a heartfelt thank you for your leadership, knowledge, and encouragement throughout this program. Whether I was logging on to a Zoom room or a real classroom, seeing you both waiting to greet our cohort made this program feel like home. Thank you for celebrating us at every step, having an unshakable confidence in our ability to complete this dissertation, and always providing the space for us to show up as our authentic selves.

Dr. Lokelani Kenolio, a special mahalo to you for our conversation four years ago when you told me that my dreams of being a mother, a scholar, and a student affairs professional were each equally important. You became the first person in my life to tell me that doing all those things at once was possible. Your conversation with me on that day truly changed the course of my life for the better.

Dr. Jan Javinar, I am thankful that this EdD program provided me the opportunity to get you know you as an instructor, consultancy advisor, and now dissertation committee member. Thank you for your willingness to walk this dissertation path with me because I have greatly valued your thoughtful advice to me as both a scholar and a practitioner.

Dr. Erika Cravalho-Meyers, I am very appreciative that this EdD program and dissertation led me to cross paths with you. Throughout these past years I have been incredibly thankful for your insight into strengthening my lens as a researcher and serving my Native Hawaiian community authentically.

Dr. Katrina Abes, first, thank you for bravely pursuing this doctoral path because watching you made it easier for women like me to follow in your footsteps. Second, thank you for helping me become a stronger researcher and always listening to my ideas and questions without judgement.

Cohort IV, thank you your friendships and braving these rough waters together. To my māmā group, Hōkū, Pili, and Aunty BJ, thank you for sharing so much aloha with me through this journey, holding me accountable, and reminding me how powerful we are as māmā. To my study hui, Allison, Dana, and Lisa, thank you for truly helping me stay afloat and making me laugh during the most overwhelming parts of this process. I am grateful to have found lifelong friends through this cohort.

My ‘ohana at UH West O‘ahu, I am so proud to work at an institution that supports students the way each one of you do every single day. Thank you for every encouraging message, email, or hug that you have shared with me over the past three years. I am truly grateful to be your colleague and friend and hope to make you proud with this research.

To my participants, Bryceson, Jensen, Kaua, Ho‘omau, Abbie, and Kim, thank you for your willingness to spend time talking with me and sharing your stories. It was an honor to learn from you and be introduced to the people, places, and culture that you come from. I believe your voices and the perspectives you have will change this world for the better.

Abstract

Despite the growing visibility of equity and access work in higher education, increasing the college degree attainment of Native Hawaiian students remains an urgent goal. The University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu, a regional public university, has the vision and location to realize this kuleana. Colonization and the illegal occupation of Hawai‘i led to complex and dissonant relationships between Native Hawaiian people and educational systems, which is notably prevalent as students learn about and prepare for college. Since Native Hawaiian people and topics of college readiness have long been discussed through a deficit narrative, it is imperative to learn from the experiences of Native Hawaiian college students and understand how their inherent strengths prepare them for college. Through the methods of Indigenous storywork, semi-structured conversations were conducted with six Native Hawaiian college students at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu to explore their perceptions of college readiness through stories. This study shares lessons on how the students’ sense of purpose, intergenerational strength, and worldviews are the foundation of their readiness for college. This research offers recommendations for college admissions staff and student affairs divisions to center their practices around the college readiness strengths of Native Hawaiian students.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract.....	vii
List of Figures.....	xiii
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Overview of Study.....	4
Problem Statement.....	5
Purpose of the Study	5
Researcher Insight	7
Methodology.....	8
Significance of the Study.....	9
Definitions	10
Mo‘okū‘auhau	11
Mo‘olelo.....	11
Native Hawaiian/Kanaka ‘Ōiwi/Kanaka Maoli.....	11
Summary.....	11
Chapter 2 Literature Review.....	12
Hawaiian Ways of Knowing.....	12
Impact of Colonialism on Indigenous Knowledge	13
Kanaka‘ŌiwiCrit	14
Indigenizing in Practice	15
Leadership.....	16
Higher education.....	17
Implications	18
Native Hawaiian Students in College.....	19

Native Hawaiian Representation in Higher Education.....	20
Implications	22
College Admissions.....	22
Historical Look at College Admissions.....	22
College Application Materials.....	23
Holistic reviews.....	26
UH West O‘ahu Admissions Requirements	27
Implications	28
College Readiness.....	28
Student Ownership of Learning.....	30
Policy	31
Policies in Hawai‘i.	32
College Access	33
Implications of College Readiness	34
Chapter 3 Methodology	35
Positionality	41
Sister	41
Native Hawaiian	42
Practitioner at University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu	44
Daughter	46
Site, Sample, and Population.....	47
Site	47
Sample	48
Data Collection	49
Data Recording.....	49

Interview Protocol.....	49
The Responsibility of Listening to Stories	51
Data Analysis.....	51
Analysis Steps.....	52
Validity and Reliability	55
Conclusion.....	57
Chapter 4 Results.....	58
There is More.....	58
These Kids Had Backing From the Start.....	59
This is Where Your Kuleana is at This Moment.....	60
It's the People That Believe in me.....	62
Bryceson's Cave	64
A New Path.....	64
I Realized it's up to me.....	65
Scared to Take That Leap.....	66
How Come I'm Even at College?.....	68
Everything I do is for Them	69
Jensen's Path.....	70
My Own Light	71
Going Nonstop.....	72
I'm Still Unsure What I Want to do	74
Kaua's Light	76
I Need Community to Make it Through.....	76
An Indigenous Learner in a Colonized State.....	77
Under the Right Circumstances, I Can be Magnificent.....	78

Breath in the Sail	81
Ho‘omau’s Community	83
For the Sake of My Grandchildren	84
The Drive to do Above and Beyond, That was my Grandmother	85
It’s Still Happening.....	86
My Teachers are my Friends, Grandma	87
Abbie’s Purpose.....	89
This is For Me.....	89
One Lane in, one Lane out, one Stoplight, and Sugar Cane.....	89
It Has to be Something That you Want to do for Yourself.....	91
Everybody can fit in Some way.....	92
Daughter.....	93
Native Hawaiian Identity.	94
The Choice was on me.....	94
Kim’s Choice.....	96
Stories as Data	96
Chapter 5 Discussion	98
The Kind Stranger	98
An Emerging Metaphor	102
Pōhaku 1: Awareness of Purpose Through Mo‘olelo.....	104
Pōhaku 2: Intergenerational Strength Through Mo‘okū‘auhau.....	105
Pōhaku 3: An Interdependent Existence.....	106
Impact of Findings.....	108
Recommendations for Policy and Practice.....	109
Cultivating a Sense of Purpose.....	110

Strength and Mo‘olelo-based Recruitment Strategies.	110
Purposeful Essay Questions.	110
Consistent Engagement with a Sense of Purpose.	111
Exit Counseling.	111
Building Collective Strength and Community	111
Building Collective Strength Through College Readiness Curriculums.	112
Ongoing Support Through a Campus-wide Mentorship Program.	112
Student Readiness.....	113
Redesigning the College Admissions Experience.	113
Establishing the Value of Stories and Qualitative Data.....	114
Student Affairs Mission and Vision Statement.	114
Professional Growth and Learning Cohorts.	114
Continually Strengthening a Lens for Access, Equity, and Decolonization	115
Recommendations for Future Research.....	115
Limitations.....	116
Final Reflections.....	117
Appendix A Participant Invitation.....	119
Appendix B Participant Consent Form.....	120
Appendix C Interview Protocol and Questions	122
Appendix D Participant Follow-up Email.....	127
References	128

List of Figures

Figure 1. Indigenous Storywork Principles	39
Figure 2. Data Analysis Through Indigenous Storywork	53

Chapter 1 Introduction

I stood outside of the room I was assigned to be in, but the door was closed and the narrow window above the handle told me that no one was inside. I found a chair and opened my padfolio to jot down some last-minute notes about my work experience and skills. I used my phone to scroll through InsideHigherEd to ensure I did not miss any big news in higher education in the last 24 hours while I traveled from my college town in Oregon. I ran through an elevator speech in my head: *My name is Amy Bumatai; I am from Mililani, Hawai'i. During college, I had the opportunity to be involved in student affairs and am now ready to pursue a master's degree in higher education administration.*

Finally, a professor and student rushed past me and into the office. After five minutes, they called my name, and I entered a small, cold room to begin my first graduate school interview. They asked me about current issues in higher education and my undergraduate preparation for their program. My resume and essay sat on the desk behind them. I had written an essay based on an 'ōlelo no'eau (Hawaiian proverb) to express the way I approach learning. It was selected with great intention and care as a way to represent my worldview and the role I play within a community. I was sure they would ask me to explain this because I had decided not to translate the 'ōlelo no'eau within my essay directly, but they did not. Throughout the interview, I tried my best to clarify why I was good enough to be accepted into their master's program. I left the interview wondering, "Was that enough? Am I enough?"

During those 45 minutes, I was desperate for the opportunity to talk about my family, my home, and all the other core pieces that make up who I am. When the professor asked me to speak only about my involvement in college and employment experiences, I felt that they had a limited understanding of who I was. While my undergraduate experience was full of moments

that shaped my insight into the student affairs profession, my childhood experiences, cultural knowledge, and lessons from my family informed the way I think about the world and work toward social justice in education. When the interview concluded, there was so much I had left to share about myself. Without the space to provide the interviewers with the full context of who I am, I felt incomplete and misrepresented.

Three weeks later, I found myself at a different institution waiting to be called for my final academic graduate school interview. Before I had time to review my notes, a professor and current graduate student invited me into an office to begin my interview. They greeted me warmly and took turns telling me about their academic backgrounds, where they were from, and what they enjoyed doing on the weekends. I was given space to talk about myself for a while and was asked follow-up questions in a way that a normal conversation would flow as new people get to know each other.

I slowly realized that *this* interview was not solely fixated on understanding my mind; it was about getting to know how my heart inspired my drive to earn a master's degree in student affairs. They asked me to talk about something I was proud of and words of advice that continue to inform how I work with other people. I was not limited to examples from my college classrooms or work experiences; the method of this interview gave me space to speak about the identities that make up who I am. I talked about my parents, brother, and grandparents, which made me feel strong and confident because I knew there were no wrong answers when speaking about my family and culture.

Finally, they brought out my application materials and asked me to talk about the 'ōlelo no'ēau that I did not translate in my essay: “‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku, kōkua mai, pela iho la ka nohona ‘ohana” (Pukui, 1983, p.130). I wanted an experience with my environment that

included receiving knowledge and support and being able to share back these same contributions. The fact that I had been invited to share this proverb was a cue that I found a reciprocal learning environment that valued my ancestral knowledge. I left that interview feeling certain of my worth and knew that regardless of the outcome, I would work my hardest to create opportunities for future students to feel this way about their encounters with admissions.

I normalized the discomfort of interviews and admissions procedures because I was taught that it was just part of the process. I did not consider that those who were raised under the same conditions in which these policies and procedures were created may not feel this friction. While it is not feasible for all applicants to be accepted to a program with limited seats, this experience taught me that it is indeed possible for admissions offices to create space for applicants to showcase their gifts to the world, as described by Puanani Burgess (Vaughan, 2020), and come out of that experience having complete confidence of their inherent worth.

My recruitment and outreach work for the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu (UH West O'ahu) takes me into the heart of O'ahu's communities, where I listen to students talk about why they are or are not considering college. My work focuses on first-year students in public high schools that enroll large numbers of Native Hawaiian students on the Leeward side of O'ahu. I notice that when a student hesitates to apply to college, this is usually not because they do not have the desire to go or knowledge to succeed, but rather because they do not feel adequately represented by the primary factors of their admissions application: test scores or high school grades. My conversations with students and their families show me repeatedly that tests and grades are not only the first thing that people consider when they think about applying to college, they are also directly tied to the term college readiness. Unfortunately, the impact of students not

feeling accurately characterized by these materials is that they will choose not to apply or begin to question their overall ability to succeed in college.

I have always known of the remarkable ancestral knowledge of our Native Hawaiian peoples. The world is in need of these valuable cultural strengths, but without shifting the way we view and assess knowledge, Native Hawaiian students will not see their own worth in educational spaces. Admissions offices must engage Native Hawaiian students in meaningful processes that recognize their distinctive gifts to the campus and move beyond what is told by test scores and grades alone. I imagine a world where engagement with college admissions leaves students confident that they have something special to contribute to their future environment. Through my personal investment in my Native Hawaiian identity and my call to create accessible pathways to college, I decided on this dissertation topic.

Overview of Study

This study sought to construct broader understandings of college readiness through the perspective of Native Hawaiian students at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. College readiness, which generally refers to a student’s preparation to enter and be successful in college, may seem to be a small piece of the entire college entry process. Still, it has the potential to set the foundation for meaningful changes toward access to higher education for Native Hawaiian students. UH West O‘ahu is a public university aiming to serve Native Hawaiian students, which compels me to wonder how our outreach and admissions processes can empower Native Hawaiian applicants. This research provided an opportunity for Native Hawaiian students to determine for themselves what it means to be ready for college.

Problem Statement

The central problem of this study is that higher education institutions use a Western ideology to evaluate the college readiness of Native Hawaiian students. Assessments such as standardized college entrance exams are often individualistic and less applicable to the everyday life of our students, which leads to the use of memorization or test strategies. Traditions of Native Hawaiian knowledge sharply contrast these trends. For example, Meyer (2001) emphasizes that for Native Hawaiians, the collection, practice, and sharing of knowledge differs from Western knowledge because it is functional and holistic. In order for more Native Hawaiian students to access college, educational leaders cannot ignore that school systems were historically designed to erase Indigenous people through assimilation and colonization (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2017). If the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu seeks to provide an education for more Native Hawaiian students, it is imperative to address this complex past by including Native Hawaiian voices in the healing and rebuilding of their engagement with educational systems.

Barriers caused by the occupation and colonization of Hawai'i should be considered when addressing issues of college access for Native Hawaiian students. Cristobal (2018) writes that "[f]or Kanaka 'Ōiwi students, the deep-seated history of colonization and occupation raises concerns about how to exist within the educational system when their two worlds are at odds" (p. 28). This project recognizes this tension and aims to contribute the building materials needed to create an equitable path into college for Native Hawaiian students.

Purpose of the Study

My observation that there are prospective students who do not feel adequately represented by their test scores and grades when applying to college led me to wonder about

what current students genuinely believe is the necessary preparation for college. What would be the impact of students being able to showcase their readiness for college through materials or methods that best captured their knowledge and ability to succeed? Before addressing this question, it was vital for me to speak to Native Hawaiian students currently enrolled at UH West O‘ahu and understand what being ready for college means to them and how they came to that understanding.

For 69 years, the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa was the only public four-year college on O‘ahu until West O‘ahu College was founded in 1976. After decades in borrowed spaces of ‘Aiea and Pearl City, the renamed University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu made Kapolei its permanent home with a new campus in 2012. UH West O‘ahu in Kapolei intends to play a critical role in addressing the University of Hawai‘i system’s goal to offer career-focused degrees and provide higher education to Native Hawaiian students. Currently, 23% of all Native Hawaiian people in Hawai‘i reside in Leeward O‘ahu and 10% specifically live on the Wai‘anae Coast, which is the neighboring community to Kapolei (Kana‘iaupuni et al., 2021). UH West O‘ahu staff affectionately refer to the Wai‘anae coast as ‘our backyard’ and see its students’ college-going behavior as the institution's kuleana (responsibility).

As a university without residential buildings, the majority of students enrolling at UH West O‘ahu come directly from the areas surrounding Kapolei. The student body includes many historically minoritized identities, including students who are the first in their family to attend college, Pell grant recipients, and a notable nearly one-third identifying as Native Hawaiian (UH West O‘ahu: At a Glance, n.d.). For many in these groups, college has been systematically and geographically inaccessible.

Hillman (2016) writes that a student's college choice is often limited by local options and, when "applying a spatial lens to college opportunity, we can see that the root cause of inequality in many communities is driven by the simple fact that no accessible college is located nearby" (p. 991). Between 2000 to 2015, Native Hawaiians completing a bachelor's degree or higher in central O'ahu rose from 12 to 18 percent, which is believed to be a result of UH West O'ahu's new campus (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2021). However, out of all Native Hawaiians from Hawai'i enrolled in college nationally, only 6% are from Leeward O'ahu (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2021). Overall, college enrollment of Native Hawaiian students remains an urgent concern; this population holds the lowest percentage of enrollment into colleges nationally when compared against national college enrollment of other major ethnic groups in Hawai'i (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2021). There is evidence that the existence of UH West O'ahu indeed has addressed some geographic opportunity, however, Native Hawaiians' continued struggle to access higher education requires an investigation of deeper systemic issues.

Along these lines, this study uses the following research question to guide this study: How do Native Hawaiian students at the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu understand their own readiness for college?

Researcher Insight

While working in the Office of Admissions at the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu, I worked in close partnership with high schools' college and career counseling offices to support students in preparing for their next step after graduation. Before I developed a critical lens to examine education, I attributed issues of college access to the lack of support and funding of external college readiness resources or programs. Today, I recognize that higher education institutions have a responsibility to look inward and address the systemic inequities that prevent

students from gaining access college. At UH West O‘ahu, this effort must also include addressing impact of Hawai‘i’s complex history and listening to the experiences of Native Hawaiian people to begin a process toward decolonization and Indigenization. Only then do we have a shot at meaningful long-term change.

The larger question that this leads me to think about is: How can Native Hawaiian students enter institutions with demonstrated histories of systemic racism if they are required to showcase their potential for success based on concepts of college readiness that do not consider Indigenous preparation for college, such as ancestral knowledge developed through culture-based learning (Kana‘iaupuni et al., 2017) and giving back to Native communities (Reyes, 2019)? My dissertation topic, an understanding of college readiness through the stories of Native Hawaiian students, is my effort to transcend this dynamic and empower Native Hawaiian people to determine for themselves what it means to be ready for college.

Methodology

If admissions offices are to build a new model of evaluating college readiness that is inclusive of other forms of preparedness and motivation while also being centered around Hawaiian worldviews, they first need to seek to understand Native Hawaiian students better on their own terms. Therefore, I conducted a qualitative research study that provided insight into Native Hawaiian college students’ experience at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. Guided by the principles of Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 2008), I conducted interviews that invited students to share how they understood their readiness for college.

This research design aims to gather data that is genuinely “grounded in the lived experiences of people” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 2). The participant group was selected using purposeful sampling to include current college students at UH West O‘ahu who identified

as Native Hawaiian and completed a minimum of one semester of college at UH West O‘ahu. Students who identified as transfers, non-traditional, part-time, or returning after a break in enrollment, were invited and encouraged to engage in this study. I hope the findings of this study contribute to both ongoing decisions about Native Hawaiian students entering college and efforts to decenter college admissions from Western authority (Smith, 2012).

Significance of the Study

I am always reminded of that empowering graduate school interview when I enter situations where I have become the interviewer. In spring 2021, I volunteered to be a mock interviewer for one of the local high schools, which I have done for many years and sincerely enjoy. This mock interview process, held virtually due to the pandemic, was a graduation requirement, and many students I worked with had little to no experience participating in formal interviews. When the interviewee logged into the virtual meeting, I could see that he was nervous and cautious with his words. After a few minutes of warming up by talking about the mutual people we knew and how extra humid the weather had been that week, he began to tell his story.

This student shared that he is the go-to person in his family to provide and prepare food for family parties, which happen often. He learned to hunt from his father and saw hunting as one of his best skills. When I asked him about his future, he told me he did not know what was next after graduation—maybe college—but he spoke of his responsibility to take care of his family, which required his next step to be close to home. He also shared a story about working at a local fast-food restaurant with a drive-through that was open 24 hours a day, and he worked the night shift. He said that often, late-night customers were rowdy, impatient, and sometimes rude. Still, he learned both patience and firmness by being an older brother and became the go-to staff

member to deal with difficult situations during a shift. At the end of the interview, I shared with him how impressed I was with his experiences, and he told me that he thought they did not count because they were not related to high school or college.

We—and I use the word “we” to acknowledge my position and responsibility as part of a higher education institution—have led students to believe that only certain knowledge and experiences are good enough for college. We tell them that strong letters of recommendation are essential to applications and must come from someone that knows them well and sees their potential, but this person should never be a family member. Meanwhile, college admissions scandals and legacy student policies reveal that, for the rich or privileged, acceptances into universities can be entirely based on family connections. These hypocritical messages highlight significant social justice issues, and this study is my contribution to the transformation of these systems.

The greatest lie that Native Hawaiian people are led to believe is that they do not possess important strengths and knowledge that are needed in the world. I offer this research, which seeks to understand college readiness through the stories of students, as a first step toward centering our practices around the worldview of Native Hawaiians and attending to the well-being of our lāhui (nationhood) through access and inclusion in college.

Definitions

There are a few key terms that are referenced often throughout this study. I have provided general definitions of the terms, however, Native Hawaiian words do not have direct translations to English. To immerse fully in the following terms, I encourage learning from Native Hawaiian speakers to gain further context about the meaning and use of the words mo‘okū‘auhau, mo‘olelo, and Kanaka ‘Ōiwi/Kanaka Maoli.

Mo‘okū‘auhau. Mo‘okū‘auhau is the knowing and telling of one’s lineage or genealogy. Most often this is the practice of tracing one’s lineage in the act of honoring our connection to the people, ‘āina, and stories that we come from.

Mo‘olelo. Mo‘olelo refers to our stories. It is a living practice of telling our stories to share lessons as well as pass forward important history or knowledge received from our kūpuna (grandparents, elders, ancestors).

Native Hawaiian/Kanaka ‘Ōiwi/Kanaka Maoli. The term Native Hawaiian refers to “any individual who can trace their genealogy to the original inhabitants (or their descendants) of the Hawaiian Islands, regardless of blood quantum or racial/ethnic identity” (Kana‘iaupuni et al., 2021). The terms Kanaka ‘Ōiwi (people of the bone), Kanaka Maoli (person Indigenous to Hawai‘i), Kanaka (human being, person), and Kānaka (plural form of Kanaka) are also used to reference Native Hawaiian people.

Summary

The first chapter of this dissertation introduced the concept of the study to understand college readiness from the perspective of Native Hawaiian students and provided historical, contextual, and personal reasons for the importance of this study. Next, a brief preview of the literature and methodology outlined how the development of this project will use an intentional approach to advance the literature on college readiness and Native Hawaiian students in higher education. This study aims to contribute to the building materials for improved access and equity in higher education for Native Hawaiian students.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter begins with an overview of Hawaiian ways of knowing and the ongoing efforts to recover these knowledge systems and work toward survivance (Reyes, 2018) as a lāhui. After examining how Native Hawaiian people traditionally experience knowledge, I will introduce a second theme that reviews the existing scholarship about Native Hawaiian college students. The third theme explores the current assessments used by colleges and universities to determine a student's likeliness for success in college as well as the ongoing critiques of these practices. Finally, the last theme reviews how college readiness is defined in the literature today.

Hawaiian Ways of Knowing

When Manulani Meyer (2001) conducted a study exploring Native Hawaiian epistemology, she asked a Native Hawaiian educational leader, "How do you know you know something?" He responded, "[b]ecause I can feed my family" (p. 136). Meyer explains that knowledge is not simply information for Native Hawaiian people; it is the collective knowledge obtained through kūpuna (ancestors, grandparents, relatives) and 'āina (land, Earth) displayed through function, linking past ancestors to future ancestors. Moreso, Native Hawaiian epistemology is a fluid, whole-body feeling that includes spirituality, physical place, relationships, and experiences. Meyer further writes:

The truth is, Hawaiians were never like the people who colonized us. If we wish to understand what is unique and special about who we are as cultural people, we will see that our building blocks of understanding, our epistemology, and thus our empirical relationship to experience is fundamentally different. (p. 125).

In Native Hawaiian epistemology, interdependence and co-constructed knowledge occur because people have a responsibility to each other. As a collectivist culture, the interdependence of

Native Hawaiian epistemology means that community, family, elders, and ‘āina are all equally important sources of knowledge and it is through their interactions that a person gains knowledge.

A broad view of Indigenous Knowledge Systems is consistent with the pillars of Native Hawaiian epistemology. Indigenous Knowledge Systems are ways of knowing which include specific beliefs around how knowledge is learned, put into practice, and passed down to others within Indigenous communities (Simpson, 2004). While Western education divides learning into school subjects, Indigenous people do not use rigid categorizations to understand the world; relationships, processes, and purpose are pillars of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (Simpson, 2004; Sumida Huaman et al., 2019).

Oliveira (2015) shares that since “overlapping and intersecting meanings are celebrated in Kanaka knowledge systems; the Kanaka scholar often has multiple layers of information to consider when reading ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i literature or listening to oral histories” (p. 76). These knowledge systems are relevant, strong, and continue to provide wisdom toward the complex problems of today (Kana‘iaupuni, 2005; Meyer, 2001; Oliveira, 2015; Wright, 2018).

Impact of Colonialism on Indigenous Knowledge

The literature surrounding Native Hawaiian and Indigenous ways of knowing describes the core values of these knowledge systems and provides recommendations about reclaiming and elevating these ways of knowing, which essential to the survivance. Throughout the 19th century, the sources of knowledge for Indigenous people were undermined, criminalized, and seized by colonial powers. Since these knowledge systems are holistic and intersecting, “conflict over control of knowledge is inextricable from acquisition and control of Indigenous lands” (Sumida Huaman et al., 2019, p. 6). Smith (2012) further addresses this power struggle over

Indigenous knowledge, writing that “[t]he globalization of knowledge and Western culture constantly reaffirms the West’s view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of ‘civilized’ knowledge” (Smith, 2012, p. 97).

Indigenous Knowledge Systems were not lost because they were vulnerable or weak but were threatened through systematic restriction, criminalization, and undermining (Simpson, 2004).

Creating a place where Indigenous knowledge is recovered, used, and passed on "require[s] a critical analysis of colonialism and how it has led to the current state of [Indigenous Knowledge]" (Simpson, 2004, p. 381). While Native Hawaiian people were impacted in this strategic removal of knowledge and power, the specific history of Hawai‘i helps to explain how this oppression appears in educational systems today and the strategies necessary to reestablish Native Hawaiian ways of knowing. This historical approach to education aligns with my goal to address Native Hawaiian people entering college, which led me to seek out a critical framework to use in the construction of my research.

Kanaka‘ŌiwiCrit

Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Critical Race Theory (Kanaka‘ŌiwiCrit) (Cristobal, 2018; Reyes, 2018; Wright & Balutski, 2015) is the conceptual framework of this study. Kanaka‘ŌiwiCrit builds on other branches of Critical Race Theory and narrows its focus to the specific experiences of Native Hawaiian people by “[acknowledging] and [incorporating] the historical and contemporary context of the United States’ treatment of Indigenous people as well as the occupation of Hawai‘i into the analysis of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi educational journeys” (Wright & Balutski, 2015, p. 91). This lens illuminates the way that Native Hawaiian people are uniquely impacted by colonization through the “exploitation of ‘āina and appropriation of identity” and why any possible feelings of dissonance in educational systems is rooted in these oppressive

historical events (Wright & Balutski, 2015, p. 93). Mo‘okū‘auhau and mo‘olelo of past and present (Reyes, 2018) are two primary ancestral practices that will combat the impact of these events and lead Native Hawaiian people to realize their kuleana on a path of survivance (Reyes, 2018; Wright & Balutski, 2015).

Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (2000, as cited in Cristobal, 2018) explains that “[t]ruly valuing and supporting Kanaka ‘Ōiwi within educational spaces requires repositioning dominant ideologies of what and whose knowledge is valid and what is considered appropriate in demonstrating competency in such knowledge” (p. 38). Oliveira (2005) speaks to the way Kanaka scholars are working toward this repositioning by bringing together their cultural practices with academia and asserting that “our ancestral knowledge may stand up to the same rigorous standards as those applying to others writing in the same fields and for the same publications (p. 75).

As a conceptual framework for this dissertation, Kanaka‘ŌiwiCrit provided a critical lens to address the core reason that Native Hawaiian students can feel dissonant in educational systems while also providing strategies to resist perpetuating oppressive practices. Moreso, the key ancestral practices presented in Kanaka‘ŌiwiCrit guided the approach to identifying the methodological needs of addressing this research.

Indigenizing in Practice

While exploring literature relating to Native Hawaiian ways of knowing and education, I found that there are examples of reasserting Native Hawaiian and Indigenous ways of knowing as the primary lens in education spaces. Scholars further demonstrate the strength of ancestral knowledge and values through frameworks, leadership, and institutional approaches centered around Native Hawaiian and Indigenous values while calling on others to do the same.

A strength-based approach to exploring the needs of Native Hawaiian people, knowledge, and community is a counter-hegemonic practice that moves away from using the lens of colonizers (Kana'iaupuni, 2005). Kana'iaupuni (2005) uses Ka'akālai Kū kanaka, which is a strength-based approach for exploring one's understandings and abilities without internalizing or legitimizing the deficit-based rhetoric used to disempower Native Hawaiian people (p. 36). Indigenous people and their recent ancestors have received messages that they are fundamentally ill-equipped, especially in education, which is an idea that is entirely false and strategic. Instead of accepting this negative message as truth, engaging in critical questioning is "cementing our presence in the production of knowledge, we can be vigilant over how it is used and the power that knowledge confers" (Kana'iaupuni, 2005, p. 34). In education, this is especially important because Indigenous representation is urgently called for in higher education institutions with Indigenous student populations (Keene, 2016; Wise, et al., 2020).

Leadership. Heather Shotton (2015), a Wichita, Kiowa, and Cheyenne leader and scholar in higher education, writes about how her Native identity informs her view of leadership as service. Rather than identifying herself as a leader who works at the top, she writes, "I consider myself part of a larger community of Native people working together toward a greater goal" (p. 144). Her community, elders, and values challenge the Western definition of leadership, which she sees as "too often focused on the individual and centered on the notion of power and influence over others-to lead implies that someone must follow" (Shotton, 2015, p. 145). Instead, she shares that she applies her leadership in service to others, rooted in understanding one's responsibility to the community and done with humility. This wisdom and insight exemplify the strengths that Native leaders contribute, which is why institutions must appoint these leaders and express the need for the expertise of that individual or group. Such an action shows the intent of

the college or university to genuinely honor the truths of these worldviews for the betterment of Indigenous students (Wise et al., 2020).

Higher education. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) are examples of higher education institutions guided by Indigenous history and knowledge. Sumida Huaman et al. (2019) write that “[Tribal Colleges and Universities] are distinct from mainstream institutions as they are the only institutions of higher education situated on Indigenous lands, within the tribal community, where severely threatened knowledges and languages are core learning material and given primary space” (p. 10). Faculty at Tribal Colleges and Universities hold the experiences of their students in high regard and see that the world could greatly benefit from the type of collectivist and collaborative applications of knowledge that their students have (Sumida Huaman et al., 2019). This strengths-based approach with students is consistent with the Ka‘akālai Kū kanaka model (Kana‘iaupuni, 2005) and reinforces that Indigenous worldviews and knowledge are valuable perspectives that both empower other Indigenous people and provide wisdom that is applicable globally.

There is opportunity in education, but only when these institutions are not only equitable and accessible but also reverent of Native Hawaiian history. Lipe (2019) aspires for a socially just university that is both responsible and reciprocal and shares that

if we are going to transform our institutions into Indigenous places of learning where Indigenous peoples, places, and knowledge systems are included, honored, and made to feel safe, we must focus on transforming the underlying assumptions of the individuals who comprise and collectively create the culture of our universities. (p. 168)

While none of the University of Hawai‘i System schools are TCUs, Lipe (2019) writes of the University of Hawai‘i’s aim of becoming a Hawaiian place of learning and offers the Hō‘ālanī

Framework (Lipe, 2015), which includes four parts: mo‘okū‘auhau, kaikua‘ana/kaikaina, kuleana, and ka ho‘okō kuleana to guide to transforming these premises through a Hawaiian worldview. A university that reflects this vision demonstrates a meaningful opportunity for the education of Native Hawaiian people in a way that could uplift entire communities.

In the Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Wright’s (2018) study found that the use of Native Hawaiian-centered elements such as a curriculum that was family-minded, the use of ‘ike kupuna (ancestral knowledge), and mentorship led students to their kuleana and an exploration of their identities as Native Hawaiians. Wright (2018) adds that “a significant piece to holistically answering questions of identity and, in turn, providing an educational journey that is intentionally designed for ‘Ōiwi success is developing appropriate research frameworks (and methodologies) resonant with the cultural/political context of our ‘Ōiwi students and lāhui Hawai‘i” (p. 31).

Implications

This section of the literature found that Indigenous people, including Native Hawaiian people, have a way of knowing that is different from the systems of knowledge that dominate educational institutions today. Native Hawaiian epistemology establishes the holistic nature of knowledge, which was systematically discredited through acts of colonization and occupation. There are ongoing strategies of indigenizing that we see in educational leadership and higher education institutions that build on the cultural strengths of Native Hawaiian people. Institutionalizing meaningful incorporations of Native Hawaiian worldviews will lead to improved experiences for Native Hawaiian students. This information becomes critical in the context of this dissertation, which is the first step in a long-term goal to grow the number of Native Hawaiian students entering college at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. Comparing

this scholarship to the current college entry processes could provide further insight into how to best work toward this goal.

Native Hawaiian Students in College

Although there is a need for more research about Native Hawaiian students in higher education, the existing scholarship of this topic provides important context to how this population of students are preparing for, entering into, and graduating from college. In regard to preparing for college, Roberts, Takahashi, & Park (2018) found that early college enrollment of Native Hawaiian students improved their ability to have confidence and experience rigorous academic environments. The authors found that these positive experiences and exposure to higher education environments led to students feeling prepared for college. Furthermore, the authors identified that engagement with supportive program structures led to increases in high school grade point averages, decreased behavior referrals, and an overall positive impact on academic performance and future goals (Roberts, Takahashi, & Park, 2018). Overall, there is very limited scholarship seeking to understand the experiences of Native Hawaiian students as they learn about and prepare for college.

When Native Hawaiian students enter college, their persistence in higher education is linked to specific factors such as practical skills (Roberts & Hitchcock, 2018), financial assistance (Kenolio, 2019; Lima, 2015; Oliveira, 2005), or finding a “family that understood their status as a minority which is not based on skin color but rather their history and colonization” (Bothwick-Wong, 2017, p. 168). Although research about Native Hawaiian students enrolled in higher education is growing, it continues to be limited. Moreso, some of the existing research (e.g., Bothwick-Wong, 2017; Lima, 2015; Oliveira, 2005) addresses the retention and persistence of Native Hawaiian students based on cohorts from well-resourced high

schools, which shows a need to include students from various educational settings based on the data provided about the high schools in Leeward O‘ahu. If more Native Hawaiian students are to enter and graduate from college, there is a need to investigate what contributes to this population of students entering or not entering college.

Research conducted with Native Hawaiian college graduates found that students contribute to their college environments in ways that are not currently recognized as college preparation, such as ancestral knowledge developed through culture-based learning (Kana‘iaupuni et al., 2017) and giving back to Native communities (Reyes, 2019). Within the individualistic structures of higher education, Native Hawaiian students’ motivation for attending college are directly related to their collectivist culture. Reyes (2019) writes that Indigenous students are motivated to graduate from college to return home and contribute to the well-being of their community. In examining graduates from the Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies, Wright (2018) found that alumni were deeply motivated to finish college because of their realization and connection with their kuleana and their sense of responsibility to their lāhui.

Exploring the research about Native Hawaiian students and higher education found that Native Hawaiian students referenced specific support, environments, resources, or skillsets that were beneficial in their college journey. However, the low representation of Native Hawaiian students in higher education draws attention to the need for systemic change.

Native Hawaiian Representation in Higher Education

The National Center for Educational Statistics (n.d.) defines “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander” as “[a] person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.” Across the U.S., students that identify as “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander” accounted for only 0.2% of 19,355,811 students earning an baccalaureate

degree during the fall 2020 academic year (National Center of Education Statistics, n.d.). In Fall 2021, the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu enrolled 822 Native Hawaiian students. This places UH West O‘ahu as enrolling the lowest number of Native Hawaiian students compared to the two other public universities in Hawai‘i; The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa enrolled 2,770 Native Hawaiian students and the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo enrolled 1,066 Native Hawaiian students (Institutional Research, Analysis and Planning Office, 2022). Although UH West O‘ahu is unique as the newest of the three campuses and a commuter campus, it is also located near large communities of Native Hawaiian people on the island of O‘ahu.

The institution’s home in Leeward O‘ahu, which is home to 23% of all Native Hawaiian people in Hawai‘i (Kana‘iaupuni et al., 2021), is an ideal site for addressing issues of college access for Native Hawaiian communities. For example, in 2021 there were 214 Native Hawaiian senior students that graduated from Wai‘anae High School, a neighboring Native Hawaiian-serving high school. Of those 214 graduates, 53 students enrolled in either 2-year or 4-year colleges with a total of two students enrolling into UH West O‘ahu as freshmen for fall 2021 (Hawai‘i Data eXchange Partnership, 2022; Institutional Research, Analysis and Planning Office, 2022). Although the first-year enrollment of Native Hawaiian students into UH West O‘ahu is lower than expected, there is a high representation of Native Hawaiian students from the Leeward region. Currently, out of 642 Native Hawaiian UH West O‘ahu students from O‘ahu, 81% reside in Leeward O‘ahu (Institutional Research, Analysis and Planning Office, 2022).

The University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu’s campus and student population is distinct from the other four-year colleges within the University of Hawai‘i System. While the geographic location of this campus seems as though it would be an advantageous college option for high

school graduates of the surrounding area, this review of recent enrollment shows that there is still much to learn about the experiences and behaviors of Native Hawaiian students with higher education.

Implications

The current literature about Native Hawaiian students in college follows students through their first-year retention and persistence to graduation. The overall interest in this research topic is to understand the unique experiences of Native Hawaiian students in college, however, there is minimal scholarly work examining how Native Hawaiian students apply to, select, and enroll at college campuses. Current literature has pointed out that Native Hawaiian students benefit from having specific financial, institutional, and academic support to graduate but does not recognize the barriers students face during their first interactions and introductions to higher education.

College Admissions

This section introduces literature that utilizes a historical and critical lens to understand college admissions policies, current practices, and limitations for schools granting bachelor's degrees. It will provide an overview of current issues of college entry in higher education, including an examination of the materials that a college can request to determine if a student is admissible to their institution. Through a careful review of these practices, scholars identify the specific factors of the college entry process that perpetuate inequitable and inaccessible environments.

Historical Look at College Admissions

College admissions practices in common use today stem from exclusive origins of higher education. Thelin (2011) describes that prior to 1960, a student's acceptance into college was primarily determined by social class and other factors linked to privilege. At that time,

admissions processes “strongly [favored] affluent, masculine, White Protestant men” (Bastedo et al., 2018 p. 785). As the landscape of college applicants diversified, institutions developed admissions requirements intended to regulate who enrolled at the institution, disguised as a quest for quality applicants (Thelin, 2011).

In 2022, the National Association of College Admission Counselors (NACAC) and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) released an equity-focused study that acknowledged these problematic beginnings and called for colleges to radically reimagine the antiquated practices that perpetuate systems of oppression. NACAC and NASFAA (2022) emphasize that “[t]he concept of “applying” to college is firmly embedded in a higher education design that, at its origin in the United States, valued exclusivity, rather than inclusivity. In that respect, the application was *designed* as a barrier to entry” (p. 21). Today, students from highly resourced and privileged backgrounds continue to have an advantage in the admissions process (Bastedo et al., 2018). However, there are ongoing efforts to dismantle these types of advantages, such as the Fair College Admissions for Students Act, which is a bill that seeks to ban the preferential treatment during the admissions process to applicants that are related to donors or alumni of that institution (Jaschik, 2022). While such advocacy efforts call for a new approach for entry into college, “[i]t will be hard to fix because so many people do not even recognize that there is a problem” (Sternberg, 2010, p. 6).

College Application Materials

When students begin their college search process, standardized tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT) enter the conversation alongside high school grade point averages. The history, use, and impact of these college entrance exams are highly researched topics in higher education.

Sternberg et al. (2012) write that when standardized test scores were first created, it was seen as valid to consider this type of academic performance alone for college success. Those in favor of the SAT and ACT see their usefulness in determining a students' academic preparation and college readiness (Tierney et al., 2009). In a correlational analysis, Westrick et al. (2021) argues that SAT scores are valid predictors of college grades and performance and can provide insight beyond that which is predicted by high school grade point averages.

Support for college entrance exams uses the primary argument that high school grade point averages, while useful alongside additional materials, are not reliable. Using a two-level regression analysis of high school grade point averages and college entry test scores, Koretz and Langi (2018) found that the predictive value of a high school grade point average is strong only when considered among other students at the same high school and not when compared against other schools. They explain that grade point averages reflect educators, coursework, and an academic structure that varies and puts reliability at risk. However, Allensworth and Clark (2020) conducted a quantitative study to test the perception that standardized test scores are better indicators of academic preparation than high school grades and found that the reverse was true; high school grade point averages were found to be consistently stronger measures of college graduation than ACT scores. This perspective and value of high school grade point averages as effective achievement indicators is a more common perspective within the review of current literature.

Scholars have widely shared that college entrance exams are directly correlated to social class, making them less about being a measure of academic achievement and more a measure of existing privilege. NACAC and NASFAA (2022) write that:

standardized admission tests represent a significant detour on the road to postsecondary education, as they are external to the high school curriculum, add to the cost of applying to college, require access to “college knowledge” that is not uniformly understood, and present an additional obstacle to be surmounted (p.36).

Instead of assuming test scores to be indicators of college success, organizations such as NACAC and FairTest are now encouraging higher education institutions to ask themselves what information these scores truly provide. An analysis conducted by FairTest (2019) of SAT scores from the high school class of 2019 found that, “[w]hether broken down by test-takers' race, parental education or household income, average SAT scores of students from historically disenfranchised groups fell further behind their classmates from more privileged families.” The information provided by standardized tests is incomplete because the test does not consider all other factors that influence the overall score (Sternberg, 2010). Additionally, standardized tests, have a gender bias because the assessment creates a competitive, high-stakes situation that is also measuring students’ self-confidence and willingness to take risks (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2010; Saygin, 2020).

While some scholars call for augmenting college entrance exams to address equity (Sternberg, 2012), others believe that these tests' entire concept and implementation are problematic. In a study exploring the relationships between selective admission criteria and students from racially or economically marginalized groups, Rosinger et al. (2021) found that “de-emphasizing or eliminating test scores from admissions consideration may be one way to interrupt inequitable enrollment patterns at these institutions” (p. 48). In addition, FairTest (2021) reported that just under 80% of four-year colleges and universities are not requiring the ACT or SAT for entry into the fall 2022 semester. This shift, along with NACAC and

NASFAA's (2022) acknowledgment that higher education is not free from systemic racism, advocates for higher education that is socially just.

Holistic reviews. In response to the lack of context and inequitable impacts of using standardized tests or grades alone, many scholars call for the use of in-depth applications which are often referred to as a holistic review. NACAC and NASFAA (2022) recommended that admissions offices “[r]e-center the process of evaluating students to focus on a recognition of the array of strengths, skills, and abilities students demonstrate during the K-12 educational experience” (p. 3). Holistic reviews include more noncognitive indicators or multidimensional performance measures, which produce stronger representation from minoritized groups and a great range of test scores (Schmitt, 2012). Sternberg (2010) speaks to this belief by saying:

students should be admitted to college on the basis of their potential for future leadership and active citizenship, at whatever level of society (from the family, to the workplace and other communities, to the world), by taking into account, among other criteria, their having the academic knowledge and skills necessary for success in college work (p. 5).

Although there are different implementations of holistic review, the general goal is to learn about a student beyond what can be told from high school grades and test scores.

However, Rosinger et al. (2021) refer to extracurricular involvement, interviews, essays, recommendations, talents, and character as “ambiguous evaluation criteria” because the evaluation of these things is subjective and puts institutions at risk of “[reproducing] and even [exacerbating] inequitable enrollment patterns” (p. 48). Rosinger et al. (2021) demonstrate through their research that, when extra-curricular involvement and subjective factors are considered, there are fewer Pell-eligible students (Rosinger, et al., 2021). Therefore, this research

shares that when involvement outside of school hours is heavily weighted in the admissions process, it will negatively impact students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

There are many different approaches to holistic review, which require ongoing work to clarify and transparently share how applications are evaluated. In addition to new models of admissions and materials that provide more context to an application, Bastedo et al. (2018) add that “we should consider not just our interventions, but the training and norming practices that engage admissions officers around these interventions” (p., 802). There must be equal attention given to both reimagining admissions policies and how admissions officers are trained to think about the nuanced differences between applicants.

UH West O‘ahu Admissions Requirements

To receive an offer of admission to the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu, the institution requires a 2.7 cumulative grade point average as well as the completion of 22 high school credits, including four years of English, three years of mathematics, including algebra II and geometry, three years of science, three years of social studies, four college preparatory credits, and five elective credits. College preparatory credits include language courses, music, classes, art courses, or early college coursework. If students do not meet the 2.7 cumulative grade point average outright, their application will be evaluated based on SAT or ACT scores, a letter of recommendation, and a personal essay (University of Hawai‘i - West O‘ahu First-Year Students).

NACAC and NASFAA’s (2022) research found that institutional selectivity and complexity in the application process is inversely correlated to equity; in other words, when college applications are cumbersome and complex, they become less equitable. Compared to the literature, the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu has a less complex application process for

those that meet the initial grade point average requirement. For those that do not, the experience is equivalent to most standard application processes needed to enter higher education. Since Native Hawaiian students are still entering college at rates lower than other ethnic groups in Hawai‘i (Kana‘iaupuni et al., 2021), there are additional access issues that must be considered beyond the complexity of an entry process. This prompted a closer examination of the current literature surrounding college applications.

Implications

In chapter one, I shared my experiences working with students that were hesitant to engage in the application process because they felt that their high school grade point averages and test scores would not adequately represent their potential to succeed in college. An exploration of literature surrounding these factors revealed that these processes and application materials are deeply rooted in the exclusive history of colleges and universities. If UH West O‘ahu applicants—nearly all of which are from minoritized groups—feel out of place during these experiences, it is because the origins of those policies were not built for them. While test scores and grades each have their strengths in predicting achievement for certain student types, overall, there is a need to rethink all that stands between a student and enrollment at a four-year university.

College Readiness

The term “college readiness” most commonly refers to the content knowledge and experiences that prepare a person to enter higher education (Conley, 2012; Allensworth et al., 2018; Maruyama, 2012). While this definition of college readiness is generally agreed upon, there are a variety of perspectives regarding its implementation, assessment, and associated variables.

Jackson and Kurlaender (2014) write that college readiness generally consists of three areas which include the academic rigor of classes before entering college, knowledge, and information gained about college, and a student's development needs as an entering college student. These authors agree with most scholars that college readiness is about the academic skills and high school preparation of a student; however, they specify that the term is also in reference to how those factors are indicators for success in college. Regarding remedial college coursework, the authors write that "[a]lthough this measure does not encompass the entire range of what makes a student ready for college, once a student is enrolled in college, the ability to take college-level courses is the most important signal that the student is ready" (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014, p. 955).

In contrast, other scholars such as Griffith (2016) study the importance of non-academic indicators of success such as connection, guidance, resources, work habits, and academic expectations. Tierney and Sablan (2014) address the need to expand the definitions of college readiness. They share that:

The topic of college readiness deserves attention beyond just a high school transcript, and current definitions of and policies regarding college readiness warrant scrutiny. Students fail to complete courses and their degrees for multiple reasons in addition to academic preparedness. Time management, financial literacy, and engagement with other students and faculty, for example, tend to impact the ability of a student to persevere in courses and ultimately attain a degree. (Tierney & Sablan, 2014, p. 944).

This exploration for a comprehensive and holistic definition of college readiness has led to scholarship seeking to understand more specific college readiness indicators.

Student Ownership of Learning

Student ownership of learning is a concept of college readiness outlined by Conley et al. (2014) that refers to the effort and motivation of students to engage in a college setting. Two conceptual models are guiding this component of college readiness. The first model includes keys to college and career readiness that can be grouped into four categories: cognitive strategies, content knowledge, learning skills and techniques, and transition knowledge and skills. Conley et al. (2014) also outline a second model of student ownership of learning that is made up of five ongoing strategies:

- Motivation and engagement
- Goal orientation and self-direction
- Self-efficacy and self confidence
- Metacognition and self-monitoring
- Persistence

While the first model intends to capture the complex nature of college readiness, the second model reflects the process students will be prepared to engage in when they are ready for college. (Conley et al., 2014)

This conversation about college readiness recognizes the role of functionality and purpose within learning, which aligns with Native Hawaiian knowledge. Conley et al. (2014) write that when students “learn something that is meaningful and valuable to them, they are subsequently more motivated and engaged and ready to set new goals and begin again” (p. 1021). This type of discussion about college readiness stood out because it was centered around the students’ experience and their internal force to keep moving forward instead of more straightforward measurement indicators such as college grades and graduation rates.

Policy

Blume and Zumeta (2014) conducted a study using a policy-focused approach to college readiness and specifically examined how federal and state policies contribute to students' college readiness in each U.S. state. They determined that five types of initiatives were indicators of strong college readiness policies, which include P-20 councils, P-20 data, dual enrollment programs, advanced coursework offerings such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses, and “statewide assessments that gauge mastery of academic topics at or near the end of high school” (pp. 1078–1079). At the time this study was conducted, Hawai‘i’s statewide evaluation revealed low scores due to the lack of implementation of college readiness policies overall, but especially in the areas of dual enrollment, advanced coursework, and statewide assessments (Blume & Zumeta, 2014).

The implementation of college readiness policy initiatives, which can happen at various levels (institutional, state, and federal), demonstrate a unified commitment to addressing systemic issues. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education & Southern Regional Education Board (2010, as cited in Blume & Zumeta, 2014) write that

“piecemeal efforts to make students college ready are not enough; rather, systemic policy change to prepare students for college depends on a state’s K-12 system and postsecondary institutions working in concert to close the gap between the skills and knowledge gained in high school and the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college” (p. 1074).

As I embark on studying college readiness, this research is a reminder not only to consider how the term college readiness is defined and assessed but also to explore how overarching policies (or the lack thereof) are related to the path into college for Native Hawaiian students.

Policies in Hawai‘i. In Hawai‘i, the organization leading the college readiness partnerships, policies, and initiatives is called Hawai‘i P-20. P-20 typically refers to the full pathway of education from preschool through higher education. Three main partnerships within Hawai‘i drive Hawai‘i P-20, which includes the University of Hawai‘i System, the Hawai‘i State Department of Education, and the Executive Office on Early Learning. Hawai‘i P-20 addresses equitable access by “[strengthening] the education pipeline from early childhood through postsecondary education and training with data-informed decision making, advocacy, policy coordination and shared action” (Hawai‘i P-20, n.d.).

Hawai‘i P-20 offers six initiatives within its College and Career Readiness division:

- **College Exploration and Planning:** Programming that helps with completing college applications and other activities related to college and career preparation.
- **College is Within Reach:** A media campaign to promote college and college-related resources throughout Hawai‘i.
- **FAFSA Cash for College:** An initiative to increase the FAFSA completion rate in Hawai‘i.
- **GEAR UP Hawai‘i:** A college access grant designed to support students in graduating from high school and successfully transitioning into college.
- **Hawai‘i Nudge Project:** A text message campaign to increase college enrollment for Nānākuli High and Intermediate School, Kea‘au High School, Castle High School and Waimea High School.
- **Next Steps to Your Future:** Customized college and career support for Hawai‘i high school seniors.

The goals of these projects are to contribute to a Hawai‘i-wide effort to increase the number of people earning college degrees through programming, communication, and long-term goal setting. This also includes broader visions for college degree attainment, such as the the 55 by ‘25 initiative, which aims to have 55% of adult Hawai‘i residents hold either an associate degree or bachelor’s degree by 2025 (Hawai‘i P-20, n.d.). While there were goals and data addressing the organization’s efforts throughout Hawai‘i, there was no information listed regarding Native Hawaiian-specific initiatives for college readiness.

College Access

College access programs like TRIO Upward Bound provide college preparation for students at less-resourced high schools who have difficulty accessing their counselors (Armesto & McElroy, 1998). The success of programs like College Horizons, which offers “culturally grounded college access support for Native students,” demonstrates the need for a new way of thinking about college readiness that considers the unique experiences of Native Hawaiian students (Keene, 2016, p. 75). These supplemental programs are not guaranteed to be accessible for all that need them; additionally, the decrease in federal funding indicates that programs like TRIO are not safe from being eliminated over time.

When students build their knowledge about college, high school counselors are also significant sources of support and influence, especially for students lacking social or cultural capital (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Fitzpatrick, 2020, Robinson & Roska, 2016). However, not all students can easily access their counselors due to large counselor-to-student ratios, which leads to discussions about college readiness initiatives needing to be examined at the systemic level. How can higher education institutions need to recognize the complexity of the college entry

process and adapt their policies to become something less or not dependent on students seeking additional help to achieve entry?

Implications of College Readiness

An exploration of college readiness found that while holistic models of this term are emerging, this concept's primary implementation and assessment revolves around academic-only factors. Regarding this dissertation, there were no discussions about how a student could present their readiness for college through Indigenous ways, such as an oli (chant), art form, or other languages such as ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i. Researchers contributing scholarship to the subject of college readiness most commonly discuss ethnic diversity to show its intersection with socioeconomic statuses (Warnock, 2016) and first-generation college student experiences (Holland, 2020; Raque-Bogdan & Lucas (2016). Native Hawaiian identity appears to be absent in literature addressing college readiness, including scholarship that critiques old models of college entry for lacking inclusion of diversity (Skinner, 2019).

Maruyama’s (2012) writes that “[de]fining college readiness is of critical importance and impact and should employ a process that engages the stakeholders,” which was heeded in the development of this study (p. 259). Considering the college readiness literature and the context of the themes in this chapter, I see an opportunity to learn more about how diverse populations of students, such as Native Hawaiian people, are understanding their readiness to be in college.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The purpose of this study was to see college readiness through the experiences of Native Hawaiian students at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. The college is driven by its vision to be an Indigenous-serving institution and is also geographically positioned to realize this goal because it is surrounded by Native Hawaiian communities. There is opportunity and responsibility for the institution to be accessible, inclusive, and student-centered, which can improve the rate at which this population of students attends college. Addressing this opportunity in an impactful way begins with hearing the stories of Native Hawaiian students in college and using their meaning-making to inform the way that we consider and speak about college readiness. This study was designed to answer the following research question:

- How do Native Hawaiian students at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu understand their own readiness for college?

In the construction of this study, I considered how I could best answer the research question while also ensuring that each participant felt heard throughout the data collection and analysis process. I saw my dissertation as a vessel to safely deliver the stories of these participants with their uniqueness intact. Based on this notion, I knew wholeheartedly that following a qualitative research approach would lead to “rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature” that I sought to find (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 75).

Since some potential college students do not feel represented by standardized test scores and grades, it felt most appropriate to collect data about this topic in a way that invited students to openly share their understandings and have control of what stories are significant to their college journey. When reviewing the potential of qualitative research, Merriam and Tisdell

(2015) write that “[s]tories are how we make sense of our experiences, how we communicate with others, and through which we understand the world around us” (p. 33). It is also used to inform our present actions because these stories carry lessons from the past (Osorio, 2001). I felt that this acknowledgement of stories aligned with the way I value storytelling and stories in my own life as well as the cultural tradition of mo‘olelo.

ho‘omanawanui (2017) writes that mo‘olelo Hawai‘i:

allows us to understand ourselves and our kūpuna (ancestors), and relate to others, to navigate more confidently towards our future, as one day we too will be ancestors setting a path for future generations to understand us and the generations before us. (p. 52)

Mākua et al. (2019) add that “[*m*]o‘olelo, our Hawaiian word for story, is thus speaking of recollections that inspire continuity through generations” (p. 138). Mo‘olelo is essential to the survivance of our Native Hawaiian people and was opportune qualitative data to collect for this study. In the process of selecting a design, it was important to select an approach that offered special care and consideration around the collection and sharing of mo‘olelo.

The use of stories was also consistent with my kuleana to uplift Native Hawaiian voices and recognize the additional care that is needed when conducting research with Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2012). In a study that seeks to understand the participants’ personal experiences in college, it feels most appropriate to capture their understanding of college readiness with their stories as the primary source of data. Smith (2012) speaks to the opportunity in these narratives when she writes, “[t]he past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices - all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope” (p. 22). Although this dissertation does not guarantee systemic

change in higher education, I hoped that the act of sharing stories can be an empowering process and a step toward self-determination for each participant.

I conducted this study through a qualitative research approach that used principles of Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 2008) to understand the experiences of Native Hawaiian students at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. Archibald’s (2008) Indigenous storywork is a method of learning from stories through a holistic process of meaning-making. Through both the traditional practices of the Stó:lō Nation and Coast Salish systems of knowledge, Archibald assembled storywork as a practice of understanding and implementing Indigenous stories in educational settings. As seen in the traditions of mo‘olelo, storywork also builds on the belief that “our stories were part of articulating our world, understanding our knowledge systems, naming our experiences, guiding our relationships, and most importantly, identifying ourselves” (Archibald et al., 2019).

Indigenous storywork’s seven principles collectively demonstrate a respect for cultural protocols surrounding stories and storytellers, which distinguishes the approach from the western qualitative research designs. Each principle “must be understood and practiced...if Indigenous stories are to be used meaningfully in an educational context” (Archibald, 2008, p. 140). These principles are respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy (Archibald, 2008).

The first four principles of storywork are commonly used as ethical guides for the listener (Archibald et al., 2019). Engaging with stories in a way that is safe for Indigenous people and their communities begins with an unwavering **respect** of all people and practices that are involved in the study. Storywork also demonstrates the sacredness of stories and compels researchers to understand their **responsibility** to share the content accurately and with approval

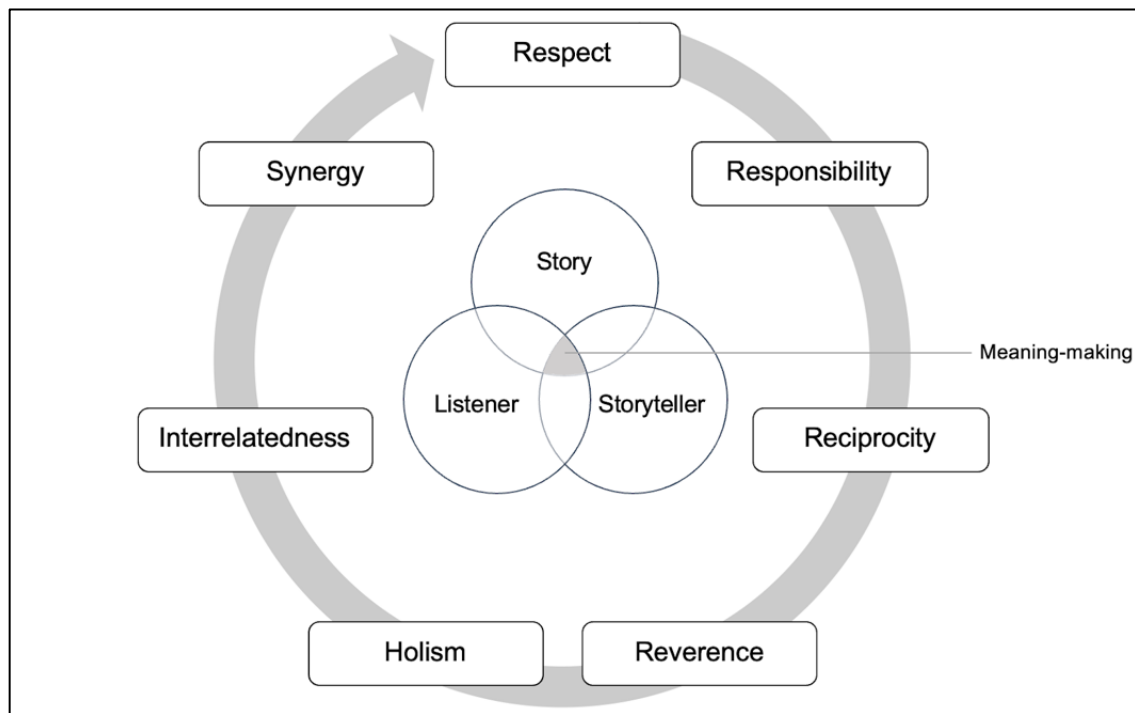
of the storyteller. Listening to stories also requires a commitment to **reciprocity**, which means collecting this data with the good intention of uplifting the storyteller and their culture by “fostering reciprocal relationships” (Martin & William, 2019, p. 67). Regardless of being an insider or outsider (Smith, 2012) to the storyteller’s culture, researchers must have **reverence** toward all social practices mentioned or practiced. (Archibald, 2008; Archibald et al., 2019)

The final three principles are especially critical in the meaning-making process of storywork. Regarding **holism**, Archibald (2008) writes that “to know and use Indigenous stories through storywork requires an intimate knowing that brings together heart, mind, body, and spirit,” which aligns with the full-body experience of knowledge found in Native Hawaiian epistemology (p. 140). Strong relationships are critical for this approach and necessary to reach the **interrelatedness** among the storyteller, story, and the listener. This type of engagement with stories can be educational and inspirational because of their **synergy**, an immeasurable feeling of understanding and connection (Archibald, 2008; Archibald et al., 2019).

Overall, each principle of Indigenous storywork works together to ensure that there is patience, time, and care practiced during the handling and meaning-making of stories. As I familiarized myself with the principles, I found that they are less like a set of rules and more of a mindset to know stories as something to experience, rather than something to have or to own. Figure 1 is a visual representation of how these principles were perpetually practiced and guided the connections between the story, storyteller, and listener in this study. At the center of the image, you will see that the storyteller, story, and listener are three equal parts of the experience interacting together to achieve meaning-making. The application of the seven principles is represented on the perimeter of the image to demonstrate the ongoing practice of each guiding value.

Figure 1

Indigenous Storywork Principles



Storywork emerged as the most appropriate research approach for this study because it is centered around Indigenous knowledge and recognizes the impact of colonization on Indigenous people as seen through stories. Archibald et al. (2019) establish that Indigenous storywork is an effort of “activating decolonizing methodologies as dynamic cultural revitalizing strategies to combat assimilation” (p. 11). Storywork not only called attention to the importance of understanding the history of Indigenous peoples, but it also recognized that telling these stories is an important piece of the journey to self-determination. Archibald et al. state:

Understanding the impact of colonization on people, their families, and communities is a difficult but important part of the holistic meaning-making process. However, Indigenous values, philosophies, resilience, and resistance that are at the core of Indigenous stories

help ease the pain of intergenerational trauma that may surface when sharing lived experience stories. (p. 9)

The problem statement of this study called attention to the tension that can arise as Native Hawaiian people interact with colonized spaces of higher education. The selection of storywork is responsive to the core problem of this research and contains the methodological infrastructure to address this type of systemic oppression.

My decision to center this study around stories intended to honor our traditions of mo‘olelo and mo‘okū‘auhau, as described in Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Critical Race Theory (Cristobal, 2018, Reyes, 2018; Wright & Balutski, 2015), and hold space for students to share how their personal histories appear in the understanding of their college journey. The sharing of mo‘olelo can contribute to a shift of guiding beliefs in higher education and, most importantly, leads to the protection and survivance of our lāhui (Reyes, 2018). Wright and Balutski’s (2015) framework for Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Critical Race Theory speaks to the use of mo‘okū‘auhau as a course “to describe and understand the diverse pathways and/or relationships individuals have with respect to different contexts” (p. 94). It was my hope that when students engage in this study to tell a story, this process will call to their kuleana, which can appear as ea (sovereignty), aloha ‘āina, and/or ka lāhui (Wright & Balutski, 2015; Cristobal, 2018, Reyes, 2018).

Indigenous storywork emerged as the strongest ethical and methodological match for the research question and the core problem that this study sought to address. During a review of common western methodologies, I realized the importance of selecting a method that is also aligned with my positionality and natural strengths, such as relationship-building. Upon reflection, I found that this design aligned with my core values, outlook on the world, and the ways in which I felt called to my own kuleana.

Positionality

The decisions made throughout this study were guided by my relationships, kuleana as a Native Hawaiian woman, and experience working in college access efforts at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. The way I prioritize human connection, seek to empower others, and strive for equity in educational systems were born from specific moments in my life. These milestones, ranging from big events to everyday observations, influenced the choices I made about my methodological approach, data collection, and data analysis. It is my hope that sharing a snapshot of these memories will provide further context into the driving forces behind each selection in this chapter.

Sister

The relationships I have with my family are important to my educational journey because my identities as a sister and a daughter have shaped the way I examine school systems and for whom they are created. In my family, the system of education has been a safe, opportunistic haven for some and a relentless, exclusive structure for others. The critical lens I use to assess educational systems today started forming when I was a child because of my brother’s experience in school. When we were kids, my older brother always had the natural ability to absorb complicated ideas with ease. From the innovative way he reimagined our toys to the complex books he would read at bedtime, his brain always seemed to be making connections quickly and efficiently. However, his experience with school was difficult because of the limited options available to him as a dyslexic student. Written tests were ineffective at showcasing his mastery of classwork and my parents struggled to secure reasonable accommodations for him as a high school student. Watching my parents advocate for my brother was my first and most impactful lesson about how school systems are not created for all types of learners. This is a

driving reason that I question conventional western assessments as sole indicators of knowledge and pay close attention when I hear that other people also feel misrepresented by them.

In high school, when I encountered the tradition of final exams and standardized tests, I began to believe that I would never be the type of student to produce very high scores. I categorized myself as “not a good test-taker” but, because I closely watched my brother’s experience in school, I never allowed this label to impact my self-worth. If I did not perform well on an exam, I knew that it was still possible to have gained knowledge from that experience. I asked my high school counselor to enroll me into a few advanced placement courses and, when he warned me of the process of taking the advanced placement exams, I told him that I fully expected not to pass those exams. I wanted to enroll in the courses because the teachers had outstanding reputations in school, which I thought would lead me to have better experiences in class. When the year ended, I did not score high enough on any of my advanced placement exams to earn college credit, but I truly enjoyed my experience in those classes.

These childhood experiences appear in my advocacy for students who, like my brother, demonstrate knowledge differently than what can be collected through the most common types of assessments. I hold a belief that education needs to be inclusive of learners that do not fit into the current school structures, which includes minoritized groups who may fundamentally practice systems of knowledge that contrast the common structure of schools today.

Native Hawaiian

The first time I began to deeply understand that Hawai‘i is not designed for the success of Native Hawaiian people was when I was twelve years old. There were three significant court cases happening at this time that threatened to dismantle organizations and policies designed to address the needs of Native Hawaiian people, which included the Department of Hawaiian

Homelands, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Kamehameha Schools (Ka‘iama, 2014). At this age, I remember trying to understand why people that lived in Hawai‘i would want to eliminate programs that helped Native Hawaiian people. Some of my classmates shared this same confusion, so we asked our kumu about it during class. She began to share a message that would lead to a significant realization of my identity as a Native Hawaiian woman. She explained that although Hawai‘i is our homeland, the major decisions that state leaders made about living, learning, and working in Hawai‘i did not normally consider the well-being of Native Hawaiian people. I recall feeling powerless as I began to understand what this meant, but she went on to remind us that there were indeed people working tirelessly to make Hawai‘i a better place for Hawaiian people. Most importantly, she told us that we needed to utilize the knowledge we gained in our life and, when the time came, join our fellow Kānaka in pursuit of a Hawai‘i that is pono (righteous, equitable, just).

My identity as a Native Hawaiian woman and the responsibility that comes with this role fiercely shines throughout this dissertation. When I make decisions about how I want to spend my life, which includes my journey as a doctoral student, I feel a responsibility to use my power and privilege for the betterment of our lāhui. Scholars that have come before me have done an immense amount of work to decolonize research methodologies as an effort to uplift Native Hawaiian and Indigenous knowledge systems. I recognize the gravity of those efforts and want to continue elevating Indigenous scholars and scholarship within my research. When constructing my research, I am also thinking about Kaiwipunikauikawēkiu Lipe’s (2015) encouragement for Native Hawaiian and Indigenous researchers to fearlessly use methodologies that are personal and cultural in our own research. My decision to incorporate an Indigenous

methodology is based on my decision to be courageously honest with the way I view the world as a Native Hawaiian woman.

Behind me are generations of ancestors that relentlessly fought for equity in Hawai‘i. Ahead of me there are new generations of Native Hawaiian children, including my own, that will one day experience the realization that I once did about the oppression of Native Hawaiian people in Hawai‘i. I want them to know that, especially during the most discouraging times, you are not alone. This dissertation was written for you. We are here and are working hard for a Hawai‘i that is indeed created with Kānaka in mind.

Practitioner at University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu

When I first started working at the UH West O‘ahu, I immediately noticed a commitment to student-centered practices among my colleagues in the student affairs and grant programs division. On campus, my colleagues were consistently advocating for accessible pathways into college in a way that I had never seen before. When I made recommendations based on feedback from my students, it was received with genuine interest. This overall mindset encouraged me to conduct my recruitment and outreach in the most open and reachable way possible. There is no pride over the number of students that are denied admission to UH West O‘ahu; instead, it is our aim to be transparent with our policies and see students successfully enter the university.

My time spent with prospective college students showed me firsthand that UH West O‘ahu’s admissions process, regardless of how minimal it is compared to other universities, is a stress-inducing and confusing process for applicants. When I stated our admissions requirements, students would often ask for more information to try to understand the behind-the-scenes decisions that were being made in the ways that Ivy League schools are often portrayed in the

media. Observing this over the years has made me very curious into how admissions practices at UH West O‘ahu can lead students to feeling optimistic and self-assured about the outcome.

My history as an admissions counselor leads me to keep applicants and their families in mind when making decisions about enrollment strategies. Although I have always had an on-campus office, the majority of my work has been face-to-face with students at high schools, community colleges, and non-profit organizations. This has allowed me to be with students as they submit their college applications, apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), or simply learn about higher education for the first time. My insight into how students are feeling about their applications to UH West O‘ahu developed over years of having conversations with students, families, and school counselors about college entry processes and drives my curiosity behind this study.

Part of my experience working in college admissions has been hosting prospective students and their families on campus for events ranging from open house events of 1,000 visitors to a campus tour for a small handful of guests. Throughout my work at four very different institutions, the opportunity to hear from current students on tours and panels consistently prevails as the most valuable experience from attending a campus visit. Future students and their families were always eager to hear the opinions of current college students. Current college students hold incredible wisdom into the inner workings of the university’s practices and policies. Although they are all around us, their know-how of navigating college is underutilized. I greatly believe that every student’s story is worth hearing and while some experiences may be similar, it is the outlying details that could explain how something may or may not be working.

Daughter

In high school my commute home could be as short as 25 minutes, but it was often closer to 45 minutes in rush-hour traffic. Some days I would spend this time napping or doing homework, but most of the time I would talk with my mom about social situations happening in school or sports. These talks would range from fun, trivial facts about my day to bigger, more emotional incidents that, as a teenager, felt like insurmountable problems. What I remember the most about these long talks is the advice she repeatedly gave me in response to my feeling hurt or angry by an experience. She told me that I must always remember the way that person or event made me feel and ensure that if I was ever in that same situation, I would not make the next person feel the pain that I once did. This compassionate response to my being wronged by another person perfectly captures the kind heartedness of my mother and is an essential piece of my intent behind this dissertation.

All my identities come together to explain the way I identify problems, seek solutions, and empower minoritized people. What is also noticeable within this study is my dedication to making paths into education easier for future generations of college students. Although I experienced my own challenges during college, I do not participate in the idea that others must struggle in the same ways that I once did to gain the full experience of earning an undergraduate degree. More so, in conjunction with my systems-focused lens, I am not aiming to provide a how-to guide that helps students navigate through college readiness and the college search. Instead, I am organizing this study in a way that will produce an informative resource for higher education institutions like the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu to learn about how Native Hawaiian students experience college. While I do believe it is beneficial to help guide students

through the college path with helpful tips and instructions, this research is my first step to long-lasting and impactful systemic change.

Site, Sample, and Population

The sample of this study was selected to provide insight into the greater population of Native Hawaiian students enrolled at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. This sample was also decided upon with the intention that the findings of this study will have transferability to colleges within the University of Hawai‘i System, Indigenous-serving institutions, or students that hold identities that are historically excluded from higher education. Determining the criteria for an appropriate sample was also guided by my conceptual framework and real-life experiences of speaking with Native Hawaiian students about college readiness.

Site

The site for this research was the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu, one of the three four-year public colleges within the University of Hawai‘i college system. The goals, location, and student support at this campus make for a fitting location for this research. The vision statement of UH West O‘ahu refers to it as an “Indigenous-serving institution...where all students, faculty, and staff embody and perpetuate Pacific and global understanding rooted in Native Hawaiian values” (About UH West O‘ahu, n.d.). The mission statement adds that the university “offers a distinct and accessible student-centered education” and “embraces Native Hawaiian culture and traditions” (About UH West O‘ahu, n.d.). More so, the location of this campus is geographically accessible to communities on the west side of O‘ahu, where 23% of all Native Hawaiians across Hawai‘i reside (Kana‘iaupuni, et al., 2021).

Approximately 3,000 students attend UH West O‘ahu and nearly one-third of those students identify as being Native Hawaiian (UH West O‘ahu: At a Glance, n.d.). While this

presence is notable, Kana'iaupuni et al. (2021)'s research reveals that nationally "Native Hawaiians have the lowest rate of attaining a bachelor's degree or higher among Hawai'i's major ethnicities" (p. 215). These statistics as well as the goals of the institution drive the motivation for pursuing this research at the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu.

Sample

The participants in this study were purposefully sampled using criterion-based selection. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) write that building a sample using this strategy should be used when "the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). When I considered my research question and overall curiosity into the concept of college readiness, I felt that it was important to select participants that experienced a variety of paths to UH West O'ahu.

My sample consists of six Native Hawaiian students that were either currently enrolled in or recently graduated from University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu as either a full-time or part-time students. Since this study is specific to UH West O'ahu, I sought participants that had completed at least one semester of being a student at this campus. A limitation of this study is that I will not be interviewing any Native Hawaiian people that were either denied entry into UH West O'ahu or discouraged to apply.

The participants met the following requirements:

1. Identify as Kanaka Maoli, Kanaka 'Ōiwi, Native Hawaiian
2. University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu is the student's main campus
3. Full-time or part-time student status
4. Has completed at least one semester of coursework at the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu

I worked closely with the student affairs division at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu in order to obtain a list of students that met the criteria for my sample. Using that list, I sent an email invitation to all eligible students with sponsorship from interim vice chancellor for student affairs.

Data Collection

I used semi-structured interviews for this qualitative research, which was guided by the principles of Indigenous storywork. Key focuses of these interviews involved building rapport, trust, and mutual understanding with the participant and providing the opportunity and openness for them to share any stories that provide insight into their experiences at UH West O‘ahu. Since there are existing associations that students make with the term college readiness, my strategy of constructing interview questions for this study is to refrain from using that term.

Data Recording. The qualitative interviews were conducted on Zoom and the audio was recorded through Otter.ai software, which automatically transcribed the interview. No video recordings were collected. Although most of the literature around the collection of stories using storywork or mo‘olelo speaks to collecting data in-person, the unknown nature of the pandemic made it necessary to create a situation which, regardless of potential new health restrictions, I was able to conduct interviews in a way that is safe and accessible. The participants had experience navigating a virtual platform like Zoom because they used digital tools to complete their coursework as current college students. In the case that they needed access to Wi-Fi, a computer, or a private space to conduct the interview, I offered to coordinate the rental of a laptop or reservation of a personal study room through the library at UH West O‘ahu.

Interview Protocol. I used an interview protocol for asking questions and recording answers during the qualitative interview, which involved taking notes before the interview

began, during the interview if needed, and immediately after the interview was completed. As the listener, I knew that I had a role in the meaning-making of these stories and needed to be reflective about how my biases, expectations, or reactions impacted that process.

In order to engage in an interview process with me, I required the completion of the participation form, which clearly outlined the purpose of the study and explained the participant's rights to leave the study at any time. Also, within this study of interviewing where participant relationships should be handled with special care, permissions were ongoing and consistently revisited throughout the study (Archibald, 2008).

The participants were asked to participate in one interview for approximately 60 minutes and respond to two follow-up emails to me again to revise, elaborate upon, or confirm that they feel accurately represented by my findings during the data analysis process. Both follow-up emails included the option of scheduling a time to speak with me to discuss the analysis of their stories. Five out of the six participants selected to provide their feedback over Zoom instead of through an email.

The nature of Indigenous storywork and its principles emphasize the importance of fostering space for connections between the storyteller and listener. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write that “[t]he conditions under which the interview takes place also shape the interview; for example, the place, the time of day, and the degree of formality established” (p. 110). I worked with the participants to determine the best time for these interviews and recognized the limitation of conducting these conversations through Zoom. The time before the interview was valuable for me to set the tone, create a comfortable atmosphere, and prepare myself to be “story-ready” (Archibald, et al., 2019). This intentionality led to hearing stories

about their personal strengths and knowledge, their journey into college, and their reflection on being a college student at UH West O‘ahu today.

The Responsibility of Listening to Stories

In chapter one, I shared a story about the first time I felt comfortable during a graduate school interview and the impact it had on my ability to provide honest answers and walk away feeling assured of my self-worth. In the construction of this study, I kept that in mind and sought to create this similar impactful experience for my participants. Archibald (2008) speaks about the importance of the preparation needed to listen to stories. In *Indigenous Storywork*, as described by Archibald (2008):

“Patience and trust are essential for preparing to listen to stories. Listening involves more than just using the auditory sense. We must visualize the characters and their actions. We must let our emotions surface. As Elders say, it is important to listen with “three ears: two on the sides of our head and the one that is in our heart” (p. 8).

This approach included a deep respect and responsibility for honoring cultural knowledge and treating the participant's stories with the same level of care I have for traditional stories within my own family.

Data Analysis

Guided by storywork, I analyzed data in a way that not only looked for the explicitly stated thoughts of the participants, but also sought to understand what they were saying through examples, metaphors, and values. As Indigenous people, we know that lessons without stories are not always stating exactly what they mean; rather, we must apply these stories to situations to understand the true message. ‘Ōlelo no‘eau are examples of this; we often cannot translate these proverbs directly to immediately understand the lesson. Rather, we must spend time learning

about the context that informs the proverb to draw conclusions about how we can apply it to our life. Included in this is also a notion that the meanings of stories change when we revisit them after different experiences in our life.

The data set included the transcripts of six participants and my personal notes that include my reflections, expectations, and hunches about each interview. The personal notes also include documentation of how I made decisions about organization, coding, and theming. Transcriptions provided by Otter.ai were compared against the audio recordings to ensure that the written data was accurate before beginning the analysis.

Analysis Steps

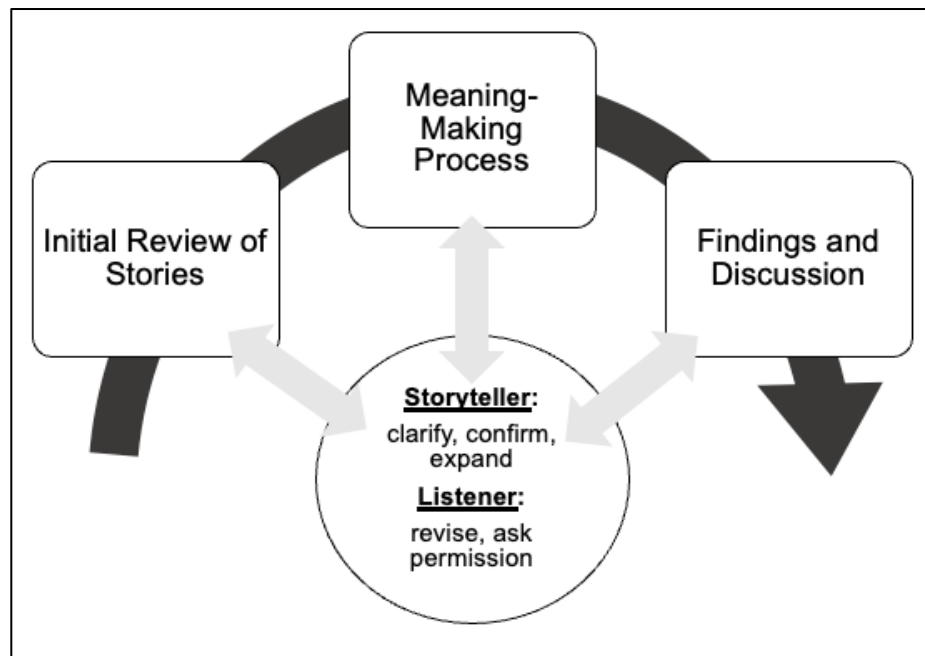
Archibald (2008) describes the meaning-making of Indigenous storywork as “intimately knowing a story, including knowing its content, but also of interrelating with the story to make meaning” (p. 133). In the process of becoming a storyteller and incorporating this approach into teaching, she also speaks about the importance of repetition and visualization to become completely immersed into a story and says that “[a] hearer isn’t meant to understand the story at all levels, immediately. It is as it unfolds” (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 84). As a researcher and listener of stories, I conducted a qualitative data analysis process that accounted for this immersion and nonlinear path.

From the lens of storywork, my analysis gave special attention to establishing reciprocal relationships that were grounded in the seven principles and a dedication of time to get to the core of the story. Three general steps made up the analysis procedure: the initial observation, the in-depth exploration, and the overall findings. The initial observation involved noting the most immediately appearing themes and ideas, which are referred to in Indigenous storywork as surface stories (Archibald, 2008). Next, the in-depth exploration took a deeper look at each of

those initial clues along with the full context of the story and the way in which the story was presented. Finally, the meaning-making and lessons emerged from grouping data and continually revisiting the stories through the lens of the seven principles. The storytellers remained involved in the process, which was a practice that upheld the responsible and ethical practice of research as described in Indigenous storywork principles. In regard to meaning-making in qualitative data analysis, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) write that “making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read” (p. 346). While I followed the general nature of this structure, I also included the participants as resources for my data analysis process. The ongoing relationship between the storyteller and the listener was necessary to receive feedback, which helped ensure that the meaning-making was accurate. My process is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Data Analysis Process Using Indigenous Storywork



The data analysis process also included the following ten steps:

1. Journalled about my memories of the interview and noted any expectations about the data that may arise
2. Listened to audio recordings of each interview and made corrections to the Otter.ai transcriptions
3. Read through all the transcriptions and listened to audio recordings and collected initial thoughts
4. Identified the “surface stories,” which were the immediate stories and/or metaphors that appeared from the conversation with the participant
5. Considered both the story and the delivery of the story to identify “keys” or “clues” (Archibald, 2008) that led to unlocking meaning
6. Dedicated time to reflecting on the story, which involved revisiting the story and following the “keys” and “clues”
7. Documented the meaning that I interpreted from the stories and provided descriptions of my observations
8. Began open coding by hand; I assigned codes and identified themes, which was grouped into categories. The organization of this was documented on Excel and saved to a secure hard drive.
9. Conducted follow-up outreach to participants to confirm, clarify, and seeking permission for the use of their stories
10. Rewrote or corrected stories if needed

Validity and Reliability

Instructive guides on conducting qualitative research emphasize the importance of clearly demonstrating how ethical standards and rigor are maintained throughout a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). When I considered the population of this research and the conditions under which the problem of practice materialized, I felt that it was important to consider the history of Indigenous people being oppressed through research in conjunction with the emergence of qualitative research in academia. Institutional data and current scholarship such as Kana'iaupuni et al. (2021) provide excellent quantitative insight into the patterns of Native Hawaiian students in the University of Hawai'i System. This dissertation aimed to further contextualize those statistics through the participant's stories and maintained high standards of validity and reliability without further silencing or undermining the shared truths of Native Hawaiian people.

Ethical rigor was considered from the beginning of this research and was the highest priority to the Indigenous storywork methodology. This design was formed by an Indigenous educator who established a way to responsibly engage in the meaning-making of stories and prevent further oppression, burden, and colonization of Indigenous people in the process. This intention led to a method that saw the well-being of the participant as the highest importance and ensures that each person is sharing their story willingly and authentically. The participants were seen as collaborators in this study, which meant they were consulted often and understood their right to revise their thoughts, retract what may be private or sacred, and could have withdrawn completely from the study if necessary. (Archibald, 2008; Archibald et al., 2019)

The ethical standards I set for myself as both the researcher and primary instrument for data collection was seen in the reflexive practices used to document my thoughts and prevent any

occurrence of unintendedly inserting my biases into the research. First, I used a researcher's journal to document my reflections while collecting and analyzing data. That process of critical self-reflection worked alongside the seven principles of Indigenous storywork to uphold strong ethical standards and contextualize the findings with as much information as possible about the data collection process. Although this study is deeply personal, I saw this research as trustworthy because my essential purpose was to give students a space for their story to be shared in its truest form.

The methodological rigor in this study is through a design selection that aligned with answering the research question, providing transparency of the process, and engaging extensively with the data. The foundation of this study was developed with intention and care so that the stories will not be overshadowed by any doubts about trustworthiness. The documentation throughout this research intended to provide a clear understanding of the procedures so that other scholars can determine the generalizability and transferability to their own settings regardless of the specificity of site and sample size.

This study builds upon participant criterion and a problem of practice that was specific to UH West O'ahu. The lessons that emerged from this study could be valuable to scholars with different settings or populations. If someone else conducted a study using this design and its procedures, the findings may not be the same because of the ever-changing nature of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, I do believe that following this design could replicate an ethical, safe, and appropriate study that is built upon trusting relationships. This would hopefully lead to hearing stories in the same manner, although the themes and patterns of those stories will likely vary. It was my hope that this study expanded the toolbox for those seeking to learn more about the experiences of Native Hawaiian or Indigenous students in

college and provoked curiosity and critical reflection about how their own actions are related to this population of students.

Indigenous storywork's approach to working with storytellers has an underlying wisdom that knowledge and meaning-making cannot be rushed. This study was constructed upon that notion and the decision to interview a sample of six students reflected the quality of time and depth that I spent with each storyteller and their story. Although this sample is small, the findings are reliable because of the comprehensive data that accompanies working with the same participants multiple times. Once the data was analyzed, I knew it was time to stop collecting data once the participant approved the existing findings and confirmed that there are not any new leads to follow.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the qualitative research design for the study of Native Hawaiian students and college readiness at the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu. First, I reviewed the overall design choices of this study and explained how my identities and experiences with current educational systems informed each of these methodological decisions. Next, I described the research sample and outlined how the criteria to select these participants provided insight into Native Hawaiian students' experiences with higher education. Finally, I outlined how the data collection and analysis process was carefully crafted using the conceptual framework of Kanaka 'Ōiwi Critical Race Theory (Cristobal, 2018; Reyes, 2018; Wright & Balutski, 2015) and the research design of Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 2008).

Chapter 4 Results

This chapter presents the stories of six Native Hawaiian students from the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. These participants graciously offered to spend their time talking to me about the stories of their life and their experiences in college. Each person embarked on unique paths to UH West O‘ahu and have valuable insight into how they came to be in college and what keeps them coming back each semester. These stories are told from the perspective of their truths. Guided by the ‘ōlelo no‘eau, “I ka nānā no a ‘ike,” meaning “[b]y observing, one learns” (Pukui, 1983, p. 129). I invite you to observe and learn from their realities.

There is More

Bryceson G. Keali‘iwiwo‘oleikamaunaki‘eki‘e Tugade transferred to the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu after completing his associate degree from Leeward Community College. He is from O‘ahu and is working toward a Bachelor of Applied Science in Sustainable Community Food Systems.

While getting to know Bryceson, he started by sharing that he has a “capacity to want to know” about the world. This curiosity appears through his intrinsic yearning to want to do more, see more, and understand more, and “it came from just really wanting to- really wanting to get out of [his] fishbowl.” In his life, primarily through opportunities seized in college, he’s gotten a taste of a meaningful and purpose-driven future that is tangibly within reach. Bryceson feels encouraged to keep progressing because “once you see that *there’s more*, you can’t shut away from that.” Here, he asked me, “[i]t’s like... Plato’s allegory of *The Cave*, you ever heard of that?”

As the title suggests, this story takes place in the depths of a large, dark cave. A handful of people are stuck in the back of the cave facing a wall that can only understand the world

through shadows. Although they don't realize it, their dependency on the shadows creates a distorted sense of reality. Finally, one person breaks out of the cave and experiences the richness of the landscape in the sun with a new reverence for nature and life. When the person returns to the cave to visit the others and tells them about everything he saw, they don't believe him. They choose to continue watching the shadows on the wall and remain in the limited reality they have always known. The person realizes he can no longer see what they see in the shadows and chooses to live in the outside world.

I had not heard of Plato's story of *The Cave* until it was told to me by Bryceson. The allegory of *The Cave*, taught in classrooms as a symbol of education, perception, and ignorance, was introduced to him in high school. Today, he uses this story as a metaphor for his accomplished, self-driven, and curiously hopeful life. Now that he has experienced some opportunities outside the cave, he knows there is more.

These Kids Had Backing From the Start

It turns out that leaving the cave is scary even when you are eager to experience a world beyond what you know. When Bryceson and a friend started their last year of high school, an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) class was added to their schedule by a counselor. Looking around the room, it was clear that many other students had been in AVID courses for a long time, possibly since middle school, and gave off confidence about preparing for college. That class fostered a sense of normalcy about going to college; teachers featured students from the senior class on bulletin boards with the name of the college they had committed to attending.

Jumping into this environment at the tail end of high school was beneficial, but it also magnified the boys' lack of support compared to their peers. Bryceson shared, "I felt just so like,

I felt jealous. You know what I mean? Like, that these people, these kids had this like backing from the start. You know? And I was like, we *need* this.” The pressure to participate in the college-going culture from the AVID class and advice from his counselor led to Bryceson’s decision to pursue higher education. Bryceson had been part of the first mālama ‘āina group at his high school and headed to Leeward Community College to further explore this interest.

Once Bryceson made the decision to go to college, he became fearful of going through the steps of enrolling alone. He said, “I had to do all that on my own. Sign up for and really look for what I gotta do. And check my emails, and I wasn't familiar with any of that stuff, and that was so scary.” Unfortunately, the fear about going to college did not subside once he decided to enroll; instead, it intensified. He told me,

I was even more scared, and I was the only one [of my friends] going to school at the time. Or the only one that was like, I'm gonna go do this. You know what I mean? I got to. Because other than that, I don't know what else I'm gonna do

The AVID course and his college counselors were helpful, but he was trying to catch up on years of learning about what to expect leading up to and beginning his first year of college. Without a clear idea of what was ahead, starting college at Leeward Community College was the moment that Bryceson decided to take a risk and leave the cave for the first time, hoping it would be better than having no plan at all.

This is Where Your Kuleana is at This Moment

While Bryceson was a student at Leeward Community College, he was accepted to a summer internship with the Kupu program, which teaches students about conservation, restoration, and culturally responsible land stewardship. These topics are taught through hands-on training, which leads to physically laborious day-to-day work. At this time, Bryceson was

generally familiar with sustainable agriculture, but his focus was to fulfill his internship hours to make the money offered to him.

One hot day at Ulupō Heiau in Kailua, O‘ahu, Bryceson became injured from a thick piece of metal that pierced through his foot. As painful as it was, that situation became a noteworthy story of how he deepened his connection to ‘āina work. The injury made him realize that his paycheck was an insufficient reason to continue the internship, which prompted his quest to find a worthwhile purpose for working with land.

He remembers starting a conversation with one of the heiau workers on an especially sweltering afternoon. He wanted to understand why someone would willingly do the physical labor of removing invasive species and cultivating native plants in such harsh environmental conditions. Bryceson asked the man how much he got paid, what he did to find meaning in his life, and simply for an explanation to understand the choice to work at that heiau day after day. Bryceson told me about his desperation to understand, saying, “I was like... what is - what is fulfilling? Because I don't understand how you can be here. You know, or *is there more than that?*”

The man’s response began with an explanation about how Akua is embodied through nature, which was the start of Bryceson discovering that his identity is deeply tied to ‘āina. It was through these conversations that he began to understand his purpose and promise in future ‘āina work. Bryceson recalled, “I told the guy and I was like, it seems that there's like, what- 200 plus years of environmental degradation to this place? So what? Do we take another 300 years to take that out?” The man answered, “yeah...I’m just happy to be part of that 300 years. I don’t care if I don’t see the end.” This response led Bryceson to a newfound kuleana and became a turning

point for Bryceson's internship. His attitude shifted because he began to understand how his daily work is part of a larger effort of aloha 'āina and responsible stewardship in Hawai'i.

Today, Bryceson feels that his injury and the initial frustration within that job helped him find his purpose and kuleana in 'āina work. Looking back on it, he said, "that was the 'āina's way of like, humbling me" because the lesson he learned from it was that "[t]his is where your kuleana is at this moment." Every morning before starting work, the group would chant to the heiau, and he felt a purposeful connection to his ancestors. From then on, he recalls thinking,

I don't want to look lazy in front of the heiau. Nor do I want to look lazy in front of like, our kūpuna and I don't want to make them feel like their descendant is kind of being lazy in front of this place of spiritual worship.

Today, Bryceson continues to recognize and honor his kūpuna and their plant knowledge by conducting and sharing research about Hawai'i's plants in an international setting.

It's the People That Believe in me

It was not a straight path between high school and the accomplishments Bryceson knows today. He told me that there were times when he felt like he made academic and personal decisions after high school that could have jeopardized his ability to attend college. Eventually, there was a moment he paused and reevaluated his path after having navigated through an unpredictable social environment. It was remembering why he left the cave and trying to imagine a future without an example of what it could be. He felt stuck and confined and said, "I didn't want to be that - like, I knew that there was more. So when I went to school and I felt like I garnered this sense of community, I was like, okay, so there *is* more." Finding community at UH West O'ahu helped him see the potential of the journey he started.

As he stayed in college and put in hard work, he found college professors who believed in him, which was empowering. It can be nice to encounter people with a positive outlook on life and generally believe that all students can achieve their dreams. However, when someone truly knows who you are and believes so strongly in your ability to succeed, it keeps you going when you feel like giving up. Bryceson specifies this kind of support's effect on his journey:

It's the people that believe in me, or believe in other people like from the jump
kine...there's those people that's like, 'you can do that. *I know you can.*' You know what I
mean? And it's like okay. Oh, this guy believe in me! I can!

For Bryceson, this emotional sponsorship was substantial; having people believe in him directly increased his motivation to keep applying for scholarships, accepting research opportunities, and completing graduation requirements.

Knowing who will be supportive when it is time to prepare for college is something special. Bryceson described how he did not have the privilege of having someone teach him about the SAT, pay for him to take it, or give him more money to retake it if he didn't get high scores. He explains that this isn't the case for most people because "regular kids that no more that backing, they gotta do 'em on their own." This newfound support found in college drives Bryceson to work hard and seek every opportunity available. He said, "[i]t's a really humbling experience to know that there's people that are willing to back you if you're willing to do the work."

Bryceson humbly mentioned a few opportunities he had so far, but it was not until I invited him to tell me more about what he's done while he has been in college that he opened up and told me everything. He has been in leadership roles in campus clubs, been part of multiple research studies led at partnering universities, flown internationally to present research through

sponsorship from other colleges, and was awarded as a national undergraduate scholar in his field. Scholarships, especially, have been an important component of being in school. He said the financial support was critical because he used it to pay for school, transportation, and travel for his research. He shared that “having these opportunities, it's been a major driver in me wanting to continue school, me wanting to pursue a master's degree because the teachers at Mānoa were like, ‘you did great on this research.’” Bryceson continues to excel in school by working hard every single day. His achievements are awe-inspiring, and he is the first to remind others that he was once a scared high school student leaving his environment to pursue college on his own.

Bryceson's Cave

In the allegory of The Cave, once the man realizes that the other people stuck in the cave are not willing to join him in the outside world, he decides to leave forever. Bryceson clarifies that his ending is different for this part of the story. He still has love for the people in his cave and continues to go back and share his experiences with them. A few days a week, he works as a substitute teacher at the same middle school he attended as a child and shares messages with young students sitting in the same chairs he was in a decade ago. He advises these students to go after what they want in life. Even if they cannot directly see examples of the opportunities out in the world, he tells them to work hard and trust in their hearts that *there is more*.

A New Path

Jensen is a recent alumnus of the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu, where he completed his Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration. He is from Nānākuli, O‘ahu, and has also found community in Kalihi, Kapālama, and Kapolei. Jensen entered college directly out of high school and graduated after four years. At the time of this interview, he had finished his bachelor’s degree but was enrolled in additional courses at UH West O‘ahu to prepare for

graduate school. He feels happy with his life today and looks back fondly at his time in college. As Jensen prepares for upcoming internships and a master's degree, he always remembers the important people and goals that inspired him to keep moving forward.

I Realized it's up to me

Jensen spent his childhood along the Wai'anae Coast being raised by two strong women: his mother and his grandmother. Their sacrifices and support for Jensen are incredibly meaningful to him; he shared, "[e]verything I've done so far was for my mom and grandma to just make them proud." These two significant people and his siblings, nieces, and nephews motivate him to create a new legacy for their entire family.

While growing up, Jensen consistently heard messages within his community that his future was limited simply because of where they lived. He explained to me that people from his hometown would tell him, "you might as well not chase your dreams or might as well not think too far because we will never get that opportunity, you'll never get that shot." When he left his community, Jensen was stereotyped based on his city and experienced microaggressions that seemed to reinforce what the people told him to expect as a child. He shared that when "[y]ou say you're from Wai'anae, you'll notice that they'll lock their cars, or they'll hold their purse close to them." When you hear these messages so often growing up and then see them confirmed outside your community, they directly impact how you view your potential. Jensen began to believe that he should not strive to be more than mediocre.

Jensen had big dreams as an elementary school student; he imagined going to a large, academically competitive university and being an athlete. As time passed, Jensen's internalization of those stereotypes of communities on the Wai'anae Coast led him to momentarily rethink the effort he was putting into school and sports. He explained that

once I [had] my personal or my first failure, like in sports or academics, I started to believe more and more that it's not worth my time to give all of my effort and shoot for straight A's or try get in extra hours of practice in sports

Although those stereotypes were pervasive, his love for his family was stronger. This love and the resources available through high school helped him not to lose sight of his purpose.

Fast forward to his senior year of high school, Jensen was a multisport athlete with a solid academic record and acceptance letters from the same colleges he once dreamed about as a kid. Those acceptances could be traced back to a specific moment when he decided to go against the narrative tied to his zip code and build something new for the next generation of his family. He recalled,

[t]he first time I started to be really serious about college was the most recent time my family got evicted from our childhood home. I realized that it's up to me and my siblings to financially support the family and to change the cycle around to at least give it a try to like, make sure we have a good job so we can support my mom and my grandma.

The choices Jensen makes today are guided by the responsibility of creating this new path, which started when he became the first person in his family to go to college.

Scared to Take That Leap

When it was time for Jensen to go to high school, he received a scholarship to attend a private institution for Native Hawaiian students. Every day his ride would be around an hour, sometimes more, outside of the community to get to school. Looking back, he feels indebted to his school for an education with built-in tools for going to college.

Jensen felt supported by his counselors and the accessible resources provided to him while in high school. Not only was he offered a variety of workshops about college, but he was

also held accountable for his learning during those sessions. It was easy for him to find information about going to college; his counselor checked on him frequently and held him to a timeline throughout his senior year of high school. He was provided fee waivers through the college counseling office that were instrumental in making applying to college affordable. These waivers encouraged Jensen to take a chance and apply to many dream schools. Now as a college student, Jensen looks back on the support and rigorous class schedule that he experienced in high school with appreciation. Being a senior in high school seemed hectic and stressful at the time, but the full schedule led to a skill in time management. When Jensen started at UH West O‘ahu, he was able to manage the courses as a full-time student as well as a work study job.

When it was time to choose a college, Jensen had options. He had always been interested in traveling to the continental U.S. to attend college and was offered opportunities to continue being an athlete through the NCAA. When I asked him how he decided to attend UH West O‘ahu, he recalled that

[o]nce senior year hit, I started thinking about leaving home and leaving my family and just couldn’t picture like, actually like stepping out the door and spreading my wings and doing it by myself. So, I was just scared to take that leap.

To understand this feeling, Jensen told me to imagine standing at the top of the jump rock at Waimea Bay or the edge of a 100-story cliff overlooking the ocean. When you look over your shoulder, an animal is sprinting toward you. As it gets closer, you see a Tasmanian Devil and know that it fears the water, so the only option is to step off the edge and jump into the ocean. Sure, the jump is terrifying and risky, but the consequences of not jumping are much worse. This is how high the stakes are, “so, you’re either gonna die on top that cliff or you’re gonna take the leap of faith and survive.”

For Jensen, there is no way to prepare for the feeling of committing to college because it will always be a leap of faith. As his senior year ended, he took that leap of faith to attend a college near his hometown and his loved ones. He enrolled at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu and started on a new path just down the road from the people who inspired the start of the journey.

How Come I’m Even at College?

During the first semester, Jensen found himself questioning the decision to go to college. He considered dropping out of school to join the military and had even exchanged contact information with Army recruiters he met on campus. Two weeks later though, he signed up as a student volunteer for UH West O‘ahu’s fall commencement ceremony, which became a pivotal moment in rediscovering his purpose of being in college.

At this point in Jensen’s first semester, it was difficult to remember why he decided to pursue his bachelor’s degree. Without a strong sense of purpose, going to class and working on campus did not seem like a useful way to spend his time. However, when he watched the entire UH West O‘ahu campus come together with the students’ families to celebrate the milestone of completing their college degrees, everything clicked for him. When the ceremony ended, the graduates walked through a tunnel of faculty and staff who gave hugs and high-fives. At the end of the tunnel, they were adorned with lei from family and friends. Jensen shared,

I could firsthand see how proud graduates and families were. I was like just dreaming of being on that stage and walking across the stage...before I volunteered, I wasn't really motivated or like- I was still lost in like, what I'm doing or like, how come I'm even at college?

Seeing the graduates greeted with love and excitement from their families reminded Jensen that he was on the right path. He kept working hard until he could walk across that stage to collect his own college diploma. This commitment kept him focused over the next several years when the experiences of students worldwide shifted due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Everything I do is for Them

In 2020, Jensen found himself amid the COVID-19 pandemic and enrolled in all online courses, even his hands-on science labs, which was a challenging way to learn. He realized that the quality of instruction by his professors was directly tied to his learning and happiness in class. His academic struggles were related to receiving a lack of instruction or communication about class assignments. During this time, he realized that feeling like people cared about his success were helping him to do well in school.

Overall, Jensen enjoyed college because of the supportive environment and the relationships he grew throughout his nine semesters as a student. With UH West O‘ahu being situated in Kapolei, he felt familiar with the campus, saying, “...the culture, the atmosphere, it felt like I was taking a class back in Nānākuli or back in Wai‘anae.” Throughout his time at UH West O‘ahu, especially in his campus job, he felt genuine support from the people surrounding him. His peers and the staff in his campus job checked in on him regularly, made him laugh, and celebrated his personal and educational milestones. Having people root for him in this way “...made it easy for [him] as a student to just concentrate on [his] studies knowing [he had] a huge support system [there] at college.”

Showing up for class every day, trying his best, and working on finishing his undergraduate degree were driven by the role he took on for his family. Not only does he feel like they are counting on him, but he also recognizes the contributions and sacrifices the women

in his life have already made to get him where he is; to change the cycle, the rest is up to him. He shared,

[t]he main value that's important to me is there's no quit, or there's no saying I give up.

Because understanding what my grandma and mom had to go through to even give me an opportunity to even be at this point in my life, like everything I do is for them. So even though I'm having a hard day, having to do some obstacle, having to face an uphill battle, I know what I'm facing is nothing compared to what they had to face years back.

Especially being raised by women. Like, women are at a disadvantage compared to men and they have to work twice as hard to get what men get.

This is the mindset that carried him through adversity during college. A strong work ethic, gratitude, and kuleana were at the heart of his motivation to hear his name and degree being called at commencement. Soon enough, that moment came:

And then four years later, like finally getting my shot, getting my opportunity and hearing my name being called, or walking across the stage to shake my professors' and to shake the Chancellor's hand and to take that picture, that even though we're still in the middle of a pandemic, like knowing that I always finish and cross that finish line and never give up. That. That's when I felt like it finally dawned upon me that everything I worked for, for 16 years like it finally paid off.

Jensen's Path

To spark change in the community and create a clear path into college, we must first go ourselves so that other people can follow in those footsteps. Jensen shares that future students must pursue a degree even if they are the first in their family to take that leap of faith. It will be scary, but “find your motivation and find your inner drive, and it'll take you farther than you

believe.” His purpose—his grandma, mom, siblings, nieces, and nephews—have been his key to moving forward. Jensen knows he is not alone in this endeavor because other college students feel pulled into the same cycles and stereotypes. The choice to do something different is hard, sometimes even scary, but he encourages every student to give it their best shot because “[i]t requires at least one person per family to break that cycle and create *a new path* in life in order to inspire the next generation.” For Jensen’s family, he is now that person.

My Own Light

The third participant in this study is Kaua. Her family is from the Wai‘anae Coast, and she was raised in the Nānākuli community. She entered the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu directly after high school and is currently in the middle of her sophomore year. Graduating from high school and entering college amidst the pandemic felt like a whirlwind; now that the winds have calmed, Kaua often thinks about how she will shine in this world.

Kaua grew up being the youngest sibling in a large family. Throughout her life her family made her feel loved, like when they celebrated her high school graduation during the pandemic. Many of her values are guided by the lessons of her family, especially from her parents. She became accustomed to attending events or gatherings as part of a huge group, but sometimes she felt alone within that crowd.

Kaua’s age placed her in the gap between her millennial siblings and her school-age nieces and nephews. She is the youngest child in her immediate family by nearly a decade. Her older siblings have their own families, and she loves being an aunty to all their children. However, being in the middle has also made her feel alone and misunderstood at times. These feelings led Kaua to invest significantly in her friendships; now, those friends have become her family, too.

During Kaua's senior year of high school, her college plans became a family decision. Although she was considering various options for what to do after high school, her family believed in and preached the value of attending college to earn a bachelor's degree. As the youngest child and an aunty in her large family, she faced pressure and kuleana unique to her birth order. Kaua felt obligated to meet high educational expectations and honor the headway her siblings made by doing it first.

Although she is the youngest sibling, Kaua leads the next generation of her family; observant nieces and nephews remind her that while she was not the first to pursue higher education, she also will not be the last. When she looked at her older family, their accomplishments gleamed so brightly that Kaua felt overshadowed. The talents of her nieces and nephews were already aglow, too, making her wonder where she fits.

Going Nonstop

Kaua remembers the time between high school and entering college as one rushed memory. In just a few short months, she graduated from high school, entered a summer program, and abruptly started her first year of college. When Kaua began her first semester of school, she adjusted to an unfamiliar amount of classwork through virtual learning. Kaua did not recall a time between high school and college when she could catch her breath and process the transition of becoming a college student. She was involved on campus as a full-time student and part-time employee; she was exhausted and shared, "it's just been going nonstop that I could never like really take a mental break from everything." Although she made friends and enjoys her major, she felt personally and academically burnt out. She referred to this past semester as a "stormy" time because she felt unmotivated toward her studies and mentally fatigued overall.

Kaua empathized with students struggling in school because she felt that way, too. It was difficult for her to complete her homework and manage the return to in-person classes. She shared, “I understand why college students they get depressed and they get anxiety and they get, they're in like a bad mental space because it's so overwhelming...they don't know how to handle it.” Since this was her experience, she reflected upon what she learned in high school and how that shaped her expectations of college life. She explained that in high school, “[t]hey give you one way of how you perceive college, and it's completely different when you enter college.” Kaua wondered how a different, more structured experience from her high school would have impacted these feelings of overwhelm.

Kaua recalled barely having homework to complete in her high school classes. Only a handful of teachers regularly assigned homework; she believed those teachers were the most invested in her learning. When she enrolled in college, the amount of homework she needed to complete for each class was unbelievably large by comparison. Kaua explained how she needed to keep track of readings, papers, group projects, and physically come to campus to attend class, which she had not done in years.

Due to the pandemic, Kaua had become accustomed to doing high school virtually, so the habit of logging into online college classes was an extension of her last two years of high school. Once the university returned to in-person classes, she endured that shift again. She offered her perspective in this area, saying, “we're all so used to going online. We don't want to go in-person. So we're like, in a way, we're all out of the groove.” That new adjustment and her homework load made the college experience seem like too much to handle, but caring professors helped some of this become manageable.

One of the professors she enjoyed the most at UH West O‘ahu provided structured support for Kaua and her classmates, which helped immensely. This professor made Kaua feel that her success mattered and that she did not have to work toward it alone. She shared that this professor

took the time in her schedule to check in on her students and make sure we're, like we're doing okay, which is, which is what I feel like some teachers or our professors in college kind of lacks because there's the mindset like you're in college, you got to do it yourself, like you're on your own.

This experience and others like it made a positive difference for Kaua in college. It was easier to navigate the storm when she felt her teachers were empathetic and rooted for her success.

After reflecting on our conversation about academic struggles and feelings of burnout, I asked Kaua to talk about some of the benefits she saw in earning a college degree. Kaua recited some of the messages her family told her, but ultimately, she told me she did not know. Instead, she walked me through how her mind swirled as it tried to make sense of recent personal and educational epiphanies.

I'm Still Unsure What I Want to do

When you are in the storm of balancing other people's expectations and feeling the weight of needing to set a good example for children, it can be difficult to make decisions that are in your own best interest. Kaua considered taking a break after graduation or traveling abroad, but instead enrolled at UH West O‘ahu because of her family's encouragement to advance her education. She heard messages such as “just continue [your] education because that can get you far” from her parents. First, her parents felt that it was best for Kaua to go straight into college while her habits for school were fresh. Second, they explained to her that having a

college degree opens more doors than a high school diploma. Although she generally agreed with those ideas, she was still unsure of her purpose in college and what doors will open from it. Despite her unsureness, Kaua persisted in college because of the trust she has in her family's value of college as well as the responsibility she has as a role model for her nieces and nephews.

Growing up, Kaua had always wanted to attend college and imagined studying abroad or exploring her interest in languages and art. Her college counselor provided information about colleges that aligned with her interests. Still, a lack of knowing where to start led her to attend a school that her family had become familiar with through her sibling's college experience, which was UH West O'ahu. She knew that UH West O'ahu was not her dream school, but the journey to becoming a UH West O'ahu student was simple for her and seemed to materialize easily.

Although she said that "school is not [her] thing," she had successfully completed three semesters of college. Still, she was not exactly sure where this path would take her and considered herself in a stage of indecision. She said, "I had like no clue of what I wanted to do when I grow up. I'm still unsure what I want to do." In college, there have been many times that she has been asked to map out a 10-year plan, but questions about her long-term goals amplified her feelings about being undecided and unsure about where she is now and how a degree will help her. She described,

I feel like those questions can be intimidating for a person, especially when a college student or high school student is just graduating because they don't know what to write and they just don't know like, how to feel about it.

Instead of helping her vision of the future become clearer and guiding her with steps to reach those goals, long-term planning contributed to her burnout during a time that she desperately wanted to shine.

Kaua's Light

Kaua is now beginning to understand herself as a unique person within her family. Today, she looks ahead to her future with a hopefulness that she can discover that which makes her feel uncommonly radiant. She said with certainty, "I just want to be successful like my siblings, but perhaps also have my own light...all my siblings have lights under them. I want to have my own light." She is navigating a time when she does not know what comes next or how college fits into that plan, but she has trust and hope that it will make sense soon.

Kaua does not have it figured out, but she gets to know herself better each new year. She is brilliantly imaginative and artistic; she beams when she speaks about how she writes stories and aims to explore the arts. She is an aspiring voice actress who enjoys learning about other cultures and languages. She is a reliable, trustworthy friend who simply wants to give her love to others. Her nieces and nephews look up to her as the favorite aunty and confidant in the family.

Although her journey in college does not have a clear goal ahead, she knows that whatever she does, she will be using her gifts of creativity and friendship. Above all, she wants to feel seen for the unique individual she now knows herself to be. Kaua is like a sunrise; she is already bringing light into the world and getting ready to rise above the waterline to illuminate everything she touches.

I Need Community to Make it Through

Ho'omau is from Ka'alaea, O'ahu and entered the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu as a transfer student. She earned an associate degree from Windward Community College and entered UH West O'ahu after being out of school for 15 years. She is interested in creating long-term resources built upon Native Hawaiian ancestral ways of being for families in Hawai'i, and a bachelor's degree is part of her plan to make this happen.

An Indigenous Learner in a Colonized State

Ho‘omau enrolled at UH West O‘ahu because she planned to be a Doctor of Clinical Psychology and create systemic change in Hawai‘i through a return to ancestral ways of community, but her experience has been a disappointment thus far. She expected open-minded and elevated thinking about people and knowledge; instead, she encountered an “academic bubble” unlike the hands-on work experience she gained while out of school for 15 years. Ho‘omau came to college with a clear idea of what skills and knowledge she needed to have a successful career. At times, it was difficult to tolerate college because she knew in her heart that the constant challenges arising from her learning differences and Native Hawaiian worldview do not reflect how the world outside of higher education treated her.

Ho‘omau was diagnosed for learning differences shortly before she enrolled at UH West O‘ahu, and she shared that it has been an uphill battle to be heard and accommodated for her needs as a learner. During classes, including courses about Indigenous methods and practices, Ho‘omau was limited to presenting her knowledge through reading or writing. Beyond feeling limited to assessments that are more about evaluating her skill as a writer or test taker, what was most challenging for her was the reaction to the initiative she takes to enhance her learning in class. Most professors did not have empathy for her learning differences and more so, she felt belittled by their responses to her questions. For example, she recently had a professor that responded to her clarifying question by saying, “[u]se your thinking brain. Your adult brain. Your college brain.”

In addition to the lack of understanding Ho‘omau’s teachers had for her learning needs, she also experienced institutional racism, which she described as the constant reminder that she

was unable to express herself in school through the Hawaiian language, Hawaiian values, or Hawaiian worldviews. Ho‘omau told me,

it's difficult for me as [a neurodivergent] student to get through college myself because at- I'm 39- I still feel like this- I feel colonized constantly that *this*, [reading and writing], is the smartest way to be smart. I don't think it is at all. And to be honest with you, almost all my professors are, you know, Caucasian, not from here, and they're trying to teach me on things of the world, and they know nothing of the things of this world. And so, it's kind of like, walking around with racism is just like a constant toxic stress. And I know it sounds extreme, but that's really kind of what it feels like to be an Indigenous learner in a colonized state.

Ho‘omau had high expectations for UH West O‘ahu because of the way it seems, on the outside, to be a place for Native Hawaiian people. Instead, it feels like an experience of colonization where ‘ike Hawai‘i does not penetrate below the surface. She shared, “I don't know if it sounds bad, but you know what it feels like? Hawaiian is a decoration.” Beyond greetings and buzzwords, nothing seemed truly centered around Native Hawaiian people.

Under the Right Circumstances, I Can be Magnificent

During our conversation about Ho‘omau’s experience as a college student, she asked me if I had a garden, which I do not. She continued, “have you ever grown an orchid or a cactus?” This question made me smile because both my mom and grandma have grown (or tried to grow) orchids for a long time. My grandma’s orchid plants live on her lanai and are watered on a precise staggered schedule. They always seem to be thriving and producing purple and pink flowers. I also have childhood memories of my mom’s attempts at growing orchid plants because their pots would migrate around our home as she tried to find a place for the orchids to be happy.

Finally, a few years ago, my mom found a spot in her home where the orchid plant thrives with the right combination of sunlight and water. The roots are now overflowing out of the pot and the branches continue to sprout new buds that bloom into beautiful white flowers.

Ho‘omau reaffirmed my thoughts about orchids and shared that “[t]hey're super temperamental, they don't like a lot of water. They like semi-sun, but they make like these amazing, magnificent flowers.” Ho‘omau continued, “that’s like a person like me. Under the right circumstances, I *can* be magnificent.”

Then, she added, there are other flowers that react very differently to their environment, such as dandelions. Those flowers

can grow on the bumper of your car. They grow in that crack in a sidewalk, they could grow in a boot that is in the yard. So, they can thrive in any situation. You know, some kids are like that. And then some kids are like the orchids.

Ho‘omau explained that a person’s ability to grow and thrive depends on having an environment that appropriately serves their needs. In educational systems, this is especially true for someone like Ho‘omau; she knows she is ready for college, but it seems that college may not be ready for her.

When Ho‘omau enrolled in college to earn her bachelor’s degree with a new awareness of her learning differences, she felt like she finally had a chance in school. She also understood how being a neurodivergent student impacted the way she once felt about school and why she internalized messages about herself not being good at school. She shared,

I am a neurodivergent student. I have ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia...I should have been diagnosed as a child, I should have had a lot of help growing up. But

instead of that I just I understood the message of like, you're not smart, you're dumb. So what's wrong with you?

Now, with a strong sense of purpose, a notetaker, extended time on tests, and the option for extended deadlines as needed, Ho‘omau received A’s for the first time in her life.

Still, how professors teach and evaluate knowledge differs greatly from how neurodivergent students like Ho‘omau learn. She felt passionate about changing the system of education after her own experiences in school. It is a purpose that drove her to be in college despite the challenges she continued to face in higher education, especially from college professors that still held on to measuring intelligence and knowledge in limited ways. She told me:

So, I went back to school to be a pediatric clinical psychologist, and especially for students like me who are neurodivergent, who just kind of slum under the radar. [There is] so much greatness in them and potential, but it just gets crushed by the infrastructure of school which only really kind of rewards those who are linguistic and logical and reading and writing. If you're good at those things, you'll do well in life and if not, then ‘you must not be good at anything,’ and that's just not true at all.

Ho‘omau hoped for empathy from others, especially professors, for being neurodivergent in an unaccommodating educational system. It has been hard to receive this empathy because “even an educational system like higher education, or even all education, if the educator themselves doesn't have that kind of a shared diagnosis, they have no empathy for anybody different from them.” The lack of understanding of her learning identities and her navigating a colonized education system as an Indigenous woman made for a disappointing experience at UH West O‘ahu.

Breath in the Sail

Ho‘omau continued in college because of her dreams of systemic change for her community through ‘āina, decolonizing support for families, and returning to interdependence. She hopes to create a community where people work together to uplift each other, which could happen through ‘āina and increasing the cultural indexes of people. This concept was at the core of her purpose of being in college to become a doctor. She shared that

when a community can be strengthened and changed, then it can kind of support interdependence between people who are doing all these things and who go hey, I'll watch your kid, OK you go work, and you know like a village...a very ancestral way of living.

She hoped for these resources and support, but specified that they must be decolonized to be culturally effective.

Community, interdependence, and cultural practices have made her more able to be in college despite the additional challenges like being disconnected in online asynchronous classes. Ho‘omau specified that she is “kinesthetic, visual, and social learner. So, if [she’s] not getting those things, [she’s] struggling.” During some semesters, her courses were only offered as asynchronous online classes, leaving her no direct connection with her professors or peers.

When Ho‘omau needed help, she utilized the campus tutoring services, however, “[she] couldn't have done it if [she] didn't make meaningful connections with other humans.” Ho‘omau participated in a pathway called Papahana Wailau Ola, a Native Hawaiian pathway to encourage Indigenous students to build community in college, which helped her make connections to other students that were experiencing similar challenges. Through her participation in this group,

Ho‘omau found a community of support that she desperately needed to thrive in school; she hopes to build this feeling for her hometown community one day. She told me:

having a pakanā (partner), really was kind of the breath in the sail, you know, because there'll be points where they were low and I wasn't, or, I was a little [low] and they weren't. And so, that's community. That's interdependence, right? Like, understanding I don't have to have it together all the time. And I also don't have to be despondent all the time. Mea kōkua means helper, but it also means the one that is helped, which is a Hawaiian idea, not just a word. And I love that idea. In English, we assign it as two different things like you're either helping or being helped as if it wasn't the same thing, as if you weren't the same vessel, that got both.

This concept of support was what worked for Ho‘omau and she credited it as a critical piece of her college experience that allowed her to move forward successfully, despite the challenges she faced at UH West O‘ahu. She told me, with unquestionable certainty, *“I need community to make it through.”*

Ho‘omau’s Native Hawaiian identity and culture led her to feel connected to her ancestors and Hawai‘i, making her feel strong, resilient, and motivated. She shared this story about a time ‘āina healed:

Honestly, I remember the best day I had, I was supposed to be writing all these papers and doing all these things and looking at a screen and being super responsible. And I just said, screw it. I'mma go outside for 30 minutes. I have a māla (garden) and I love being outside and my 30 minutes turned into the entire day like, 12 hours of the day. And I did a lot of work for ‘āina, but ‘āina did so much work for me. I was so healed. I felt a sense of resiliency because at that point I felt like I was going to quit school.

She continued to describe the ways in which that experience made her feel connected to her ancestors through mo‘okū‘auhau:

After spending all that time in my māla and with ‘āina, I really felt that sense of connection like all the people who lived before me. They had difficulties in life that I have never known. And these plants that I'm cultivating, I was working with kalo, ‘uala, māmaki, and all these things at the time, I have awa. They're only existent because those people saved this for *me*. So, I felt like that connection like I'm so humbled, I stand on the shoulders of giants, you know, and like their struggles are why I'm here today, if it had not been for them. And I felt a sense of like pride, like, *I can go through hard things*.

Ho‘omau’s motivation to continue in college is not only because of how she looks to the past of her mo‘okū‘auhau, but also because of how she looks toward the future. Being a student at UH West O‘ahu continues to have very challenging moments. However, Ho‘omau is aware that someday she will be an ancestor, so she perseveres to become the shoulders on which her decedents will stand.

Ho‘omau’s Community

Today, Ho‘omau sees that being in college begins with finding a purpose, especially for Native Hawaiian students who may encounter challenges that lead them to question their place in college. She recommended that future college students build their purpose around a clear finish line. Knowing where she’s going and what the end looks like made it easier to distinguish between who and what she needs. Ho‘omau shared that students also need community. Her worldview and life experience has taught her that we cannot do things alone. Knowing this has been pivotal in her college experience, which is why she believes that “for you to succeed, you

do need community, whether it's one person or a bunch of people you need more than yourself.” This is because “when we look at resilience, it’s also spelt interdependence.”

Ho‘omau hopes for college to become a place where students are provided the resources to identify and nurture their basic health, well-being and, most importantly, their cultural needs. For Ho‘omau, having a connection to her cultural was a form of finding purpose and resiliency. Out of every support available, she noted, “that cultural index, though, would honestly be the foundation of how I survive.” Her ability to persevere every day in college is due to her goals, ‘āina, community, and ‘ohana. In the end she said, “I want to live life in a way that makes my ancestors proud and what they did, meaningful.” After talking with Ho‘omau, I am confident that her kūpuna see her journey as the flowers of an orchid: truly magnificent.

For the Sake of My Grandchildren

Abbie Kahula Reed, whose family is originally from Moloka‘i, was born in Papakōlea on O‘ahu. She was raised in Waimānalo and now lives in Kapolei. After retiring from a career in the medical insurance field, she decided to go to college with the encouragement of her daughters. She provided for her family throughout her life, but it was not until she went to college that she began to think about her purpose:

Prior to coming to West O‘ahu, I had no clue of purpose, that I was meant to- put on Earth to do something. I think no one even asked me that question. I just lived life. When my husband passed in 2016, you know, I looked up and for the first time trying to realize, you know, what is this all about? What am I doing? Where am I going? Finally, slow-paced. I took the time to actually ask that question.

When we had our conversation, Abbie had just graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in Creative Media a few weeks earlier. She was one of two fall 2022 commencement speakers for the

University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. From the podium, Abbie shared the importance of finding her reason for being in college. At the end of her speech, she called four of her five grandchildren up to the stage. Then, she looked to the audience and said, “ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to introduce you to *my why*” (Reed, 2022).

The Drive to do Above and Beyond, That was my Grandmother

Abbie had a strong and loving relationship with her grandmother, from whom she learned her values and lessons. She remembers,

when I was growing up, you know, small, little, maybe pre-kindergarten, we lived in Papakōlea and we would sit under the mango tree on the lauhala mat and would lay down, just her and me. And you know, she would tell the stories.

These moments were distant memories until Abbie started a project in college that required her to look back on her life and childhood. Through this reflection, she realized how much her grandmother’s words had guided her understanding of her gifts and values.

Abbie hears the voices of her ancestors, and it was her grandmother who taught her to identify this as a valuable gift. She explained that her grandmother taught her that “the ancestors are there to help. And there’s lots of them, and they’re always talking to you and talking to you.” The presence of her ancestors has helped her with hula, creativity, and problem-solving throughout her life.

Abbie’s grandmother also taught her to aim for excellence in everything she does. She told me, “[t]he drive to do above and beyond, that was my grandmother.” Guided by this value, she excelled in both hula and high school. Since “Hawaiian music and culture have always been in [her] family,” she was expected to excel in hula; she became the best. Abbie shared, “I was a

frontline dancer in Merrie Monarch,” the most prestigious hula competition in the world, “and we won.” To have such an accolade means truly reaching excellence.

In high school, Abbie was recognized and awarded for her talents in dancing hula. Through these achievement awards, Abbie secured three scholarships for college, too. When it came to going to college, though, she told me, “I fell through the cracks...and we were told- *I* was told, ‘no money, no college,’ right? My mom said, ‘no money, no college,’ you know, and *her* mom [said], ‘*there is no college,*’ right?”

Abbie enrolled in Windward Community College for a brief time. She explained, “I went to college only because I won scholarships.” Although Abbie attended a college preparatory school, she said, “the words in my ear all growing up was college is not for me.” After leaving college, she built her career and a beautiful family until she retired in 2017. All the while, she never stopped striving for excellence the way her grandmother had taught her.

It’s Still Happening

Once Abbie became a UH West O‘ahu student, she had a documentary assignment in college that took her back to her hometown. For her project, she decided to speak to houseless people living in her hometown of Waimānalo. Abbie met a woman living in one of the camps and asked, “your grandkids going college?” The woman replied, “college is not for them- can’t afford it.” This moment was significant to Abbie; she realized “the same words that came out of [her mom’s] mouth decades ago is still happening. It’s *still* happening.”

Looking at Hawai‘i, she feels discouraged by the economic trends, just as many others do. Homes are not affordable, and wages are insufficient to sustain comfortable lifestyles. However, Abbie notices certain people in Hawai‘i have mindsets and habits that lead them to go to college, get good jobs, and advance their families toward success. Families unfamiliar with

college are disadvantaged because they do not have this type of cultural capital to pass on to their children. Because of this, she explained that she feels a “purpose is to expose our young children into the new verbiage and [add] to our Hawaiian values.” Her goal of this “new verbiage” is to increase the cultural capital of everyday Hawai‘i people by sharing phrases, mantras, and perspectives about college through social media. This process involved unraveling personal and cultural norms that she learned growing up. She stated,

[t]he survival of our culture is, you know, we got to focus on making the money. Or else we won’t have Hawaiians on this island...I gotta open that, that knot that I was raised in. For the sake of my grandchildren.

My Teachers are my Friends, Grandma

To change how her family and future generations think about their opportunities in the world, especially in education, she is teaching her grandchildren the messages she wishes she had learned as a kid. These messages are things like, “your teacher is your friend,” meaning that the students can ask their teacher for help and that their teacher is there to help explain things to them when they do not understand. In her upbringing, she shared, “I never heard that. I heard, ‘you listen to your teacher. You be mindful. You don’t talk back and do what they say. Hey, be respectful.’ That was respect to me. That’s how I was taught from generations now.” She remembers telling her children these same messages, to listen and respect their teacher. She told them to follow directions, to be obedient, and not to talk back. Culturally, these were signs of respect; she now sees that these messages may have prevented her children from asking questions and taking the initiative they needed with their learning. She notices that these same original messages are told to her grandchildren, and she sees an opportunity to begin shifting the mindsets of her own family.

Recently, her grandson came home from school interested in becoming class president. She noticed that he was interested in the opportunity but was nearly talking himself out of trying because of the risk of failing. He told her, “[w]ell, maybe I should go for secretary, you know, president is too much, right? I can’t be president.” This doubt was familiar to Abbie; she remembered thinking similarly with an internal dialogue that said, “that’s not us.” She seized the moment and told her grandson he could be class president if he worked hard. She helped him to make his signs and practice his speech. Most of all, she told him he could shoot for the stars. Through each conversation, she instilled hope and confidence in her grandson. She would ask, “[y]ou can go how high?” He would reply, “[a]s high as I want, grandma...I want that.” With a proud smile on her face, Abbie told me that out of all the students that ran for class president, her grandson won.

Abbie is evolving how future generations of her family are thinking about school by encouraging her grandchildren to believe that their dreams are within reach. This belief, similar to her grandmother’s values, has given them a sense of purpose to do well in school. She pointed out that her grandson

“now gets straight A’s. Before, he didn’t know why he should. Yeah, let’s just pass the class. Let’s just you know, C’s and B’s were good. But he’s like, after the A’s. He wants the A’s. He makes the appointments with the teachers because if he doesn’t know this trigonometry equation, he will tell the teacher, can I meet with you after class or before school to go over something?”

He understands his teachers and educational resources differently now. And when she hears him say, “my teachers are my friends, grandma,” she knows that she is changing how he thinks about his potential and purpose in life.

Abbie's Purpose

“UH West O‘ahu helped me to define my purpose,” Abbie told me. Now, she feels unstoppable. She acknowledges that without this sense of purpose, attending college every day or putting a bachelor’s degree to use after graduation could be difficult. Abbie also values the impact she can have on others through social media platforms; she shared, “I [realized] the power that I had in creative media...and the reach that I had, not just in my community in Hawai‘i, but I could reach out in the world.” Today, Abbie honors her ancestors, family, and grandmother through her efforts to uplift future generations of Native Hawaiian people.

This is For Me

The final participant in this study is Kimberly (Kim) Ae from ‘Ewa Beach, O‘ahu. After 20 years, she decided to return to college and enrolled at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities with a concentration in English. Kim is also employed at UH West O‘ahu and we became colleagues in 2022, but it was not until her interview that I had the chance to get to know her motivation for being in college. She will graduate this fall and pursue opportunities based on her gift of storytelling.

One Lane in, one Lane out, one Stoplight, and Sugar Cane

Kim was born and raised in ‘Ewa Beach, a city known for its rapid growth in population and development. While many people think of this city as home to the largest public high school in Hawai‘i, Kim clarified to me that she remembers the simpler days when ‘Ewa Beach was a small town without much name recognition. “I grew up when it was still one lane in, one lane out, one stoplight, and sugar cane,” she explained. It was a small, close-knit community where people looked out for and relied on each other. When describing herself and her values, she shared, “a lot of the way that I am is informed by coming from a small town.” Although some of

her extended family has since moved away, Kim and her family are still deeply rooted in ‘Ewa Beach.

Kim’s “great-great-grandfather was the first person to build a house in ‘Ewa Beach, which was on the property where [her] mom [and family] is living.” Six generations of Kim’s maternal family have lived on that same property in ‘Ewa Beach. In a place where most Native Hawaiian people have lost or left their ancestral lands, Kim acknowledges that it is rare and significant for her family to live on the same land for six generations. Living in ‘Ewa Beach today connects Kim to decades of stories about work ethic and resiliency in her family.

Kim’s understanding of work ethic came from “seeing [her] mom and dad work hard so that [their family] could have the things [they] had.” She also knows the stories of her parent’s resiliency starting from their childhood; her mother braved through losing a parent and her dad worked from the time he was a young child by “[filling] up two five-pound bags [of coffee beans] before he went to school.” She mentioned that he never once complained about doing that work and still does not complain about his responsibilities today.

These family stories lead her to feel strong, resilient, and capable of being in college today. She shared,

I can do it because they went through worse stuff. And me, you know, complaining because I have a paper due it's not that hard compared to the struggles that they have. So, it's totally doable for anybody. And I think even more so when you've come from a family that has had to struggle.”

This is a strength that has always been with Kim; she never doubted her ability to be in college, but without making the choice to enroll based on a self-driven purpose, like her personal and professional goals, she could not see herself being in college directly after high school.

It Has to be Something That you Want to do for Yourself

Kimberly moved to southern California right after the summer she graduated from high school, but decided to move home after three months becoming homesick from being away from her family and Hawai'i. A short time later, she enrolled at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. Then, she returned to 'Ewa Beach and attended Leeward Community College briefly. When Kim reflected on those experiences further, she explained "it wasn't the right time, I guess, [for her] to go to school" because she lacked a clear sense of purpose beyond wanting to fulfill her parent's hopes for her to go to college. So, she entered the workforce while continuing her gift of storytelling and writing.

Kim's gift for storytelling and writing grew from her love of reading. She told me that from the time she was a young girl, she would read as much as she possibly could. Eventually, she realized that she had her own stories to share and began her journey as a writer. Leading up to 2016, Kim was employed at a medical center and had authored a series of fiction books. After sharing her books with a friend to read, that friend strongly encouraged Kim to get her work published. She recalled feeling hesitant about getting published, saying, "[i]t just doesn't seem like- it *didn't* seem like something I was gonna be able to do." Kimberly explained that authors often have a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree, which she perceived as a helpful credential for an author.

With a Post 9-11 G.I. Bill available to use, Kim decided that her next step toward becoming a published writer was to earn a college degree. Her friend, a Doctor of Medicine and a Doctor of Philosophy, told her, "[y]ou do not need to go to school for what you're gonna do." Kimberly mentioned that "it was kind of interesting that somebody at her [friend's] level [of education] was not encouraging [her] to go [to college]." However, Kim's mother had always

hoped for her children to be college educated, and Kimberly especially wanted to be a good example for her daughter. So, she returned to college to pursue being a published author while also fulfilling long-held personal goals for her daughter, her parents, and herself.

Kim decided to work and enroll at UH West O‘ahu after connecting to the campus through a colleague from the medical center. As a veteran, Kim used educational benefits to eliminate the financial burden that often comes with a college degree. When those benefits concluded, she then used the employee tuition waiver to continue attending college for free. Kim appreciates the affordability of attending UH West O‘ahu, however, it was her personal motivation for a college degree that became the most impactful.

When I asked Kim about the difference between going to college directly after high school and now, she said, “this is for *me*.” In addition to the strength sourced from knowing her family’s stories, her perseverance through challenges in college was also because of her own clear motivation to be a published author as well as an inspiration to her daughter. Regarding going to college this time around, she also shared:

It's mostly determination. Like believing that you can be here for yourself, and you can't base it on anybody else, like your family. It has to be something that you want to do for yourself, because I think back when I first was going to go to school, that was for my parents, right?"

In addition to a strong sense of purpose, Kim is in college today through the reciprocal support of small campus environment and her daughter.

Everybody can fit in Some way

The supportive environment of a small college campus led Kim to feel like she was getting a quality academic experience. This support was reciprocal; as an employee, she not only

received assistance as a student, but also gave back to the campus through the service of her job. The size of the campus was especially appealing to her, and she appreciated “a small community because that’s the kind of community [she] grew up in.” In this atmosphere, it felt like “everybody can fit in in some way.” This community meant that even as a student who went to college in her 40’s, she never felt out of place among younger students. She described the feeling as, “[i]t’s just like, ‘oh, we’re, we’re in the same class.’ Really, we’re the same, right? We’re learning the same thing. I’m not better than you. You’re not better than me. We’re just- we’re on the same playing field.”

Daughter. A few years after Kim enrolled at UH West O‘ahu, her daughter enrolled there, too. They began taking classes together and worked toward a degree in Humanities with a concentration in English. The two are close, so it was enjoyable to be going to school together. Still, Kim was mindful of the unusual situation of a mother and daughter being in the same college class. Initially, when they would begin a new semester, Kim would ask her daughter, “how do you want to play it? Do you want them to know we’re related?” Kim’s daughter was reassuring and said that the dynamics of their relationship was not a concern. The two continued toward their degrees as mother and daughter.

Although part of Kim’s motivation to go to college was to be an example for her daughter, she found that it was the reciprocal support system between the two of them that helped her make it to the end of tough semesters. Kim remembered the way she was held accountable and encouraged by her daughter. Kim was also in awe as she thought about how her daughter managed to go to school as a full-time student, work a campus job, and care for her grandparents. Reflecting on how her daughter juggled these responsibilities, Kimberly shared that “[s]he’s been kind of a good motivation for me and an inspiration.” Taking on the journey of

college alongside her daughter was special for Kimberly. While the small university community was a positive experience, it was also their inspiration to each other that led to continuing in college. Kimberly imagines a future where they can both get their MFA degrees together.

Native Hawaiian Identity. Kim has learned more about her Native Hawaiian identity and her roots in 'Ewa Beach since enrolling at UH West O'ahu. This is due to both her job of working alongside Native Hawaiian grant programs as well as experiencing Native Hawaiian history and practices through her classes. Although she had some familiarity of her Native Hawaiian culture, she said that "it wasn't until coming [to UH West O'ahu] that it was put into context for me...this is where we are and this is where we're from." Her ability to learn in this way is what she appreciated about the small community; Kim felt that she could go to college wherever she was at in her life, grow, and be part of something.

The Choice was on me

Today, Kim is sure that this is the right time for her to be in college because she experiences the community as both a student and staff member, she has the support of her daughter, and, most importantly, she has a clear purpose. Reflecting on past experiences in college, Kim shared that

[her parents] weren't pushers. They didn't say, 'you're going to college.' They just didn't. So, the choice was on [me]. And of course, I didn't make the decision until later.

Which, you know, sometimes I have to be grateful. Maybe they knew what they were doing because I wasn't in that place at the time and now I am.

A story of a recent opportunity that connects her gift of storytelling, roots in 'Ewa Beach, and identity as a Native Hawaiian woman, helps to demonstrate this feeling.

Several years ago, Kim went home to her family's property in 'Ewa Beach after a day of work at UH West O'ahu to learn that her parents were visited by a man named Kilin Reece. Kilin is a musician and guitar repairman that had lived in East O'ahu for the last few decades. One day, an old guitar was brought to him to be repaired. The label on the guitar read: property of the Royal Hawaiian Band. Upon further research into the Royal Hawaiian Band, Kilin realized that the group had significant impacts both to Hawai'i's history and to the world through music. A notable story of the Royal Hawaiian Band in Hawai'i's history is their refusal to sign an oath of loyalty in support the provisional government in 1893 (Silva, 2004), which became a story that inspired Ellen Keko'aohiwaikalani Wright Prendergast to compose a song for the band members. Today, this song is commonly known as "Kaulana Nā Pua" (famous are the flowers), but originally it was called "Mele Aloha 'Āina" and "Mele Ai Pōhaku" (Silva, 2004).

Kilin became particularly interested in the life and leadership of Mekia Kealakai, who led the Royal Hawaiian Band as the director from 1920 to 1926 and then again from 1930 to 1932. He was inspired by Mekia's life and hoped to learn and share his story with the world. Kilin's self-driven quest to learn more about Mekia led him to the 'Ulu'ulu archives, which is located on UH West O'ahu's campus. The staff provided Kilin with the last known address for Mekia, which led him to Kim's family home in 'Ewa Beach. Mekia Kealakai was the first person to build a house in 'Ewa Beach and his descendants had continued to live on that same property for six generations. His great-great-granddaughter is Kimberly Ae.

When Kilin met Kim's parents, he told them about his hope for the story of Mekia's life and the Royal Hawaiian Band's international influence on music during a turbulent time in Hawai'i's history to be heard. He also told them, "I don't feel like it's my place [to share it]." When Kim's mother responded, "well, my daughter's a writer," Kilin reached out to connect

with Kim. Eventually, the two connected and became friends. After many years of writing, Kim and Kilin produced a screenplay about the rich life story of Mekia Kealakai and the history of the Royal Hawaiian Band.

The process of writing the screenplay involved learning more about the story of Mekia Kealakai's life and the difficult choices he had to make during the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Kim shared, "as I've gotten to know more about the story of my ancestor in this way, it's like shaping who I am and then I definitely have so much more appreciation for my Native Hawaiian side." So far, there have been many positive reactions to the screenplay, and the potential opportunities ahead will bring Kim's dream of being a published writer to fruition. As Kim prepares to graduate from college next semester, this topic will be her final senior project.

Kim's Choice

Near the end of our conversation together, Kim chuckled as she acknowledged that it was a long journey to get a bachelor's degree. However, she told me, "when I met [Kilin], it all made sense." The opportunity to use her gift of writing to tell the story of her great-great-grandfather on a worldwide stage meant that her timeline for college was the right choice. Kim needed to be in a reciprocal support system with her daughter. She needed the small community of UH West O'ahu. Most importantly, she needed a sense of purpose. As the final semester of college approaches, Kim is ready because she can say to herself, "*this is for me.*"

Stories as Data

This section presented the qualitative data of this research, which included six individual life stories of Native Hawaiian students from the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu. It was an honor to listen to and write about the people, places, and support that were shared by Bryceson,

Jensen, Kaua, Ho‘omau, Abbie, and Kim. Their perceptions of college readiness are the heart of this research and the lessons discussed in chapter five.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Through this dissertation research, I aimed to learn about college readiness from the stories of Native Hawaiian college students at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. I used a conceptual lens of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Critical Race Theory (Reyes, 2018; Wright & Balutski, 2015) to understand the systemic nature of Native Hawaiian people in education as well as the methodological design of Indigenous Storywork (Archibald, 2008), which is inherently by and for Indigenous people. After studying the detailed descriptions of each participant’s life and journey in college, I learned that their sense of purpose, intergenerational strength, and an interdependent worldview makes this group feel ready for college.

While learning from these stories, I examined how my positionality in the world and experience in higher education interacted with the lessons I learned from the participants (Archibald, 2008). One challenging memory from graduate school continued to surface during this process and led me to question how I understood college readiness for myself. After I explored the relationship between that memory and the stories of this study, it helped me to become even more open-minded about college readiness and clearly identify the lessons of this research.

The Kind Stranger

In chapter one, I shared a story about interviewing for graduate school and how that interview made me feel seen, worthy, and capable. So, when I received the call offering me a place in the graduate program, I accepted. It was over 4,000 miles from my family on O‘ahu, but I saw it as an opportunity to grow in my career as a student affairs professional, with all expenses covered. At my graduate institution, I accepted a position in the office of undergraduate admissions to conduct daily counseling appointments with visitors and lead a team of 20 student

ambassadors. I also agreed to take on an additional job as a live-in housing and property director for a national sorority organization, which paid for my housing and meals. I knew that these roles and my full-time student schedule would be a lot of work, but I assured myself that I could manage the responsibilities.

Two years later, aside from the incomprehensible freezing weather, I was grateful to be learning and working in Illinois. I looked forward to class with my cohort and discovering how social justice work in the Midwest was similar to and different from social justice work in Hawai‘i. My time there felt purposeful; I was rapidly gaining work experience, my friends had become family, and frequent video calls with my loved ones made the distance seem manageable. Then, when I was eight weeks away from graduating with my master’s degree, my mom called to tell me that my dad had been diagnosed with cancer. For the first time in my undergraduate and graduate career, I prepared to drop out of school.

Everything that made me feel strong and capable of being in school was gone within a moment. Although my parents urged me to graduate and said they felt hopeful about the chemotherapy and radiation treatments, it was hard to think of a reason to stay in school. At the time, I believed sharing my feelings with my friends, colleagues, or family would be unproductive, so I did not speak to anyone about my situation. I had thought that words or hugs would never fix my feelings, so it was better to try and manage the pain alone. I scheduled a meeting with a faculty member to determine the steps for me to drop out of the program. She listened to me for a while with much empathy and recommended that I consider all my options instead of rushing my decision.

Later that week, the Office of Admissions asked me to host the descendents of a late, beloved faculty member around campus as they learned about this man’s legacy and viewed the

building named in his honor. When I arrived, I met a friendly group of people, one and two generations older than myself. I escorted them around and stood to the side while they visited the archives and looked at pictures, newspaper articles, and artifacts from the university. I put on a brave face and gave them as much energy as possible. However, being physically and mentally present was difficult because I was concerned for my parents. Since my mom was taking time off work to drive my dad to his cancer treatments, I thought about how, if I was home, I could take care of everything else in the background.

When I finished the tour, one of the women in the group came up to chat with me. She seemed genuinely interested in getting to know me; she asked about my studies, hometown, and experience living in the Midwest. I remember how kind and patient she was while she listened to me explain my experience in school. During my conversation with the woman, I had not shared anything about my dad's recent diagnosis or that I was considering dropping out of school while only two months shy of graduating. I held my emotions together, but somehow, it felt like she could sense my pain or see how close I was to breaking. When we finally concluded our conversation, she shook my hand and wished me good luck for the rest of my semester. Then, the woman took another moment to look inside her purse and hand me her business card; she looked at me knowingly and said, "Amy, when you look at this card, I want you to remember that someone is rooting for you."

When those simple yet meaningful words were gifted to me, I remembered what it felt like to be supported. Since the phone call with my mom, I had lost sight of my reason for being in graduate school, which became more difficult to rediscover when I isolated myself from family and friends. My foundation for being in school was crumbling, but that interaction showed me how to begin rebuilding; I needed to reconnect with my support systems. Slowly, I

shared my situation with friends and allowed myself to speak honestly with my family. I grew stronger through those relationships and planned to stay in school, graduate with my master's degree, and move home. Soon after, I graduated and returned home to be with my family as my dad went through a grueling therapy process and then eventually a full recovery.

When I began this study, I was working to address Native Hawaiian college enrollment through a lens of outreach and access processes. Simply, I was focused on how students learned about and entered college. As I listened to the stories and gifts of the six participants, I was continuously reminded of my own story with this kind stranger. Initially, I disregarded that my story had anything to do with college readiness because it occurred nearly nine years after I first learned about and enrolled in higher education. So, in my mind, I had categorized it as a story of perseverance rather than a story about feeling ready to go to college. Eventually, however, I understood that the participants had explained their college readiness through stories of strength and perseverance. College readiness was not only how they learned about, applied, and arrived in college, but also how they continued to thrive or endure at UH West O'ahu.

The participants' stories extend into student success topics, which typically focus on college students' academic and personal impact through engagement with their college campus. College readiness, college admissions, and student success are three focus areas of higher education that are closely connected, but often enacted separately. Since college readiness efforts aim to prepare students to be successful in college, which is evaluated by college admissions offices, it was helpful to understand how the participants perceived their engagement with UH West O'ahu. Through the exploration of college readiness, this research produced lessons that contribute to the full pathway of how UH West O'ahu can identify, evaluate, and prepare students for college success.

An Emerging Metaphor

As I write this last chapter, the weather has brought harsh rain and wind to my home in Launani Valley, a small community in the ahupua‘a of Waipi‘o between Mililani and Wahiawā, every day for the last week. During this time, my husband Nick and I usually avoid walking outside with our son, Andrew, because the loose soil leads to falling trees and rockslides throughout the luscious green valley. I keep my eyes and ears vigilant to the mountains of our valley because that which is usually firmly planted becomes unstable.

There is an ‘ōlelo no‘eau this occurrence reminded me of: “Malia paha he iki ‘unu pa‘a ka pōhaku nui ‘a‘ole e ka‘a” which translates as “[p]erhaps it is the small stone that can keep the big rock from rolling down” (Pukui, 1983, p. 231). Mary Kawena Pukui (1983) writes that this ‘ōlelo no‘eau commonly referred to individual people that played important supporting roles to other “superior” people (p. 231). I started to think about how these boulders on my mountain remind me of the participants in my study. They are strong and purposeful pieces of our land, but even harsh conditions challenge their stability. I learned from my participants that, while they came to college as whole pōhaku (stones), the supporting boulders wedged beneath them contributed to their stability in college. Their stories presented in Chapter 4 are stories of strength; how these participants give, receive, and search for steadfastness in a turbulent college environment reminds me of our sacred pōhaku.

The powerful role of kūpuna pōhaku in the acts of aloha ‘āina at Mauna a Wākea in 2015 exemplifies how pōhaku are both figurative and literal foundations of abundance for Native Hawaiian people (Fujikane, 2021). Fujikane’s (2021) writing of these events references ho‘omanawainui’s (2008) understanding of abundance from stones as it was taught by Kawika Winters, who was taught by Eddie Ka‘ana‘ana and Lydia Hale. They explain that pōhaku are the

foundations of our sustenance; they shape our lo‘i, pound our poi, and are the base of our homes. More so, they are representations of our ancestral guardians. Pōhaku feed us not only physically, but spiritually. Fujikane (2021) highlights the significance of stones for Native Hawaiian people, sharing that “[p]ōhaku are manifestations of Pāpahānaumoku, she who is the foundation birthing islands, the ‘āina who feeds.” When Native Hawaiian people refer to themselves as ‘ai pōhaku (stone eaters), this name is significant. From the words of these kūpuna and scholars, I have learned that when Native Hawaiian people are steadfast to traditions that give us meaningful and holistic nourishment (Winter as cited in ho‘omanawainui, 2008), it is an act of survivance; this continued presence of Native Hawaiian ways of knowing and being leads to the lastingness of Native Hawaiian people.

My choice to use pōhaku as a metaphor for my findings was made with much intention. I look at these stories with the same reverence I have for our sacred pōhaku and the stories, people, and places they represent. This understanding of pōhaku alongside the guiding ‘ōlelo no‘eau that speaks to the importance of supportive pōhaku is a metaphor that aims to illuminate what I have learned about college readiness from these Native Hawaiian students.

The Native Hawaiian students in this study explained their understanding of college readiness through lessons about their sense of purpose, intergenerational strength, and interdependent worldview. Each of the three lessons, which I refer to as pōhaku, reflects what I learned from listening to the stories of Bryceson, Jensen, Kaua, Ho‘omau, Abbie, and Kimberly. These pōhaku are the foundation of their college readiness, which is less about their academic performance and more about what contributes to their perseverance.

The participants told stories of their families, both past and future, with a strong presence of mo‘olelo and mo‘okū‘auhau. They walked me through memories that captured the collectivist

nature of their being and how they see themselves as interdependent with other people, places, and stories. Along with this collective approach to being in this world were expectations for a reciprocal approach to support. The participants were also very different, having various perspectives and understandings of college based on other factors such as their value of college, their age, or their understanding of themselves.

When a student has one of these foundational pieces of support, it is helpful; when they have two, they become more secure, and when all three are present, the students feel most secure in their ability to be in college. Each pōhaku must be considered within the full context of the participant's story, and one is not more important than another. The interconnectedness of these pōhaku means that we must think differently about how we speak about and evaluate the readiness of Native Hawaiian college students. Through this research, I have learned that a fragmented view of an individual's story is an insufficient measure of college readiness and is a disservice to both the student and the university. Instead, we must understand how a person's whole story of purpose, intergenerational strength, and interdependence work together as preparation for college.

Pōhaku 1: Awareness of Purpose Through Mo'olelo

The participants in this study felt a sureness about entering and enduring adversity in college when they could think, *I have a reason to be here*. Whether the participants were building something new for themselves like Bryceson and Jensen, uplifting their communities like Ho'omau and Abbie, or trying to make a dream come true like Kaua and Kim, going to college with a purpose was an essential lesson of this research. Adversely, the lack of purpose appeared as the source for withdrawing after previous attempts at college. Without an apparent

reason for being in college or being actively reminded of that reason, students may feel lost or less willing to endure the challenges of entering or continuing in college.

The participant's stories revealed that perseverance seemed to be tied to college readiness. This concept of perseverance presented itself differently than scholarship around college persistence. College persistence and retention often refer to the number of students that return for their second year of college (National Student Clearinghouse, 2022) as well as the learned traits that lead students to continue toward degree attainment, including formal and informal applications of self-efficacy, a sense of belonging, and a perceived value of curriculum (Astin, 1894; Tinto, 1993). Although there were some references to skills learned in past educational organizations such as time management, this research found that the participants persevered in college through that which was always part of them.

This pōhaku also represents the knowing and telling of one's story. The participants' understanding of their reason for being in college illuminated how they reflected on their life and chose to tell their stories. They could show how their story led up to college and how they had agency in the conscious decision to enter college. As each participant shared their story, I observed that these personal recollections of their life also included other people's stories, worldviews, and values. The participants' practice of mo'olelo connected them to other people, especially within their genealogy, which leads to the second pōhaku.

Pōhaku 2: Intergenerational Strength Through Mo'okū'auhau

The participants in this study felt ready for their college education through the strength of resilient people in their genealogy or because their actions would impact future generations. For Jensen and Kim, witnessing their parents' resilience and work ethic led to how they perceived challenges in college. When Bryceson and Ho'omau nurture native gardens, they are reminded

of their steadfast Native Hawaiian ancestors who cared for those same plants. Finally, Kim, Abbie, and Ho‘omau committed to college because it impacted their children or grandchildren.

This collectively sourced perseverance came from either passed-down stories or first-hand observation of people in their families facing challenges and working through difficulties. More so, these stories of strength within the participants’ mo‘okū‘auhau have shaped their worldview and led them to have a contextualized understanding of adversity. It was when they could think, *I can do hard things because of them or for them*, that they knew they were ready to take on a challenge or risk in college.

This foundational lesson shows that traditional practices within Native Hawaiian ways of knowing, such as the scholarship around mo‘olelo and mo‘okū‘auhau (ho‘omanawainui, 2017; Lipe, 2015; Mākua, et al., 2019; Reyes, 2018; Wright & Balutski, 2015) in educational spaces, are present and relevant in the participants’ self-awareness. It is also encouraging to see these findings support what has long been shared by Native Hawaiian elders, which is that “[m]o‘okū‘auhau is an active story” and a source of collective, multidimensional knowledge that is unique to everyone (Hall, 2019, p. 113).

‘Ohana relationships and engagement with mo‘okū‘auhau have a role in all three lessons learned in this research. However, this pōhaku, which I call intergenerational strength, emerged from my research as distinct from a student’s understanding of their purpose and interdependence. Although a participant’s family can inspire college goals, when students knew the stories of strength in their mo‘okū‘auhau, it made them feel capable of enacting those goals.

Pōhaku 3: An Interdependent Existence

The participants came to college existing interdependently with people, ‘āina, resources, and community, which prepared them for college. They could say to themselves, *I am supported*

and give support. This was especially true for Bryceson, Ho‘omau, and Kim. When professors, researchers, or scholarship donors invested in Bryceson, through either time or funding, he reciprocated that support by succeeding in his research efforts and speaking about college to younger children. Ho‘omau also explained that being assigned a pakanā was the “breath in the sail” because they carried each other through inevitable high and low moments in college. Kim, the product of a small hometown, expressed that caring for others and being cared for at UH West O‘ahu was an ideal college environment.

When I first began learning from the stories, I noticed that each person referenced support they used to get to or continue to be in college. On the surface, this may seem like a reliance on resources, but their understanding of reciprocated support led me to see that their interdependent being in the world was a form of college readiness. College is often portrayed as or presumed to be an individual journey. However, the participant’s stories showed that the experiences directly countering the idea of doing college by themselves made them feel like they could continue in college.

The use of a culturally responsible (Smith, 2012) and strength-based (Kana‘iaupuni, 2005; Lipe, 2015) research inquiry uncovered that the worldview of these college students is indeed fundamentally unique (Meyer, 2001) from the dominant narratives around college readiness (Allensworth et al., 2018; Conley, 2012; Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014; Maruyama, 2012). The participants’ readiness for college aligns with the interdependent and collective worldview of Native Hawaiian people as described in Native Hawaiian epistemology (Meyer, 2001). Not only are these students ready for meaningful and reciprocal engagement with their campus community, but they are also in need of it to feel certain about being in college.

The collective worldview of the participants also does not fit into expanded conceptualizations of college readiness, such as Conley et al.'s (2014) student ownership of learning model, which still applies an individualistic lens to additional indicators for success in college. High school grade point averages and standardized test scores have long been viewed as the primary measures of academic achievement in college (Tinto, 1993); however, neither of these two indicators appeared in the student stories within this study.

Impact of Findings

Today, high school grade point averages and standardized tests still play an active role in college admission processes and contribute to maintaining exclusivity and restricting access to higher education for minoritized groups (NACAC & NASFAA, 2022). However, national organizations are now beginning to use clear messaging to establish that equity and access are now an expectation instead of a radical demand (NACAC & NASFAA, 2022). It has been suggested that contextual reviews of college applications through a holistic admissions process (Schmitt, 2012; Sternberg, 2010) and a call for more non-cognitive college readiness indicators will increase access to higher education for minoritized populations (Griffith, 2016; Tierney & Sablan, 2014).

Now that we can peer into the reality of Native Hawaiian college students, their stories do not support the overall dichotomy of cognitive and non-cognitive indicators for academic achievement and student success. The findings of this study support the scholarship of Native Hawaiian and Indigenous Knowledge Systems which emphasize that knowledge cannot be divided into categories (Oliveira, 2005; Simpson, 2004; Sumida Huaman et al., 2019). As mentioned during the introduction of the pōhaku, it is the wholeness of these students and their stories through which their college readiness must be understood. Furthermore, this research has

found that while the term college readiness is generally used to describe a person's preparation to enter higher education (Allensworth et al., 2018; Conley, 2012; Maruyama, 2012) at a single point in time, these participants were constantly questioning and revisiting their ability to be in college throughout their undergraduate career.

As UH West O'ahu continues to address issues of equity and access alongside other higher education institutions, I offer the stories and lessons of this research for consideration. This research found that the participants perceived their college readiness to be a sense of purpose, intergenerational strength, and an interdependent way of being. These findings offer a counternarrative to the topic of college readiness, which is currently centered around Western ideologies of defining and measuring academic performance. By recentering policies and practices around the lived experiences and worldviews of students in this study, institutions can develop processes that build upon the inherent cultural strengths existing within Native Hawaiian people.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

I pursued this research to learn how the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu can better serve Native Hawaiian students as they learn about and enter higher education. I acknowledge the dedicated work that already exists at UH West O'ahu and humbly put forward the findings of this study to guide meaningful work at this campus. The following recommendations provide suggestions for both policy, the rules that guide how we do our work, and practice, the daily ways we make decisions and perform our work with students. It is time to not only create space for listening to the stories of minoritized peoples, but also to honor those stories as valuable sources of data and wisdom. The following recommendations are direct strategies to recenter

topics of college readiness around the truths of Bryceson, Jensen, Kaua, Ho‘omau, Abbie, and Kim.

Cultivating a Sense of Purpose

The recommendations of this section intend to address strategies to help nurture the first pōhaku of this study: awareness of purpose through mo‘olelo. I hope that these efforts initiate a practice of listening to prospective students and honoring their stories as a meaningful form of college readiness.

Strength and Mo‘olelo-based Recruitment Strategies. College recruitment and outreach often utilize informative sessions, which leads to a dynamic of admissions counselors speaking and prospective students listening. Instead of perpetuating this pattern, I recommend that admissions counselors use mo‘olelo-based recruitment strategies that invite future students to begin telling the stories of their life. Sharing these stories will not only allow admissions counselors to provide better, more personalized service, it also encourages the students to reflect on and familiarize themselves with the power of their story.

College admissions counselors and those who do outreach work should also adjust their materials, presentations, and overall narrative to be strength-based and rooted in mo‘olelo. More so, counselors and campus tour guides should be trained to share the stories of purpose and their experiences in college in a way that invites prospective students to consider their motivations for going to college and identify what support they will need in that journey.

Purposeful Essay Questions. I recommend adjusting the questions in UH West O‘ahu’s personal statement and scholarship essays to engage students with the story of their purpose for being in college. A policy revision will be requested for scholarships stemming from the University of Hawai‘i System. Currently, these questions ask students to speak about themselves

through the lens of academic achievement or career aspirations, which students may indeed be excited to address. However, staff should revise these questions to include space for students to write about themselves as multidimensional people. Additionally, I recommend that the Office of Admissions and scholarship committees determine if the essays mean to provide context about the student, evaluate the student's writing skills, or a combination of the two. Then, write clear and transparent language about how essays are evaluated.

Consistent Engagement with a Sense of Purpose. Students need a dependable space to revisit and share their sense of purpose in a supportive community. UH West O'ahu should require a first-year university course rooted in identity exploration, a sense of place, and a cultural value system for all new college students, especially those admitted or re-admitted on probation. This class will then become a community of learning and support where students can actively share and revisit their sense of purpose throughout their first or returning semester on campus.

Exit Counseling. The final recommendation to cultivate a sense of purpose at UH West O'ahu is to offer students the opportunity to reexamine their sense of purpose before disenrolling from college. I recommend that UH West O'ahu create a policy requiring students to complete exit counseling before leaving the university. Many life situations or emergencies can prevent students from continuing in college; however, for those who have lost sight of their purpose or seek support, speaking with student affairs staff could provide students with the reconnection they need to stay in college.

Building Collective Strength and Community

The following recommendations are responsive practices and policies to grow the support networks of college students. These strategies build upon the second pōhaku, intergenerational

strength through mo‘okū‘auhau, by creating opportunities for students to connect with a new or existing community.

Building Collective Strength Through College Readiness Curriculums. I recommend creating a college readiness curriculum that begins with the lessons of this study as its foundation. It will lead students to start their college preparation with self-reflection and confidence in their life story. This curriculum should include a pathway for the student and a second pathway for their family or support system. With this approach, the student and their family will collectively prepare for their roles in the journey of earning a college degree.

This curriculum should be less focused on someone’s age or grade level and more attentive to the order in which prospective college students are exposed to various college readiness topics. It will also use strategies known to combat educational dissonance, such as mo‘olelo and mo‘okū‘auhau (Reyes, 2018; Wright & Balutski, 2015), and build upon the existing strengths of each student. Additionally, if faculty and staff are trained to use this curriculum when introducing students to the idea of higher education, more people can share encouraging and accessible messages about college.

Ongoing Support Through a Campus-wide Mentorship Program. I suggest implementing a campus-wide mentorship program to create new forms of community, support, and strength for current college students. All employees at UH West O‘ahu will be offered the opportunity to mentor new and continuing college students. As the university works to rebuild student and campus connections lost during the pandemic, the objective of this program is for students to grow their support network. A mentor will become a trusted person on campus who is invested in the mentee’s success, listens to their experience, provides guidance, and connects them to other colleagues for services or support when needed. I also suggest that mentors be

asked to recommend mentees to an existing peer mentorship program to perpetuate a culture of support.

Student Readiness

The final recommendations intend to help the university become ready for the experiences and worldviews of Native Hawaiian students, as found in the third pōhaku of this study. I encourage the student affairs division to consider how we can advance our practices and policies to be centered around students' voices. The following recommendations are specific to student affairs; however, the objective of these steps is to actualize the university's mission and vision to be rooted in Native Hawaiian values, culture, and tradition "while promoting student success in an environment where students of all backgrounds are supported" (About UH West O'ahu, n.d.).

Redesigning the College Admissions Experience. The University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu will benefit from developing a new, equitable access model of college admissions for UH West O'ahu built from a strength-based approach to college readiness. Compared to peer institutions, UH West O'ahu does not have a cumbersome admissions process. However, there is room to explore how students can feel engaged after interacting with this admissions process.

The Office of Admissions can offer more equitable processes by determining how applicants can demonstrate their readiness for college through presentations, storytelling, projects, and other materials that represent their strengths. This effort should be collaborative through a partnership with faculty members, high school educators, and students; all these people should be knowledgeable in Hawaiian culture-based education practices. This effort aims for the university to offer a second, equally legitimate admissions process that invites students to

showcase their readiness for college in a way that feels most authentic to their worldview, gifts, knowledge, and inherent cultural strengths.

Establishing the Value of Stories and Qualitative Data. Our division of student affairs needs data that is not only qualitative, but story-based. The first phase of establishing the value of stories is to practice sharing stories and listening to each other in the workplace. Small exercises of telling and listening to stories should be incorporated into weekly meetings, lunches, or workshops because genuinely listening to students begins with truly listening to each other. If individual offices can create formal and informal opportunities for students to share their experiences, then we can establish a process of honoring these stories and using them as the foundation for building student-centered policies and practices.

Student Affairs Mission and Vision Statement. I recommend that our division of student affairs initiate the development of a mission and vision statement that unifies approaches to preparing, evaluating, and enacting college readiness. Native Hawaiian students feel prepared for the challenges of college in a fundamentally different way from the dominant narrative around college readiness. Therefore, there is a need to honestly identify student affairs' collective capacity and individual capabilities for serving students through a mission statement. Next, with student voices as the foundation, develop a vision statement of what the division aims to become. The gaps between these two statements will inform how the college becomes student ready.

Professional Growth and Learning Cohorts. I recommend creating spaces and opportunities for UH West O'ahu faculty and staff members to engage in ongoing growth as a community. Small cohorts of five or fewer people can learn together through workshops and professional development series that address gaps between the mission and vision statement. The

objective of the learning cohorts is to reflect on the ideas presented in the workshops with colleagues across different offices. In addition to workshops that address the gaps, I recommend requiring professional development workshops that teach the history of Hawai'i, the history of higher education, and the history of UH West O'ahu. A historical look at these topics intends to provide insight into the origins of an oppressive past as well as hopefulness for the possibilities of college access at UH West O'ahu.

Continually Strengthening a Lens for Access, Equity, and Decolonization

This research has directly informed my practice as a college access professional. I hope that other staff, faculty, and administrators also consider the lessons of this study to enhance their messaging and approach with students. Student affairs professionals should continue questioning, defining, and decolonizing the terms we rely on in our practice, such as academic achievement, student success, and college readiness. With Native Hawaiian student stories about college readiness at the heart of my efforts, I will continue forward by listening to students with empathy, using a strength-based lens to solve problems, and continually seeking to understand interdependent worldviews.

Recommendations for Future Research

The interdependence of these participants showed that they are entering college with a reciprocal understanding of their role in the surrounding environment and specifically with people, land, or resources. This finding raises intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of Native Hawaiian students and their engagement in college. Since many colleges build their policies and practices around the assumption that actively engaged college students lead to growth and personal development (Astin, 1984), it will be a worthwhile endeavor to explore how

Native Hawaiian students, who are seemingly ready for reciprocal interaction with their environment, are engaging in college.

Through this research I also observed that there is room for us to learn more about how Native Hawaiian students are valuing college. Throughout the pandemic, my role as an admissions counselor showed me first-hand how more students seemed to be questioning the value of college. Within this study, the participants alluded to how they valued college because of the impact of having a bachelor's degree, rather than an intrinsic desire for the knowledge acquired while in college. This research is built on the premise that students are wanting to go to college, but do not because of systemic barriers. Conducting a future study to learn about how students are or are not valuing college could also provide helpful insight and would require different targeted strategies.

Finally, even though the lessons of this study have provided important information about Native Hawaiian students at UH West O'ahu, I do believe that more intentional research around how to build an equitable access model of college admissions is needed. Interviews with college admissions personnel would provide the full context of the conditions under which this model is being built.

Limitations

This study represents the perspective of a small group of students who have successfully entered higher education; two have since graduated with their bachelor's degrees. During the process of understanding how to create a new college admissions model, it will be important to consider the perspectives of Native Hawaiian people who did not enroll in college. Additionally, the sample group of this study did not yield any students from Kaiapuni and other Hawaiian immersion schools. As UH West O'ahu continues to enhance its capacity to serve Native

Hawaiian students, the perspective of Kaiapuni students and alumni will be integral to such efforts.

Final Reflections

My goal for this study was to create space for Native Hawaiian students to determine for themselves what it means to be ready for college. As I built this research from a strength-based perspective, I expected participants to share specific ancestral knowledge, gifts, or practical skills they used daily in college. However, after sitting with my participants' stories, I learned that their gifts, qualities, and skills cannot be separated from the context of their whole stories. More so, extracting specific characteristics as indicators of student success will simply become a replication of existing systems of oppression.

Admittedly, despite all my efforts to decolonize how the university views knowledge, I needed to do more work in this area as well. Once I removed myself from this existing evaluative framework, I could truly learn from these participants. Although I have spent my entire career learning about college admissions processes, I could only reconceptualize what I know to be college readiness through my abandonment of these systems. I offer my advice and encouragement for those who engage in this scholarship to do this, too. We will understand more about college readiness among Native Hawaiian students only once we release ourselves from the need to measure these lessons.

It is time for our people to be present in all spaces where decisions are made about Hawai'i, which begins with access to a system from which we have been historically and strategically excluded: higher education. This research was built on a hopeful premise that learning about and applying to college can become an encouraging experience for our Native Hawaiian students. For a long time, Native Hawaiian ways of life and knowing were discredited,

undermined, and criminalized. This has rippled down from generation to generation with a message that our ways of being are wrong or incapable. My study offers a different message that echoes the words of Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer (2001) who says, “[s]o, let it be said and let it be known: *We have* what we need. *We are* what we need” (p. 146). I believe that the knowledge of Native Hawaiian people is not to be itemized, for it is our entire being in this world—our connectivity with people, place, and spirit—that is our strength.

Appendix A Participant Invitation

Re: Invitation to share your story as a UH West O‘ahu student

Aloha,

My name is Amy Bumatai and I am pursuing a doctorate degree at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I am conducting a study to understand how the life experiences of Native Hawaiian students at the University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu have contributed to their readiness to be in college. **This is an opportunity for you to share your story.**

I invite you to join this study and talk story with me. If you decide to participate, there will be one virtual interview for 60-90 minutes. I will also ask for your response to two follow-up emails.

Interested in participating or have questions? Please email Amy Bumatai at amy36@hawaii.edu.

(Participation is voluntary and there is no consequence to those who choose not to respond.)

Mahalo,

Amy Bumatai
Doctoral Student, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
Program Specialist, University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu
Email: amy36@hawaii.edu
Office phone: 808-689-2917

Appendix B Participant Consent Form



University of Hawai'i Consent to Participate in a Research Project Amy Bumatai, Student Researcher

Project title: Understanding College Readiness Among Native Hawaiian Students

Aloha! My name is Amy Bumatai and you are invited to take part in a research study. I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in the College of Education. As part of the requirements of earning my doctoral degree, I am doing a research project.

This is a study titled *Understanding College Readiness Among Native Hawaiian Students* and there are two people that are part of this research team. The principal investigator is Dr. Nicole Salis Reyes who is a tenured faculty member at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The second team member is Amy Bumatai who is a doctoral student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

What am I being asked to do?

If you participate in this project, you will complete a brief 5-minute questionnaire. This questionnaire will be general information about how many semesters you have been at UH West O'ahu and how you entered the university (as a freshman student, transfer student, etc.) Next, I will be reaching out to you to schedule a 60-90 minute interview. After the interview is completed, I will ask for you to provide brief responses to two follow-up emails.

Taking part in this study is my choice.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. If you stop being in the study, there will be no penalty or loss to you. Your choice to participate or not to participate will not impact my student status at UH West O'ahu.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this project is to examine college readiness of Native Hawaiian students at UH West O'ahu. We hope to gather data to inform college staff and administrators about what Native Hawaiian students feel has prepared them to attend UH West O'ahu. We are asking students like you to participate in this study because we want to hear your experiences related to the University of Hawai'i-West O'ahu and use that knowledge to improve the way we work with students as they are getting ready for college, especially for Native Hawaiian students.

What will happen if I decide to take part in this study?

If you choose to take part in this study, you will be interviewed by the student investigator, Amy Bumatai, for 60-90 minutes through Zoom. You will be asked about your experiences related to college and I have provided some example questions below. You will be one of 5-7 participants interviewed for this study.

- Which of these communities have had very strong impacts on the person you are today and why?
- What are some of the goals you hope to accomplish during your life?
- Can you tell me about what it was like to learn about college?
- Can you tell me about what college is like for you now?

With your permission, I will audio-record the interview so that I can later transcribe the interview and analyze the responses. There will not be any video recordings.

After that first interview is completed, Amy will reach out to you providing a copy of the transcript as well as the initial findings to confirm that your feelings and stories are being accurately portrayed in the study.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part in this study?

We believe there is little risk to you for participating in this research project. If you become stressed or uncomfortable answering any of the survey questions, you can skip the question or take a break. You can also stop the interview at any time or withdraw from the study altogether.

There will be no direct benefit to your participating in this study. However, the results of this project may help



University of Hawai'i
Consent to Participate in a Research Project
 Amy Bumatai, Student Researcher

Project title: Understanding College Readiness Among Native Hawaiian Students

to improve the process of getting ready to enter college for future Native Hawaiian students.

Confidentiality and Privacy:

During this study you will be given the option to be represented in the study by your own name or to use a pseudonym of your choice. This is a strength-based study that is designed to identify what is working for Native Hawaiian students as they prepare for college. No damaging information will be included in the study and you will be able to approve the final findings before the study is concluded. If you decide to use a pseudonym, there are no consequences and all personal identifiable information will be removed from the stories you share.

After you complete the interview, we will keep the recording as well as all study data secure in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office with data encrypted on a password protected computer. Only approved investigators will have access to this data. After the research study has concluded, the recordings will be permanently deleted. The University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this stud. Other agencies that have legal permission have the right to review research records.

Future Research Studies:

Even after removing identifiers, the data for this study will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Questions:

If you have any questions about this study, please call or email Amy Bumatai at (808) 689-2917 or amy36@hawaii.edu. You may also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Nicole Salis Reyes, at reyesn4@hawaii.edu. You may contact the UH Human Studies Program at (808) 956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu to discuss problems, concerns and questions, obtain information, or offer input with an informed individual who is unaffiliated with the specific research protocol. Please visit <http://go.hawaii.edu/jRd> for more information on your rights as a research participant

Signature(s) for Consent:

I give permission to join the research project entitled, "*Understanding College Readiness Among Native Hawaiian Students.*"

Please initial next to either "Yes" or "No" to the following:

____ Yes ____ No I consent to be audio-recorded for the interview portion of this research.

____ Yes ____ No I consent to my name being used in this study.

Name of Participant (Print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Signature of the Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Please keep copy of the informed consent for your records and reference.

Mahalo

Appendix C Interview Protocol and Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol and Questions

Introductory Protocol

Aloha and thank you for participating in this research study. My name is Amy Bumatai and I am a student investigator pursuing my doctorate in education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

So first, thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. The purpose of my research project is to learn more about who you are as a person and how those experiences prepared you to be where you are now as a college student at UH West O'ahu.

This will be a storytelling and talkstory-style conversation, so I am not looking for any right answers; this is just a time for you to talk to me about your life experiences as well as your experiences in college.

I'm here to hear about the places, people, and values that you come from as well as what it felt like for you to get ready to enter college. There will never be a time where you can talk too much, so feel free to dive into any story you are comfortable sharing with me to help take me into those memories.

As we begin, I would like to review a few logistical details.

- To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio record our conversation today. The audio portion will be recorded using Zoom audio and Otter.ai software. For your information, only myself and the Principal Investigator for this project, my advisor, Dr. Nicole Salis Reyes, will have access to the recording and it will be stored in a secured location for one year and then destroyed. Do you give your consent to have the audio portion of this interview recorded?
- You have completed the consent form. Do you have any questions about that form before we begin?
- All information shared will be held confidential.
- I have planned this interview to last approximately 60-90 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover pertaining to you and college.
- Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to end the interview at any time.

****Begin recording on Zoom audio and Otter.ai****

Now that we have completed the introductory protocol, I have started the recording and will now begin the interview questions. Do you have any questions before we get started?

There are going to be two different groups of questions that I'll be asking you today. The first set of questions are meant to learn about who you are and where you come from. After you share those answers, I will then ask you questions that will have you thinking more specifically about college.

Core question	Interview questions: Tell me about yourself
Who are you?	<p>Could you share with me the typical way you introduce yourself to new people?</p> <p>If you were given an opportunity to share a more detailed introduction, is there anything you would add to help others understand who you are?</p>
Where are you from?	<p>What places, spaces, or groups of people do you call home?</p> <p>What are the communities you are part of?</p> <p>Which of these communities have had very strong impacts on the person you are today and why?</p> <p>Optional follow-up question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me about a meaningful memory you have with this community? <p>What does it look like for you to be part of these communities?</p> <p>Optional follow-up question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the main responsibilities in that role? • What does it feel like for you to be part of those communities? <p>What is a particular lesson that you learned from these communities?</p> <p>Optional follow-up question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you remember a particular time when you learned that lesson/value and could you share that story with me?
What are your gifts?	<p>What would you say are some of the gifts you bring to the world?</p> <p>Optional follow-up questions:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me a story about yourself where you used this gift?
What is important to you?	<p>What is a value that you practice in your life?</p> <p>Optional follow-up question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you share with me how you learned this value? • Is there someone you learned this from? <p>What are some of the goals you hope to accomplish during your life?</p> <p>Optional follow-up question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think that became something that you hoped for? • Can you share with me a story about what it looks like for you to work toward these goals?

That concludes the first half of our interview and now we're going to transition to questions that are more specific to college. These are meant to build upon some of the things you've already shared with me, so you are always welcomed to make connections back to anything we've already talked about. It is my goal here to understand how the core pieces of who you are show up or possibly lead you to successfully engage in your college environment.

If you're feeling like you need a break, it is no problem at all and we can continue the second half at a later time. How are you feeling about continuing with the second half of the interview?

Do you have any questions for me before we move forward with the last half of the questions?

Core question	Interview questions: College questions
How were you taught to think about college?	<p>Can you tell me about what it was like to learn about college?</p> <p>Optional follow-up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where did you learn that? • How did it feel for you to learn that? • Was that message consistent across the different communities that you are part of? • Do you remember when you made the decision to go to college?
What was your process of getting	Can you tell me about, as specifically as you can recall, what it was like for you to get ready for college?

ready for college?	<p>Optional follow-up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was anyone part of that process? • What did that feel like? • Where did that occur? • If you were to do it again, can you tell me about what you would do differently? Or something you would do the same?
What does it feel like to be in college now?	<p>Can you tell me about what college is like for you now?</p> <p>Optional follow-up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me about how this has met or changed your expectations about what college would be? <p>When you think about being a college student, what is it that helped you prepare for where you are now?</p> <p>Optional follow-up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me about an experience that led you to believe that? <p>What motivates you to stay in college?</p>
<i>What do you think it takes to be ready for college based on your own experiences?</i>	<p>What advice would you give to future Native Hawaiian students about how to prepare for going to college?</p> <p>Optional follow-up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe the experience(s) that led you to give this advice? • What encouragement would you give to a Native Hawaiian student that may be hesitant about attending college?

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions or comments before we end the interview?

Closing

We have gone through all of the questions, and I appreciate your time in sharing your experiences. Once I have completed the transcript from this interview, I will email it to you and ask that you review it. As a participant in this study, I will be reaching out to you again by email to share your feedback on my initial analysis of our conversation to make sure that you feel everything is accurately representing your feelings and experiences when they are included in

my research. In my research, you also have the option of being represented as a pseudonym of your choosing, or to go by your real name. I have no preference, and this is entirely up to you. You have some time to think about this and I will email you to collect your response and you can reply whenever you are ready.

Thank you again for participating in this interview and sharing your voice and experiences. Should you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me by email at amy36@hawaii.edu.

Appendix D Participant Follow-up Email

Semi-Structured Interview Follow-up Questions

Introductory Protocol Review

Aloha and thank you for responding to my email with an interest in meeting for a second/third interview to provide feedback or expand on some of the themes that emerged from our last conversation.

As a reminder, your participation is voluntary and you are always welcomed to take breaks or conclude the interview at any time. All of the information shared will be held confidential and to facilitate my notetaking, I would like to audio record our conversation today. The audio portion will be recorded using Zoom audio and Otter.ai software.

Do you have any questions or want to review the process further before we begin with the follow-up interview?

Begin recording

Question for Follow-up Interview(s)

Based on the initial themes I shared, please share with me some of the feedback that came to mind for you.

Optional questions:

- Is there anything I may have missed?
- Are there any stories that come to mind that may help me to learn more about that thought?

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions or comments before we end the interview?

Closing

Thank you again for participating in this interview and sharing your voice and experiences. Should you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me by email at amy36@hawaii.edu.

References

- American College Testing. (2019). *The condition of college and career readiness 2019*. ACT.
<https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/cccr-2019/Hawaii-CCCR-2019.pdf>
- Allensworth, E. M. & Clark, K. (2018). High school GPAs and ACT scores as predictors of college completion: Examining assumptions about consistency across high schools. *Educational Researcher*. 49(3). 198–211. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20902110>.
- Allensworth, E. M., Nagaoka, J., & Johnson, D. W. (2018). *High school graduation and college readiness indicator systems: what we know, what we need to know. concept paper for research and practice*. University of Chicago Consortium on School Research.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED589733.pdf>
- Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. University of British Columbia Press.
- Archibald, J., Lee-Morgan, J., De Santolo, J., & Smith, L. T. (2019). *Decolonizing research: Indigenous storywork as methodology*. ZED Books Ltd.
- Armesto, M., & McElroy, E. J. (1998). TRIO and upward bound: history, programs, and issues—past, present, and future. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 67(4), 373–380.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2668137>
- Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: a developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 34(2), 297–308.
- Bastedo, M. N., Bowman, N. A., Glasener, K. M., & Kelly, J. L. (2018). What are we talking

- about when we talk about holistic review? Selective college admissions and its effects on low-SES students. *The Journal of Higher Education*, (89(5), 782–805.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2018.1442633>
- Blume, G. H., & Zumeta, W. M. (2014). The state of state college readiness policies. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 58(8), 1071–1092. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213515235>
- Borthwick-Wong, E. (2017). *Native Hawaiian student retention in institutions of higher education*. [Doctoral dissertation, Northern Arizona University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/78db90a6c94c28c0055d6590d20eb15c/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>
- Cabrera, A. F., & La Nasa, S. M. (2000). Understanding the college-choice process. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2000(107), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.10701>
- National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education & Southern Regional Education Board. (2010). *Beyond the rhetoric: Improving college readiness through coherent state policy* [Policy brief].
- Clandinin D. J. & Connelly F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Conley, D. T. (2012). *A complete definition of college and career readiness*. ERIC.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED537876.pdf>
- Conley, D. T., French, E. M., Tierney, W. G., & Sablan, J. R. (2014). Student ownership of learning as a key component of college readiness. *The American Behavioral Scientist*. 58(8), 1018–1034. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213515232>.
- Cristobal, N. (2018). Kanaka ‘Ōiwi critical race theory: Historical and educational context.

- Contemporaneity*. 7, 27–44. <https://doi.org/10.5195/contemp.2018.240>
- FairTest. (2019, September 24). *2019 SAT scores: Gaps between demographic groups grow larger*. FairTest: The National Center for Fair and Open Testing. <https://www.fairtest.org/2019-sat-scores-gaps-between-demographic-groups-gr>
- FairTest. (2021, December 7). *More than 1,830+ schools do not require ACT/SAT scores from current high school seniors applying for fall 2022*. FairTest: The National Center for Fair and Open Testing. <https://www.fairtest.org/more-1815-schools-do-not-require-actsat-scores-cur>
- Fitzpatrick, D. (2020). Challenges mitigating a Darwinian application of social capital: How specific advising activities by high school counselors shift measures of college readiness but not college-going. *Research in Higher Education*, 61(5), 652–678. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-019-09575-7>
- Fujikane, C. (2021). *Mapping abundance for a planetary future*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jacc.13368>
- Griffith, K. L. (2016). *High school graduates' perceptions of college readiness*. [Doctoral dissertation, Wilmington University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/93de732692d1cefacf0325bbf75cfd7c/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>
- Hall, L. K. (2019). All our relations: mo'okū'auhau and mo'olelo. In N. Wilson-Hokowhitu, *The past before us: mo'okū'auhau as methodology* (pp. 106–119). University of Hawai'i Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824878177>
- Hawai'i Data eXchange Partnership. (2022, March). *College and career readiness indicators*

- (CCRI). Hawai‘i Data eXchange Partnership. <https://www.hawaiidxp.org/data-products/college-and-career-readiness-indicators/#compare>
- Hawai‘i P-20. (n.d.). *College & career readiness*. Hawai‘i P-20 Initiatives. Retrieved March 20, 2022. <https://www.hawaiip20.org/p-20-initiatives/college-career-readiness/>
- Hillman, N. W. (2016). Geography of college opportunity: The case of education deserts. *American Educational Research Journal*, 53(4), 987–1021. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216653204>.
- Holland, M. M. (2020). Framing the search: How first-generation students evaluate colleges. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 91(3), 378–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2019.1647582>
- ho‘omanawanui, k. (2008). This land is your land, this land was my land: Kanaka Maoli verses settler representations of ‘āina in contemporary literature in Hawai‘i. In C. Fujikane, *Asian settler colonialism: from local governance to the habits of everyday life in Hawai‘i* (pp. 116–154. University of Hawai‘i Press.
- ho‘omanawanui, k. (2017). He ahu mo‘olelo: E ho‘okahua i ka paepae mo‘olelo palapala Hawai‘i. *Palapala*, 1, 51–100.
- Institutional Research, Analysis and Planning Office. (2022). *Selected student characteristics*. Data.Hawaii.Edu. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://data.hawaii.edu/#/reports/ENRT05>
- Jackson J. & Kurlaender, M. (2014). College readiness and college completion at broad access four-year institutions. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 58(8), 947–971. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213515229>

- Jaschik, S. (2022, February 7). *Bill would deny aid to colleges with legacy admissions*. InsideHigherEd.
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/reference_list_electronic_sources.html
- Ka‘iama, M. (2014). Kū i ka pono: the movement continues. In N. Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, I. Hussey, & E. K. Wright, *A nation rising: Hawaiian movements for life, land, and sovereignty* (pp. 98–114). Duke University Press.
- Kana‘iaupuni, S. M. (2005). Ka‘akālai kū kanaka: A call for strengths-based approaches from a Native Hawaiian perspective. *Educational researcher*, 33(9), 26–32.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X034005032>
- Kana‘iaupuni, S. M., Kekahio W. M., Duarte, K., Ledward, B. C., Fox, S. M., & Caparoso, J. T., (2021). *Ka huaka‘i: 2021 Native Hawaiian educational assessment*. Kamehameha Publishing. https://www.ksbe.edu/assets/research/ka_huakai/2021_KaHuakai.pdf
- Kana‘iaupuni, S. M., Ledward, B., & Malone, N. (2017). Mohala i ka wai: Cultural advantage as a framework for indigenous culture-based education and student outcomes. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1S), 311S–339S.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216664779>
- Keene, A. J. (2016). College pride, native pride: a portrait of a culturally grounded precollege access program for American Indian, Alaska native, and Native Hawaiian students. *Harvard Educational Review*, 86(1), 72–97. <https://doi.org/10.17763/0017-8055.86.1.72>
- Kenolio, E. L. (2019). *Native Hawaiian student success in the first-year: The impact of college programs and practices*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/2dab4cf274f1c50bfdda3561a0ca6d00/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=51922&diss=y>

Koretz, D. & Langi, M. (2018). Predicting freshman grade-point average from test scores: Effects of variation within and between high schools. *Educational Measurement, Issues and Practice*. 37(2), 9–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emip.12173>.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2(1), 257–277.

Lima, K. M. (2015). *Identifying factors that influence persistence of Hawai‘i students studying at mainland colleges: A phenomenological multi-case study of higher education* (Publication No. 10002268). [Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/e22d95f0e6d43c13841d6f585caee2f5/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Lipe, K. (2015). Mo‘olelo for transformative leadership: Lessons from engaged practice. In K. R. Oliveira & E. K. Wright, *Kanaka ‘Ōiwi methodologies: mo‘olelo and metaphor*. (pp. 53–71). University of Hawaii Press.

<https://doi.org/10.21313/hawaii/9780824855857.003.0004>

Lipe, K. (2019). Toward equity and equality: Transforming universities into Indigenous places of learning. In R. S. Minthorn & H. J. Shotton, *Reclaiming Indigenous research in higher education*. (pp. 162–177). Rutgers University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.36019/9780813588728-013>

Mākua, S. K., Meyer, M. A., & Wakinekona, L. L. (2019). Mo‘olelo: Continuity, stories, and

- research in Hawai'i. In Windchief, S. & San Pedro, T., *Applying Indigenous research methods*. (pp. 138–149). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315169811-9>
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Martin, G. & William, E. J. (2019). Le7 q'7es te stsptekwll re secwépemc: Our memories long ago. In Archibald, J., Lee-Morgan, J. B. J. & De Santolo, J., *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*. (pp. 56–71).
- Maruyama, G. (2012). Assessing college readiness: Should we be satisfied with ACT or other threshold scores? *Educational researcher*. 41(7), 252–261.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12455095>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation* (4th ed). Wiley.
- Meyer, M. A. (2001). Our own liberation: reflections on Hawaiian epistemology. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 13(1), 124–148. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cp.2001.0024>
- National Association of College Admissions Counseling, National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. (2022). *Toward a more equitable future for postsecondary access*.
https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/images/about/lumina_report/nacac_nasfaa_lumina_report_0122_10.pdf
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (n.d.). Fast facts: *Degrees conferred by race/ethnicity and sex*. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=72>
- National Student Clearinghouse. (2022, June 28). *Persistence and retention*. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/persistence-retention/>

- Niederle, M. & Vesterlund, L. (2010). Explaining the gender gap in math test scores: The role of competition. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 24(2), 129–144.
<https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.24.2.129>
- Oliveira, J. A. K. (2005). *Native Hawaiians' success in higher education: predictive factors and bachelor's degree completion*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/eb2b398a0a79d182cf9dae93e7c9dd8e/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Oliveira, K-A. R. K. N. (2015). Ka wai ola: The life-sustaining water of Kanaka knowledge. In K-A. R. K. N. Oliveira & E. K. Wright, *Kanaka 'Ōiwi methodologies: mo'olelo and metaphor* (pp. 72–85). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824857516-008>
- Osorio, J. K., (2001). “What kine Hawaiian are you?” A mo'olelo about nationhood, race, history, and the contemporary sovereignty movement in Hawai'i. *The Contemporary Pacific*. 13(2), 359–379. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cp.2001.0064>
- Pukui, M. K. (1983). *Ōlelo no 'eau: Hawaiian proverbs & poetical sayings*. Bishop Museum Press.
- Raque-Bogdan, T. L., & Lucas, M. S. (2016). Career aspirations and the first generation student: Unraveling the layers with social cognitive career theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 57(3), 248–262. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0026>
- Reed, A. (2022, December 17). *Hawaiian grandma college graduate delivers eye-opening class speech* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Luv6K9IRDEo&t=462s>
- Reyes, N. A. (2018). A space for survivance: locating Kānaka Maoli through the resonance and

- dissonance of critical race theory. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 21(6), 739–756.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1376632>
- Reyes, N. A. (2019). “What am I doing to be a good ancestor?”: An indigenized phenomenology of giving back among native college graduates. *American Educational Research Journal*, 56(3), 603–637. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218807180>
- Roberts, K. D., & Hitchcock, C. H. (2018). Impact of culturally aligned supports on native Hawaiian high school students’ college attendance: A qualitative perspective. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 42(4), 245–257.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2017.1284698>
- Roberts K. D., Takahashi K., & Park H. J. P. (2018) The impact of project ho‘oku‘i participation on Native Hawaiian high school students’ perceptions of high school and college coursework. *The High School Journal*, 101(3), 199–210.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2018.0010>
- Robinson, K. J., & Roksa, J. (2016). Counselors, information, and high school college-going culture: Inequalities in the college application process. *Research in Higher Education*, 57(7), 845–868. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-016-9406-2>
- Rosinger, K. O., Ford, K. S. & Choi, J. (2021). The role of selective college admissions criteria in interrupting or reproducing racial and economic inequities. *The Journal of Higher Education*. 92(1), 31–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2020.1795504>
- Saygin, P. O. (2020). Gender bias in standardized tests: evidence from a centralized college admissions system. *Empirical Economics*. 59, 1037–1065.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00181-019-01662-z>
- Schmitt, N. (2012). Development of rationale and measures of noncognitive college student

- potential. *Educational Psychologist*. 47(1), 18–29.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2011.610680>
- Shotton, H. J. (2015). Being of service to our people. In R. S. Minthorn & A. F. Chávez, *Indigenous leadership in higher education*. Routledge.
- Silva, N. K. (2004). *Aloha betrayed: Native Hawaiian resistance to American colonialism*. Duke University Press.
- Simpson, L. (2004). Anticolonial strategies for the recovery and maintenance of Indigenous knowledge. *American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3/4), 373–384.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/aiq.2004.0107>
- Skinner, B. T. (2019). Choosing college in the 2000s: An updated analysis using the conditional logistic choice model. *Research in Higher Education*, 60(2), 153–183.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-018-9507-1>
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*. (2nd ed.). Zed Books.
- Sternberg, R. J. (2010). *College admissions for the 21st century*. Harvard University Press.
- Sternberg, R. J., Bonney C. R., Gabora L. & Merrifield, M. (2012). WICS: A model for college and university admissions. *Educational Psychologist*. 47(1), 30–41.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2011.638882>
- Sumida Huaman, E., Chiu, B., & Billy, C. (2019). Indigenous internationalization: Indigenous worldviews, higher education, and Tribal Colleges and Universities. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(101). 2–25. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.4366>
- Thelin, J. R. (2011). *A History of American Higher Education* (2nd ed.). The John Hopkins University Press.

- Tierney, W. G., Bailey, T., Constantine, J. Finkelstein, N., & Hurd, N. F. (2009). *Helping students navigate the path to college: What high schools can do: A practical guide*. Institute of Education Sciences.
- Tierney, W. G., & Sablan, J. R. (2014). Examining college readiness. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 58(8), 943–946. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213515228>
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- University of Hawai‘i. (n.d.). *UH West O‘ahu: At a Glance*. Retrieved February 1, 2022 from <https://www.hawaii.edu/campuses/westoahu/>
- University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu. (n.d.). *About UH West O‘ahu*. Retrieved April 1, 2022 from <https://westoahu.hawaii.edu/about/>
- University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu (n.d.) *First-Year Students*. Retrieved October 13, 2021 from <https://westoahu.hawaii.edu/admissions/first-year/>
- Vaughan, M. B. (2020). Portrait. Puanani Burgess: He alo a he alo. In Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, N., Hussey, I., & Wright, E. K., *A Nation Rising* (pp. 355–362). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822376552-026>
- Warnock, D. M. (2016). Inequalities at the outset: Racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences in parents’ perceptions of paying for college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 57(5), 503–521. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0066>
- Westrick, P. A., Schmidt, F. L., Le, H., Robbins, S. B. & Radunzel, J. M. R. (2021). The road to retention passes through first year academic performance: A meta-analytic path analysis of academic performance and persistence. *Educational Assessment*. 26(1), 35–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10627197.2020.1848423>

- Wise, G., Dickinson, C., Katan, T., & Gallegos, M. C. (2020). Inclusive higher education governance: managing stakeholders, strategy, structure and function. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(2), 339–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1525698>
- Wright, E. K. (2018). It was a process of decolonization and that's about as clear as I can put it: Kuleana-centered higher education and the meanings of Hawaiianness. In R. S. Minthorn & H. J. Shotton, *Reclaiming Indigenous research in higher education*. (pp. 18–35). Rutgers University Press.
- Wright, E. K. & Balutski, B. J. N. (2015). Ka 'ikena a ka Hawai'i: Toward a kanaka 'ōiwi critical race theory. In K. R. Oliveira & E. K. Wright, *Kanaka 'Ōiwi methodologies: mo'olelo and metaphor*. (pp. 86–108). University of Hawaii Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824857516-009>