DISSERTATION

EIA KA LEI: A KĀNAKA COLLEGE CHOICE FRAMEWORK FOR OUR SURVIVANCE AND EA

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

EIA KA LEI: A KĀNAKA COLLEGE CHOICE FRAMEWORK FOR OUR SURVIVANCE AND EA

This research study makes a significant contribution to understanding the experiences of Native Hawaiian students in higher education and their college choice process. Research and literature focused on or inclusive of Native Hawaiians in higher education is scarce and limited (Reyes, 2018), so there is very little known about how Native Hawaiian students navigate to and through higher education. The central research question focused on developing a college choice framework specifically tailored to Native Hawaiians: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?

Employing KanakaCrit (Reyes, 2018) as a theoretical framework, lei making as the research design framework (Alencastre, 2017; Vaughan, 2019), and talk story methodology (Kovach, 2010; Sing et al., 1999), the study successfully elicited stories on the college choice experiences of Native Hawaiian students. The findings led to the creation of a culturally responsive Kānaka College Choice Framework, which aims to uplift the needs and values of Native Hawaiians in college choice research and contribute to the continued survivance of the lāhui (Hawaiian nation). The framework is interdisciplinary, iterative, and integrative. Like a lei, it wraps aloha (care, love) and ʻohana (family) around the student as they navigate the college choice process.

DEDICATION

For Mom, because she always told me someday I'd write a book…

And for Dad, who taught and instilled in me the patience I'd need to write it.

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Whenever I want to make a memory or mark a milestone, I make a lei. Perhaps it is because I treasure the ceremony of the process. Perhaps it's because when I make lei, I carve the time to focus on it. Perhaps it's because I enjoy tapping into my muscle memory when I make lei. My hands are maʻa (accustomed) to the rhythm of making lei. Sometimes, there is power in letting my hands lead so my head and heart can rest. Whatever the reason, whenever I want to make a memory last, I make a lei and infuse that memory into the lei.

Embarking on the daunting task of developing and executing my dissertation study, I found solace in the familiar process of lei making. What started as a simple analogy for my study became a central theme. Initially, I questioned the appropriateness of lei making as a methodology in academia. However, with the encouragement of my committee members, I learned to trust my naʻau (intuition) and embraced lei making as a core element of my research. This acceptance significantly shifted my academic journey, opening up new possibilities and perspectives.

The result of this journey is the academic lei I present to you. This is the story I choose to tell at the intersection of Kānaka Maoli, higher education, and college choice. As a Kānaka Maoli, I am committed to our representation and success in education. We have a history of carving our ea in education, and despite being woefully underrepresented, we persist. This study – Eia ka lei – is my contribution to the next level of inquiry in college choice research, with the sole purpose of elevating and centering Native Hawaiians in higher education.

Researcher Positionality and Manaʻo

Whenever I think of life's milestones and my favorite moments, I remember the lei that came with them. I received two lei I will never forget when I graduated from high school. One lei was from my mom. It was a white "triple carnation"—it was so massively thick that when my mom gave it to me, I could barely see over it. I remember the lei because I had never received such a lei like that before; it symbolized both my milestone and my mother's success as an entrepreneur. During my last three years of high school, she successfully opened and managed a flower and lei shop. That lei represented her pick of lei for me to commemorate my graduation. I also remember the blink-of-an-eye moment my mom and I shared as she put the lei around my neck. She was proud of me. I mean, I knew she was proud of me, but something about that moment sealed the memory for me. Someone from my family caught the moment on camera, so whenever I look at the photo – I can remember the moment, still smell that lei, and feel my mom's squeeze.

Now that she has gone, I treasure those moments with her that I can still feel in my iwi (bones).

The second "lei" I received was from my dad. Just before graduation, my dad took me to a Hawaiian Heirloom jewelry store and asked me to design a Hawaiian bracelet for my (now) stepmom. I did not think anything of it; her birthday is in April, so I did not suspect the possibility the bracelet was for my upcoming graduation. When he and the jeweler asked me to design the band, I remember saying, "I don't know what she would like." My dad said, "Well, what would you put on it if it were for you?" Immediately, I drew the design for the jeweler using three of my favorite flowers: maile, ʻōhiʻa lehua, and ʻilima. I had never seen a lei like that, but the design came so easily, and the jeweler affirmed the design worked. I also said, "You

should put her name on it with raised letters. The black enamel will eventually peel off." I remembered that from others' bracelets, like my mom's. We left the store, and I remember feeling quite proud of myself. "She's gonna love it, Dad." He smiled back.

Shortly after graduation, my dad took me and my younger sister, Jolene, to lunch at our favorite California Pizza Kitchen restaurant. At the end of the lunch, he brought a professionally wrapped gift box and placed it on the table before me. "Happy graduation, Nik," he said. I was puzzled because he had already given me so much I did not expect a graduation gift. I opened the box to see a gold Hawaiian Heirloom bracelet with my original lei design and my Hawaiian middle name, "Kāhealani," in raised letters. He even added an inscription on the inside of the bracelet from him and my sister. I cried and laughed simultaneously, overwhelmed by the gift and the fact that he had tricked me into designing it.

That sneaky buggah.

There have been more moments, memories, and lei since those two. However, when I think of lei I have treasured beyond the moment, I think of those two. This dissertation, this academic lei, will make it to this list of lei I will treasure beyond the moment. When I started on this doctoral journey, people tried to communicate what to expect from this experience – but I have concluded that there is very little preparation you can receive when you put your entire self into a single piece of work. Until this dissertation, I have never put my entire self into a lei.

So, who is this entire self I poured into this lei? Welina (greetings), dear reader. I am a Native Hawaiian and Chinese woman born and raised in Nu‘uanu, O‘ahu. I am a proud alumna of the Kamehameha Schools. I was the first in my family to attend college and earn a bachelor's degree in communication and a master's in enrollment management. I am a doctoral student whose personal and professional experience shaped my dissertation research.

What Kine Hawaiian Am I?

Dr. Jonathan Osorio, an esteemed colleague, author, musician, and recognized leader of the lāhui (Hawaiian nation), posed the question, "What kine Hawaiian are you?" in his article about the contemporary sovereignty movement in Hawai'i. His mana'o (wisdom) in response to the question included:

> Those of us in this century who confront this question, confounded in ways that our ancestors were not, can take nothing for granted, not even our Hawaiianness. That too, is something we might cherish. (Osorio, 2001, p. 376)

This question, "What kine Hawaiian are you?" is fitting as I discuss my identity about being a Native Hawaiian woman and my positionality in higher education.

When I was younger, I thought I knew what it meant to me to be Hawaiian. Moreover, perhaps I did, although now I recognize my notions were incredibly naïve and reflected my unwitting assimilation to Western notions. As a child, I did the things that I thought you had to do to show you're Hawaiian. I danced hula and played 'ukulele from a young age; I am brown-skinned with long hair, and I remember being particularly proud when I could count to 100 in Hawaiian. My identity as a Hawaiian solidified when I enrolled at the Kamehameha Schools because my admission hinged on my family's ability to "prove" my heritage and pass their admission tests. When someone asked, I was Hawaiian, and I was sure I knew what that meant—and I never imagined that self-assuredness would or could change.

I grew up, and my confidence in my identity became more complicated. I left home for college and went from being in a place where I looked like most people to living in a city where people looked at me – puzzled – because they could not place where I was from. When I first received those looks, I was amused by them. For whatever reason, when I told people I was

Hawaiian, they seemed relieved to have figured me out. But after a while, I began to wonder – why did it matter? And why was it their business to place me in their minds as they made a judgment call about me? What did they possibly know about Hawaiians that I suddenly made sense to them when I spoke my identity out loud? All these thoughts I kept to myself because I had never spoken to someone who could relate to these experiences. I was not raised to speak about race and identity in constructive or productive ways. Throughout college, I mostly thought that what I was experiencing was "just me" – it was not real.

My relationship with my identity became incredibly complex when I began this doctoral journey and learned how to unlearn all I was sure would never change about what it meant to me to be Hawaiian. At this stage and age in my life, I also realized I was a feminist who never knew what it meant to be a feminist, so this part of my identity lay dormant. As a doctoral student, I was surrounded by classmates and colleagues who could articulate relatable experiences about what it meant to be a person of color and a feminist.

I learned words like "microaggressions," and it was a word that hit home for me as I thought about my experiences in college. I thought about the times I was dismissed, silenced, or ignored – suspecting that treatment was related to my being a brown woman. But again, thinking at the time that it was "just me." As a doctoral student, I was with friends and colleagues who affirmed that I was not imagining those experiences – there really were people I encountered who saw me as "less than." I learned how to give myself permission to be angry and use that fire as a motivating source for the work I want to do in the world.

So, what kine Hawaiian am I? I still struggle to articulate it in a succinct way, but I value that I have the opportunity to grapple with it. So far, I know I am the kind of Hawaiian who is unafraid to walk in this world as I am, and I have a fire within me to make visible those who

have been categorically ignored or rendered invisible. Today, while I still wrestle with what it means to be Hawaiian, I have become confident that my Kānaka Maoli ancestors decided my place on the continuum. My naʻau (core, gut) tells me my kuleana (obligation, responsibility) is to pursue higher education research and scholarship for Native Hawaiians and to use that knowledge to uplift the lāhui (Native Hawaiian nation).

What Kine Hawaiian Am I in Higher Education?

The next pertinent question about identity as it relates to this dissertation is, "What kine Hawaiian am I in higher education?" College took me across the Pacific and the continental U.S. from Honolulu to the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida. I began my career in college admissions at my alma mater and served for several years as an admissions counselor and manager of electronic communications for the enrollment management division. I continued my admissions career as an associate director at Rice University in Houston, Texas. After a few years in Houston, I was offered the senior associate director role at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California, and I held that role for three years. I was promoted to director of undergraduate admission, and I was two years into the role as director when I was recruited for a once-in-a-lifetime career opportunity. Now, at the time of composing this chapter, I am the inaugural Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Interim Director of Admissions at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa.

In this role, my areas of kuleana (responsibility) include Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Registrar's Office. I was initially intimidated by the career leap: who would be convinced that someone who had worked primarily in college admissions at private universities could fill a role overseeing a suite of enrollment offices for *the* public flagship R1 institution in Hawaiʻi?

We know how this story ends, of course. Ultimately, I knew this job was a unique opportunity to lead enrollment strategies for a premier Native Hawaiian-serving institution. This role has been an incredible living laboratory for doing work that speaks to my soul. Throughout my entire career and at each institution at which I have worked, my heart always drew me to supporting Native Hawaiian students. There was no better place at which to do this work than UH Mānoa and hold this role. There was no better place to make a real impact in support of Native Hawaiian students.

My role at the time of this research fueled this study because it brought this living laboratory to life. In this role, I aimed to understand the ways Native Hawaiian students navigate college pathways so I could affect improvement and change on those pathways. I aimed to understand the barriers our institution presents to students so I could effectively bring those barriers down and smooth the college choice process for Native Hawaiian students. This study afforded me the ability to take lessons learned from research participants and apply changes to my everyday work. Additionally, my practitioner experiences in my everyday work shaped the way I analyzed data collected from the study. I had more context than most as I tried to make sense of research participants' perspectives and developed recommendations for research and practice based on the results of the study.

For instance, as I conducted the study and learned from the research participants about how important financial aid was to their college choice process. At the time, I was also revising our merit scholarship program for incoming students. I added more scholarship levels so more students were awarded a merit scholarship from Mānoa. Hearing from research participants about the impact of financial aid and scholarships on their college choice experiences bolstered my confidence that I was making the strongest strategic changes to our scholarship programs.

Additionally, the enrollment metrics for the incoming class of 2024 demonstrated that scholarships made the difference in motivating more students to choose Mānoa over their other college choices.

Conversely, the drawback to being in this living laboratory while conducting this research was that my perspective may have been too myopic. Perhaps I was able to relate too well to the research participants' experiences. I may have been too close to the heart of the study, which limited my ability to be objective and recognize when my biases constricted the study's potential. As a result, my biases likely influenced the study, skewing the results in ways I was not able to recognize. Still, I was compelled to conduct this study because of how much I could relate to these topics, and I did my best to navigate my biases under the guidance of my advisor and committee members.

So, what kine Hawaiian am I as a seasoned higher education practitioner? I am the kind of Hawaiian who has followed her na‘au away from home, across the continental U.S., and back again. I am the kind of Hawaiian who cares deeply about what happens to Native Hawaiian students in higher education, no matter where I may work or where they may attend. I am the kind of Hawaiian who wants to dismantle barriers in higher education so that Native Hawaiian students can experience smoother pathways to college. Thus, when I asked the central research question: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians? You, dear reader, now know I asked this question with my heart and soul.

Problem Statement

The central research question resonated with me because as a Native Hawaiian doctoral student in higher education, I think deeply about the problems and challenges faced by Native Hawaiians in higher education. In that light, the central problem addressed by this study is that

research and literature focused on or inclusive of Native Hawaiians in higher education is scarce and limited (Reyes, 2018). There was very little known about how Native Hawaiian students navigate to and through higher education. Higher education was not designed with Native Hawaiians in mind, and the scarcity of literature on this topic means that these students' needs are invisible (Reyes & Shotton, 2018). Native Hawaiian representation in higher education is also scarce and limited at the national and state levels (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2021; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2024), and the existing research paints a bleak picture of Native Hawaiian enrollment and retention in college.

When compared to the national landscape of college-going students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, Native Hawaiians are rendered nearly invisible. From 2014-2021, out of the 22 million undergraduates enrolled at Title IV institutions[1], just below 0.30% of these students identified as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Additionally, not only are Native Hawaiians a minute portion of enrolled college students, but research on Native Hawaiian college participation consistently cited lower standardized test scores, low retention rates, disparities in educational attainment, and limited knowledge about how pre-college programs affect college-bound Native students (Hagedorn et al., 2006; Roberts & Hitchcock, 2018; Rothwell, 2013; Yamamoto & Black, 2015). With such limited knowledge about students who have been rendered nearly invisible in U.S. higher education, scholars and practitioners are unable to provide effective solutions in support of Native Hawaiian students' needs in college.

Literature and research on college choice often help higher education scholars and practitioners understand how and why students choose and enroll in their college. College choice

[1] A Title IV institution participates in federal financial aid program(s).

models often act as a road map (Bergerson, 2009) to examine the challenges and opportunities related to student access, entry, and persistence. College choice models also help us understand college pathway structures and the ways students navigate those pathways. Then, once those pathways are mapped and understood, scholars and practitioners can work to affect change in college enrollment patterns. However, there is scant literature on college choice research and models that specifically address the experiences of Native Hawaiian students.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study aimed to address the lack of literature on college choice research focusing on Native Hawaiians. It contributed to research on the experiences of Native Hawaiian students in higher education and the college choice process for Native Hawaiians. At the intersection of Native Hawaiians in higher education literature and college choice research, there is an opportunity to understand how we can improve policies and practices that lead to increased enrollments of Native Hawaiian students. Moreover, how can we center and honor Native Hawaiians to document their college enrollment stories and include their voices in this research? Thus, the central research question guided this study: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?

The significance of this study was centered in the opportunities revealed when we adjust the scope of examining Native Hawaiians in higher education. When we adjust that scope and exclude the external data of national trends or other ethnic groups, we see trends indicating growth, survivance, and promise. According to the 2021 Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment report, Native Hawaiian college enrollment increased from 24 to 31 percent between 2008 and 2017; this increase "def[ied] national trends during the same period" (Kanaʻiaupuni et

al., 2021, pg. 211). Native Hawaiian students should not be rendered invisible on the college landscape when they defied national trends of growth for almost a decade.

Furthermore, we anticipate growth in the Native Hawaiian population. According to Kanaʻiaupuni et al. (2021), the Native Hawaiian population in the U.S. will grow from 627,929 in 2020 to 1.2 million in 2060. The number of school-age Native Hawaiian children in Hawaiʻi will more than double from 86,825 in 2020 to 192,531 in 2060 (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2021). Since we anticipate growth, it is timely and there is ample opportunity to improve college choice processes, bring down institutional and system barriers that are in the way of Native Hawaiians enrolling in college, and ensure more students continue into higher education.

Finally, after considering my positionality, the limited research on Native Hawaiians in higher education, and the potential for growth in the Native Hawaiian population, I arrived at the main reason for undertaking this research. When the time comes for me to move on from my current role at UH Mānoa, I want to be confident there are many Kānaka Maoli ready to continue this important work at Mānoa for the benefit of the lāhui. The best way I know how to make that happen is to ensure there is an abundance of college-educated Kānaka from which Mānoa may someday choose its future leaders.

Overview of the Study

This study was constructed using KanakaCrit (Reyes, 2018) as a theoretical framework, lei making as the research design framework (Alencastre, 2017; Vaughan, 2019), and talk story methodology (Kovach, 2010; Sing et al., 1999) to elicit stories on the college choice experiences of Native Hawaiian students. Through the talk story sessions, participants were asked about their college choice experiences so they could help me address the central research question, “What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?” This

study included 21 research participants, from students in early pre-college stages to students who were enrolled in advanced degree programs, as well as parents of these participants who had experienced the college process and supported their students through their process.

The stories I gathered through this study shed light on participants' values, tensions, aspirations, and fears as they navigated their college choices along the way to higher education. Those insights deepened my understanding of the gap in college choice research as it relates to the experiences of Native Hawaiian students. The gap is that college choice research has not yet centered on the experiences of Native Hawaiian students.

The rich data from these talk story sessions was analyzed using three ʻōiwi (Native Hawaiian) epistemologies: Papakū Makawalu, KanakaCrit, and looking to my naʻau (core, gut). Papakū Makawalu, or "having eight eyes," is recognized as "the method in which kupuna looked at their natural world and then recorded their observations" (Kanahele-Mossman & Karides, 2021, p. 455). Examining the findings while "having eight eyes" pointed me to ways in which study participants holistically reconciled the tensions associated with being a Native Hawaiian in college.

The second ʻōiwi epistemology used for data analysis was KanakaCrit (Reyes, 2018). In chapter three, I used KanakaCrit as an analytical framework to shape and elevate the study's findings. Ultimately, as an analytical lens for this study, KānakaCrit helps us "understand how colonization impacts ʻōiwi college success, and the conveyance of stories helps relate ʻōiwi success to the priorities of nationhood and social justice" (Reyes, 2019, p. 14). Suppose we gain insights into what a college choice framework might look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians. In that case, we benefit from understanding more deeply the needs Native Hawaiians have when navigating the college choice process. This, in turn, allows higher education scholars

and practitioners to strengthen and develop more tailored resources that support and uplift Native Hawaiians toward their college goals.

The third ʻōiwi epistemology used for data analysis was looking to my naʻau (intuition) for guidance on interpreting the data (Bernal, 2016; K.-A. R. K. N. Oliveira, 2015; Wilson, 2008). Essentially, for this study, this meant that once the data was collected and coded, I stepped back, organized the data, and gleaned themes and patterns from it. Vaughan (2019) pointed out, "Environmental research, like lei making requires trusting the people who know a place, and your own naʻau (your gut or intuition), more than any pattern or plan" (p. 56). The patterns and themes gleaned from the data often come from the researcher looking at the large whole of the data and paying attention to what we notice, even if those observations were not overt or apparent to others. Those observations came from within the researcher based on their experiences and knowledge gathered until the point in time they were interacting with the data.

Given my analysis of the findings, I proposed a Kānaka College Choice Framework designed to center and honor the values of Native Hawaiian students as they navigate their college choices on their way to higher education. This framework stands on four principles:

1. Fulfilling Kuleana for the Lāhui: Understanding the role of Native Hawaiian identity in college choice
2. ʻOhana & Support: Intentional role and space for the student's support system
3. Waiwai: Space and resources to manage the financial responsibilities associated with college
4. E wili me ke aloha: Infuse confidence in students

After proposing this framework, the research study concludes by discussing its implications for future research and practice.

Lei Making for the Research Design Methodology

A central feature of this study was my research design. In my dissertation reflection journal, when I wrote about how all my life milestones are connected to lei, I realized this process might also relate to making lei. At the end of dissertation writing process, it is clear the dissertation process was akin to making an intricate lei that will be offered to scholars and colleagues in academia: I moved through the process more confidently. Thus, lei-making served as the research design methodology because it is a concept that helped me present to others what I knew and how I knew it.

Dr. Mehana D.B. Blaich Vaughan (2019) drew a parallel between making lei and conducting research. Vaughn's Tūtū captured her manaʻo (knowledge) in several lessons for making lei, and I adapted these lessons as the framework for my research design. The graphic illustration resembles a lei (Figure 1), and each phase of making lei parallels the steps of this study. I briefly touch on each of these lessons below, and I explain the lessons further in the methods section of chapter three.

Kuleana: Harvest First from the Place you Know and then Aloha aku, Aloha mai, or Cultivate Relationships

For this study, I talked story with Native Hawaiians who experienced the college search process and support(ed) Native Hawaiian students who experienced the college search process. This lesson helped me infuse intentionality into the recruitment stage of this research study.

Hōʻakoakoa: Gather a Diversity of Materials from Different Sources

This lesson resulted in this study, which included participants' various college choice perspectives and experiences. For instance, participants included high school seniors, law

students, and non-traditional students. This range deepened my insights on the long-term development of college choice.

Wili: One Technique, Many Forms

With this lesson, I shaped my talk story interview protocol. Talk story methodology allowed me to approach each interview with the same guiding questions. However, when I followed the natural flow of the conversation, the resulting interviews took on many forms. I describe and discuss those forms in Chapter three.

Hele me ka Mālama: Proceed One Step at a Time and Let the Outcome Surprise You

This lesson guided my time as I conducted the study, gathered data, ensured study trustworthiness, and cultivated relationships. In chapter three, the steps in the study are outlined, such as note-taking, limitations, and ensuring study trustworthiness. The chapter also summarizes the research participants and discussed how the talk story protocol unfolded during the data collection stage.

E Mau: No Lei Lasts Forever, Process over Product (Capturing and Coding Data)

This lesson described the coding stage of my research. Through coding, I sought to capture the essence of the talk story sessions because the moʻolelo told during our session would never be the same after that. In chapter three, I describe and discuss the pre-coding stage, the first stage of coding (Exploratory Coding), and the second stage of coding (Focused Coding).

ʻĀina Uluwehi: Findings and Analysis

This lesson from making lei guided the analytic process of this study. In this context, ʻāina uluwehi describes a lush land or landscape from which we draw elements for a unique lei, and the creation of the lei reveals new knowledge to the beholder. The lush landscape for this study included lessons learned from the literature on Native Hawaiians in higher education,

existing college choice research, and the data collected from this study. When put together, what stories will be told from the data collected? What does the lei look like? What is it made of? What lessons are there to learn from the new knowledge the lei represents?

As mentioned earlier, the rich data from these talk story sessions was analyzed using Papakū Makawalu (Kanahele-Mossman & Karides, 2021) as an orientation to the data, as well as looking to my naʻau (intuition) for guidance on interpreting the data (Bernal, 2016; K.-A. R. K. N. Oliveira, 2015; Wilson, 2008). I also used KanakaCrit (Reyes, 2018) as an analytical framework to shape and elevate the findings.

Pīpī Holo Kaʻao: The Story Goes On

My kupuna taught me I am one small, humble glimpse on the continuum of our ancestors. I ended my research design with this lesson to honor my truth that the story I choose to tell will continue beyond me.

Talk Story Methodology for Data Collection

I used talk story methodology as my primary data collection method. This methodology was a strong fit for my theoretical framework, KanakaCrit. Talk story methodology elicits the story from the participant(s), and the story, or moʻolelo, contributes to the survivance of Native Hawaiians (Reyes, 2018). To further support the use of talk story methodology, in chapter three, I presented two research studies conducted by Kovach (2010) using "a conversational method for gathering data and are situated within an Indigenous research framework" (p. 43). The conversational method's characteristics align with KanakaCrit since the methodology centers on an Indigenous paradigm, aims to contribute to decolonization, and elicits participants' stories. Essentially, talking story is how Hawaiians approach an issue (Sing et al., 1999) so they benefit

from the group's energy and mana (power). Thus, a conversational talk story methodology fits this study.

Conclusion: Looking Forward

This first chapter set the stage for this study. I have presented who I am, the problem I aim to address, and the study I designed to address the central research question: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?

The next chapter, Nā Moʻolelo, is a literature review of Native Hawaiians in higher education and college choice research. Nā Moʻolelo means "The Stories," so the chapter tells stories that provide context for the study. Chapter two will include a discussion of KanakaCrit (Reyes, 2018) as the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter two provides context for the research design presented in chapter three.

Chapter three presents the research design for this study. The research design is framed with lei-making methodology and the use of talk story methodology as the primary mode of data collection is detailed. Finally, the three ʻōiwi epistemologies used to analyze the study's data is discussed.

Chapter four, ʻĀina Uluwehi, introduces a Kānaka College Choice Framework in response to the main research question, based on my data analysis. This chapter is also full of stories from the research participants. Their stories and experiences were a crucial part of this study.

Finally, Chapter five discusses what this proposed framework means for theory, research, and practice. It makes clear what is added to the existing literature and how the research furthers the scholarly conversation at the intersection of Native Hawaiians and college choice. Finally, it

makes clear what the study's framework meant for Kānaka Maoli survivance, social justice, and (independence).

CHAPTER 2: NĀ MOʻOLELO (THE STORIES, A LITERATURE REVIEW)

I have always been a storyteller. I think it is in my koko (blood) because my kūpuna (ancestors) have always been storytellers. From a young age, I learned how to tell stories with hula (Hawaiian dance) and mele (songs), as well as through my writing. When I started this doctoral journey, I felt out of place amid a sea of terminology and rigidity as professors taught me how to say the things I ought to say as a researcher. I remember feeling frustrated when I initially learned about literature reviews in research because constructing a literature review seemed like a simple concept. However, the idea of it all was not connecting for me.

A literature review reflects a conversation that is currently taking place and about the areas of research I was gravitating toward. The task of developing a literature review involved my kuleana (responsibility) to learn about that conversation – what has been said, what is being said, and by whom? Then, as an emerging scholar, I needed to determine where and how I entered the conversation. The place at which I entered this conversation and the way in which I entered it should reflect my identities as a scholar and a practitioner. While the scholarly idea of a literature review did not initially make sense to me – I knew how to assess and determine my appropriate place in a conversation.

My clarity crystallized further in the development of this chapter when my advisor pointed out that there is a story to tell about my research areas. When she asked me plainly what the story was, the story came to me as a short poem:

This is who we are, proud Kānaka Maoli

This is who we are in higher education; here are stories of strength and survivance

Even if higher education *was not meant for us*.

College choice research helps us understand student pathways to college

But it has not yet centered on the experiences of Kānaka Maoli.

Because higher education *was not meant for us*.

For the continued survivance of the lāhui, this study centers Kānaka Maoli

in college choice research.

After all, when we understand the intersection of Kānaka Maoli and college choice

We can enact change so that Kānaka Maoli higher education experiences

Will finally be designed for us.

When the shape of the story I wanted to tell came to me in this way, I knew I was finally ready to tell this story.

Chapter Overview

After more than 20 years of professional experience in college admissions and higher education, and as a Native Hawaiian and Chinese woman and first-generation college student, this dissertation is the story I told while at the intersection of Kānaka Maoli, higher education, and college choice. The way I choose to tell this story aligned with the way this chapter is organized. Simply put, the story is that Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) are here, and we are survivors. We have stories to tell of strength and survivance in higher education, and today, we are still telling and shaping those stories with the proliferation of Kānaka Maoli scholars.

The chapter continues with a discussion of contemporary scholarship on college choice. How do students navigate their college pathways? College choice research has been intersected with race, socioeconomic, and financial factors, but it has not yet been centered on Native Hawaiian students. To that end, this study weaves together elements that had not yet been connected: literature on Native Hawaiians in college, research on college choice, and ʻōiwi

epistemologies like KanakaCrit and lei making. This chapter concludes with a discussion about how I incorporated these factors to design the research study and addresses the central research question: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?

Eia Mākou, Nā Pua o Hawai‘i: Here We Are, Native Hawaiians

For this dissertation, I defined Native Hawaiians as the Indigenous peoples of Hawai‘i, individuals who can trace their heritage and ancestral lineage to the original peoples of Hawai‘i (Balutski et al., 2012). Reyes (2018) described Native Hawaiians, or Kānaka Maoli, as the autochthonous people (with chthōn referring to earth) of Hawai‘i ("Autochthonous," 2024), which fits in the sense that Kānaka Maoli cherish their close relationship to the ‘āina, or land. Native Hawaiians, as a people, have endured a long, beautiful, and complex history of survivance[2] through to contemporary times, and my dissertation study is my humble attempt to contribute to this story of the Hawaiian people.

As I shaped this dissertation and my contribution to the story of Native Hawaiians, the reader should note my references to Native Hawaiians are an inclusive "we" to include me as the researcher and storyteller. A few terms are used interchangeably when referring to the Indigenous peoples of Hawai‘i, including Kānaka Maoli, Kānaka ‘ōiwi, Hawaiians, and Native Hawaiians (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2009). Additionally, the reader should note ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) words (Reyes, 2018) are not italicized. This was a practice I originally learned to signal non-English words in whatever I wrote. However, while English is my first language, Hawaiian is the language of my kūpuna (ancestors), so I constructed this dissertation weaving between English and Hawaiian to reflect my comfort level between these two languages.

[2] I will discuss survivance in later sections of this chapter when I discuss Reyes' (2018) KanakaCrit.

To tell the story of who we are, I invite the reader to a moment shared among Hawaiian educators who had the foresight to share their manaʻo (wisdom, knowledge, thoughts) with fellow scholars. One morning in the fall of 1999, three esteemed Hawaiian educators gathered between classes to talk story about the state of Native Hawaiian education at the time (Sing et al., 1999). These three Hawaiian education pioneers were Dr. David Kekaulike Sing, the director of Nā Pua Noʻeau and pioneer in connecting Hawaiian education with culture; Dr. Alapa Hunter, assistant director of Nā Pua Noʻeau and a celebrated kupuna (elder, grandparent) keeping the movement of Hawaiian education alive; and Dr. Aluli Meyer, assistant professor of education at the University of Hawaiʻi at Hilo and trainer of future teachers on culture and liberation theory.

As these people pointed out, a talking-story session is how Hawaiians best approach an issue (Sing et al., 1999). Fortunately, these scholars captured their talk story session as a published journal article. They openeds their article with a brief and beautiful moʻolelo (story) about where Native Hawaiians began and how we have survived more than 2,000 years of history. As I shaped my contribution to the moʻolelo of Native Hawaiians, I felt ill-equipped to tell the story of who Native Hawaiians are in my own words, so I humbly wove in this excerpt from the talk story session shared by Drs. Sing, Hunter, and Meyer (1999):

> Ola na oiwi. Our bones live. Our people live. We live through our actions, thoughts, and dreams. This ʻolelo noʻeau is a poetic way to begin this discussion of Hawaiian Education. We begin first by saying that we exist as one of the many distinct peoples of Oceania who came to these islands in the middle of the Pacific thousands of years ago. We were wayfarers, travelers, and adventurers who left our ancient homelands for a better world, for a visit to relatives, for a new home. We have survived 2,000+ years of invasion, droughts, warfare, and plagues. We currently exist in one of the most expensive

> places to live on the planet with a finite list of resources. We are an island people, 20% of the Hawai‘i State population of over one million, who exist at the bottom of all positive health and socio-economic statistics. It is a predictable picture of colonial oppression and decimation that began from the mooring of Cook’s ships in Kealakekua Bay in 1778, and when the first organized missionary party landed in 1820. Our history parallels the plight of many Native peoples and although we are indeed distinct, the imprint of oppression and power is a shared phenomenon throughout North America. (p. 4)

This excerpt is now 25 years old, yet several things remain true today. Native Hawaiians continue to survive invasion and colonization, which is discussed throughout this literature review. Hawaiians “are generally the most likely of Hawai‘i’s major ethnicities to be in poor health and to have higher rates of smoking, obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure” (Kana‘iaupuni et al., 2021, p. 194). Hawai‘i is the state with the highest cost of living rate and the lowest rate of disposable income (Rothstein, 2024), making it a difficult place for people – especially Native Hawaiians – to make a living.

However, we are the original peoples of the Hawaiian archipelago. More than 2,000 years later, we have proven ourselves as a people who thrive and survive amidst those who try to oppress and decimate us. Despite a history of colonialism, Native Hawaiians continue to survive, and we continue to come together to preserve and protect our rights and interests as Indigenous people (Reyes, 2018). This study was rooted in our history of coming together to preserve and protect our rights and interests as Indigenous people regarding higher education. This research added to the chorus of scholarly voices that continue to thrive and survive and refuse to be decimated.

Above all, we are still here.

KanakaCrit: A Theoretical Foundation for Examining Native Hawaiians in Higher Education

A critical component of Native Hawaiians' ability to survive and thrive has been our strong and steadfast relationship with education. In the following sections of this chapter, Native Hawaiians in higher education is examined through the lens of Reyes' (2018) Native Hawaiian version of Critical Race Theory (CRT), KanakaCrit. A Kānaka ʻŌiwi Critical Race theoretical foundation effectively and critically examines the ways the colonization experienced by Native Hawaiians impacts how we experience college enrollment. KanakaCrit also highlights the importance of college enrollment increases for Native Hawaiians as a necessary part of survivance.

KanakaCrit, ʻŌiwiCrit, & KanakaʻŌiwiCrit

Dr. Nicole Alia Salis Reyes, a Wahine ʻŌiwi (Hawaiian woman), mapped KānakaCrit as a theoretical space for the survivance of the Kānaka Maoli through the resonance and dissonance of critical race theory (Reyes, 2018). I honed in on Reyes' use of the term "survivance" – I believe it to be a robust and incredibly fit term used to describe the livelihood of the Kānaka Maoli people. As poetically put forward by Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), "Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent (Vizenor, 2008, p. 1)." Throughout this dissertation research, in alignment with Reyes' KānakaCrit, I keyed in on survivance as a motivation for Native Hawaiians to tell our stories, and I showcased indicators of survivance in our story on education to demonstrate that we continue to fight, and *we are still here*.

Reyes is one of a few scholars to write about KanakaCrit; Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright, Brandi Jean Nālani Balutski (Balutski, 2015), and Nik Cristobal (Cristobal, 2018) have also

contributed literature to Native Hawaiian CRT. I touched upon these scholars' approaches to KānakaCrit to provide a fuller perspective on why I chose Reyes' KānakaCrit as my theoretical foundation. After a brief overview of Wright's and Balutski's ʻŌiwiCrit and Cristobal's Kanakaʻ ŌiwiCrit, I provide a more in-depth exploration of Reyes' KānakaCrit and its applicability to this dissertation study.

ʻŌiwiCrit by Wright and Balutski. Wright and Balutski bring together Critical Race Theory (CRT), Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005), and Kanaka ʻŌiwi Critical Consciousness to develop what they call ʻŌiwiCrit (Balutski, 2015). While ʻŌiwiCrit can be applied as a theoretical foundation for this study, its epistemological underpinnings in Kanaka ʻŌiwi Critical Consciousness is a broader framework than I preferred to utilize. Still, Wright's and Balutski's ʻŌiwiCrit is valuable to touch upon because, like KanakaCrit, this framework was shaped by two Native Hawaiian higher education scholars who "push us to think more deeply about the experiences of our people in the context of U.S. higher education…" (Balutski, 2015, p. 89).

CRT and Tribal Critical Race Theory assert the following that influences ʻŌiwiCrit, including but not limited to:

1) Colonization and racism are endemic to society;
2) Critiques of neutrality, meritocracy, and colorblindness;
3) Assimilation is problematic; and
4) Applicability to examine inequalities in education (Balutski, 2015; Brayboy, 2005).

Wright and Balutski added the influences of Kanaka ʻŌiwi Critical Consciousness, including but not limited to:

1) Colonization, prolonged and illegal occupation, and Asian settler colonialism is endemic to Hawai‘i society;
2) Liminality is complicated by self-determination; and
3) Hawaiian identity development is nuanced and non-linear (Balutski, 2015).

When putting together CRT and Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Critical Consciousness, Wright and Balutski posit the following tenets for ‘ŌiwiCrit:

1) Educational structures are reflections of colonialism and occupation;
2) How do broader socio-historical and socio-political contexts influence Hawaiian educational journeys?;
3) How do colonial structures influence Hawaiian educational journeys?;
4) How do Hawaiians articulate these journeys?;
5) How are Native Hawaiians racialized in education?; and
6) How can we reconceptualize higher education? (Balutski, 2015).

These questions are among those explored as an emerging higher education scholar myself.

Using the Talk Story Methodology (which is discussed further in chapter three), I explored how Hawaiians articulate their college journeys and create space for them to tell their mo‘olelo (story). In the long term of my career, I contributed materially to Wright’s and Balutski’s last tenet/question: How can we reconceptualize higher education? I sought to reconceptualize higher education on Native Hawaiian terms, making these critical foundations incredibly important.

Kanaka‘ŌiwiCrit by Cristobal. Dr. Nikki (Nik) Cristobal offered Kanaka‘ŌiwiCrit, in which she brings together the principles of Wright’s and Balutski’s ‘ŌiwiCrit and Reyes’ KānakaCrit. Cristobal asserted while Reyes KānakaCrit is situated in Indigenous critical

pedagogy and Wright's and Balutski's ʻŌiwiCrit is situated in Hawaiian critical consciousness, the core of their concepts are the same (Cristobal, 2018). Cristobal synthesized KānakaCrit and ʻŌiwiCrit to build off their work and develop a unified theory. Cristobal named this synthesis KanakaʻŌiwiCrit and posited the following themes and tenets:

1) Occupation and colonialism are endemic in society;
2) Kanaka ʻŌiwi identities are multiple, intersectional, and liminal;
3) As we learn and tell our moʻolelo (stories, narratives, histories), we contribute to our survivance; and
4) Kuleana is the culmination of Kanaka ʻŌiwi moʻolelo about how we enact agency through social justice (Cristobal, 2018, p. 36).

While the KanakaʻŌiwiCrit tenets apply to my dissertation research, and it carries more specificity than Wright's and Balutski's ʻŌiwiCrit, Cristobal's theoretical framework does not emphasize social justice to the same strength and extent as Reyes' KanakaCrit. For my dissertation research, I sought ways to contribute to restoring social justice in higher education, so Reyes' KānakaCrit was a more robust theoretical framework for my intentions. Still, as with ʻŌiwiCrit, Cristobal's framework adds to the veracity of the intersection of CRT and Native Hawaiians, so it was a valuable perspective to touch upon in this literature review.

Why KanakaCrit?

Reyes (2018) asserted theoretical spaces are crucial for developing scholarship so Native Hawaiians can participate in our decolonization, assert ourselves as producers of new knowledge, and maintain a connection to the wisdom of our ancestors:

> As a conceptual framework, KanakaCrit offers areas for analysis and suggests appropriate methodological approaches for future ʻŌiwi scholarship. With regard to my

> own field of study, higher education, for example, there is currently extremely little literature inclusive of Kānaka Maoli. (Reyes, 2018, p. 14)

Reyes identified a significant gap in the literature: There is little literature inclusive of Kānaka Maoli. Furthermore, the literature that does exist shows a persistent gap in college completion for Native Hawaiians (Reyes & Shotton, 2018). Reyes offered KanakaCrit as a framework to facilitate more research and literature on the Kānaka Maoli experience and encourage scholars to fill that gap. This study also fills the gap in the literature by focusing on the college choice experiences of Native Hawaiian students. Reyes goes on to explain that Native Hawaiians have high college aspirations yet enroll in and complete college at lower rates, and I go into depth on these enrollment rates among Native Hawaiians in subsequent sections of this chapter. This shrinking representation of Native Hawaiians in higher education and relatively limited literature on the Native Hawaiian experiences in college are among the things that compel me to progress with this dissertation research. To that end, Reyes' KanakaCrit (2018) is a fitting theoretical framework for me to utilize as I examined and analyzed Native Hawaiians in education and higher education.

Tenets of KanakaCrit

Reyes (2018) offered six tenets of KanakaCrit:

1) Occupation and colonialism are endemic in society;
2) ʻŌiwi identities are multiple, intersectional, and liminal;
3) Social justice is inherently tied to our ea (independence) and lāhui (nation);
4) We work toward social justice as we work to restore pono (righteousness);
5) As we learn and tell our moʻolelo (story), we contribute to our survivance; and
6) Knowledge must be developed and used to benefit lāhui.

Reyes (2018) offered this manaʻo (knowledge, scholarship) to grow the body of ʻŌiwi (Native Hawaiian) theoretical and methodological thought, as well as contribute to the survivance of the lāhui.

These tenets provided an infrastructure for this study. This study utilized the KanakaCrit tenets as a guide through which I examined Native Hawaiians in higher education and assessed previous literature and research on Native Hawaiians and college choice. I also used these tenets to guide this dissertation's research design and analyze the results of this study. Reyes (2018) explained further how she intended for KanakaCrit to facilitate research like this study:

> KanakaCrit may potentially provide a vital conceptual and/or analytical framework for more research on Kānaka Maoli within higher education to be done. It suggests that we should seek to understand how colonization impacts ʻŌiwi college success and that, through the conveyance of stories, we relate such success to ʻŌiwi priorities of nationhood and social justice. (Reyes, 2018, p. 14)

As I progressed through this research and contributed to the story of Native Hawaiians in education, KānakaCrit is the theoretical framework I used to critically examine our moʻolelo (stories) and fortify the reasons more research ought to be done at the intersection of Native Hawaiians and college choice.

In particular, Reyes' last two tenets applied to this research study. The fifth tenet led me to use a talk story methodology in my dissertation research. The goal of the fifth tenet is to elevate Kānaka Maoli stories so participants' stories may contribute to the power that protects the lāhui (Reyes, 2018). Talking story to gather qualitative data captures the participants' voices so that their voices and stories are uplifted through this research. The sixth tenet echoed Brayboy's (2005) argument that research conducted among or with Indigenous peoples should benefit

Indigenous peoples. Reyes (2018) explained that in ʻōiwi epistemology, the value of knowledge is in its usefulness to the lāhui (Native Hawaiian nation). In that light, research about Native Hawaiians in higher education is valuable and beneficial to Hawaiians because the research reveals the challenges and opportunities they face. Once those challenges and opportunities are identified, researchers and practitioners can address those issues head-on.

Summary

To this point in the literature review, I discussed who we are as Native Hawaiians and the theoretical foundation upon which I will base this literature review and dissertation study. This is the start of the mo'olelo I am shaping to tell by establishing who the story is about and how I choose to tell the story. Next, I will convey the story of Native Hawaiians in higher education. As I this story is told with a KanakaCrit lens, I themes of survivance and social justice are lifted in alignment with the importance of this research study to me and my intended contribution to the lāhui.

At the conclusion of this literature review, I discuss why this dissertation research intersecting Native Hawaiians and college choice is vital to the survivance of the lāhui. It is time Native Hawaiians expect more college choice research that impacts Native Hawaiian students. Moreover, of course, who better to source this mana'o (knowledge) than Native Hawaiians themselves?

Kānaka Maoli in Higher Education: Elevating Stories of Strength and Community

Native Hawaiians are present today at every level of education, and that is the narrative this research perpetuates – *we are present, we are still here, and we must be recognized in U.S. higher education*. Native Hawaiian students are often rendered invisible (Reyes & Shotton, 2018) to researchers, policymakers, and educational practitioners because they are woefully

underrepresented in higher education. We may be present in comparatively smaller numbers (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2024), but rather than view this as a deficit, let us remember that Native Hawaiians have persisted and survived through education amid a history of settler colonialism (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2021; Reyes & Shotton, 2018; Wright, 2018). In that light, let us celebrate the precious students who persist through education and pave the way for the next generation of Kānaka Maoli.

Through this section of the chapter, I asserted we should use Kaʻakālai Kū Kanaka (strengths-based) tools (Kana'iaupuni, 2005) to shift a deficit narrative (Hagedorn et al., 2006; Roberts & Hitchcock, 2018; Rothwell, 2013; Yamamoto & Black, 2015) around Native Hawaiian higher education attainment. When we use strengths-based tools and examine the research literature intentionally focused on or authored by Native Hawaiians in higher education, there are valuable lessons to learn. These lessons are further discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter. These lessons guide scholars studying Native Hawaiians in higher education today to elevate stories of strength, center the importance of using Native Hawaiian tools to measure Native Hawaiian attainment, and recognize that assets like financial aid and community must be included in support systems. At the close of this section of the chapter and as it relates to this dissertation study, I affirm these lessons learned should shape a college choice framework built by and for Native Hawaiians.

Comparative Trends that Perpetuate a Deficit and Invisibility Narrative

When compared to the national landscape of college-going students disaggregated by race/ethnicity, Native Hawaiians are rendered nearly invisible. From 2014-2021, out of the 22

million undergraduates enrolled at Title IV institutions[3], just below 0.30% of these students identified as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). This rate declined slightly in 2022 and 2023 to 0.27% (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2024). In other words, at less than 1/3rd of a percent, the share of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students on the national landscape is minute.

When measured against other races/ethnicities on the national landscape, Native Hawaiian students' college enrollment rates remain comparatively minute. In the fall 2023, among all enrolling undergraduate students in the U.S.: 40.55% White, 18.29% Hispanic, 10.77% Black, 5.89% Asian, 4.40% Unknown, 4.35% Multiracial, 1.01% International, 0.66% Native American, 0.27% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 13.81% were missing this data point (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2024). Considering these data often aggregate Native Hawaiians with Pacific Islanders, the number of Native Hawaiians who do not also identify as Pacific Islanders shrinks even further, but it is uncommon for national data sets to disaggregate Native Hawaiians from Pacific Islanders, Asians, or Asian Americans (Reyes & Shotton, 2018).

When examining Native Hawaiian college enrollment rates in the State of Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiians are disaggregated from other ethnic groups. This allows us to follow specific enrollment trends for Native Hawaiian students in the state. According to the 2021 Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment report, among young adults ages 18-24, 31% of Native Hawaiian young adults enrolled in college. Japanese young adults enrolled at 54%, Chinese at 46%, Filipinos at 37%, and Whites at 33% (Kana‘iaupuni et al., 2021). Blacks and Latinx young adults were not measured in this report. While Native Hawaiians had the lowest enrollment rate

[3] A Title IV institution participates in federal financial aid program(s).

among major ethnicities measured in the state, Hawaiians were also on par with the enrollment rate of White students. This comparative trend was unfortunate given that the State of Hawai‘i is the Indigenous land of Native Hawaiians, so why are we still behind in our homeland?

Several research studies focused on Native Hawaiian college participation consistently cited lower standardized test scores, low retention rates, disparities in educational attainment, and limited knowledge about how asset-based programs affect college-bound Native students (Hagedorn et al., 2006; Roberts & Hitchcock, 2018; Rothwell, 2013; Yamamoto & Black, 2015). The most troubling pattern discerned from these research studies was that they consistently used deficit framing and described Native students as "behind." The students were framed as the ones with shortcomings, so the onus was put on the students to "do better." Native/Indigenous students' success is consistently defined and measured using tools developed based on research involving students who were not from Native/Indigenous communities (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Reyes, 2019). Thus, not only are Native Hawaiians a tiny sliver of the higher education landscape, but the literature also perpetuates deficit-oriented, outsider narratives about these students.

Trends that Perpetuate a Strengths-based Narrative

This deficit narrative must end, especially because there are trends of growth available to highlight. An objective of this study is to increase Native Hawaiian college enrollment, and it is important to note that the narrative of Native Hawaiian enrollment is not an absolute deficit. This study will seek to nurture seeds of existing promise for growth among Native Hawaiians in college. While the national- and state-level landscape of higher education enrollment metrics for Hawaiians looks bleak, we must not forget to bring the scope of inquiry further and focus it on promising trends seen among Kānaka Maoli. When we adjust that scope and exclude the external

data of national trends or other ethnic groups, we see trends indicating growth, survivance, and promise. According to the 2021 Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment report, Native Hawaiian college enrollment increased from 24 to 31 percent between 2008 and 2017; this increase "def[ied] national trends during the same period" (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2021, pg. 211). Native Hawaiian students should not be rendered invisible on the college landscape when they defied national trends of growth for almost a decade.

Other indicators that this deficit narrative must end included that the proportion of Native Hawaiian young adults enrolled in college in Hawaiʻi reached a high of 35 percent in 2013 (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2021). College completion rates increased from 14 percent in 2011 to 17 percent in 2014 and remained steady through 2017. Native Hawaiian enrollment has held steady at the national level as well. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (2024) showed from 2020-2023, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NHPI) freshmen enrollment (at the national level) remained relatively steady. In 2020, the number of NHPI freshmen enrolled in college was 5,474, and the number of NHPI freshmen enrolled in college in 2023 was 5,262. Indicators of growth in the past decade and data showing that Native Hawaiian enrollment has remained relatively steady in recent years show there are reasons to reject the deficit narrative. It is time to turn toward a strengths-based narrative that centers on Native Hawaiians and from which we can develop solutions to increase Native Hawaiian college enrollment.

Using Kaʻakālai Kū Kanaka Tools Toward a Strengths-based Narrative

A strengths-based narrative that centers on Native Hawaiians begins with using success measurement tools rooted in Native Hawaiian epistemology. In alignment with Reyes' (2018) KānakaCrit tenet to learn and tell our moʻolelo (stories, narratives), I contend we learn and develop the Native Hawaiian narrative in higher education based on Native Hawaiian values and

experiences. It is time to take back our own narrative and tell it from a place of strength, so we perpetuate valuing the assets Native Hawaiians bring to higher education. A significant contributor to the deficit narrative on Native Hawaiians is that we have been measured by tools that were not designed with us in mind. Current assessments "often come from outside of Hawai'i and focus on deficits rather than strengths" (Borofsky, 2010, p. 170). Why do we allow outsiders to measure our success? Focusing on deficits does not contribute to the survivance of the lāhui. Focusing on deficits will not lead to social justice. Deficit assessments lead to damage-centered research, and what Tuck (2009) described as "a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community" (p. 413). At this point in our history as Native Hawaiians in higher education, we do not need the oppressors to define who we are and further stifle our success.

This study was designed to be a strengths-based tool that centers Native Hawaiian epistemology, contributes to increasing Native Hawaiians in higher education, and measures Native Hawaiian success in higher education based on Native Hawaiian values. This study's foundation was in KanakaCrit, a Native Hawaiian epistemology, and it sought to perpetuate existing narratives of strength and survivance related to Native Hawaiians in higher education. Next, how do we measure Native Hawaiian success if we do not use the mainstream, traditional measures that have resulted in the deficit narrative? For this study, we look to Kana'iaupuni's (2005) ka'akālai kū kanaka (strengths-based approach) for guidance on how to measure Kānaka Maoli success in college:

> Strengths-based research, in my view, begins with the premise of creating social change. In contrast to the expert-driven, top-down approach assumed by deficit models, it means treating the subjects of study as actors within multi-layered contexts and employing the

> multiple strengths of individuals, families, and communities to overcome or prevent difficulties. (p. 35)

Since strengths-based research should treat the subjects of the study as actors and employ multiple sources of strength, this study deliberately investigated what a college choice framework might look like when developed *by and for* Native Hawaiians. Wurdeman-Thurston and Kaomea (2015) asserted that narratives born from strengths-based research "provide models of vitality and empowerment from which we can progress further" (p. 425). This study intentionally focused on collecting and synthesizing Native Hawaiian narratives, experiences, perspectives, and voices to develop a college choice framework for use by Native Hawaiian students. To that end, this study may be a jumping-off point from which we can further understand how Native Hawaiians navigate the college process and enact change that will help increase the college enrollment rates of Native Hawaiians.

Now, with Kanaʻiaupuni's (2005) kaʻakālai kū kanaka (strengths-based approach) in mind, I determined the metrics that needed to be measured to identify and assess the challenges Native Hawaiians face as they progressed to and through higher education. What could be measured outside of the mainstream, traditional metrics when examining college enrollment trends? What should be targeted to influence increases in Native Hawaiian college enrollment and continue to honor a strengths-based narrative?

Kanaʻiaupuni et al. (2021) recommend, "…we acknowledge that quality educational experiences and pathways come from a variety of environments beyond mainstream classrooms" (p. 261). We should measure and assess the factors and experiences beyond formal classrooms and include other workspaces such as internships, apprenticeships, and employment (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2021). We should not limit the measurements to the linear process of

enrolling in and progressing through traditional coursework. That way, we gain a more holistic perspective of the learning opportunities leveraged by Native Hawaiians because students learn in multi-layered contexts (Kanaʻiaupuni, 2005) and all those experiences contribute to students pursuing their goals and fulfilling their kuleana (responsibilities, obligations).

Additionally, the Native Hawaiian higher education journey begins well before the student enters a college community. We should pay attention to the metrics and experiences Native Hawaiian students have with their families and communities prior to entering college. Perhaps when considering the systemic change needed to influence college enrollment, we should look to impacting students' families and communities. While conventional data collection on the impact of students' families and communities is limited (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2021), Native Hawaiian charter and immersion schools serve as examples of ways that Native Hawaiians involved students' families and communities to become agents of our educational narrative.

According to Dr. Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua (2013), co-founder of a leading charter school called Hālau Kū Māna (HKM), Kānaka Maoli communities started charter schools to assert some autonomy in the state's public school system. Establishing these culture-based charter schools has been about educational reform and restoring healthy Hawaiian communities and nationhood (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, 2013). These charter schools emphasize using ancestral wisdom to model pathways for future generations. The founders also highlighted the central role of community in student development and recognized that ʻohana (family) is a powerful source for student growth (Ah Nee-Benham & Cooper, 2000). These schools demonstrate that a crucial part of ʻōiwi leadership involves using cultural wisdom to connect Kānaka (people) to "self, community, and a global/universal honua" (Borofsky, 2010, p. 176). Graduates become leaders

in the community because they help younger students with their hula (dance), ʻoli (chants), and ʻōlelo (language). These are the haumāna our lāhui will need as leaders in the years ahead.

Native Hawaiian charter and immersion schools are vibrant embodiments of educational ea (independence) and demonstrations of how we have lived at least two of Reyes' (2018) KānakaCrit tenets: Social justice is inherently tied to our ea (independence) and lāhui (nation), and knowledge must be developed and used to benefit lāhui. These schools serve as evidence of what is possible when Native Hawaiians are agents of our educational independence and when we ensure that the knowledge we have developed is used to benefit the lāhui. If these schools are any indication, then perhaps a college choice framework involving these schools will illustrate what it means to keep Native Hawaiian students' interests at its core and adapt the framework to the students rather than force the students to fit the framework.

Lessons Learned from Literature Focused on Native Hawaiians in Higher Education

So, what else can we learn from research and literature that already contributes to a strengths-based narrative? Better yet, what can we learn from research and literature focused on Native Hawaiians that has also been authored or led by Native Hawaiians? When I apply Kanaʻiaupuni's (2005) kaʻakālai kū kanaka lens, I gleaned the following lessons: 1) Hawaiians should tell our own higher education stories; 2) Higher education should develop culturally responsive assessment tools with Hawaiians in mind; 3) Community is key to ensuring Native Hawaiians succeed; 4) Financial aid is vital to securing higher education for Native Hawaiians; and 5) Systemic change is necessary to sustain Native Hawaiians' success in higher education. As previously mentioned, this chapter is summarized with a discussion about how these lessons can shape and be applied toward a college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians.

Hawaiians Should Tell Our Own Higher Education Stories

Kānaka Maoli should be uplifted in higher education research and literature so we may harness our narratives and tell our own stories. Brayboy (2005) reminded us "stories as 'data' are important, and one key to collecting these data is 'hearing' the stories" (p. 440). As we tell and collect our stories, who better to "hear" them with the nuance owed to the stories than Native Hawaiians themselves? Who better to tell the stories than our scholars?

Today, many Kānaka Maoli scholars effectively tell our stories of strength in higher education. Kānaka scholar Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright penned a compelling chapter on kuleana-centered higher education as it relates to Hawaiianness and identity (Wright, 2018). The chapter was her contribution to "decades of important conversations Kanaka ʻŌiwi have had about the meaning and significance of identity through a diversity of scholarship" (Wright, 2018, p. 19); this was her way of reinforcing that Kānaka should tell our own stories. Wright invited us to look inward at the relationship between our Hawaiianness and our identity as Hawaiians so that we may better understand ourselves and our relationship to education. She urged for a kuleana-centered approach to understanding the interplay of identity, education, and environment for Kānaka Maoli because, with that approach, we could intentionally design a higher educational journey that sets Hawaiians up for success. Wright (2018) reminded us that we should harness our own stories, tell them ourselves, and tell them our way – while ensconced in our values, like the value of kuleana.

Mana Wahine (strong, Native Hawaiian women) scholars Wright, Reyes, Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, and Oliveira (Wright & Reyes, 2019) exhibited their skills in telling our stories through their piece, Ka Lei o ka Lanakila: A Letter to the Potential of Our Lāhui. They authored this letter for future Kānaka college students to uplift them as they navigate their higher education journeys

and so that these students "know that we are with them" (Wright & Reyes, 2019, p. 10). They remind us that "for the potentiality of this kuleana to be realized…Kānaka ʻŌiwi must draw connections between the knowledge, skills, and networks that they gain through college" (Wright & Reyes, 2019, p. 10). In other words, the authors infuse strength into the narrative on Hawaiians in higher education and reach out to future haumāna (students) to remind them that college is the key to the survivance of the lāhui. They remind us that we can defy the odds; our kūpuna (ancestors) have done this for centuries, and now it is our time to do so in higher education.

Culturally Responsive Assessment Tools Can Dismantle Barriers to College

College enrollment and persistence rates for Kānaka Maoli students are comparatively low; however, it is a mistake to attribute the low rate to a lack of student capacity. The tools used to measure Kānaka Maoli student success were designed by and for non-Kānaka, which suggests that Native Hawaiian students lack capacity or ability. Instead, Native student accomplishments deserve to be measured by culturally responsive tools that identify and measure multi-layered contexts, complexity, and nuance (Faircloth, 2017; Kana'iaupuni, 2005; Roberts & Hitchcock, 2018).

Reyes (2019) recommended, "If higher education institutions are interested in leveling postsecondary educational gaps, they should begin by broadening their limited conceptions of what constitutes success" (p. 630). To that end, if we expect to see Hawaiians rise in higher education, the onus is on higher education institutions to expand their toolkits and develop culturally responsive assessment tools with Hawaiians in mind.

Fortunately, there is ample evidence that higher education scholars and practitioners have access to and can build culturally responsive tools for student assessment. To illustrate this point,

I offer two examples: 1) Parents of Hawaiian immersion students fight for an alternative to a standardized exam, and 2) Reyes' (2019) Indigenized phenomenology of 'giving back.' Stories and examples like these should empower Hawaiians to continue advocating for and developing student assessment tools with Hawaiians in mind.

Parents of Hawaiian Immersion Students Fight for an Alternative to a Standardized Exam. A strong example of Hawaiians advocating for culturally responsive assessment approaches and tools took place in 2016, when parents whose children attended a K-12 Hawaiian language immersion school fought for alternatives to standardized English tests (Neason, 2016). Parents knew that the test would not accurately measure their students' performance in an immersion curriculum. Rather than accept the standardized tests that centered on and measured the success of a student's English language comprehension, parents demanded an alternative.

When the Hawai‘i Department of Education adopted the Common Core educational standards, the department worked with experts at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa to design a test version for elementary school-aged Hawaiian language immersion students (Neason, 2016). School leaders worked with culturally minded community experts who helped coordinate and integrate cultural values into the assessments. While Neason (2016) does not provide insights as to the outcomes of the new test, the lesson learned here is that it took a community – alongside the school officials – to fight for a culturally responsive assessment. In this case, parents knew the long-term costs of having their students inaccurately measured; students would be labeled as deficient and would be unable to progress appropriately beyond their elementary school. They also knew that students who learn in a language other than English *do not* have setbacks in long-term language and skills development in English, but the standardized assessment reported otherwise (Neason, 2016). Consequently, parents knew these standardized tests were often tools

used to determine college readiness, so poor performance on these exams eventually gave a false sense of the student's readiness for college.

Fortunately, the school and community won this battle with a standardized test. However, this struggle should not require an angry, provoked community of parents to win – especially not when there is ample research to support that standardized tests disproportionately harm low-income and underrepresented minority students (Hoover, 2020; Soares, 2012, 2020). Educational systems should be more attuned to and designed better for the cultural needs of their students and communities, but that has long been a contested battleground. While schools and communities fight this front against standardized test goliaths, this story should be uplifted as an example of self-advocacy among Hawaiians for assessments designed with them in mind. Perhaps one day, when the systems do change, Hawaiians must fight so fiercely for what should be a given in the first place.

The previous example highlighted the importance of a culturally responsive assessment tool in shaping students' educational journey from K-12 to college. Next, I share an instance where a Native Hawaiian scholar proposed the use of a culturally responsive tool for admissions consideration, emphasizing its potential to support Native applicants. Both cases emphasize the positive impact of culturally responsive tools in dismantling barriers for Native Hawaiian students on their journey to college.

Reyes' (2019) Indigenized Phenomenology of "Giving Back." Reyes (2019) led a research study that used an Indigenized phenomenological approach to examine "giving back" among Native college graduates. For higher education practitioners, how might colleges be able to identify and acknowledge a Native student's nation-building merit in their admission decisions? By and large, admissions offices are not seeking or uplifting this quality among

Native applicants, which means they may miss a significant part of the student's essence as a potential future campus community member. To that end, we ought to examine and develop this assessment for the college process, keeping Native students' contributions in mind.

This study analyzed and connected the stories of eleven participants who self-identified as Kānaka ʻŌiwi (Native Hawaiian), Native American, and/or Alaska Native. Reyes selected these participants because they work to benefit Native people and communities. The conceptual framework for this study wove together TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005), KānakaCrit (Cristobal, 2018), and Indigenous critical pedagogy (e.g., McKinley & Smith, 2019; Meyer, 2008; Reyes, 2018). Reyes' interwoven conceptual framework emphasized the active stance Indigenous people must take to work toward survivance; thus, the participants' intentionality behind giving back was crucial for their selection for the study. Participants' stories provided the foundation for this study. After reviewing the findings, Reyes asserted "when Native college graduates give back, they effectively draw bridges between education and self-determination" (p. 610). She asserted this new knowledge about the importance of giving back among Native students could encourage their participation in higher education and improve practices related to Native enrollment and attainment.

Reyes' (2019) study was an example of decolonized and Indigenized research practices, as her approach "honors the integrity of Indigenous stories and lived experiences" (p. 610). It also supported the importance of developing culturally responsive assessment tools with Native students in mind. Indigenizing research practices include teaching Indigenous researchers to merge their academic work with their cultural values rather than viewing these as separate entities. There is potential in changing our admissions lens and selection processes to account for Native students' values of giving back. Such practices make Native students more visible and

valued in the admissions process and allow universities to connect Native students to resources on campus that nurture their nation-building qualities.

As these two examples illustrated, Native Hawaiians can advocate for and develop culturally responsive assessment tools in education that center Hawaiian values and experiences. Culturally responsive tools with Hawaiians in mind will more accurately measure Kānaka success because these tools account for the nuanced ways that Kānaka navigate higher education (Borofsky, 2010; ʻAipia-Peters, 2014). Culturally responsive assessment tools also reveal systemic, assimilatory, and structural flaws in higher education processes and systems (Brayboy, 2005), rather than emphasize student shortfalls. It is time to shift the paradigm and solve existing systemic issues rather than situate the problem in the students and blame them for observed trends. Culturally responsive tools can make significant contributions to shifting this paradigm. Thus, if higher education institutions expect to enroll and support more Native Hawaiian students, they should focus more resources on examining their assessment tools and developing them to be culturally responsive. Accordingly, this study is a culturally responsive tool for higher education institutions and practitioners to use as they seek to facilitate college choice among Native Hawaiian students.

Community Support is Central to Native Hawaiian College Pathways

For this dissertation, community support includes acknowledging the role of Kānaka Maoli students' immediate support system (such as parents, guardians, family members, teachers, and mentors). Community support for this context also extends beyond the students' immediate circle to include the idea that they are motivated to and through higher education to enact their kuleana (responsibility, obligation) to the lāhui (Native Hawaiian nation).

When institutions seek to enroll Native Hawaiian students and successfully see them through to degree completion, they should also make room for the community the student brings with them. Institutions must understand they are not only enrolling the student but also all who come with the student's support system. For instance, Oliveira's (2005) dissertation study on Native Hawaiians' predictive factors and bachelor's degree completion found that parent encouragement was a significant predictor of completion and, in fact, found that a lack of support decreased the probability of completion. Given this finding, Oliveira (2005) recommended that information about the college process should extend beyond the student to include the parents so that the parents can be prepared to support their student.

Similarly, Hoke et al.'s (2019) study in which first-year Native Hawaiian students conducted original research to determine the top ten barriers to Kānaka students' success at the University of Hawai'i Maui College (UHMC) found that family and friends were essential for student success. More than 90% of respondents reported that family and friends were supportive of them attending college, and more than 65% of respondents shared that they reached out to family and friends when they needed support while in college (Hoke et al., 2019). Incidentally, Hoke et al.'s (2019) study also supported the previous two lessons from the research and literature on Hawaiians in higher education since the study involved Kānaka students conducting research by and for fellow and future Kānaka students. In that light, Hoke et al.'s (2019) study quintessentially captured the kind of research and literature work that should be elevated and centered in higher education scholarship.

A succinct cap on this lesson that community support is key to ensuring Native Hawaiian success in higher education came from Dr. Amy Bumatai's (2023) dissertation study titled, "I need community to make it through": Understanding college readiness among Native Hawaiian

students. Bumatai's (2023) study was an affirming echo for my dissertation study since she emphasized a strengths-based approach to understanding how Native Hawaiian students demonstrate their readiness for college. Recommendations from Bumatai's (2023) research were made that the college readiness 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" (Bumatai, 2023, p. 112). Figuratively and literally in practice, Native Hawaiian students benefit from higher education systems, researchers, and practitioners who understand that preparing the student means preparing the family and the community.

A crucial question then arises when we examine the college support systems intended for Native Hawaiian students: To what extent do those systems also account for the needs of the students' community? Additionally, let us not forget that we should also endeavor to nurture the intangible part of the student's support system, the student's sense of kuleana. A participant in Balutski's (2012) study on access and success for students from Indigenous populations described their kuleana as being a part of a "bigger picture" (Balutski et al., 2012, p. 358). Thus, the lesson learned from the literature on Hawaiians in higher education as it relates to community support is that the student does not navigate the experience alone – they benefit from intentional spaces for their immediate support system to be with them on the journey, *and* they carry with them this sense of "privilege and burden" (Wright, 2018, p. 19) for the lāhui. In practice, this means that institutions should account for relaying information about the college process to students' communities and families. Institutions should open their intended target audience beyond the individual student and demonstrate the extent to which they recognize the student navigates their process with their support system. This approach secures a successful college

pathway for Native Hawaiian students. Therefore, this study incorporates understanding community support as a factor in Native Hawaiian students' college choice processes.

Financial Aid is Vital to Securing College Pathways for Native Hawaiians

Research on Kānaka in higher education consistently references the vital role that financial aid plays in ensuring they enroll in and complete a college degree. Existing literature cites the grave extent to which finances are a significant barrier to higher education (Hagedorn et al., 2003; Hoke et al., 2019; Jensen, 2020; Kerr et al., 2018). The lesson here is that we must look critically at how students learn about and leverage financial aid so that it is a contributing factor to their success, not a barrier. Any tools used to support success for Native Hawaiians in higher education ought to include a comprehensive understanding of how financial aid is leveraged in the process.

Some noteworthy examples in the literature include a study on Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in STEM in which Kerr et al. (2018) pointed out that financial barriers begin as early as their K-12 education and then extend to become barriers to their higher education. Jensen (2020) authored a paper that critically explored factors affecting Kānaka college-going rates, and they noted that a lack of finances was the most common barrier to college. Hoke et al.'s (2019) study also revealed that 71% of Native Hawaiian students reported financial difficulties as a top barrier to college.

Given the extent to which finances are a barrier for Native Hawaiian students to attend college, the lesson here is that we must deconstruct these barriers to help students secure a college degree. Hagedorn et al.'s (2006) CP-TASKS study is probably the most extensive quantitative research study focused on Native Hawaiian college-bound students, and their research revealed that financial aid from the Kamehameha Schools (KS) significantly *increased*

a student's likelihood of attending college (Hagedorn et al., 2003). Thus, removing or deconstructing financial aid barriers has the potential to unlock the myriad opportunities available for Kānaka students in college, and there is evidence that financial aid funding can change and improve the student's trajectory toward college.

Financial aid is crucial for understanding how Hawaiians pursue and navigate college. We must recognize both the need for direct aid that can help fund a student's education (Hagedorn et al., 2006), as well as the need to provide information, guidance, and education for students and families trying to navigate the college process (J. A. K. Oliveira, 2005). In that light, a holistic approach that includes financial aid funding and education would be highly beneficial for Native Hawaiians and would help them secure their higher education goals. This study will explore the college choice experiences of Native Hawaiian students and contribute to the literature on a holistic approach to financial aid information as students navigate their college pathways.

Systemic Change is Necessary to Sustain Native Hawaiians' Success in Higher Education

The final lesson gleaned from research and literature focused on Native Hawaiians in higher education is that systemic change is necessary to sustain student success in higher education. Reyes and Shotton (2018) underscored this lesson when they urged more visibility to the needs and interests of Indigenous students and pointed out that "institutions should review their current policies to assess how they might hinder or better support cultural practices for Indigenous students on campus" (Reyes & Shotton, 2018, p. 23). Reyes and Shotton (2018) understood and asserted that critical change is needed in higher education so that Native students and their needs can be more effectively addressed at the macro levels of higher education.

In support of this lesson, Watkins-Victorino (2016) offered a diagram that illustrated the point that in education, students are deeply nested within education systems. Students are inherently tied to external influences, laws, policies, and funds that make up the education system surrounding these students, so change cannot happen in a vacuum. If we expect any change to take place and be sustained for Native Hawaiian students, the change must be made at the systemic level.

Figure 1 below is Watkins-Victorino's (2016) diagram showing how Native Hawaiian students are nested within multiple education systems. At the core of the nest, Watkins-Victorino (2016) placed Native Hawaiian students across Pre-K through post-secondary levels. The second level of the nest is the ʻohana (family), or those who are considered members of the student's support system. The third level of the nest involves communities, schools, programs, and organizations that support students. The fourth level of the next identifies the State Systems involved in Native Hawaiian students' education, such as the Department of Education and the University of Hawaiʻi. Finally, the fifth level is an all-encompassing level of the nest, which is the U.S. Department of Education at the federal/national level. This diagram illustrates how students are nested in local, institutional, state, and federal contexts and systems as they move through their educational experience. Additionally, facilitating across and through all these nested levels are laws, policies, and funds that facilitate the system of education around, through, and for Native Hawaiian students.

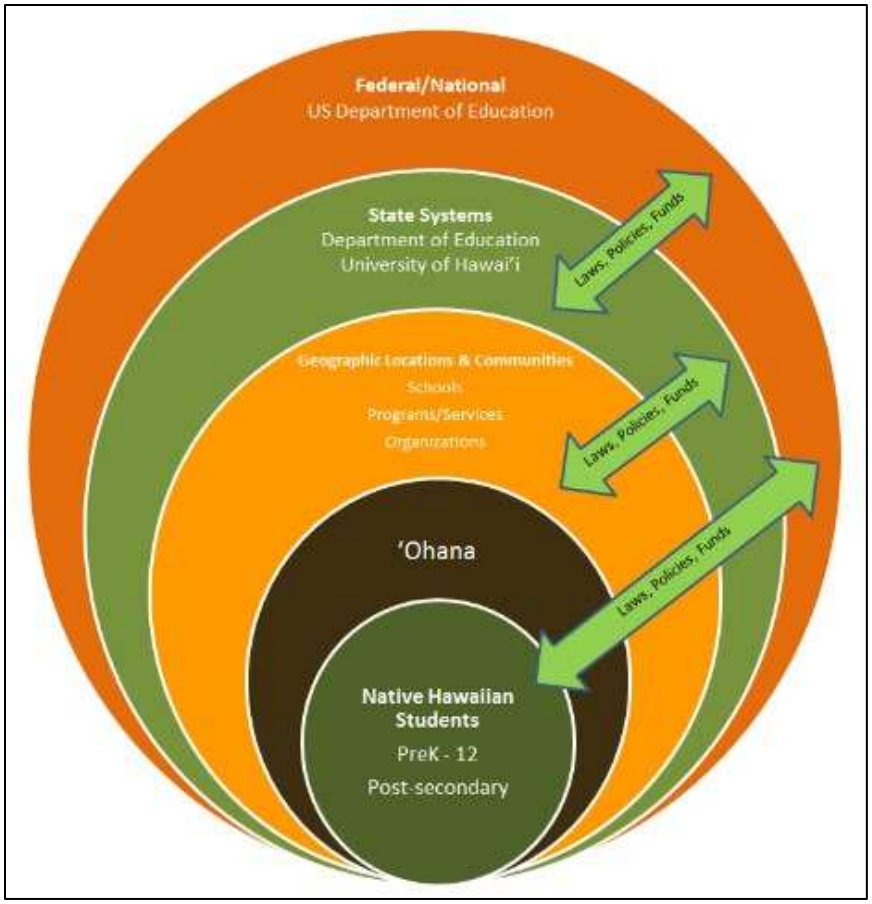

Figure 1: Watkins-Victorino (2016) Diagram of Native Hawaiian Students Nested in Systems.

Watkins-Victorino's (2016) diagram elucidated the idea that improving Native Hawaiian metrics in higher education involves multiple external constituents, communities, and stakeholders, as well as laws, policies, and funds that comprise the system of education in which students are nested. This means that true and transformational change for Native Hawaiian students must be systemic and take place at the macro levels of education. So, this study will gather the experiences of Native Hawaiian students and use those perspectives to critically examine the ways that systemic and macro levels of education can or should change to better accommodate the needs of Native Hawaiian students.

Summary

In summary, to shift the trends of Native Hawaiians in higher education, we should learn to tell our own stories, develop culturally responsive assessment tools, mobilize community support, provide financial aid funding and education, and then ensure this work happens at the systemic level to spur sustainable change. When I weave these lessons from a critical scholar's perspective (Brayboy, 2005), I assert that we must commit to all of these lessons, dig deeply into institutional policies and practices, expose structural inequalities, unlearn assimilatory processes, and work to replace policies and practices with systems that will address the real needs of Native Hawaiian students.

Given these lessons gleaned from research and literature focused on Native Hawaiians in higher education, I return to the central research question: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians? When woven with the lessons gleaned, the following additional questions reflect how the literature shaped my perspectives on Native Hawaiians in higher education and shaped this study. How do we tell our own stories about the ways that Native Hawaiians move through the college choice process today? How do we claim our space in college choice scholarship and develop a culturally responsive framework with Hawaiians in mind? Who must we engage in the community to mobilize support for Kānaka students? What role does financial aid play today in the college choice process for Native Hawaiians? Then, based on what we learn, how do we weave these lessons into the fabric of practices and policies that impact college choice for Kānaka Maoli students? These questions shaped the design of this study because I used these questions to examine and analyze the study's data. These questions reflect the ways that my scholarly

curiosity has been piqued, and ideally, this study sheds light on possible answers to these questions.

Of course, literature on Native Hawaiians in higher education only addresses part of the central research question. When considering this research question, it is crucial to thoroughly examine and assess college choice. In the following sections of this chapter, I present research and scholarship on college choice to build on addressing the central research question.

Weaving in College Choice Research

Whenever I find myself with multiple pieces of related things that I want to bring together, I think about making a lei. A lei, in its most known form, is a traditional Hawaiian adornment that weaves together a variety of materials; it is gifted to a recipient as a way to mark a special occasion or milestone (Vaughan, 2019). A lei in the context of academia, as I am utilizing it with this dissertation, is a symbol that reflects ʻōiwi epistemology. Dr. Makalapua Alencastre, an international award-winning Native Hawaiian scholar from the first Ed.D. cohort at the UH Mānoa College of Education (University of Hawaiʻi at Hilo, 2015), related making lei as a way to design research that is pono (righteous, or to be done appropriately):

> As the weaving progresses and individual elements are connected, an intricate pattern of colors and textures is created. To assure that each piece has been appropriately placed and securely fastened, it is picked up and gently shaken. A final reflection of the lei includes a discerning visual inspection to affirm its qualities and to enjoy its unique beauty. As a labor of love, once the lei is complete, it is presented to encircle its wearer with aloha. (p. 59)

Making lei intuitively makes sense to me (Alencastre, 2017), so it also makes sense that it should be applied to this dissertation. In the idea of a lei, this dissertation is certainly a labor of love presented to my academic colleagues once complete.

When I make lei, I am motivated by the idea that the final product will reflect something new and inspired. I am constantly learning as I am doing. I anticipate the need to undo and redo my work to achieve my desired lei. In that light, a lei itself is:

1) **interdisciplinary** because it shows synergy from a collection of perspectives and knowledge sources;
2) **iterative** because the process can be and is often non-linear, and the maker often must begin again; and
3) **integrative** because while the lei is the primary focus, it drew upon multiple secondary sources for support.

In alignment with my intuition (Bernal, 2016; Wilson, 2008), I discuss college choice literature and then weave it together in alignment with these three characteristics of a lei.

Existing College Choice Literature and Research

Like every good lei, this college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians should draw from its original ‘āina, or its original sources of knowledge, which includes research on Native Hawaiians in higher education and college choice. The earlier half of the chapter presented lessons learned from the literature on Native Hawaiians in higher education, and the next sections will present lessons learned from existing college choice literature and research. As Vaughan (2019) pointed out, research can weave new knowledge of landscapes, which is what I anticipate will happen in bringing together these two areas to address the central research question.

Research on college choice models is crucial as scholars and higher education enrollment practitioners examine student systems and behaviors of entry and persistence. The impetus for college choice research stemmed from a growing interest among institutional decision-makers who sought to influence student enrollment decisions (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). Additionally, the college search process is rife with choices for the student and the student's support system. College choice models are valuable because they provide blueprints for those who must navigate the process and for those who are in the business of guiding students through the process. College choice models also help us understand college pathway structures and the ways students navigate those pathways. Then, once those pathways are mapped and understood, scholars and practitioners can work to affect change in college enrollment patterns.

Dr. Amy Bergerson's (2009) monograph on college choice provided a thoughtful and thorough overview of college choice. It encouraged scholars and practitioners to use the monograph as "a road map for those interested in embracing the challenge of taking the field of college choice headlong into the twenty-first century" (p. 117). With this research study, I embraced this challenge to contribute to moving the field of college choice into the twenty-first century. Thus, to develop a college choice framework by and for Native Hawaiians, I examined eight college choice models/paradigms.

I selected relevant takeaways from these eight models/paradigms that could be part of developing this framework and created Figure 2 (below). The visual of the illustration allowed me to see laid out in front of me all the college choice material with which I developed this lei. The eight models/paradigms included the following:

1) The Comprehensive College Choice Model (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987);
2) The effects of race on college choice (Engberg & Wolniak, 2009);

3) Teranishi et al.'s (2004, 2009, 2011, 2017) research on college choice for APA students;
4) Perna's body of research (2000, 2002; Perna et al., 2005; Perna & Titus, 2004) on socioeconomic and financial influences on college choice;
5) The College-*conocimiento* Model (Acevedo-Gil, 2017);
6) the Cultural Ecological Model (Tierney and Venegas, 2009);
7) A community and cultural wealth paradigm (Villalpando & Solorzano, 2005; Yosso, 2005); and
8) A college preparatory program/model in practice, named College Horizons (Keene, 2016).

Figure 2 is a quick reference illustration of the relevant takeaways from these models/paradigms that may be used to develop this new college choice framework by and for Native Hawaiians. As Figure 2 illustrates, existing scholarship on college choice offers a wealth of relevant takeaways from which to choose and lend toward developing a college choice framework by and for Native Hawaiians.

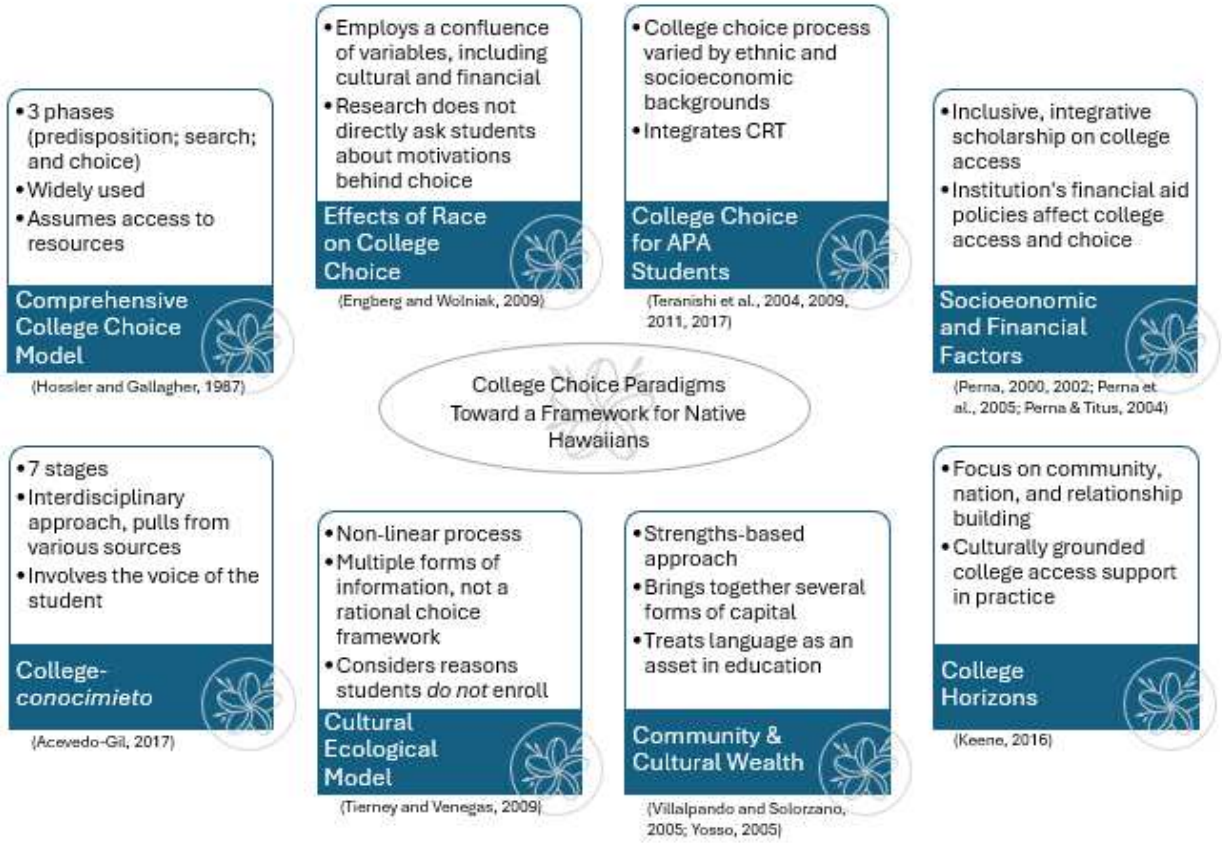

Figure 2: College Choice Models/Paradigms Toward a Framework for Native Hawaiians.

This visual of the eight models/paradigms reminded me of the typical way I begin a lei. I lay all the available materials before me when I start making lei. Sometimes, I see a pattern immediately; sometimes, it presents itself to me after I begin the lei. When examining these eight models/paradigms, I imagined the process as if I were beginning a lei. I reviewed the college choice research literature and slowly began to see the literature organized into these eight models/paradigms. I reviewed each college choice model/paradigm and noted the characteristics that did or did not resonate with ʻōiwi (Native Hawaiian) epistemology, as outlined in the earlier half of this chapter.

The five lessons learned and discussed in the first half of this chapter about Native Hawaiians in higher education shaped the critical questions I posited about these college choice

models. Was the model culturally responsive? Did it account for how race/ethnicity affects college choice? Might it help us understand how to tell our stories in higher education? Were there elements of community support? Did the model cross into or integrate with the field of financial aid? Evaluating college choice models in this way formed the basis of a college choice framework created by and for Native Hawaiians. It reflected the integration and weaving of ʻōiwi epistemology and values into college choice research, all aimed at addressing the central research question: What would a college choice framework designed by and for Native Hawaiians look like?

The Three-Strand Backbone of a College Choice Framework by and for Native Hawaiians

Once I saw the available lei materials in front of me, I began to wili (weave, braid) the backbone, or base, of the lei. Often, the base includes three strands braided together; this is the backbone of the lei that will anchor whatever flowers or materials I chose to add as I continued to make the lei. Vaughan et al. (2015) reflected on the process of creating the backbone of the lei:

> The beauty of lei wili comes from combining materials of different sizes, shapes, textures, and colors. The three-strand raffia structure allows for finesse in the binding. (p. 45)

With the college choice material laid out in front of me (Figure 2), I saw the three strands that would become the backbone of this lei. I identified those strands while inspired by the three characteristics mentioned above of a well-made lei. Therefore, the backbone of this lei is interdisciplinary, iterative, and integrative.

The first strand of this backbone is interdisciplinary because the Native Hawaiian framework can be developed from the synergy of existing college choice models. The second strand is iterative, inspired by Acevedo-Gil's (2017) the college-*conocimieto* model, which

encouraged a non-linear process, and students could repeat stages as needed. Finally, the third strand is integrative because while this new framework is focused on college choice, it draws from Perna's body of research (2000, 2002; Perna et al., 2005; Perna & Titus, 2004) on socioeconomic and financial influences on college choice. Together, these strands become the backbone of the lei, and this three-strand structure was as solid and elegant base for research as it is for making a lei.

Strand #1: Interdisciplinary

The synergy of this interdisciplinary strand came from pulling together parts of the existing models that echoed the lessons gleaned from the literature on Native Hawaiians in higher education. When I looked at the relevant takeaways of each model for this study, I articulated characteristics that support ʻōiwi epistemological values, including the following:

1) accounting for students' ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g., Teranishi et al., 2004);
2) exercising strengths-based principles (e.g., Villalpando & Solorzano, 2005);
3) amplifying student voices and perspectives (e.g., Acevedo-Gil, 2017);
4) garnering community involvement/engagement (e.g. Keene, 2016; Yosso, 2005);
5) centering culturally responsive practices and policies (e.g. Tierney & Venegas, 2009); and
6) integrating financial aid policies (e.g. Perna, 2002).

Indeed, these are not the only characteristics among existing models that contribute to a Native Hawaiian college choice framework; these are several of the most relevant and echo the five lessons discussed earlier from Native Hawaiian higher education literature and research.

Constructing this framework as interdisciplinary was vital because it created alignment with contemporary college choice models (e.g. Acevedo-Gil, 2017; Engberg & Wolniak, 2009;

Yosso, 2005). Hossler's and Gallagher's (1987) traditional, comprehensive model, while widely used (Park & Hossler, 2015), was comparatively narrow and failed to recognize the nuanced needs of non-white, nontraditional-aged students. Comparatively, Engberg's and Wolniak's (2009) interdisciplinary model posited a "confluence of variables" (Engberg & Wolniak, 2009, p. 2261) were involved in the college choice process. Specifically, Engberg's and Wolniak's (2009) model included cultural and financial variables. A college choice framework for Native Hawaiians should also include financial and cultural variables. According to the literature about Native Hawaiians in higher education discussed in the first half of this chapter, culture and financial aid are important factors for Native Hawaiian students who experienced the college choice process.

Acevedo-Gil's (2017) model built on Perna's college choice research (2000, 2002; Perna et al., 2005; Perna & Titus, 2004) and integrated it with the theory of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2013), which resulted in an interdisciplinary college choice framework for Latinx students called college-*conocimiento*. Acevedo-Gil's (2017) model draws the most valuable knowledge from its emphasis on engaging Latinx students to capture their voices. This emphasis on incorporating the students' voices aligns with the central research question that this model is developed by and for Native Hawaiians. This emphasis also supports the idea that Hawaiians should tell their own stories in their own voices.

Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model brought together several forms of capital to value community cultural wealth in education. This interdisciplinary model elevates "the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Why is that important for communities that have been historically underrepresented in higher education?

Villalpando and Solorzano (2005) arrived at the resonating conclusion that college preparation programs are a firmer fit and can significantly impact college enrollment rates of historically underrepresented students when framed by cultural wealth. Such framing leads to programs that are tailored to meet these students' nuanced needs and offer a culturally relevant tapestry of components that better support students.

Finally, KanakaCrit should be a discipline woven into the base of this college choice framework. In the same way KanakaCrit is a theoretical foundation for this study, KanakaCrit can and should serve as a theoretical foundation for a college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians. KanakaCrit reminds us that Native Hawaiians can participate in our decolonization, assert ourselves as producers of new knowledge, and maintain a connection to the wisdom of our ancestors. A college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians would further new knowledge at the intersection of Kānaka Maoli in higher education and college choice research.

Thus, this first strand of the backbone for a college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians ensures that an interdisciplinary approach is inherent in the framework's base. To honor Native Hawaiians' experiences in higher education, the framework should endeavor to bring in various sources of knowledge. More pointedly, this framework calls on components such as the student voice, cultural assets, and financial factors to support the college choice process.

Strand #2: Iterative

The value of an iterative strand in this backbone for a Native Hawaiian college choice model emerges because it allows students to repeat stages of the model and learn about themselves and the college choice process as they go along. Hossler's and Gallagher's (1987)

comprehensive college choice model assumed students move through the process linearly, and it assumed all students had uniform needs as they considered college options. This model was inadequate for students of color because it failed to account for the nonlinear, iterative way that underrepresented, often under-resourced students navigate the process. It also failed to account for the cultural and ever-evolving financial needs (Acevedo-Gil, 2017) that students encounter with a complex choice set such as choosing a college:

> The nonlinear process reveals that students may negotiate institutional information as it applies to their individual characteristics. Previous models and studies focus on what variables influence Latinx college choice but do not elaborate on the interconnectedness between individual characteristics and institutional contexts. (Acevedo-Gil, 2017, p. 844)

In a nonlinear, iterative process, students can repeat stages as needed. An inherently iterative model allows students to learn as they go and return to steps in the process with new knowledge – knowledge about themselves and the institutions they are considering. This is especially important in the absence of widespread college guidance resources for students of color, including for Native Hawaiian students (Roberts & Hitchcock, 2018).

The iterative strand of this backbone is also essential for a Native Hawaiian college choice framework because it reflects a culturally relevant practice, making lei. Making lei is itself an iterative process (Alencastre, 2017; Vaughan, 2019), in which the maker can and often does begin again when or if the lei is not turning out as expected. Thus, a college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians should inherently be iterative to honor the student's ongoing, evolving needs and to honor a culturally relevant practice, making lei.

Strand #3: Integrative

The final strand of this backbone was integrative. This framework cannot exist in a vacuum if it is to serve Native Hawaiian students, given the nuanced needs of this community of students. To adequately support Native Hawaiians, this framework was bolstered and integrated with multiple secondary sources. Specifically, this framework integrated Critical Race Theory (CRT) elements (Reyes, 2018; Teranishi et al., 2009), as well as college access practices and financial aid policies (2000, 2002; Perna et al., 2005; Perna & Titus, 2004).

Dr. Robert Teranishi has been a lead author of research and literature on college choice, access, and completion among Asian Pacific American (APA) and/or Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) students (Teranishi et al., 2004, 2009; Teranishi & Kim, 2017). Teranishi et al. (2004) conducted research that examined how class and ethnicity impacted the college decision-making process and destinations for various subpopulations of Asian Pacific American (APA) students. Tranishi et al.'s study surveyed 18,106 first-time, full-time APA freshmen attending 469 colleges and universities across the U.S. In addition to examining different APA ethnic groups, researchers analyzed students' different socioeconomic classes. From this study, Teranishi et al. (2004) determined that the college decision-making processes varied by the ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds of students.

Given the impact of class and ethnicity on the college choice process, Teranishi integrated Critical Race Theory (CRT) into their work on college choice, access, and completion (Teranishi et al., 2009). CRT assisted in challenging the traditional claims of the education system and was particularly useful for critiquing deficit thinking; CRT provides alternative pedagogies and methodologies for scholars to think critically and differently about race

(Teranishi et al., 2009). Teranishi et al. (2009) used CRT as a lens for college choice and access work:

> Alternatively, CRT perspectives focus on the needs of marginalized populations, which are often overlooked, as opposed to the agenda served by normative frameworks. Therefore, CRT can be an effective lens for examining and challenging normative paradigms, which defined mainstream policy discourse and determine appropriate concerns for education research. (p. 59)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, I integrated Reyes' (2018) Native Hawaiian version of Critical Race Theory (CRT), KānakaCrit, as the theoretical lens through which I conducted this dissertation research. Reyes' (2018) KānakaCrit effectively allowed me to challenge normative college choice models (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987) and contribute to culturally responsive (Acevedo-Gil, 2017; Tierney & Venegas, 2009), community-oriented (Keene, 2016), and nonlinear (Acevedo-Gil, 2017) scholarship on college choice frameworks.

Dr. Laura Perna's body of research (2000, 2002; Perna et al., 2005; Perna & Titus, 2004) on college access and choice was frequently cited in the literature at the intersection of college choice and race. Perna's inclusive, integrative scholarship on college access may get closer to explaining how Native Hawaiian students enter and move through higher education. Perna researched the individual and structural factors that impact students' access to higher education. In that way, Perna's (2000, 2002; Perna et al., 2005; Perna & Titus, 2004) body of research integrated college choice, access, and financial aid in a manner that previous college choice research did not.

Perna's (2002) research also suggested an institution's financial aid policies and awards affected students' college access and choice. According to Perna (2002), college enrollment

patterns involved institutional decisions, policies, and practices as much as students' choices. The inclusion of financial aid policies inherently takes socioeconomic class and race into consideration. As Roberts and Hitchcock (2018) demonstrated, race and socioeconomic status are important influences when examining how Native Hawaiian students enter and move through higher education. Additionally, Hagedorn et al.'s (2006) CP-TASKS study supported the importance of integrating financial aid into a college choice process for Native Hawaiians:

> The specific goals of CP-TASKS were to explore the relationships between college preparation programs, financial aid and subsequent success in college attendance, retention, degree acquisition and occupational success" (p. 6).

The findings from this rich dataset included finding that financial aid from the Kamehameha Schools (KS) significantly increased a student's likelihood of attending college (Hagedorn et al., 2003); and the finding that community college students place great importance on "socioeconomic status, a sense of belonging to the Hawaiian culture, and family support" (p. 36) when navigating the college experience.

Integrating KānakaCrit and socioeconomic and financial factors into the backbone of this framework will strengthen its base. The integrative tactic ensured the college choice framework for Native Hawaiians takes a holistic view of student's needs, from the impact of race and ethnicity on the process to the ways that financial factors influence college choice.

Summary

As Vaughan (2019) stated, the three-strand structure leads to more finesse in the binding. As a base for this framework, finesse and nuance are vital to account for the needs of college-going Native Hawaiians. After all, there is much to consider and account for in this framework. According to the literature on Native Hawaiians in higher education, this framework should

support a mechanism to tell our own stories, culturally responsive assessment tools, community-oriented support, and considerations for financial aid impacts, as well as serve as a tool for systemic change in higher education, all in support of Native Hawaiian students. To support all these factors, the backbone of the framework should be interdisciplinary, iterative, and integrative.

Conclusion: A College Choice Framework for Our Survivance and Ea

This is the story I chose to tell at the intersection of Kānaka Maoli, higher education, and college choice. Kānaka Maoli live. We live through our stories. We live, thrive, and survive in education. We have a history of carving our ea in education. Although woefully underrepresented, we are present in higher education even if it was not designed for us. Now, in response to the calls of ʻŌiwi scholars like Dr. Maenette Benham (2006) and Dr. Nicole Reyes (2018), I brought together my cultural self, social justice self, practitioner self, and emerging scholar self to pose this central research question guiding this study: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians? Such a college choice framework may contribute to our survivance and ea as a lāhui.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Native Hawaiians are nearly invisible compared to the larger landscape of college-going students. Will we remain invisible? Population projections suggest that the answer is "no." According to Kanaʻiaupuni et al. (2021), the Native Hawaiian population in the U.S. will grow from 627,929 in 2020 to 1.2 million in 2060. The number of school-age Native Hawaiian children in Hawaiʻi will increase from 86,825 in 2020 to 192,531 in 2060 (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2021). This projected growth justifies the interrogation of educative dilemmas facing Native Hawaiians today. These projections shed light on who today's ʻōiwi

leaders are fighting for and demonstrate the energy spent on educational ea (independence) today will make a difference for many Kānaka Maoli and haumāna (students) in the decades ahead.

While these projections infuse hope into the landscape, much work is still needed to ensure Kānaka Maoli and haumāna successfully move through the education system. How can we ensure ea and social justice regarding Native Hawaiian students' educational rights and interests in the college search process? This can happen through college choice research centered on Native Hawaiian students. Therefore, this research study contributes to understanding the factors that make up this college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians. Based on existing literature, those factors include empowering Kānaka Maoli to tell our own stories, developing and using culturally responsive assessment tools, and integrating community support and financial aid to the college choice process. Contemporary literature on college choice (e.g. Acevedo-Gil, 2017; Engberg & Wolniak, 2009; Keene, 2016; L. Perna, 2006; Teranishi et al., 2004, 2009; Yosso, 2005) suggests a more holistic approach to this model is ideal; so this framework should offer more dimension and nuance to account for a fuller suite of student needs in the process. With all of this in mind, this framework acts a lei that wraps culture, community, and ʻohana (family) around students as they navigate the college process. In the next chapter, I present the way I chose to weave this lei.

CHAPTER 3: I WILI ʻIA (TO WEAVE, A METHODOLOGY)

There is a lei style called “Christina,” which involves stringing together 500 dendrobium orchid petals – specifically the lip of the orchid – and I will not forget learning this from my mom and aunt – it was one of several lei styles I learned when my mom decided to open her own lei and flower shop. At first, the idea of stringing together 500 individual orchid petals sounded daunting – and it is – but the way they taught me to tackle the task was to break it down into smaller, more manageable steps.

When I learned about this style, I learned other seemingly random things, such as a case of dendrobium orchids contains 1,000 blossoms. I could weave two Christina-style lei and eight centipede-style lei from that one wholesale box. A centipede-style orchid lei involved weaving 125 pedals from the lip of the orchid blossom. I learned how important it was to count the orchid heads and separate them into groups of 125 in each pile. That way, four piles created one Christina and four centipedes. Then, I separated the lip of the flower head from the rest of the flower and kept everything in their respective piles.

Once I separated the flowers and settled into my space with my lei needle and thread, I got to work weaving the lei. I tended to start with the Christina since that was more tedious work. I realized that keeping the piles intact helped me to measure my progress and methodically go from start to finish with each lei.

The art of lei-making has been a profound teacher, guiding me through the process of breaking down daunting tasks into manageable steps. It has instilled in me the virtues of patience and perseverance, qualities I now recognize as invaluable in my academic journey, particularly as I navigate the complex terrain of designing my dissertation research study.

Chapter Overview

This dissertation was the first academic lei I offered to scholars and colleagues to demonstrate my commitment to higher education. The methodology of this research was the intricate, invisible work put into lei-making before the lei adorns its recipient. Masters of the craft can tell the strengths and roots of the lei maker by observing the way the lei is weaved. More specifically, masters of the craft will look at the back of a lei for those details where most others admire the front. Mmethodology, too, can be recognized by scholars, and someone's use of methods reveals their roots and their invisible work. In choosing methodologies centered on lei-making and talking story, readers will see the roots and the intricate work brought to the scholarly conversation.

In conducting this research, I was on the learning end of this process with this academic lei. I had never made this kind of lei before; the longest I have ever committed to a single lei before has perhaps been a couple of hours. This lei will have taken me nearly seven years to weave. Motivating me throughout this journey was the question lingering in my naʻau (core, gut), and I believed it is my kuleana (responsibility) to raise the question as an emerging Kānaka ʻŌiwi scholar. The central question for this research study was: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?

In this chapter, the crux of my academic lei is presented: the design, development, execution, and analytical process of my dissertation study. First, the ways my positionality had a direct influence on the way the study unfolded is discussed. Then, the lei-making methodology is paralleled to the research design. Next, the research design is presented and the steps to execute the study are discussed. The research design of this study was captured in a six-phase process (see Figure 3). The graphic illustration resembles a lei, and each phase of making lei parallels the

steps of this study. In the latter stages of making this lei, I review how this study wove in trustworthiness to the process and present the steps taken to code and analyze the data collected. The chapter concludes with pīpī holo kaʻao, which is not as much a conclusion as it recognizes that more research and studies begin where this study ends. After all, in alignment with Native Hawaiian epistemology, this dissertation was a humble blip on the continuum of research and dialogue surrounding Native Hawaiian students and college choice.

Researcher Positionality

In chapter one, I discussed my story and how it shaped my dissertation research. For the methodology chapter of this dissertation, it is worth recapping my positionality and discussing two specific ways I observed my positionality played a role in the execution of this study.

As the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, I was in the most promising space where Native Hawaiians interact with higher education. In this role, I had close access to a rich pool of eligible students for this study. When I arrived at the steps in my study to recruit first- and second-year college students, I considered recruiting "close to home" through the Office of Admissions network. After all, our office works heavily with incoming students, and my office hires several of them.

However, I recognized that in my current role, students—especially the students also were student employees—felt obligated to participate in my study. With that in mind, I deliberately ensured that when I sent my recruitment flier to my UH network, I sent it to offices outside my division. I concluded that if my network led students in Admissions my way, their participation would be fueled by other connections and not by perceived pressure from me.

The second way my positionality played a role in how this study unfolded was the data analysis process. Opaskwayak Cree Scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) offered an Indigenous way to

analyze data, pointing out that one can embrace intuition in data analysis. Hawaiians refer to our intuition as our naʻau – some other names we may call it are our gut, inner voice, or intuition. I acknowledge I am attuned to my naʻau (core, gut, intuition) because I was raised with the mantra that I should always listen to my naʻau; it is through my naʻau that my kupuna (ancestors) communicate with me and guide me.

I bring an insider-outsider perspective to this research since I am a Native Hawaiian who has experienced the college choice process (insider perspective); however, my experiences took place more than 25 years ago (outsider perspective). In that sense, I recognized my lived experiences in the college process and my career work contributed to my intuition and influenced how I interpreted the data. This was an essential aspect of the data analysis stage because my intuition or naʻau allowed me to identify codes, themes, nuances, and connections that may have otherwise been missed by someone who cannot relate to the research participants' perspectives. Understanding my positionality as a researcher pursuing this study allowed me to expand on the lei-making methodology that guided the research design (Vaughan, 2019).

Making Lei as a Research Design Methodology

Making lei takes time and intention. Who is the lei for? What is the occasion? What materials do I have on hand? What kind of flower reminds me of this person? How many lei do I need? Does the lei need to last in transit to the occasion? Should it be fragrant? The energy and mana (strength, spirit) I have while making lei becomes part of the lei. I pass my mana to whoever receives the lei. What am I passing into this lei? I gather my tools and materials, find a space on the floor to sit, and spread out what I have gathered for the lei.

Many people contributed to my lei-making knowledge, including my mom, grandmother, stepdad, hula teachers, and aunties and uncles. While each person approached lei-making

uniquely, there was always a common thread. Each person insisted preparation and organization were essential to make lei successfully. The lei-making art form taught me to be creative, organized, and flexible simultaneously. Sometimes, the plan involved a loose approximation of materials to determine whether I had what I needed for the lei. I would "wing it," as my mother taught me. Sometimes, the plan was more involved, and I lined my materials side-by-side to ensure I had enough. The adage "measure twice, cut once" applied well to this level of planning. The primary lesson across teachers was that I should always have a plan. In that light, this chapter serves as the plan for this academic lei.

Dr. Mehana D.B. Blaich Vaughan (2019) also drew a parallel between making lei and conducting research. When I read her work, I realized I had never seen someone write about lei making. I remember feeling incredibly relieved reading her work because until then, the course content on methodology did not make sense to me. I found myself constantly looking up terminology as I tried to navigate methodology coursework and sometimes feeling out of place because the concepts were not landing with me. When I read Dr. Vaughan's work and how she drew parallels between making lei and conducting research, things finally made sense to me. After all, I may not fully understand formal dissertation terminology, but I *know* how to make lei.

In my dissertation reflection journal, when I wrote about how all my life milestones are connected to lei, I realized this process might also relate to making lei. When I think about this dissertation process as making an intricate lei that will be offered to scholars and colleagues in academia, I moved through the process more confidently. Thus, lei-making served as the research design methodology because it is a concept that helped me present to others what I knew and how I knew it.

Research Design Framework: An Overview

Vaughn (2019) shared that her Tūtū (grandmother) was a primary source of knowledge regarding making lei. Vaughn's Tūtū captured her mana'o (knowledge) in several lessons for making lei, and I adapted these lessons as the framework for my research design. Below is a graphic illustration of how I adapted Vaughn's Tūtū's lessons in relation to my central research question (Figure 3). In the subsequent methods section, I further explain how I applied this framework to the stages and steps taken in this study.

Figure 3: Research Study Design.

Research Methods and Steps

The next section of this chapter explains the research methods and steps taken to carry out this study. In June 2022, my dissertation committee approved my proposal, understanding I would synthesize their feedback and work with the chair to make revisions aligned with their feedback. I worked with my committee chair to revise my proposal and all associated study communications. With the revised proposal approved by my chair, I sought IRB approvals.

I obtained IRB approvals from Colorado State University and the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Both IRB bodies determined my research was not human subjects research because I did not intend for this research to become generalizable beyond this study. As I explained to the IRB boards, this study was a glimpse of a framework; the study would not extend beyond initial suppositions or include rigorous testing that should be involved in positing a full-fledged framework or model.

The reader should note that two changes evolved after receiving IRB approvals and during the execution of this study. These changes explain why some of the IRB-approved communications collateral, such as the consent forms, references things that did not fully occur during the research. One change was I did not engage master’s or doctoral-level Native Hawaiian students with this study. As it turned out, I did not have the bandwidth or capacity to manage or cultivate additional relationships beyond those I cultivated when carrying out the study components I did manage.

Another notable change is that I did not host a community or group talk story session; all talk story sessions were one-on-one or paired focus groups. This was because when I began working with the Kamakau school, Dr. Kelling advised that one-on-one or small group sessions would be more conducive to eliciting the mo‘olelo from members of the Kamakau community.

Therefore, any references to a group talk story session, especially in the consent forms, did not manifest.

Kuleana: Harvest First from the Place you Know and then Aloha aku, Aloha mai, or Cultivate Relationships

"Interviewing, like gathering flowers to make lei, requires cultivation of relationships. Start with people you know and allow them to introduce you to others" (Vaughan, 2019, p. 53). This quote succinctly describes my initial steps in this study when I recruited participants. I began with my existing network of friends and colleagues, allowing them to connect me to potential participants who fit my study criteria.

To carry out this study, I sought research participants who fit one or more of the following criteria as explained by the recruitment flyer (Appendix A): Native Hawaiian high school seniors who are currently experiencing the college search process; Native Hawaiians in their first or second year of college who experienced the college search process; Parents/guardians of Native Hawaiian students who had experienced the college process; Master's/Doctoral students in a higher education program or related concentration who identified as Native Hawaiian; and/or Secondary/high school administrators who work with Native Hawaiian students navigating the college process.

The recruitment of research participants took place in two stages. The first stage involved finding a secondary school site that allowed me to cultivate relationships with their students and community members who support the school's college-going culture, such as teachers or counselors. Working with a secondary school allowed me to gain perspectives from research participants who were looking ahead at their college experiences. From those stories of experiences, I examine the support network in the school community that surrounded the

students. The second stage focused on recruiting research participants who were currently enrolled in college. This allowed me to gain perspectives from research participants who could reflect on their college process.

First Stage of Recruitment: Secondary School Perspectives

As Vaughan's Tūtū (2019) advised, start with people you know and allow them to introduce you to others. In January 2023, I was invited to a meeting by Dr. Kapā Oliveira to debrief about a conference where attendees discussed reimagining college access. During this meeting, I met a couple of new colleagues, all of whom were like-minded Native Hawaiian wahine (women) who work in the college access space. One of those colleagues, Dr. Meahilahila Kelling, was the director of Ke Kula ʻo Samuel M. Kamakau Laboratory Public Charter School, a preschool to grade 12 Hawaiian language medium school located in Kāneʻohe on the island of Oʻahu. Meeting Dr. Kelling aligned with my methodology because I met her through connections in my existing network of colleagues. When we met, I knew she could potentially connect me to research participants in the K-12 space.

I emailed Dr. Kelling (Appendix B), and she agreed to talk with me about my research study. Those initial conversations were crucial for building a relationship with Dr. Kelling and earning her trust to work with her and members of the Kamakau community. Following a couple of meetings and email exchanges and after gaining appropriate permission from the Ke Kula ʻo Samuel M. Kamakau school community, Dr. Kelling shared my recruitment flyer (Appendix A) with the students and their family members, encouraging them to kōkua (help) and participate in my study. Dr. Kelling also introduced me to two Kamakau teachers whose classes centered on college readiness.

When I received responses from Kamakau students and their family members interested in the study, I emailed them with more information about the study and arranged a date/time to meet. Dr. Kelling allowed me to meet with these students and family members on the Kamakau campus to make it a familiar and comfortable place for the participants. Once we agreed upon a date and time, I sent the student and family member(s) a confirmation email (Appendix E) and asked them to review and complete a consent form (Appendix G or H). The talk story interviews are discussed further in this chapter's subsequent "hele me ka mālama" section.

During this study, it was important to me that I become a familiar face at Kamakau. I did not want to only "take" as a researcher; I was compelled to "give back" (Reyes, 2019) to the Kamakau community in whatever way they determined would be valuable for the school. To that end, as I engaged in the recruitment process for this study, I worked with the college readiness teachers to visit the campus as a guest speaker who presented manaʻo (knowledge) about the college process. I was a guest of the Papa Alakaʻina (College Preparatory) class nine times from May 2023 to December 2023.

Because I also wanted to talk to a couple of school administrators for their perspective on the school's work behind the college process, I recruited one of the college readiness teachers to engage in a one-on-one talk story session with me (Appendix C). Once we agreed upon a date and time, I sent the teacher a confirmation email (Appendix D) and asked her to complete a consent form (Appendix F).

In total, I recruited ten participants from the Kamakau school site. I recruited all four seniors who graduated from Kamakau in the spring of 2023. Three of those interviews were paired with the graduate's mother since I was also interested in speaking with people who were a part of the student's support network. Two more participants were current seniors (12th grade) at

Kamakau, and I interviewed one teacher who was also a Kamakau alumna. I discuss the talk story interviews further in this chapter's subsequent “hele me ka mālama” section.

Second Stage of Recruitment: College-level Perspectives

Once my secondary school perspectives and participants were secured, I could turn toward recruiting college-level participants. To recruit first- and second-year Native Hawaiian students who experienced the college choice process, I emailed my recruitment flyer (Appendix A) to a few colleagues on campus (not colleagues in offices that report directly to me) who I knew worked heavily with currently enrolled Native Hawaiian students. These offices/departments included the following UHM offices: Native Hawaiian Student Services (NHSS), TRIO Mānoa, Student Equity Excellence Diversity (SEED), and the Native Hawaiian Place of Learning.

When I received email responses from interested participants, I sent them a Google calendar with open talk story appointments so they could book a convenient time for their schedule. For additional convenience, I conducted talk story interviews via Zoom. Once we secured a date/time for the interview, I sent the participants both consent forms (Appendices G and H) and asked them to complete the form that applied to them.

There was an exciting outcome at this stage of the recruitment. While the recruitment flyer indicated an interest in first- and second-year Native Hawaiian college students, I received responses from students across undergraduate and graduate years, including transfer and non-traditional-aged students. I also received a response from a student attending a college in Iowa. In total, I recruited and interviewed 11 college-aged research participants. I discuss these talk story interviews in this chapter's subsequent “hele me ka mālama” section.

Hōʻakoakoa: Gather a Diversity of Materials from Different Sources

Hōʻakoakoa is the process of gathering diverse materials from different sources. Vaughan (2019) explained:

> Tūtū used ten or fourteen different plants in one head lei - leaves, seed pods, berries, green calyxes of lehua whose blossoms had fallen off, rakishly orange ranunculus, and distinguished silver liko. These diverse materials set one another off in a new light, creating a unique and unexpected whole. (p. 55)

Vaughan (2019) encouraged researchers to create new ways of seeing an issue by combining various sources, much like a lei maker can make a unique lei out of nearly any collection of materials. In this study, hōʻakoakoa represented the diversity of perspectives and experiences held by the research participants regarding the college choice process.

Hōʻakoakoa also resonated with Reyes' (2018) KānakaCrit tenet number two, which posited ʻōiwi identities are multiple, intersectional, and liminal. The hōʻakoakoa of this study led to a rich collection of ʻōiwi identities, voices, and moʻolelo (stories). I was energized throughout the study when I recognized this richness and multitude of perspectives gave dimension to the study.

When I initially designed this study, I believed I would have ample diversity of perspectives from participants who were reasonably close to the college choice process (high school seniors and first—or second-year college students). I thought that memories of the process would be stronger if the participants were closer to it.

While that was true, the hōʻakoakoa lesson amplified in the study when, by the end of the data collection stage, I interviewed 21 participants who represented a wide swath of perspectives on the college choice process; they were at various stages in relation to the college choice

process. Some were looking ahead at enrolling in college, most had already experienced the college choice process, and a few participants had both experienced the college process while supporting students who were about to enroll. Casting a net beyond first- and second-year college students was unexpected but serendipitous. Within the participant group, I captured moʻolelo from students at early pre-college stages to students who were enrolled in advanced degree programs, as well as parents of these participants who had experienced the college process and were supporting their students through their process. As it turned out, participants had no problem recalling their college choice/enrollment experiences, however far removed they may have been from the process. Thus, at the end of the data-gathering stage, I realized I had a unique and unexpected whole (Vaughan, 2019). I was given an unexpected gift with a richness of participant perspectives for which I had not planned. My kuleana, with this unexpected gift, was to make sense of these perspectives to answer the central research question.

Wili: One Technique, Many Forms

I utilized one talk story interview protocol across all participants' talk story sessions (Appendix I). As a conversational methodology, I explained to participants that I had a set of guiding questions that were not followed rigidly. I also followed the natural flow of the conversation and posed follow-up questions based on insights they shared. I shaped the protocol based on findings from the literature review, following the KānakaCrit tenets (Reyes, 2018).

Talk Story Methodology Utilized for Data Collection

I used talk story methodology throughout this study as my primary data collection method. Talk story methodology was a strong fit for my theoretical framework, KānakaCrit. Talk story methodology elicits the story from the participant(s), and the story, or moʻolelo, contributes to the survivance of Native Hawaiians (Reyes, 2018). Reyes (2018) explained:

> KānakaCrit may potentially provide a vital conceptual and/or analytical framework for more research on Kānaka Maoli within higher education to be done. It suggests that we should seek to understand how colonization impacts ʻŌiwi college success and that, through the conveyance of stories, we relate such success to ʻŌiwi priorities of nationhood and social justice. (Reyes, 2018, p. 14)

In this section, I will discuss conversational, talk story methodologies in practice. I found three research studies that directly influenced my decisions regarding the methodology for my dissertation study. I reviewed the research studies by Dr. Margaret Kovach (2010) and Simpson Steele (2012) in the following sections to provide context for why I chose talk story as my primary data collection methodology.

Kovach's (2010) Conversational Method for Data Gathering. Kovach (2010) discussed two research studies using "a conversational method for gathering data and are situated within an Indigenous research framework" (p. 43). Kovach (2010) identified as "an Indigenous academic situated within a western university setting" (p. 40). Her first study was an inquiry into Indigenous research approaches using Plains Cree Ways of Knowing. Her second study was in the data analysis phase (Kovach, 2010). Her research group wanted to develop recommendations for non-Indigenous faculty to integrate Indigenous knowledge with a decolonized lens. Both studies provided insights into the conversational method in action.

Kovach (2010) explained how the conversational method shifts when viewed through an Indigenous framework:

> The conversational method is reflected in western qualitative research. However, when used in an Indigenous framework, a conversational method invokes several distinctive characteristics: a) it is linked to a particular tribal epistemology (or knowledge) and

> situated within an Indigenous paradigm; b) it is relational; c) it is purposeful (most often involving a decolonizing aim); d) it involves particular protocol as determined by the epistemology and/or place; e) it involves an informality and flexibility; f) it is collaborative and dialogic; and g) it is reflexive. (p. 43)

The conversational method's characteristics align with KanakaCrit since it centers on an Indigenous paradigm, aims to contribute to decolonization, and elicits participants' stories. As briefly discussed in the opening of chapter two, talking story is how Hawaiians approach an issue (Sing et al., 1999) so they benefit from the group's energy and mana (power). Thus, a conversational talk story methodology fit this study.

Simpson Steele's (2012) Ineffective Application of Talk Story Methodology. In contrast to Kovach's (2010) studies, malihini (visitor) researcher Simpson Steele (2012) used talking story for a study around May Day, a cultural day of celebration in Hawai‘i. However, Simpson Steele did not successfully use talking story as a methodology. This literature illustrated a cautionary tale about how not to use talk story methodology. Simpson Steele (2012) described obtaining "dispassionate reports that did not contribute to our growing understandings" (p. 46) and difficulties when "inquiries often wandered into tangential territory" (p. 46). Simpson Steele expected more linearity and logic with the talk story methodology than they gleaned from research participants.

Simpson Steele's (2012) article illuminated the limitations they experienced conducting this study. As described below, the talk-story approach generated as many problems for Simpson Steele as it did solutions:

> One such complication was an unintentional hierarchy of voices. Regardless of my egalitarian intentions, I provided leadership to help maintain focus, encourage progress,

> and provide efficiency. I operated knowing full well this was *my* study, which would lead to *my* advanced degree, and so I maintained a degree of control at all times. In the end, all the voices of the participants were represented, albeit through the filters of my judgment, selection, framing, and final analysis. (p. 46)

Did the researcher realize there is no hierarchy or control in telling stories? Although Simpson Steele (2012) insisted their leadership, efficiency, and assertion of control would facilitate talking story, this approach was exactly how the talking story methodology was undermined. In talking story, egalitarian ideologies do not necessarily equate to or translate to an Indigenous way of thinking that is "collaborative and dialogic" (Kovach, 2010, p. 43). While Simpson Steele was under the impression that they understood the talk story methodology, they fell short of fully comprehending the nature and flow of talking story. Simpson Steele's (2012) study showed how a researcher could ineffectively apply a Western, hierarchical way of thinking to a fluid, Indigenous practice.

The challenging experience Simpson Steele had with talking story reaffirmed Kovach's (2010) point that the researcher is an active participant in this methodology. By positioning themself as an outsider seeking control, Simpson Steele seemed to miss the fact that the conversational, talk story method is a "dialogic approach to gathering knowledge that is built upon an Indigenous relational tradition" (Kovach, 2010, p. 44). I inherently understood this relational approach in my iwi (bones). Talking story is about building and developing relationships. This understanding bolstered my confidence in the talk story and conversational approach as the most suitable for my dissertation research.

Kovach's (2010) and Simpson Steele's (2012) studies reminded me of what to keep and exclude while practicing the talk story methodology for this study. According to Kovach's (2010)

studies, the talk story methodology for this study should be relational, purposeful, aligned with ʻōiwi epistemology, informal, flexible, dialogic, and reflexive. Simpson Steele's (2012) study reminded me that my role in the data collection stage was not to control the talk story session or expect it to be an egalitarian experience. This meant the data collection process for this study could not be two-dimensional or transactional in nature. The data collection stage had to be grounded in relationship-building and give way to the natural ebb and flow of the conversation with each research participant.

Setting the Talk Story Stage

During the talk story interviews for this study, I initiated the sessions by discussing the context of the study. This involved sharing my personal and professional experiences related to the college choice process. Setting the talk story session stage in this manner was crucial, given my role as an insider-outsider researcher. As a Native Hawaiian working in higher education, I was an insider. But, I was an outsider due to my experience with the college choice process over 25 years ago. I was also an outsider to the research participants as a non-member of the Kamakau community and a non-enrolled student at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa. This approach allowed me to establish a connection with the participants and anchor myself in reflexivity and humility. As Tuhiwai Smith (2012) highlighted in her seminal work on decolonizing methodologies, it was my kuleana to approach my research with reflexivity and humility. Humility is crucial as a member of the community researched (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Commencing the interviews in this manner rooted me in the impending conversation and guided my participants to understand the purpose of the talk story session.

Now, Tell Me About Your College Search Experiences

Next, I asked the participants about their college choice or college search experiences. I invited them to begin wherever they were inclined or whatever came to mind as they listened to me kick off our talk story session. My decision to invite participants to begin wherever they were inclined was aligned with Kovach's (2010) literature on talk story methodology. Kovach (2010) pointed out that talk story conversational methodology should be informal and flexible, so I gave participants the agency to begin wherever they were most comfortable. Participants often began by describing their own college admissions or college application processes. From that point, their insights gave me leads for follow-up questions, especially about "why" they made those choices or "how" they believe they arrived at those decisions.

Did Financial Aid Play a Role in Your Process?

After discussing their college admissions experiences, I guided the conversation to questions about financial aid. I chose this direction of questions based on what I gleaned in the literature review from Dr. Laura Perna's body of research (2000, 2002; Perna et al., 2005; Perna & Titus, 2004). Based on the literature review, I concluded that a college choice framework focused on Native Hawaiian students would likely have an intentional component related to financial aid because finances are a significant barrier to higher education (Hagedorn et al., 2003; Hoke et al., 2019; Jensen, 2020; Kerr et al., 2018). Understanding how finances are a significant barrier – from the student's perspective – will help us bring down those barriers in ways that align with students' needs.

In many sessions, the students naturally discussed their experiences with financial aid and scholarships as they discussed the college admissions process. When this happened, it simply gave me something to refer to when I asked participants to tell me more about their financial aid

and scholarship experiences. I found it very easy and natural to have the student/participant share about their financial aid and scholarship experiences, which signaled to me there was a high level of mindfulness on this topic related to their college enrollment experiences.

Did Your Identity as a Native Hawaiian Play a Role in your Process?

Since the intent of this inquiry was to explore what the college choice framework might look like from a Hawaiian perspective, I asked participants pointedly if their identity as a Native Hawaiian influenced or played a part in their college choice process. In many sessions, participants answered this question before I asked it, which signaled that their identity was not just a part of the process but a natural and valuable component of their process.

Any Advice for Me?

I asked for more insights if participants shared something that warranted more follow-up. Otherwise, I guided participants to the end of the talk story protocol (Appendix I). I asked if they had any advice for me as someone whose professional work centers on enrolling college students and who primarily wants to see more Native Hawaiian students in college. After all, not only was I interested in their experiences and their strengths and drawbacks – but I was also interested in what a college choice framework might look like when it was developed together with Native Hawaiians who experienced the college choice process. To that end, I believed that posing a question where I humbly asked participants for any mana‘o (wisdom, thoughts) they had if they imagined themselves in my shoes.

This was one of my favorite aspects of the talk story protocol because the insights were simple, profound, genuine, and authentic. While most participants needed a little more prodding to understand the question, the insights flowed beautifully once they did. At the end of the data collection stage, I felt I had discovered a treasure trove of advice from these participants.

Hele me ka Mālama: Proceed One Step at a Time and Let the Outcome Surprise You

Lei-making is an iterative process. When I begin to connect and sew materials, I feel my progress as I do so. I see what pattern emerges and check my raw materials. If I continue this pattern, do I have enough to make this lei the length I need? If I make this lei for a specific occasion, like a competition, I check my progress with my Kumu or hula sisters. If I am not progressing in a way that makes sense or feels good, I will undo a part or all of the lei and begin again.

I was nervous before the first talk story session conducted in August 2023. While I prepared as best as possible, and the participants were willing to engage, I still had nervous butterflies as we met. Would my questions lead to them telling their story? Was I showing enough respect for the time we would spend together? Would my audio recorder work? As it turned out, I admitted to the participants that they were my first research interview; I often allowed myself to be vulnerable in these moments. Allowing those vulnerable moments has not failed me yet. The pair was incredibly understanding about my nervousness and seemed to take a deep breath with me as we began. Ultimately, the interview was so incredibly successful that we joked about how they set the bar for my study.

Consent Forms, Note-taking, Recordings, and Transcriptions

After breaking the ice with the first interview, I gained the confidence to proceed. Each talk story session and school site visit were steps in this study that I took with respect and care. One way I took those steps with respect and care was to be mindful that I was a visitor to the school, so I ensured I approached the space and the people I saw with the utmost respect and gratitude. I did my best to be mentally and emotionally present for each visit and talk story session; I put away any distractions and ensured I gave my full attention to the research

participants. I captured the talk story sessions through audio recordings; if the session was in person, I used my handheld audio recorder, or if the session was via Zoom, I used the Zoom recording tool. While the participants signed the consent forms (Appendix G and H), I verbally confirmed at the start of the session that I had their consent to record the interview for data collection purposes. I assured them no personally identifying information from the interviews would be published or presented.

I listened intently to the participants during the interviews and took notes on my laptop. I let the participants know that I was simultaneously listening and typing notes. In many cases, I could type significant portions of the notes verbatim. I highlighted notes while the talk story session took place if what the participant said signaled something that I would return in my review and analysis of the data.

After the interviews, I used the AI (Artificial Intelligence) technology available on Temi (2022) to transcribe the interviews. After the file was transcribed, I reviewed the transcript and made corrections for accuracy. As anticipated, many Hawaiian words were challenging for the AI tool to capture accurately. Toward the second set of interviews, I used the Rev (2024) I used a human transcription service to minimize the manual transcription clean-up I had to do. Once I determined the transcripts were as accurate as possible, I emailed them to the participants (Appendix J) so they could review their respective transcripts for accuracy; this is referred to as member checking.

Ensuring Trustworthiness and Credibility

In this section, I review the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness and credibility for this study. First, I ensured that I took steps in the talk story sessions and this dissertation to disclose my positionality, assumptions, beliefs, and biases (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I valued being

highly reflexive (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Kovach, 2010; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) to approach this study with a heightened humility and awareness of how my perspectives and lived experiences shaped this research.

Second, as mentioned previously, I performed a member checking process by sending participants their transcripts after our sessions and asked them to review them for accuracy (Appendix J). As Creswell & Miller (2000) pointed out, the lens of the study is shifted from researcher to participant, which allows participants to confirm I captured their narratives to the best extent possible.

Third, I embraced the value of continuous improvement by creating opportunities to check in with my dissertation chair/advisor. During these meetings, I shared my progress and requested their feedback on my work. This process, much like making lei, underscores the importance of striving for excellence. By checking my progress with my kumu (teacher) as I am making progress, rather than at the end, I can improve my lei before it is complete. This iterative process of feedback and improvement is crucial to meeting my kumu's expectations. Vaughan (2019) also pointed out the importance of this step:

> Tūtū came over, picked up the finished lei and, to my horror, began to swing it around over her head vigorously, lasso style. When no flowers dropped, she placed it back on the table saying only, "If a lei is well made, it will not fall apart when you do that."
>
> (Vaughan, 2019, p. 58)

With this study, as it is with making lei, it was crucial to align my work with my chair's expectations as frequently as possible. This alignment was not just a formality, but a key factor in the success of the research. To that end, this lei stood a better chance of staying intact when my

kumu lassoed it around their heads and tested if it was a lei well made. This emphasis on meeting academic standards is a testament to the rigor and quality of this research.

Limitations and a Delimitation

This study was limited in a few ways, revealing future dialogue opportunities and research on college choice. First, the study was limited to college-bound (intending to attend college) or college-educated Native Hawaiians, so these perspectives may not be transferable to all (non-college-bound or non-college-educated) Native Hawaiians. There are opportunities to research characteristics and pre-cursors, which help us understand how this study could be transferable to non-college-bound or non-college-educated Native Hawaiians. However, that was outside of this study's aim or scope.

Second, since I relied on recruiting research participants who had an initial connection to my existing network, the reach of my recruitment was limited. In other words, I could have emerged with different/other participants if I had cast wider nets to those beyond any pre-existing connection to my personal or professional network.

Third, the number of participants was a limitation of this study. This study included responses from 21 participants, a small sample size among college-bound and college-educated Native Hawaiians. Although I remain incredibly grateful for the time and mana‘o (knowledge, insights) provided by these 21 participants, the small sample size bound my ability to generalize findings and analyses to the entire population of Native Hawaiians.

Finally, I want to acknowledge this study was delimited by design, starting with the research question. The question posed, "What *might* a college choice framework look like…" because I recognized this as an initial inquiry that would necessitate more future research and inquiry. In this sense, the delimitation was that I knew from the start that this study would not

lead to a full-fledged framework or model. Instead, it was an inquiry of supposition by design because the existing scholarship at the intersection of Native Hawaiians and college choice is currently limited. Engaging in this research and study was a recognition that this is merely one flower in a long and elaborate lei, albeit a valuable flower I am honored to recognize and add to the lei.

Research Participants: A Summary

Among the 21 participants, I captured moʻolelo (stories) from students at early pre-college stages to students who were enrolled in advanced degree programs, as well as parents of these participants who had experienced the college process and supported their students through their process. The sessions took place from August 2023 through February 2024; six sessions were conducted in person, and the remaining interviews were conducted over Zoom. Four sessions were conducted with a pair of research participants, and the remaining sessions were one-on-one interviews.

All participants except two identified as Native Hawaiian by ethnicity; one participant, Leihulu, identified as Native American, and another participant, Maile, identified as Hawaiian by nationality (as a citizen of the Hawaiian Kingdom), not as Hawaiian by ethnicity or lineage. According to Maile, he identified "as Hawaiian under nationality because you could nationalize as a citizen in the Kingdom before the overthrow." Even though these two participants did not identify as Native Hawaiian by ethnicity, I chose to keep all participants' stories in the study analysis because they all expressed a deep commitment to the survivance of the lāhui.

Participants experienced the college process at various ages and stages of life, from the traditional post-secondary stage to non-traditional college ages. To my delight, participants had no problem recalling their college choice/enrollment experiences, however far removed they may

had been from the process. Participants appreciated the opportunity to reflect on and tell their stories, as one participant, Palapalai, remarked:

> Knowing that there's someone out there that even cares to hear my story, that was amazing. Even if you're not paying my tuition or anything but just knowing that you care enough to know about how I'm paying my tuition, how I found myself here, I feel like that helps, just knowing that someone wants to hear my story.

Knowing that a simple act of caring about someone's story motivated me throughout the data collection stage to continue with this study. I was honored to capture the precious college choice stories of these 21 participants, and I am grateful for how their insights advanced my research study.

Interview Protocol that Solicited the Stories: A Recap

The flow of the sessions followed the talk story interview protocol outlined in chapter three and Appendix I. To recap, the guiding questions of the interview protocol included setting the stage for the talk story session, asking participants to tell me about their college search experiences, asking if financial aid played a role in their college process, and asking if their identity as a Native Hawaiian influenced their college process. I concluded each session by asking the participants for advice since my career and daily work involve supporting college-bound students. The guiding questions naturally led to follow-up questions. Together, these questions effectively elicited thoughtful reflections from the research participants about the college search and choice process.

These talk story interviews resulted in a robust data set of perspectives about college choice and topics related to college choice. Some related topics included (but are not limited to) lived college experiences, college preparatory experiences in high school, and aspirations for

their futures beyond college. Of course, while related, these topics did not materially inform the research question, so they were not included in the core data analysis.

Listening to and gathering these stories, I kept my central research question top-of-mind. The more sessions I conducted, the more I realized that my interview protocol script (Appendix I) grounded me so that I was in an appropriate mindset throughout the interview. Setting the stage with each participant and explaining a brief background about how I arrived at my question helped them to understand why I wanted to know this about their experiences and centered me on my research inquiry with each conversation.

Throughout the conversation, as I thought about what a college choice framework might look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians, I focused on the parts of the interview that helped me understand things valued by the participants and things that could have improved their experience. I took note of the energy behind responses – did the person light up as they shared those insights? Did they get caught up in their stories and reflections? In talking story as a technique, I found people who get caught up in their own stories signal they were sharing something heartful and essential. I took notes and used highlighting to help me take the participant back to a part of a response I wanted to know more about. If a response seemed flat or uninteresting to the participant, I took it as a signal that there was not much to tell.

I paid attention to the dynamics and non-verbal behavior between the participants when conducting paired interviews. During one of the paired interviews, the mother-daughter duo of ʻŌhiʻa and Lehua became emotionally charged, and Lehua started to tear up. They told me Lehua had recently decided not to pursue college plans as her mother, ʻŌhiʻa, had expected. “It’s still raw,” admitted ʻŌhiʻa, “I’m still dealing with the transition.” These interviews ran the gamut of emotion as I gleaned these stories – an experience with data collection I had not necessarily

expected; however, the emotionality of these conversations further grounded me and reminded me that these experiences ran deep for many of the participants.

E Mau: No Lei Lasts Forever, Process over Product (Capturing and Coding Data)

Vaughan's (2019) Tūtū wisely offered, “The beauty of lei is that they are not meant to last forever” (Vaughan, 2019, p. 58). This lesson from Tūtū compelled me to capture the essence of the talk story interviews and interactions with participants through thorough note-taking and then through the coding process. I recognized that those moments we shared in the talk story sessions could never be replicated, so it was my kuleana (responsibility) to capture these moments in the research process.

Pre-coding Stage

My rigorous note-taking, highlighting moments, and participant contributions that caught my attention during the pre-coding stage. Participant contributions that caught my attention included emphatic statements made by participants that, at the moment, gave dimension to the topics that guided the talk story protocol. For instance, I highlighted statements such as, “I always felt this cultural responsibility to do right by my culture,” or “I want to take care of my family, pay it back.” Marking these statements or moments in real-time provided guidance when I reviewed the full transcripts after the talk story session.

The highlighted parts of the notes helped me remember that the participant said something that caught my attention, and I wanted to refer to it when reviewing, coding, and analyzing the full transcript. Saldaña (2016) offered that these data could turn into “key pieces of the evidentiary warrant to support your assertions, propositions, or theory, and serve as illustrative examples throughout your report” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 31). I valued this pre-coding

stage because I knew I would not be able to remember the things that struck a chord with me at the moment, so it was very beneficial to mark those things as I collected the data.

First Stage: Exploratory Coding

The first stage of coding was exploratory, provisional coding, in which I assigned preliminary codes to the data and followed the natural evolutionary process of the analysis and investigation (Saldaña, 2016). The start list of codes included the following: Lived college experiences, College application process related to Hawaiian identity, financial aid, and advice from interviewees. The codes on Hawaiian identity and financial aid were identified based on existing literature that identity and financial aid influenced students' college choice processes (e.g. Acevedo-Gil, 2017; L. Perna, 2006; L. W. Perna et al., 2005). The code identifying lived college experiences stemmed from the participants discussing the range of their experiences throughout their college choice process – from their early college program experiences through to their experiences as enrolled college students. This code helped identify and separate college choice excerpts from what students experienced firsthand in a college setting. The code identifying advice from participants was established because the premise of the central research question was a framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians. Thus, I concluded these talk story sessions by asking participants whether they had any advice for me so I could hear what they would do if they were in my position.

From this initial list, I identified and developed a layer of secondary codes including, but not limited to:

1. Staying home vs. going away;
2. Things colleges did well;
3. Understanding Early College;

4. Kuleana;
5. Afraid to create debt for parents;
6. Importance of community; and
7. References to trust.

These secondary codes were identified from my notes and pre-coding as I noted patterns in participants' responses on these topics. For instance, throughout most talk story sessions, I noted participants discussed wrestling with the idea of staying in Hawai‘i for college or going away. Participants discussed this topic without any prompting from me, so I determined it warranted becoming a secondary code. A complete list of these codes and their frequencies is available in Appendix K.

It is worth noting that several of these codes at this stage reflected this study's theoretical framework, KanakaCrit. For instance, a few code codes in the group Related to Hawaiian Identity connect to the second tenet of KanakaCrit, such as Sense of Place, Giving Back, and Feels out of touch with Hawaiian Identity. The second tenet of KanakaCrit (Reyes, 2018), says that ‘ōiwi identities are multiple, intersectional, and liminal. According to Reyes (2018), our identity is tied to more than race – our identity is also genealogical, political, and cultural. These codes begin to reflect the dimension and depth of the data collected from participants about their Native Hawaiian identity and how it intersected with their college choice process. For instance, 24 excerpts were coded Sense of Place because participants discussed the ways in which their identity and relationship to their place in Hawai‘i influenced their college choices. In reflection of the ways that ‘ōiwi identities are liminal, I identified 10 excerpts from two participants in which they discussed how they wrestled with feeling out of touch with their Native Hawaiian identity and culture. It was noteworthy to lift out these participants' relationships with their

Native Hawaiian identity to demonstrate that participants were in various stages of their identity development at the time they were going through the college process.

There were two codes related to identity which connected to the third tenet of KanakaCrit that social justice for Native Hawaiians is inherently tied to our ea (independence) and lāhui (nation). Those codes were Kuleana and For the Lāhui. When discussing the role of their Hawaiian identity in the college choice process, participants naturally discussed a sense of kuleana they felt to attend college "for the lāhui" (Reyes, 2018). Participants expressed they felt attending college was their contribution to the betterment of the Native Hawaiian community. In that way, participants reinforced this study's theoretical framework and its fit to analyzing the data collected.

Second Stage: Focused Coding

When making lei, I often break materials apart multiple times to reach the level of detail, nuance, or specificity needed for the lei. Focused coding made the most sense as a second stage of coding because it allowed me to examine the sizes and frequencies of the codes from the first stage and focus on breaking down the higher-frequency codes into smaller, focused categories to observe deeper patterns (Saldaña, 2016). For instance, I coded 65 excerpts under "Financial Aid." This made sense since my talk story protocol included asking participants if financial aid played a role in their college choice process.

However, 65 excerpts were overwhelming to make sense of, so I focused a round of coding on further categorizing those 65 excerpts. A deeper examination of the 65 excerpts led me to create a few secondary-level codes. Those secondary-level codes came from noticing patterns of topics as participants discussed if financial aid played a role in their process. The resulting codes included: Cost; Questions on the value proposition of college; Scholarships; Afraid to

create debt for parents/family; and Worried about student debt. Breaking the 65 excerpts into small groups allowed me to discern more patterns within the data.

Ultimately, the significance of this group of codes led me to develop the third principle of my proposed college choice framework for Native Hawaiians. The third principle, Waiwai, involves integrating resources to help students navigate the financial responsibilities associated with attending college. Waiwai, as a principle of the proposed framework, brings together lessons learned from the literature review (discussed in chapter two) about how important financial aid is to the college choice process and the voices of the participants as reflected in these 65 coded excerpts.

ʻĀina Uluwehi: Findings and Analysis

Vaughan (2019) pointed out that every landscape offered a unique lei to be made, and research can weave new knowledge of landscapes. This lesson from making lei guided the analytic process of this study. In this context, ʻāina uluwehi describes a lush land or landscape from which we draw elements for a unique lei, and the creation of the lei reveals new knowledge to the beholder. The lush landscape for this study included lessons learned from the literature on Native Hawaiians in higher education, existing college choice research, and the data collected from this study. When put together, what stories will be told from the data collected? What does the lei look like? What is it made of? What lessons are there to learn from the new knowledge the lei represents?

To begin weaving this new, unique lei, I moved from the coding stage to analyzing the study's findings. I based the analysis on Native Hawaiian lenses so this framework ultimately contributed to ameliorating educational injustices against Native Hawaiians while also legitimizing a Hawaiian worldview (Kaiwi & Kahumoku, III, 2006; Meyer, 2003). To that end, I

examined the findings through an Indigenous orientation called Papakū Makawalu (Kaiwi & Kahumoku, III, 2006; Kanahele-Mossman & Karides, 2021); tuned into and followed my intuition and naʻau (Bernal, 2016; K.-A. R. K. N. Oliveira, 2015; Wilson, 2008) as I made sense of the findings; and utilized KānakaCrit as a tool to shape and elevate the findings into a Kānaka College Choice Framework. The Kānaka College Choice Framework that emerged from this study is discussed at length in chapter four. Meanwhile, the subsequent sections of this chapter will discuss the analytical lenses that led to the findings discussed in chapter four.

Papakū Makawalu: An Indigenous Orientation for Analysis

Papakū Makawalu is a Native Hawaiian concept that refers to "having eight eyes," and it establishes an Indigenous foundation for studying the world around us (Kanahele-Mossman & Karides, 2021). Papakū Makawalu is recognized as "the method in which kupuna looked at their natural world and then recorded their observations" (Kanahele-Mossman & Karides, 2021, p. 455). "Having eight eyes" is a concept that encourages active observation and broad examinations beyond Western canonical standards, mainly so that there is space and intention behind validating Native Hawaiian epistemologies. As Kaiwi and Kahumoku, III (2006) explained:

> In a brainstorming session on Native Hawaiian education, a prominent *Kanaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiian), Aunty Pualani Kanakaʻole Kanahele, introduced the Hawaiian concept of makawalu, or 'having eight eyes,' to a group of educators. According to Aunty Pua, makawalu represented a broader conceptualization of what it means to educate Native Hawaiian youths than the standard, Western fare prescribed by most schools in Hawaiʻi. (p. 184)

As discussed in chapter two, Kānaka Maoli have navigated Western paradigms of higher education with mixed success, and there is a need for more culturally responsive tools to measure Native Hawaiian success in a world not built with them in mind (Faircloth, 2017; Kana‘iaupuni, 2005; Roberts & Hitchcock, 2018). Examining the findings while “having eight eyes” pointed me to ways that study participants holistically reconciled the tensions associated with being a Native Hawaiian in college.

A holistic approach to college choice means going beyond the admission and recruitment processes that the traditional college choice model (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987) asserted. Contemporary college choice models (e.g. Acevedo-Gil, 2017; Engberg & Wolniak, 2009; Keene, 2016; L. Perna, 2006; Teranishi et al., 2004, 2009; Yosso, 2005) offer far more dimension and nuance to account for a fuller suite of student needs in the process, as discussed in chapter two. For Native Hawaiians, a holistic approach means also integrating other aspects such as community, culture, and financial aid processes into college choice. With Papakū Makawalu as an Indigenous orientation toward analysis, I aimed to:

1) “deconstruct layers of embedded meaning” (K.-A. R. K. N. Oliveira, 2015, p. 78);
2) identify findings that illuminate the ways that participants reconcile being a Native Hawaiian in college; and
3) discern the ways that participants consider community, culture, and financial aid processes part of their college choice experience.

KānakaCrit as a Tool to Shape and Elevate the Findings

In chapter two, I discussed how Reyes’ (2018) KānakaCrit is the theoretical foundation for this study as I examined and analyzed Native Hawaiians in higher education. In this methodology chapter, I extend using Reyes’ (2018) KānakaCrit as both a theoretical foundation

and an analytical framework for this study. Ultimately, as an analytical lens for this study, KānakaCrit helps us "understand how colonization impacts ʻōiwi college success, and the conveyance of stories helps relate ʻōiwi success to the priorities of nationhood and social justice" (Reyes, 2019, p. 14). Suppose we gain insights into what a college choice framework might look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians. In that case, we benefit from understanding more deeply the needs Native Hawaiians have when navigating the college choice process. This, in turn, allows higher education scholars and practitioners to strengthen and develop more tailored resources that support and uplift Native Hawaiians toward their college goals.

Reyes put forth KānakaCrit as a theoretical space for Native Hawaiians to participate in our decolonization, produce new knowledge, and remain connected to our cultural knowledge. This study is intended to contribute to that theoretical space; a college choice framework by and for Native Hawaiians would be newly developed knowledge that contributes to our decolonization and centers Hawaiian values and culture in the college choice process.

Reyes also offered KānakaCrit as an analytical framework to better understand how to mobilize research to practice for the betterment of the lāhui. Reyes (2018) pointed out Native Hawaiians have high college aspirations yet enroll in and complete college at lower rates. Reyes (2018) posited that this may be due to "a mixture of cooling out and empowering experiences in the academy that may impact our persistence, as well as our ability to envision the usefulness of college degrees" (p. 14). For Native Hawaiians, there is a dearth of research about why there is a mix of cooling out and empowering experiences in the academy. There is also scarce research on Native Hawaiian students' abilities to see themselves in college and envision the utility of their college degrees.

This study intended to help fill that gap and provide insights on how to smooth college pathways for Native Hawaiians, as well as elevate student empowerment so more of them see themselves as belonging in college. I gathered this study's data through talk story methodology because, as Reyes (2018) asserted, "as we learn and tell our moʻolelo (stories), we contribute to our survivance" (p. 13). The stories I gathered through this study shed light on the values, tensions, aspirations, and fears held by participants as they navigated their college choice process. All of those insights deepened my understanding of the gap in college choice research as it relates to the experiences of Native Hawaiian students.

Following my Intuition and Naʻau

My naʻau (gut, core, enlightened intestines) has played a role throughout this study, which is why my naʻau will also be necessary when I make sense of the study's findings. As discussed in previous chapters, my naʻau is the vehicle through which I believe my ancestors guide me and my decisions. I was raised to believe my kūpuna (ancestors) communicate with me through my naʻau, so I also believe in "listening to my naʻau" or "trusting my gut" when I have decisions to make or when I am presented with an opportunity. For example, when I was invited to a meeting of like-minded Mana Wahine in January 2023, who shared my value of reimagining the college admissions process, my naʻau told me to follow up with Dr. Kelling because perhaps that connection would lead me to potential research participants. As it turned out, meeting Dr. Kelling was a crucial milestone in my study because it connected me to the Kamakau community. Listening to my naʻau often means trusting that it will lead me to where I need to be.

I was raised on the concept of naʻau, but I was only exposed to written literature on the concept when I embarked on this doctoral journey. So, how does the concept of naʻau manifest in existing literature? Kānaka Scholar Kerry Laiana Wong refers to a "serendipitous" method of

research in which "information that the researcher is seeking exposes itself suddenly and unexpectedly" (Oliveira, 2015, p. 81). Serendipity is viewed as a driver of interdisciplinary research because it allows unexpected things to arise (Darbellay et al., 2014). This notion of making way for serendipity closely resembles the Hawaiian epistemology of listening to your naʻau (gut, enlightened intestines, intuition). Native Hawaiians believe—as I do—that our kūpuna (grandparents, ancestors) guide us through our naʻau. What may seem "sudden and unexpected" to me may be guidance from our kūpuna manifesting for us to see. Oliveira (2015) wrote, "I do indeed believe that my kūpuna have guided me in directions that I did not have the cognitive capacity to dream up for myself" (p. 81). My ancestors can see pathways I cannot, and they have a way of putting hōʻailona (signs, omens) in front of me so I can see what they see.

When applied to this study's findings and analysis stage, I used my intuition and naʻau to guide me in making sense of the data and lead me toward the study's findings and conclusions. Opaskwayak Cree Scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) offered that one can embrace one's intuition in data analysis (Wilson, 2008). Wilson described intuitive logic as "where you are looking at the whole thing at once and coming up with your answers through analysis. So, it is mostly innate within us" (Wilson, 2008, p. 119). Similarly, Chicana feminist scholar Delgado Bernal proposed the concept of cultural intuition, acknowledging that the researcher can and should draw upon personal experiences, professional experiences, communal memory, existing literature, and the research process itself (Bernal, 2016). Bernal's cultural intuition (1998) made room for the researcher's spirit in the process. In other words, the patterns and themes gleaned from the data often come from the researcher looking at the large whole of the data and paying attention to what we notice, even if those observations are not overt or apparent to others. Those observations

come from within the researcher based on their experiences and knowledge gathered until the point in time that they are interacting with the data.

Essentially, for this study, this meant that once the data was collected and coded, I stepped back, organized the data, and gleaned themes and patterns from it. Vaughan (2019) pointed out, "Environmental research, like lei making requires trusting the people who know a place, and your own naʻau (your gut or intuition), more than any pattern or plan" (p. 56). Some patterns happened by design; for example, the data around the participants' Native Hawaiian identity was because my talk story protocol included questions about how identity played a role in their process. However, some patterns had to be gleaned using intuition, like the subprinciples presented in chapter four. For example, one of the main principles of a Kānaka College Choice Framework presented in chapter fur captured the data around ways that participants' Native Hawaiian identity shaped their college choice process. So, I anticipated and planned to collect data around the more prominent theme of Native Hawaiian identity. What I did not know—until the data collection was complete and the data were coded—were the subprinciples I would glean from the more prominent theme. As it turned out, one of the subprinciples was related to a sense of kuleana and how kuleana played into the college choice process. Identifying kuleana as significant in this study involved following my intuition and naʻau because I knew innately how important kuleana is as a value for Native Hawaiians.

Conclusion: Pīpī holo kaʻao

When I designed this research study, it only made sense to end it with an intentional opening to wherever the study may lead next. After all, that is how making lei works. Thus, the final step of this research study, pīpī holo kaʻao, refers to the way the story trails on. The story is

complete, but it has not entirely ended. The end of a lei may mean it is complete, but the lei is meant to live beyond its completion:

> Lei are meant to be given and shared, so that they may be worn. Lei add beauty and fragrance, which spread from the recipient, throughout the event [they] attend. Research too should not sit in a fridge, journal, or dissertation, but must be shared and distributed, used and shared again. Through sharing, research can make circumstances better, and add to ʻike (knowledge), that which is seen, smelled, sensed, experienced, and known. (Vaughan, 2019, p. 60)

I became more aware of my identity as an emerging scholar seeking to serve the lāhui, so I recognized my kuleana creatied an elaborate and well-loved lei that I presented to colleagues in academia. This lei was also one small flower on a much longer and more grandiose lei that began with my kupuna (ancestors) before me and will continue well beyond my ability to make lei.

CHAPTER 4: ʻĀINA ULUWEHI (FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS)

I have always been a story gatherer. I am most content when I am surrounded by loved ones telling and sharing stories, and all I had to do in those moments was sit and listen. During family parties, my favorite thing to do was sit with my aunties, uncles, and grandparents and listen to them reminisce and swap stories. Those were my favorite laugh-until-you-cry moments, my favorite deep-belly laughing moments. I came for the stories and stayed for the laughter. Those were the moments I learned about how my Nana and Papa (mom's parents) went on chaperoned dates with my Nana's sister, Aunty Josie. Of course, it didn't mean anyone stayed out of trouble. It simply meant the trio of them got into mischief together. I'll never forget the kolohe (mischievous, playful) smiles the three of them flashed as they told these stories of their younger years.

As I grew older, I realized if we did not capture these stories and kolohe moments, they would be lost with time. So, I began recording interviews with my grandparents and writing down the stories I could remember. I hope to someday share these stories with ʻōpio and future generations so they can know our kupuna the way I did.

Conducting this study brought me back to those memories and those feelings of contentment. Several of the talk story sessions went a little longer than planned because I truly enjoyed gathering participants' stories about their college process and college experiences. Conducting those talk story sessions reminded me how important it was to bring the stories forward, capture them, and prepare to share them with future generations. Once this lei is complete, these participants' stories will perpetually have a place in academia and hopefully benefit future scholars who seek the same knowledge as I do.

Chapter Overview

The primary focus of this study was to posit what a college choice framework might look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians. To explore this study, I gathered the college choice stories of 21 research participants through 17 talk story interview sessions. There were four talk story sessions where research participants were paired together. As mentioned in chapter three, I realized these research participants' stories yielded a *unique and unexpected whole* – like a lei that looks different when the stories are separate than when put together. As a whole lei, I gained a perspective that allowed me to see these stories in a new and inspiring way.

In this chapter, I offer a Kānaka College Choice Framework as a response to the central research question: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?

Eia ka lei: A Kānaka College Choice Framework for our Survivance and Ea

For this research study, I used lei-making methodology to weave together Kānaka Maoli education, college choice research, KānakaCrit theory, talk story methodology, the stories of 21 research participants, and my experiences as a scholar and practitioner. At the close of chapter two, I concluded the backbone, or base, of this framework should be interdisciplinary, iterative, and integrative. I aligned the lei analogy with this framework to illustrate how the framework weaves together these various elements and sources of knowledge and wraps culture, community, and ʻohana (family) around students as they navigate the college process.

With all this manaʻo (knowledge) put together, I offered the following as a preliminary college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians. For this dissertation, I am naming this a Kānaka College Choice Framework. This framework stands on the following four principles:

1. Fulfilling Kuleana for the Lāhui: Understanding the role of Native Hawaiian identity in college choice
2. ‘Ohana & Support: Intentional role and space for the student’s support system
3. Waiwai: Space and resources to manage the financial responsibilities associated with college
4. E wili me ke aloha: Infuse confidence in students

Figure 4: Illustration of Eia ka lei: A Kānaka College Choice Framework.

Principle #1: Fulfilling Kuleana for the Lāhui

Developing a college choice framework by and for Native Hawaiians means we must engage as deeply as possible in understanding how Native Hawaiian identity plays into college choice. What does it mean to be a Hawaiian finding their way to college? What values do they carry with them? What experiences shape their decisions? According to the literature, Kānaka Maoli students today carry with them the history of their ancestors. Despite a history of colonialism, Native Hawaiians continue to survive. Native Hawaiian trends in college enrollment show improvement in recent years (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2021), and there are opportunities to push more upward trends in the years ahead. So what did it mean to this study's research participants to be a Hawaiian navigating the process of choosing a college?

This principle was presented first and foremost to signal the extent to which a Kānaka College Choice Framework should center Native Hawaiian identity. Leading with this principle is what makes made framework distinctive from other college choice models since no other models to this point have been developed while centering the experiences of Native Hawaiians. The data for this finding came mostly – but not exclusively – from answers to my pointed question(s) to participants about the ways in which their Native Hawaiian identity influenced (or not) their college choice process.

For the purposes of this chapter, four subprinciples generated from the data analysis, as it relates to the way(s) in which the participants' Native Hawaiian identity played a role in their college choice process:

1) Staying home vs. going away for college;
2) Kuleana (purpose, responsibility);
3) For the Lāhui (Hawaiian Nation); and

4) Feeling out of touch with their Hawaiian identity.

Staying Home vs. Going Away for College

There were several ways this subprinciple was expressed in the conversations. The topic of whether to stay or go came up in 14 participants' talk story sessions, which signaled the importance of the subprinciple from among study participants. Under this subprinciple of whether to stay home or go away for college, participants wrestled with such ideas as staying in or leaving their comfort zones; as well as feeling like they were being "pushed" from Hawai'i, especially for financial reasons.

For some participants, the decision to stay home or leave for college was influenced by their relationship toward or away from a place that is comfortable and familiar. Palapalai is from O'ahu and tried her first year of college at Cal Poly Humboldt along with one of her friends from high school. Palapalai decided to come home and transferred to UH Mānoa for her second year:

> With coming home, it definitely was because I knew I would be around more people looked like me and understood me. But going out to the mainland kind of didn't because I live in my happy little bubble here. I forget the rest of the world exists.

She was a first-generation college student who grew up thinking that "going out to the mainland" for college was the option she was supposed to choose. She admitted that she did not know what she was looking for when it came to a college, so she focused on a college that had the kind of biology program she thought she wanted. As it turned out, the biology program at Cal Poly Humboldt required students to take botany in their first year, and she failed the course because she was not interested in botany related to biology. A friend convinced her to transfer to UH Mānoa because Mānoa's biology program wasn't heavily plant-based. Palapalai realized after that experience that not all biology programs are the same, so she was happy to learn Mānoa's

program could be a better fit. She was also glad to return to her “happy little bubble” in her hometown.

Awapuhi described something similar about the comfort of staying in a familiar place. Awapuhi is from Maui and enrolled in her first year at the UH Mānoa Richardson School of Law:

> I think it’s that there’s a real sense of cultural understanding when you talk to people who are from Hawai‘i and grew up in Hawai‘i, and I think that that gives me a sense of comfort. That’s also why I decided not to go to a different law school as well, was because I so enjoy now in my life being able to talk to people about common experiences regarding Hawai‘i and the little nuances of living in a small town on Maui or even on O‘ahu, being able to connect with people about specific things in Hawai‘i. It’s a very much a sense of community and definitely the community that I fit into, and that gives me a lot of comfort.

Awapuhi started her undergraduate degree at Pacific University in Oregon but transferred after her first year to the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo when she realized that she hated the weather in Oregon and “winter depression is real.” She thought living somewhere outside of Hawai‘i would be exciting but leaving only made her realize she actually wanted to be somewhere she felt connected to the community.

Students may also choose to leave Hawai‘i and break from their comfort zone, like Laua‘e, a first-year student from O‘ahu attending a small college in Iowa, who expressed, “Living on a small island, you can feel almost bored. I’ll definitely tell you that my senior year to junior year, I was getting bored, and I was ready for something new.” For Laua‘e, the value in leaving was to experience “the independent aspect of being Native Hawaiian.” Like Palapalai

and Awapuhi, he knew there was no other place like Hawai‘i, but that comfort empowered him to leave home.

Conversely, the draw of Hawaiian culture can also pull Native Hawaiian students to leave their home and comfort zone. Liko, for example, is a junior at UH Mānoa from San Diego. Liko's mom is Native Hawaiian, but Liko grew up with limited exposure to their Hawaiian background. Liko and her mother wrestled with the prospect of staying in California or going to UH where she would have an opportunity to learn more about her Native Hawaiian heritage. She explained, "I was telling my Mom, 'I think I should go. I should learn more about my Hawaiian heritage in the place where Hawaiians are. What better place is there?'" In Liko's case, San Diego was the comfort zone she left in hopes of connecting with her Native Hawaiian roots.

Amid these internal, personal influences students face as they wrestle with the decision to stay or go, they also struggle with external influences that make them feel they are being "pushed" to leave Hawai‘i. Puakenikeni explained:

> I always felt like I was being pushed to leave and explore. I mean, yea, that's great. I definitely want to see the world and have all these experiences, but there was a disconnect between me and my own culture at the same time.

Puakenikeni is a second-year undergraduate at UH Mānoa who knew he wanted to stay in Hawai‘i for college, despite feeling that he was being pushed out because the college process at his school "was a lot more centralized towards looking at mainland colleges." While he had colleges in and outside of Hawai‘i on his application list, he shared he did not feel he received much exposure to the Hawaiian culture in high school, so he wanted to stay in Hawai‘i and bridge the disconnect he felt with his culture.

While a connection to culture influenced Puakenikeni to push against messages he received from his school about choosing a college, more participants discussed the practicality of cost on their choice to stay or leave. Kī discussed how the job market and cost of living is pushing him to "move away for a bit and save money and eventually come back home." Kī is third-year law student at the UH Mānoa Richardson School of Law. He discussed while he loves being in Hawai‘i, he plans to leave after graduation in hopes of a better job market. Among his life goals is to be able to afford the lifestyle he wants, and he simply does not see it happening while staying in Hawai‘i.

Nanu, a sophomore, computer science major at UH Mānoa, shared a similar sentiment and expressed some sadness as she discussed Hawaiians not being able to afford living in Hawai‘i:

> You see Hawaiians getting displaced, and moving to the mainland, not necessarily by choice, but a lot because they can't afford to continue living here. For me, I'm very aware of that problem.

She talked about how her awareness of this problem influenced her college choice process and led her to stay in Hawai‘i and "choose the cheapest option." She doesn't believe this was what her parents wanted for her – they wanted her leave and experience the independence of college. After weighing all her options, Nanu stayed home. She explained:

> I think personally, for me, I would feel a lot more pressured, academically and financially, if I went away because it's so much more if you end up losing a scholarship. Then I feel like the impacts can be a lot more devastating, depending on where you decide to go. And I just personally didn't want to deal with that. And yeah, that's mainly how I chose my college.

While she understood the extent to which her parents valued education, she didn't understand why it would lead them to take on debt to send her away from Hawai‘i. Existing literature suggested that this might have been due to the limited resources available to Native Hawaiians students and families navigating the college process (Roberts & Hitchcock, 2018). Nanu also discussed she would do what she can to stay in Hawai‘i after graduation because that was where she wanted to be and she refused to be displaced.

A few participants, like Nanu, connected the idea of staying or going to the personal financial impacts of the decision to stay or go. ‘Ilima, a UH Mānoa senior who plans to attend medical school, was similarly determined not to let the feeling of being "pushed" from home drive her college journey. She took a non-linear pathway through her degree, including taking a five-year hiatus to work for a state senator and wait until after she turned 23 so she would not have to involve her parents' financial circumstances in her college financial plans. Advice from a mentor sparked her drive to return to school and complete her bachelor's degree. She saw her degree as a means to shape her future, on her own terms:

> You get to stay in Hawai‘i and live in Hawai‘i, even though we are experiencing high cost of living, inflation, housing crisis. So that kind of was super important to me because I want to stay here. I want to live and stay in my home and not have to worry about whether my future kids are going to make it or if my parents are going to be able to make it. I just want to solidify that when I get older, when my career starts, I want to be able to take care of my family.

‘Ilima's determination to use college as a tool to support herself and the future of her family illustrated Wright's (2018) urging to harness our own stories and draw on the connections, knowledge, and networks we gain through college (Wright & Reyes, 2019).

‘Ohia, one-half of a research participant duo, is Lehua’s mother and herself a Native Hawaiian with a Ph.D.. She expressed she wished more Kānaka students would or could harness their own stories and stay home like ‘Ilima and Nanu did:

> Why should they go? Why, why, why should my babies go? I want to keep them home. I’m not sending them away. You know, that’d be hard for me to let go. We have good colleges here. We have jobs here. We can do it. We’re fine. We don’t need to go away to get a good education.

‘Ōhi‘a’s statement “we don’t need to go away to get a good education” is counternarrative to the messages Palapalai and Puakenikeni received students should leave home and attend schools on the U.S. continent. But ‘Ōhi‘a’s determination embodied Kana’iaupuni’s (2005) ka‘akālai kū kanaka (strengths-based approach) about the opportunities in Hawai‘i, so she encapsulated the sentiment of a Kānaka College Choice Framework. For this framework, we need to strongly consider what Hawai‘i has to offer before we send our keiki (children) away.

In summary, wrestling with the idea to stay home or go away for college is multilayered and interconnected to other considerations like comfort zones and feeling pushed away from Hawai‘i. Since this topic arose from majority (14) of the study’s talk story sessions, this is a significant subprinciple related to understanding Native Hawaiian identity development. Overall, these findings revealed that a Kānaka College Choice Framework needs to build in a component that helps students and families wrestle with and navigate this question with nuance and depth: should I stay, or should I go?

Kuleana

Kuleana is an important value to understand in the context of Native Hawaiian identity (Cristobal, 2018; Reyes, 2018; Wright, 2018). Kuleana can be so significant to Kānaka that it can

become a driving force for those that are tuned into their kuleana, and in turn, that force can propel students to persist to and through higher education. Kuleana as a subprinciple was identified when participants discussed how education is tied to their sense of responsibility they had to themselves, to family, or to the lāhui (Native Hawaiian nation). This is important for a Kānaka College Choice Framework because to understand Native Hawaiian identity is to understand the nuance and depth of what Kānaka mean when they discuss kuleana.

The sense of kuleana seemed to motivate several participants through their educational pursuits and bolster their determination to earn a degree. Ma‘ohauhele is a non-traditional aged student who followed a non-linear pathway through higher education and has nearly completed a master’s degree. She shared:

> At one time, my dad used to tell me when I was younger, what kine Hawaiian are you? You’re supposed to do this, you’re supposed to do that. And I’m like, “No, no…I’m going to go to school and I’m going to learn the white way so when they come at me and tell me I cannot do this, I’m going to beat you at your own game.”

Throughout our talk story session, Ma‘ohauhele discussed how much she valued her local/home community. Her kuleana was clearly related to serving and uplifting her community, and she determined that education was a necessary tool to fulfill that kuleana. Admirably, by the time we shared this talk story session, she had obtained multiple degrees/credentials, and it was plain to see that nothing would stand in the way of her fulfilling her kuleana.

‘Ohaiali‘i, another non-traditional aged participant currently in her junior year at UH Mānoa, also plans to use her art degree as part of her kuleana to the lāhui:

> I plan to be an artist and create culturally relevant work that speaks to the issues we face in Hawai‘i and take the stories of our ancestors and present them in a way that is beautiful and understandable for people to look at and absorb. That’s my goal.

‘Ohaiali‘i was inspired to return to complete her bachelor’s degree after her children were in high school and her older sister completed a master’s degree. Neither of ‘Ohaiali‘i’s parents went to college, so she and her sister didn’t have access to college resources at a traditional college age. It made sense to her that they would pursue this when they were older and could support their own college pursuits. Now that ‘Ohaiali‘i has found her calling as an artist, she views her kuleana as someone who will continue telling the stories of our ancestors.

As ‘Ilima completed her bachelor’s degree and aspires to attend medical school, she explained that college was a part of her kuleana to become the accomplished Native Hawaiian that she wants to see more of:

> This is our home. There should be a bigger percentage of Native Hawaiians going into careers in Hawai‘i, but it’s honestly a big risk to take because you sacrifice a lot of your time to get to that place in life. Honestly, just seeing more Native Hawaiians be in dignitary positions kind of motivates you to want to be in that same area too.

In light of ‘Ilima’s insights, seeing “a bigger percentage of Native Hawaiians going into careers in Hawai‘i” would involve helping Kānaka tap into their own sense of kuleana. Like ‘Ilima explained, “it’s…a big risk to take because you sacrificed a lot,” much like she did, so a way to inspire Kānaka to take that risk is to help them see if college is a part of their kuleana. Perhaps a Kānaka College Choice Framework could, by design, be a tool toward connecting Native Hawaiians to their kuleana.

Finally, kuleana is a way for Native Hawaiians to understand their place on the continuum of our kūpuna (ancestors). We are but one part of a continuum of a bigger, grander picture that we may not always fully understand, but we know in our naʻau (gut, core, intuition) when we've found our place on that continuum. ʻŌhiʻa saw college and her pursuit of a Ph.D. as part of her kuleana to a long line of Hawaiian scholars:

> That helped for me to go the Ph.D. route knowing that I wasn't alone. Kuʻu Kahakalau, Manulani Meyer folks, they led the way. They fought the good fight. They opened the doors for the rest of us to come in.

As ʻŌhiʻa mentioned, accomplished Native Hawaiian wahine (women) scholars opened the doors she walked through when she earned her Ph.D. Kuleana must be understood not only as something an individual feels for themselves, but also as something they do for those who follow after them. The continuum endures after our small part so others may follow.

In summary, as these participants helped to capture, kuleana is a valuable aspect of Native Hawaiian identity. It can be a driving force for students to pursue college. It can empower someone. It is a sense of purpose, and helps us pave the way for others behind or beyond us. Understanding the dimensions of kuleana and what it means to Native Hawaiians pursuing higher education will be an essential component of a Kānaka College Choice Framework.

For the Lāhui

This theme was generated from the interviews of several participants, and like kuleana, it is an important concept to understand as it is related to Native Hawaiian identity. "For the lāhui," or "For the Hawaiian nation" is the idea that a Hawaiian is motivated by the desire to benefit the whole of the Hawaiian nation or community. Lauaʻe explained this concept succinctly:

> From my standpoint, it is really having that understanding of our purpose as Native Hawaiians is to uplift the lāhui. And I think that's what my brother says a lot, is it's our goal to uplift the lāhui. And by us being in college, that's one step forward to that uplifting and to us getting to a point where we're benefitting each other by our decisions to push forward and grow.

Among Laua'e's motivating factors toward college was this idea that college was part of his purpose, part of the way he would serve the larger whole of the Hawaiian community. He chose to attend school in Iowa motivated by the lower cost of Graceland, as well as by an opportunity to be a college-level athlete. But ultimately, his "bigger" reason was an innate sense that college would enable him to be a part of uplifting the lāhui.

Mother-daughter research participant duo, Pua and Melia, were both oriented toward a desire to contribute to the betterment of the lāhui through education. Pua is a Native Hawaiian woman with master's and Ph.D degrees, and her scholarly experiences shaped Melia's, outlook on college. Melia graduated from Kamakau last spring and was a highly competitive athlete considering a gap year so she can continue competing internationally. Pua was particularly keen that Hawaiians should not incur heavy debt in college because higher education should be a step toward creating generational wealth. She explained:

> I think especially for Hawaiians and especially for Hawaiians that lack available resources, encouraging students to go into debt is definitely not…that's not a way to create generational wealth. And that's the purpose of higher education, right?

Pua was an educator herself, and she was committed to the larger whole of the Hawaiian community through encouraging her daughter and her students to steer away from loans and debt in college. Her larger goal for her family and the lāhui is to create generational wealth. In that

light, a surefire way to uplift the lāhui is to make certain that we do not drive our generations of learners into crippling debt.

Pua also discussed how she was in the Hawaiian studies program at UH Mānoa at a time that Kumu Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa's goal was to create 500 Hawaiian Ph.D.s, so she became a part of Kameʻeleihiwa's vision when she completed her degree. Seeing 500 Hawaiian Ph.D.s ultimately would uplift lāhui because with those degrees, Hawaiians would have the credentials necessary to take over the roles that could support and lead the lāhui.

Loke and Lani, my third Native Hawaiian mother-daughter research participant duo, were also keen on uplifting the lāhui through their education and work. Loke had just graduated from Kamakau and wanted to pursue marketing in college so she could "come back home and work for my lāhui in the business side 'cause our people are struggling in that kind of area."

Her mother, Lani, has her Ph.D. in education and became a teacher because she is determined to teach Hawaiian keiki (children) their own history. She wants her students to think about ways they can help the lāhui. Shaping young Hawaiian minds is her contribution to the lāhui:

> I feel like there definitely needs to be somebody that encourages the kids. I feel like we [Hawaiians] need that extra boost of confidence because we need to remember we were brilliant people. And, we still are. It's in our DNA and we just need to do that. And for our lāhui I always tell all my students, like, whatever you are, be the best. So you can come back when we have sovereignty, [laugh], and then we can have an amazing, you know, nation. Yeah. You know, plant a seed in all the kids.

Planting a seed is a poetic way to think of our contributions to the betterment of the lāhui. It is the idea that the work we do today are seeds we plant with our keiki. As seeds with our keiki, our work lives beyond us and extends into the continuum.

In summary, understanding Native Hawaiian identity means understanding what Kānaka mean when they express that they do something "for the lāhui." It is more than an expression of generosity or altruism. It is a concept that who we are and what we do are intertwined with a commitment to uplifting the Hawaiian community-at-large, the lāhui. A Kānaka College Choice Framework would be incomplete without accounting for this element, one's dedication and love "for the lāhui."

Feeling Out of Touch with their Hawaiian Identity

To provide another dimension to these findings about identity, the perspectives of two participants who expressed feeling out of touch with their Hawaiian identity emerged. These perspectives offer a contrast to most participants who expressed alignment with their Hawaiian identity as it related to their educational experiences. Native Hawaiians often have different and ever-evolving relationships with what it means to be Hawaiian (Osorio, 2001; Wright, 2018), so a future college choice framework for Native Hawaiians needs to consider that identity is an ongoing journey both for individuals and for the collective.

Kī was forthcoming, although with some reservation because he was not sure if his perspective contributed to the aim of this study:

> Sometimes I feel like a fake Hawaiian, so it doesn't really play a role and I'm kind of just like, ah, I'm just going to do what I want to do and not taking consideration the other cultural aspects. I don't think I've really ever fell back onto that card or identified myself as a Native Hawaiian. If you want to press me for it, then yeah, sure, I'll tell you that I'm

> Hawaiian. But I don't think that I let my ethnicity lead me. At TCU [Texas Christian University], I don't think anything in my Hawaiian ethnicity led me there. It was just more my want to try something new and be somewhere new and somewhere else.

He became self-conscious discussing this with me, but it did not keep him from continuing with his genuine, candid perspective:

> I don't feel like there's a lot of Hawaiians that share my same perspective. I know some older ones that do, but the young ones, I don't really see eye to eye with a lot of them on a lot of the issues.

Kī didn't question whether he was a Native Hawaiian; rather, he questioned whether his authentic views contributed to the larger whole of the Hawaiian community. Kī's college experience was highly disrupted by COVID, and contributed to a sense of disconnectedness from his communities.

Liko wrestled with the tensions of her identity as a Native Hawaiian from California. But her experience as a Hawaiian growing up on the U.S. mainland was not the only thing that made her identity development multidimensional. Liko discussed the ways she navigated being both Mexican and Hawaiian:

> I grew up speaking Spanish. I grew up so immersed in that culture. It was a really big thing. And I knew my mom was Hawaiian. I knew I was Hawaiian, and she always said, I'll be proud of it, whatever, and so I was because she told me to, but she never really shared any of the culture. I don't really know what it is. She was just very…she kept it to herself. If we asked, she would answer a few questions and then move on.

Liko was grateful for the support she's found as she navigates this journey of her identity, especially having a girlfriend who also identifies as Native Hawaiian. But she also showcased some self-consciousness as we discussed this:

> I know more than when I started, but I still don't know that much, and it always feels like, oh, everyone knows more than me and it's like that I don't belong in the spaces. And my girlfriend always tries to reassure me. She's like, "Well, I don't know everything either, but you still belong and you still have a place because you're Native Hawaiian and everything."

Given her self-consciousness, Liko was also grateful for being in a space and community where she could continue to learn – learn about herself, her heritage, and all those sharing her college experience.

Summary

Understanding where Native Hawaiian identity intersects with college choice means understanding the following: what it means to students to stay home or leave for college; the concept of fulfilling one's kuleana for the lāhui; and not all students are in the same place with their identity development. The process should account for the range of relationships students may have with their identity as a Native Hawaiian. While there is still much more to consider and research about the ways that Native Hawaiian identity shapes their college choice process, the findings related to this first principle of a Kānaka College Choice Framework contribute to the dialogue around how Native Hawaiian identity plays a role in the college choice process.

Principle #2: ʻOhana & Support

The second framework principle involves making space for family and community surrounding the student. As discussed in chapter two, community support is key to ensuring

Native Hawaiian succeed in higher education (Bumatai, 2023; Hoke et al., 2019; J. A. K. Oliveira, 2005). Participants in this study also tied family and community support to a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2023) once they were enrolled at the college. From a college choice research perspective, the literature (Villalpando & Solorzano, 2005; Yosso, 2005) supported the importance of familial presence in the college process so that they can be part of the student's preparation and support successful outcomes. Unfortunately, valuing the family as an asset in college choice processes has typically been dismissed (Villalpando & Solorzano, 2005). This study's finding asserts that families are an asset to the process. To that end, this framework should have an intentional space and role for the ways that family and community are held paramount by the student.

Talk story sessions with participants affirmed the college choice process went hand-in-hand with the student's family and community. Nearly every participant credited parents and other family members as reasons they successfully navigated any part of the college process. A couple of participants also spoke of supportive communities at the institution they chose to attend, which influenced their enrollment decision. I grouped these findings into three subprinciples: 1) Receiving family support; 2) Providing support for others; and 3) The importance of an institution's communities in a student's support system.

Receiving Family Support

Family support can take on many forms for students preparing for or searching for college. For several participants, family support was given to them by parents or other family members. For one participant, family support was hands-on from a sister who had experience in college admissions. Family support can also be given by the student, as was the case for our participants who are also parents.

Naupaka, a junior at UH Mānoa majoring in Kinesiology, spoke enthusiastically about the support he received:

> I feel like I wouldn't do anything different with how I applied or anything like that. I had a really big support group, as in my college counselors, my peers and friends from school, and my parents. They really helped me figure out what I wanted to write about for my college essay, and even filling out certain parts of my application, they really helped me with that as well.

Naupaka's parents have strong backgrounds in higher education; his mom has two bachelor's degrees, a master's degree, and is currently pursuing a degree in nursing. Naupaka's dad has an associate's degree in the culinary arts. Naupaka recognized his parents were prepared to support his college plans in whatever ways possible, in large part because of their own experiences in college. Naupaka's mom encouraged him to take his time with his college pathway and give himself the chance to learn what he really wanted to study because she valued the non-linear pathway she took toward her nursing degree.

Similarly to Naupaka citing his mom's influence in his college process, Palapalai credited her mom with being her main source of support:

> My mom has been my support from behind. She's like the backstage. I'm the one that's putting on a big "I know what I'm doing façade," and it's really just my mom and her computer like, "What do I do? My daughter's in college. I'm lost." So yeah, it's all my mom that's keeping me upright as an adult.

Palapalai described her mom as a "nervous nancy" who wanted to know everything she could about the college process and ways to support her daughter through it. To her mother's credit,

Palapalai's anxiety about the process decreased because of the resources her mother found while Palapalai focused on transferring from Cal Poly to Mānoa.

Pikake, a senior at the Kamakau School, shared how important her mom's support was for her:

> Honestly, my family's very – what's the word? They're very supporting of anything that I choose. I know that my Mom kind of pushes me to get that higher education. I think my family's very supportive and they're just very worried about what's next in life. My family likes to think ten steps ahead all the time.

Pikake shared about other ways she's connected to her family and community, especially through her non-profit work. In light of how supportive her family has been about her community and non-profit work, it made sense her college future was also supported by her family.

Puakenikeni experienced support and pushes from his family to pursue opportunities they didn't have:

> I think for my family, it always was to push to go to school because they didn't go to school. They were like, "You can't end up like us. We want better for you."

Puakenikeni did not cite exactly what his family meant by "we want better for you." But the support was still key for him to pursue what he wanted for college, which turned out to be UH Mānoa so that he could continue learning about his Hawaiian heritage.

Like Puakenikeni, Nanu received encouraging pushes from her family to grow during college:

> I think within my family, my parents really emphasized getting the college experience, and they wanted me to be able to go off on my own, and learn how to become independent.

In earlier sections of this chapter, we learned about how Nanu wrestled with staying in Hawai‘i or going away, as well as her concerns about how she could afford college. Add her parents’ encouragement to learn independence in college, and she was balancing a number of influences and priorities in her decision. Ultimately, she balanced all these factors when she decided to stay in Hawai‘i and live on campus, rather than commute from home. Her parents insisted she live on campus so that she could learn how to become independent.

‘Ohaiali‘i spoke highly of the ways that her sister supported her college search process. Her sister had college admissions experience working with high school students and provided ‘Ohaiali‘i with hands-on support in applying to college. This was especially welcomed as ‘Ohaiali‘i was a non-traditional-aged student navigating new resources:

> I guess because I haven’t been in an institution of learning for 20 plus years, it was really intimidating going to the website and figuring out all the steps. I couldn’t have figured it out without her. I thought it was really difficult figuring out all the things I needed to do, and she just knew everything I needed to do. Then whenever I had a problem, I’d call her.

‘Ohaiali‘i was fortunate to have her sister available for support, especially since her sister had relevant knowledge and experience in the college process. Most Native Hawaiian students do not have adequate resources for navigating this process (Roberts & Hitchcock, 2018). As indicated by the research participants, family members from parents to a sibling played important roles in providing support that the student did not feel they had otherwise.

Providing Support for Others

A second subprinciple underscoring this principle is that when participants felt empowered with knowledge in this area, they contributed to other Kānaka navigating the college process. Two participants who are also parents shared stories of the support they extended to

their children's education because they believe so deeply in the power of their degrees. ʻOhaialiʻi was highly motivated to ensure her children also have fulfilling educational experiences:

> My younger son is definitely more academically inclined. He wants to be able to make money. He wants a career that pays well. And I've always told my kids, to me, it's more important that you do what you love. That's just how me and my husband have always…we've kind of just lived on less so we could do more fulfilling work as opposed to stressing out and being in unfulfilling jobs and stuff. That's kind of just a motto I've always had for myself.

Pursuing college at a later age and stage in her life has meant her college experience became aligned with her children's educational experiences. She shared the power of navigating school together with her children:

> My younger one, I do share my school woes with him, and we talk about exams and midterms and tests and teachers, and I tell him, "Now that I know how to do financial aid, I got to get you on it," because it's pretty awesome. To have the support to go to school, I just feel like is the icing on the cake. It's like you get an education and you get financially supported at the same time. It's pretty awesome.

ʻOhaialiʻi went from feeling completely lost about the college enrollment process to feeling empowered with knowledge she was eager to pass along to her children. Her experience was an illustration of how familial support created more support for others in their immediate circle.

Maʻohauhele was raising college-aged children while pursuing her Master's degree. She took very seriously her ability to be a role model for her children:

> I have two kids in college right now. I have one that's a freshman, one that's a junior. And something I've always preached to my children was, "You weren't going to tell me, 'Hey

> mom, you didn't do it. Why do I have to?'" And so that was my push to finish my school path.

Ma'ohauhele demonstrated that support can have a multilayered effect. She supported and pushed her children to pursue higher education, and in turn, she was her own source of self-motivation because she wanted to model these choices for her children. Together, 'Ohaiali'i and Ma'ohauhele exhibited a dimension of family support that can bolster this Kānaka College Choice Framework, which is that this support can result in a positive ripple effect on those in the student's immediate circle of influence.

The Importance of Communities at the Institution

The third subprinciple gleaned from the data related to community-building was that it benefits Hawaiian students to know there are communities ready to support them at their future college. Lehua, who graduated from Kamakau in the spring 2023, noted how a supportive community was key for her early college experience at Windward Community College (WCC):

> WCC is like one of my top favorites just because how, you know, our school is tied with it. And just the community over there is very, they're very loving and caring and make sure they take care of you. They make everything happen.

The care Lehua experienced first-hand at WCC shaped her perspective on the college experience because it showed her that WCC had a community prepared to support her. While Lehua chose to take a gap year after graduation, she learned there was a supportive, caring college community available to her if she chose WCC.

Awapuhi knew there is a community at school with which she could connect; this was a significant contributor to her sense of belonging:

> I think there's a real sense of cultural understanding when you talk to people who are from Hawai‘i and grew up in Hawai‘i, and I think that that gives me a sense of comfort. That's also why I decided not to go to a different law school, because I so enjoy now in my life being able to talk to people about common experiences regarding Hawai‘i and the little nuances of living in a small town on Maui or even on O‘ahu, being able to connect with people about specific things in Hawai‘i. It's a very much a sense of community and definitely the community that I fit into, and that gives me a lot of comfort.

Since Awapuhi was actively seeking comfort, familiarity, and community in her J.D. program, it led her to attend the Richardson Law School and remain local. Why is a sense of belonging important overall? Strayhorn (2023) reminded us a sense of belonging is a basic human need and it takes on heightened importance in some college settings. In that light, a Kānaka College Choice Framework should take into consideration the extent to which the student feels a sense of belongingness on their chosen college campus.

For Loke, that sense of belonging runs deep. After graduating from the Kamakau School, she chose to attend the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo because it's one of the few institutions where she can continue to ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (speak Hawaiian): "I'm in my community. I can continue to ‘ōlelo and I can continue to live how I live every day like I did at school. So I think that was a choice for me." Loke's desire to find a college community in which she could ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i bolsters the importance of community cultural wealth (Villalpando & Solorzano, 2005). Villalpando and Solorzano (2005) specifically cite the importance of students' native language because it is a vehicle for passing along knowledge and culture from and to families supporting the student. Language is a connecting thread in students' support networks as they navigate

college, so it should be viewed and treated as a cultural asset in a Kānaka College Choice Framework.

‘Ilima was also motivated to choose UH Mānoa because of the connections she knew were available to her:

> I was able to transfer to UH Mānoa to which I was able to connect to other resources where they were able to help me, and I was able to get more scholarships. Honestly, it’s talking to people and making that social movement to get to know the programs that are available to UH Mānoa because not a lot of people know about it. I didn’t know about it until I talked to some of my peers, my colleagues, my classmates, about it.

‘Ilima’s college journey was filled with stories of the ways that her communities and family supported her success. In fact, her trajectory to medical school was connected to community support; she aspired to enter to the John A. Burnes School of Medicine at Mānoa through a program specifically designed to provide additional support resources for incoming students from underrepresented backgrounds. Similarly to her undergraduate experience, ‘Ilima was strengthening her college career by tapping into communities and networks that would help her leverage resources for support.

For Liko, finding community is a part of the journey. She was drawn to attend Mānoa to learn more about her heritage and culture. Her interest in Mānoa was strengthened by her sister with whom she stayed during a trip to O‘ahu, so she toured the campus and decided to give Mānoa a chance. Liko knew how important it would be for her to find community on campus, but she also knew that belongingness doesn’t happen instantly:

> Even if I don’t find a place within the community here, somehow I don’t find a place, at least I’ll have learned something. And I think that was a big thing. That was important to

me, pretty much. I think that was really the biggest thing, just wanting to learn and try and find a place in the community.

As of the time of our talk story session, Liko still did not feel she knew her place, but she felt connected enough to communities and friend groups to continue with Mānoa. While she expressed uncertainty about her place, knowing the communities were present and available was all she needed to continue at Mānoa.

Summary

A Kānaka College Choice Framework would be incomplete without intentional spaces and roles for the ways family and community are held paramount by the student. Family and community are essential assets to this process for Native Hawaiian students, so a future framework involving their college choice process should account for these assets. The participants in this study demonstrated that family and community support come to the student from multiple angles; this is about more than *receiving* support. When provided with this support, students show they can provide it in return to others in their immediate network, and students are often seeking supportive communities on which they can rely when they enroll in college. Thus, this framework should ensure that Kānaka students are able to access and grow their familial and support networks while they navigate the college process.

Principle #3: Waiwai

The third principle of this framework involves integrating resources to help students navigate the financial responsibilities associated with attending college. Waiwai is the Hawaiian term often used to signal resources, money, or wealth. Wai is the Hawaiian word for water, and Hawaiians recognize that water is a precious resource. For this framework, I used Waiwai to have a double-edged meaning: this is the principle that focuses on navigating financial aid and

literal money, and it is the space in the framework for the range of resources that Hawaiians can and should have access to in support of their college careers.

As discussed in chapter two, financial aid is vital to understand as we seek to understand how Hawaiians navigate to and through college. We must recognize both the need for direct aid that can help fund a student's education (Hagedorn et al., 2006), as well as the need to provide information, guidance, and education for students and families trying to navigate the college process (J. A. K. Oliveira, 2005). From a college choice research perspective, Perna's (2000, 2002; Perna et al., 2005; Perna & Titus, 2004) body of research on college choice, access, and financial aid supported the idea that individual and structural factors impact students' access to higher education; college choice models should not be developed assuming that "one size fits all." In that light, this principle for a Kānaka College Choice Framework is intended to uphold a holistic approach inclusive of financial aid funding and education.

Since this was one of the guiding topics from my talk story protocol (see Appendix I) this principle elicited a great deal of data, so I present three subprinciples:

1) Financial aid processes are difficult and complex;
2) "I didn't know" was a common sentiment; and
3) Participants were fearful of creating debt for themselves and their families.

Understanding the waiwai principle through these three subprinciples gave voice to the Native Hawaiian students who experienced firsthand having to balance the cost of college with managing the financial responsibilities that came with pursuing a degree.

Process is Difficult and Complex

Most participants expressed frustration with the financial aid process itself. The steps required to apply for aid, the immense amount of time and cooperation from parents needed, and

the uncertainty of how all the process will result in something that benefits the student – all those things together create stress on students and families. Participants expressed feeling lost and behind the game, as Palapalai explained:

> So with financial aid, just had no idea where to go. Didn't know how to apply. Even when I kind of found out about certain scholarships, it was either too late to apply to them or I found them right now in midterm season where it's super busy and I don't particularly have the time to be writing an essay for a scholarship. Yeah, nobody taught me how to search for it.

She was directed to the resources at her high school's college readiness program, but their support fell short of her needs. She shared, "They were trying to push me to do it myself, but I didn't know how to do it myself." In the absence of knowledge, Palapalai thought loans were her only option in her first year. She felt short-changed because she did not receive more guidance regarding scholarships.

In Liko's case, not only was the process frustrating, her lack of knowledge about the process resulted in financial aid being taken away:

> The documents took so much time for processing and I had to call so many times. I was at the financial aid office all the time. And then I got an email a couple of days later that they had taken away my Pell Grant of like, it was almost $6,000, the Pell Grant. And then I also couldn't do Federal Work-Study. And at that time, I had just started that Federal Work-Study job and I was like, okay, well, this isn't great.

As it turned out, Liko's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) increased from zero to $14,000, which caused her to become ineligible for the Pell grant, and she was no longer eligible for the Federal Work Study (FWS) Award. Liko asked aloud, "How do they expect me to do this?" and I

think that is a valid question. How could Liko have known to prepare for such a significant change to her financial circumstances? How was she supposed to make up for the financial gap left when she was no longer eligible for the Pell grant and Federal Work Study award, which amounts to nearly $10,000 per year in aid?

Puakenikeni learned he needed to engage in the process because he became aware that persistence could result in receiving more aid:

> Honestly, just pushing people to apply because even myself, I'm so bad sometimes. I am like, "Oh yeah, I'll do it, I'll do it, I'll do it," and then I miss a deadline. "Oh crap, I missed the scholarship." But really stressing the…I don't want to say the importance of financial aid, but how much opportunity there is out there…I was like, "See, if people don't apply, then..." You lose money. This is literally free money that you can get. Stressing people to take advantage of the opportunity out there is probably my biggest piece of advice.

Puakenikeni's advice came at the close of our interview when I asked participants if they had any advice for me. I asked participants, "What advice might you have for me or my colleagues as we want to improve the college process experience for Native Hawaiian students?" Based on his experiences, Puakenikeni thought it valuable to push through the complexities of the process and take advantage of the whatever monies and resources are being offered.

On the other hand, Awapuhi expressed a different sentiment. She believed that sometimes, the process did not pay off enough:

> They do give you significantly less money for going in-state, which I thought is a really good motivation for people to stay out of state, but whatever. I now have student loans because law school is very expensive. But the thought of having, I got all of my

> undergraduate covered through scholarships and stuff like that, but there's just less scholarships for going to law school. It's just rough.

Awapuhi was referring to the Kamehameha Schools, which offers scholarships for Native Hawaiian students (Hagedorn et al., 2006). In her experience, Kamehameha incentivized students to go out-of-state, for which she initially did to pursue her undergraduate degree. But o since she was pursuing a graduate degree in-state, the scholarships were not as available and she had taken out student loans to support herself.

In spite of the process being difficult and complex, and in spite of the mixed payoff for persisting through the process, financial aid and scholarship support are key to most Native Hawaiian students being able to afford college. ʻOhaialiʻi conveyed:

> I couldn't do school if I didn't receive financial aid. I have my family and we couldn't afford it. The financial aid is really what is sustaining me as I'm on my school journey. I feel like every year it's been like…now I know how to do my FAFSA, so okay, dial that in. Then I missed so many deadlines, so then the next year, I learned to make sure I got the deadlines and I applied for a couple more, which I got, which was great.

ʻOhaialiʻi's experience supported a backbone value of this framework, which is that this framework should be iterative. ʻOhaialiʻi needed time and experience to learn each year ways she could improve her leverage of the financial aid process. However, what more could she have gained from the start if she had more knowledge of the process? While the framework should be iterative, the lessons learned should not come at a cost to students. A Kānaka College Choice Framework would integrate resources to help students navigate the financial aid process so that they have sufficient knowledge at the start to decrease the difficulty the student experiences throughout the process.

"I Didn't Know."

In addition to the process itself being difficult to navigate, participants communicated – directly and indirectly – the stress of not knowing things related to financing and affording their education. "I didn't know" was a common phrase among participants. "Nobody taught me" was another shared phrase among participants. For Palapalai, the absence of knowledge had real consequences:

> I ended up having to pull out loans for it because I didn't get any financial aid my first year because I didn't know if I was supposed to go to the college for financial aid, like if colleges provide the scholarships or outside. Nobody really taught me when I was in high school searching how you're supposed to find those scholarships yourself.

Palapalai's absence of knowledge continued into her enrollment, and now, upon reflection, she realized she spent money on college that did not provide her with a positive return:

> I went to that college and nobody taught me how to look at how much it cost to go to the college. I went on their website and I looked at the numbers and that was it. I didn't know what I was looking at. I didn't know what these numbers meant and what they correlated to and I ended up spending a lot of money on a college that I didn't have a good experience in.

Given all that Palapalai felt she did not know, she spent a year at a college during which she had diminished returns on her time and money. Would she have made a different decision about attending Cal Poly Humboldt if she knew more about cost, financial aid, and scholarships? She and I did not have a chance to discuss that question, but perhaps she would have less loan debt, and perhaps more knowledge about the costs at Cal Poly Humboldt had she learned more options

to remain enrolled there. At least she would have had knowledge of options rather than feel backed into a corner at a college that did not offer her a positive experience.

Nanu is a little more optimistic that there are resources that can help students, but recognized that you still had to know something to get you started:

> But if you look hard enough, then there are things that can help you, at least within the UH system. But I think sometimes the biggest challenge is knowing where to look for that stuff, or knowing who to ask where you can find that information.

In Nanu's case, knowledge about knowledge could have made a difference in her experience. But how are students supposed to know that? How are students, mostly experiencing the college process for the first time, supposed to know what they don't know?

Awapuhi underscored the impact of not knowing financial aid information, and while she acknowledged receiving relevant information to educate her on the process, that information did not quell her anxiety:

> The thought of having student loans really freaked me out when I was younger. But then they make you go through that whole FAFSA thing and they make you sign off on things and go through that whole 30 minute lecture where they make you watch videos about that, and that did help. I will admit that did calm some of my anxiety. But in general, I was like, "I don't know what I'm signing up for." But it's all said and done. It's terrible for your credit, which is a whole different thing, which I don't look at anymore because that gives me too much anxiety.

Awapuhi's experience is illustrative of the ways students may hold on to stress and anxiety for the years leading up to college. In Awapuhi's case, some knowledge she received helped to calm

her, but now she's holding on to new stress and anxiety about the downstream impacts of taking out student loans.

Maʻohauhele also found the absence of knowledge led to her taking out loans rather than applying for scholarships and grants:

> At the same time, I also wasn't given the opportunities, or maybe the knowledge. I didn't have the knowledge to apply for scholarships and grants. It was just financial aid, so I have a ton of student loans. I wasn't aware, there was no guidance on that.

Conversely, Maʻohauhele shared her experience when she was given sufficient guidance and resources from the University of Hawaiʻi at West Oʻahu:

> Years later when I went to West Oʻahu, they were much more helpful in that admission process. They said, "Hey, you're of native Hawaiian ancestry. Did you apply for this? Did you do this? Did you do that?" I'm like, "Well, what is that?" And I actually believed back then that you could only apply for these scholarships if you were a senior coming out of high school. That was my understanding. And they're like, "No, we have special scholarships for non-traditional students, parents that came back to school." And I was like, "Really?"

A Kānaka College Choice Framework would integrate resources and a proactive approach as modeled by the staff at the University of Hawaiʻi at West Oʻahu. The staff knew enough about Maʻohauhele and available scholarship resources to proactively connect her with the information. This kind of care and intentionality would go a long way with Native Hawaiian students who otherwise do not know about the financial aid and scholarship processes that maybe available to them. This proactive approach certainly made a positive difference for

Ma‘ohauhele who, at the time of the interview, was pursuing an advanced degree and sharing her college knowledge with her community and her children.

Afraid of Creating Debt for Self and Family

The last subprinciple gives voice to a common pattern from the participants – most participants expressed fear of taking on debt for themselves or for their families. The notion of taking on debt for college seemed to be another strong source of stress for participants because they described trying to make ends meet while also avoiding student or parent loans. Based on this data from participants, a Kānaka College Choice Framework should be constructed in a way that helps practitioners understand and address these concerns so the fears do not become a hinderance to pursuing a college degree. Granted, participants' concerns about loans did not directly interfere with their college pursuits, but the fear of and avoidance of loans pushed them to find other ways to finance college. In some ways, the stress and pressure of finding those alternate ways were the hinderance. Puakenikeni talked about how his mom told him plainly that he would have to find other sources for college funding:

> My mom had raised me on her own so she was being a single parent and she worked for the DOE as an educational assistant. And I mean, through her savings and stuff, she was just like, "I can't afford to send you to college. So I really hope you can get good financial aid and do good in school for scholarships."

Since his mom was not able to provide financial support for college, he did whatever he could to afford college on his own:

> To this day, if I do not have to take out a loan, I will not because I am so scared of debt. But yeah, so because of that, I try to make sure to apply to all the Native Hawaiian scholarships and everything that I could in order to be able to afford it.

Earlier, we learned that Puakenikeni was compelled to choose UH Mānoa because he wanted to connect with his Hawaiian heritage, but Puakenikeni's college search was also shaped by his avoidance of loans. Puakenikeni also seriously considered schools outside of Hawai'i, including Creighton University, Grand Canyon University, Wazoo, and UCLA. If one of the schools outside of Hawai'i managed to provide him with sufficient financial aid without loans, he may have enrolled there, but he would not have been able to connect with his Hawaiian heritage in the way that he has at UH Mānoa. In other words, his fear of loans may have shaped his choice away from one of the core values he held as he considered what he wanted from his college experience.

Puakenikeni was not the only one whose family influenced his attitude toward loans. Ohia's experience with student loans impacted the way her daughter, Lehua, has approached her college choices. Ohia already incurred her own debt, so she pushed her daughter, Lehua, to find other funding because their family couldn't afford both of them to take out student loans. Ohia explained:

> I told her straight up, bottom line is I'm not taking a loan. I've got my own student debt, student loans that I'm taking care of. I'm like, I knew I couldn't take out any more loans. I was like, no. That's why I pushed you [referring to Lehua], get the grades, apply for all the scholarships, hustle, do all this extra work so you can get free money, then take out loans, and you gotta work to pay back the loans that I'm doing. So there is that pressure.

Ohia experienced firsthand the impact of taking student loans, and she decided it was a pressure she didn't want her daughter to feel – not only for herself, but also for their family. In Ohia's eyes, her daughter's indebtedness would become their family's indebtedness, and "money is not plentiful in this household." As a single mother with an advanced degree and student loan debt,

Ohia has been conscientious about their family's expenses, and that has extended into Lehua's college plans. At the time of the talk story session, Lehua seemed to take her mother's cautionary words to heart; Lehua's plan was to enroll at a community college the following spring for a culinary arts program.

For another one of the study's mother-daughter duo, Pua and Melia, Pua drew a line about their family considering student loans, stating emphatically, "We don't want our kids paying for college. So, the idea of taking out financial aid for student loans has never been a thing that we've advocated for." Earlier, we learned about Pua's views that higher education is tied to creating generational wealth. Why should Native Hawaiians begin their college experience with debt when there are other options and pathways to a degree? Pua also shared:

> We are also advocates of community college and having an affordable college experience. And if you're going to have a costly college experience, then you should already, in my opinion, you should already know what it's that you're gonna do. Because there's no reason why anybody should be a hundred thousand dollars in debt trying to pursue a higher ed degree.

At the time of our talk story session, Melia planned to pursue her career as a competitive athlete, so I cannot be sure the extent to which her mother's views on college indebtedness impacted her college plans. She did not have specific plans for college, but she expressed confidence that a college degree was certainly in her near future. Her experiences with Kamakau's early college program gave her a boost of confidence about her ability to succeed in college-level courses, so she knew that college would soon follow her athletic career.

As Nanu juggled several priorities related to her college choice including whether to stay or go and whether she could afford it. She also questioned the value proposition of college itself.

Was college going to be worth it? When considering the idea of taking out student loans, she described the possibility as "crippling":

> To have to deal with, possibly crippling student loans that take a decade or so, to pay off? And that it could take longer. So I think that was an event that made me be like, "Is student debt really worth it for me, personally, just if it means to go away?"

Ultimately, we know she chose to attend UH Mānoa because she wanted to remain in Hawai‘i, and what we also learned is her college choice was shaped by her desire to avoid a "ton of student loans":

> Because of that, I think that's also another reason why I chose Mānoa, is honestly, it was just financial stuff that really factored into it, because I want to be able to, I'm going to try my hardest to stay in Hawai‘i. I think one step of that is not having just a ton of student loan that would weigh on me, compared to if I left the islands.

As it turned out, Nanu's perspective on loans was shaped by an interaction she had with one of her high school teachers. Her teacher attended a school in California, and one day, her teacher announced in class that she had just finished paying off her student loans. Nanu estimated the teacher to have been in her early to mid-thirties, and at that moment, Nanu was left with the impression that people carry their student loans for a very long time. That was when she began to wonder, was college worth carrying that debt?

For Kukui, a graduating senior at the Kamakau School considering aviation or Hawaiian Studies in college, he knew he wanted to go to college, but he refused to put himself into debt. "My big goal is to graduate college and not be in student debt. That's just a big fear of mine. I want to go to college. But I feel like that haunts a lot of, a lot of us kids here." Kukui echoed the sentiment of other study participants, describing his fear of debt. He also expressed gratitude for

teachers at Kamakau who demystified the processes around college and scholarships; the knowledge allayed some of his fears, but not quite all. At the time of our talk story session, Kukui remained focused on attending college, but only time will tell if he is able to do so without loan indebtedness.

Summary

The Waiwai principle of this Kānaka College Choice Framework is the intentional space for Native Hawaiians to connect with financial resources and knowledge so they may more effectively manage the financial responsibilities that come with pursuing a degree. While scholarships and financial aid dollars are helpful, they are less enough when students and families do not also have the knowledge and context about how financing a college education really works. These findings give voice to the experiences of Native Hawaiian students and help us understand how difficult and complex these processes are, as well as give us a glimpse into how deep some of these fears and concerns are, especially around loan indebtedness. To that end, one of the core goals of this framework was to intentionally incorporate a holistic, systematic way for students and families to receive sound financial aid and scholarship management information, in addition to any scholarship and financial aid dollars they receive. A longer-term, grandiose aim of this framework was to affect systemic change, make college costs affordable for all students, and bring down financial aid barriers to make the process more accessible to all students.

Principle #4: E Wili me ke Aloha

This principle was developed from the study's findings that participants were filled with self-doubt about their place in college. "Wili," which means to weave or braid, and "me ke aloha," means "with love." This principle is named "E wili me ke aloha" or "weave with love"

signaling that this framework should make space to weave in or infuse care and confidence in college-bound Hawaiians so they stop doubting they have a place in higher education. Not only do they deserve to be more confident that they belong in college – higher education is a means toward nation-building for the lāhui (Wright & Reyes, 2019). The lāhui needs more students to realize their futures in higher education. To that end, this framework bolsters students' sense that they deserve to and are prepared to pursue a college degree while they are navigating the college choice process.

There are two subprinciples gleaned from the data that support this principle: 1) Institutions and systems of higher education should devote resources to amplifying ʻŌiwi stories of success; and 2) Institutions and systems of higher education should also dedicate resources to developing and executing pre-college experiences for K-12 students. Such experiences make a difference in ensuring students persist toward and through college.

Amplify ʻŌiwi Stories of Success

Maʻohauhele's story is one example of a story that should be amplified as a model for persistence and success, despite forces that tried to keep her from being successful in education. As shared previously in this chapter, she was a non-traditional aged student who followed a non-linear pathway through higher education and has nearly completed a Master's degree. But she often encountered those who discouraged her and went as far as calling her a "dumb Hawaiian":

> I've come from the struggle, I've come from the rock bottom and having to fight back through it. And being told you're a dumb Hawaiian, that is one thing that will annoy me like hell.

Throughout her educational journey, she refused to let others define her or discourage her. Additionally, she used all that she learned about the college process to benefit her children and

others in her local community. A Kānaka College Choice Framework would endeavor to infuse this embodiment of survivance in more Native Hawaiian students setting a pathway toward college.

‘Ohaiali‘i is another example of an admirable “come back” story; I discussed earlier in this chapter about how she’s a first-generation college student pursuing her degree later in life – “after a 22 year break” – on her own terms and timeline. Yet, she still felt deflated about her skills and accomplishments:

> It’s like I'm always humbled, and now I just kind of feel really deflated, like I don't know what I’m doing. But I don’t know if that’s in the art world, like you just got to get used to failing a lot until you make good work or what it is.

‘Ohaiali‘i’s story was laudable because she returned to college after being an entrepreneur and raising two children. She previously directed and managed her own dance company. When she realized her passion for and career in dance could be elevated with a degree, she decided to pursue a double major in Hawaiian studies and art. Her goal was to learn and enhance her own dance skills while learning about Hawaiian culture so she could integrate the two. Under this principle of a Kānaka College Choice Framework, ‘Ohaiali‘i’s story about finding her calling as an artist and telling the stories of our ancestors would be amplified and celebrated as an example for future students.

Palapalai’s college journey was a courageous one – venturing away from home with little guidance and navigating the financial responsibilities that came with her decisions about college. During our talk story session, she shared that despite all that she had managed to do for herself in pursuing her degree, she still felt like a “mess”:

> Everyone sees me and they're like, “Ah, she’s so confident. She knows what she’s doing.” And knowing that there’s somebody that I can just be like I was a mess the entire time, I’m still a mess, like that is really comforting to know that there’s somebody that cares and somebody that’s not judging me for being a mess.

Palapalai’s reference to knowing the was somebody who cares surfaced as we discussed the idea of a college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians. She told me she appreciated the conversation we were having and the fact that person cared enough to ask her about her college journey was meaningful. This was the underlying idea for the fourth principle of the framework: to weave in space and intention for students to have their voices and stories heard, to celebrate their success and assure them that someone cares enough to learn about their individual journey.

Lani, one-half of a research participant mother-daughter duo, was a highly accomplished Indigenous scholar and teacher. Given the breadth of her experiences, including having been a teacher-in-residence for the Smithsonian, I was surprised to hear her share she still feels like an imposter and lacks confidence in herself:

> I definitely feel like I lack the confidence. And even to today, I lack that confidence. I have that imposter syndrome sometimes, you know, like where I feel like, oh God, these people are so smart. You know, like, why am I here? You know? And, um, yeah. So even today I still feel that way. So I feel like there always has to be that encouragement.

Like Maʻohauhele, ʻOhaialiʻi, and Palapalai, Lani had a rich tapestry of educational experiences that should be upheld as a model for persistence and success. She was a Native Hawaiian woman with a Ph.D. who had taken her talents into the classroom as a social studies teacher so she can

impact the future of her students. She was also motivated knowing her background has a direct influence on the choices her children make in education:

> The other thing I also read was that, um, the mother's highest level of education helps, you know, motivate her children. So then for me, I was like, well, if that's the case, then I'm gonna try and get the highest degree in my profession so that my kids can see me as a role model and hopefully, you know, um, motivates them. And I always tell them like, no matter what you choose, like, just be the best at it. You know?

Lani was setting an example for her children and her students, despite any imposter syndrome she carried. With this framework's principle, the aim would be to provide support to students who are experiencing self-doubt and imposter syndrome and uplift more stories like Lani's. The framework would not seek to minimize or erase self-doubt; rather, it would be to ensure that despite those feelings, students still felt empowered to take their place in higher education, like Lani did.

Dedicate Resources to Pre-college Experiences

Evidence that confidence about college can make a difference came from the talk story sessions with the Kamakau students. Specifically, Kamakau's Early College program infused confidence in participants, showing them firsthand that they could succeed in college-level academic rigor. Lani's daughter, Loke, was a strong example of what a student can achieve when they have support from their family and a program like Early College. Loke graduated from Kamakau in the spring of 2023 with her high school diploma and multiple college-level credentials:

> I just took, kept taking classes outside of school, took classes during the summer, like at least three. And then I just kept going. I graduated back in May with two Associate's

> degrees in liberal arts in Hawaiian studies, and then three certificates in Moʻolelo, ahupuaʻa, and ʻōlelo.

The Early College program at Kamakau is built into the high school curriculum, so all students take at least a couple of courses at the neighboring Windward Community College (WCC) as they complete their high school diploma. For Loke, Kamakau's tactic of taking a class at a time beginning their freshman year in high school contributed to her confidence in college-level courses. Students have the option to complete enough courses to earn an associate's degree, as Loke did, and clearly she raised that bar by earning two associate's degrees alongside three certificates. At the time of the research, Loke had a significant number of transfer credits for her academic pathway at UH Hilo, which gave her options for her bachelor's degree, and perhaps even for an advanced degree.

Like Loke, Pikake "got hooked" on college courses once she started on the Early College program at Kamakau. Pikake and Kukui were both seniors at Kamakau when they shared a talk story session with me, and Kukui pointed out that students at Kamakau can take their own pace with the college courses. Kukui shared:

> I feel like some of us like [Pikake] really dig deep and strive for our Associates. And then there's others like me where I'm gonna be like, I'm gonna do as much as I can, but I'm gonna try to balance it out 'cause I don't, I don't think I can handle all of that.

Not only did students get hands-on experiences with college, but they learned something about their learning styles and take advantage of whatever they chose from the program. Even if Kukui did not choose to take enough courses to complete an Associate's, the program still gave him enough confidence to look forward to college. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, at the time of our talk story session, Kukui was interested in Hawaiian studies or aviation.

Pikake, on the other hand, put herself on a fast track to complete her associate's alongside her high school diploma:

> Ever since I started early college courses, I kind of got hooked and then I got into the mindset where, oh, I wanna complete all early college courses or I wanna complete my AA before I graduate high school. And then once I graduate I can go straight to UH Mānoa and I'll be ahead and all of that.

Pikake shared how she became highly focused in her junior and senior year to complete enough courses for her associate's degree. It was a challenge, but she was able to build her confidence and persist:

> It was a struggle though, not gonna lie. It was a struggle balancing out everything. Um, and I did miss out on some, some like, hangout sessions with my friends. But at the same time, I kind of enjoy taking college courses because I know that in the future it's something that I'm going to enjoy later on.

Not only did Pikake gain college-level academic experiences, but she also developed other important skills that are often honed in college, like time management. Developing these skills while in her familiar high school environment bolstered her confidence that she would be successful in college.

Melia hit the spirit of this principle on the nose as she described how the Early College program boosted her confidence in college:

> The Early College program definitely kind of boosted my confidence and 'cause I was always like kind of scared to go to college and like take harder classes and stuff. But I think the Early College program really showed us that you can do it.

As Melia described, the power of a program like Early College is that it can help students overcome fears and self-doubt about college. Participants had these college experiences while they were also in their familiar Kamakau setting, learning and working among Kamakau teachers and community members that they knew. Nesting Early College in the high school setting allowed participants to experience college classes and know they were capable, which led to them being far more confident about pursuing a college degree in their future.

Summary

E wili me ke aloha is the principle of this framework that ensures Native Hawaiian stories of success in higher education are told often and amplified. Wright (2018) reminded us that we should harness our own stories, tell them ourselves, and tell them our way. Through telling our own stories of success, we can boost students' confidence in themselves and counterbalance any feelings of self-doubt that they have a place in college. Not only should we tell our own stories, but we should also expect higher education institutions and organizations to invest resources in amplifying those stories as well. With that confidence, as the findings from this study show, students are motivated to persist toward and through their college career.

The deficit narrative discussed in chapter two provided context that Native Hawaiians have been rendered nearly invisible on the national landscape of higher education. I also discussed that we should use strengths-based tools to shift these narratives, and I this framework is a strengths-based tool to further Native Hawaiian ea and survival. Let us create a space to intentionally weave aloha into the college choice process for Native Hawaiian students. Let us expect higher education institutions and systems to dedicate resources to pre-college programs and other firsthand experiences for K-12 students so they can see themselves in college. Let us

use this principle of the framework to shine light on our students' strengths and assure them that they belong in higher education.

Conclusion

I went into these interviews with one research question and a guiding protocol for the talk story sessions. I had invigorating talk story sessions with 21 research participants and basked in the beauty of their stories. I emerged with a rich data set, which, when intersected with my literature review and my own personal and professional experiences, I organized into a proposed Kānaka College Choice Framework. Beyond contributing toward answering the research question, these data set and analysis serve as a source of inspiration and motivate me through my own academic and professional journey. If the manaʻo (wisdom, insights) from these study participants are any indication of the survivance of the lāhui, I felt a sense of peace that we are in good hands with Kānaka Maoli like these participants. Now, with this proposed Kānaka College Choice Framework, the next chapter discusses how this framework contributed to theory, research, and practice.

CHAPTER 5: HAʻINA ʻIA MAI (CONCLUSION AND THE STORY'S REFRAIN)

I have always been a storyteller. When I tell a story through lei, I come to the end of the lei only to circle it back to the beginning of the lei and connect both ends. When I tell a story through hula, I know the song has come to its end because the last verse almost always begins the same, "Haʻina ʻia mai ana ka puana lā," and it is the verse that often repeats the song's main refrain. In other words, when I tell a story, my natural inclination is to circle the story back to the beginning. I have come to the end of this big story of mine, so now it is time to circle back to where we started.

Chapter Overview

This chapter serves as the refrain of our story. Here, I will return to the central question: What could a college choice framework designed by and for Native Hawaiians look like? In chapter four, I introduced the Kānaka College Choice Framework, a significant contribution based on the literature review's insights and this study's findings. This chapter delves into the implications of this framework for research and practice. I commence the chapter with a recount of a profound talk story session with Dr. Kapā Oliveira, a respected Mana Wahine whom, at the time of research, I was privileged to call a colleague and friend. Our conversation, which occurred at a critical juncture in this dissertation journey, was instrumental in interpreting the study's significance. It helped me articulate how this study enriches the existing research and literature on Native Hawaiians in higher education and college choice research. Our dialogue was pivotal in shaping this concluding chapter.

After setting the stage for this chapter, I will talk story about the findings and proposed framework. What might the findings mean? How does this framework advance the conversation

on college choice? Why might it matter in theory, research, and practice? Finally, this chapter, and thus, this dissertation, concludes with a story about a meaningful lei I once made as a child. Lei making has always been a personal and profound process for me. Whenever I want to make a memory, I make a lei. Similarly, making this academic lei caused me to reflect on some early lessons that lei-making taught me, lessons that showed themselves in this lei. Then, to complete this academic lei, I offer a poetic verse that came to me as I concluded this story I chose to tell. The verse – Eia ka lei – is my presentation of this meaningful lei. I have been proud and humbled to weave and share it on my academic journey.

Treasured Talk Story Session with Dr. Kapā Oliveira

One day in the spring of 2024, Dr. Kapā Oliveira and I grabbed lunch at the campus center food court between meetings we both had to attend. Kapā and I met regularly to discuss our shared work and to be sounding boards for one another. She was a tenured wahine ʻōiwi scholar in ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi, an accomplished author, and for several months, had been fulfilling the role as the Vice Provost for Student Success at UH Mānoa. As a fellow Vice Provost, she was one of my counterparts on the senior administration leadership team at Mānoa and at the time of publication, was a friend and a colleague.

As we sat talking story and eating our mini plate lunches, I thought about how surreal it was working alongside Kapā. I knew of this Mana Wahine before we met, because a book she co-edited, Kanaka ʻŌiwi Methodologies, transformed my doctoral world by introducing me to Kānaka ways of thinking in academia. When I started the book, I lived in California and navigated an inexplicable internal disconnect with my doctoral program. There I was, living and working away from Hawaiʻi, attempting to focus my research work on the experiences of Native

Hawaiian students. Was I an imposter for being so far from the source? How could I authentically connect with my intended focal point for this research?

Fatefully, Kapā's book exposed me to the research and literature work of Kānaka scholars and ʻōiwi epistemologies that—before the book—I only knew as spoken mantras from people like my mother and grandmother. I hadn't seen someone write academic pieces about kuleana and naʻau. This book, alongside all the other literature I encountered from Kānaka scholars, made me feel like I was on the right track, even if I was far from the source. Reading that book felt like I had come home; it provided me with a comforting space in my academic life that I didn't know I needed until it showed itself.

On that afternoon, my naʻau told me it was a serendipitous opportunity I asked Kapā for help with my dissertation. I was elbow deep in writing chapter drafts and trying to make sense of my advisor's feedback. I felt myself swimming in my head. My advisor wanted me to center my work and discuss how the study added to the conversation and raised new questions. Intellectually, I understood what she meant, but I struggled to get out of my head to weave in that feedback. I asked Kapā if she had any advice for me.

Without missing a beat, Kapā smiled knowingly and said, "Bring it back to the beginning. Why did you choose this research in the first place?" *Of course*. *Go back to the origin point*. I sat back into this "aha" moment and responded, "It took me 21 years to make sense of these things – college admissions, financial aid, and higher education systems. It took me 21 years to realize none of it was built with me in mind. Not everyone has 21 years to figure this out, so I want to change the system and put Native Hawaiians at the center."

My mom always told me there was power in saying things out loud. Somehow, articulating the origin point of this journey while at the tail end of the process helped me begin to

lift my head from the fog. Kapā continued with her thoughtful questions, and I responded off the cuff. I find the first answer is often the best one and the most honest one. Here is how our conversation went:

Kapā: So…who benefits from this work?

Me: Ideally, Native Hawaiian students who are considering a college degree. I mean, what's good for Native students is good for everyone, so others benefit from the downstream impact. Institutions benefit from enrolling more Native Hawaiian students and enriching their campus community. The lāhui benefits as more ʻōiwi obtain college degrees at every level and across many disciplines.

Kapā: And why are you doing this?

Me: I feel like *this* is my kuleana. Whatever it is I'm doing here, in this role, it feels like there was some kind of design behind this. There's something in my naʻau that says this is my part of uplifting the lāhui. I want to empower students in the college process in ways I don't feel I was empowered. I wonder often what would have happened if I knew more than I did then? After working with students all these years, the one thing I wish is that they knew how amazing they really are. I want them to know they are capable, and they are precious assets in the world of higher education.

Kapā: Hmm. Why does empowerment matter to you?

Me: That's a good question. I think our students will be the best agents of transformative change in higher education. When they discover their confidence, they will thrive, and the system won't have any choice but to change and follow their lead. The system won't have any choice but to center them and pay attention to their needs. What I really want – now having been an agent *in* the system for 21 years, is to see systemic change. Otherwise, we're just treating the symptoms and that's not good enough for me.

Kapā: So…why now?

Me: I don't know why "now" exactly…except that I find myself at this point, poised to do something from the inside of the system. It's hard to describe as more than a feeling in my naʻau. At this point in my career, I have just enough manaʻo, just enough tools, connections, resources, and drive to do *something*. Something that makes a *real*, material difference. I'm finishing this degree…I'm in this role…it's like all these things converged, and here we are.

Kapā: And…why you?

Me: Hmm. Why me?

Kapā: Yes. Why *you*?

Me: (She could tell the question momentarily stunned me. In hindsight, I realized it was a question I had not considered; the question seemed to shine a giant spotlight on me. Why *me*?)

Kapā: Nikki, you're uniquely positioned to empower the lāhui in a way others cannot. Your work makes a significant impact on the Kānaka who come to Mānoa. *You* are in a position of power and privilege. *You* have a seat at the table to make change happen. So what are you going to do with all of that?

I was in awe at how her manaʻo and advice effortlessly flowed from her. It was almost as if she knew we would someday have this conversation. Her advice caused me to reflect on the early stages of my transition to my current position as the inaugural Vice Provost for Enrollment Management at UH Mānoa. Kapā served on the search committee for this position, so perhaps this manaʻo was a part of her consideration for me in this role.

Her manaʻo also took me back to the crossroads I faced when considering whether to accept this position. I was initially reluctant to leave my previous position at Caltech because I had just reached a maturity level in that role. I could see myself contentedly continuing in that role for several more years. Yet, I also knew in my naʻau that this role was a once-in-a-lifetime career opportunity and how serendipitous it would be the role to bring me back home. Kapā articulated what I'd known in my naʻau: this position was a unique opportunity to serve the lāhui, uplift Kānaka needs and values in college choice research, and contribute to transformative change in higher education. Ultimately, at the time of publication, I held a part of the kuleana to enact the systemic change needed to sustain Native Hawaiians' success in higher education, as

discussed in chapter two. Her final question that afternoon was quintessential: “What will you do with the precious power and privilege you now hold?”

Let’s Talk Story About this Framework

At the conclusion of writing, I did not yet have a grand answer to that quintessential question, this dissertation study encapsulated the more immediate work I desire to do with this power and privilege I held as an emerging scholar and seasoned practitioner in higher education. The conversation with Kapā helped ground and center me as I made sense of this study and drew conclusions about its significance.

Now, with this grounding, a Papakū Makawalu orientation, my na‘au as my guide, and this proposed framework in the conversation, I continued to talk story about what this study meant for theory, research, and practice. This chapter includes final conclusions and recommendations. What did the chosen framework mean in conversation with Reyes’ (2018) KanakaCrit? How did the framework fit into the conversation with traditional and contemporary college choice research? In what ways does the framework shape college choice practices? How did this preliminary framework support future lines of research and inquiry? What does this mean for Native Hawaiian education, survivance, and ea?

Framework as a Tool to Further KanakaCrit

A Kānaka College Choice Framework extends scholarship on KanakaCrit because it is a college choice model that intentionally contributes to the survivance and ea of Native Hawaiians. This framework is rooted in Reyes’ (2018) KanakaCrit because it weaves in KanakaCrit’s philosophy and tenets. To recap, the six tenets of KanakaCrit include:

1) Occupation and colonialism are endemic in society;
2) ‘Ōiwi identities are multiple, intersectional, and liminal;

3) Social justice is inherently tied to our ea (independence) and lāhui (nation);

4) We work toward social justice as we work to restore pono (righteousness);

5) As we learn and tell our moʻolelo (story), we contribute to our survivance; and

6) Knowledge must be developed and used to benefit lāhui.

Consequently, these tenets manifest in the Kānaka College Choice Framework because, through the framework's four principles, it acknowledges Kānaka Maoli history of colonialism; centers the importance of honoring ʻōiwi identity as a factor in the college choice process; contributes toward restoring social justice for Kānaka; captures and elevates Kānaka stories in higher education; and seeks to benefit the survivance of the lāhui. Essentially, this framework is a tool that allows us to "seek to understand how colonization impacts ʻoiwi college success" (Reyes, 2018, p. 14).

So, in what ways has colonization stifled ʻōiwi college success? This study revealed that colonization stifled ʻōiwi college success by perpetuating students' self-doubt that they belong in college. Thus, this framework helps researchers explore how colonization has chipped away Native Hawaiian students' self-confidence. It also helps us understand how to build back confidence in students while advancing them through higher education.

In summary, this study answered Reyes' call to extend more inclusive research to the stories of Kānaka Maoli, and I am proud to be among those who answered this call. I see KanakaCrit and this study as having a symbiotic, interwoven relationship. KānakaCrit theory consistently influenced my scholarship, so I was excited it remained a foundation of my dissertation research and served as theoretical and analytical paradigms to build a Kānaka College Choice Framework. In turn, a Kānaka College Choice Framework extends KanakaCrit scholarship into college choice research in a way that has not yet been done before. I contend

that extending the KanakaCrit scholarship into college choice research not only leads to a Kānaka College Choice Framework but also unlocks opportunities to increase college enrollment rates of Native Hawaiians.

In Conversation with Existing Kānaka and College Choice Literature

When I bring together the five lessons gleaned from the literature focused on Native Hawaiians in higher education (discussed in chapter two) together with college choice research and a Kānaka College Choice Framework, I drew four conclusions about how this framework furthers and adds to existing literature. These conclusions include that a Kānaka College Choice Framework does the following:

1) Weaves in strengths from existing, relevant college choice models;
2) Carves space for the specific needs of Native Hawaiian students;
3) Fills a gap meeting students' cultural needs in the process; and
4) Shines a critical light on institutional accountability to change systems, not students.

The development of this Kānaka College Choice Framework was partly informed by the strengths of existing, relevant college choice models. The framework is deliberately interdisciplinary, iterative, and integrative. Also, it centers Native Hawaiian voices (Acevedo-Gil, 2017); integrates KanakaCrit (Reyes, 2018; Teranishi et al., 2009); acknowledges a non-linear college choice process (Tierney & Venegas, 2009); treats community and language as assets (Yosso, 2005); incorporates inclusive scholarship on access and financial aid policies (L. Perna, 2006); and leads to culturally grounded support in the college process (Keene, 2016). As a product of these strengths, this framework represents the best of all worlds in college choice research related to Native Hawaiian values and experiences.

The Kānaka College Choice Framework expands upon the existing models outlined in chapter two by addressing the unique needs of Native Hawaiians as they navigated college choice processes. This framework introduced a new college choice model that focused on the experiences and requirements of Native Hawaiians. Scholars and practitioners should use this model to help increase Kānaka Maoli college enrollment. This framework incorporated Papakū Makawalu, an Indigenous orientation toward analyzing the study's findings, which ensured the framework was nestled in addressing the values and needs of Native Hawaiians in the college choice process. In carving that space, this framework allowed students to navigate the college process without losing who they are. As Kaiwi and Kahumoku, III (2006) concluded, the Makawalu paradigm made sure that "students, especially our native students, will understand how to live in this complex world without losing themselves to it" (p. 20). Above all, the survivance of the lāhui relies upon our ability to move through the world and processes like college choice without losing the core of who we are as Kānaka Maoli.

The third conclusion I drew about this framework is that as a culturally responsive framework, it speaks more effectively to Native Hawaiians' needs than other existing college choice models. Native Hawaiian cultural needs are missing from existing college choice research, so this framework assists with filling that gap. Kaiwi and Kahumoku, III (2006) reminded us:

> Within our Hawaiian culture, we have a common understanding that those who have passed are still with us and stand behind, beside, above, and below us. We reflect all of those who have come before, and reciprocally, our actions reflect back on our ancestors. (p. 14)

This framework inherently understands reciprocation through understanding values such as kuleana (Wright, 2018) and giving back (Reyes, 2019). This study revealed participants were motivated to attend college because they knew what a college degree meant for them, their communities, and the lāhui. Why does it matter that this framework is culturally responsive? Principally, practitioners and scholars who desire to see more Native Hawaiians in their colleges may use this framework to understand students' cultural values so that they can pull together relevant resources that support students' advancement in their colleges. Without this cultural understanding, colleges risk being mismatched to Native Hawaiian students and thus risk that students will disenroll because of an unsatisfactory experience.

My final conclusion was that this framework shines a critical light on institutional accountability to change systems, not students. In chapter two, I discussed how systemic change is necessary to sustain Native Hawaiians' success in higher education (Reyes & Shotton, 2018; Watkins-Victorino, 2016), and this framework elicits systemic change for higher education institutions to enact.

The four principles of the framework call on practitioners to ensure that in the college choice process, their policies and practices:

1) Account for understanding the role of Native Hawaiian identity;
2) Make room for ʻohana and support;
3) Seek to provide ample resources for navigating financial aid processes; and
4) Weave in ways to bolster students' confidence in themselves.

Thus, the onus for adjustment and change is on those who shape and develop the system the students are navigating. This framework was developed by and for Native Hawaiians, which centers Hawaiians, so all other actors and factors are meant to revolve around Native Hawaiians.

How Does this Framework Offer Distinctive Contributions?

In addition to the four conclusions drawn from this framework being in conversation with existing literature, I discuss how this framework is distinctive compared to current college choice models. Overall, this framework calls for scholars and practitioners to dig deeper into aspects of college choice than other existing models/paradigms. For instance, this framework calls for a multidimensional examination of Native Hawaiian identity development. Institutions that seek to enroll Hawaiians need to have a more robust understanding of what their students are grappling with related to their identity development so they can better support these students in college. This study merely touched the surface of identity. However, even in that glimpse, it is evident students are considering many factors about their identity and its relationship to their college career.

This framework also calls for a deeper dive into restoring Native Hawaiian students' self-confidence. To that end, this framework calls for "heart" work, or work that is intangible because it comes from within. I have seen firsthand the impact of infusing "heart" work through my involvement with the College Horizons program. Much of our work involves building student confidence in the college admissions process. When we work with these students during the program, we intentionally seek opportunities to connect with them and give them space to be brave and vulnerable about their college process. Often, these students come to College Horizons feeling "less than," but they leave us knowing they can and will succeed in the college process.

In summary, I recognize that deepening work in higher education requires time, energy, and resources that most do not have on a practical level. However, as a preliminary framework, I still believe it is worth planting deep seeds because development can only be constructed on top of that depth.

Considering the Framework in Practice

This study is my kāhea (call) to fellow practitioners that we should endeavor to strengthen our work on enrolling Native Hawaiian students in our colleges. This framework inherently built-in recommendations for practitioners because the principles draw practitioners toward action-oriented recommendations. These recommendations will shape the higher-level institutional strategies for recruiting and enrolling Native Hawaiian students. The framework calls for deepening one's understanding of Native Hawaiian identity, creating space and roles for family and support networks, simplifying and fortifying resources for the financial aid process, and amplifying ʻōiwi stories of success. Generally, these principles challenge practitioners to go beyond the transactional nature of recruitment and enrollment; these principles call for practitioners to understand Native Hawaiian students with deeper intentions about who they are and what they value. These principles also advocate spending institutional resources tailoring enrollment practices to their specific needs.

Tactical recommendations beyond shaping and setting strategy depend on the institution, its resources, its commitments, and its leadership. Some general tactics can include assigning recruitment activities for Native Hawaiian students to someone on staff with a shared identity or lived experiences in common with Hawaiian students. Often, when an admissions office decides to recruit in Hawaiʻi, the area is assigned based on office seniority, meaning that someone with less seniority but more experience is passed over. Another admissions office tactic can be considered around the application review process. Offices can train staff to be cognizant of Hawaiian cultural activities and values that strengthen a student's candidacy for admission. For instance, staff can be trained to recognize how a student's penchant for "giving back" to their communities (Reyes, 2019) is a signal they are poised for nation-building for the lāhui. Without a

working knowledge of why giving back is valuable to Native Hawaiians, this quality can be overlooked when evaluating a student's strengths in the admissions review process.

Tactical recommendations should extend to financial aid offices as well. For instance, offices have ample opportunity to shape communications and messages about financial aid that can help alleviate intense fears and unknowns for students and families who want to pursue higher education. Granted, a significant challenge in communications for financial aid policies and practices is that the staff constantly balances the need to communicate accurately with the need to communicate plainly so families understand the message. However, this is necessary deep work, and offices should constantly examine the effectiveness of their messages to improve our service to students and families.

Finally, there are tactical recommendations for student services offices to consider. As recommended by the Kānaka College Choice Framework, institutions need to make space and create roles for family members in the student's support network. For example, student services offices could open some programming to include parents/guardians of Native Hawaiian students so parents can also learn about navigating the institution's resources. When parents/guardians learn about navigating the institution's resources, they can better support their students when they need assistance. A specific area to open to parents may be orientation programming when students and families arrive on campus. Higher education administrators and professionals need to ask themselves: Does our institution host orientation sessions and programming for Native or Native Hawaiian students? If so, do we extend that programming to include parents/guardians? Teaching parents/guardians about the institution's resources fortifies the family's knowledge and ability to support their students throughout college.

This study opens doors for practitioners to consider our everyday work, and I know this study has impacted me in countless ways. The talk story sessions with participants and their shared stories carried into my everyday work. They caused me to think more deeply and critically about our enrollment practices and policies for Native Hawaiian students. How can we, as an institution, eliminate barriers related to students' college choice process? This study's findings directly and indirectly shapedede my decisions around policies and practices for UH Mānoa, impacting how I trainde and developd staff around this work. For instance, the academic year of publication (2024-35), we eliminated the application fee for Hawai‘i residents and offered more merit scholarships for Hawai‘i residents. These moves inherently included impacting our Native Hawaiian student population. In turn, our enrollment pace for Hawai‘i residents and Native Hawaiian students was higher for this upcoming fall term than for the last two.

For any other practitioners or peers who read this dissertation, my number one practitioner recommendation is to embrace the deep, "heart" work. It is not the easiest road to follow, and there are more obstacles than smooth roads, but the approach pays dividends in enrolling Native Hawaiian students.

Supporting Future Lines of Inquiry and Research

A Kānaka College Choice Framework can give scholars and practitioners a jumping-off point for more inquiry and research. I have become so intrigued by this data that I will likely pursue research that branches from this study. To this point, I have touched on possible future research related to Native Hawaiian students navigating identity development and my interest in exploring what restoring students' confidence in themselves would take.

So, what are some other possible pathways from here? Since this study was conducted as a preliminary look, there is ample opportunity to extend or continue this line of inquiry and build a functional and tested framework. This was also a qualitative study; a wealth of data can be discovered through a quantitative or mixed-methods approach.

This framework also calls for more specificity, especially relating to the universe of students to which this inquiry applies— "Native Hawaiian students"—is far too broad for inquiry. Future research needs to further narrow the scope of Native Hawaiian students' needs. For instance, my work with the K-12 school led me to consider scoping a study to Hawaiian language medium schools. Talking story with two non-traditional-aged students also led me to consider the power of a study related to non-traditional-aged Native Hawaiian students, so this inquiry can be scoped to a more specific age or stage of life among the universe of Native Hawaiian students.

Another way to narrow the scope of this inquiry is to construct research aimed at Native Hawaiian students and financial aid or scholarships. This study revealed a genuine fear students hold about affording college. To what extent is this fear affecting enrollment patterns? Where does this fear come from? When articulate the source of this fear, perhaps we can create policies and practices that address those sources directly. Such research could involve students, parents, and other student support network members to reveal a multilayered approach to addressing this fear.

This research study offered myriad possibilities and jumping-off points. For me, it prompted more questions than answers, which is what happens to academic scholars. College choice research is limited, so research on college choice among specific student communities is further limited. There is much to learn about the college choice process, particularly for student

communities that have been historically underrepresented in higher education. The possibilities inspire me, and I cannot wait to engage further in this line of research.

For Our Survivance and Ea

And finally, what might this framework mean for Kānaka Maoli survivance, social justice, and ea (independence)? This framework is another valuable vehicle through which Kānaka Maoli tell our stories and set our college pathways forward. This framework is a response to the kāhea (call) from our kānaka scholars to conduct our research and become our own agents of change in education. When put into practice, this framework contributes to increasing the enrollment rates of Native Hawaiians in higher education institutions. Students will benefit, and practitioners' training and development will be enriched, having learned more about ways to be culturally responsive to Native Hawaiian students and supporting their success.

As I bring this dissertation story to a close, I want to create space for the participants' stories who made this study possible. I was humbled to share time with impressive, incredible, and courageous participants who honored me with their stories and manaʻo (insights). Their stories were more than the findings presented in chapter four, so as this dissertation and lei end, I would like to honor their stories. Mother-daughter duo Loke and Lani set my research study bar high as my first talk story session. Lani is an accomplished Native Hawaiian scholar, and her daughter Loke will undoubtedly play a significant role in nation-building for the lāhui as she pursues her degree at UH Hilo. Pua and Melia kept that bar high, as Pua is also an accomplished Native Hawaiian scholar supporting her daughter Melia's career as a competitive worldly athlete. Then, I had the fortune of interviewing a third mother-daughter power pair in Ohia and Lehua. Like Lani and Pua, Ohia had a couple of advanced degrees. And while Lehua – at the time of our interview – was still in a limbo stage about her post-secondary plans, her mana wahine (strong

woman) energy was palpable. I have no doubt I will find her in the future, leading the lāhui toward ea.

Leihulu impressed me with her dedication to ʻōlelo and the survivance of Native communities, even though she is not Hawaiian by ancestral lineage. Maile was also not Hawaiian by ancestral lineage, but as a graduate and teacher at the Kamakau School, she is an integral part of the survivance of the lāhui. I also happened to find out after our interview that she was accepted to the Richardson Law School and will start there this fall. Kamakau seniors Pikake and Kukui will also always hold a special place in my heart as they come into their own in college and beyond. Pikake has already made an indelible impact on the lāhui through her non-profit work. Kukui "comes from a long line of Watermen" and has realized his strength in mentoring youth. College or not, I am sure I will see him bravely advocating for the survivance of the lāhui in the years ahead.

My deep admiration for the participants from the college side of the study continued. Puakenikeni stayed true to his heart and culture when he chose to attend UH Mānoa. Liko followed her naʻau from San Diego to Mānoa and is bravely exploring her identity as a Mexican and Native Hawaiian raised on the continent. Similarly, Palapalai may feel like she is "faking it to make it," as her journey brought her from California to Mānoa. However, during our interview, I only saw a young wahine willing to push and explore her abilities and boundaries. ʻIlima overcame tremendous personal adversity and followed a non-linear, precarious pathway towards her 4-year degree – and she is not stopping there. I cannot wait to learn how medical school works for her.

Lauaʻe also followed his heart and family traditions to pursue his college degree in Iowa, and he is exploring his Hawaiian identity away from home. Nanu made what I saw as a series of

mature financial decisions about her college career because she keeps her eye on the long-term prize. Ultimately, she wants to afford to stay home and seems to refuse to be pushed out of Hawai‘i. Naupaka also made some selfless decisions about college related to finances – he has a twin sister who chose college on the continent, leading him to stay home. He did not want to put his family further into debt by choosing college on the continent.

Law students Awapuhi and Kī were unexpected participants, but serendipitously so. I admired Awapuhi's sensible and humorous outlook on life; she has a very successful legal career ahead of her. Kī added an exciting dimension to the study with his distant relationship to Hawaiian identity. I was also struck by how nonchalant he was about his career pursuits; I think he has more natural talent than he knows. I anticipate an incredible journey of self-discovery ahead of him as he figures out how to harness that talent.

Last but certainly not least, this study introduced me to two non-traditional-aged students who will always be a source of inspiration for me. ‘Ohaiali‘i is balancing her art and dance pursuits with work and raising a family. I am always in awe of anyone who can balance significant life factors like that at once. I am excited to see her lāhui advocacy in art galleries someday. Ma‘ohauhele had me so intrigued during our interview that I must confess – I stopped taking rigorous notes because I only wanted to listen and absorb her inspirational energy. She followed a precarious pathway toward her master's degree and has not given up on her or her children's dreams. She unapologetically speaks her truth and uplifts her local community with super shero strength. I cannot wait to see her cross the stage at her commencement ceremony.

Conclusion: Final Mana‘o (Thoughts)

Whenever I want to make a memory, I make a lei. When I was 11 years old, I remember making a special lei. My parents were going through a divorce, and my mom started dating the

man who eventually became my stepdad. For his 21st birthday, I made him a lei to show him I was beginning to accept him in our lives. I remember going into our backyard to collect materials. Our backyard was a bit of a hodgepodge of flowers and leaves, but I remember seeing potential. I picked whatever stephanotis flowers we had, along with red and green ti-leaves…did I know what I was doing?

I remember that, in the end, the lei was lopsided, and when I picked it up, some of the flowers fell off to reveal sections of string. Still, I was convinced I was a lei-making artist. I gave him the lei, incredibly proud of my work. I remember he accepted it with love and acted like it was the most impressive lei he had ever received.

When I look back on that night, that gesture, that lei, and my mind's eye remembers the lei very differently. In reality, the lei was terrible! It was chunky and awkward, and it started falling apart before I gave it to him. I laugh thinking about how proud I was, and I think of the love from my step-dad for keeping a straight face as he received the lei – celebrating his "Now I can legally drink, but I am dating a woman with two young kids" birthday at Pizza Hut and an arcade. Did we all know then that we would spend the next 30 years together? Maybe, maybe not. Family life was more complicated than not, and we would have decades of memories together after that birthday – but for some reason, I have never forgotten that lei.

The memory of that lei reminds me of the power of perspective. It reminds me that often, you need to accept and embrace that you once thought atrocious-looking things were beautiful. You need to let things be ugly before they can be beautiful. You need to leave room for process and the in-between stages of learning on your way to some level of mastery. Who knew that lei would become an evolving life lesson?

This dissertation has been *that* lei of mine. A hodgepodge labor of love, a source of joy, angst, and pride that has grown as I have grown. It has changed and evolved; the lei that is not today what I thought it was yesterday. For seven years, I have been working on this lei. For seven years, I have made and re-made this lei in parts and as a whole. There were many points in these last seven years where I thought the lei I planned to make was "it," – but that lei was atrocious, and my faculty graciously gave me the time and space to see that it was not the final lei. Seven years of learning, unlearning, doing, and undoing have gone into this lei. Lessons over the years taught me that this may not even be "the" final lei, but it is the lei I present to mark the ending occasion of this academic journey.

This was the story I chose to tell at the intersection of Kānaka Maoli, higher education, and college choice. Kānaka Maoli live. We live through our stories. We live, thrive, and survive in education. We have a history of carving our ea in education. We are present – although woefully underrepresented – in higher education because it was not designed for us. This study offered the next level of inquiry intended to elevate Native Hawaiians in higher education.

With this study, I brought together my cultural, social justice, practitioner, and emerging scholar selves. I posed this central research question: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians? Based on this dissertation research, I offered a Kānaka College Choice Framework for our survivance and ea with roots in KanakaCrit and lei-making methodology. The framework is interdisciplinary, iterative, and integrative. It wraps aloha and ʻohana around the student as they navigate the college choice process.

Whenever I want to make a memory or mark a milestone, I make a lei. Here is the lei – Eia ka lei – I offer to academia and await my next scholarly endeavor.

Eia ka Lei

Eia ka lei, no ka lāhui

I present this lei for the lāhui

Ka lei kīpaipai i wili ʻia me ka iho nō

A lei humbly woven from inspiration

Ka mea aloha no nā keiki

A thing of love for the children

Mai ka ʻāina uluwehi mai

From a lush landscape

Mahalo e ke Akua, nā kupuna, nā makua, nā ʻōpio

With gratitude to ke Akua, and to generations before and after me

Eia ka lei, no ka lāhui ē.

I present this lei for the lāhui.

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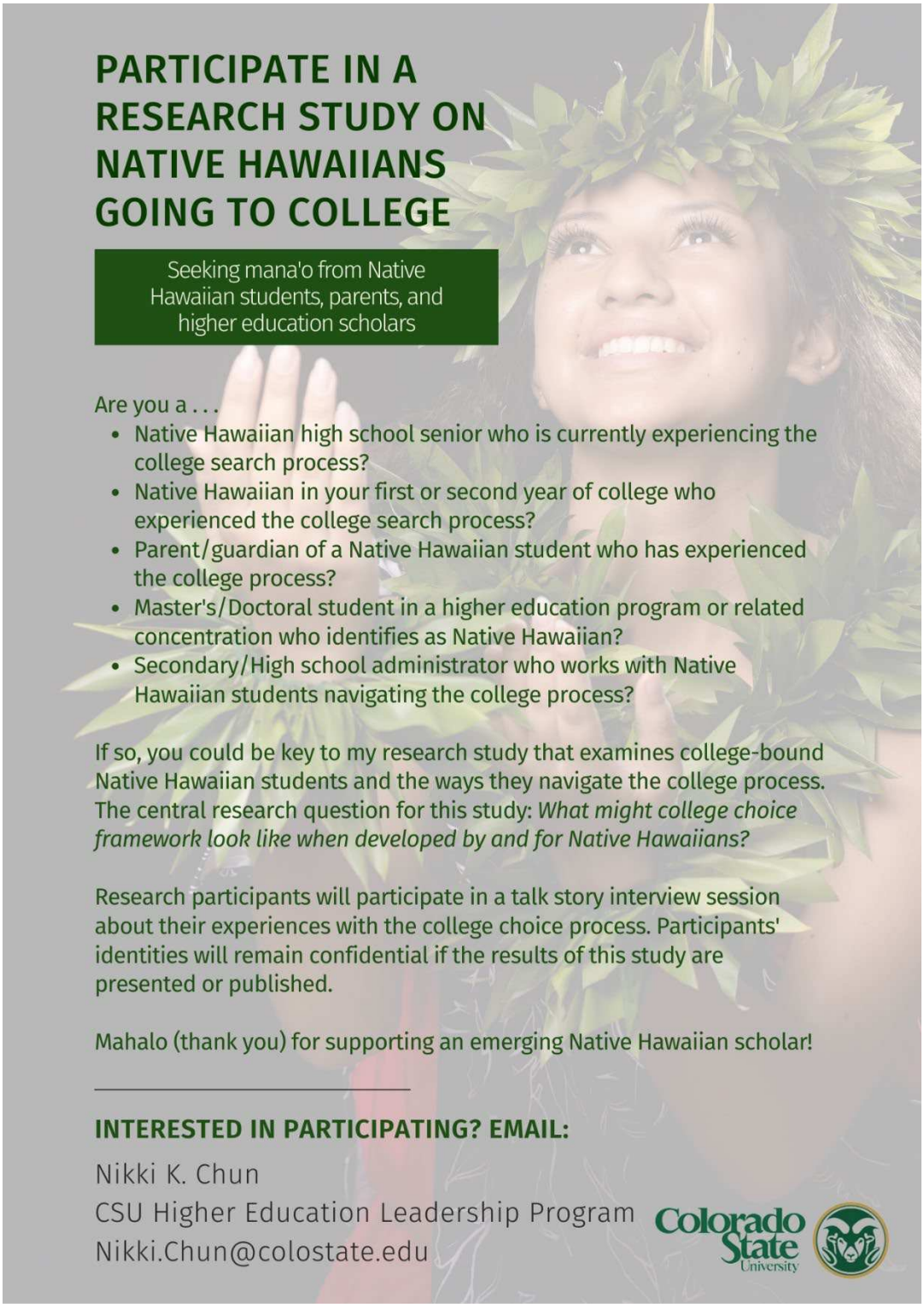
APPENDIX A

General Recruitment Flyer



APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email for Primary Contact in School Community as a Potential Study Site

Dear Colleague,

Aloha! My name is Nikki Chun, and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Colorado State University. I am pursuing my Ph.D. in Higher Education Leadership under the guidance of my faculty advisor, Dr. Susan Faircloth. I identify as a Native Hawaiian and Chinese, cisgender, hetero, able-bodied womxn of size who was the first in her family to pursue a college degree. I currently hold a senior-level leadership role as an enrollment management practitioner. I am motivated to pursue this research study for the benefit of future scholars and practitioners who may someday fill my leadership role in higher education and enrollment management. I am also motivated to conduct this research to elevate the experiences of Native Hawaiian college-bound students.

I invite you and your school community to participate in my doctoral research study, which looks at Native Hawaiian students and their process(es) for choosing and enrolling in college. My central research question is: *What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?*

Seeking a school partner and site for research participants
To address this research question, I am seeking a school community that would allow me to engage in talk story sessions with school administrators, as well as students and parents/family members who have experienced or are currently experiencing the college admissions/enrollment process. As a part of this research partnership, I will:

- Request a 1:1 interview with you (approximately 30-45 minutes) so that I may understand your school's college-going culture from your perspective.
- Conduct 1-2 onsite school visits over the next 3-4 months to get to know the school community and allow the community to get to know me.
- Offer sessions to the school community around college admissions and financial aid.
- Host a 60-90-minute community talk story session in November/December 2022 with 10-15 students and parents/family members to learn about their college choice experiences. Ideally, these will be students who are high school seniors or first- or second-year college students who have recently experienced the college admissions and enrollment process.
- Request your assistance in identifying 2-3 school administrators who are involved in the college search process on your campus (such as a college counselor, teacher, or principal) to participate in a 1:1 interview (approximately 30-45 minutes per interview). These sessions will help me further understand your school's college-going culture from fellow colleagues who actively engage in this process alongside your students.

With permission from research participants, I will record and take notes during the talk story sessions and interviews. If the results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. More details about recording and study documentation will be available through future consent forms if you decide to participate.

Guiding topics for the 1:1 and community talk story interview session(s)
In order to explore what a college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians might look like, I would like to engage selected school administrators and 10-15 students/parents (family members) in a community talk story session about their experiences with the college admissions and enrollment processes.
The guiding topics/questions for these talk story session(s) include the following:

- Begin by sharing information about myself and my research study. Share insights into my central research question. Express gratitude to the participants for agreeing to be part of this study.
- Perspectives on the high school's conversations about college. When did the conversations begin in the school? What were those conversations like?
- Participants' perspectives on college and the college admissions process. What motivated them to engage in the process? What were some strengths of the process? Thoughts on what the college could have done better?
- Perspectives on the college's financial aid process and participants' interactions with applying for financial aid (if applicable). What did the college do well? What could the college have done better?
- What role, if any, did culture or your Native Hawaiian identity play in this process?
- Anything else participants would like to share about the college choice process?

Interested in participating?
If you and your school community are open to participating, I will arrange a time with you to discuss this further. Please reply to this email (Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu) if you would like to learn more about this study. Mahalo (thank you) in advance for considering this invitation!

Sincerely,
Nikki Chun

Dr. Susan Faircloth
Advisor
Professor and Director, School of Education

Nikki K. Chun
Researcher
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Email for School Administrators at School's Study Site

Dear Colleague,

Aloha! My name is Nikki Chun, and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Colorado State University. I am pursuing my Ph.D. in Higher Education Leadership under the guidance of my faculty advisor, Dr. Susan Faircloth. I identify as a Native Hawaiian and Chinese, cisgender, hetero, able-bodied womxn of size who was the first in her family to pursue a college degree. I currently hold a senior-level leadership role as an enrollment management practitioner. I am motivated to pursue this research study for the benefit of future scholars and practitioners who may someday fill my leadership role in higher education and enrollment management. I am also motivated to conduct this research to elevate the experiences of Native Hawaiian college-bound students.

I invite you to participate in my doctoral research study, which looks at Native Hawaiian students and their process for choosing and enrolling in a college. My central research question is: *What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?*

Seeking school administrators for research participants

To address this research question, I am seeking a school community that would allow me to engage in talk story sessions with school administrators, as well as students and parents/family members who have experienced or are currently experiencing the college admissions/enrollment process. As a part of this research partnership, I will:

- Request a 1:1 interview with you (approximately 30-45 minutes) so that I may understand your school's college-going culture from your perspective.
- Conduct 1-2 onsite school visits in the next 3-4 months to get to know the school community and allow them to get to know me.
- Offer sessions to the school community around college admissions and financial aid as it would benefit your college-going culture.
- Host a 60-90-minute community talk story session in November/December with 10-15 students and parents to learn about their experiences. Ideally, these will be students who are high school seniors or first- or second-year college students that have recently experienced the college admissions and enrollment process.

With permission from research participants, I will record and take notes during the talk story sessions and interviews. If the results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. More details about recording and study documentation will be available through future consent forms if you decide to participate.

Guiding topics for the 1:1 and community talk story interview session(s)

In order to explore what a college choice framework developed by and for Native Hawaiians might look like, I would like to engage 2-3 selected school administrators and 10-15 students/parents (family members) in a community talk story session about their experiences with the college admissions and enrollment processes. Your participation as a school administrator in this talk story session is welcomed, but not required for the study.

The guiding topics/questions for these talk story session(s) include the following:

- Begin by sharing information about myself and my research study. Share insights into my central research question.
- Perspectives on the high school's conversations about college. When did the conversations begin in the school? What were those conversations like?
- Participants' perspectives on college and the college admissions process. What motivated them to engage in the process? What were some strengths of the process? Thoughts on what the college could have done better?
- Perspectives on the college's financial aid process and participants' interactions with applying for financial aid (if applicable). What did the college do well? What could the college have done better?
- What role, if any, did culture or your Native Hawaiian identity play in this process?
- Anything else participants would like to share about the college choice process?

Interested in participating?
If you are open to participating, please reply to this email (Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu) so that I may answer any questions you have and make interview arrangements. Mahalo (thank you) in advance for considering this invitation!

Sincerely,
Nikki Chun

Dr. Susan Faircloth
Advisor
Professor and Director, School of Education

Nikki K. Chun
Researcher
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D

Confirmation to School Administrators Participating in 1:1 Talk Story Interview

Aloha *[Name]*,

Mahalo (thank you) for agreeing to participate in a 1:1 talk story interview focused on your college process experiences and your school's college-going culture. I would like to schedule this interview for [insert date/time]. Does this date and time work for you? If so, please email me at *Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu* to confirm your interview. If not, let me know and I will be happy to work with you to find another date/time to talk.

OR *[If they did not provide dates/times]*

Mahalo (thank you) for agreeing to participate in a 1:1 talk story interview focused on your college process experiences and your school's college-going culture. Here is my availability in the next few weeks. *[insert dates/times]*

Please let me know which of these will work best for you for the interview. You can contact me by email at Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu.

Please use this zoom link for the talk story interview session: *[insert zoom link]*
A week prior to our interview, please complete and sign the attached research study consent form and return it to me via email. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

With gratitude,

Nikki Chun

Doctoral Candidate
Email: Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu

*Attachments: DOC-F_CONSENT_School_Admins

APPENDIX E

Confirmation to Research Participants for Talk Story Sessions

Aloha *[Name]*,

Mahalo (thank you) for agreeing to participate in a 1:1 talk story interview focused on your college process experiences. I would like to schedule this interview for [insert date/time]. Does this date and time work for you? If so, please email me at *Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu* to confirm your interview. If not, let me know and I will be happy to work with you to find another date/time to talk.

OR *[If they did not provide dates/times]*

Mahalo (thank you) for agreeing to participate in a 1:1 talk story interview focused on your college process experiences and your school's college-going culture. Here is my availability in the next few weeks. *[insert dates/times or Google Calendar link]*

Please let me know which of these will work best for you for the interview. You can contact me by email at Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu.

Please use this zoom link for the talk story interview session: *[insert zoom link]*
A week prior to our interview, please complete and sign the attached research study consent form and return it to me via email. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

With gratitude,

Nikki Chun

Doctoral Candidate
Email: Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu

*Two attachments:
DOC-G_CONSENT_Talk-Story_Session_Under18;
DOC-H_CONSENT_Talk-Story_Session_Over18

APPENDIX F

ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM
(School Administrators at Selected School Site)

Colorado State University
School of Education

FORMAL STUDY TITLE:

Native Hawaiian Students and College Choice Frameworks

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. OiYan Poon, Professor, School of Education, Colorado State University

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: Nikki K. Chun, doctoral candidate, Higher Education Leadership, Colorado State University

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Nikki Chun at 305-903-9919 or Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu. You may also contact Dr. OiYan Poon at oiyan.poon@colostate.edu.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at: CSU_IRB@colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
The purpose of this research study is to examine and understand the ways in which Native Hawaiian students navigate the college search and college enrollment process. My central research question is: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?
You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit one or more of these criteria:

- You are an administrator/staff member at the school selected to participate in this study (Ke Kula ʻO Samuel M. Kamakau Laboratory Charter School), and you actively support students who are navigating the college process.
- You identify as someone who is Native Hawaiian or part Native Hawaiian, or you support the college process of students who identify as Native Hawaiian.
- You are participating in or have participated in the college search and enrollment process.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

Talk Story Sessions
This study will involve 60-90-minute (1-1.5 hours) talk story sessions with Kamakau students and their family members who have volunteered as research participants. The date and time of these sessions have not yet been scheduled, but they will likely (tentatively) be hosted in August/September 2023 during a weekday evening or a weekend to accommodate student and parent schedules. The location of this talk story session has not yet been finalized, but it will likely be on-site at the school selected for this study.

Please note that in addition to the research participants, I may be accompanied during this session by a master's/doctoral degree student who shares my interest in this research topic. They will be there to assist with session observations and to help me facilitate the conversation throughout the session.

1:1 interview with school administrators
In addition to the student/family talk story sessions, I will be conducting 1:1 interviews (approximately 30-45 minutes each) with 2-3 school administrators who are involved in the school's college-going culture. These interviews will provide me with context for the information that is shared by students/parents during the community talk story session.

The 1:1 interviews will be conducted from August 2023 – September 2023, and scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee(s).

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Schedule a 1:1 interview with me (approximately 30-45 minutes). The date, time, and location will be arranged based on your availability.
- During the interview session, you will be asked to participate in a conversation about your college process experiences and the college environment at your school.

You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. Participation in a follow-up interview will also be completely voluntary, scheduled during a mutually agreeable date and time, at a mutually agreed upon location.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. Overall, it is hoped that this research will contribute to developing a college choice framework or process designed by and for Native Hawaiians.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
There are no known risks included with this study. While the level of risk is minimal, you may become uncomfortable with some questions related to the way you and/or your students are navigating or navigated your/their college search and enrollment processes.

The goal of a talk story interview is to utilize a conversational methodology so we can comfortably explore these topics. If any of the research questions make you uncomfortable, you can decline to answer these questions or stop the interview.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

At the conclusion of this study, each school administrator who participates in a 1:1 interview will be provided a $25 Amazon or Starbucks gift card (your choice) as a thank you for your time.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

To ensure confidentiality, access to study files and records will be limited to the researcher and the dissertation committee chair. All information gathered in this study will be kept confidential, to the extent possible.

To protect your identity, you will be given the option to choose a different name (pseudonym) by which you will be identified in the research project. Any direct quotes used in the final analysis will be edited to as not to reveal personal identifiers. The interview will be recorded for audio transcription. All recordings and transcripts will be kept confidential on a password-protected drive accessible only to the research team. The only exception to this would be if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the Colorado State Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary.

In addition, since we are providing a gift card as a thank you for participating in this interview, the Colorado State financial management team may also request an audit of research expenditures. For financial audits, only the fact that you participated would be shared, not any research data. Any data collected for this project will be destroyed after three years.

If the results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. However, as mentioned above, we may be asked to share the research files with CSU's Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with CSU. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Participant Consent:

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and voluntarily wish to participate in this research. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received a copy of this document containing 4 pages.

_____ _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____
Name of person providing information to participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of Person Providing Information to Participant Date

APPENDIX G

MINOR PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM
(Participants Under the Age of 18)

Colorado State University
School of Education

FORMAL STUDY TITLE:

Native Hawaiian Students and College Choice Frameworks

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. OiYan Poon, Professor, School of Education, Colorado State University

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: Nikki K. Chun, doctoral candidate, Higher Education Leadership, Colorado State University

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Nikki Chun at 305-903-9919 or Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu. You may also contact Dr. OiYan Poon at oiyan.poon@colostate.edu.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at: CSU_IRB@colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
The purpose of this research study is to examine and understand the ways in which Native Hawaiian students navigate the college search and college enrollment process. My central research question is: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?
You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit one or more of these criteria:

- You are currently enrolled in or recently graduated (within the last 1-2 years) from the school site selected for this research study (Ke Kula ʻO Samuel M. Kamakau Laboratory Public Charter School)
- You identify as someone who is Native Hawaiian or part Native Hawaiian, or you support the college process of a student who identifies as Native Hawaiian.
- You are the parent/guardian of currently enrolled student enrolled in the school site selected for this research study, or you are the parent/guardian of a recent graduate (within the last 1-2 years) of the school site selected who is currently enrolled in college.

- You are participating in or have participated in the college search and enrollment process.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

This study will involve a talk story session with a Kamakau student and their family members who have agreed to participate in this research study. The talk story session will last approximately 60-90-minutes (1-1.5 hours). The date and time of this session have not yet been scheduled, but it will likely be during a weekday evening or a weekend to accommodate student and parent schedules. The location of this talk story session has not yet been finalized, but it will likely be on-site at the school selected for this study.

Please note that in addition to the research participants, I may be accompanied during this session by a master's/doctoral degree student who shares my interest in this research topic. They will be there to assist with session observations and to help me facilitate the conversation throughout the session.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Attend a scheduled talk story session in (tentatively) August and/or September 2023, depending on the research participants' availability.
- During the session, you will be asked to participate in a conversation about your college process experiences.

You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview after the talk story session. Participation in a follow-up interview will also be completely voluntary, scheduled during a mutually agreeable date and time, at a mutually agreed upon location.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. However, there may be an indirect benefit from our talk story conversation because participants will share their experiences with the group about their college search and enrollment process. Oftentimes, when students and parents discuss the college search and enrollment process as a group, they benefit from the questions and insights of the others in the group.

Overall, it is hoped that this research will contribute to developing a college choice framework or process designed by and for Native Hawaiians.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no known risks included with this study. While the level of risk is minimal, you may become uncomfortable with some questions related to the way you are navigating or did navigate your college search and enrollment process. There is a potential loss of confidentiality in a group interview setting, and I address this potential in a subsequent section of this consent form.

The goal of a talk story interview is to utilize a conversational methodology so we can comfortably explore these topics. If any of the research questions make you uncomfortable, you can decline to answer these questions or stop the interview.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

At the conclusion of this study, each participant will be provided a $25 Amazon or Starbucks gift card (your choice) as a thank you for your time.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

To ensure confidentiality, access to study files and records will be limited to the researcher and the dissertation committee chair. All information gathered in this study will be kept confidential, to the extent possible.

Confidentiality during the Talk Story Session

Participation in a group talk story session involves the potential loss of confidentiality. The research team will make every effort to ensure that information about you remains confidential; however, we cannot guarantee total confidentiality. Your identity will not be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study.

Confidentiality after the Talk Story Session

To protect your identity, you will be given the option to choose a different name (pseudonym) by which you will be identified in the research project. Any direct quotes used in the final analysis will be edited to as not to reveal personal identifiers. The talk story session will be recorded for audio transcription. All recordings and transcripts will be kept confidential on a password-protected drive accessible only to the research team. The only exception to this would be if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the Colorado State Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary.

In addition, since we are providing gift cards as a token of appreciation for participating in the interview, the Colorado State financial management team may also request an audit of research expenditures.

If the results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. However, as mentioned above, I may be asked to share the research files with CSU's Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes.

As mentioned previously, I will transcribe the audio recordings as soon as possible after the interview and destroy the original files after the transcription is complete. When the research is completed, I will retain the transcriptions and other study data for possible use in future research, for no more than 3 years after the completion of this project.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with CSU. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Participant Consent:
Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and voluntarily wish to participate in this research. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received a copy of this document.

_____ _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____
Name of person providing information to participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of person providing information to participant Date

Next, obtain your parent's/guardian's permission ONLY if you are under 18 years of age. By signing this form, you are authorizing your child's participation in this research study.

CONSENT FOR MINOR TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

As parent or guardian, I authorize _____ (print name) to participate in this study. The nature and general purpose of this study have been explained to me by Nikki K. Chun, and I am satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

_____ _____
Minor's date of birth Parent/Guardian signature

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian name (printed) Date

APPENDIX H

ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM
(Participants Age 18 and Over)

Colorado State University
School of Education

FORMAL STUDY TITLE:

Native Hawaiian Students and College Choice Frameworks

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. OiYan Poon, Professor, School of Education, Colorado State University

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: Nikki K. Chun, doctoral candidate, Higher Education Leadership, Colorado State University

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Nikki Chun at 305-903-9919 or Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu. You may also contact Dr. OiYan Poon at oiyan.poon@colostate.edu.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at: CSU_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
The purpose of this research study is to examine and understand the ways in which Native Hawaiian students navigate the college search and college enrollment process. My central research question is: What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?
You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit one or more of these criteria:

- You are currently enrolled in or recently graduated (within the last 1-2 years) from the school site selected for this research study (Ke Kula ʻO Samuel M. Kamakau Laboratory Public Charter School)
- You identify as someone who is Native Hawaiian or part Native Hawaiian, or you support the college process of a student who identifies as Native Hawaiian.
- You are the parent/guardian of currently enrolled student enrolled in the school site selected for this research study, or you are the parent/guardian of a recent graduate

(within the last 1-2 years) of the school site selected who is currently enrolled in college.
- You are participating in or have participated in the college search and enrollment process.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

This study will involve a talk story session with a Kamakau student and their family members who have agreed to participate in this research study. The talk story session will last approximately 60-90-minutes (1-1.5 hours). The date and time of this session have not yet been scheduled, but it will likely be during a weekday evening or a weekend to accommodate student and parent schedules. The location of this talk story session has not yet been finalized, but it will likely be on-site at the school selected for this study.

Please note that in addition to the research participants, I may be accompanied during this session by a master's/doctoral degree student who shares my interest in this research topic. They will be there to assist with session observations and to help me facilitate the conversation throughout the session.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Attend a scheduled talk story session in (tentatively) August and/or September 2023, depending on the research participants' availability.
- During the session, you will be asked to participate in a conversation about your college process experiences.

You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview after the talk story session. Participation in a follow-up interview will also be completely voluntary, scheduled during a mutually agreeable date and time, at a mutually agreed upon location.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. However, there may be an indirect benefit from our talk story conversation because participants will share their experiences with the group about their college search and enrollment process. Oftentimes, when students and parents discuss the college search and enrollment process as a group, they benefit from the questions and insights of the others in the group.

Overall, it is hoped that this research will contribute to developing a college choice framework or process designed by and for Native Hawaiians.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no known risks included with this study. While the level of risk is minimal, you may become uncomfortable with some questions related to the way you are navigating or did navigate your college search and enrollment process. There is a potential loss of confidentiality in a group interview setting, and I address this potential in a subsequent section of this consent form.

The goal of a talk story interview is to utilize a conversational methodology so we can comfortably explore these topics. If any of the research questions make you uncomfortable, you can decline to answer these questions or stop the interview.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

At the conclusion of this study, each participant will receive a $25 Amazon or Starbucks gift card (your choice) as a thank you for your time.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

All information gathered in this study will be kept confidential, to the extent possible. The researcher team will take every measure to protect your confidentiality.

Confidentiality during the Talk Story Session

Participation in a group talk story session involves the potential loss of confidentiality. The research team will make every effort to ensure that information about you remains confidential; however, we cannot guarantee total confidentiality. Your identity will not be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study.

Confidentiality after the Talk Story Session

To protect your identity, you will be given the option to choose a different name (pseudonym) by which you will be identified in the research project. Any direct quotes used in the final analysis will be edited to as not to reveal personal identifiers. The talk story session will be recorded for audio transcription. All recordings and transcripts will be kept confidential on a password-protected drive accessible only to the research team. The only exception to this would be if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the Colorado State Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary.

In addition, since we are providing gift cards as a token of appreciation for participating in this study, the Colorado State financial management team may also request an audit of research expenditures.

If the results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. However, as mentioned above, I may be asked to share the research files with CSU's Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with CSU. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Participant Consent:
Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and voluntarily wish to participate in this research. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 4 pages.

_____ _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____
Name of person providing information to participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of person providing information to participant Date

APPENDIX I

Interview Protocol/Script for 1:1 Talk Story Interviews

Introduction:

Aloha [Everyone or Participant's First Name]! Mahalo – thank you – so much for agreeing to participate in this research study. My name is Nikki Chun, and I am a doctoral student in Colorado State University's Higher Education Leadership program. This talk story session will take about an hour.

I'll begin by sharing with you some context around how I arrived at this study and why this research is important to me. Next, I'll ask you some questions about your work and background; you were selected for this study because I anticipate that your experiences and perspectives would enrich my knowledge about college-bound Native Hawaiian students. This session is intended as a talk story format so that I will follow the natural back-and-forth flow of our conversation. After our session, I anticipate that we'll have generated a rich data set to address my central research question.

Before I continue, I'd like to confirm that I have your permission to record this interview.
[If yes, then continue. If no, then conclude the session.]

Context for this study:
I'll continue with some context about how I arrived at this study. I identify as a Native Hawaiian and Chinese woman who was the first in her family to attend college. I entered my college admissions career after completing my bachelor's degree. When I entered my doctoral program, I was encouraged by my faculty advisor to explore research related to Native Hawaiians and college choice models or frameworks. How are Native Hawaiians guided through the college process?

This study aims to examine Native Hawaiian college-bound students and college choice models. The central research question for this study is, "*What might a college choice framework look like when developed by and for Native Hawaiians?*" The purpose of this research is to propose what a college choice framework might look like when it has been developed by and for Native Hawaiians. The comprehensive college choice model that is widely used today does not effectively serve the needs of college-bound students from historically marginalized backgrounds.

The aim of this study is to suggest another alternative to the college choice model/framework landscape, where the framework specifically serves college-bound Native Hawaiian students. As a scholar and practitioner in the college choice landscape who is dedicated to the outcomes of Native Hawaiian students, I hope this research will reveal to me more effective ways that I may serve these students and the lāhui (Native Hawaiian nation).

Questions for participant(s):
To explore this question, I am interested in your experiences and insights with applying to and enrolling in college, or your role as someone supports college-bound Native Hawaiians. Not only

am I interested in learning the best ways we can support college-bound Native Hawaiians, I would also like to develop a college choice framework alongside Native Hawaiians and those who directly support Native Hawaiians as they enroll in college.

Let's begin with a little bit about your background. Please tell me a little bit about your experience with attending college or supporting someone who is attending college?
Depending on the responses, follow up questions will guide the conversation around the following topics:

- Perspectives on the high school's conversations about college. When did the conversations begin in the school? What were those conversations like?
- Participants' perspectives on college and the college admissions process. What motivated them to engage in the process? What were some strengths of the process? Thoughts on what the college could have done better?
- Perspectives on the college's financial aid process and participants' interactions with applying for financial aid (if applicable). What did the college do well? What could the college have done better?
- What role, if any, did culture or your Native Hawaiian identity play in this process?
- Anything else participants would like to share about the college choice process?

Potential concluding questions:

- I work for the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, overseeing admissions, financial aid, and records/registrar. What advice might you have for me or my colleagues as we want to improve the college process experience for Native Hawaiian students?
- Do any other thoughts come to mind as we have been having this conversation?

Conclusion

Mahalo nui (thank you so much) for taking the time to speak with me. I will now stop recording our session. After today, I will process the audio file into a written transcript. Once that transcript is complete, I will send you the transcript to review for any edits or corrections. I hope to complete my dissertation work in the spring of 2024. If you have any questions as we take the next steps in this process, please do not hesitate to contact me by email (Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu).

APPENDIX J

Post-1:1 Talk Story Interview Follow-Up Email

Aloha *[Name]*,

Mahalo (thank you) for taking the time to participate in our talk story session on *[DATE]* and share your experiences with the college search and enrollment process. I enjoyed our time together. As I mentioned at the close of the talk story interview session, I am emailing you the attached transcript.

Please review the transcript and notify me within two weeks of receiving this email of any corrections or clarifications that you would like to make. While reviewing the transcript is not required, it will help me ensure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and experiences. I appreciate your time and willingness to contribute to this research study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

With gratitude,
Nikki Chun
Doctoral Candidate
Email: Nikki.Chun@colostate.edu

APPENDIX K

Code Book with Frequencies

Number and Name of Code	Frequency
1 Accomplishments/Strengths	90
2 Sense of exposure to college environment	53
3 Lived college experiences	103
3.1 Non-linear education experience	12
4 College Application Process	158
4.1 Sense of self-doubt	9
4.2 Independent in app process	35
4.3 Staying home vs going away	98
4.4 Things colleges did well	38
5 Deficit reference	22
6 Understanding Early College	56
6.1 Classes that shaped experience	29
6.2 College helped boost confidence	27
6.3 Designed for students	8
6.4 Learning how to navigate resources	14
6.5 Early College has become expected at Kamakau	13
7 Related to Hawaiian Identity	104
7.1 Feels out of touch w/Hawaiian identity	10
7.2 Sense of place	24
7.3 Giving Back	11
7.4 Leadership	4
7.5 Hawaiian as first language	10
7.6 Intersection of culture	41
7.7 Kuleana	36
7.8 For the Lāhui	24
8 Understanding Kaiapuni	47
9 Financial Aid	65
9.1 Cost	39

9.2 Questions on value proposition of college	7
9.3 Scholarships	53
9.4 Afraid to create debt for parents/family	21
9.5 Worried about student debt	32
10 Importance of Community	63
10.1 Support system	25
11 References to Trust	8
12 References to Family	81
13 Identity	35
14 Future facing	74
15 Advice from interviewees	29
15.1 Knowing someone cares	5
15.2 Advice for future college-bound students	34
15.3 Advice for me	63
16 Loved this (Quotes that caught my attention)	108
TOTAL EXCERPTS CODED	**1,818**