PEHEA KA NO‘ONO‘O?

TRANSITIONAL EXPERIENCES OF HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE IMMERSION SCHOOL GRADUATES MOVING INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

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Dedication

What I do is a reflection of my ancestors and where I am from. For that reason, this dissertation is dedicated to those whom I reflect, my family. First are my parents, Barbara and Michael, and my daughter Lynda; I love you all. You are my kahua, my pūnāwai, from which everything flows. Mahalo palena ‘ole for being there, for being my sounding board, for being my cheerleaders, and for always having faith in me. It means more than words can express. To my kūpuna, Louise, Frank, Mary, John, Catherine and Francis, I am who I am because of you – mahalo now and forever. I hope you are proud of what I have done in your name.

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Abstract

Institutions of higher education are seeing an increasingly diverse population of students on campuses. One source of this increase is students who are entering the academy from a wider variety of educational environments. In order to support and serve more diverse students in higher education, educators and student affairs practitioners need insight into the perceptions, experiences, and needs of these students. This study examines the transitional experiences of Hawaiian language immersion school graduates who move into higher education in a non-Hawaiian studies major. The research questions that guided this inquiry are: 1) What do students educated in the Papahana Kaiapuni ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i experience when they enter the college environment with a non-Hawaiian language major? 2) What are their perceptions of this experience? Are these perceptions different from what they expected? If so, how are they different? And 3) What strategies do they use during the transition experience?

This qualitative, phenomenological multiple case study used transition theory to frame and guide the inquiry. Data collection consisted of a focus group, individual interviews, video recordings and field notes. Five participants from two different Papahana Kaiapuni ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i schools provided the data. The participants transitioned into four different campuses in a public higher education system in the state of Hawai‘i. First-year adjustments and challenges experienced by these students included cultural challenges, language issues, and variations in support strategies. Three themes emerged from the data: community, dealing with differences in size between environments; and changes in support.
These findings have implications for theory and practice. Implications for theoretical models of transition include an awareness of the circular pattern of indigenous peoples. Practitioners and educators can draw a broader understanding of students entering colleges from indigenous settings to help these students succeed in the academy.
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Chapter 1. Mana‘o Wehewehe: Study Rationale

‘A‘ohe o kahi nānā ‘o luna o ka pali;

ihō mai a lalo nei ʻike i ke au nui ke au iki, he alo a he alo.

The top of the cliff is not the place to look at us;

come down here and learn of the big and little currents, face to face.

ʻŌlelo No‘eau (Puku‘i, 1983, p. 24)

The Hawaiian proverb above warns against approaching knowledge from an attitude of superiority or power. It advocates a more personal perspective to learning. This maxim reminds us that humility and understanding are an important aspect of working with varied populations. Diversity exists in all areas of the higher education environment, from the student body to the faculty. Students come from different backgrounds and cultures. Faculty members and other educators convey their understandings and personal histories through their interactions with others. Every participant in the educational setting brings his or her own individual worldview into the classroom. No one participant in the process is exactly alike (Barrington, 2004; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Komives, Woodard & Associates, 2003; Martinez Aleman, & Salkever 2003; Schneider, 1993; Tanaka, 2002). Among all the varied possibilities for differences, one may be the language students have used in their primary and secondary education. While international students have been attending American universities and studying in a different language for a long time, students from language immersion programs in the United States of America are relatively new to the higher education scene.
Changes in student demographics have resulted in the modification and addition of services, alterations in higher educational mission statements, and an increased awareness of and sensitivity to diversity (Komives et al., 2003; Moore & Blake, 2007). Now more than any other time in the history of higher education, the needs of students are at the forefront of the academy (Brinkworth, McCann, Matthews & Nordström 2009; Evans, et al., 1998; Kidwell, 2005; Komives et al., 2003). Scholars from around the globe have published research regarding the changing demographics of university students (e.g., Martinez Aleman & Salkever, 2003; Meyer, 2001, 2004; Nelson-Barber & Estrin, 1995; Tanaka, 2002).

Issues of diversity not only affect faculty, but students as well, are learning to adjust and develop their learning styles to meet the demands of the evolving higher education environment. In the first year, students are faced with a new environment, one that is home to a wide variety of people, cultures, beliefs and experiences that they may not have previously undertaken. Studies show that the transition from high school to college is difficult for many students. The challenges encountered vary from one student to the next and are dependent on a variety of factors including development, preparation, and family environment (Evans, et al., 1998; Roe Clark, 2005). Understanding and addressing issues and adjustments faced by incoming first year students has given rise to a variety of first-year experience programs, first-year seminars and mentoring programs (Evans, et al., 1998; Komives et al., 2003; Roe Clark, 2005). These programs are aimed at helping first-year students navigate the transition and changes that come with moving from secondary to post-secondary education. However, these programs are generally
aimed at students who transition from traditional secondary education programs. What is available for students who come from an alternative secondary environment?

One such alternative environment is immersion education or schooling in which a second language is the principal language of instruction. Canada, for example, has successfully used this technique for over 30 years (Cummins, 1998). Immersion instruction has also been used in the continental United States, New Zealand and Hawai‘i in an effort to revitalize indigenous languages (Cummins, 1998; Kamanā & Wilson, 1996; Murakami, 2006; Peter, 2007; Yamauchi, Ceppi, & Lau-Smith, 1998). Some programs like those in Alaska, New Zealand, Hawai‘i, and the Cherokee Nation are aimed specifically at “Reversing language shift – or taking action to alter a trend toward language loss” (Peter, 2007, p. 323).

Intrinsic differences exist between traditional English language instructional methodology and education in an immersion environment through an Indigenous language (Meyer, 2001, 2004; Nelson-Barber & Estrin 1995; Reyhner, 2003). The indigenous style of linguistic and culturally focused education is different than traditional English language instructive methods. This pedagogical style embraces a “curriculum that is based on traditional culture that recognizes the importance of Native spirituality, and places the education of young children in a contemporary context” (Murakami, 2006, p. 10).

This is not simply a matter of second language education although there are similarities. The Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) at Berkeley stated: “Second language immersion education is based on the premise that students can learn a second language incidentally, through its use as the medium of
Hawaiian language immersion students are schooled in a second language environment during the formation of the very foundations of their educational experiences.

Although these students are educated completely in the Hawaiian language it is not the only language in their life. They are required to complete state and federal assessments in English, and English language classes are part of their curriculum beginning in the fifth grade (Department of Education State of Hawai‘i, 2005). Additionally, the English language may be used in many of their daily activities outside of school. Nevertheless, their educational development has been filtered through their experiences with Hawaiian educational practices and pedagogy that are embedded in the Hawaiian immersion education philosophy (Wilson, 1998; Yamauchi et al., 1998).

When the haumāna (students) move into the post-secondary environment, how do they navigate the transition from immersion to non-immersion education? What challenges do they face to adjust and adapt to these changes? If they need assistance, to whom do they turn? This study seeks to understand these questions, to delve deeper into the post immersion adaptive and coping strategies of students who are negotiating the transition from an indigenous language immersion program to a traditional large public university system.

Schlossberg (1984) defined transition as “An event or nonevent resulting in change” (p. 43). The focus of this definition is the result, not the process. While this description speaks to the event (or nonevent), the focus of this particular interpretation of transition is the outcome – the change itself.
An additional view was offered by Bridges (1980, 2001, 2003) who defined transition as a process that consists of three overlapping phases. He stated:

Transition … is the process of letting go of the way things used to be and then taking hold of the way they subsequently become. In between the letting go and the taking hold again, there is a chaotic but potentially creative “neutral zone” when things aren’t the old way, but aren’t really a new way yet either. This three-phase process – ending, neutral zone, beginning again – is transition. (2001, p. 2)

For the purposes of this study, I used a variation on both Schlossberg’s (1984) and Bridges’ (1980, 2001, 2003) descriptions: Transition in the context of this study, is a multi-phase process of acceptance and adaptation. This definition of transition is used to examine the experiences of students who shift from the immersion environment to the college setting. The movement of students between these educational contexts, as well as the implications of that transition, are the focus of this study.

To begin, this chapter will provide a brief history of the Papahana Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, the Hawaiian language immersion education movement in Hawai‘i. This will be followed by an overview of the research questions that will guide this study. Finally, I will provide definitions of some of the terms and concepts that will be used in this inquiry.

Historical Overview

Education in Hawai‘i, especially with regard to the language of instruction used to educate students, has been a tumultuous subject throughout its history. When classroom instruction was introduced to Hawai‘i by missionaries, education was conducted in the Hawaiian language. Boston missionaries arrived in 1820, intent on introducing Christian
doctrine to the natives (Benham & Heck, 1998; Kahumoku, 2003). The creation of schools allowed the missionaries to educate the Kanaka Maoli. By the mid-1800s Christianity was firmly established in Hawai‘i, from the ali‘i to the maka‘āinana (Benham & Heck, 1998; Kahumoku, 2003). The Hawaiian people took to the written word – seeing it as a tool for communication and using it as a method to preserve stories and history. Hawaiian language newspapers were filled with letters of protest against the changes in Hawai‘i, mele (poetry), oli (chants), and stories that had once only been recorded in oral traditions and more were printed in multi-part serials, preserving the mo‘olelo (stories) for future generations (Kahumoku, 2003). Much of Hawaiian traditional knowledge was printed and published in the Hawaiian language during this period.

As time passed, however, this changed. Many political changes led to the increase of the use of English (Benham & Heck, 1998; Kahumoku, 2003; Murakami, 2006). These included a desire on the part of many of the Christian faction to suppress the “native” beliefs and traditional knowledge, to usurp the Hawaiian identity, and impose conformist behavior. The political beliefs held by many close to the ali‘i led to the comments made in The Biennial Report of the Hawai‘i Bureau of Public Instruction, 1894 – 1895, a precursor to the 1896 legislation that enacted tremendous changes to the education system in Hawai‘i. The report, which ironically was published in both Hawaiian and English languages, stated:

Schools taught in the Hawaiian language have virtually ceased to exist and will probably never appear again in a Government report. Hawaiian parents without exception prefer that their children should be educated in the English language.
The gradual extinction of a Polynesian dialect may be regretted for sentimental reasons, but it is certainly for the interest of the Hawaiians themselves. (Bureau of Public Instruction, 1894, p. 6)

The changes that were made resulted in the transformation of the public school curriculum and instruction. Once the textbooks, class pedagogy, and American teachers replaced the missionaries and their Hawaiian language materials, the stage was set for Act 57 (Kahumoku, 2003). According to Kahumoku (2003) Act 57 was “an educational policy that was passed in 1896 which legally restricted the use of the Hawaiian mother tongue as a means of communication between students and teachers in the school setting” (p. 160). This legislation caused the demise of education in Hawaiian language and had “disastrous effects on literacy, academic achievement, and the use of Standard English among Native Hawaiians” (Kamanā & Wilson, 1996, p. 137). The use of Hawai‘i Creole English, more commonly known as “Pidgin” English, increased even as the number of native Hawaiian speakers drastically decreased (Benham & Heck, 1998). Hawai‘i Creole English is still used regularly throughout Hawai‘i and is prevalent within the quotes and interviews with the participants in this study.

The Hawaiian language was no longer used as a medium of instruction and, as native speakers decreased, the language seemed to face certain extinction. Benham and Heck (1998) noted: “Schooling was an institution that could be used to rapidly indoctrinate and, hence, assimilate those who were different into a common set of Euro-American beliefs, goals, and behaviors” (p. 11). This loss of instruction in an indigenous language was certainly not a unique situation. In fact, language has been used across the world as a means of colonization and control (Thaman, 2003). Even the continental
United States has not been excluded. According to Murakami (2006), across the United States “the language and culture of the majority were viewed as the vehicle of modern progress and the symbol of national identity, while other cultures and languages, became marginalized and associated with regression” (pp. 5-6).

As time passed, however, there was a surge of revitalized interest during Hawai‘i’s “cultural renaissance” of the 1970s (Murakami, 2006; Silva, 2000; Wilson, 1998). Fueled by an increased interest in Hawaiian culture, including music and hula, the Hawaiian renaissance movement sparked interest in creating programs to keep the language and culture from extinction. “This was due largely to the civil rights movement nationwide and increased indigenous affirmation worldwide” (Murakami, 2006, p. 4). Language revitalization was an intrinsic part of the renaissance movement. In 1978, the movement to save the language took a major step forward when the State Constitution was revised to include Hawaiian as an official language of the State, along with English (Benham & Heck, 1998).

This renewed interest in language revitalization eventually led to the creation of ‘Aha Pūnana Leo in 1983, an organization outside of the Department of Education that was formed by educators who spoke Hawaiian and were committed to restoring Hawaiian as an educational medium (Kamanā & Wilson, 1996; Wilson, 1998; Yamauchi, et al., 1998). This was essentially the birth of the current Hawaiian language revitalization and education movement. Murakami (2006) stated that “the establishment of the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo was by far the boldest and the most significant of the contributions to the culturally based education movements in Hawai‘i as it combined an emphasis on pedagogy, culture, and [sic] language” (p. 15).
The next step was to change the laws regarding Hawaiian language education. Wilson (1998) noted: “In 1986, after three years of lobbying by ‘Aha Pūnana Leo members, parents, and the Hawaiian community, the two laws were amended to allow Hawaiian medium education in the public schools” (p. 333). This movement ultimately produced Hawaiian language immersion schools, Papahana Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, beginning in 1987 (Department of Education State of Hawai‘i, 2005). The program was created as a means to propagate Hawaiian language and culture and the schools, run by the Hawai‘i State Department of Education, were part of the public school. Subsequently “in July 1997, Governor Benjamin Cayetano signed into law the establishment of a Hawaiian language college at UHH (University of Hawai‘i at Hilo)” (Silva, 2000, p. 76).

In 1999, the first students of the Papahana Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i program graduated from high school (Murakami, 2006; Yamauchi, et al., 1998, 1999). Today, after more than two decades of the Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i program, Hawaiian language education is provided throughout the state of Hawai‘i from pre-kindergarten through doctorates.

At the primary and secondary levels, the program is highly dependent on parental and family involvement. Involvement can be in the form of language and culture classes for family members, encouragement in the pursuit of additional education for family members, and the provision of opportunities for these minority groups to become involved “at both the school and broader policy making levels” (CREDE, 2002).

The need for family support is not unique to Hawaiian language programs. A study conducted by Reyhner and Dodd (1995) indicated that American Indian students who have persisted in higher education cited the “ability to cope with racial and cultural
differences, family encouragement, ability to adjust to new situations” and support systems as necessary tools to succeed (p. 4).

An additional aspect of importance in the Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i program is the overwhelming encouragement and support for continued education past the secondary level. Hawaiian language immersion graduates move on to colleges and universities at an astounding rate. For example, according to Wilson and Kamanā (2009), one particular immersion school, Ke Kula ‘o Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu in Hilo, “has a 100 percent high school graduation rate and an 80 percent college attendance rate” (p. 372). This seems to indicate that students educated in the Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i program are moving rapidly into the higher education setting. Although there are higher education programs offered that are based in Hawaiian culture and language, some students who graduate from the Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i program move into other disciplines or majors that do not use culturally based or Hawaiian language based educational methods. This is significant not only because of the extreme cultural shift experienced by these students, but also because we do not yet understand the post immersion adaptive learning and transition strategies that may be employed by these students. This shared experience – the transition from a Hawaiian language immersion program into a non-Hawaiian major in a higher education setting – is the focus of this study.

**Research Questions**

According to Van Manen (1990), a phenomenological study seeks to understand the essence of an experience through the words of those who lived through the phenomenon. “Indeed, if there is one word that most aptly characterizes phenomenology
itself, then this word is ‘thoughtfulness’” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 12). It is this sense of thoughtfulness that drives this study and encompasses the research questions.

The experiences of kaiapuni ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i students with the transition from one educational environment to another is the focus of this study. What differences, if any, do these students encounter in teaching methods? What accommodations do the haumāna make to differences in classroom pedagogy they may encounter? Do the haumāna perceive changes in educational and social culture and expectations? What differences are there between their expectations and what they actually experienced? What coping strategies, if needed, do the haumāna employ to succeed in and out of the classroom? In other words, I seek to understand what the haumāna from the papahana go through during this shared experience of transition.

To accomplish these goals, the following questions guided my research:

1. What do students educated in the Papahana Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i experience when they enter the college environment with a non-Hawaiian language major?

2. What are their perceptions of this experience? Are these perceptions different from what they expected? If so, how are they different?

3. What strategies do they use during the transition experience?

Definition of Terms

1. Cognitive development / epistemological development are used interchangeably in this study and encompass what has been termed making meaning, or approaches to knowing, referring to “not what we know but our way of knowing” (Kegan, 2000, p. 52)
2. *Culture* is a major factor to be considered when discussing students’ learning styles. Given this understanding of the context of culture in students’ ways of knowing, culture, as used in this paper, should be considered “to encompass shared meanings of a group of people that derive from race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, immigrant status, physical capability, and combinations thereof” (Tanaka, 2002, p. 267).

3. *Hawaiian language immersion* – education, specifically primary and secondary education, conducted solely through the Hawaiian language and epistemology.

4. *Indigenous or indigenous peoples* – peoples having a pre-colonization historical continuity with a culture that developed on their territory and who consider themselves a distinct society.

5. *Indigenous education* – for the purposes of this study, this term refers to education utilizing post-colonial epistemologies and paradigms (Cajete, 2008; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008; Smith, 1999).

6. *Indigenous immersion education* – any education that is conducted exclusively through an indigenous language and epistemology.

7. *Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i* – for the purpose of this study, this refers to Hawaiian language immersion schools that are based on a philosophy of cultural tradition known as Nā Kumu Honua Mauli Ola. Throughout this study this term is used interchangeably with the term *papahana*.

8. *Kumu Honua Mauli Ola* – According to the Native Hawaiian Education Council (NHEC) and Ka Haka ʻUla O Keʻelikōlani College of Hawaiian Language (CHL) at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo (NHEC & CHL, 2002):
Ke Kumu Honua Mauli Ola is expressed in traditional Hawaiian metaphors and teachings passed down to us by our kūpuna. This philosophy speaks of the mauli as the cultural heart and spirit of a people, and the fostering of one’s mauli through three piko connections within various honua or defined environments. (p. 14)

9. **Learning style** – the repetitive, habitual use of conscious or unconscious plans of action on the part of a student to accomplish a specific learning outcome (Komives et al., 2003). These plans, or learning strategies, are usually invoked deliberately and evolve over a student’s educational development.

In addition to these terms defined here, Hawaiian language terms and phrases will be explained and/or defined as they occur throughout the text.

Hawaiian language education has undergone a plethora of changes in its history. The reemergence of the Hawaiian language as an educational medium has just begun. Students from Hawaiian language immersion environments are moving into the academy at an increasing rate. However, the experiences and perceptions of students transitioning from these environments into the academy lack investigation and understanding. This study sought to share and learn from the voices of the haumāna who have lived through that transition.
Chapter 2. Ka Nā‘ana: Review of Literature

‘Ike ‘ia no ka loea i ke kuahu.

An expert is recognized by the alter he builds.

It is what one does and how well he does it that shows whether he is an expert.

‘Ōlelo No‘eau (Puku‘i, 1983, p.131)

Immersion education in Hawaiian language has been in existence for nearly two decades yet literature and research in the area of post immersion transition strategies of students from the Papahana Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is scarce. This literature review reflects the theoretical framework of the proposed study while providing an overview of current understanding of a variety of subjects and research areas that influence this inquiry.

I will begin with a discussion of cultural influences, giving an overview of our current understanding of how colonization can affect learning and the ways culture can influence how students learn and students’ ways of knowing. This will lead to a discussion of indigenous ways of knowing and how it differs from Western epistemology. Finally, the section on cultural influences will close with an overview of Hawaiian epistemology.

The next section will offer an overview of issues and research regarding transition, change and coping to provide a deeper understanding of the processes of transition that will frame the study. Transition theory will also be used to frame my discussion of the literature. This will be followed by a section entitled Endings in which I will provide an overview of literature available on high school students in the senior year,
including cognitive and identity development followed by a similar discussion regarding indigenous and Hawaiian high school seniors. The section will conclude with an overview of traditional high school environments including a discussion of traditional pedagogical methods followed by a look at the environment and pedagogical methods used in Hawaiian immersion schools.

The subsequent section of this literature review, called the Neutral Zone, will discuss the literature on first year college students. That will be followed by a review of what we know about minority, and more specifically, Hawaiian freshmen students in the university. Next, I will look at standard pedagogical methods in American higher education. This section will conclude with a look at the limited amount of available literature on Hawaiian pedagogical methods in higher education.

The final section of this literature review, Beginnings, will open with a review of what we know about the needs of first year students including an overview of some of the literature on first-year experience programs. This section will conclude with a discussion of available literature on the needs of indigenous and Hawaiian freshmen.

**Cultural Influences**

Culture colors the educational experience of students. It is their personal lens on the information presented. “The who, what, when, where, why, and how of learning may be only understood as situated in a specific cultural context” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 7).

Culture infuses students’ learning processes. According to Love and Guthrie (1999), “Cultural context includes the patterns of norms, values beliefs, and traditions in a group that have an influence on forms of thinking and problem solving and methods of meaning making” (p. 57). In many cases the cultural context of the classroom is based on
Eurocentric principals. According to Martinez et al., (2003): “These principles, generally understood as the privileging of reason, the primacy of the individual, and an internalization of Enlightenment ideas about character and moral good, ultimately appear to prove inadequate for the institution’s multicultural aims” (p.577). Diverse students bring diverse worldviews, epistemologies, and frames of reference with them to the educational environment. Some of these may be in direct conflict with the post-colonial focus of many of today’s institutions of higher education (Jenkins & Jones, 2000).

As educators we work to help students overcome barriers as we cheer and support their successes. Institutions of higher education are faced with new challenges and opportunities created by the evolving multicultural experiences of our students. Previously successful communal philosophies that presumed assimilation of students into a shared vision no longer address the needs of the campus (Martinez Aleman & Salkever, 2003). “In place of educational purpose and plan, the liberal arts major too often offers students a cafeteria menu of courses designed to acknowledge the faculty’s scholarly interests rather than to provide a coherent and developmental program of study” (Schneider, 1993, p. 247).

**Voluntary and involuntary minorities.** The historical roots of privilege and minority status add another layer of complexity to the cultural picture. Ogbu’s (1998) model of historical status offers valuable insight and a useful lens through which one can view the subject. This model involves not only immigrants, but also non-immigrant minorities and how they perceive and are perceived by the majority culture. According to Ogbu and Simons (1998):
Ogbu classifies minority groups into autonomous, voluntary (immigrant), and involuntary (nonimmigrant) minorities. The different categories call attention to different histories of the people who make up the larger category referred to as minorities. The autonomous minorities are people who belong to groups that are small in number. They may be different in race, ethnicity, religion, or language from the dominant group. (p. 164).

Ogbu and Simons (1998) define voluntary immigrant minorities as those who “(1)…voluntarily chose to move to U.S. society in the hope of a better future, and (2) they do not interpret their presence in the United States as forced upon them by the U.S. government or by white Americans” (p. 164). Therefore, those minorities who have come to the United States and to Hawai‘i by choice, whether for work, education or some other reason, are considered voluntary immigrants. In Hawai‘i, these types of immigrants would include the Chinese, Pacific Islanders, and recent Japanese immigrants.

Alternatively, the involuntary nonimmigrant minorities as defined by Gibson and Ogbu (1991) are “people who were brought into their present society through slavery, conquest, or colonization. They usually resent the loss of their former freedom, and they perceive the social, political and economic barriers against them as part of their undeserved oppression” (p. 9). He continues by identifying American Indians, African Americans and Māori people as being examples of involuntary minorities. In this context, Hawaiians can be classified as involuntary minorities and Ogbu’s premises apply to their situation.

**Minority versus dominant.** In addition to the voluntary and involuntary classifications of minorities, other terminology has been used in the literature when
discussing minority culture. Settler society is one term used to describe the majority culture that has colonized an area or a people. The colonizing culture has also been called the dominant or majority culture. Ogbu and Simons (1998) offered this definition of what they term the settler society:

A settler society is a society where the ruling or dominant group is made up of immigrants from other societies who have come to settle there because they want to improve their economic, political, and social status, and so on. White Americans, the dominant group in the United States, are almost entirely immigrants. (p. 162)

The above definition clearly outlines the status of White Americans in the continental United States as immigrants. What we know today as American society, by this definition, can then be classified as a settler society.

There are some universal traits in these kinds of dominant cultures. Ogbu and Simons (1998) noted:

The dominant groups in settler societies have certain beliefs and expectations in common, including the belief in opportunity in their appropriated territory for self-improvement, individual responsibility for self-improvement, and expectations that people in the society should more or less conform or ‘assimilate,’ especially in language and culture. (p. 162)

This “assimilation” has also been described as cultural imperialism or educational colonization by some indigenous authors and researchers (e.g., O’Neill and Spennemann, 2008; Thaman, 2003; Trask, 1999; Walker, 2003). Here in Hawai‘i, those of Hawaiian decent have long experienced cultural imperialism. In fact, Hawaiians have even been
referred to as a “cultural minority in Hawai‘i” (Dela Cruz, Salzman, Brislin, & Losch. 2006, p. 120).

Education has historically been used as a tool for assimilation. In Hawai‘i, according to Kahumoku (2003), “Beside legislative measures to forward Protestant piety, missionaries also sought educative policies to advance their religious crusade” (p. 160). And Hawai‘i is not alone; even in Micronesia, the educational system is based on that of the colonizing culture. “U.S. school curricula have been devised in a very different cultural setting and under very different circumstances but are often used unchanged in Micronesia” (O’Neill & Spennemann, 2008, p. 210). How, then does this “educational colonization” affect students in the minority culture?

*Education and colonization.* Research shows there are differences in educational experiences between students from minority and majority cultures (Benham & Heck, 1998; Dela Cruz et al., 2006; Freitas & Balutski, 2009; Murakami, 2006; O’Neill & Spennemann, 2008; Whitesell, Mitchell, Spicer, & The Voices of Indian Teens Project Team, 2009). Could culture and colonization be factors in these differences? The literature suggested that culture, majority/minority status and other factors can have an influence on students.

For example, Ogbu and Simons (1998) reported on the differences in educational issues between voluntary and involuntary minorities. They found that, in general, voluntary minorities do not have long lasting problems in school. Nor do students from voluntary immigrant type cultures have problems with language or cultural adaptation. However, that may not always be the case with involuntary minorities. They noted that “Involuntary minorities are less economically successful than voluntary minorities,
usually experience greater and more persistent cultural and language difficulties, and do less well in school” (p. 166).

This lower performance in school has been considered a tool of colonization by some scholars. For example, in discussing school performance and educational colonization, Battiste (2000) noted:

The military, political, and economic subjugation of Aboriginal peoples has been well documented, as have social, cultural, and linguistic pressures and the ensuing detrimental consequences to First Nations communities, but no force has been more effective at oppressing First Nations cultures than the educational system. (p. 193)

There are other variables that have an impact on students’ performance in the classroom. Ogbu and Simons noted:

One cannot attribute the differences in minority school performance to cultural, linguistic, or genetic differences. This is not to deny genetic differences or to deny that cultural and language differences may have an adverse or positive effect on minority school performance; but culture and language do not entirely determine the differences among minorities. (pp. 157 – 158)

Educators then, need to look at other obstacles to success in these students. According to Battiste (2000) “There has been a growing awareness of late that we need a more systemic analysis of the complex and subtle ideologies that continue to shape postcolonial Indigenous educational policy and pedagogy” (p. xxi). An awareness of the use of education as a tool of colonization and an understanding of its implications can
provide some insight. Paying attention to the differences in ways of knowing and worldview are also necessary.

The influence of culture on ways of knowing. There has been an increase in sensitivity and awareness of the cultural and ethnic diversities of students in higher education today (Komives et al., 2003; Newman et al., 2004). Established educational attitudes exemplified in norms of classroom behavior, pedagogy, assessment, and expected outcomes often do not serve indigenous students well (Battiste, 2000; Benham & Heck, 1998; Smith 1999). As Schneider (1993) stated, “Cognitive strategies are least powerful when very general, most effective when linked to context, to well-organized knowledge bases, and to communally negotiated standards for marshaling evidence, analysis, and argument” (p. 250). To put it simply, not all students learn the same way and may suffer from the use of general, predominantly white Western pedagogical strategies in college classrooms.

In addition, alternate perspectives can have an effect on the individual and the individual’s judgments. Bowers (1999) stated:

The cultural schema that represents intelligence, creativity, and capacity to make moral judgments, as an attribute of the autonomous individual – all characteristics of the various elite groups now promoting the idea that thought is based on information and data – is simply another example of a cultural view of intelligence. (p. 35)

Another factor to be considered is that students from underrepresented groups appear to be less successful in educational pursuits (Reyhner & Dodd, 1995). As Cajete (2008) noted, “Few schools that serve Native students have integrated cultural content in
any serious or systematic form. This lack of progress is reflected in the continued underachievement of Native students in science and math” (p. 488). Students who do persist appear to have developed personal strategies to enable them to complete their education. Therefore, insight into and adaptation for epistemological variations and coping strategies could have the potential to increase retention and persistence rates for underrepresented students.

**Indigenous ways of knowing.** Indigenous knowledge can be defined as “a multidimensional body of understandings that have – especially since the beginnings of the European scientific revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries – been viewed by Euroculture as inferior and primitive” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008, p136). It offers an example of an alternative paradigm that has been traditionally underrepresented in the academy. According to Ma Rhea (2004):

It is clear in our research that the human knowledge of Indigenous peoples and local communities is failing to become embedded in national education systems because it is seen as lower order knowledge when compared to the superior knowledge system of western industrialized societies. (p. 5)

Further, the use of alternative ways of knowing has not been accepted and has actually been suppressed in mainstream educational settings, even when it could be of value to all students. In fact, speaking of indigenous ways of knowing Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) noted:

Such ways of knowing and acting could contribute so much to the educational experiences of all students, but because of the rules of evidence and the dominant
epistemologies of Western knowledge production, such understandings are deemed irrelevant by the academic gatekeepers. (p. 136).

The differences between the Eurocentric educational worldview and the indigenous worldview are numerous. According to Cajete (2008), “Indigenous people’s worldviews are about integration of spiritual, natural, and human domains of existence and human interaction” (p. 489). This can be in conflict with the empirical and positivistic studies of the natural world that may be taught in the post-colonial classroom (Smith, 1999).

There are, however, programs that strive to address indigenous knowledge. Researchers at the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) at the University of California at Berkley conducted a study in 2002 of the Hawaiian language immersion program. This program educates students using Hawaiian language and worldviews, resulting in an increase of cultural pride while producing comparable student results in standard achievement assessments (CREDE, 2002). The program embodies Ma Rhea’s (2004) belief that “education has a key role to play in the preservation and maintenance of Indigenous and local community knowledge” (p. 8). It unites the community in the quest for knowledge and thereby reinforces the cultural experience. “The education cycle is a lifelong learning process, and a personal, family, and community endeavor. A healthy and responsive learning community is the ultimate goal” (NHEC & CHL 2002, p. 15).

The indigenous community has made a difference in shaping their educational environments. In 1981 the Māori in Aotearoa (New Zealand) created Te Kōhanga Reo, a Māori language immersion program that has graduated over 60,000 students since its
inception (Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, 2012). According to Simon (2000), “Few, if any, board schools attempted to cater for the specific needs of Maori pupils before the 1960s and, even after that period, Maori needs were widely ignored” (p 59). As the amount of Māori children in schools increased the Māori began to protest the educational system. A review of the system was ordered by the government that “served to highlight the diversity of views and demands of the community in regard to the education system” (p. 60). Today the Māori community continues to speak out and work towards a true Māori education system based on Māori knowledge and culture. “In the process of accessing existing education resources, many Maori become disoriented and dislocated from the mana of their communities” (Jenkins & Jones, 2000, p. 144).

In addition research has shown that educators can be powerful advocates for Indigenous and underrepresented students. Reyhner and Dodd (1995) discussed a study of American Indian students conducted in 1989 by Coburn and Nelson “They reported that teachers were the strongest influence in the students’ educational experiences” (Reyhner & Dodd, 1995, p. 2).

**Hawaiian ways of knowing.** Culture is the heart and soul of Hawaiian education and understanding. Meyer (2003) stated that Hawaiian “culture exists despite our own good intentions, ignorance or apathy. It exists because we [Hawaiians] do” (p. 5). Culture, and thereby knowledge, also known as na‘auao, is a physical part of the Hawaiian being. There is no separation between body (culture) and mind (knowledge). According to Meyer (2003):

> Literally meaning ‘daylight mind,’ na‘auao is used to describe notions of knowledge, wisdom and intelligence. And so, the seat of Hawaiian wisdom was
somewhere in the stomach region; so was the seat of emotion and feelings. To know something was to consider it via your emotions, your mind, and thus Hawaiians pointed, continue to point to our stomach region when speaking of something of substance … In a sense, then, intellect was grounded in being a Hawaiian being, grounded in all aspects of epistemology already discussed, (i. e.: spirituality, sensory, environmental). (p. 123)

The connection between culture, spirituality, and knowledge was developed into an educational philosophy that guides many of the Hawaiian language immersion schools. Nā Honua Mauli Ola guidelines “have been developed with the belief that continued learning and practicing of the Hawaiian language and culture is a fundamental prerequisite for nurturing culturally healthy and responsive citizens and contributes to the growth and harmony of the community” (NHEC & CHL, 2002, p. 13).

An essential feature of the Kumu Honua Mauli Ola philosophy, according to ‘Aha Pūnana Leo (2012), is tied to the mauli Hawai‘i, the essence that is born into and springs forth from one who is Hawaiian. There are four major elements to the mauli Hawai‘i and these frame this philosophy. The first, ka ‘ao‘ao Pili ‘Uhane is the spiritual element. The second is ka ‘ao‘ao ‘Ōlelo or the language element. The third is ka ‘ao‘ao Lawena which is the physical behavior element. Finally, the fourth is ka ‘ao‘ao ‘Ike Ku‘una or the traditional knowledge element (‘Aha Pūnana Leo, 2012).

The mauli Hawai‘i is connected to the honua (environment) through three Piko (centers). The first, Piko ‘Ī, is the spiritual connection and is found at the crown of the head. The second is Piko ‘Ō which is the inherited connection that is found at the navel. The last is Piko ‘Ā. This is the creative connection found below the navel (NHEC &
CHL, 2002). The connection between the honua and the mauli Hawai‘i is central to the learning environment.

Hence, the Kumu Honua Mauli Ola philosophy is based on the understanding that Hawaiian knowledge is spiritual, physical, connected, inclusive, and infused with culture. This awareness has led to the growth of culture based education (CBE) which has also taken hold in Hawai‘i. An alternative to immersion education, CBE educates students using a Hawaiian educational perspective and worldview without necessarily requiring the language immersion component of the papahana. Kana‘iaupuni (2007) defined culture based education:

Perhaps most simply put, culture refers to shared ways of being, knowing, and doing. Culture-based education is the grounding of instruction and student learning in these ways, including the values, norms, knowledge, beliefs, practices, experiences, and language that are the foundation of a(n indigenous) culture. (p. 1)

According to Takayama and Ledward (2009), “Hawaiian culture-based education grounds teaching and learning in culturally relevant content, contexts, and assessments, which draw heavily upon ‘ohana (family), kaiāulu (community), and ‘ōlelo (Hawaiian language)” (p. 1). This type of education appears to provide the connection and tools students in these schools need to be more successful. Students exposed to this kind of education tend to report higher than average levels of school engagement and a more positive self-image (Takayama & Ledward, 2009).

This relation to culture and the ties to place are central to Hawaiian ways of knowing and crucial to many Hawaiian students. In fact, Dela Cruz et al. (2006) observed
that Hawaiian students are more connected to traditional knowledge and valued the information gathered from kūpuna on an equal basis with that gathered from books and journals. Family and community also serve as a respected source of knowledge. One participant of the study conducted by Dela Cruz et al. (2006) noted: “We have a different base of knowledge than many Americans and different priorities” (p. 134). Do these differences have an effect on the transition process for students?

In the last few sections we have seen how culture and worldview have an impact on education and epistemology. We have looked at programs for indigenous education and how they have or have not addressed the needs of indigenous communities. We have gained an understanding of some ways of knowing and how they impact education. In the next section we will look at transition and the way one can cope with change.

**Transition and Change**

What is the difference between change and transition? The terms are often used interchangeably and it may be assumed that they are synonymous. Yet, this is not necessarily the case. “Transition is the way we all come to terms with change. Without transition, a change is mechanical, superficial, empty” (Bridges, 2001, p. 3). Transition, therefore, is the process of adapting to external change.

Schlossberg (1984), and Bridges (1980, 2001, 2003) both addressed change and the process of transition; they both discussed ways to move through this process. Schlossberg focused on the type, context and impact of transitions on a personal level. Bridges looked at a three-part process involved in the transition – the ending, neutral zone, and beginning.
Schlossberg’s (1984) theory stressed the importance of the kind of transition, the situation in which the transition is experienced and the effect that transition has on those involved. There are nondiscrete types of transitions including anticipated, non-anticipated and nonevents. Evans, et al. (1998) noted: “The meaning attached to transitions by different individuals is relative, as is the way in which the transition is categorized by type” (p. 112). The key here is the awareness of the individual – if the individual experiences a transition – that is central to this definition. “A transition is not so much a matter of change as of the individuals’ own perception of the change …. a transition is a transition only if it is so defined by the person experiencing it” (Schlossberg, 1984, p. 44).

Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering (1989) discussed the process of transition as moving in, moving through and moving on. They asserted:

A transition is like a trip. Preparation for the trip, the actual trip, and its aftermath all elicit feelings and reactions. But feelings at the start of a trip differ from reactions to it later. In the same way, reactions to a transition continue to change as the transition is integrated into one’s life. (p. 15)

In many ways, this concept of movement through a transition is similar to Bridges’ (1980, 2001, 2003) theory. In recalling a shared personal experience with transition, Bridges (1980) noted “the three main similarities seemed to be that each of us had experienced (1) an ending, followed by (2) a period of confusion and distress, leading to (3) a new beginning” (p. 9). These three stages are referred to in Bridges’ theory as the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning.
Although not always recognized, endings are a very important part of the transition process. Bridges (2003) stated “Before you can begin something new, you have to end what used to be …. So beginnings depend on endings. The problem is, people don’t like endings” (p. 23). The ending, therefore, may be the most difficult part of the transition process.

The second part of the transition process is what Bridges (1980, 2001, 2003) termed the neutral zone. It is a period of confusion and disconnects; it is a purgatory-like existence. Bridges (2001) stated:

It is a season of dormancy when life withdraws back into the root to get ready for a long, cold season without whatever had given warmth and meaning to life-before-the-ending. It is a strange no-man’s-land between one world and the next. It is a zone where you pick up missed signals, some coming from the past and some from the future. (p. 156)

The final stage of Bridges (1980, 2001, 2003) concept of transition is where the change actually happens. This is the beginning of the new. “It is when the endings and the time of fallow neutrality are finished that we can launch ourselves out anew, changed and renewed by the destruction of the old life-phase and the journey through the nowhere” (Bridges, 1980, p. 134).

The first two stages are central to a successful transition. How one negotiates the first and second stages of the transition will determine how well one will handle the commitment to the new beginning. It can also be a daunting time for some people. Bridges (2003) asserted that beginnings “require, in some sense, that people become the new kind of person that the new situation demands” (p. 58).
Coping strategies. How one works through a difficult situation or through a transition and how one copes with obstacles can be beneficial to examine. Educators could take advantage of an understanding of how many students, specifically minority students, work through obstacles, challenges and issues that they face in education. What strategies and adaptations do minority students employ when faced with these challenges?

Spencer, Cunningham, and Swanson, 1995 found that African-American males used identity – developing hypermasculine attitudes, defiance and group identity as a method of coping. These students may intentionally do poorly in school as an act of defiance, a cultural strategy they have devised to fit in with their own ethnic group and rebel against the values of the majority culture. The defiant behavior is their coping strategy and the group identity becomes a support system.

Another possible cause of poor performance in school for minority and underrepresented students was issues of self-esteem. Whitesell et al. (2009) conducted a study of self-esteem in American Indian students with regard to how it affects school performance. They stated:

Taken as a whole, our findings point to the importance of self-concept in the academic success of American Indian adolescents and clearly suggest that self-esteem plays a more central role than does American Indian identity. In addition, our findings show that it was not self-esteem per se that accounted for academic success but rather factors associated with self-esteem. Adolescents did not excel in school just because they felt good about themselves; instead, feeling good
about themselves was linked to greater personal resources that fostered success and fewer problem behaviors that could have interfered with that success. (p. 49)

Clearly, in the case of this study, self-esteem was a contributing factor but not the answer to school problems in this population. In addition to the personal resources developed by positive self-esteem, strategies and coping mechanisms employed by the minority students in Whitesell et al.’s (2009) study included defiance, drug abuse, violence and other negative behaviors. These behaviors were similar to the defiance strategies employed by the students in Spencer et al.’s study.

Another way to examine how a student might adapt to change would be to look at the variables that can affect the coping process. Schlossberg (1984) described four variables that can affect this adjustment: situation, self, support, and strategies. In the case of transitioning to the higher educational environment, the situation would be entering the institution of higher education and how that would impact the student. Self would consist of the student’s own worldview, resources, past experiences, self-identity, and personal development. In this situation of transition, supports would include any personal, family, friends, financial supports and emotional support systems that would be available to the student. The way the student actually copes with the change would be what Schlossberg called strategies.

Coping also varies from individual to individual and from culture to culture (Gibson-Cline, 2000; Spencer, et al. 1995; Worschel, 2005). Gibson-Cline (2000) conducted a multinational study of college students’ concerns, help-seeking behaviors and coping strategies. The students employed a wide array of strategies, including seeking assistance, disengagement and resignation. The study also noted that the coping
strategies employed by both advantaged and disadvantaged youth did not actually address or solve the issues. When discussing immigrant populations, Gibson-Cline noted that the youths, while having similar issues to other poor and disadvantaged youth also “need to adapt quickly to new cultures in the face of loss of their own cultural support systems and enormous practical concerns such as immediate need for education and mastery of a new language” (p. 54). Thus coping strategies may further or hinder educational success for minority students.

Whatever the adaptive strategies or coping processes used by college students, it is clear that not all minority students are successful in overcoming their educational challenges. According to Freitas and Balutski (2009), Native Hawaiian students are more likely to drop out of college in their first year and those who remain are much less likely to graduate in four years. Further, the majority of Native Hawaiian freshmen students, 84%, are not first-time freshmen. These statistics are disappointing in light of the educational advances made here in Hawai‘i with regard to culture based education and support systems for Native Hawaiian students.

As previously discussed, Western education methodologies in educating indigenous people have been described as a type of colonialism and a power tool of the dominant culture (e.g. Ma Rhea, 2004; Smith, 1999; Thaman, 2003; Wilkinson, 1981). Alternative ways of knowing and learning are often discouraged. According to Wilkinson (1981), “Education is the great massifier of America. Its goal is to break down distinctions between people, to teach people to live in a rootless society, and to foster communication among strangers” (p. 49). These colonizing paradigms can still be seen throughout the world. For example, while discussing the Indigenous people of the
Pacific, Thaman (2003) stated: “Globalization, like colonization, is once again disempowering many Oceanic peoples, especially those who are most removed from western knowledge and values” (p. 4).

The effects of this westernization in education are reflected in educational culture, management, structure and knowledge within the academy. According to Smith (1999):

The form that racism takes inside a university is related to the ways in which academic knowledge is structured as well as to the organizational structures which govern a university. The insulation of disciplines, the culture of the institution which supports disciplines, and the systems of management and governance all work in ways which protect the privileges already in place. (p. 133)

This may lead to conflict between the majority group members and those in the minority. This conflict can have negative consequences or may be constructive, strengthening the cultural identity of the minority group. Worschel (2005) noted:

Once the lines between cultural/ethnic groups are drawn, portraying the out-group as a threat to the in-group’s culture leads to in-group cohesion, conformity to group norms, obedience to group leaders, and salience of group identity. Intergroup conflict, not necessarily violent, lubricates the wheels of group formation and concern about the out-group helps ensure a ready supply of loyal group members. Conflict, then, is functional to the cultural group. (p. 744)

In other words, the existence of conflict (defiance, behavior problems, etc.) may be contributing to the strength of the cultural identity of these minority groups. This
certainly seems to be evident in the case of the African American males in the study undertaken by Spencer et al. (1995).

The subject of conflict resolution can also be used to understand how students of different cultures may cope with conflict and struggles. The process of working through these conflicts and struggles includes emotional, cognitive and behavioral components. According to Worschel (2005):

A willingness to interact and cooperate with the out-group toward goals that are mutually beneficial guides the behavioral component of peaceful co-existence.

This willingness can only occur when group members feel that the out-group will not attempt to force assimilation on them. (p. 752)

This then reinforces the idea that conflict and feelings of forced assimilation play a major role in feelings of acceptance. Because many college student retention studies (Tinto, etc.) claim feelings of acceptance as an important factor in college success, it is important to examine Hawaiian students’ struggles with this issue. What happened when these students move from the culturally supportive immersion environment to the mainstream environment of a university campus?

As increased numbers of indigenous students move from culturally sensitive educational arenas into the higher education environment, there will be a greater need to understand the challenges these students face. Their needs may be different than indigenous students who have been educated in a traditional school environment. These students may not have developed the same coping strategies as other students since they have been in a supportive and cultural environment. We need to understand; we need to know.
Endings

As discussed earlier, in Bridges’ (2003) theory endings are a fundamental part of the changes students experience during the transition into a four-year institution from high school. Leaving the high school setting is an ending. Friends may move away or students leave friends and families to go to college. These are all examples of endings imbedded in the transition between high school and college. In the context of this study, participants will also be ending their experiences as a student in the Papahana Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i environment.

Students in the senior year of high school are on the brink of change. Standardized tests, college entrance exams, admission applications and college planning are all indications that an ending is approaching. Cognitive and epistemological development is ongoing (Kegan, 1982; Love & Guthrie, 1999; Schommer, 1998). A study conducted by Schommer (1998) on the epistemological development of high school students showed that: “There is some epistemological development that occurs during high school. Belief in simple knowledge, certain knowledge, and quick learning changed significantly from freshman to senior year” (p. 410).

When looking at the cognitive development of high school students, Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences offered insight into cognitive processes. Gardner (2006) stated, “In the classic psychometric view, intelligence is defined operationally as the ability to answer items on tests of intelligence” (p. 6). This definition, although long accepted in many academic communities, may not fully consider cognitive or personal development. Moran, Kornhaber, & Gardner (2006) stated: “Multiple intelligences theory proposes that it is more fruitful to describe an individual’s cognitive ability in
terms of several relatively independent but interacting cognitive capacities” (p. 23). These multiple intelligences “intermix within a student to yield meaningful scholastic achievement” (Moran et al., 2006, p. 24).

According to Gardner (1999, 2006), there are a minimum of seven multiple intelligences including linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. This theory proposed that, “Each of us is equipped with these intellectual potentials, which we can mobilize and connect according to our own inclinations and our culture’s preferences” (Gardner, 1999, p. 44). The individualistic nature of this theory provides insight into adaptive pedagogical methodologies that may assist students’ in achieving educational success. Encouraging students to make use of their individual strengths while enabling use of their lesser-developed intelligences, increases development and enhances student-learning outcomes (Gardner, 1999).

Gardner’s (1999, 2006) theory can be compared to Kegan’s theory, which divided cognitive development into stages. Kegan’s stages were based on the work of Jean Piaget whose “research discloses four systems of thought about the physical world which people seem to grow through invariantly” (Kegan, 1982, p. 38). Piaget’s stages as analyzed in Kegan’s (1982) work were incorporative, imperial, interpersonal, institutional, and interindividual. Each of these stages utilizes subject-object or self-other balancing (Kegan, 1982). These stages can be associated with Piaget’s sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, early formal operational, full formal operational and post-formal operational stages. As students develop, they move between a balance of autonomy and inclusion (Kegan, 1982).
In his 1982 work, *The Evolving Self*, Kegan discussed the six levels of self that a person moves through over their life span. Individuals move through each level, going through a period of growth and loss of each self throughout the lifespan. The selves that Kegan (1982) described are the Incorporative self, the Impulsive self, the Imperial self, the Interpersonal self, the Institutional self and the Interindividual self. According to Love and Gutherie (1999), “Kegan’s theory centers around five ‘orders of consciousness’ which are principles of mental organization that affect thinking, feeling, and relating to self and others” (p. 67). As a person moves through the orders, each one assimilates and builds upon the insights and abilities of the previous orders.

Kegan’s (1982) stages contained a marked similarity to Gardner’s (1999) theory. Both discussed interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Gardner (1999, 2006) referred to these skill sets as a form of intelligence, while Kegan (1982) referred to these skills as stages of development. In relation to this study, students entering the academy are usually entering the interpersonal stage of development and may display some vulnerability as they move into this phase (Kegan, 1982). This vulnerability may or may not be present in those students who have astute, well developed interpersonal intelligence, thereby offering an explanation regarding the ease of adaptation to college for some students (Gardner, 1999).

The way a student processes information, their learning style, is another important variable. Educators must understand how students learn or make meaning. Mezirow (2000) discussed Bruner’s (1996) “four modes of making meaning,” which consisted of “(1) establishing, shaping, and maintaining intersubjectivity; (2) relating events, utterances, and behavior to the action taken; (3) constructing of particulars in a normative
Mezirow (2000) argued that this list is missing one component that is provided through transformative learning theory, that of “becoming critically aware of one’s own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation” (p. 4).

The process of making meaning in indigenous cultures may take a different form from the transformative learning that Mezirow (2000) describes. Indigenous knowledge and meaning making is more organic and spiritual (Walker, 2003). “The Native Hawaiian embraced the spiritual and supernatural that connected the land and people. With the introduction of scientific knowledge that sought to objectify this relationship, the very fiber of native knowing was contested” (Benham & Heck, 1998, p. 112). This understanding of and harmony with one’s surrounding and people is language and cultural based knowledge that infuses the indigenous worldview and affects educational performance. Battiste (2000) noted:

> Educators argue that school systems can maintain Aboriginal identity, culture, and languages by making a conscious effort to teach the children how to act in the modern classroom. They do not know or understand the cognitive shock they would be forced to endure if Aboriginal consciousness and language were to be respected, affirmed, and encouraged to flourish in the modern classroom. (p. 197-198)

In addition, the recent literature on Hawaiian high school students offers an interesting insight into the issues and problems encountered by some of the haumāna. For example, Benham and Heck (1998) stated: “Several examples of cultural differences
that are often neglected in formal school settings include the use of Standard English, the avoidance of eye contact, the need to talk story and the value of family privacy” (p. 193).

**Western versus Indigenous education.** According to Dela Cruz, Salzman, Brislin and Losch (2006), “Differences in Western and Hawaiian educational philosophies and values account for many of the academic struggles Hawaiians encounter” (p. 121). Some of these differences include time schedules imposed in the traditional Western classroom, the way students interact with teachers, the competitive nature of the traditional classroom, the value of grades as an indicator of success and accomplishment and the lack of hands-on experiences (Benham & Heck, 1998; Dela Cruz et al., 2006).

What types of educational environments or practices have been shown to support Hawaiian and indigenous students? Wetere-Bryant (2000) suggested:

For successful education practices, there are several principles I believe need to be met. First, all learning needs to involve the concepts of the past, present, and future. All learning needs to be delivered with a balance of the physical, mental and spiritual levels of understanding. We also need to center out learning around understanding oneself, one’s environment, and the relationship between oneself and one’s environment, as a means to access knowledge. (p. 147)

One way to center the relationship between oneself and the environment is through language. Little Bear (2000) stated “Language embodies the way a society thinks …. Aboriginal languages are, for the most part, verb rich languages that are process – or action oriented” (p. 78). This connection between indigenous language and
knowledge is one driving force behind the creation of the Hawaiian language immersion schools (Ma Rhea 2004).

Hawaiian language immersion schools, or Papahana Kāiapuni ′Ōlelo Hawai‘i, are relatively new when compared to other, more traditional high school environments. Educating students in an indigenous language requires an alternative methodology and pedagogy in the classroom (Ledward & Takayama 2008; Ma Rhea 2004; Reyhner & Dodd, 1995). As previously mentioned, one methodology that has been somewhat successful in charter schools and particularly in Hawaiian language immersion schools in Hawai‘i is cultural based education (CBE) (Kanai‘iaupuni, 2007; Ledward & Takayama 2008).

The CBE method generally includes Pilina ‘Ohana – family involvement, Pilina Kāiaulu – community involvement, Haku – original compositions, Mālama ‘āina – environmentally sensitive projects, Kōkua kāiaulu – community service, Hō‘ike – performances and demonstration of completion/competence, and Ola Pono – application of life and cultural skills (Ledward & Takayama 2008). The incorporation of these cultural values grounds and defines the students’ educational experiences.

Teaching through the language and culture is a defining factor of cultural based education. The defining aspect seems to be the link between the language and the culture. According to Murakami (2006):

Language cannot be taught in a sterile environment, devoid of corresponding cultural companionship because, in such an environment, as many indigenous educational programs in the past have found, the language is doomed to be applied only in academic contexts, rather than real life. (p. 11)
In this section we have looked at ending and letting go. As we have seen, as the haumāna navigate the Endings stage of transition, questions remain regarding how they let go of their past educational practices in order to adapt to the Western ways of academe while retaining connections to their identity, culture and language.

Neutral Zone

The neutral zone may be the hardest time in a period of transition, yet it is also a time with great potential. For students moving from high school to college, this may be a time of disorientation and confusion. According to Bridges (2003), “The neutral zone is not the wasted time of meaningless waiting and confusion that it sometimes seems to be. It is a time when reorientation and redefinition must take place” (p. 43). In other words, this is a time of student development.

This reorientation and redefinition are similar to other theories that speak to student development. In fact, there have been numerous theories put forth regarding the cognitive development of college students (e.g., Gardner, 1999; Kegan, 1982; Moran, Kornhaber & Gardner, 2006). These theories discussed ways in which students develop, both emotionally and cognitively. Each theory has its own value and application to the development of college students (Evans, et al., 1998; Love & Guthrie, 1999).

Differences between how students make meaning and how information is presented can cause incongruities in what is actually learned. Mezirow (2000) stated: “Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to future action” (p. 5). These previous experiences and the meaning created through them “frame” future
meaning. A frame of reference through which all future meaning will be filtered is created.

Personal frames of reference are different for each student; therefore, the educational processes should also vary. Cranton (2000) asserted: “People with different learning styles, cognitive styles, and personality traits both assimilate and reconstruct frames of reference in distinct ways” (p. 181). Service learning, transformational learning, active learning, learning communities, collaborative learning, and cooperative learning are just some of the wide variety of educational models designed to include students’ varying frames of reference (Chickering, 2006; Davis & Murrell, 1993; Dalton, 2006; Mezirow, 2000).

Personal frames of reference are also subject to revision and evolution. An important part of transformative learning is for individuals to change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds (Mezirow, 2000). This disorienting dilemma is an opportunity to reflect, question, and eventually reframe the experiential base. On entering the academy, many first year students must confront this type of dilemma in the face of an increasingly diverse campus.

**Traditional first-year experience.** First-year experience programs are now a common tool used to help students transition into the academy. According to Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates (2005) various types of support and programming for first-year students that have been successfully used include first-year seminars, learning communities, first-year centers, summer transition programs, faculty mentoring programs and leadership programs. These programs aim to support students and provide the tools
needed in the first year of their higher educational experience while providing necessary support through the transition period. As Upcraft and Gardner (1989) noted, the success of first-year students are central to the development of first-year programming. They noted that the definition of such success should “transcend the racial, ethnic, gender and age diversity of freshmen [and] describe their basic commonalities” (p. 2).

Research seems to support the idea that within the academy, first-year programs can raise awareness of support services. In fact, first-year programming has been shown to have an effect on students, their perceptions, and their awareness of services and supports that are available to them more than students who did not participate in the first year experience programs (Shrader & Brown, 2008).

The literature shows that services and supports for first-year students are central to the goals of first-year experience programs. According to Shrader and Brown (2008):

A principal goal of FYE programs is to establish a social cohort early in students’ academic careers and provide information about interactions with other individuals as well as various university systems (e.g., financial aid, counseling, health). Without this experience, students appear to lower their appraisal of these important resources. (pp 330-331)

This culture of support appears to be central to student success, especially when looking at underrepresented students. “When such reinforcement is missing, or, indeed, when certain subcultures serve to isolate participants from new and different ideas and people, the effects may even be negative” (Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006, p. 155). Clearly, support services are a necessity, but are not truly valuable unless students are
aware of the services, understand what is offered and, perhaps most importantly, use the services available to them.

Support and tools for coping are not only needed by underrepresented student populations, these tools and supports are central to retention of all first-year students. Shrader and Brown (2008) noted, “Students who do not successfully integrate into the academic environment represent a loss of resources in terms of student talent and revenue” (pp 333-334).

Further, the need for support is apparent outside of the classroom as well. “Evidence clearly indicates that students’ learning and cognitive development is shaped not only by what happens in the classroom … but also by the extent to which students take advantage of the range of learning opportunities … outside the classroom” (Reason, et al., 2006, p. 155).

There are other variables that can have an effect on student success. According to Upcraft and Gardner (1989), “To understand freshman success, we must understand the influence of their backgrounds, characteristics, and experiences before college, including personality, demographic and cultural characteristics” (p. 7) In other words, educators need to be aware of the diverse worldviews that students bring into the higher educational setting.

How prepared students are for the transition to the higher educational setting is prevalent in the literature. Kidwell (2005) observed that “the difficulty they [first-year students] encounter arises from the workload that each course expects of them—what students learn—as well as a transformation in the students’ styles of learning—how they learn” (p. 254). Moreover, the academic preparedness of students entering the academy
has an impact. “Students’ academic competence is shaped in no small measure by students’ precollege characteristics. These personal and academic backgrounds and experiences both prepare and dispose students to varying degrees to engage with the learning opportunities their institution offers” (Reason, et al., 2006, p. 156).

**Non-traditional and minority first year students.** The current upsurge in diversity occurring rapidly on university campuses raises questions regarding how these institutions adapt to the shifting needs of their students. As previously noted, many of the methods employed, although time tested and firmly entrenched, do not fully address the varying requirements that diversity brings to a campus. According to Barrington (2004), “the normative assumption still prevailing in many universities is that knowledge acquisition is the main function and that transmission through lectures is the main mode” (p.425). There is recent research that points to “a shift from a deficit model of student failure towards more context specific investigations of pedagogical and discursive practices, a position which is leading to new kinds of questions about learning and teaching in higher education” (Haggis, 2004, p.350). Post-secondary educators need access to information regarding learning strategies that may assist students. Students also require access to programs and services to assist them in adapting their learning styles and strategies to succeed in the higher education environment.

Indigenous and native Hawaiian students’ adaptation to the post-secondary educational environment is not always easy. Interestingly, the literature on programs and services available to support these students is nearly non-existent. Henderson (2000) discussed the perceived attitudes of universities and educational processes towards indigenous people: “Their categories and disciplines deny our holistic knowledge and
thought. Indigenous people are forced to exist as an exotic interdisciplinary alterity” (p. 164). These struggles are also documented in the success rates of native Hawaiian students within the University of Hawai‘i. Dela Cruz, et al., (2006) noted:

Western and Hawaiian educational philosophies conflicted in the 1850s and continue to clash in modern times …. Although Hawaiian student enrollment figures throughout the University of Hawai‘i system have steadily increased in the past few years, Hawaiians are still underrepresented on the University of Hawai‘i campuses, indicating difficulties in adjusting to the Western educational system continues at the higher education level. (pp. 122-123)

Clearly, the Neutral Zone is a time of restructuring and refocusing one’s world. Students face new challenges and situations while gaining insight and forging new understandings. The time of confusion comes to an end and the beginning is ahead.

**Beginnings**

Once one has navigated through the murky, choppy waters of the neutral zone one moves into the acceptance and adjustment phase that Bridges (1980, 2001, 2003) termed Beginnings. In the case of the experience of transitioning into college, this stage is the student’s first year. It is the period after the student has settled in to the daily routine of classes, friends, and the inherent stresses and joys of college life.

As we have seen, the experiences of students who enter the university environment directly from high school have been widely studied and documented. Cognitive and developmental theories have tried to address and identify the various factors that influence this transition process (Evans, et al., 1998; Love & Guthrie, 1999; Roe Clark, 2005). Chickering and Schlossberg (2002) even combined their talents to
create a handbook of sorts, *Getting the Most Out of College*, designed to help students with this transition.

What is it that makes this transition so difficult? The wide array of factors influencing this experience makes a simple answer impossible. Family background, emotional and social development, educational preparation and socio-economic status are just some of the factors that may influence a student’s experiences as he or she transitions from secondary education to a higher education environment (Brinkworth, et al., 2009; Evans, et al., 1998; Roe Clark, 2005).

Roe Clark’s (2005) study of eight first-year students over the course of their second semester in college provided interesting insight into the college transition experience. Her findings supplied information on the development of strategies by students in response to perceived obstacles and challenges. She stated:

Students encountered challenges throughout their first year that ranged from positive to negative and occurred both inside and outside of college. Each challenge included its own set of influences, which also existed inside and/or outside the college environment. Students responded by devising strategies to address those challenges and accommodate the related influences. (p. 302)

Expectations have also proven to be a complication when discussing student adjustment. Brinkworth, et al. (2009) conducted a study in Australia at the University of Adelaide that surveyed 233 students six months into their first year at the university. Another survey was taken of 189 students a year and a half after they graduated. Finally, faculty and tutors who had worked with both groups were surveyed. The results of these surveys were compared to a similar survey conducted in the orientation week. They
stated “Student responses … indicate that a successful transition is not solely due to academic ability, but … on an ability to make a rapid adjustment to a learning environment that requires greater autonomy and individual responsibility than students expect” (p. 168).

In researching the literature on this stage of the transition experience with regard to Hawaiian first year students, the absence of information was startling. There are studies on the success rates of Native Hawaiian students in the university system yet studies examining their first-year and transitional experiences are lacking.

The scarcity of research should not be taken as a sign that these students have a high rate of success in the university. Although there are programs in place for Native Hawaiian students, a recent study profiling the Native Hawaiian population in the University of Hawai‘i system noted:

Hawaiian students are more likely than other UH Mānoa students of other ethnicity groups to drop out of school after their first year …. Over a quarter of Hawaiian students drop out of UH Mānoa after their first year (26.7%) and another 9.5% after their second year, leaving only 63.8% retained after the first two years. Dedicated first year experience programs for Hawaiian students would be beneficial in providing guided advising and mentorship for this specific group of students. (Freitas & Balutski, 2009, p. 26)

Clearly there is a need to gain a deeper understanding of this population – to raise awareness of the cultural and epistemological needs and to uncover pedagogies and methodologies to support these students.
This chapter has provided a discussion of the literature available on indigenous ways of knowing, the influences of culture, and a review of available research on transition, change and coping. An overview of cognitive development of students has set a context for the study. Finally, the discussion of what we know about how first year students experience the transition to the college environment provided support and a background understanding in which to set this study.
Chapter 3. Ke Kiʻina Hana: Methodology

Nei ka honua, he ʻōlaʻa ia.

When the earth trembles, it is an earthquake.

We know what it is by what it does.

ʻŌlelo Noʻeau (Pukuʻi, 1983, p 251)

The quote above is deceptively simple. The Hawaiian kūpuna, the ancestors, were not actually speaking of earthquakes; rather, according to Mrs. Pukuʻi this saying refers to understanding something by studying its actions. It is the same in the field of research. No study is complete without a discussion of the methodology, the action of the study. According to Jones, Torres and Arminio (2006), “Without attention paid to methodology, the researcher lacks the means to appropriately design the study, analyze the data, and make sense of findings” (p. 16). Further, there is no context for readers of the study to understand the results.

I used a phenomenological case study method for this research. This inquiry examined students who have been educated in Kaiapuni ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi and moved, or transitioned, to a higher education setting. Using Bridges’ (1980, 2001, 2003) theory of transition, I explored the experiences and perceptions of these students and this chapter will discuss the method and theoretical frameworks, followed by the specifics of this study.

Methodological Frameworks

After considering several different types of studies, a multiple case study emerged as the most appropriate choice of method. According to Merriam (1998), the case study
involves research in a real-life context of a bounded single unit. She stated, “The single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case” (p. 27). The bounded nature of this study gave rise to the initial idea of case study. This study is a multiple case study consisting of five cases. Each student constitutes a single case. The study was bounded by place, time and participants. These boundaries will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Additionally, the fundamental ties to situational understanding within the study led to this choice. Flyvbjerg (2006) stated:

> Context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity. Such knowledge and expertise also lie at the center of the case study as a research and teaching method or to put it more generally still, as a method of learning. (p. 222)

There are, however, many different theoretical approaches to a case study. For example, Jones et al. (2006) discussed the possibility of a researcher using critical theory as a theoretical view to an ethnographic or phenomenological study. They stated:

> “Because case study is both a unit of analysis and a methodology without a presumed philosophical tradition attached to it, it is both common and important to see case studies described with an anchor in a particular theoretical perspective” (pp. 53-54).

The research method for this study (see Jones et al., 2006) is phenomenology. Creswell (2007) asserted, “The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (p. 58). In other words, the researcher seeks to understand an experience by exploring the commonalities within the participants’ perceptions of the phenomenon and to derive a
description of the essence of the experience. In this study, the aim was to describe the essence of the transition experience for these particular Hawaiian immersion students.

The theoretical frame used in this inquiry is Bridges’ (1980, 2001, 2003) theory on transition. Bridges held that transition is a multi-phased process that requires one to move through an ending, or period of letting go of the known. This period is followed by a time of confusion and even chaos that he calls the “neutral zone”. Bridges (2001) described this period as a “strange no-man’s-land between one world and the next. It is a zone where you pick up mixed signals, some coming from the past and some from the future” (p. 156). This is followed by a period of acceptance of the change, a beginning.

Case study. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) defined a case study as an “approach … in which a single individual, group, or important example is studied extensively and varied data are collected and used to formulate interpretations applicable to the specific case” (p. 13). This method is descriptive, interpretive, contextual, and most importantly, bounded (Frankel & Wallen, 2006; Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998).

A case study is descriptive and interpretive. The product of most types of qualitative research is a report filled with a deep level of description. The depth and quality of description add to the goodness of the study. Merriam (1998) wrote that a good strategy for generalizing a qualitative study is “rich, thick description providing enough description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation and hence, whether findings can be transferred” (p. 211). Further, the analysis of qualitative data is steeped in interpretation and rich descriptions (Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998)
A case study is contextual and bounded. Research, especially qualitative research, does not happen in a vacuum. It takes place in real world, natural settings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed the context of a study as being essential to understanding the meaning of the results. Context is also integral to the bounded nature of the case study. Jones et al., (2006) explained:

Because cases are situated within a bounded system, understanding the relationship of the case to the bounded system is crucial. This process begins by situating the specific phenomenon of interest (the case) in a larger context by describing what that context looks like. (p. 54)

The bounded system is also the most important criteria for a case study. Creswell (2007) described case studies as being bounded by a setting or a context, a bounded system. A study can only be considered a case study if the scope of the study is limited and the boundaries are clear. Merriam (1998) stated:

One technique for assessing the boundedness of the topic is to ask how finite the data collection would be, that is, whether there is a limit to the number of people involved who could be interviewed or a finite amount of time for observations. If there is no end, actually or theoretically, to the number of people who could be interviewed or to observations that could be conducted, then the phenomenon is not bounded enough to qualify as a case. (pp. 27-28)

This study was bounded by time. It was to be completed within one calendar year in order to ensure the students were in their first or second year of study.

The number of people who could be interviewed also bounded this study. The type of Hawaiian language immersion school from which they graduated limited the
number of participants. This study drew from only two Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i schools who use the Kumu Honua Mauli Ola philosophy. For the purposes of this study, we will use pseudonyms for the schools; one will be called Ke Kula ‘o Kaleiu‘i (or Kaleiu‘i) and the other Kula Ha’aheo ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i (or Ha’aheo). Participants must have spent their entire primary and secondary education (K – 12) in one of these schools. Further, the participants must have been in a non-Hawaiian Studies major in higher education program in the state of Hawai‘i. Finally, the participants must have completed at least one semester of their first year of study at a college. The boundaries described above defined and limited the parameters of the inquiry while providing a context in which the research occurred.

**Phenomenology.** Phenomenology is concerned with the study of a phenomenon – a study of the reactions or understanding of a shared experience (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). It is through this kind of study that the researcher strives to understand how a group of people makes meaning of an experience. In addition, Merriam (1998) stated: “Qualitative research draws from the philosophy of phenomenology in its emphasis on experience and interpretation, but a researcher could also do a phenomenological study using the particular ‘tools’ of phenomenology” (p, 15). The use of these tools in harmony with a bounded case study to describe a shared phenomenon defines these phenomenological case studies.

When deciding if phenomenology is a good match to the intended case study, the researcher needs to consider the subject. Creswell (2007) stated “The type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon” (p. 60). To focus on these
shared perceptions and understandings, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with broad, open-ended questions are one feature of phenomenology that is well suited for a case study (Creswell, 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The rich, thick descriptions of the experience also fit well within the case study format. According to Merriam (1998), rich, thick description is defined as “providing enough description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation and hence, whether findings can be transferred” (p. 211)

Another aspect of phenomenology that may be appropriate for a case study method is phenomenological analysis. “This type of analysis attends to ferreting out the essence or basic structure of a phenomenon. Several specific techniques – such as epoche, bracketing, imaginative variation, first- and second-order knowledge, and so on are used to analyze experience” (Merriam, 1998, p. 158). Although all these techniques are associated with phenomenology, the researcher should use those tools that best suit the study.

Epoche, according to Merriam (1998) is a way for the researcher to analyze, bring to light, and work to eliminate the various biases and pre-conceived ideas about the area of study. Epoche involves setting aside prejudgements and maintaining an unbiased, receptive presence in the research process (Moustakas 1994). Bracketing involves stating and then setting aside the preconceived notions and beliefs of the researcher to ensure the goodness of the study (Van Manen, 1990). Finally imaginative variation is a tool used to help view the phenomenon under study from other perspectives or viewpoints (Merriam, 1998).
“A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p.57). This quote helped inform my decision to use a phenomenological case study approach for my research. The desire to understand the meaning of the participants’ lived experience is central to my study. This study is not solely about culture; rather it is about the students’ experience in and out of the classroom. Further, according to Van Manen (1990), “It [phenomenology] differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting” (p. 9).

The philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology are also helpful to my study. I seek to uncover the meaning of the experience; what Jones et al. (2006) term the “lifeworld” of those individuals sharing the phenomenon. The study looks to grasp the shared experiences of the participants during the transition from an indigenous education environment to traditional higher education. It seeks to discover the students’ perceptions of the experience.

Phenomenological, or heuristic, research focuses not only on the shared experiences but also on the meaning created by participants involved in the phenomena. Moustakas (1994) noted, “The aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (p. 13). This provides a method for meaning making from experiences, including internalizing the experience to create new understandings.

The qualitative researcher has a wide array of methods and frameworks from which to choose. It is the subject and the research question that will drive these choices.
Although an ethnographic case study could have fit my study, the cultural focus, the extended nature of the study and the anthropological underpinnings of the approach do not support my inquiry. The shared nature of the experience and the focus on the phenomenon is what led me to select a phenomenological case study.

**Research Sample**

Due to the specific nature of the phenomenon under study, the participants were selected using a snowball sampling method. According to Merriam (1998) snowball sampling “involves asking each participant or group of participants to refer you to other participants” (p. 63). Initial participants were located using purposeful sampling and were asked to refer additional participants based on similar criteria (see below). In addition, I used an online social media program, Facebook®, to make initial contact with several other participants. The initial contact was followed up with an email explanation of my background, the purpose of the study and some specifics of the study. Jones et al. (2006) noted, “Sampling criteria, then, serve as the foundation for making sampling decisions and must be made explicit as the guide for selecting a sample” (p. 68).

For the purposes of this study, participants were educated from kindergarten through their senior year (K – 12) in a Hawaiian language immersion environment. In order to ensure there was a transition from a Hawaiian educational environment to a non-Hawaiian learning environment participants must also have entered a non-Hawaiian studies major in college. In addition, all participants were in their first or second year in higher education within the state of Hawai‘i.

I am aware that the relationship between researcher and participant is a fragile one. Merriam (1998) encouraged researchers to do as much as possible to ensure the
privacy of participants. For this study, the privacy of the participants was protected using pseudonyms. I also used pseudonyms for the names of the Hawaiian language immersion schools and the colleges and universities that the participants attended to further protect the participants’ identity. Participants were advised of the purpose of the study and given the opportunity to review and approve data pertinent to them prior to the completion of the study. A copy of the informed consent form provided to all participants can be found in Appendix C. In addition, permission for this study was obtained from the University of Hawai‘i Committee on Human Studies Institutional Review Board.

Another concern regarding the relationship between the researcher and participants is the existence of power differences within the relationship. Jones et al. (2006) held that “Researchers must acknowledge the potential position of power they hold as researchers and as a result of their social identities. Researchers must then work through the messiness of understanding the influence these different positions have on the research process” (p. 108).

I addressed this issue by using a focus group for the first meeting. This helped establish a rapport between several of the participants and researcher and to ease the initial encounter. As is culturally appropriate, food was provided by the researcher during the group and all of the individual interview sessions. Further, participants of the focus group were acquainted with one another and given time before and after the focus group to chat. Finally, all interviews were conducted in a combination of English, Hawaiian Creole English (Pidgin English) and Hawaiian languages. This report reflects all three languages throughout the case studies. This multi-lingual perspective and process helped the participants relate to the researcher on their own terms in the language
with which they felt comfortable. Due to the culturally rich diversity of the Hawaiian language and for the sake of clarity, in many instances I have chosen to summarize comments made in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i rather than attempt a literal translation of the words of the participants. In these cases the summarization will appear before the actual quote.

**Study Sites**

Because of the varying nature of educational programming at different immersion schools, all participants needed to be graduates of one of two Hawaiian language immersion schools who share an educational philosophy. Students in this study were either graduates of Ke Kula ‘o Kaleiu‘i or Kula Ha‘aheo ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i. These schools are kindergarten through high school (K-12) Hawaiian language immersion schools. Ke Kula ‘o Kaleiu‘i is located in a rural area in the state of Hawai‘i, while Kula Ha‘aheo ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is located in a more populous area of the state. Both schools base their education on the Kumu Honua Mauli Ola educational philosophy and both enjoy a graduation rate that is much higher than the state average. And, as previously stated, all participants were enrolled in college within the state of Hawai‘i in a non-Hawaiian studies major. All of the sites involved in the study will be described further in Chapter Four.

**Data Collection**

In qualitative research, and more specifically in case study research, the researcher is also the instrument of data collection. All information is filtered through the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). “The qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 38).
Gathering data in a phenomenological investigation is a multifold process. Interviews, focus groups, observations, and artifacts are all sources of data (Creswell, 2007; Jones et al., 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Van Manen, 1990). There was one initial focus group with three of the participants. This group provided the base for the interview processes. The same questions were used in subsequent semi-structured interviews with participants who had not been able to participate in the focus group. This was followed by two one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each participant. These interviews took place over the span of an entire academic year to ensure a deeper understanding of the students’ perceptions and experiences.

According to Creswell (2007) “Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information” (p. 133). Local Hawaiian culture includes talk story sessions, where people get together in groups to talk about various topics, making this method culturally appropriate (Benham & Heck, 1998). Hawaiian culture also emphasizes relationships, basing trust and understanding on the strength of those relationships (Meyer, 2004). The participants in the focus group knew one another which helped to defuse some of the power differential at our first meeting. Thus, the focus group was especially appropriate for this study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that “qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a ‘field’ or life situation” (p. 6). This prolonged contact provides insight to afford a richer description of the phenomenon under study and a clearer view of the themes that emerge in the data analysis phase. To help capture the contact and understanding I used an audio recorder, video camera, and written notes in each encounter and interview session to collect data. A list of questions and discussion
topics for the focus group and interview sessions is included in Appendix A and B respectively. These questions were guided by the existing literature on first-year experience and by Bridges’ (1980, 2001, 2003) theoretical frame on transition. The questions were reviewed by a group of students who have previously transitioned from Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i to ensure the questions allowed the voices of the participants to be heard. The questions were also revised through the interview process to ensure a fuller and deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Analysis of Data

A thematic analysis of the data gathered helped me gain a deeper understanding of the essence of the phenomenon. According to Van Manen (1990), “Phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience. So when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up that experience” (p. 79).

Once data collection is complete, Moustakas (1994) described how data analysis begins:

Organization of data begins when the primary researcher places the transcribed interview before him or her and studies the materials …. The procedures include horizontalizing the data and regarding every horizon of statement relevant to the topic and question as having equal value. From the horizontalized statements, the meaning or meaning units are listed. These are clustered into common categories or themes. (p. 118)

These various thematic meanings emerged through repeated review and deeper understanding of the data. Van Manen (1990) described a theme as “The experience of
focus, of meaning, of point …. The sense we are able to make of something …. The process of insightful invention, discovery, disclosure …. Theme describes the content of the notion” (pp. 87-88). In order to ensure accurate and insightful data analysis, I transcribed all the focus group and interview audio recordings myself. This afforded me the opportunity to become intimately familiar with my data. Following the transcriptions, I began reviewing the data in each case looking for trends and themes. Detailed descriptions, audio transcriptions, personal notes from the interviews, and video records provided a wealth of information from which themes emerged.

Upon completion of the focus group and all the interviews, all the transcriptions associated with them, I began data analysis. First, I conducted an in-case analysis of the data. This was accomplished by coding the data and looking for patterns and themes. Pulling the data apart and then recombining it in a clearer manner provided an overall essence of the experiences. These cases were written up in narrative format and are reported in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five contains the brief in-case analyses followed by the cross case analysis. Creswell (2007) suggested looking for common ideas or trends in each case to determine themes across the cases. Using a modified version of Miles and Huberman’s (1994) data display to manually display data, I conducted a cross case analysis, identifying themes that ran across all cases. I used a method that Miles and Huberman (1994) call *stacking comparable cases*. This process involves writing up individual cases using a somewhat standardized set of variables. They note that it is important to leave some flexibility in these variables to ensure that unexpected themes can still emerge.
“After each case is well understood… you ‘stack’ the case-level displays in a ‘meta matrix’ which is then further condensed permitting systematic comparison” (p. 176).

The themes that were found in the individual cases served as my standardized variables. I looked for patterns and multiple instances of the pattern across all the cases. Next each statement relevant to the topic and question was horizontalized or regarded to have equal value. From these statements I then clustered the units of meaning into themes grouped by common categories. The themes of each case were then “stacked” into comparable cases, grouping like cases together and revealing similarities and differences in the cases.

Limitations and Challenges

Ensuring that the researcher does not unduly influence the data during collection is imperative. One of the fundamental features of a phenomenological study is bracketing out researcher biases and study limitations as much as possible. According to Van Manen (1990), “It is better to make explicit our understanding, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories. We try to come to terms with our assumptions, not in order to forget them, but rather to hold them deliberately at bay” (p. 47). In other words, detailed explanations of the researcher’s choices, assumptions, and biases aids in ensuring the dependability of results (Creswell, 2007; Jones et al., 2006; Merriam, 1998; Van Manen, 1990). In this study, I used journaling to work through thoughts and ideas to help bracket out my personal understandings, feelings, experiences and beliefs after each interview and analysis session.

This study is limited to five cases. However, this sample represents a large portion of the available sample. Kula Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i schools graduate twenty-
five to thirty (25-30) students statewide per year (Department of Education State of Hawai‘i, Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Student Support/Instructions Services Branch 2005). That means approximately 150 - 200 students per year graduate from Hawaiian language immersion schools. From this, one needs to subtract those students who choose not to continue on to higher education. Then we need to examine how many students choose not to go into Hawaiian studies. Then, one needs to subtract those students who choose to attend institutions of higher education on the United States Continent. From there, I was able to identify five students to participate in this study. Therefore, although the small size could be considered an issue, I was able to obtain a majority of available participants for this study. Needless to say, given the small sample size, the results of this study cannot be generalized to any larger population.

To compensate for the smaller sample size, I conducted one focus group to establish rapport with participants and to initiate an awareness of the process of transition. Following the initial focus group, I conducted two sessions of one-on-one interviews with each participant over an entire academic year. This proved useful in providing a wider variety of reflections and an opportunity for deeper reflection from participants. Using this multiple interview format in combination with ongoing analysis also provided a chance for the researcher to correct possible misconceptions, ask follow-up questions and confirm or discard emerging ideas.

Finally, as I am not of native Hawaiian ancestry I needed to be aware of my insider / outsider status. Like most researchers, I am both an insider and an outsider. I am an insider as I speak the Hawaiian language and I have studied Hawaiian language in an immersion environment at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. I am an outsider as I am not
Native Hawaiian and my primary and secondary education was not through the papahana ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. In order to address issues related to being an outsider, or not being a member of the culture associated with the study, I asked a native Hawaiian to be my peer debriefer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A tenured professor at a state university, she has actively provided an alternate lens through which I have been able to examine the results and perceptions. She repeatedly offered comments and insights on drafts and on data analyses, providing a perspective that I would not have seen alone. Additionally, I asked several Native Hawaiian undergraduate students to review my interview protocol prior to the start of the study.

**Goodness**

I chose to use the word goodness to describe the quality or worthiness of the intended research. Use of this term is intended to support the differences between qualitative research and quantitative methods. According to Jones, Torres and Armino, “Studies must be grounded in an epistemological and theoretical stance. Goodness requires that the stance is stated and that evidence is offered that the stance is followed” (p. 122). This is a phenomenological study in multiple case format framed by Bridges’ (1980, 2001, 2003) theory of transition. As Jones et al. (2006) stated: “Because qualitative work is grounded on foundations far different from those of quantitative work, it is only reasonable that criteria for evaluating research grounded in different epistemologies be different” (p. 119). Consequently, this study used criteria common to phenomenological and case study research.

Member checks are one common method of ensuring goodness and triangulating the data. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted: “Both facts and interpretations that will
ultimately find their way into the case report … must be subjected to scrutiny by respondents who earlier acted as sources for that information, or by other persons who are like them” (p. 211). Therefore, I ensured that the participants were given the opportunity to review the information for accuracy. After the focus group and all the interviews were transcribed and the individual cases were written, I sent each participant a transcript of their personal case for comment and input.

Another tool for maintaining the goodness of a study is the use of a peer debriefer. Lincoln and Guba (1985) remarked that a peer debriefer can be used for the “purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 308). Further, Cooper, Brandon and Lindberg (1997) stated that a peer “debriefer can help the evaluators discuss and define their roles in the task force without exerting undue, improper influence” (p. 24). They also noted that peer debriefers are very useful in clarifying questions of role and handling issues of power (pp. 24-25). Therefore, as previously mentioned, I used a peer debriefer to help ensure the quality of this study. The debriefer is a native Hawaiian woman involved in higher education. She speaks the Hawaiian language and is well versed in education and native Hawaiian issues. As mentioned earlier, she served to provide an alternate viewpoint and an additional lens through which I could view the data.

The use of thick, rich descriptions is also a common way to ensure the goodness of a study (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This concept is best captured in Van Manen’s (1990) words:

Phenomenological text succeeds when it lets us see that which shines through, that which tends to hide itself. And how can research as writing “let us see?”
Phenomenology is heedful of our propensity to mistake what we say (our words) for what we talk about (the *logos*). Phenomenological writing is not found in the colorful words of the story-teller, nor in the fanciful phrases of the person with a flair for writing. The words are not the thing. And yet, it is to our words, language, that we must apply all our phenomenological skill and talents, because it is in and through the words that the shining through (the invisible) becomes visible. (p. 130)

**Role of Researcher**

Creswell (2007) noted, “To fully describe how participants view the phenomenon, researchers must bracket out, as much as possible, their own experiences” (p, 61). It is in this spirit of bracketing out that I include my own biases in this report. The concept for this study grew from my own experiences in Hawaiian language immersion. I began my journey as a college student at the age of 44 at Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. The program is a university level immersion program where students are encouraged to use Hawaiian language as their primary language in the classroom as well as with peers outside of the class. Wilson and Kamanā (2009) explained:

Students enrolled in Ka Haka ‘Ula’s bachelor of arts program begin intensive study of Hawaiian through English their first year. They transition to total use of Hawaiian in the classroom the second year. In the third and fourth years of their degree, in addition to their daily language study, students take courses beyond Hawaiian language through Hawaiian. (p. 373)
My experiences as a student at Ka Haka ‘Ula instilled a deep and unwavering support of Hawaiian language immersion education. This is one of the driving forces behind the existence of this study. My personal experience in an immersion environment affords a deep understanding of and passion for the Hawaiian worldview.

An additional issue that I feel must be expressed in the bracketing out process is the fact that I am not a Native Hawaiian. I was born in Somerville, Massachusetts to a mother of Portuguese ancestry and a father of Irish heritage. My father was in the United States Navy and it was through his service that I came to Hawai‘i for the first time as a child. We were lucky to have been able to live in Hawai‘i for most of my formative years. I have spent the majority of my life learning and promoting the Hawaiian culture.

I am a kumu hula who has been trained in the traditional arts of hula. Hawai‘i and the Hawaiian culture have infused my life and colored my worldview. The use of a journal and deep, regular discussions with my peer debriefer helped bracket out these biases.

This chapter has provided an overview of the specifics of this study, the framework and the method that was used to understand the shared experiences of students who have been educated in Papahana Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i as they transition to a non-Hawaiian studies major in an institution of higher education. This study is intended to help make the invisible visible and to understand the experiences of the students.
Chapter 4. Nā Hoa Nīnaele ‘Ia: The Participants

‘Aʻole i keʻehi kapuaʻi i ke one o Hauiki.

Has not set foot on the sands of Hauiki.

One does not know much about a place until one has been there.

ʻŌlelo Noʻeau (Pukuʻi, 1983, p. 27)

As the proverb above notes, experience is usually the best teacher. One really does not truly know how to comprehend an experience until one has lived through it. This was especially true of the participants in this study. Each of the participants has lived through the transition from the papahana to the university. Each one was generous enough to allow me to share their story.

Experience is a multidimensional concept, especially when looking through an indigenous view. Meyer (2004) noted that when conducting research through a Hawaiian epistemological lens that one must “develop the right orientation to ourselves and our place first” (p. 60). Hawaiian knowledge ties place to understanding. In other words, the places tied to the research should be understood before the stories can be fully appreciated. It is in that spirit that I first present an overview of the educational settings. This will be followed by the stories of each of the student participants.

Ka Papahana

Four of the participants graduated from Ke Kula ‘O Kalei‘uʻi. Located in a rural area, this is a primary and secondary school. The other participant graduated from Kula Haʻaheo ‘Ōlelo Hawaiʻi located in a more populous area of the state. Although the schools are located in different environments, they are very similar. As discussed earlier,
both schools use the Kumu Honua Mauli Ola educational philosophy to guide their pedagogical methods.

Papahana schools are very small, often with less than 100 students enrolled in kindergarten through twelfth grades. This was the case with both of these schools. Papahana schools like these are heavily reliant on family involvement. In addition to volunteering at the schools, parents are encouraged to use only Hawaiian language in the home to ensure the continuity of the immersion environment. These two factors, small size and dedicated family involvement, help to create a community of Hawaiian language speakers, kumu (teachers), and cultural practitioners all working to support the students and promote the language.

The small class size of the school also allows for one-on-one interaction between the kumu and the haumāna (students). During the interview process with the participants, they all talked about being reminded about assignments and quizzes. They were encouraged to speak out and ask questions and the class did not move on until every student understood what was being taught. This level of support from the kumu was not limited to the classroom. It was not unusual for a kumu to ask if there are other issues outside school that may be bothering a student. They gave students their email addresses and even their telephone numbers in case a question or issue arose.

The involvement of families, the small class size and the encompassing support of the teachers all combine to create an overall sense of ‘ohana (family) and connection. Students know their classmates’ parents and siblings, and it is common practice to call the parents of another student aunty or uncle. This sense of community is the reason students say they were “raised” in the papahana.
Nā Kulanui

All of the participants are enrolled at a campus within the Kulanui o ka Pākīpika (KP) system. This system serves the residents of the state, students from the continental United States, and international students. The campuses are all unique and offer a wide variety of programs and degrees. There were four campuses from the KP system involved in this study.

KP North is the main campus, home to over 20,000 students. Two participants chose this campus. The campus does have dormitory space for students but the majority of the student body commutes from their homes or other off campus housing. Class sizes for first year classes are large, averaging 35 in a class with some lectures having up to 300 students.

KP South is smaller with a student body of approximately 4,000. One participant selected this campus for her studies. Another participant began her college education here and transferred to another campus in the system. There is limited dormitory space on this campus so most of the student body lives off campus with family or on their own. The average class size is 20 and the largest lectures seat 70 – 80 students.

Ke Kulanui Kaiaulu o ka Pākīpika (KKP) is the community college branch of the KP system. KKP West has an enrollment of roughly 8,000 students. One participant from the study attended this campus. There is no on campus housing at KKP West, so all the students must commute. The average class size is 20 and the largest first year lectures seat approximately 40 students.

The other KKP campus mentioned in this study is KKP East. Approximately 8,000 students attend this campus. One participant from this study transferred in to this
campus in her second year. All students at KKP East commute to campus as there is no on campus dormitory space. The average class size here is 28 with 35 as the largest class.

All of the aforementioned places were intimately involved with the participants of this study. Moving from the papahana to the KP campuses was the transitional experience shared by all of the participants. I was thrilled and honored that these students agreed to speak with me and share their experiences. The following are their stories.

**Walea**

The first time Walea and I met was in the focus group. This took place in a conference room in the Student Services building on the KP North campus. The internet and email proved extremely useful for our subsequent interviews as there was not an opportunity for us to meet again in person.

Quiet and shy, Walea is a young woman who describes herself as “the girl who speaks Hawaiian with no Hawaiian blood.” Currently a psychology major at KP North, she was raised by a father who speaks Hawaiian and a mother who does not. She entered the Hawaiian language immersion education system as a preschooler and stayed in the papahana through her senior year in high school. Walea feels that her time in the papahana shaped her morals and her worldview in addition to providing an educational base. Her transition experience was complicated by a learning disability that affected her classroom experiences. Nevertheless, she had adjusted to the “new distractions” and was on track to graduate from the university next year.

After graduating from Ke Kula ‘o Kaleiu‘i, she expected to find peace, quiet and freedom in the university setting. Walea also noted that she was not expecting to make
friends since she is quiet and shy. Nevertheless, when she moved into the residence hall in her first semester, she began to find friends. She spoke about relationships with people in the residence halls that felt like the ‘ohana relationship of the papahana. The shared experience of being new to campus and away from home combined with the proximity of living together helped create friendships. She stayed in the residence halls for her first year in the university and then chose to move into a place of her own off campus.

We talked about some of her more difficult experiences during her transition. She discovered that she needed to pay more attention to deadlines and due dates. In the papahana, the kumu would remind students about when assignments were due and classmates would work together to make sure everyone had all their work done. Walea did not find that level of support after her transition to the academy. In fact, she encountered many professors who did not seem to care. When we talked, she noted that on many occasions she felt like “just a number” and that the professors were only there to get paid. She felt that the professors did not listen to her questions and did not take the time to make sure the answer they gave was what she was asking.

Another challenge that Walea faced was preparing for exams. In Kaleiuʻi there were no mid-term or final exams. There were tests, difficult tests, and regular quizzes, but these did not cover a large amount of material. Once the material had been covered and tested, the class moved on. There were no comprehensive exams. In the university, she was faced with comprehensive exams covering an entire semester of material. That, combined with the fact that the professors do not consistently remind students about exams and quizzes like they did when she was in the papahana, left her feeling unprepared. Another quandary for her was the wording on some of the exams and tests.
She said that there were some complex English words that she did not understand and she felt that put her at a disadvantage. She noted that other students in her university classes did not seem to have that issue so she was embarrassed to ask for a definition. When asked if more classes in English in the papahana would have helped, she said “I’m not sure if learning more English would have helped or not because there’s a lot of words in the English language.”

Walea found the behavior of other students in the university to be a major challenge for her. She was disturbed that students in her classes were having conversations during class and not paying attention to the professor. An added annoyance for her was when students start packing up their books and bags before class is over. She spoke of having to listen more carefully because of classmates talking or because of the noise from other students packing up their bags and leaving. This behavior also bothered her because she had been taught to be respectful to the kumu. For example, things like not holding a door open for an older person or not taking one’s hat off when speaking to the professor left her annoyed and upset. A normally quiet person, she described one month where she spoke up to the offending person every time she saw something wrong both on and off campus, just to relieve the stress of seeing that kind of behavior.

Lawena, proper behavior, was also an issue when it came to asking questions in classes. Walea spoke of responding to a question in class and then feeling as if she had silenced the voices of other students. She spoke about times where the professor was so rushed and overwhelmed with questions at the end of class that when she asked a question the response she received was not applicable to her question. She ended up
leaving class without a satisfactory answer because she did not want to interrupt the other students. She even noted that “you talk about something and the teacher comments on it and asks if anybody else wants to add anything and if nobody says anything you’re going to be like oh I made them go quiet.” This was a change for her as she noted that in the papahana, students were encouraged to speak out and ask questions until they fully understood the material presented. It was assumed that if they did not speak up in class, then they were not paying attention to the kumu.

Walea does not make as much use of campus support as some other students might. We talked about some of the support systems that are available on campus including academic advising. She noted that: “academic advisors seem to rush at times and you can never fully get all the information you need.” She also felt that other services on campus are not as useful as they could be noting that many had limited appointment times and required a student to call at a certain time to make an appointment. She did not choose to use the programs available in the university; rather, she preferred to reach back to the papahana for support and assistance. Similarly, she stated that she tended to ask people with whom she was comfortable – classmates, co-workers or her immediate supervisors at her on campus job for assistance before going to on campus services designed to help students. She said that these were people who were “familiar with the [campus] area, they’re up to date on everything there, and I figured they would probably know.”

When asked about support systems outside of the university setting, Walea spoke fondly of the papahana and the preparation she received for the transition. In fact, she noted that she was often surprised that other students did not understand the complexities
of the financial aid system and had not been prepared for the intricacies of higher educational support and finances. She stated that in Kalei‘i, students have classes that prepare them for the financial aid application process and help them understand waivers, scholarships and loans. This included information about SAT’s and other standardized testing as well as the variances within the higher educational application processes. She seemed genuinely surprised to discover that many of her current classmates who did not come from the papahana arrived at the university lacking the skills and understanding to navigate these somewhat complex systems.

We talked a bit about the tools she used to succeed in the university. Walea noted that at the start of each semester she would worry that she would repeat her less than stellar performance from her first semester in college. Fortunately that has not happened. She has found that watching other students, observing them studying was helpful. She also noted that if she listened to students explaining concepts to others she was better able to grasp the information. She believes this comes from the way many things were taught in the papahana – watch how the kumu does something and then mimic what you saw. She found that taking this skill of observation and applying it to the university classroom was a major tool that helped her adjust.

As our discussions drew to a close, I asked Walea if she had any mana‘o, thoughts or encouraging words for those who followed her out of the papahana. She said:

It’s really going to be scary because you don’t know who will have the information, who you can turn to. You can kind of guess who might know an answer, but in the end it’s just going to be confused and it would really help if there was somebody when I first went there for me to be comfortable to talk to
and know who to turn to that would have all the information. Just to be able to have some guidance person there to be able to talk you through it if you have questions that you’ll feel comfortable talking to.

Nai‘a

Nai‘a is a young man who graduated from Ke Kula ‘o Kaleiu‘i. We first met in the focus group in the Student Services Building at KP North. He was educated in the papahana and, at the time of our meeting, was still undecided about his choice of major as well as his life path outside of the immersion environment. A liberal studies major at KKP West, he was animated and self-assured. He believed that the papahana prepared him to be a leader and gave him a positive self-image as a Hawaiian man.

We discussed the move from the papahana to the university and he talked about how attending first-year orientation affected his transition experience. Sociable and outgoing, Nai‘a noted that he most enjoyed the social aspects of the orientation programming. He said he attended most of the activities and enthusiastically tried to make new connections. He also stated that on some level he felt the need to fit in with other students who had not come from the papahana. He said he did not want the other students to think he was the only one there from the immersion environment.

When asked about his expectations on entering the university, Nai‘a believed that it would be fun, an exciting and care-free life. He did not anticipate any responsibilities and did not think he would have to work hard. When it came time for him to financially support himself while attending school and living off campus, it was very difficult. He eventually came to the realization that he would have to alter his “usual routine” to accommodate his new life in the city and on his own.
The changes were not confined to his life outside the classroom. When we talked he spoke of feeling spoiled in the papahana. He mentioned that the kumu would check up on students and tell them what they missed if they were not in class. He reminisced about how kumu would remind them to get assignments done on time. Once he moved into the college environment he discovered that professors in the university did not take that much of a personal interest in their students. He believed that the professors did not care if he was in class or whether he was passing or failing. Although he felt this taught him to learn from his mistakes, he also talked about not behaving the way he was raised. He thought that when he first arrived at KKP West he was not acting as responsibly as he had been taught. His grades were lower than in the papahana and he was not completing his work on time. After a conversation with his mother, he realized that he was an adult and he just had to “suck it up” and learn to live his new life.

The behavior of his classmates in college was somewhat problematic for Nai‘a. He was outraged at the level of disrespect shown to elders and to professors. He talked of being expected to thank the kumu in the papahana for taking the time and interest to teach the class, yet in the university students leave before class is over and never say good bye or thank you to the professors. He was offended when students talked to the professors with their arms crossed, with their hands behind their back, or while wearing a hat because these actions were considered rude and disrespectful lawena in the papahana.

Another incident he described involved an older female professor walking on campus. He recalled:

I remember one time there was a teacher with her bag, and it was raining and it was like the rolly bags, and there were students just passing her and they all had
umbrellas. And they were just passing by her, not stopping, not anything and its
pouring raining and nobody’s stopping to help her. I felt I had to help and I didn’t
have an umbrella so what I did was I ran to the custodian closet and I grabbed a
really big black trash bag and I held it over her and I walked her to her car and
then I went to my class, I was about ten minutes late to class, but that’s just what I
had to do!

He went on to note that all his life in the papahana he had been taught to respect
his elders and he could not let her walk in the rain and not try to help.

This brought up some more memories of Kaleiu‘i and some of the routines in the
papahana. He talked about social gatherings and how they were taught to let the elders
eat first “and then if there’s no food, there’s no food. You figure it out later, you stop at
somewhere and you eat.” It was simply a sign of respect. Waiting for special guests at
the piko (the central entrance to the school) entailed standing quietly and calmly waiting
so they could be properly welcomed with an oli (a chant) upon their arrival was another
memory he shared. If the guests did not arrive, no one was angry; that would be
disrespectful. He believed that having to be flexible in different situations helped him
learn to adapt and adjust.

Cooperating and working together with other students was also an adjustment.
Work on group projects was not as collaborative as it had been at Kaleiu‘i and he often
found himself taking the lead to make sure the work was done. He did not mind taking
on this task as felt he was raised to be responsible and the leadership role came naturally
to him. He also noted that the other students did not seem to mind him stepping up and
taking charge.
As an openly gay young man, Nai’a found a level of acceptance in the papahana that he did not see when he transitioned into college. He has been ridiculed, called names and teased – all new experiences for him within an academic setting. Anger was the only way he knew to react as he had never been treated that way. He talked about getting into fights when he first moved because of the insults and remarks that were made to him. He believes that in the papahana he was readily accepted and appreciated for who he is and that it made him stronger.

Nai’a stated that the papahana prepared him well for the transition and for his life outside the immersion environment. The ability to adapt to new situations, patience, and respect were important tools that have served him well throughout this new experience. He spoke of learning how to take notes and how to use the notes to study in the papahana, skills that have worked well for him in college.

Nai’a noted that although he has graduated, he still felt like part of the papahana. He spoke fondly of one kumu who was very strict with him in school. She still emailed and called to check up on him. She asked about his classes and college first and then asked how he was. If he had not heard from her and needed help, he would call her for support.

As we neared the end of our discussion, he talked about leaving the papahana, the good points and the more challenging ones. He was appreciative of how well he was prepared and felt ready to take on new challenges. When asked how he felt about the transition experience he responded:

I thank (Kaleiu‘i) for teaching me what is right and what is wrong in a school setting, but now I’m allowed to figure out for myself what is right and what is
wrong, and allowing myself to make mistakes knowing that it’s ok because I can pick myself up right after. And it’s not that bad making mistakes, you make mistakes, then learn, move on.

**Mamo**

Mamo and I first met in the initial focus group. She had been a classmate of Walea and Nai‘a and seemed very happy to see them both again. I arranged our subsequent interviews in conference rooms on the KP North campus for her convenience and comfort.

A graduate of Ke Kula ‘o Kaleiu‘i, Mamo is a young Hawaiian woman who spent her primary and secondary years in the Hawaiian immersion program and went on to pursue a Journalism degree at KP North. Although she was no longer being educated in the Hawaiian language immersion program she was still active in using, perpetuating, and promoting ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. When asked to describe herself she said, “I think my life, who I am, is based around the Hawaiian culture, Hawaiian language, Hawaiian identity.”

Upon entering the university she participated in the new student orientation program that was offered. Mamo noted that orientation was a good way to get to know the campus and learn the location of classes and various offices. “Coming from a way smaller campus it was a big help,” she said, noting that it afforded her the opportunity to adjust to her new surroundings. She stated that although the events and games were fun, the chance to learn where services were was the most valuable part of the experience.

Even though she had expected changes, Mamo’s first few weeks were quite an adjustment. One change was simply the move from the very small community of the papahana to the very large community of the academy. In the immersion program,
Mamo went to school with the same students, a class of 12 – 14. All the families knew each other and supported the students and one another. Moving from this small closed community to a university that was comprised of over 20,000 students was a major change for her. She spoke of “stressing” on school and working hard to do her best to be a good reflection on her family.

When she set off on her transitional journey out of the papahana, Mamo expected to “work hard, have a lot of stress, and get good grades.” She also expected to go out to parties, have fun and enjoy her freedom. To her, college, parties, and fun in her free time all seemed to be connected with the hard work of the classroom. She noted that she was excited to explore the beaches, meet new friends and discover life in the city. When asked about how her expectations compared to the reality she experienced she responded, “What I expected is exactly what I’ve experienced.”

The transition to the university presented a cultural shift as well. Mamo talked about the behavior of other students, which was a big issue for her. In the papahana the students were taught respect, their lawena was a central part of their educational foundation. There were consequences for improper behavior. For example, she spoke about being scolded by the kumu for not turning in an assignment on time and having her grade lowered for being late to class. At KP North, she noticed students walking out of class early, wearing hats in class, talking during lectures, playing on Facebook ©, and generally behaving in ways that she had been taught was impolite or unacceptable. This point was repeated several times in our discussions as she described how her university classmates disrespect the professors and how upsetting this was for her.
We talked about the differences between the kumu in the papahana and the professors in the university. She spoke about the lack of attention to her personally and to her success, which seemed elusive and unobtainable when compared to the support she experienced in the immersion environment. She stated that she felt like she was “just a number” and that the instructors were not invested in her success. In the papahana she felt the kumu were part of her ‘ohana, like an aunt or an uncle. They took care of the students, kept them on track, and encouraged them to be successful. In her experience she believes that the professors in the university did not have the same level of care and concern for their students as did the kumu in the papahana.

This led to a discussion of Mamo’s support system and how it changed in the transition between the papahana and the university. The immersion environment is a family-based support system. The students in the papahana help one another and take care of each other. If one student was having trouble with a concept or a lesson, the others would help. Older students took care of the younger students. There was also a deep and solid connection between families creating a support system based on ‘ohana (family). Students knew the parents and family of their classmates, and felt as if they were all one family. As previously mentioned, parents of classmates were often called ‘anakē (aunty) or ‘anakala (uncle). This was nothing like the larger size of the university environment where she noted that it was “every man for himself.” Mamo acknowledged that adjusting to these changes was a learning experience for her. She noted that she needed to adjust to the larger class sizes. That helped her to realize the importance of not being intimidated or afraid to ask questions when she needed more information.
These changes have had an influence on her learning style and on her choice of major. Mamo spoke about how difficult the first few semesters were in the classroom and how much difficulty she was having in the pre-medicine program. She worked hard, as hard or harder as she had in the papahana but was not succeeding. After much soul searching and many discussions with those close to her, she ended up changing her major in her second year. She realized that although she wanted to help her community, perhaps becoming a doctor was not the right path for her. Her strength in writing and desire to promote the Hawaiian language led her to look at a degree in Journalism.

These were significant changes in Mamo’s life and support systems. She seemed to miss the close knit community of the papahana. When asked her feelings about using on-campus services for support she responded that it was difficult as she did not feel connected to the larger campus community. Tutoring by someone she did not know was not comfortable for her. She missed the pili ‘ohana (familial) relationship with other classmates as well as the academic intimacy that the papahana provided. She described large lecture classes where there was no time to build relationships with classmates or with the professor. Students came in, took notes, and left. The support and services provided by university professors seemed distanced and impersonal to her. She noted that when she needs help or direction she will call someone from the papahana.

The disparities that Mamo experienced were not limited to the classroom. In discussing the differences between the rural life that she was raised in and the city life in which she found herself immersed, she spoke about the difficulties in adjusting to the fast pace of city life. She did believe that this change may be one that is experienced by any rural student moving to a large urban environment. However, she noted that in the
papahana they were taught not to be afraid but to face issues head on. She stated that the papahana taught her to be fearless and overcome all obstacles.

Mamo did feel that she had made successful adjustments to adapt to the higher educational environment while still achieving the inspirations and goals she carried from the papahana. She spoke of how the papahana helped her become a “modern Hawaiian” who had a responsibility to keep the knowledge that was passed to her alive. In fact, she feels that the immersion environment had laid out a life course for her in promoting and sharing the Hawaiian language and culture through any medium possible. She hoped to help carry on the use of modern technology to continue spreading the Hawaiian language to future generations.

As our interviews drew to a close, I asked Mamo if she had any words of wisdom for students in the papahana who may be thinking of coming into the academy:

An old Hawaiian saying is that it takes a village to raise a child; that goes along with ‘a’ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka halau ho‘okahi, there is not enough knowledge to be attained in one area, or one schooling, or one place. I think that for any haumana that is coming out of the papahana and going into an unfamiliar place, if you’re scared about that, it’s just another community from which you learn and it’s just another ‘ohana that you’re building. And it’s all going to come back to that kahua, that foundation that you originated from. You come from this kahua, you go out like all the kumu tell us, and, this is what I think is important for everyone to know, is that you go out and you learn as much as you can, and you come back. Because the knowledge you attain and bring back is what is going to help the
papahana, our culture, and our language especially to continue on through the
generations.

Ululani

Ululani was not able to attend the focus group as she was living on another island.

We were able to meet for all of our sessions at various meeting rooms on the KP South
campus. The first interview took place in the library, while the other meetings were in
an unused office on campus.

Ululani is a young woman of Hawaiian ancestry who graduated from Ke Kula ‘o
Kaleiu‘i. A single mother, she began her college journey pursuing a degree in
Agriculture at KP South. When asked the question “Who are you?” Ululani responded
only in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. This in and of itself speaks volumes to her identity and
worldview. In her response to the question she described herself as a family woman, a
person who cares for and loves her family. She also noted that one of her most important
values was to go out, learn what she could and return with the new knowledge to benefit
the Hawaiian community. She stated her ultimate goal was to support and propagate the
Hawaiian people, language, history and education:

He wahine mālama ‘ohana. He wahine kāko‘o i ka mō‘aukala Hawai‘i a he
wahine e ‘ike kāko‘o ana i ka ho‘oholo mua a me ka ulu kānaka. A ‘o kekahi o
ka‘u mau values, ‘o ia ho‘i ka hiki ke puka i waho a a‘o a ho‘i mai a ho‘ohana i
kēlā ‘ike no ka hoiihoi ‘ana i ke kaiāulu Hawai‘i. ‘O ia wale nō. ‘O ka mea nui
iā‘u i hiki ke ho‘oulu kānaka a ho‘oulu i ka mo‘aukala Hawai‘i a ho‘oholo mua i
ka mō‘aukala Hawai‘i.
Ululani is the only participant who did not move away from home for her first year in the university. Given that she was in her hometown, the fact that she did not attend new student orientation when entering the university is not surprising. She stated that she was working at the same times that the orientation activities were held. During her classes at Ke Kula ‘o Kaleiu‘i she had the opportunity to visit and explore the university, so she felt comfortable on campus before the start of her first semester. In fact, she said that what she expected to find in the university is exactly what she found. This familiarity proved to be both an advantage and a disadvantage once she began her studies at the university.

Although she knew something about the KP South campus, Ululani spoke of being afraid because she did not have the same support she had counted on in the papahana. She knew that she would be on her own to keep up with the work. She talked about the university as a large environment with many people she did not know. It was a challenge for her to feel comfortable in this setting since she had come from such a small community. Big classes made her especially uncomfortable, even to the point where she did not want to talk to anyone. However, that feeling did not carry over into the smaller classes where she noted that she got along well with her classmates.

When it came to the behavior of some of her classmates in the classroom, Ululani was taken aback. It was a surprise to see students using cell phones in class, texting during lectures and talking to one another while the professor was teaching. She had difficulty with this because she was used to an environment where everyone paid attention to the kumu and disrespect was not tolerated. There were even occasions when her classmates were so rude or disrespectful that she felt ashamed. “It’s so bad! The
PEHEA KA NOʻONOʻO?

respect level here is so bad. And sometimes the part that makes me so ashamed is the one who is disrespectful – it’s going to be the Hawaiian.”

We talked a bit about moving from the Hawaiian immersion environment to an all English class setting. Ululani noted that it was difficult but that the kumu in the papahana were still there to support her. She spoke about feeling lost at times, but believed that it has helped her overall. Like many students who have grown up in Hawaiʻi, in her day-to-day life Ululani spoke Hawaiian Creole English, also known as Hawaiian pidgin English. This is a local dialect that incorporates the syntax of the Hawaiian language but is a combination of English, Hawaiian and several other languages that were introduced in the plantation era in Hawaiʻi. She noted that she occasionally feels awkward because, while her education is equal to other students, her immersion education has left her lacking the more accepted accent-neutral linguistic skills of the continent. This increased her feelings of isolation from other students.

Ululani’s transition became a two-fold occurrence for her. She began her university experience at the KP South campus in her hometown. At the beginning of her second year she made the decision to move away from home, to another island and a much larger city. This relocation included transferring to KKP East and changing her major to Travel and Tourism. She noted that the realization that “you’re eventually going to have to fly away and go out and make your own living” helped her decide to step out of the safety of her home island and venture out on her own. She felt that moving to the city was difficult and that she had to force herself to accept it and adjust, to keep moving forward.
Ululani believed she learned a lot about herself during both transition experiences. She realized that she needed to be more diligent in her assignments and class work as there was no one to remind her to do them. Taking notes in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i helped her to keep current with lectures and class work. She stated that it was harder to take notes in English because the notes ended up being half Hawaiian and half English. That began to get confusing for her so she tends to use Hawaiian more often. She also learned that online classes while seemingly more convenient, were actually much more difficult than physically being in a classroom with an instructor. She said that it was easier to get distracted or to let work slide and fall behind in an online class. Outside of class, she had to learn to cook for herself, get out of the house on time, navigate the bus system and make sure all her responsibilities were met. She noted that she had to be even more vigilant with her studies and her self-discipline in order to keep on track.

We also talked about her support systems, the people and programs she looked to when she felt lost or needed assistance. She had returned to the papahana repeatedly, not only to visit her kumu and the younger students, but also for help and support. These visits served as inspiration and encouragement by providing a concrete reminder not to give up, that the younger generation was looking to her as an example.

Her family also served as a wealth of help and guidance for her. Ululani used these tools for support rather than taking advantage of the programs available in the university. When asked why she did not use the programs available she said that speaking to people she did not know, people she had just met, was very uncomfortable for her. She again noted the comfort of the papahana, the family feeling, the small size,
and the familiarity of the papahana community versus the large and unfamiliar environment in the university.

The discussion turned to other tools and skills that she has used through the transition. Ululani mentioned that she used the papahana as inspiration to keep her on track and moving forward. She noted that she remembers her background and ideals when working with teachers and classmates and did her best to incorporate those Hawaiian values into the university setting. For example, if a professor presented material that left her unsure or was something that she questioned, she would mentally refer back to what she had been taught as pono (proper) and pololei (correct). She would then apply that knowledge to the material she was learning in her classes to incorporate the new information to her life. If the incongruity remained, she would go and talk to the professor during office hours to try and reconcile the issue. Finally, the increased financial burden on her family since she moved away from home also served as an impetus for success.

I asked Ululani if she had any advice or additional manaʻo that she would like to share with those who would follow in her path. She thought for a while and then shared:

I guess ma koʻu makana, he paʻakīkī nō ka puka ʻana i waho (my gift is that it is hard to go out) but you just going to have to take that step and move forward… Weʻre all here for one reason, we all want to move forward, so I just think that people should know that it’s a hard step but you should just take it. Just go. Because you never know what’s going to happen – there’s lots of lessons and lots of experiences out there.
When you are in the papahana, we should all have the same value which is to go out, get educated, come back and find some way to give back to our community, our Hawaiian community. So if you’re not going to go into the mēkia Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian studies), then go out and learn something that you can use in the papahana. So if you want to go be a kauka (doctor), you go out, get your Doctor’s, come back and do something for the poʻe Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian people), go be a kauka Hawaiʻi. Or you want to be a loio (lawyer), you go out there get the naʻauao (education) and hoʻi mai (come back) and you loio no ka poʻe Hawaiʻi. So it really doesn’t matter if you going into the Hawaiian major or not. To me it’s if you’re going to go out and go learn something that you can learn, take it and use it, and find a way to bring it back over here and use it for our community.

Māhealani

I first met Māhealani on the KP South campus. She was unable to attend the focus group as she was living on another island. We were able to meet for all of our sessions in a private, unused office on campus.

Māhealani is a young Hawaiian woman who was raised in the papahana and graduated from Kula Haʻaheo ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi. She began in the papahana when she was two years old and proudly states that Hawaiian is her first language. Her culture was very important to her; she felt it defined her as a person. Open minded, happy, and sociable she believed that education is the key to success in life. When asked how she would describe herself she said, “I feel like my kuleana (responsibility) as a kanaka
Hawai‘i is to be an example for the keiki kamali‘i (*young children*) and to make sure that I make a future for myself and for future generations to come.”

Although she paid to attend first-year orientation at KP North, Māhealani did not go to the sessions. Instead she and some friends who were also starting at the university explored the campus and chose their classes independently. She felt that the time spent learning about the campus and the necessary processes on her own was an excellent way to get her priorities straight.

When she graduated from the papahana and began her higher educational career, Māhealani expected it to be different. She realized that it would not be a small, close-knit, family style community. In the papahana students regularly call their kumu ‘anakē or ‘anakala. She knew that would not be the case at the academy. Additionally, she anticipated that the professors would expect students to be responsible. She assumed that they would not be as diligent in reminding her about assignments and class attendance as her kumu had been.

Māhealani’s first day of classes at the university “was a reality check.” She was overwhelmed by a feeling that the support she received from the kumu in the papahana was gone and that she was on her own. She talked about feeling lost and scared. She even tried to change her behavior, being quieter and almost shy, in order to feel more comfortable. Walking around the larger campus with a lot of unfamiliar faces was also challenging and unnerving, “Going to a school with only 100 students and with 8 seniors including you and compared to how many freshmen in one class?” Having classes with first, second, third and fourth year students in the same class was intimidating for her.

On the first day of classes some of her professors dove right in to the course work while
only a few took the time to do ice breakers and try to help the students feel more comfortable.

There was also a shift in Māhealani’s cultural environment when she began classes on the university campus. She talked about being surprised to find so many people from so many different cultures and commented on how it was a wonderful way to learn about the world outside of the papahana. We discussed the many different cultures someone can experience on the campus and how it impacted her. One example she provided was the Sāmoan students. She noted that the Sāmoan culture is remarkably similar to the Hawaiian culture. The understanding that both cultures were trying to preserve their language and culture in the modern world provided a solid basis for many friendships.

Another experience she talked about was adjusting to the behavior and habits of her new classmates and other students she encountered on campus. One difference she noted was that students in the university do not speak up as much in class as in the papahana. She said that in Haʻaheo they were encouraged to speak out, especially if they did not understand something, so the kumu could help. That was not the case in the university setting. The professors seemed to distance themselves from students, not taking the time to understand the student’s life outside the classroom or what obstacles there may have been to that student’s success. She noted, “They don’t get to know you or what your lifestyle is out of the university, such as family, or any struggles you may go through, or if this is what is affecting your schooling.”

Another major difference for Māhealani was the behavior and attitudes of her fellow students. She stated that she noticed many of her classmates being “very
disrespectful to their teachers,” talking while the teacher was speaking, leaving before class was over and slamming doors when leaving the classroom. She was surprised that some students only showed up for attendance to get credit for being there. That was compounded by her shock at students who were absent from classes without reason and then were not ashamed to ask the professor for extra credit assignments to make up what they missed.

When working in a group for an assignment or in class, Māhealani found herself naturally taking charge. She attributed her leadership skills and comfort with the responsibility to the papahana and her kumu. However, she did get frustrated when faced with classmates who did not seem interested or motivated to help on the assignment. She spoke of one instance where she was the youngest in the group and still ended up doing most of the work for the project. This frustrated her as she had been taught that it was the responsibility of the older students to help the younger students. Being in a situation where she felt like all the responsibility for the group fell on her shoulders was unnerving for her.

In reflecting on her experiences in the papahana and her transition into the university, Māhealani noted that one thing she missed was the teaching style of the kumu in the papahana. She felt that the kumu were adjusting their teaching style to benefit the student, not necessarily what was comfortable for the teacher. It was also not unusual for kumu to give the students their phone number in case the student had questions or needed assistance. The papahana teachers helped with school supplies when needed and at Haʻaheo they even had a scholarship program to help students through the first year of college. She did not find that level of care and concern at the university. The professors
in the academy gave her the feeling that they did not care whether she succeeded because they were paid either way.

Māhealani chose Communication as her major in college specifically to increase her experiences outside ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. She noted that she expected this major to strengthen her English skills, especially since she came from a Hawaiian immersion environment. She firmly believes that she needs strong English skills to succeed in today’s society. The papahana provided a base for her English language skills that was supplemented by her love for popular music. She spoke enthusiastically about how musical groups and television personalities helped her make sense of English grammar and structure.

That is not to say that Māhealani’s experiences have been all negative. She feels that the transition has been a wonderful opportunity to grow and mature, an opportunity for which she felt completely prepared by her education in the papahana. As we drew our conversations to a close I asked if she had anything else she would like to share. She responded with enthusiasm:

My journey began long ago when my grandfather was told that he couldn’t speak Hawaiian anymore. He was banned from speaking ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i. Because my grandfather went through that experience, he did not want his kids to go through what he went through. When ‘Aha Pūnana Leo began, and Pūnana Leo ‘O Hilo was opening, my mother took a leap of faith. I began to attend the Hawaiian immersion preschool when I was two years old; I stand here today a proud graduate of the Immersion program.
‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i has been doubted by many, but there were a few who chose to
make a difference. I would like to give a big mahalo to ke Akua (God), my
ancestors, my mother, my kumus and my fellow classmates who have been there
from the beginning. Not many people believe that Hawaiian immersion students
can be successful in the real world. But here I am today, a sophomore attending
Kulanui o ka Pākīpika.

If I did not have my Hawaiian culture in my life, I wouldn’t be the person I am
today. It’s what defines me. I grew up with this knowledge and this is my
opportunity to give back to my kumus and the next generation. I don’t know what
the future holds, but I will use my past and everything that my ancestors has
learned to do nothing but see our cultural and language move forward.

This chapter has provided a description of the Kula Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i and
the Kulanui o ka Pākīpika campuses included in the study and then an overview of the
transition experiences of each of the student participants.
Chapter 5. Nā Ha‘awina: Findings

_E hana mua a pa‘a ke kahua mamua o ke a‘o ana aku ia ha‘i._

_Build yourself a firm foundation before teaching others._

‘Ōlelo No‘eau (Puku‘i, 1983, p. 34)

Hawaiians understood that in order to build one needed to make sure the foundation was sound. The above quote reminds me that one of my hopes is for this study to serve as a foundation for future educators. To help lay this groundwork, this chapter will delve deeper into the cases and analyze the differences and commonalities among them. I will begin with a brief examination of data in each case. This will be followed by an overview of the themes that emerged during data analysis. The main focus of this chapter, a cross case analysis, will provide a deeper understanding of the data. Finally, I will provide a chapter summary to review the main points of this discussion.

Nā Mea Like ‘Ole (The Data)

Each voice and each case is fundamental to this study. The participants’ individual stories provide the substance for the cross case analysis. This section provides a brief overview of the high points of each case. This will be followed by a cross case analysis of the study’s participants. The analysis is presented in the order that the students agreed to participate in the study.

Walea. My talks with Walea illuminated several points that are repeated throughout this study. First, she repeatedly addressed concerns with the behavior of her classmates in the university classroom setting. These points ranged from issues with disrupting the classroom setting to disrespecting the professors.
Walea also seemed to have an issue with testing and class work. This was not surprising, as she had revealed that she had been diagnosed with a learning disability. Nevertheless, her experiences were not solely attributable to her condition. Her experiences in the papahana also played a part. In speaking about examinations, she noted that in the papahana the exams were not comprehensive. “The exams were a big adjustment. We’re used to quizzes and knowing what to study for, and having time to prepare for it,” she noted. “And here there’s no reminders! So if you forget about an exam for some classes and they don’t mention it, you’re done.”

Nai’a. In talking with Nai’a there were several points that seemed to jump out. He spoke repeatedly about the support that he received from the papahana both as a student and now, as a graduate. There were emails and telephone calls from his kumu at Kaleiu‘i asking about his progress and checking if he needed assistance. He noted that, other than his mother, the kumu from the papahana were the first ones he turned to when he needed support.

He also spoke about feeling safe and accepted for who he was within the papahana. The atmosphere “was absolutely non-judgmental, you’re my classmate but more than that you’re my ‘ohana and we’ll always love you.” This was markedly different from the university environment where, even at the outset in first year orientation, he felt a need to fit in, to become a part of the larger community. He recalled:

I tried to make it a point that I wasn’t different, that I didn’t have a different schooling than them because all of them were from English speaking schools, and
when I introduced myself I tried to make it so that I wasn't the only Hawaiian immersion kid there, even though I was.

**Mamo.** The data reveal that some of the themes that Mamo discussed were her leadership skills and her drive to promote the Hawaiian language and culture. The desire to succeed and learn was instilled in her in the papahana and continues to be a source of inspiration. She spoke to this determination in one of our talks:

That’s what really helped me is that [in the papahana] they taught us not to be scared, wiwo ‘ole, to be fearless, to go out, learn whatever you possibly can, because one day that knowledge will come back to our papahana and be very useful. [The kumu] were like parent figures in our lives, and that push that they gave us in school showed me that I do mean something to the papahana, and whatever I do outside of the papahana will contribute back.

**Ululani.** The transcripts of my interviews with Ululani are varied. In the first interview she was still living at home and was attending the KP campus in her hometown. This interview was surprisingly marked by a level of discomfort in the university environment. I believe this was due to the fact that although she was in a larger community on campus, she was still immersed in the community in which she was raised off campus. “It’s just uncomfortable, you just feel like you’re always being judged,” she said, “maybe I should have gone somewhere off-island where I don’t know anybody, and they don’t know me.”

Interestingly, the second interview found Ululani living off island in the city and attending the KKP East campus. The data extracted from this interview was more in line with the themes and ideas that emerged from interviews done with her classmates in the
study. The leadership skills and her feelings of self-worth helped her feel more self-confident and feel more “in control.” She noted that “everything here is ten times faster and more intense and you’re literally on your own.”

Māhealani. The only participant who moved from the large city to a more rural setting, Māhealani’s experiences were remarkably similar to the other students in this study. Like the other participants, one of the major themes that emerged from our talks was the realization that she had changed; she spoke about how she adapted and matured as a result of the transition experience:

College has changed me as a person right now, because I learned so many things as far as knowing what to do and what not to do. It really opens your eyes to what the world really is like. You start from Pūnana Leo and you keep going, and now college is like the Pūnana Leo for the real world. And then from here on you just keep moving forward. So, I appreciate college now. I really do.

Hoʻohālikelike (Cross-case Analysis)

Based upon data collected through focus group, individual interviews, and field notes, three main themes emerged: 1) Community, 2) Challenges and 3) Supports. Every theme appeared in some form in all the cases. I have chosen to use quotes from the haumāna to describe each theme. “Thrown into a bigger community” will discuss the differences in the community that the haumāna experienced. The section entitled “White out everything and start all over again” will look at the challenges that the haumāna experienced. Finally, “Kōkua aku, kōkua mai” (help one another) will examine the support systems of the haumāna as they navigated through the transition into college.
Thrown into a bigger community. The participants all noted significant differences in community structure and size between the papahana and the university. These differences, both negative and positive, had an effect on the students’ transition experiences and perceptions. The impact varied but was mentioned by every participant in some way. All the students felt they had successfully made the transition from the smaller community of the papahana to the university environment.

Moving from the small, close knit community of the papahana to the larger and less personal environment of the university was difficult for most of the students. Mamo noted that there was less attention and reminders in the larger community. “Kaleiu‘i really helped us where we needed help but here it’s different,” she stated, “They’re not going to follow you around, it’s all up to you... That's the major difference between a smaller community and being thrown into a bigger community.”

Many of the participants spoke of feeling intimidated, yet also talked about learning to adapt to the new environment. Ululani noted “It’s hard; it sucks because it’s a different environment. But I guess that’s just life. So I’ve gone with it and forced myself to adjust. It’s a totally different environment but that’s just how it goes.”

This attitude seemed to be the tool used by several of the students. In speaking about the residence halls and how she had to adapt to that environment, Walea said “Everybody was kind of wandering around trying to figure out what to do at the beginning of the year, and if you cannot sleep you just go downstairs and see people and it starts off friendships.” These experiences provided tools with which the students adapted to their new community.
Although they felt prepared, several of the participants noted that the small size of the papahana felt like a disadvantage at times now that they had moved into the university. One participant stated:

When you grow up in a small environment, and you know everybody, when you come over here it’s like you’re lost. Which is one downfall of the papahana, not really a downfall, but it’s hard because we’re in our small little domain and then when you come out here and it’s like whoa!

The feelings of fear and trepidation caused by moving from the family like closeness of the papahana to the comparatively impersonal atmosphere of the university was more difficult when combined with the transition out of the Hawaiian cultural environment. Māhealani believes that is the reason why many students who move from the papahana to the university feel the need to choose a Hawaiian language or Hawaiian studies major. She said:

For a student coming from a small school or a Hawaiian immersion school with not much background of what the world is like, western philosophy, that sort of thing, it’s a lot of pressure. You want to prove to everybody that you can come from a Hawaiian immersion background, you can be successful, you can adapt to this type of life style. I think that’s why a lot of Hawaiian immersion students just jump right into a major in Hawaiian studies because they feel like it’s the only way out. That’s the only thing that they know and they’re scared to branch out into other things because they’re afraid that they’re going to mess up.

All of the participants felt that the leadership skills they learned in the papahana helped them make a successful transition into the university. Nai’a stated “We were
raised to be leaders,” and Mamo agreed, saying she was raised to “guide the people younger than us to be prepared for what we faced. So I think that leadership role really followed us to college.”

Three of the participants felt they had brought other valuable tools from the papahana. These included study skills as well as the ability to adapt to new situations. As touched upon briefly earlier, one skill that Walea spoke about was the ability to navigate much of the transition process. She stated:

I know some people that graduated from other high schools, they don’t really know the whole process of how to do financial aid, how to look at this, how to look at that, all the sides of getting into college; whereas at Kalei‘u‘i, there are a lot of class sessions dedicated to showing you what you have to do to get financial aid, where you have to go to sign up for something… One kumu who’s the teacher representative of the junior year spent a lot of time with us and pushing us to look for what schools we want, find out what the requirements, take the test, she even went out of her way to find us waivers for certain applications and certain tests.

Another tool that helped the students in the move to the university was the study skills they learned in the papahana classroom. One skill, learning to take notes properly was especially helpful for one participant. “Every time a teacher grabs that pen I have pen at hand ready and I write everything they write on the board,” noted Nai‘a, “and I take it home and re-write my notes and figure out what are the important things.” In discussing the tools and preparation they received before making the transition, one participant spoke about how the papahana prepared her for the changes in classroom
style. According to Mamo, “What helped me be prepared for the Western stereotypical classroom was they [the kumu] made sure they didn’t give you the answer. They sat there and talked to you about different ways you can approach the problem to find the answer.”

The participants all have skills and tools that were learned in the papahana that have helped them through the transition to the university. Although the community they find themselves in now is much larger than the one they came from, each student has found a way to adjust to the change. They drew upon the lessons learned in the papahana and on the strengths they had developed to decrease the issues associated with their move into the academy. Mamo summed it up best when she said, “We’re not going to change who we are even though we’re surrounded by change. So all we had to do was adapt to the bigger community. And everything else that we were taught at Kaleiu‘i stuck with us.”

**White out everything and start all over again.** All of the participants experienced some general challenges within the educational setting. This section will discuss the issues involved in the overall transition into the university. I will also explore some of the difficulties and experiences of the students in and out of the classroom.

Language was one of the first challenges that came up in the interviews with the participants. According to Ululani, the transition from all Hawaiian to all English was “just like white out everything and you just start all over again.” English is not used in the classroom in the papahana before sixth grade and then it is only used in the English class. “It took me until I was about in third grade to be able to process information in English,” she said, “And it took me until I was in sixth grade to start reading English and
I had a hard time.” This sentiment was echoed by every participant. For example, Walea stated: “I’ve always had difficulty adjusting to using past tense and present tense words for English language, I always get them mixed up.”

These difficulties with English tend to carry over into the classroom and exams. Four of the five students spoke about wording on exams being confusing or being ashamed to ask what a word means in the classroom setting. The participants felt that they were alone in this situation and did not feel comfortable asking for help. “I never notice any of my college friends complaining about complex [words],” Walea noted, “but I do hear some students that graduated from the papahana talking about when they have an exam and don’t know what a word means, and they talk about being too ashamed to ask the teacher.”

Examinations were a challenge for the students in other ways as well. The issues ranged in nature from not understanding what was needed for an exam to being inexperienced with comprehensive exams. For example, Nai’a spoke about trying to find out what was needed for one exam: “I had to buy my own scantron for my test. The teacher said make sure you bring your scantrons,” he said, “and I was thinking, what’s a scantron?”

Comprehensive exams were also problematic for the participants. All of the students spoke about their lack of experience with large exams. Mamo said, “I feel like we didn’t really have finals or midterms at Kaleiu‘i, it was more like just quizzes. Little tests after each chapter.” Walea agreed and noted that it was very difficult at first:

I had a hard time adjusting to exams because there used to be quizzes during class and once those quizzes passed, that information was done with. [Now] classes are
cumulative and you have to remember everything from the entire semester. I found it difficult to adjust to the exams at first.

Differences in teaching style between the academy and the papahana were another theme that repeatedly emerged in the interviews. Māhealani noted that the one-on-one attention and caring feel of the papahana was not present in the university classroom. “In the university, if you don’t get it, that’s your fault. They have a schedule they have a deadline they got to follow,” she said. Walea agreed stating, “Professors don't take the time to actually hear what you’re asking. I often find myself getting misinterpreted questions and answers that are similar to the subject but irrelevant to what I asked.”

Every one of the participants had issues with perceived rudeness or disrespectful behavior of their classmates. They all spoke about how upset and even shocked they became at the behavior of classmates and other people they have encountered out of the papahana. Most also did not understand why professors tolerated that type of behavior in the classroom. Nai‘a provided one example:

When I go into class the first thing I do is aloha my kumu and the last thing I do before I leave is tell my kumu aloha again. I always say ‘aloha’ when I come in and when I leave, ‘mahalo.’ That’s just what I’ve been taught to do. So when other students don’t do that, I’m kind of like drawn back. Wow, they just gave us a whole hour and a half of their time teaching us with all their knowledge and you’re not even going to tell them thank you!

Both Mamo and Walea agreed that the behavior of their classmates was bothersome and a major challenge for them. Mamo said, “I want to stand up and say can you stop talking or can you take your hat off, that’s so rude!” A major issue for Walea
was, “students having conversations and not paying attention,” she said, “and when people start packing up five minutes ahead of time and you can’t even hear the teacher. That’s disrespectful.” Ululani added that she has seen students texting during class and playing on Facebook © in lectures. Māhealani summarized her experiences with her classmates:

I notice they’re very disrespectful to their teachers. I was used to that Hawaiian mindset where you don’t talk if the kumu is speaking, you don’t leave until they actually tell you it’s ok to leave. I see my classmates and there’s only five minutes of class left, and they start getting up and leaving and making so much noise slamming the doors and talking. It’s common courtesy, common respect! And the teachers don’t say anything!

The participants found that they needed to adapt their class behavior in response the differences in the university. Walea felt that she needed to speak out less in smaller classes, “In smaller classes that are only twenty or thirty students and part of the grade is participation, sometimes I feel like I have to quiet down or not talk just to fit in with the rest.” Nai’a agreed with her saying, “Talking too little is bad; talking too much is bad. But for me it’s hard to find the medium.”

Māhealani found that she needed to adjust her social behavior to meet new cultural norms:

I have to be aware of the things that I tell people. I was so maʻa (comfortable) in this pūnana (nest), in this kīpuka (sheltered space) where everybody cares about you, everybody’s loving, everybody’s maʻa to that sort of style. I’m so maʻa to giving an aloha. So, the proper thing is pūliki (hug), honi (kiss), and ask
everybody how they are doing. I had to learn that I cannot just do that with everybody.

The changes that the participants experienced were not all negative. All of the participants spoke about meeting new people and learning about other cultures from classmates and friends. “I didn’t imagine I would meet so many new people from so many different places who have the same problems as we do in the Hawaiian culture,” Māhealani noted. Other participants spoke about taking new knowledge and applying it to what they already know. For example, Mamo stated:

When we learn about different cultures I like to convert it to my own and I think that learning process is that you can connect your own culture to something else, and that’s how you can remember it … I think it’s cool, that I can compare it to my own culture

Kōkua aku, kōkua mai. Kōkua means to help in Hawaiian. This theme explores the evolution of the support systems employed by the students in their transition from a Hawaiian language immersion environment into the academy. This section will look at the support systems the participants felt were valuable to them in the papahana and the changes they have experienced. Students’ perceptions of services available in the university will also be examined. Then I will discuss the support strategies that the participants have employed to ease their transition experience.

At this juncture, I believe a brief review of certain points regarding the ‘ohana structure of the papahana must be repeated. Within the Hawaiian language immersion environment, the kumu are considered family and students are cared for and nurtured as children by all. In other words, teaching and support are inexorably tied to one another
both in and out of the classroom. Family members often take the time to learn the Hawaiian language so the immersion environment continues in the home. The Hawaiian mindset and worldview is the guiding principle whether the child is in school or at home.

Each successive interview brought new reminders of the small, familial nature of the papahana; the ‘ohana structure and the environment in which these students had been immersed. Every participant at some point made note of being “raised” in the papahana. They all spoke of the connection they feel to one another and to other Hawaiian immersion students. For example, at one point Mamo stated, “We were brought up on that ‘ohana foundation, that’s why we help each other. And it’s a small community like we keep mentioning and that adds to the ‘ohana connection.”

Learning that the university community did not have the same connection and support as the papahana was a major adjustment for all the students. At various points in the interviews I heard every participant note that they felt like “just a number” and that it felt as if professors do not care about the students. For example, Ululani noted, “You’re literally on your own. If you don’t go to class, that’s your fault. If you screw up, they don’t care. It’s a big difference. It seems just like everybody’s trying to get paid.” And Ululani is not alone in her opinion. Māhealani observed “That’s what I feel professors need to work on. It’s like they’re only getting paid for this. Do they really even care? That’s my question.” This realization that professors were not as caring as the kumu in the papahana was further supported by Nai‘a statement, “Professors don’t care if you’re failing, they don’t care if you’re passing, they don’t care if you’re late, they don’t care if you’re on time.”
Many of the participants discussed learning to rely on their own strengths was important to their transition experience, Ululani said, “You notice that you really have to keep yourself together ‘cause if not you’ll just helele‘i (get scattered) and fall way back.” This thought was echoed by several of the students including Mamo who noted, “You can’t be scared to ask questions. I think that’s one of the biggest things I’ve learned. You have to step up and not be afraid to learn, because if not, no one cares.”

This theme also emerged as the students talked about their classmates. Many noted that they do not feel the same level of support from their peers as they did in the papahana. One student realized that studying in a group helped her learn. “When we grew up in the papahana we all knew the same people, we all studied together or practiced together before a test. I noticed I do better in classes when I do that instead of being by myself,” said Walea.

Māhealani best described this when she said:

I notice I can’t depend on my classmates or group members. In Hawaiian immersion you have that pilina (relationship or connection) with them, you can trust them, you see them on a daily basis, you know their mom and dad, so if they don’t help you can call them and say Uncle, Aunty, your son didn’t help me. But I don’t know this person like that.

Nai‘a also spoke about the lack of support from peers. He stated that when working in a group he found the best way to ensure the work was done was to step up and use his leadership abilities. “I don’t mind leading; I feel like that’s just my kuleana (responsibility) to take care of it. If they’re unprepared and I know that I can take care of it then, why not do it?”
Support services offered through the university, although readily available, were rarely used by the students in this study. One student spoke of her confusion about services and how to take advantage of what was offered. She said, “You get lost out there and then you don’t know where to go. Then when you hear about certain programs you get confused.” This is compounded by the discomfort of opening up to someone they had just met. As Mamo noted, “Here you don’t feel that ‘ohana connection. If you need help you can seek tutoring and stuff but, it’s never that pili ‘ohana, feeling.”

Surprisingly, even services designed for native Hawaiian students were not comfortable for the students. Several participants felt there was no difference between these services and services for the general population, even though in many offices they can be conducted in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. One student said “I don’t use any of the resources here for po‘e ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language speakers) because I feel like it’s a joke. I feel like it’s there because it’s there.” She went on to explain that she felt the services were too focused on Hawaiian language and grammar and not on helping students succeed. For example, she noted that on one occasion when she went in to see what was available and was speaking with the assistants in the computer lab, she was talking with them in Hawaiian when the assistant corrected her grammar. This was upsetting and insulting to her. She stated:

The thing that I don’t appreciate here is that a lot of students who haven’t been in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i since they were kids, when they come here and they learn it, they’re high makamaka (conceited). They feel like it’s their way or nobody’s way.
General services, like academic advising and student support services, were not used by the students either. Various reasons were cited, the most common being the discomfort with asking for help from someone they did not know. Walea also noted that the availability of these services may also be a consideration. She stated:

Academic advisors seem to rush at times, and you can never fully get all the information you need. In student services you can only set appointments within a half hour period and it’s a daily appointment, so you can call between 8:30 and 9:00 and only on that day to set the appointment. That’s a lot of work and it complicates seeing an advisor.

In lieu of using the available services on campus, the participants employed two basic support strategies: 1) count on themselves, their family and close friends for help, and 2) reach back to those in the papahana who had been supportive. Ululani noted that her family supports have been important to her in the transition. She said, “Whenever I need support my mom is always there to support me, I always start with my family.” She continued by noting that the internet has been helpful in maintaining that connection, “Google, it’s part of my ‘ohana!” In addition to contacting his family, Nai‘a noted that he uses the ability to adapt to change as a personal support strategy. “I think they prepared us to be able to adapt to different situations regardless of what it is. Just be prepared for the worst and hope for the best.”

All of the participants use the papahana for support in one way or another. All of the students spoke of calling or emailing the kumu in the papahana for help or reassurance. For example, Ululani noted that she actually feels more dependent on the support in the papahana now that she has moved to the city. “I do find myself kauka‘i
(dependent) on that because they’re not right there,” she said, “I always try to make time to go see my teachers and try and find help.”

Māhealani finds that physically going back to her papahana campus is helpful to remember that support is a two way process. She noted: “I always go back, every year. I make it in time for graduation. I continue to kākoʻo (support) because if they can kākoʻo me, why can’t I give back?”

It’s All a Learning Process

Now that it is all said and done, the question is what did I learn? I learned that the size of the educational community matters. In many ways these students’ experiences could be from any small, private school. The small one-on-one environment that the students came from helped them become self-assured, gave them leadership skills and taught them how to adapt to new situations. One major difference is that the kumu in the papahana are still supporting and reaching out to the students and vice versa.

The students all seemed to adapt well to their new surroundings. It is interesting that they seemed to adjust better when they were away from home and away from their comfort zone. They were all afraid at first, intimidated by the size of the university. But before their first year was over they had all realized it was just another community, albeit a much larger one than the papahana. One noted that “all we had to do really was adopt to the bigger community.” Another stated, “You start off in a bubble and then you expand and you go out into the real world.” Mamo stated, “What actually got us here in the first place was our kumu saying, we taught you what we know, now go out there, learn some more, wherever it may be, preferably in a bigger community, and come back.”
There are two main points that stand out in the data. One is the behavior of others, the lawena. This would be an issue anywhere because the participants were “raised” with a Hawaiian value set, mind set and worldview. It was a cultural nest, an “ideal” world, and that “ideal” is not fully sustainable in our modern society. However, the data show that this perceived disrespect on the part of their classmates negatively affected the way they viewed their professors. All of the participants expressed surprise and disbelief that the professors did not speak up or try to correct the impolite behavior.

The other point that stood out is the reluctance of the students to use the services available to them. This is partly due to hesitation and discomfort of the participants to share or open up to someone whom they did not know. Another cause seems to be the availability of the services. These students have always had free and unlimited access to services and support. If they didn’t understand something, they could email or call kumu whenever necessary to get help. That is not the case in the university where they found themselves embarrassed to ask for help and feeling lost.

This is compounded by their experiences in the classroom. In the papahana they were encouraged to speak out, to ask questions. New information was not presented until all the students in the class understood and grasped the concepts. Students helped each other understand. In the university the participants found themselves alone in their zeal to participate in class. When they were the only ones to talk in class their natural reaction was to assume they caused their classmates to “go quiet,” or to feel like everyone else understood when that may not be the case. They reacted by hesitating to ask questions so they were not embarrassed.
This was also true of their language issues. Although all of the participants live in an English speaking society, the fact is that these students did have some difficulty with English. The question remains whether this difficulty is due to the reliance on the papahana on a full immersion concept where Hawaiian is spoken in the home, the academic language environment of college, or it is simply a function of the widespread use of Pidgin English here in Hawai‘i. Nevertheless, these students were embarrassed to ask when they did not know the meaning of a word, assuming that everyone else understood.

What stood out in the data was the dedication these students have to the revitalization of the Hawaiian language and culture and the appreciation they have for those who have come before them in this endeavor. The drive to go out, learn what they can and then return to the papahana to share that knowledge permeated my conversations with the participants.

Each student spoke about the sacrifices that were made by their parents to support their education. They were determined not to fail. As one participant noted: “You are a reflection of where you came from.”
Chapter 6. Nā Hopena: Conclusions

E lawe i ke a'o a mālama, a e 'oi mau ka na'auao.

He who takes his teachings and applies them increases his knowledge.

'Olelo No'eau (Puku'i, 1983, p. 40)

I open this chapter as the previous chapters, with a quote from Mary Kawena Puku'i¹. The quote above reminds us that the mere acquisition of knowledge is not sufficient, that one must find how to apply that knowledge. This is the only way to fully understand and retain new information. That application is the underpinning for this chapter.

My study, Pehea Ka No‘ono‘o? Transitional Experiences of Hawaiian Language Immersion School Graduates Moving into Higher Education, offers an insight to the experiences and strategies of students who transition from the papahana into higher education while moving into a non-Hawaiian studies major. It lays the groundwork for educators and practitioners to begin to understand the transition experiences of students from immersion educational environments. It may also serve as a stepping stone to understanding the needs of students moving from an indigenous educational environment into the academy.

This chapter will discuss how the study fits in the current literature and what the implications of this information are for future practice, theory, and research. Before I begin the discussion, I will offer a brief summary of the key findings of the study.

¹ Mrs. Puku‘i took it upon herself to collect and translate words of wisdom from Hawaiian kūpuna. She understood the value of these words to future generations. It is in this spirit that I have shared her words throughout this study.
Key Findings

Every study is driven by questions, by a desire to understand. These are the questions that drove this study and the insight I gained from the interviews. 1) What do students educated in the Papahana Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i experience when they enter the college environment with a non-Hawaiian language major? 2) What are their perceptions of this experience? Are these perceptions different from what they expected? If so, how are they different? And 3) what strategies do they use during the transition experience?

What do students educated in the Papahana Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i experience when they enter the college environment with a non-Hawaiian language major? Their experiences took the form of challenges and adjustments. The change from a small immersion environment to a large college environment with linguistic and cultural differences between them had the greatest impact on their experiences and created the majority of their challenges. Changes in support systems and personal accountability required the greatest adjustments.

The students’ perceptions of their experiences, for the most part, were similar to their expectations. All of the students noted that they knew “it was going to be different,” and they all expected that it would be more difficult. They all understood and expected their new educational community to be larger, but most were startled at how much larger it felt. In class, they all expected to experience a different pedagogical style but were unprepared for how different it was. Professors were perceived as uncaring and the classroom environment uncomfortable. Surprisingly, what they did not expect were
some of the cultural differences. The cultural norms of their classmates, for example, respect and lawena, were the most commented upon.

What strategies do they use in the transition experience? The tools and strategies used by the participants were varied. All of the participants used in class skills, e.g. note taking, which they brought with them from the papahana. One student specifically mentioned his kumu who taught him how to take notes in class. He felt it was a valuable tool to help him be successful in the college classroom. Study skills, although learned in the papahana needed to be adapted to the college classroom. Several of the students discussed the differences in exams and tests between the papahana and college, noting that they had little to no experience with exams that were as comprehensive as the finals and mid-term exams in college. One final strategy that bears noting is actually more of an attitude that was widely repeated in the data. The participants all mentioned that they were determined to do what was needed to succeed. As one student put it, “You just gotta suck it up and do it.” Another noted “We have to do good… we can’t fail.”

Literature. Turning now to how this study fits within the literature, it is clear that the data support Mezirow’s (2000) notion that the specifics of learning need to be situated in a cultural context. These students have been learning in an environment based on culture for their entire educational life in the papahana. This has clearly impacted and shaped their learning style. For example, one participant commented that she liked to take information she gleaned in class and see how it applied to her culture. She said, “When we learn about different cultures, I like to convert it to my own and I think that a learning process is that you can connect your own culture to something else.” She has taken the information presented in class and applied her own cultural context to fully understand
and process what was presented. Another noted that if something she learned in class did not seem to fit with her values or knowledge base she looked back at what she had been taught as culturally appropriate and then determined how it applied to the new knowledge. This blend of culture and education fits well with the idea that there is no separation between culture and knowledge for Hawaiians (Dela Cruz et al., 2006; Meyer, 2003, Trask, 1999).

All of the participants in this study used some sort of coping strategy. Determination to succeed, the need to meet responsibilities, and a sense of appreciation to their parents, the papahana founders and their kumu were central to their ability to adjust. Interestingly, the tools used in Spencer et al.’s (1995) study, developing a group identity and defiance, were not present. This may have been because the haumāna still feel part of the papahana and therefore did not need to develop another group identity. However, the strategies they used confirmed Whitesell et al.’s (2009) study that indicated how self-esteem affected performance. Each participant spoke to their leadership skills and their pride in their culture. For example, one student noted, “we were raised to be leaders.” Another said, “I am a modern Hawaiian… It’s now my responsibility to keep that knowledge alive.” A third noted that she was proud to be following in the footsteps of her kumu saying “they went through some trials and tribulations in getting our culture together, and now it’s our turn.” And another noted, “We can’t fail and just throw all their hard work to waste.” Clearly, pride and self-esteem were valuable coping tools in their transition tool box. An appreciation of the history of the papahana and the struggles that the founders encountered strengthened their determination and feelings of self-worth.
As one stated, “I do mean something to the papahana, and whatever I do outside of the papahana will contribute back.”

The data also indicate that the participants’ experiences are similar to those of other first-year students. First-year orientation provided a chance to socialize and learn about services and supports (Kuh, et al. 2005; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). One student spoke about how valuable orientation was for learning where everything is located. Another found first-year orientation to be an excellent tool for making new friends and socializing. However, one student was surprised that her new friends on the college campus were not already familiar with the way financial aid and the application processes worked. She noted that this was something she learned in the papahana and had found especially useful.

Similar to other first-year students, the participants had difficulties with the amount of work in their classes and in making sure it was done on time (Kidwell, 2005). One participant noted that she missed how the kumu in the papahana would check up on their progress with assignments and remind them about due dates. Most of the students spoke about having to adjust to midterm and final exams. Regarding finals week, one participant noted, “I had no idea why people were staying up late and studying. I had to learn that was a do or die type thing.”

It is interesting to note, although Reason et al. (2006) held that support services are central to student success in the first year, these students were not comfortable using the services available on campus. Even services designed specifically for native Hawaiian students did not meet the needs or attitudes of the participants. Talking and confiding in someone they did not know or who was not in their circle of trust was


uncomfortable and unnerving for them. The culture of support to which they were accustomed was not readily apparent. The participants repeatedly stated that they were “just a number.” As one student said, “It’s like you’re thrown out there in the water all alone.” To try and compensate for the perceived lack of support, the participants all spoke of reaching back to the papahana for help. This supported the view that universities and institutions of higher education may not be fully meeting the needs of minority students (Barrington, 2004; Freitas & Balutski, 2009; Henderson, 2000, Reyhner & Dodd, 1995). This may also be indicative of a need within the papahana to increase the preparedness of the haumāna prior to their transition into college.

Implications

While this body of work is in its early stages, it is my hope that future studies will follow, expanding our understanding of students moving from a Hawaiian language immersion school into a traditional higher educational setting. In the next section, I will discuss how the results of this study can affect our practice as educators. This will be followed by some implications for transitional theory. Finally, I will discuss the study’s implications for future research.

Implications for practice. Although this study has implications for how students can be better served, the results cannot be generalized due to the small sample size and the qualitative nature of the data.

Nevertheless, this study did provide a glimpse into some of the needs and challenges of underrepresented students within the academy. First, although there are services available that are designed for underrepresented students like native Hawaiians, these services may not work well for all. The post-colonial Eurocentric mindset that so
many have decried (e.g., Trask 1999; Whitesell et al., 2009) has been modified but not eliminated on large public campuses. The students in this study are not using services designed for native Hawaiian students because they do not fit their needs. The participants do not feel valued or wanted at these services, with one student saying that the services are “a joke.” They prefer to return to supports which feel valued, the papahana and the family. This is in keeping with Reyhner and Dodd’s (1995) findings of American Indian and Alaskan Native students who felt that the teachers and the college did not care about them.

In light of this finding, it would be beneficial to have a closer relationship between the papahana schools and the university system. Regular visits from someone from student affairs within the college could help alleviate issues associated with opening up to someone new. Although there is already a relationship between most Hawaiian studies departments within the university system and the papahana schools, there may not be direct, regular communication between student affairs and these schools. This would open additional lines of communication affording an opportunity for a more supportive relationship and deeper mutual understanding.

In addition, it would be beneficial for the Kula Kaiapuni ʻŌlelo Hawai‘i program to add a discussion on the differences in cultural and educational expectations of most college environments. The students I interviewed all spoke of classes that prepared them for college, learning to apply, how to get financial aid, what to expect, etc. These were helpful and well used tools for the participants. However, most of the haumāna spoke of having difficulties with examinations, especially cumulative exams. Adding information on the academic rigor within college and possibly one or two cumulative exams to the
papahana program could be helpful. I also believe they could benefit from a discussion on non-Hawaiian lawena and cultural expectations. One of the major challenges for the participants was what they perceived to be disrespect on the part of their classmates. A discussion in the papahana of the differences in behavior and how it is perceived could eliminate some of the challenges faced by the haumāna.

**Implications for theory.** In many ways Bridges’ (1980, 2001, 2003) theory of transition was a useful frame for this study. He stated that the transition process is made up of three main stages which he called Endings, The Neutral Zone, and Beginnings. He holds that in order to begin something new, one must let go of the old. This letting go or ending is essential for a successful transition. The participants in this study did leave the papahana, but they retained contact. The papahana is their support system even after the “ending.” Interestingly, the one participant who stayed in her home town to begin her university experience had a very difficult time managing her ending stage of the transition. It was not until she physically moved to another island that she seemed to be able to complete the process.

Next is a period of confusion and disarray, the neutral zone. In this stage Bridges (2003) notes that one feels lost, disconnected, lost between the past and the future. The students clearly went through that type of experience. Phrases like “just white out everything and start over,” and “it was nerve wracking,” point to the haumāna’s feelings of being lost. The participants spoke of “culture shock” and of being intimidated by the large class sizes. However, Bridges notes that this stage is essential to a successful transition. It is a time when individuals are open to new ideas where they learn new ways of coping.
Bridges’ (1980, 2001, 2003) final stage is what he termed Beginnings. This is where you have to let go of the past and find a new way of behaving. He notes that getting to this stage is contingent on the successful completion of the first two stages. The data clearly show that the participants were able to make the adjustments and overcome the challenges to move on in their new environment. At the time of the interviews most had completed their first year of college successfully.

This study of the transition of immersion students adds to our understanding of Bridges’ theory. As I stated earlier, these participants do not let go completely. Bridges (1980, 2001, 2003) noted that the process was completed by “the destruction of the old life-phase and the journey through the nowhere” (Bridges, 1980, p. 134). These students were able to make a successful transition without completely cutting ties with the past. In fact, their ties to the past support their journey into the future.

Schlossberg, et al., (1989) likened a transition to a trip. Using that analogy, one can view Bridges (2003) theory as linear, a trip that moves from one place to the next, one step at a time to completion. The movement of these participants, however, is more like that of a spiral in that they circle back to the papahana on a regular basis, both for support and to give back to their culture. Their transitional voyage goes out into the world to garner knowledge and then returns to their home – the papahana – to share. Every participant talked about leaving the papahana to learn more and then return to the papahana to share that knowledge with future generations. Much like the indigenous understanding of the world as well as indigenous educational models, which are often more circular than linear (Ah Nee-Benham & Cooper, 2000), this work confirms an understanding of transitional theory that is circular in nature.
Implications for research. There is no doubt that more research in this area is needed. Researchers and educators need to look further into how academe can better serve our students. Scholarly inquiry can serve to clarify and define the experiences of Hawaiian students and their needs.

As mentioned earlier, this study indicates that supports and services designed for underrepresented students are not being used by the haumāna. Student affairs and student support services will likely continue to face budget cuts and constraints. Further inquiry into which students are still underserved and a deeper understanding of their needs could help streamline services.

One finding that certainly deserves further examination is the notion of moving from a small community into a much larger community. Institutions of higher education could benefit from an understanding of the challenges involved in moving from a small educational environment to a much larger one. This could be investigated by looking at students from small private schools that enter a large university. Are their experiences similar to the experiences of the participants of this study? Do they use similar support and coping strategies? Another interesting possibility to investigate the effects of the size of the environment would be to look at students from the papahana who move into a small college. How would their experiences differ?

Size is of course, only one factor in these students’ adjustments. The differing cultures of the papahana and higher education contribute to the complexity of their experience. Future studies could focus on the transition from one educational culture to another and tease out which parts of the experience are due to size and which are due to culture. Small schools that are not immersion still retain their own organizational
cultures, but this study notes the dramatic change from a small immersion environment to the larger public university environment. These differences would have important implications for student services. They might also highlight how often students from small private school environments circle back to their original school environments.

It would be valuable to understand how the experiences of these participants compare with the experiences of their peers who do go into Hawaiian studies. Do they face similar challenges? Are there differences in support needs and if so, what are the differences? Similarly, an investigation into the adaptive and support strategies used by papahana students who transition to a higher educational environment outside of Hawai‘i would provide valuable insight. Do these students circle back to the papahana support systems? How do they adapt to the cultural differences outside of the state?

Another area that should be investigated is how the experiences of these students compare with the experiences of second-language learners. How does the language adjustment affect the transition experience? What are the similarities to the findings of this study? Are there similar cultural adjustments for second language learners? What tools do they use to adapt?

**Manaʻo Hope**

I would like to conclude with a few personal thoughts and discoveries. The focus group and interviews that took place for this study provided a wealth of information and knowledge about the experiences of students from the papahana who transitioned into an institution of higher education. I was humbled by the willingness of these students to share their manaʻo and a piece of their life with me.
When I began this study, I imagined I would learn about educational strategies that students from the papahana use to adapt to a traditional Western educational classroom. I drew that idea from my experiences in moving from the Western educational setting to a partial Hawaiian language immersion setting. I knew the difficulties I had learning to think differently, to adjust my learning style. I wondered if students moving in the opposite direction, from Hawaiian immersion to a more traditional Western classroom, would have similar experiences. Thus, the seed was planted. However, the study that grew from that seed blossomed into my own disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 2000). It was an experience which shifted my worldview and enhanced my knowledge.

Rather than having to make adjustments in how they thought, learned, or made meaning, these students were most troubled by the cultural challenges and differences they encountered. This took me completely by surprise. I had incorrectly assumed that since these students were still in Hawai‘i, cultural changes would be minimal. In fact, I designed the study to minimize what I perceived to be major cultural differences by not including students who attended college out of the state. What I failed to realize is that students from the papahana were raised and educated in a culturally infused environment that shaped their values and worldview.

Adjustments in support systems were also a challenge for these students. I was amazed to discover that they did not use programs available in the Hawaiian studies department or the services designed for Native Hawaiian students. Instead, they continued to use support systems that were developed in the papahana, often calling, emailing or visiting when they felt they needed assistance. Even more surprising was the
realization that although most of the haumāna are Native Hawaiian students, the participants did not feel comfortable speaking to the personnel in the Native Hawaiian centers. I had believed that if the services offered were conducted in the Hawaiian language students from the papahana would feel welcome and comfortable.

I also find it notable that the students I interviewed from the papahana were self-assured and confident in their abilities. They were determined to reach their goals no matter what challenges or obstacles they encounter. Several students spoke of the sacrifices their families and their kumu had made to help the students succeed. They were proud of where they were educated and positive they will return to provide the same kind of support for their younger counterparts in the papahana.

The findings of this study are relevant for educators in and out of the state of Hawai‘i. I believe it is imperative for us as educators and student affairs professionals to question, explore, and understand this phenomenon. This is especially important when we are designing services or offering supports to our students. Without insight into the needs of all our students, some will be left to fend for themselves. If this is happening to these students, how many more are not being properly supported or served? How can student affairs practitioners and educators continue to adjust and adapt to the needs of our students? The results of this study, while not generalizable, do raise some interesting questions.

In closing, I would like to once again express my gratitude to the participants for graciously sharing their stories and experiences. This was done willingly and without compensation. And although all the students said they were uncomfortable opening up and sharing with someone they did not know, that is exactly what they did and I was
honored by their frankness and vulnerability. In our talks, every participant spoke about going out, learning and returning to the papahana with new knowledge; I am privileged to do the same. It is my belief that the manaʻo and ʻike (knowledge) provided by these students will help student affairs practitioners and educators provide better support and assistance to all students. As I noted at the outset of this chapter, Mary Kawena Pukuʻi believed in the value of research and knowledge as a tool and treasure for future generations. I hope this study will provide insight and understanding for future researchers, educators and practitioners.
Appendix A

Focus Group/Preliminary Interview Questions

1. What did you expect when you entered the university as a first-year student?
   a. Did you attend first-year orientation? If so, what were your experiences?
   b. What did you expect to experience in the classroom?
   c. What did you think your classmates would be like? Your teachers?
   d. What did you expect to experience outside of the classroom?

2. Were these experiences different than you expected?
   a. Were your class experiences different? If so, how?
   b. Were your classmates different? If so, how?
   c. Were your teachers different? If so, how?
   d. What about your out of class experiences?

3. How did you feel about what you experienced when you first arrived?
Appendix B
Second and Third Interview Questions

1. Tell me about you – Who are you?

2. What adjustments, if any, have you made both in and out of the classroom in response to what you’ve experienced in college?

3. What skills have you brought with you that you used in your Hawaiian immersion program? How have they worked for you?

4. What new skills have you learned in the classroom and how have they worked?

5. What new skills have you learned out of the classroom and how have they worked?

6. What kinds of supports have you developed since you moved into college and how have they worked?

7. What have you learned about yourself as a student as you moved from high school to college? As a person?

8. How do you feel about college now?

9. Do you have any mana‘o you would like to share with haumāna who will be moving into college from the papahana?
Appendix C

Agreement to Participate in Research

This research examines the experiences of graduates of Kula Kaiapuni ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i who have chosen to enter a non-Hawaiian studies major within the university. I hope to learn from the first-year experiences of these students. I would like to thank you for giving your time and efforts to this study. You will be interviewed and then asked to review the case study I create from these conversations, for accuracy and intent of your statements. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any point, with absolutely no penalty or loss to you. Participants will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study and I believe that there are no significant risks to you from your participation. Your confidentiality will be preserved through a pseudonym of your own choosing and personal information gathered will be securely stored for the duration of the study and then destroyed. If you have any questions about this study, please contact the investigator, Kealoha Finneran-Swatek at (808) 959-3939 or by email, at finneran@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the UH Committee on Human Studies at 956-5007, or write to 1960 East-West Rd. Biomedical Bldg. B-104, Honolulu, HI 96822 (email: uhirb@hawaii.edu). Again, I am grateful for your generous participation and the sharing of your experiences.

Signed,

Name: ____________________________ Date: ________________
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