“STANDING BEHIND”
LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF NATIVE HAWAIIAN STUDENTS
WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN THE TRANSITION PROCESS

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to three individuals who have each taught me to live with passion and with purpose: one I knew since the day of my birth, the second I met while still a teenager, and the third I met as an adult. Each of these individuals is significant to me. They are family…they are a part of my history…because of them, my life has been enriched.

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“For lack of guidance a nation falls,
But many advisers make victory sure.”

(Proverbs 11:14)

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ABSTRACT

Research on the transition process for students with disabilities has focused primarily on student academic and vocational outcomes but has not examined the factors that influence their postsecondary decision making processes. The evolution of education in Hawai‘i from the “place-based” sharing of traditional knowledge to a system of Western instruction has created disparity between native Hawaiian children (whose cultural roots suggest an inclination towards experiential learning in authentic environments) and their non-native peers. Understanding how students are making decisions about their futures is essential if educators, counselors and other partners in the transition process are to assist them in this endeavor. The purpose of this qualitative study was to define, describe, and analyze how culture, disability, first-generation college student status impacted the decision-making processes of native Hawaiian students. The research questions that guided this study were: (a) How do native Hawaiian students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?; (b) What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?; (c) What role does disability play on the students’ school experiences and daily living?; and (d) How does their status of first generation college student influence their decision-making process? Results show that native Hawaiians students are tied closely to their history and their culture which impact all facets of their lives including how they make decisions about the future. The findings have implication for secondary, postsecondary, and adult service personnel who much find the resources to develop and maintain culturally appropriate curricula and programs for these students.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Prologue

A warm breeze carries the perfume of the land, pungent with the scent of moist soil and decaying vegetation…the old giving life to the new. Under the shelter of vine-covered trees, I stand at the edge of the school grounds and watch the students as they ready themselves for “protocol,” their morning ritual. They line up by grade level, each helping the other to settle down, to focus on the task at hand. When all is quiet, the students chant their oli asking the kumu for permission to enter, informing all that they are ready to learn. In turn, the kumu chant a response, acknowledging their responsibilities as teachers and leaders and welcoming the students to this place of learning.

This is a time of reverence, of solemnity, of worship and I find myself holding my breath as I listen in awe. I can almost hear the ancient voices blending with the sweet, sounds of these young students and their kumu…their chanting resonating with the wind in the trees. I am aware that this is more than a morning ritual. Here, juxtaposed among the fragrant, organic foliage, the young grow and thrive because of the gifts from those who have come before them…

Statement of the Problem

Culture is the process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand events, actions, objects, utterances, or situations in unique ways (Morgan, 1998). Culture not only encompasses everyday practices such as patterns of discrete behaviors, traditions, habits, or customs but also includes the way people understand ideas, give meaning to everyday life, and make sense of their environment. These meanings in turn, provide a foundation for learning, instruction, and assessment (Smith-Maddox, 1998).

Cultural psychologists believe that the role of culture in the cognitive process is of central importance. Most students arrive at their assumptions, beliefs, and values about education from their personal experiences in their home, school, and community cultures. Because cultures have different ways of understanding the world and socializing their young, it is suggested that they may also have different expectations of the school and teacher in the
socialization process leading to a possible mismatch between home and school environments (Schonleber, 2006). Extensive research has been conducted on conflicts between students from minority cultures (primarily from collectivist orientations) and the individualist culture of educational institutions (Ballinger & Noonan, 2004; Kawakami, 1999; Ogata, Sheehey, & Noonan, 2006; Ogbu, 1990; Yamauchi, 2003; Yamauchi, Greene, Ratliffe, & Ceppi, 1996). Differences between collectivist and individualist cultures appear in matters such as: (a) societal cooperation versus competition; (b) individual versus family or group orientation; (c) time orientation; (d) gender roles and family responsibilities; (e) interaction styles; and (f) self-determination and autonomy versus family or group responsibilities (Triandis, 2001). These differences often create challenges for students from collectivist cultures who must learn to understand, adjust, and perhaps even forgo their own culture as they maneuver their way throughout the individualist culture of the traditional U.S. educational institution.

Insufficient academic participation and under achievement of students from collectivist cultures have been attributed to cultural dissonance. For example, Nakhid (2003) studied the lack of academic achievement of Pasifika (Pacific Islands) students in New Zealand. She found that a necessary condition for academic success was for the Pasifika students was to carry out their own “identifying process” (i.e., recognize and value their unique culture, language, and religion) and to have this practice valued by the teachers and schools. The failure to recognize the students’ identifying processes affected the educational achievement and opportunities for these students.

Other factors also impact academic involvement and achievement. In the native Hawaiian culture, one’s social well-being sustains both adults and children in their life pursuits (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005). Stressors such as single-parent households, unemployment, poverty, and financial obligations (more prevalent in the lives of the native Hawaiian community than in any other ethnic group in Hawai‘i) often negatively affect the educational development of this population (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005). In addition, native Hawaiian children fall prey to the present disposition of public institutions. Presently, Hawaii’s public schools are likely to be in “restructuring status” when they contain high proportions of native Hawaiian students and often employ less experienced teachers (Ledward & Malone, 2008).
There is growing concern that educational researchers have been slow to recognize the significance of culture and cultural differences in research practice and understanding. This has resulted in key research issues such as power relations, benefits, representation, legitimization, and accountability continuing to be addressed by the researchers’ own cultural agendas (Bishop, 1998). Approximately 60,000 native Hawaiian children are currently enrolled in Hawaii’s public schools. With the most rapidly growing sector in the youngest age groups, it is projected that this population will double in the next 40 years (Ledward & Malone, 2008). Native Hawaiian students are overrepresented in special education and account for approximately one-third of the special education enrollment. Although long-term developments indicate that the rate of enrollment of native Hawaiian population in special education has slowed, this population is still highly overrepresented in special education (Ka Huaka’i, 2005). Inequalities continue to exist that run along racial and class lines. Factors such as the reliance on IQ testing to “measure” and determine disability and identify student’s programming needs, power differentials between parents from minority backgrounds and school officials, and teacher longevity and experience all contribute to the over representation of native Hawaiian students in special education (Ka Huaka’i, 2005).

My experiences as a vocational rehabilitation counselor with the State of Hawai‘i and the review of literature have triggered questions about HOW native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities make postsecondary decisions and the FACTORS THAT IMPACT their decision making process. These were the questions that warranted further investigation and were the basis for this study. The futures of native Hawaiian students, specifically those with learning disabilities is an issue that requires the attention of the students themselves, their families, postsecondary administrators, special educators, transition specialists, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and other professionals serving this population.

This study explored the challenges of three independent but often interacting sets of factors that impacted the transition of native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities into postsecondary settings: (a) belonging to the native Hawaiian community and culture, (b) diagnosis of a learning disability, and (c) identification as a first-
generation college student. These factors were addressed by the study’s research questions and were corroborated and challenged by the words of the study’s participants.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework refers to prior research studies or existing research on the topic of interest, offers suppositions, and links the unanswered question to larger theoretical concepts (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Major themes embedded in the theoretical perspectives of cultural psychologists include: (a) a relationship between an individual’s development and socialization; (b) how people construct meaning is implicit in each research question; (c) daily activities and settings and cultural models make up the units of study, and (d) history is an integral feature of culture and present practices (Schonleber, 2006).

The process of identifying a theoretical framework for this study was an expected task but for me, it was one that took me on a journey and provided a foundation for exploration and learning. There were several theoretical frameworks from which to examine the influence of culture on student choice. I visited, considered for use, and “tried on” the following theories: (a) Critical Race Theory; (b) Sociocultural Approach to Learning; (c) Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education model, and the (d) Cultural Difference Model. In the next section, I highlight the theories independently, as if viewing separate pieces of colored glass through a kaleidoscope. It is when the kaleidoscope is turned just a fraction that all four images (four theoretical frameworks) are united into a collective vision, leading me to a better understanding of how native Hawaiian history, race, and culture have provided the framework for this study.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race theory provided insight into the educational experiences of students who were underrepresented in higher education. Critical race theory is important in education where the students’ educational experiences are often connected to racial background. Rooted in the civil rights movement, this theoretical framework is based on three arguments:

1. Race is a defining characteristic of inequality;
2. Rights in the United States are deeply-rooted to rights based on property; and
3. The combination of race and property rights provides a theoretical lens through which to understand inequality (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Sociocultural Approach to Learning

The sociocultural approach to learning provided another theoretical lens to frame this study. It shaped the types of questions used; informed how data was collected and analyzed; and provided a call to action (Creswell, 2009). The development of the sociocultural theory is attributed to the Russian psychologist and philosopher, Lev Vygotsky. Compared to other theories that separated learning and development, Vygotsky considered their unity and interdependence. This theory is based on the tenets that human activities take place in cultural contexts; are mediated by tools (language and other symbol systems), and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

Vygotsky provided a framework for teaching in a multicultural setting and in school, children connect everyday concepts to scientific concepts, drawing generalizations and constructing meaning from their own experiences (Young, 1992). According to Vygotsky, the developmental level of a child is identified by what the child can do alone. What the child can do with the assistance of another defines what Vygotsky called the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) (Ivic, 1994; Tharp et al., 1984). Sociocultural learning emphasizes the interdependence of social and individual processes in the construction of knowledge. Ways of knowing (i.e., “learning”) comes about when the individual interacts with his/her environment and occurs with the assistance of a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). The role of culture and language in the human development process is an essential aspect of the Vygotskian framework (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Key to this theory is the idea that people learn collaboratively through interaction and dialogue with another.

Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education Theoretical Model

The third theoretical model used to frame this study is the Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education theoretical model ( Ledward, Takayama, & Kahumoku, 2008). Culture-based instruction builds instruction and student learning on the values, norms knowledge, beliefs, practices, and experiences, and language of an indigenous culture. CBE practices can positively affect student outcomes in both the socio-emotional and educational
arenas (Ledward et al., 2008). Developed by Ledward et al. (2008), Figure 1.1 provides a theoretical model of Hawaiian cultural influences in education and highlights the relationship between culture-based education, socioemotional development, and educational outcomes.

Figure 1.1: Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education Theoretical Model (Ledward, Takayama, & Kahumoku, 2008).

Cultural Difference Model

The final framework views native Hawaiian students through the cultural difference model (Kawakami, 1999). This model states that minority underachievement results from a lack of similarity (to the dominant culture) between assumptions, norms, values and behaviors of minority populations (Kawakami, Aton, Glendon, & Stewart, 1999; Tharp 1982). Ogbu (1992) stated that the first step in understanding the success or failure of the social adjustment and academic performance of minority students is to recognize the different types of minority groups who experience and respond differently to schooling. He classified minorities into three categories (autonomous, immigrant, and involuntary) that are defined below:
Autonomous minorities: may be culturally or linguistically different but are not politically, socially, or economically subordinated to major degrees. These groups experience relatively high rates of school success.

Immigrant or voluntary minorities: essentially moved voluntarily to the United States for economic well-being, improved opportunities, and/or greater political freedom. Their positive outlook influences their perceptions of the U.S. society and schools. Their children typically do not experience problems in social adjustment and academic achievement.

Non-immigrant or Involuntary minorities: Groups that belong to the U.S. society because of slavery, conquest, or colonization (vs. choice and the expectations of a better future). These individuals have the most problems with school adjustment and academic achievement. Examples of involuntary minorities include African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and Native Hawaiians.

According to Ogbu (1992), in involuntary minority communities, one finds cultural models that make individuals (from these communities) skeptical that they can get ahead through mainstream strategies. They attribute their economic and other hardships to institutionalized discrimination which will not be eliminated by hard work and education alone. Unlike voluntary minorities, involuntary minorities are apt to demand or require culturally compatible curriculum, teaching, and learning styles.

According to Ogbu (1990), native Hawaiians fall into the “involuntary” minority category. This group resented the loss of their former freedom and interpreted social, political and economic barriers as undeserved oppression. These perspectives have influenced the way that they responded to “White Americans” and to the societal institutions that were controlled by the dominant culture.

A word of caution is necessary when discussing this topic. Some native Hawaiian scholars however have contested defining indigenous people as “minorities,” even with the qualifier of “involuntary” (N. Goodyear-Kaopua, personal communication, June 27, 2010). Instead, some native scholars believe that the involuntary nature of colonialism has profoundly shaped the social worlds in which native Hawaiian students and their families live.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiple case study was to define, describe, and analyze the intersection of three factors: (a) culture, (b) disability, and (c) first-generation college student status on the decision-making processes of native Hawaiian students.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

- How do native Hawaiian students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?
- What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?
- What role does disability play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?
- How does being a first generation college student influence participants’ postsecondary decision-making process?

Significance of the Study

In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity – it is a pre-requisite…That is why it will be the goal of this administration to ensure that every child has access to a complete and competitive education… (Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, Congressional Address, February 24, 2009)

Although the Obama administration conveyed optimism for the future and rights of “every child” we are well aware that not all children in the United States receive equal access to educational opportunities nor is their parity in the quality of education received. Students with disabilities (Test, Fowler, White, Richter, & Walker, 2009), those from ethnic and cultural minority groups (Leake, Black, & Roberts, 2004), and those from the lower socioeconomic status (Okamura, 2008) were especially vulnerable to inequalities in education. According to the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (2005), approximately twenty-eight percent of students with disabilities do not complete high school. This increases the probability that these individuals will experience low earnings,
higher proportion of incarceration, and limited access to postsecondary environments (Test et al., 2009).

While there is already much researched and written on transition planning for students with disabilities (DeFur, 2003; Gaylord, Johnson, Lehr, Brenner, & Hasazi, 2003/04; Kochhar-Bryant & Bassett, 2002; Madaus & Shaw, 2006); the role of the family in transition planning (Lindstrom, Doren, Metheny, Johnson, & Zane, 2007); access to postsecondary education (Shaw, Madaus, & Banerjee, 2009); academic outcomes (Webb, Patterson, Syverud, & Seabrooks-Blackmore, 2008); and vocational outcomes of students with disabilities (Curtis, Rabren, & Reilly, 2009; Gerber, Price, Mulligan, & Shessel, 2004; Kochhar-Bryant & Greene, 2009; Sitlington, 1996) the research has not examined the postsecondary decision making processes of these students nor discussed the factors that impact these decisions. There is very little is written about the influence of culture on education and on the postsecondary decision-making process of students with learning disabilities (i.e., specifically native Hawaiian students).

Understanding how students are making these decisions is useful if educators, counselors and other partners in the transition process are to assist them in this endeavor. Research into the intersection of culture, cultural capital, and social capital and education is necessary to understand how professionals can best serve these students with appropriate transitional services. This study will help to inform practice and policy related to the native Hawaiian community:

a) Impact on research: In the United States, there has been little research on student choice in the transition process. This study will add to the body of existing knowledge in this field.

b) Impact on improving practice: Knowledge of how native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities make postsecondary decisions can provide valuable information to parents, educators, and policymakers toward developing appropriate curricula, training programs, and supports.

c) Impact on policy: This study will provide information to administrators on the transition and decision-making processes of their native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities. It is my hope that this will lead to improved policy and appropriate teacher training to develop skills to work with this population.
d) Impact on the native Hawaiian community: This study will provide a vehicle for the native Hawaiian community to share their stories and pass on knowledge and wisdom to the generations of Kānaka Maoli that will follow; and perhaps too, to engage and educate non-native researchers, educators, legislators, and community members.

Definitions of Terms

1. Culture: the set of shared attitudes, values, processes that allow people to see and understand events, actions, objects, utterances, or situations in unique ways (Morgan, 1998).

2. Native Hawaiian: Native Hawaiian as defined by the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921 are “descendants of not less than one-half part of the blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778” (HHCA, 1921); a definition that is centered around determining hereditary rights to Hawaiian homelands. The participants in this study however have self-identified as native Hawaiian and therefore the blood quantum is not a factor.

3. Specific Learning Disability: A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

4. First Generation College Student: For the purposes of this study, I used the following definition: a student whose parents have not attained a college degree and/or participated in postsecondary education.

5. Charter School: Primary or secondary schools in the U.S. that receive public money but are exempt from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools in exchange for some form of accountability for producing results set forth by the individual school's charter (National Education Association, n.d.)
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to examine what current researchers are saying relevant to the postsecondary decision-making practices of native Hawaiian high school students with learning disabilities. It was important that I position this chapter in the growing body of literature that questions traditional approaches to research on indigenous people by situating culture (and the historical impediments to the people of that culture) as the focal point of this inquiry. In the next section, I provide a framework for this study by describing what the literature says about:

1. The native Hawaiian people and the historical, social, and political context of education
2. The influence of a learning disability on the transition process; and
3. The effect of being a first generation college student on postsecondary participation and retention.

Native Hawaiians

Although it was my intent to provide a solid foundation for this study, I realized that I could not capture all that has been written about the native Hawaiians nor their culture. Due to time and space restraints, I could not be exhaustive in my efforts and must heed the wise advice of one of my committee members. I needed to set boundaries and delimit this section in order to focus on the task at hand: to describe accurately what the literature says about the native Hawaiian culture and education. Recommendations for further discourse on the history of the Hawaiian nation can be found through the reading of works by native Hawaiian scholars such as: Osorio(2002) who told the story of how colonialism worked in Hawaii “not through the naked seizure of lands and governments but through a slow, insinuating invasion of people, ideas, and institutions… in which that colonialism literally and figuratively dismembered the lāhuī (the people) from their traditions, their lands, and ultimately their government” (p. 3); Meyer (2003) who sought to “transform current pedagogy and curriculum” by “flushing out” the origins of Hawaiian stereotypes and “unmasking the educational philosophy of the early and late 1800s to prove that the “benefactors” of the Hawaiian people used education to create and maintain a “new order of influence and power” (p. 22); Sai (2008) whose dissertation
outlined and challenged the core assumptions about the history of law and politics in the Hawaiian Islands by providing a legal analysis of Hawaiian sovereignty under international law since the nineteenth century (p. 2); Silva (1999) who analyzed colonization resistance discourses. Other notable scholars include Ewalt and Mokuau (1995); Kanahele (1982); Pukui (1986); and Trask (1993). In addition, a review of official documents and records may be warranted and can be located in the Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu, HI (Osorio, 2002). In the next section, I provide a brief history of the Hawaiian people, describe the impact of colonization on the people at large as seen through indigenous scholars, and finally highlight the current impact of colonization on the education of the Hawaiian people.

A Brief History

To adequately describe who the native Hawaiian people are, one must look to the annals of history that trace their struggle as a colonized people. We must make effort and the time to seek out and listen to their words. The true and accurate history of the Hawaiian people is not often found in the U.S. history texts. In fact, American scholars have based misrepresentations of the Hawaiian history and shaped primary and secondary sources to benefit their illegal control over these islands (Young in Sai, 2008). Silva (1999) analyzed nineteenth century artifacts (i.e., Hawaiian language newspapers) and in contrast to earlier misrepresentations of the people, revealed that Native Hawaiians had in fact resisted many forms of political, cultural, and religious oppressions of colonialism.

Native Hawaiians were subjected to social, political, economic, and cultural turmoil due to Western colonization (including dethronement and imprisonment of the reigning Hawaiian monarch, annexation of Hawaii, and the ceding and procurement of indigenous lands) (Meyer, 1998; Mokuau & Matsuoka, 1995, Silva, 1999). Cultural traditions such as the hula, traditional medicine, and indigenous religion were for a time forbidden (Silva, 1999). The “Americanization” of Kānaka Maoli not only ended their political independence but resulted in the banning of their language in 1896 (Hoʻomanawanui, 2004; Trask, 2000). Ramifications of this type of “deficit model” by a colonial educational system that professes that anything native was “not good enough” (Hoʻomanawanui, 2004) has resulted in the indoctrination of Kānaka Maoli and has had profound and debilitating effects on Hawaiʻi’s children (Silva, 1999).
The Hawaiian worldview stresses relationships first. It is spiritual, giving, and intimately bound to the land and genealogy. This worldview is a source of resilience and strength (Kana‘iaupuni, 2005, p. 36).

With the history of colonization of Hawai‘i and its history of oppression, educational models that overlook indigenous philosophies and practices have appeared. One such model views native Hawaiians as part of the “problem” in need of fixing. Many short term remedial projects have been developed yet have not addressed the deeper issues of alienation, underrepresentation, and conflicting epistemologies (Meyer, 2003).

Busby-Neff in Meyer (2003) describes Hawaiian epistemology:

Epistemology, the study of knowledge. Hawaiian epistemology, the cultural/traditional practice of that knowledge. Nānā i ke kumu: look to the source. The source, the knowledge we draw from is found right here in our community, through the voices of our people, our kūpuna, kumu, mākuʻai, and the living treasures and keepers of our cultural practices and genealogy (p. XI).

Demographics

According to the U.S. Census, there were an estimated 307,006,550 individuals living in the United States in 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). An estimated 0.2% of the population self-identified as native Hawaiians. In the State of Hawai‘i, native Hawaiians and or other Pacific islanders constituted 9.2% of the total state population (1,295,178) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009. The native Hawaiian population was demographically unique from the general U.S. population. For example, the native Hawaiian population was comparatively young with a large population made up of children ages 19 and younger. In contrast, those individuals ages sixty years and older formed a much smaller proportion. These patterns possibly suggested a high fertility rate among women and/or a high mortality rate among the elder population. It is projected that over the next fifty years, the number of native Hawaiians between the ages of five and nineteen will double (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005).

Native Hawaiian Culture

Native Hawaiians have a number of unique characteristics and values that differ from those of the Western culture. Over the past century, through repression and sometimes ignorance, differences in cultural values have lead to clashes between cultures (Ka Huaka‘i,
Yamauchi and Greene (1997) examined the relationship between social cultural factors and the development of youths’ perceived academic self-efficacy. Their findings were based on the premise that students’ beliefs about their efficacy in specific situations affected their motivation in school (i.e., social cognitive theory). These researchers suggested that the socio-cultural context provided different information to native Hawaiian boys and girls regarding their roles at home, in school, and in their communities. For example, the traditional female roles in the Hawaiian culture were more compatible with school expectations and thus girls performed better in school. In contrast, native Hawaiian boys may act in ways that resist the authority of teachers but reinforce peer solidarity.

The evolution of education in Hawai‘i from the “place-based” sharing of traditional knowledge to a system of Western instruction created disparity between native Hawaiian children and their non-native peers whose cultural roots suggest an inclination towards experiential learning in authentic environments (Kawakami, 2004). Marginalization and socioeconomic challenges have also impacted the children leaving some disengaged and mistrustful of social institutions such as school (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005).

Also in the traditional Hawaiian culture, the kūpuna (i.e., the grandparents or grandparent generation) were acknowledged as the sources of wisdom, the troubleshooters in family problems, and the educators and trainers of the younger generation. The elder female played a significant role in training children in family customs and etiquette (Mokuau & Brown, 1994). In the oral tradition, history and culture are passed on by kūpuna to the younger generation through storytelling (Ogata et al., 2006). Children learned primarily through listening and observation (Mokuau & Brown, 1994). Tharp (1982) highlighted major cultural elements that must be taken into consideration when teaching native Hawaiian students: (a) ‘ohana; (b) sibling-care-taking; and (c) peer-orientation. Native Hawaiians are a collectivistic group; the ‘ohana (largely kin-based) share work and resources. Children are expected to participate in and contribute to the ‘ohana. In the second concept of “sibling-caretaking,” older siblings are the primary caregivers with adults loosely supervising the children. This results in the development of strong, self-reliant child-groups.

Kawakami (1999) stated that for native Hawaiians, formal education has separated the culture of home and community from the school culture. In the traditional Hawaiian culture, it
is presumed that children learned through participation in which learning primarily took place through the passing of information by an adult and students must in turn receive, encode, and memorize this information (Calkins & Pedersen, 1979; Tharp, 1982). In today’s schools, conflict may take place when the student and teacher do not share the same culture or when the student’s home culture does not reflect the values of the school. Native Hawaiian students may not feel comfortable speaking up in large or whole-group settings but may speak freely in smaller groups (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000). Thus, in order to succeed in modern Hawai‘i, students must leave their culture at home and take on the values and manners related to success in the Anglo-American culture. “For many native peoples, the school is a contested terrain; it is a place of conflict, struggle, and negotiation over content, context, values, instructional strategies, and measures of accountability” (Benham, 2006, p. 29). The Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP), looked for answers from the traditional native Hawaiian culture as to why these students responded with low interest and attention to the teacher and coursework in individualistic, teacher-led classrooms and high levels of attention seeking behaviors from peers (Tharp et al., 2000).

Native Hawaiians have had to put aside cooperative and collaborative values of laulima (joint action), kōkua (support), and ha‘aha‘a (humility) and are often faced with the dilemma of adopting values directed toward individual achievement and competition. As a people, native Hawaiians have also had to forego foundational values of aloha‘āina (love of the land), ‘ohana (devotion to family and community), and aloha (the spirit of love and genuine concern for others) (OHA, 1993) in order to “get ahead” in educational institutions (Kawakami, 1999). According to Meyer (2003) the Hawaiian people are in trouble because they are no longer listening:

We listen, instead, to the view that intelligence is something found in national standardized tests. We tie money to outcomes without understanding the larger issues of what these outcomes mean for the wealth and health of our Hawai‘i community. We listen to those who talk the most. We have forgotten to uphold what has been the cornerstone of our Hawaiian lifestyle: This is the idea and thread of ‘ohana, or family (p. 5).

In order to bring Hawaiian values into the public schools, Meyer (2003) stated that one must “first recognize their worth, see them in our environment, have the curiosity to learn
them ourselves, and then believe that we all have the responsibility to embody them, along with the core of our own identities” (p. 6).

Native Hawaiians and Educational Achievement

Native Hawaiians have a high regard for education. Poʻokela (excellence), paʻahana (industriousness), and ‘auao (seeking knowledge) are important values that reflect the Hawaiian views of education (Ogata et al., 2006). According to a recent survey, more than 4 out of 5 native Hawaiian parents desired that their children would pursue a postsecondary education: 62% envisioned that their children would continue their education at a four-year institution and 24.4% expected their children to enroll at a two-year college or technical school. Most of the survey respondents believed that education was positively correlated with success (Ka Huakaʻi, 2005)

Native Hawaiians tend not only to fall in the lowest economic group but also have the lowest levels of educational achievement in the state of Hawaiʻi (Mokuau & Matsuoka, 1995). There is a considerable gap in educational achievement between ethnic minority groups (i.e., native Hawaiians as well as African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and other Pacific Islanders) and the White and Asian American groups (Benham, 2006). Differences in educational achievement among ethnic minority groups appear to include the following components: (a) achievement-motivation; (b) parent socialization and parent/family-child expectations toward academic achievement; (c) parent/family-school participation/involvement; (d) literacy and language differences; (e) degree of historical consciousness (attitude toward colonization); and (f) political and economic dimensions (Benham, 2006).

Historically, native Hawaiians have not performed well under a Western-based economic and educational system. The Republican Party’s “power” on the Hawaiʻi school system from 1887-1950s provided Caucasian students with better educational resources while condemning the non-white population to substandard fare. Western colonizing activities have resulted in the teaching of Anglo-based knowledge and values in schools. This in turn has altered the native Hawaiians’ and other Pacific Islanders’ perceptions of themselves, their cultures, and their place in the world (Benham, 2006).

Numerous researchers (Gallimore, Boggs, & Jordan, 1974; Kawakami, 1999; Tharp et al., 2000; Yamauchi, 2003; Yamauchi et al., 1996) have addressed the
incongruence between the Hawaiian culture and the western-based educational institution. Students and teachers enter the school environment with different expectations about what activities and interactions should take place in the classroom. Students’ adjustments may be more difficult due to differences in values of the home and school cultures and that education is more effective when the school and home cultural values are compatible (Yamauchi, 1998). Differences in values, beliefs, and practices of the Hawaiian culture and the western school system have resulted in reciprocal misinterpretation and dissention (Leake & Black, 2005; Turnbull et al., 1996). In order to succeed in modern Hawai‘i, native Hawaiian students have had to take on the values and manners related to success in the Western culture. For many native Hawaiians (and Pacific Islanders), school is often seen as a place of conflict and struggle; a land where one must negotiate content, context, values, instructional strategies, and measures of accountability. Implications of the colonization continue to be evidenced in the participation and persistence of native Hawaiian students in today’s classrooms.

Culture-based Educational Strategies

The Kamehameha Schools Research and Evaluation’s study on Hawaiian cultural influences in education examined the relationship between Hawaiian culture-based education strategies and student outcomes. Under the premise that culturally relevant instruction and learning strategies would have a positive impact on student’s socio-emotional development and outcomes, this study examined survey results of 600 middle and high school teachers from 62 schools across the State of Hawai‘i. The researchers found that: (a) The use of culture-based education strategies can be found in across the State of Hawai‘i in different school types and among Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian teachers; (b) Teachers who implement culture-based education strategies in greater amounts more frequently utilize research-based best teaching practices; and (c) Instruments such as the “Hawaiian Indigenous Education Rubric” can effectively measure culturally relevant approaches to learning (Ledward, Takayama, & Elia, 2009).

High School Persistence

During the 2002-2003 school year, there were 47,721, native Hawaiian students in the State of Hawai‘i’s Department of Education (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2006). Data of high school persistence in the State of Hawai‘i revealed that Hawaiian/part Hawaiian students were
less likely to complete high school within a four-year timeframe due to various factors including a higher retention-in-grade rate in comparison to other groups (Benham, 2006). A little more than 49% of the native Hawaiian population over the age of 18 years had a diploma or GED (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2006). Native Hawaiian students’ achievement scores were below national norms and below their peers in the State of Hawai‘i in reading, math, social studies and science. There were also few native Hawaiian students in the upper achievement levels at each grade level (NHEA, 1993 as cited in Kawakami, 1999).

An Underserved Population

Native Hawaiians (and other Pacific Islanders) were also among the most underserved population in the State of Hawai‘i. Schools with a high concentration of native Hawaiians are often located in remote or economically depressed areas. U.S. mainland recruits and other less experienced teachers often fill teaching vacancies in these locales. Recruits are frequently new teachers who are unfamiliar with the Hawaiian culture. There are also notable inequalities in facilities and equipment in public schools found in low-income areas of the state that enroll large native Hawaiian populations. These schools have the highest turnover rate for teachers and thus the students with the most needs are educated in poorly equipped schools by the least experienced teachers (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005, Ogata et al., 2006; Okamura, 2008). Native Hawaiians have the lowest test scores, poor high school graduation rates, a disproportionately high rate of grade retention, and low rates of enrollment into postsecondary institutions. Native Hawaiians consistently fall behind the average, depriving group members from engaging in greater educational opportunities and subsequently limiting life choices (Benham, 2006).

Many native Hawaiians have not had sufficient access to quality educational experiences, nor have they attained the kind of education that will free them from the cycles of poverty, dependence, and low self-esteem (The Office of Hawaiian Affairs Data Book, 2006).

Overrepresentation of Native Hawaiian Students in Special Education

Lowered teacher expectations and the labeling of minority students as educationally disadvantaged have adversely affected minority education services. This has resulted in the disproportionate channeling of minority children into special education (Ogbu, 1990). In the 2002-2003 school year, approximately 18.5% of native Hawaiian students in Hawai‘i’s public schools participated in special education programs as compared to 10.9% of their non-
Hawaiian peers (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005). Ogata et al. (2006) identified five reasons why native Hawaiians were over-represented in special education:

- Notable inequalities of facilities and equipment in the public schools in low-income areas (i.e., areas predominantly inhabited by native Hawaiians). These schools also had the highest turnover rate for teachers resulting in the neediest students educated in the most poorly equipped schools by the least experienced teachers.

- Although many native Hawaiian students are raised speaking Hawaiian Creole English (also known as “pidgin English”) as their first language, they are taught by teachers who speak (and expect the students to speak) Standard English. The students therefore often perform poorly on standardized tests and consequently, are identified as requiring special education services.

- Educators and evaluators who determine eligibility for special education services often lack cultural competence. This often results in poor student achievement, flawed test results and inaccurate eligibility decisions.

- Special education teacher recruits often come from the continental United States to fill vacancies in areas serving predominantly native Hawaiians. These recruits are in all probability, new teachers who are unfamiliar with the Hawaiian culture.

- Native Hawaiian students in special education related to the previous reliance on IQ tests for diagnosing specific learning disabilities. The tests are tied to cultural knowledge and did not include native Hawaiian children in their norm groups they may be invalid for this population.

In the years 1980-2008, the percentage of native Hawaiians (as a percentage of all Hawai‘i’s public schools) has grown from 20-26 percent. In contrast, native Hawaiian students as a percentage of all special education students in the State grew from 32 to 38 percent. While it may appear that these statistics are a true reflection of special education demographics, we must consider that the native Hawaiian population has grown. This increase in overall native Hawaiian enrollment may account for the growing proportion of native Hawaiian special education students. Although native Hawaiians continue to be among the highest ethnic group of students identified as needing special education
services, over the years there actually has been a slight decrease in their over-
representation (Kamehameha Schools, 2009).

The increase in total native Hawaiian enrollment however could account for the
growing proportion of native Hawaiian students receiving special education services (Ka
Huaka‘i, 2005). In fact, in 1993, the Kamehameha Schools – Office of Program
Evaluation and Planning projected 20 year trends in native Hawaiians as a percentage of
all special education students and of all public school students. They found that over
time, the native Hawaiian enrollment in special education increased at a slower rate than
that of the total native Hawaiian enrollment suggesting that the inequities that native
Hawaiians confront in the special education referral process are not increasing and may
be diminishing (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005).

Charter Schools for Indigenous Children

After over a century of widespread educational failure among Hawai‘i’s
indigenous public school population, exciting successes in Native education are
occurring in rural Hawaiian communities all over the archipelago. From the island
of Ni‘ihau to the district of Puna on Hawai‘i island innovative, community-based
culturally-driven models of education grounded in the application of traditional
Hawaiian culture, language and values are allowing Native public school students
to experience unprecedented successes in education. Utilizing the charter school
movement as a vehicle to assert native control over Hawaiian education, fourteen
Native grassroots communities on four islands, who make up Nā Lei Na’auao-
Native Hawaiian Charter School Alliance provide living proof that culturally-
driven education is not only preferred by Native Hawaiians today, but brings
about educational success even for those labeled as “uneducable” by Hawai‘i’s
Western School system (Kahakalau in Meyer, 2003, p. XIV-XV).

Charter schools are publicly funded and are exempt from many state laws and
regulations with the requirement that the school will be held responsible for student
learning. The recent emergence of charter schools (specifically native Hawaiian charter
schools) has provided opportunities for native Hawaiian students to learn in a setting
conducive to their cultural values. Charter schools offer unique educational benefits for
native Hawaiian students. They allow families and communities to determine curriculum
content. In addition, the schools engage in autonomy that enables them to pioneer innovative approaches conducive to fostering greater achievement and engagement of their students (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005).

Hawaiian-Based Charter Schools

According to Ka Huaka‘i (2005), charter schools on a national basis served student bodies that were high in poverty and increasingly diverse ethnically. These national findings paralleled those found in the Hawai‘i charter schools. In the 2002-03 school year, native Hawaiian students made up more than half of all students in start-up charter schools. In addition, in the State of Hawai‘i, students who enrolled in startup charter schools were likely to be more socioeconomically challenged (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005) and more economically disadvantaged (Ledward & Malone, 2008) than their contemporaries in mainstream public schools.

In the State of Hawai‘i, charter schools are accountable to the state through a detailed contractual agreement that includes a detailed implementation plan (including a mission statement, educational framework, assessment plans, etc.). In this state, an elected Board of Education appoints the Superintendent of Schools (Buchanan & Fox, 2003) and is the only charter granting authority (Goodyear-Kaopua, 2005). Buchanan and Fox (2003) traced the history of charter schools in Hawai‘i. They highlighted the dire conditions of native Hawaiian students in education and highlighted programs and mandates that promoted educational programs in Hawaiian language and culture. In 1999, legislation was passed enabling the start up of twenty-five New Century Public Charter schools (Buchanan & Fox, 2003). According to Buchanan and Fox (2003), the primary reason for starting charter schools in Hawai‘i appeared to be autonomy from a distant center of control and a desire to serve a “neglected special population of native Hawaiian children” (p. 4).

Native Hawaiian children must face negative stereotypes on an ongoing basis. According to Kana‘iaupuni and Ishibashi (2003), Polynesian youth are perceived by their peers and teachers as putting little effort in school and performing poorly in academics. One solution to the stereotype threat was to provide students with a learning environment they can trust (Kana‘iaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003). Recent efforts have provided another viable option for native Hawaiian students with efforts focused on the creation of new
types of learning communities such as Hawaiian Language Immersion Programs and charter schools such as Hālau Kū Māna. Goodyear-Kaopua (2005), a co-founder of Hālau Kū Māna discussed one of the central disputes about Hawaiian collective identity: Are Hawaiians a racial minority within the United States, an indigenous people defined by ancestry or a national citizenry under prolonged American occupation? This indigenous scholar wrote:

Founders of Hawaiian charter schools strongly assert that Kanaka Maoli are an indigenous people, with attendant rights to self-determination, and we resist the notion that Hawaiians are simply a racial minority within the larger population of Hawai‘i (p. 243).

A paradox then develops as charter schools are driven through a “consumer choice” model of educational reform that frames Hawaiian culture-based charter schools as an “ethnic minority option” (Goodyear-Kaopua, 2005). Recognizing that liberation from the bureaucratic system does not mean a disregard for its standards, teachers and parents want their ‘ōpio to “walk in two worlds.” That is, they want these students to go to school, to score well on standardized tests and to lead healthy lives (Goodyear-Kaopua, 2005).

The development of Hawaiian charter schools is one of the emerging initiatives created to serve native Hawaiian children. Buchanan and Fox (2003) defined ethnocentric charter schools as “schools whose mission is the promotion and study of one ethnic group as a means of providing students with a link to their cultural heritage, sometimes including language” (p. 3). The nature and scope of Hawaiian-focused charter schools represent a distinct educational position in the context of publicly funded K-12 education in Hawai‘i and reflects upon the empowerment of the native Hawaiian people in general.

Frustrated by the challenges of conventional public school classrooms in meeting the needs of native Hawaiian students, several native Hawaiian communities seized opportunities for independence and autonomy offered by the charter school movement (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005, p. 42).

There are 31 public charter schools in the state of Hawai‘i with over half of these Hawaiian-focused (Charter School Administrative Office, 2010). Schools independently develop a model of Hawaiian education that reflect, respect and embrace Hawaiian
cultural values, philosophies, and ideologies. Many of these schools have formed an alliance with other Hawaiian-focused charter schools (*Na Lei Na ‘auao*) for opportunities for sharing and for collaborating and pursuing legislative efforts (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005).

Students of Native Hawaiian ancestry make up nearly 96 percent of Hawaiian-focused charter schools. Most students come from low-income families with two-thirds of the schools’ enrollment participating in subsidized lunch programs (Indigenous Education, 2006). In this section, I will discuss the role of the charter school in the education of Native Hawaiian children. Charter school movement operates on the idea that increased autonomy and flexibility (in exchange for heightened accountability) will lead to the creation and maintenance of more effective schools (Stillings, 2006). More specifically, Native Hawaiian public charter schools such as Hālau Kū Māna, utilize instructional approaches and materials founded on the Hawaiian ways of knowing and doing. These schools are considered forerunners in the advancement of Hawaiian culture-based programs and offer extensive Hawaiian language curricular strands (or teach exclusively in the Hawaiian language) (Indigenous Education, 2006).

Charter schools are run on the notion that increased autonomy and flexibility leads to the development and maintenance of more effective schools (Estes, 2004). These schools are free to establish their own policies, practices, and curriculum free from most of the Department of Education policies and state laws. Charter schools in the State of Hawai‘i have contributed to Native Hawaiian education. The culturally based initiatives within these schools have incorporated parental involvement and community support and promote native Hawaiian traditions, values, and ancestral wisdom (Kana‘iaupuni et al., 2005). Hawai‘i’s charter schools have also benefited the state and local communities by bringing in over 2 million dollars per year in federal monies to improve education in the State of Hawai‘i; attracting new teachers to a system that is struggling with inadequate numbers of qualified personnel; and contributes to the establishment of small schools in a state that has the largest schools in the nation (Hawai‘i Association of Charter Schools, 1999).

There are a number of positive outcomes for native Hawaiian students in charter schools. For example, on the SAT-9 reading test, native Hawaiian students in charter schools performed significantly better than their peers in mainstream public schools after
adjusting for differences in student characteristics (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status, and grade). Also native Hawaiian students in charter schools scored significantly higher than their peers on math tests after adjusting for other explanatory variables. Native Hawaiian students who attend charter schools are also reported to be more engaged in school and have significantly higher attendance rates than their mainstreamed contemporaries (Kana'iaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003). National findings reveal that the frequency of racial minorities and low-income students is significantly higher in charter schools than in traditional public schools and the population of disadvantaged charter school students has grown considerably in the past two to three years. As these findings mirror Hawai‘i’s population of public school students, differences may lead to an underestimation of the actual impact of charter schools.

In the next section, I discuss what the current literature says about the native Hawaiian students’ experiences in the postsecondary environment.

Native Hawaiians in Postsecondary Education

The native Hawaiian student enrollment in the University of Hawai‘i system has grown over the last few years from 8,949 in Fall 2006 to 10,574 in Fall 2008 (Freitas & Balutski, 2009). However, while native Hawaiian high school graduation rates are comparable to the national averages (Makuakane-Drechsel & Hagedorn, 2000), they are still underrepresented in higher education. Studies on the postsecondary outcomes of these students indicated that these students were not adequately taught how to apply for enrollment into colleges or universities and oftentimes lacked the cultural capital to understand the demands and expectations of the postsecondary institution. In 2000, while native Hawaiians made up 23.1% of the state’s college-age population (ages 18-24), they accounted for only 17.5% of college students (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005).

More recent statistics appear to show a trend toward higher enrollment of native Hawaiian students in postsecondary education in the State of Hawai‘i. According to the University of Hawai‘i’s Fall 2009 Enrollment Report, native Hawaiians made up 25.5% of the total community college enrollment but only 14.3% of the enrollment at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. According to the 2009 Native Hawaiian Student Profile, the UH Hilo and UH West Oahu have realized significant growth in total campus
enrollment as well as Hawaiian student enrollment. In comparison, the UH Manoa growth in Hawaiian student enrollment was minimal with only 132 Hawaiian students enrolled from Fall 2008-Fall 2009. In the Fall 2009 semester, Hawaiian students made up 12.7% of the total campus enrollment (Freitas & Balutski, 2009). In the next section, I report on what current research has to say regarding factors that contribute to enrollment and persistence of Hawaiian students in higher education.

Students with higher academic achievement, self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and higher parent education levels, were more likely to successfully complete college (Hagedorn, Tibbetts, Moon, & Lester, 2003; Makuakane-Drechsel & Hagedorn, 2000). Seidman (2005) indicated that regardless of race, high school grades were the primary predictor of academic performance. Family and job responsibilities were negatively related with college completion; students with high levels of problems related to family and work tasks were less likely to complete college (Hagedorn et al., 2003).

Another factor promoting persistence is the receipt of financial aid. Many native Hawaiians are severely underrepresented in higher socioeconomic levels and are thus unable to access higher education without additional financial support. In fact, having college financial aid increased the probability of a native Hawaiian student completing his/her bachelor’s degree by 35% (Hagedorn, Lester, Moon, & Tibbetts, 2006). Seidman (2005) provided a more generalized outlook on the need for financial aid. He stated that a lack of sufficient financial aid presented a barrier to higher education to minority as well as to majority students.

Hagedorn et al. (2003) focused on a set of alumni (1993, 1994, and 1995 graduating classes) who received financial aid from Kamehameha Schools (a private school dedicated to the education of native Hawaiians). These researchers found that financial aid was an important contributor to college completion. They also found that native Hawaiian students attending colleges in the continental United States tended to complete their degree at a higher proportion than those who remained in Hawai‘i and those who began their studies at a community college were less likely to complete a bachelor’s degree.

The retention rates of native Hawaiian students has increased slightly from 2005-2008 (from 72.9% in 2005 to 73.3% in 2008. Although this trend is promising, native Hawaiian students at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa are more likely to leave school
after their first year when compared with students from other ethnicities. In fact over 25% of native Hawaiian students drop out of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa after their first year with another 9.5 percent leaving after their second year (Freitas & Balutski, 2009). The average six year graduation rate at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa is 54%. When compared to other ethnic groups, native Hawaiians are least likely to graduate in 6 years (42%) (Kuali‘i Council, 2006). The University of Hawai‘i’s tracking system found that only 41.3% of native Hawaiians had earned a college degree as compared to 73% of Chinese students and 64.2% of Japanese students (Hagedorn et al., 2003). Hagedorn et al. (2006) reported that 65% of native Hawaiians who entered community colleges in the University of Hawai‘i system dropped out within three years.

Another puzzling statistic came from a study that compared the postsecondary outcomes of Kamehameha Schools’ graduates. The Kamehameha Schools High School and Beyond Study suggested that two-thirds of the recent KS graduates had completed college while the KS Alumni Survey reported that 48% had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher. Malone (2003), a research scientist with the Kamehameha Schools’ Policy Analysis and System Evaluation program (PASE), cautioned researchers and policymakers who relied on or interpreted educational attainment statistics. He warned that statistics related to the educational attainment of native Hawaiians could lead to confusion and that it was essential to consider four important features of the data on which the statistics were based: sample size; detailed race categories, multiple-race reporting, and geographical detail.

According to Malone (2003), Aloha Counts provided the most precise estimate of educational attainment among the entire native Hawaiian population in the State of Hawai‘i. Aloha Counts provides general demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics for native Hawaiians for the State of Hawai‘i. The table below describes the educational attainment among the native Hawaiian population, ages 25 and older.
Table 2.1 Educational Attainment of Native Hawaiians Ages 25+

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Pct.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>121,375</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 9th grade</td>
<td>4,155</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th to 12 grade, no diploma</td>
<td>14,035</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>52,400</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>27,125</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>8,350</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>11,410</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>3,905</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate or higher</td>
<td>103,185</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree or higher</td>
<td>15,315</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the most significant trends in the last three decades is improved access for students of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (Dey & Hurtado, 1995). Federal financial aid policies enable students of diverse economic backgrounds to pursue higher education. With continued financial assistance, perhaps we will see better retention rates among culturally diverse clientele at institutions of higher education. Hagedorn et al. (2003) provided a word of caution. The researchers warn that in spite of the strong corollary between financial aid and college completion, there are other factors impacting postsecondary attendance for students of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, significant family or job responsibilities can detract from college completion and while financial assistance may only assist in easing the burdens, it will not in fact, remove them.

Studies show that with increased education, one’s economic returns also increase. According to Malone (2003), 69% of native Hawaiians with college degrees were employed on a full-time basis when compared to only 55% of native Hawaiians who held a high school diploma and 30% for those who did not complete high school.

Oliveira (2005) examined the predictive factors for Bachelor’s degree completion for native Hawaiians. She found that along with financial aid that allowed the native Hawaiian student access to and persistence in postsecondary education and the student’s participation in specific secondary activities/programs, parental encouragement was a predictor of successful Bachelor’s degree participation. In fact, Oliveira states that the
lack of parental encouragement may be attributed to the student being unsuccessful in navigating the college pipeline.

Native Hawaiians carry a long history of oppression and prejudice that have impacted their views, access, and responses to traditional education. Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, Kauai, Maioho, & Winchester, 2008 provided the following charge to those serving Hawaiʻi’s children:

Schools in Hawaiʻi can no longer simply train young people to “get good jobs” in order to fit into the current economy. We need to prepare young people to think critically and imaginatively to create ways out of this occupation of our economic possibilities, which attempts to make it impossible for Kānaka to thrive on our own homelands (p. 166).

Students with Learning Disabilities

In the last two decades, much has been written about students with learning disabilities: assessment and eligibility for services (Mellard, 1990; Youn, 2000); access to and academic for postsecondary participation (Scanlon & Mellard, 2002; Shaw, Madaus, & Banerjee, 2009); transition services (Cooper, 1987, Gerber et al., 2004; Lindstrom et al., 2007; Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2004; Shaywitz & Shaw, 1988); reasonable accommodations for students with learning disabilities (Ellis, Sabornie, & Marshall, 1989; Harris & Robertson, 2001); literacy programs (Corley, 2000); and self advocacy and self determination (Arndt, Konrad, & Test, 2006; Hadley, 2006; Smith, English, & Vasek, 2002; Trainor, 2005; Webb et al., 2008). Key pieces of legislation including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Rehabilitation Act have helped to increase the participation of persons with learning disabilities in postsecondary education and employment (Kerka, 2002).

Debates surrounding the assessment, diagnosis, and provision of services for students with learning disabilities (Gallego, Durán, & Reyes, 2006; Gerber et al., 2004; Gregg, Coleman, Davis, Lindstrom, & Hartwig, 2006) provided us with an opportunity to reevaluate what we know (or what we think we know), to reassess present plans, and to formulate more appropriate means to serve this clientele. A long-standing concern in special education has been the assessment and identification of a specific learning disability (SLD). The issue
centered on the lack of agreement concerning the best way to operationalize the formal
definition of SLD. In 1977, the U.S. Office of Education issued rules and regulations
formalizing discrepancy as the primary criterion for SLD identification. The use of this
discrepancy model as the sole criterion for SLD identification created a number of problems
including over identification of children with SLD and a general lack of consistency in the
identification procedures (Kavale, Holdnack, & Mostert, 2005; Zirkel & Krohn, 2008).

Included in IDEA (1997) were provisions on how schools could determine whether a
child had a SLD and needed special education services. According to IDEA (1997) the term
Specific Learning Disability represented:

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in
understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an
imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical
calculations. This term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury,
minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. This term does not
include children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual,
hearing, or motor disabilities; mental retardation; or environmental, cultural or
economic disadvantage. (Section 602[26], p. 13).

Widespread agreement that policy such as the IQ discrepancy criterion that delayed
intervention for several years while waiting for the student’s achievement to be sufficiently
low enough that a discrepancy was achieved created potential harm to the student. The IQ
discrepancy criterion was also a problem for students from diverse backgrounds (i.e., those
living in poverty or from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds) (IDEA 2004:
Changes to the Identification and Eligibility Procedures for SLD). While IDEA 1997 did not
mandate a specific discrepancy approach to the identification of Specific Learning Disability,
it did discuss the need to document “whether there is a severe discrepancy between
achievement and ability that is not correctable without special education and related services”
(IDEA, 1997, Section 602(26), p. 13). Most states included a discrepancy model into their
regulations (e.g., 15-22 standard score points).

In the early 2000s, amidst the discussion surrounding the reauthorization of IDEA, the
IQ-achievement discrepancy was challenged on a number of issues that resulted in
reevaluating how learning disabilities are assessed and identified (Cortiella, 2006; Kovaleski
& Prasse, 2004; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2005; Zirkel & Krohn, 2008). One of the major changes in IDEA (2004) is that districts have more freedom in determining how they identify students with learning disabilities. The law now indicates that states must adopt criteria consistent with 34 CFR 300.309 for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability. In addition, the criteria by the State:

- Must not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual disability and achievement for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, as defined in 34 CFR 300.8(c)(10);
- Must permit the use of a process based on the child’s response to scientific, research-based intervention; and
- May permit the use of other alternative research-based procedures for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, as defined in 34 CFR 300.8(c)(10) (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

The regulations of IDEIA 2004 indicated that States may be permitted to use a response to intervention model (RTI) instead of the discrepancy criteria. RTI is a process based a systematic assessment of the child’s response to a high quality, scientific, research-based general education instruction and may permit the use of alternative research based procedures for determining whether the child has a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) (Kavale et al., 2005; Kovaleski & Prasse, 2004). The incorporation of RTI represents a shift in special education toward the goals of better achievement and behavior outcomes for students with SLD (Kavale et al., 2005; Wright & Wright, 2008).

A child may be determined to have a specific learning disability as defined in 34CFR 300.8(c)(10), if:

- The child does not achieve adequately for the child’s age or to meet State-approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas, when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child’s age or State-approved grade-level standards: Oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem solving.
The child does not make sufficient progress to meet age or State-approved grade-level standards in one or more of the areas identified in 34 CFR 300.309(a)(a) when using a process based on strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age, State-approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development, that is determined by the group to be relevant to the identification of a specific learning disability, using appropriate assessments, consistent with 34 CFR 300.304 and 300.305; and the group determines that its findings under 34 CFR 300.309(a)(1) and (2) are not primarily the result of: a visual, hearing, or motor disability; emotional disturbance; cultural factors; environmental or economical disadvantage; or limited English proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Characteristics of Adolescents with Learning Disabilities

Individuals with learning disabilities often have deficits in cognition and attention; lack insight and the ability to learn from experience; have a poor sense of self possibly stemming from past academic failures; have poor visual imagery; and have learned helplessness manifesting in passivity in learning and dependency (Sitlington, 1996). Although the majority of high school students with learning disabilities attend general education classes, they are likely to struggle in these classes and begin a cycle of negative experiences that often lead to the students dropping out of school (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). These characteristics of adolescents with learning disabilities, dictate the need for transition planning. While still under the protection of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, high school students with learning disabilities receive mandated special education services and programs. As they exit the high school environment and enter the adult world, they not only lose their entitled educational supports and accommodations but are now faced with a myriad of decisions including furthering their education, pursuing employment, and addressing independent living desires. When compared to their non-disabled peers, students with learning disabilities are more frequently unemployed or underemployed. They often live with their families for longer periods of time and describe frustration with their limited social lives (Bassett & Smith, 1996).

Although as many as two-thirds of students with learning disabilities desired to continue their education following high school graduation, these students were less likely than their peers to enroll in postsecondary programs (Gregg, 2007). Students with
learning disabilities are underrepresented at both 2-year and 4-year colleges. Only 12% of students with learning disabilities went on to attend 2-year colleges, and only 4% went on to 4-year colleges (Blalock & Patton, 1996).

These individuals may also, after years of academic struggle, have low self-concepts and believe that they lack the ability to succeed at the community college or university levels (Brinckerhoff, 1996). Whereas many students with learning disabilities could identify what they needed to do in order to pursue their goals, they often did not have the confidence, the executive functioning skills, and the supports necessary to achieve them (Bassett & Smith, 1996). Kerka (2000) offered a more optimistic view. She stated that although individuals with learning disabilities were challenged in education, employment, daily routines, and social interactions, many were able to make changes to their lives and live successfully. The individuals’ successes were influenced by participation in educational experiences (e.g., high school completion, quality of education, training and services and by personal characteristics (e.g., moderate LD, higher than average IQ, from above socioeconomic background). Additionally, many students with learning disabilities did not consider postsecondary options because they were not encouraged, assisted, or prepared to do so (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1994). The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1994) stated that students with learning disabilities should opt for postsecondary education and that they should be successful if their transition plans are designed and executed well.

Transition of Students with Learning Disabilities into Postsecondary Education

Research has documented the need to assist individuals with learning disabilities to transition to adult life in areas other than education and employment. Sitlington, 1996 stated that individuals with learning disabilities need to learn to maintain a home, get involved in community living, and experience satisfactory social relationships. Self-determination is an increasingly important link in helping students with learning disabilities experience personal fulfillment and successful adult outcomes. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandated that students with disabilities are involved in their transition plans (Smith, 2005; Wehmeyer, Garner, Yeager, Lawrence, & Davis, 2006). It is important to study the connection between
cultural values and self-determination in postsecondary planning (Trainor, 2002).
Achieving “successful” postsecondary outcomes for students with learning disabilities
continues be challenging.

The dominant, individualist American values can be found throughout federal
legislation (e.g., Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] and the Rehabilitation
Act of 1992) that guides the domain of special education. Cultural values such as
normalization, independence, autonomy, and equity are manifested in special education’s
emphasis on self-determination (Trainor, 2002). Often times, they fall short in accommodating
individuals from collectivistic cultures (Leake et al., 2004). Trainor (2002) believed that in
order to improve educational outcomes for students with learning disabilities, it is important to
examine the link between cultural values and self-determination in postsecondary planning.
Although increasing students’ self-determination was an important link in helping students
with learning disabilities experience personal fulfillment and successful adult outcomes, it has
been problematic to help culturally and linguistically different students with learning
disabilities attain acceptable postsecondary outcomes.

Federal Legislation Regarding Students with Learning Disabilities
Over the past three decades, IDEA (and subsequent amendments) has mandated
the need to provide a free and appropriate education for all students with disabilities,
pursued the requisite for specific transition services for these students, clarified the
members that need to be present and active in this transition process, and clarified the
definition of “learning disability.” In the next section, I highlight key federal legislation
that has supported students with learning disabilities in the transition process.
Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142)
Prior to the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL
94-142), access for students with disabilities to educational opportunities was limited. More
than 1.75 million students with disabilities were totally excluded from schools and more than
3 million additional students with disabilities did not receive an education that was appropriate
to their needs. Moreover, because of the limited opportunities offered by the public schools,
families were often forced to secure education and related services elsewhere, often at great
distance from their homes and at their own expense. The education of students with
disabilities was seen as a privilege, rather than a right (Huefner, 2000).
Only 20% of children with disabilities were educated in U.S. public schools in the early 1970s. Many of these students received education that was not appropriate to their needs. In fact, certain states’ laws had excluded categories of students with disabilities. This seemingly random nature of services for students with disabilities prompted parents and other advocacy groups to seek solutions to these problems through court action (Katsiyannis, Yell, & Bradley, 2001). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, guaranteed a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students with a disability, in every state and locality across the United States. The purpose of the law was to improve access to education (and related services) for children with disabilities. Specifically, changes involved: (a) Efforts to improve how children with disabilities were identified and educated; (b) To evaluate the success of these efforts; (c) To protect the rights of children and families; and (d) To provide financial incentives to enable states and localities to comply with the law (Education for All Handicapped Children’s Act of 1975).

Public Law 94-142 addressed the needs of more than one million children with disabilities who were excluded from the education system or who had only partial access to an appropriate education. The children who had only partial access to appropriate education made up more than half of all children with disabilities who were living in the United States at that time. The law covered the following classifications of disabilities: deafness-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech/language impairment, and visual impairment/blindness (Altshuler & Kopels, 2003).

States were required to prove that they were educating students with disabilities in accordance with the law’s principles in order to receive funding under EAHCA. Subsequent re-authorizations of EAHCA (e.g. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) further extended the right to FAPE to more individuals by expanding age ranges, types of disabilities, types of supports and related services.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (PL 101-476)

EAHCA was reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA of 1990 provided federal funding for children with disabilities. It required as a condition of funding, the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE). IDEA of 1990 detailed the following purposes: (a) To ensure that children with disabilities had available to
them a free appropriate public education that emphasized special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living; (b) To ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and parents of such children are protected; and (c) To assist States, localities, educational service agencies and Federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities (IDEA, 1990).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 was the first piece of federal legislation that mandated a statement of needed transition services be included in the students’ Individualized Education Plan (IEP) by the age of 16 (or younger when appropriate). Transition services was defined as a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process, that promotes movement from school to postsecondary activities (Department of Education, 1992). The definition of transition services in IDEA (1990) broadened the concept of multiple postsecondary outcomes (Sitlington & Clark, 2006) and included postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

Another important component of IDEA (1990) was the mandate for students to be involved in planning their transition services and goals at IEP meetings. This mandate provided a basis for students to become actively involved in articulating their needs, goals, and planning for their futures (self-determination movement). IDEA (1990) clearly identified special educators as being the agents responsible for initiating the transition planning process. Transition planning was to include a team of individuals including members from the community and adult services agencies that could provide postsecondary services (e.g., vocational rehabilitation) to individuals with disabilities. The law mandated that the personnel from outside agencies be invited to the students’ IEP meetings when appropriate.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (PL 105-17)

While IDEA (1990) provided the first federal mandate for transition planning in special education, IDEA Amendments of 1997 broadened the scope of transition planning. The Amendments emphasized the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms, setting high standards and expectations; and including children in large-scale assessment programs in States and districts. A significant change in the IDEA Amendments of
1997 related to when transition planning must begin for students. Transition planning was now to begin at age 14 and updated annually. A statement of transition service needs of the child must be listed under the applicable components of the child’s IEP that focuses on the child’s courses of study (IDEA 1997).

Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA 2004)

The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 brought about significant changes including: the requirements for “highly qualified” special education teachers, added flexibility in attendance at IEP meetings; identification procedures for students with specific learning disabilities, and changes to transition requirements. While IDEA 1997 required that schools provide transition planning in IEPS when the student reaches 14 years of age, IDEIA 2004 requires that schools only include a statement of transition goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments beginning with the first IEP that is in effect when the child reaches 16 years of age (Smith, 2005).

Transition Services for Individuals with Disabilities

The increase in the number of students with disabilities entering colleges and universities requires more effective transition programs and services between secondary and postsecondary institutions (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005). In order to be effective, transition planning must be student-centered and should address the developmental and educational needs of the student (Blalock & Patton, 1996). Although federal legislation has promoted students’ participation at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, studies indicated that their active involvement continues to be lacking (Arndt et al., 2006; Trainor, 2005). In addition, transition plans reveal that many students with disabilities exit high school without having developed the necessary self-advocacy skills to survive in college (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005). IDEIA 2004 acknowledges the importance of student self-advocacy and requires that decisions about transition activities be based on the student’s preferences and interests.

Despite an increased interest in students with learning disabilities, there was surprisingly little empirical research that addressed student choice in the transition process. York-Barr and Paulsen (1997) presented survey results of high school student’s perspectives related to current and desired life outcomes but did not describe “how” the students made life choices. Kern (2000) studied minority high school students’ choices regarding postsecondary education. She found that higher education was not a tradition among her sample of students.
but was strongly encouraged by their families and that financial aid was an important consideration for many them. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA 2004) (PL 108-446) supported the need for students with disabilities to be provided with transition services, to be allowed access to general education, and to partake in state assessments. In IDEIA 2004, the statement of transition service needs for students at age 14 was deleted and replaced with the following: “Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child is 16 and updated annually thereafter” (Sitlington & Clark, 2006). Also, IDEIA (2004) addressed matters related to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) by defining “highly qualified” special education teachers. All special education teachers must be highly qualified under the NCLB definition creating ramifications for schools to successfully recruit and/or train, and retain such licensed personnel (Smith, 2005).

The percentage of school age students placed in the SLD category and receiving IDEA services varies greatly across states. In 2000, there were 2,887,966 individuals with SLD living in the United States and 10,587 living in Hawai’i (Students with Learning Disabilities, 2002). The goal of improving identification of students with SLD is not to reduce the number of eligible students but instead, to bring greater understanding to current policies, and to learn to serve students more quickly and more efficiently once they begin to struggle in school (IDEA 2004: Changes to). Other questions include how these RTI will affect children who have not yet been identified with SLD and the millions who have been identified as SLD and are already receiving special education services. The success of RTI depends in large part on whether it is appropriately implemented by highly trained professionals (Wright & Wright, 2008).

Students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Postsecondary Environments

In the past ten years, postsecondary education has become a more viable option for students with learning disabilities. Although there is variation in the percentage of students with LD in college, a survey of postsecondary offices for students with disabilities found that students with learning disabilities made up more than one-third of all students with disabilities. This increase in students with learning disabilities in postsecondary institutions can be attributed to several factors including the impact of IDEA (Madaus & Shaw, 2006).

Skinner and Lindstrom (2003) discussed strategies that will increase the probability of a successful transition for college bound students with learning disabilities.
Strategies included: (a) teaching students about their disability and compensation strategies; (b) teaching students to self-advocate; (c) teaching students about the laws that directly affect their educational rights and responsibilities; (d) helping students with learning disabilities select postsecondary schools and to self-identify and seek appropriate assistance once enrolled; (e) teaching students to organize for learning and living; and (f) facilitating a support network.

Hadley (2006) studied first year college students with learning disabilities who transitioned from a sheltered secondary environment to a less monitored college setting. She found that it was critical for students with learning disabilities to self-advocate with their professors and reported also on the importance of the professors’ support of their academic needs. Those students who did not self-advocate and therefore did not institute needed academic accommodations reported to have a very difficult time adjusting to college.

Although IDEIA (2004) contained major changes that directly affected students with learning disabilities in their transition to postsecondary education, students with disabilities must self-identify and provide documentation to their chosen postsecondary institution in order to gain access and receive accommodations from the college (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). As postsecondary institutions are covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and not under IDEA 2004, they are not obligated to provide assessments for nor pay for student evaluations. Currently, there is no standard for what is considered “acceptable documentation” of disability.

There have been increasing concerns regarding students with learning disabilities in postsecondary environments due to a number of reasons: diagnostic reports are often outdated, ill-prepared (or prepared by unqualified individuals), and lack specific recommendations. For example, one diagnostic report recommended that a student’s “spelling errors be forgiven” a request that does not pose a realistic accommodation at the postsecondary level (Harris & Robertson, 2001). Harris and Robertson (2001) reported that oftentimes, these students are not disadvantaged by their disabilities but rather their expectations of what the faculty at the postsecondary institutions is going to do for them.

In addition to the federal legislation under IDEA, individuals with disabilities are also protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with
Disabilities Act of 1990. These laws mandate that all public institutions provide accessible postsecondary education for students with disabilities.

Although there has been an increase in students with disabilities entering postsecondary education, these numbers are still far behind those of students without disabilities. If these individuals desire to pursue entry into higher status positions, participating in postsecondary training must be an essential component of their transition plan (Sitlington, 2003). Murray, Goldstein, Nourse, and Edgar (2000) examined the postsecondary education status of high school graduates with learning disabilities. Their findings suggested that when compared to their peers without disabilities, students with learning disabilities were significantly less likely to have attended training in postsecondary institutions and were also less likely to have graduated from postsecondary programs during their first 10 years following high school.

According to the NLTS2 (2009), individuals with disabilities from wealthier families were more likely than their peers to experience positive outcomes in education and employment. Youth from higher income households (more than $50,000) were almost twice as likely to have enrolled at a postsecondary institution. In addition, this group is more likely to be employed since leaving high school (81 percent vs. 61 percent for those in lowest economic households). Cultural and social capital issues that impact students’ educational and vocational involvement will be further outlined in the next section.

First Generation College Students

“One of the most significant promises of postsecondary education is its positive effect on future generations” (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005, p. 115).

In this study, I wanted to explore the role that first generation college student status played on the decision making practices of the study participants. Research tells us that the role of first generation college student is one beset with challenges. Compared to their peers, first-generation college students are at a distinct disadvantage in many ways: basic knowledge about postsecondary education (e.g., costs and application process); level of family income and support; educational degree expectations and plans; and academic preparation in high school (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzina, 2004).
First-generation students must not only deal with the anxieties common to all college students but must also experience significant cultural, social, and academic changes. Understandably, a disproportionately low number of first-generation students succeed in college (Pascarella et al., 2004). Many of these challenges of first-generation college students can be attributed to issues of cultural and social capital.

Impact of Cultural and Social Capital

Philosopher, sociologist, and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu conceptualized the terms “cultural capital” and “social capital” to explain disparities in the educational attainment of children from different classes (Weininger & Lareau, nd). According to Bourdieu, cultural and social capital formed a theoretical perspective for understanding the potential outcomes of first-generation students. “Cultural capital” is the knowledge, skill, education, and other advantages that give an individual a higher status in society (Pascarella et al., 2004). Parents are often instrumental in providing the attitudes and knowledge that make the educational system comfortable and familiar to their children. Cultural capital suggests that those with highly educated parents may have a clearer advantage over first-generation students in understanding the culture of higher education and its role in personal development and socioeconomic attainment (Pascarella et al., 2004; Trainor, 2008). “Social capital” in turn, is the resources available to the individual based on group membership, relationships, and networks (Pascarella et al., 2004; Trainor, 2008).

Dumais and Ward (2009) found that cultural capital was more common to members of the upper class and linked to positive educational results such as higher grades or a personalized educational experience. These researchers highlighted both the importance of structure and agency in Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory. They reported that those in power may select and reward those who possess knowledge of the dominant culture but also, students and their families may take steps to benefit them at critical points in the educational process.

Demographics

First-generation college students differed from non-first-generation students in age and family background. One major difference is that they were older than traditional students: 31% of first-generation students were 24 years of age or older. First-generation students also
tended to come from families with lower incomes; 42% earned less than $25,000/year) (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004).

Financial Issues

First generation college students often faced financial obligations that interfere with their studies. These students worked more hours and studied fewer hours per week when compared with their peers (Pascarella et al., 2004). Ball, Reay, and David (2002) classified a first generation applicant to higher education as a “contingent choice.” This student was described as one whose parents were educated outside of the country (UK), were of the working class, and had low incomes. This student could expect little financial support from them in deciding on and financial higher education however may receive emotional support and high levels of encouragement to pursue a higher education. Seidman (2005) provided a more generalized outlook on the need for financial aid. He stated that a lack of sufficient financial aid presents a barrier to higher education to minority as well as majority students. Dey and Hurtado (1995) indicated that one of the most significant trends in the last three decades is the improved access for students of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Federal financial aid policies now enable students of diverse economic backgrounds to pursue higher education. With continued financial assistance, perhaps institutions of higher education will see better retention rates among their culturally diverse clientele.

Academic Preparation for Postsecondary Education

First generation college students are more likely to be less academically prepared for college, to have less knowledge of how to apply for college and for financial assistance, and to have more difficulty in acclimating themselves to college once they enroll. They are likely to lack knowledge of time management, college finances and budget management, and the bureaucratic operations of higher education (Tym et al., 2004).

Retention Issues

Retention is a major issue for first-generation students. Compared to students whose parents are college graduates, first-generation students are more apt to leave a four-year institution at the end of their freshman year. A disproportionately low number of first-generation students succeed in college with evidence of a 15% gap between the
persistence rates of first- and second-generation students (73% and 88% respectively) (Pike & Kuh, 2005).

First generation students are more likely at risk for not completing a degree because they are more apt to delay enrollment after high school, to enroll in post secondary education part-time, and to work full-time while enrolled (Tym et al., 2004). Compared to their peers, these students completed fewer first-year credit hours, studied fewer hours and worked more hours per week, were less likely to perceive that faculty were concerned about students and teaching, and made smaller first-year gains on a standardized measure of reading comprehension. Compared to students whose parents are college graduates, first-generation students were less likely to stay enrolled in school or earn a bachelor’s degree after five years (Pascarella et al., 2004).

Social Supports

First generation college students are less likely to live on campus, less likely to develop relationships with faculty members, less likely to perceive faculty as being concerned about their progress (Pascarella et al., 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005). These differences continued even in the presence of statistical controls for a battery of background characteristics such as tested ability, family socioeconomic status, aspirations, high school involvement, etc. (Pascarella et al., 2004).

For most students, going to college may be seen as a rite of passage. However, parents, siblings, and friends of first generation college students who have no experience of college or its reward may not be supportive. For example, these first-generation students may not have a designated place or time to study at home, and may be criticized for devoting time to school rather than family responsibilities (Tym et al., 2004).

First-generation students may encounter cultural conflicts between the home and college community that seriously impact their successful transition to and retention in postsecondary environments (Tym et al., 2004). Extensive research has been done on the conflict between students from minority cultures (primarily from collectivist orientations) and the individualist culture of the educational institution (Triandis, 2001). Administration and educators must be cognizant of the needs of first generation college students and the cultural differences that arise in their educational settings and address these issues. Many first
Ethnic Minority Students in Postsecondary Environments

The ethnic composition of many college campuses has changed over the years. Diversity is becoming a major feature of higher education. Laden (2004) reported that there was an “emerging majority” of students enrolling in institutions of higher education. In 2000, students of color represented 34% of all students enrolled in public two-year colleges and 38% of all students enrolled in private two-year colleges (Laden, 2004). Among first-time students at four-year colleges, the proportion of white students had progressively declined while the proportion of all other ethnic minority groups has increased (Dey & Hurtado, 1995). By 2015, the number of 18-25 year old students is projected to increase by 1.6 million with 80% being students of color (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005).

There is substantial research on the issue of the ethnic minority students’ access to and retention in higher education (Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997; Makuakane-Drechsel & Hagedorn, 2000; Simeonsson, Carlson, Huntington, Sturz, & Lytle Brent, 2001). Wright (2003) reported that while there is a rich body of knowledge chronicling the positive influences on cultural identity formation of students of color who attended same ethnicity institutions of higher learning, research on the interaction between higher education and Hawaiian identity did not exist. Perna and Titus (2005) found that African Americans and Hispanics were disadvantaged in the college enrollment process not only due to “economic, human, and cultural capital” but also due to limited social networks that promote college enrollment in the schools they attended. These researchers also found that parental involvement is positively related to college enrollment regardless of individual and group differences. Dey and Hurtado (1995) acknowledged that while all racial minority groups have evidenced enrollment gains, some groups continue to be confronted with inequities in college access.

Retention and Persistence of Ethnic Minority Students in Higher Education

Administrators of mainstream institutions of higher education are looking for ways to retain these ethnic minority students. Retention and persistence strategies are now being recognized as necessary components of the higher education curriculum. Although 230,000
associate degrees were conferred in 2000, 71% of them were awarded to white students. Regardless of the growing trend of minority students at community colleges, only 9.6% of associate degrees were granted to African Americans, 10.1% to Hispanics, 5.3% to Asian American and Pacific Islanders, and 1.0% to American Indians and Alaska Natives (Laden, 2004).

Seidman (2005) reported similar concerns that while minority students are now entering colleges at higher rates; they also have higher attrition rates than non-minorities. Makuakane-Drechsel and Hagedorn (2000) indicated that persistence was positively correlated to increased time and energy studying, getting involved in school activities, and interacting with faculty and peers, activities that are often times at odds with the demands on the ethnically minority students’ time. Seidman (2005) reported that common traits that prevented students from ethnic minorities (specifically, American Indian, African American, and Hispanic) from successful integration into the academic and social aspects of college life included: lack of academic preparation, lack of students with similar ethnic characteristics, and financial need. The student’s decision to leave his/her place in higher education was dependent on the extent to which he/she was academically and socially integrated into the academic and social system. Positive experiences served as reinforcements to the individual’s intentions and commitments whereas the opposite was also true. The significant component to retention then was the introduction of positive reinforcements or influences and the removal of negative influences. One could question however whether the ethnic minority students’ “unsuccessful” integration into the majority culture (i.e., postsecondary education) could be framed as a desire to protect their culture and therefore a resistance to assimilate.

Zamani (2000) conducted a review of literature in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) system on minority student retention in higher education and found that prior academic achievement and intellectual ability were the primary factors affecting student retention. The literature also suggested that students with “low-level degree goals, lack of financial resources, poor study habits, full-time employment, and parents with low levels of educational attainment” had higher dropout rates. Carter (2006) had similar findings. She found that high income, adequate financial aid, academic preparation, and strong support networks positively affected persistence.
Corroborating the above findings, Opp (2002) found that barriers in the structure of institutions affected the retention of students of color. These included: inadequate financial aid; deficient funds for intervention programs; insufficient research on retention and achievement of minority students; few faculty and staff who came from minority groups; lack of suitable and appropriate social and cultural activities; and ignorance by the institution of the cultures and contributions of the ethnic minorities. Opp (2002) also mentioned that there were attitudinal barriers at institutions including negative racial climate on campus, the resistance of faculty to advise students of color, and the reluctance of faculty to deal with under prepared students.

Educational equity may be undermined due to pressures for assimilation. Minority students may be admitted to college programs but if the instructor fails to acknowledge the values and belief systems of these students, he/she may challenge their success and prevent them from attaining educational equity (Harbour, Middleton, Lewis, & Anderson, 2003). Oftentimes, colleges attempt to include minorities by assimilating them into the institutional programs. Martinez, Aleman and Salkever (2003) believed that instead of encouraging “assimilation,” institutions of higher education should attempt to create a common experience that encourages a sense of community. In order to create “community,” we don’t have to be “alike.” Harbour et al. (2003) discussed the concept of “assimilation” as a process of absorption. In these situations, individuals from ethnic minority groups are pressured (subtly and otherwise) to accept the dominant culture and subordinate their own cultural identity.

Heisserer and Parette (2002) researched the significance of intrusive advising for at-risk college and university students (i.e., ethnic minorities, academically disadvantaged, disabled, those from low socioeconomic status, and those who are on probationary status). These authors defined intrusive advising as an intervention with an at-risk student that is designed to make possible informed and responsible decision-making, increase participation in social and academic activities, and ensure the likelihood of academic success. The authors found that most advisors required further training in the use of integrated advising models and more significantly, were not trained to address the unique needs of at-risk students.
Often linked to ethnic minority students is the issue of socioeconomic status (SES). The SES of the student may also affect an individual’s decision to pursue postsecondary education; low family SES is strongly linked to less college participation. Tierney (1980) in Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) reported that the probability of college attendance for students coming from low-income families is heavily influenced by their perception of available financial assistance. Hurtado and colleagues (1997) stated that socioeconomic factors influenced the options or opportunities offered to students in higher education in terms of the development of their college choice sets. These authors indicated that students in lower income categories submitted fewer applications to colleges when compared to students whose family incomes were over $50,000.

Using a multiple case study design, Lindstrom et al. (2007) studied the role of the family in career development and post-school employment outcomes for young adults with L.D. They found that the family socioeconomic status was linked to initial career decision making. Participants in this study who were raised in low-SES families reported that this had an effect on their career development and vocational identity. These individuals were expected to contribute financially to the family functioning. Although a low SES may inhibit an individual’s career aspirations and outcomes, with these participants, it instead produced a need to be different from their parents.

In 2002, Ficklen and Stone indicated that because of record high financial barriers, nearly one-half of all college-qualified low- and moderate-income high school graduates (i.e., more than 400,000 students), would be unable to attend a four-year college, and 170,000 of these students would not be able to attend college at all. They estimated that over the next decade, 4.4 million qualified students would not attend college as prohibitive financial barriers prevented many students from enrolling in a community college and many students who were admitted to a four-year or a community college would find it more and more difficult to remain in school due to financial difficulties (Ficklen & Stone, 2002).

Parental Involvement

Most college preparation programs assume that parental involvement encourages the enrollment of students from underrepresented groups. Perna and Titus (2005) studied the effects of parental involvement on African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and White 12th grade students. These researchers found that parental involvement is related to
college enrollment even after taking into account race/ethnicity, sex, and measures of economic, cultural, and human capital. These authors found, however, that research on parental involvement and college enrollment is limited by the operational definition of “involvement” (e.g., using just one indicator such as frequency of discussions between parent and child). Parental involvement is also impacted by the lack of funding, staffing, and other resources necessary to recruit and maintain program involvement.

Perna and Titus (2005) recommended that resources should be allocated to promote parental involvement which they operationalized as the frequency of discussions between parent and child about educational related activities) as a form of social capital of underrepresented groups. Perna and Titus’ conceptual model was based on the work of Bourdieu (1986) and Lin (2001) that suggested that one’s action such as college enrollment must be understood in terms of the structural context (i.e., the characteristics of the student’s high school; how the school encouraged parental involvement; accessibility of school resources; and school social networks). These authors attested that the probability of enrolling in a 2 or 4-year college was dependent not only on the parental involvement but also on the social and other forms of capital available at the student’s secondary school.

There is limited research on how ethnic minority students chose their postsecondary institutions. Esters (2005) studied graduates of an urban agricultural education program and identified parents and/or guardians as the individuals most influencing the student’s decision as to whether or not to pursue postsecondary education. In their study of student choice in higher education, Ball et al. (2002) studied ethnic-minority students in the United Kingdom. These researchers found that the ethnic mix of the institution of higher education was one factor (among others) that influenced student choice. The choice of institution for some of their participants was related to maintaining facets of their ethnic identity; providing an arena where this identity would be valued and defended; or at least, not having to protect or assert the value of their identity. For these students, certain higher education institutions were more tolerant of the ethnic differences. Simeonsson et al. (2001) asserted that a negative relationship exists between school size and participation. Harris (1970) wrote about the African-American experience and highlighted personal and parental influences on college attendance.
Okamura (1990, 2008) introduced the idea that race was the key to identifying socioeconomic status, advantages, and opportunities. This researcher used three objective indices of socioeconomic status (occupational distribution, educational achievement, and income) to explore the social stratification system and determine the relative statuses of ethnic groups in Hawai‘i. He found that ethnic groups could be ranked in the following socioeconomic stratification order:

(a) Upper level (i.e., high status): Chinese Americans and Caucasians;
(b) Intermediate level: Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, African Americans;
(c) Lower level: Filipino-Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Samoan Americans.

Okamura (1990, 2008) found that ethnicity was the primary structural principle in regulating the distribution of socioeconomic advantages, opportunities, and rewards among ethnic groups. The disparity of opportunity and reward among these groups remains a basic condition of the social status system of Hawai‘i.

The review of literature regarding the first generation college student indicated that these students were faced with a number of challenges that impacted their consideration of, application to, participation in, and retention in higher education. Factors contributing to these challenges were attributed in part to the students’ lack of cultural and social capital.

Conclusion

A learning disability may impact the student’s academic history, career choices, and self esteem (Levine & Nourse, 1998; Williams, 1998). Despite the increased interest in students with learning disabilities, there is surprisingly little empirical research that addressed student choice in the transition process. In addition, little is known about when the intersection of culture, disability, and first generation status occurs. The review of literature showed that we still need to learn how native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities make postsecondary decisions and the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that impact those decisions. In the next chapter, I present the study design that addressed these questions.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Kana‘iaupuni (2005) called for future research about Native Hawaiians to reflect a Native Hawaiian worldview based on strengths rather than deficits. This researcher challenged the “construction of knowledge” and the ways “knowledge” had been used to advantage some groups while rationalizing the inferiority of others. This researcher called on Native Hawaiians to use their voices, to take on an active role in producing research (vs. only being researched), and to cement their presence in the production of knowledge. Kana‘iaupuni advocated for a strengths-based approach to research and evaluation whose purpose is to benefit those involved in the study by giving them a voice, insight, and political power. This approach laid the framework for the design of this study. I do not wish to imply that I have the “power” to “give” a people a voice; my intent was to serve as an instrument to record their voices.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe and document the participants’ experiences as they made postsecondary decisions. I wanted to learn about the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influenced their decision-making with the hope that this information would help me and others in the field of education to better serve these students.

Design

Research Questions

The primary research question that guided my study was: “How do native Hawaiian high school students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?” Three secondary questions followed:

- What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?
- What role does disability play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?
- How does being a first generation college student influence participants’ postsecondary decision-making process?
To answer these questions, I used a multiple case study approach. The case study would be the preferred method when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, and when the researcher had little control over events and wanted to answer “how” or “why” questions (Yin, 1998). This multiple case study was bounded (Creswell, 2007) by the physical parameters of the chosen site (DOE Hawaiian charter school on the island of Oahu), by participant demographics (native Hawaiian high school student with a learning disability), and by time (within 2009 – 2010 school year) (Jones et al., 2006). The case study method provided a means for participants to share their stories. I wanted to use a culturally appropriate method to interview the participants and modeled my method after Meyer’s study (2003) in which she approached her participants (mentors) not as a researcher in need of hard data but rather as a “student” in need of assistance. I informed the study participants that I wanted to hear their voices and allow their words to teach me about their post high school decision making influences and processes.

Like Meyer (2003), I realized that although the participants were familiar with and comfortable in the interview setting (their school), this was still a contrived situation and foreign to how knowledge is usually exchanged among the Hawaiian people. Students were however especially gracious and appeared willing to help me with my “learning.” I interviewed each student on the school grounds just after the close of the school day. Utilizing this approach allowed me to sit with the participants while they were in their natural habitat, listen to their words, observe nuances in tone and body language, view artifacts, and record and report these in-depth findings.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data. The human instrument comes with limitations and biases that may impact the study. For this reason, it is important that the researcher identify and monitor these subjectivities as they may influence the collection and interpretation of data (Merriam, 2002). In his study of Māori research, Bishop (1998) posed the question as to who should conduct research in indigenous settings. He noted that cultural insiders may undertake research in a more sensitive and responsive manner than outsiders. However, Bishop also stated that even Western trained indigenous researchers would not automatically conduct research in
culturally appropriate ways. In addition, insiders were “inherently biased” or too close to the data to ask critical questions. It was important that the researcher “had the cultural knowledge to accurately interpret and validate the experiences…within the context of the phenomenon under study” (Bishop, 1998, p. 113).

Bishop’s words served as a caveat for this non-native researcher. I knew that I needed to be aware of any biases or stereotypes that I might have that would influence this study. As a rehabilitation counselor for the State of Hawai‘i in the 1990s, I interviewed a number of young men of native Hawaiian ancestry who stated that they did not want to go to college but preferred to move from the high school setting into a trade occupation. Many of the young women of native Hawaiian ancestry chose neither to work nor to pursue further education but instead indicated that they preferred to “stay home, to get married and have babies.” These recollections were embedded in my memory.

As a VR counselor, I was not collecting data for research purposes; I did not document the number of students that responded to my questions regarding postsecondary options; nor did I take the time to pursue why they were making those choices. I realized that as I entered this study, I had to address these and other preconceived notions of the native Hawaiian people and the impact culture (or views regarding other aspects of the study) may have on postsecondary decisions for the study participants. I knew that I needed to identify, acknowledge, and continually revisit these biases and preconceptions throughout the study.

I also needed to check for conscious and unconscious areas of a biased or condescending perspective. The use of language or choice of words was important in not only my interaction with study participants but also in the write up of this study. For example, a committee member cautioned me when I wrote the following sentence an earlier draft about the impact of this study on the native Hawaiian community: “This study will provide ‘a voice’ for the native Hawaiian community and thereby provide a means and opportunity to educate, engage, and secure support from educators and relevant service providers.” The committee member reminded me that there were implications for a non-Native scholar providing ‘voice’ to native Hawaiians. In so writing, it appeared that I believed that I had the power to bring about this action.
There were also several factors that could contribute to social distance between the researcher and the participants: education, socio-economic status, language. As the primary researcher, I was aware of the social distance between the study participants and myself due to my gender (4 of the 5 participants were boys), age, education, background, language, and ethnicity. Although I recognized that it would be impossible to completely bridge the gap of social distance, I made attempts to make the participants as comfortable as possible with me. Prior to the 1:1 interviews, I put on mini workshops. This allowed the participants saw me on campus on several occasions. I also, chose my attire carefully. The students at this school all wore a school uniform (t-shirt with school name and logo) and the school staff dressed casually. I too chose to dress in the manner of the school staff and wore jeans, a blouse, and casual footwear.

My mode of communication was also carefully selected. Although I can speak in standard English, I was born and raised in Hawai‘i and grew up speaking the local dialect of Hawaiian Creole English (known by locals as “pidgin English”). This was the language the participants used. For this reason, during our interviews, I spoke in “pidgin English” to promote a more informal, relaxed, and free flowing conversation.

It was also important that I respectfully navigate through the cultural protocols of the research study. Although I was born and raised in Hawai‘i, I am not a true “insider.” I am not native Hawaiian; I am Japanese-American. As a non-native researcher, I was aware of that the dissonance between the native Hawaiian epistemology and the dominant Euro-American system of knowledge that I was raised with may impact my effectiveness. According to McDermott, Tseng, and Maretzki (1980), native Hawaiians use avoidance of intimate involvement with outsiders as a coping mechanism to deal with the frustrations of modern living. “The cold professional direct approach sometimes attributed to the haole is very likely to elicit a veiled deceptive response. By the same token, the outsider, regardless of his ethnicity, who attempts ‘local’ speech patterns and inflection is likely to get the same response” (p. 19).

My method of addressing subjectivities was to take notes along with taped interviews; write journal entries of thoughts, feelings, and surprises. After transcribing and reviewing the first set of participant interviews, utilized member checks as described by Denzin and Lincoln (2000). I reviewed transcriptions with each participant to ensure
that I was accurately describing their thoughts and feelings. I enlisted the use of informants (i.e., two staff persons from Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina) who helped me to clarify and at times make corrections to collected data (e.g., Hawaiian vocabulary). Lincoln and Gupa (1985) recommended the use of a peer reviewer as a tool for qualitative researchers. Peer debriefing helps to establish the credibility of a study by helping to keep the researcher honest; by testing hypotheses; by providing an opportunity to develop and test an emerging design, and by providing an occasion for catharsis. I met with a peer reviewer on a bimonthly basis. Our conversations ranged from discussions on accessing participants in culturally appropriate ways to teasing out thoughts and hypotheses. The peer reviewer helped to keep me on task and also helped me to identify possible biases and preconceptions.

It was important that I recognized and accepted these facts and so that as much as possible, I would be aware of preconceived assumptions. I needed to heed the warnings of researchers who have come before me. I must also pay attention to the warnings of native Hawaiian researchers like Kaomea (2005) who called on non-Hawaiian classroom teachers to take a more proactive role in Hawaiian studies education, while reminding the educators that they must “know their place” and the boundaries that were imposed by their supervising teacher. Kaomea suggested that the most helpful role that could be assumed by non-natives in teaching indigenous or researching indigenous communities was to work collaboratively with the native Hawaiians, to listen closely to their wisdom and concerns, and just as poet ʻImaikalani Kalahele (2002) so eloquently wrote to “stand behind” the people so that it is their voices that can be heard. Kalahele’s words that provided this nonnative researcher with needed guidance and offered a paradigm for me to follow:

If to help us is your wish then stand behind us.
Not to the side
And not to the front (Kalahele, 2002, p. 51).

In the context of my role as researcher, “standing behind” meant that I must not assume that I could lead these people nor should I be so ignorant as to consider myself an equal partner in their cause. It was important for me to put aside my natural tendencies to “dive in to” the environment and actively take part in conversations. I needed first to
develop a deeper understanding of the Hawaiian culture; to learn their way of learning from a respectful distance. In order for me to learn, I too needed to take on the child’s role and learn in the traditional way by watching and listening with the inquisitive eyes and ears of a child. In other words, I have found the method to this study for here is my place of learning…I must “stand behind.”

Participant/Observer

As a participant/observer I had a dual purpose in this study: (a) to participate in activities that supported and/or were part of the study (e.g., workshops, IEP meetings) and (b) to observe the activities, people, and physical characteristics of the situation. In doing so, I needed to be aware of details I had previously overlooked through years of discriminating levels of attention. I also needed to take in a wider spectrum of information in order to study cultural rules (Spradley, 1980).

Research Site: Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina

_Na Keiki o Ka ‘Āina_ (pseudonym), is a charter school located on the island of Oahu in the State of Hawai‘i. The school’s curriculum integrates core subjects (i.e., Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, Science, and Hawaiian Language) into place and project-based learning. The school’s philosophy is that academic rigor and cultural excellence “feed each other.” Each week, students also participate in hula, ‘oli, and mālama ‘āina. The school’s mission statement clearly focused on native Hawaiian values:

- **Ho‘okumu** (*Build grounding and foundation*) – To foster a sense of esteem, stewardship, and kuleana to the ‘āina, our communities and ourselves, through grounding in ancestral knowledge and practices of Hawai‘i and the academic skills necessary to excel in the 21st century.

- **Ho‘okele** (*Forge direction and connections*) – To explore and inquire in ways that build upon our ancestral wisdom and bridge to other communities and cultures in a harmonious manner.

- **Ho‘omāna** (*Provide sustenance and empowerment*) – To nourish ourselves and our communities by striving for high academic, cultural, social, environmental, and economic standards (i.e., all _piko_ cognitive, emotional, spiritual and physical (Note: school information was found on school’s website but citation will not be noted here in order to maintain confidentiality of study participants.).
The research site was purposefully selected. One reason for choosing this site was that *Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina* was a Hawaiian-based charter school with 97% of the school population identified as Hawaiian [Note: reference to website not shown in order to protect confidentiality of participants]. Another reason for choosing this site was that this school enrolled a large number of students who received special education services. Approximately one quarter of the school’s population was eligible for special education services. This was confirmed by one of the school’s special education teacher who stated that at the time of the study, there were 28 students who received special education services (I. Young [pseudonym], personal communication, January 14, 2010). As a researcher, this provided me with a large enough pool from which to select my participants.

**Participants**

The following students agreed to participate in this study (I have used pseudonyms for all participants to protect their identities):

*Kainoa* was a 14-year old freshman. He was adopted by his birth mother’s family. Kainoa has 8 brothers and 1 sister (by birth mom and by adopted mom). An older brother attended college for two years but did not graduate.

*Po’okela* was a 14-year old freshman and the younger brother of Kekolu who is also a participant in this study. Po’okela lived with his parents and brothers in Honolulu. He is the middle child (older brother age 15; younger brother age 13). At the time of the study, all three siblings attended NKKA.

*Kekolu* was a 15-year old junior. He had two younger brothers. His mother worked as a waitress for a family-style restaurant and his father worked in the construction industry.

*Pu’uwai* was a 16-year old junior. She was the oldest of four siblings (one sister and two brothers). *Pu’uwai’s* parents were separated at the time of the study. The participant lived with her mother, a younger brother, and sister in Honolulu. She was responsible for a lot of babysitting duties. The other younger brother lived with her grandmother on the Big Island where he attended a Hawaiian immersion school.

*‘Aukua* was a 17-year old senior. ‘Aukua lived with his extended family in Honolulu (i.e., mother, father, maternal grandparents, younger sister, and cousins).
mother had encouraged him to go to college. No one in ‘Aukua’s immediate family went to college. He had one cousin who went to college on an athletic scholarship (on the mainland USA) but did not have much more information about this individual.

All 5 of the participants were native Hawaiian students. One of the initial challenges for this study was determining how I would define “native Hawaiian”. In my research, I discovered that “how” an organization or institution defined “native Hawaiian” varied greatly. For example, the State of Hawai‘i Data Book 2009, and the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) both relied on individuals self-identifying as native Hawaiian. In contrast, the Kamehameha Schools Bishop Estate (an estate founded by Princess Pauahi Bishop whose mission is to create educational opportunities to improve the capability and well-being of people of Hawaiian ancestry) (About Kamehameha Schools, n.d.) defined native Hawaiians as those who can substantiate Hawaiian ancestry through birth certificates of parents and grandparents (Ho‘oulu, 2005) and the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921 defined native Hawaiian as “descendants of not less than one-half part of the blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778” (HHCA, 1921). For the purposes of this study, I relied on the participants to self-identify as native Hawaiian.

I have used pseudonyms for the students and kumu, and changed the name of the research site and other distinguishing factors to protect the identities of all study participants. I initially sought out referrals of students from the upper grade levels (i.e., grades 11 and 12) of Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina. Unfortunately, due to the small school population, only three students were enrolled in the upper grade levels who met the study criteria and agreed to participate. For this reason, I expanded the age range to include students who were enrolled in grades 9-12. The participants were identified by the DOE as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and were currently receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This was one of the criteria that I used for referrals and relied on the vice principal of Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina to identify participants who met all study criteria. For the purposes of this study, I used the DOE’s current records and assessments to verify diagnosis of SLD.
Interestingly, RTI was not implemented *Na Keiki o Ka ʻĀina*. When asked how the students were identified with a disability, Ikaika Young, the certified special education teacher for the school responded:

For LD, basically what it is is a series of things. There’s a cognitive exam and DOE comes in and tests for that. We [the school personnel] do the academic test and …and we also do observation within the class and that’s pretty much it when it comes to making a determination. We take a look at the [student’s] cognitive abilities versus where they are right now and if there’s a severe drop combined with their overall grades…maybe they’re on the low end then we usually make them eligible for special education services (I. Young, personal communication, January 14, 2010).

Most of the participants were determined eligible for special education services while they were still in elementary school. Due to these outdated records, it is difficult to determine the accuracy of the diagnoses and recommendations for academic accommodations.

I would say they were all [tested] before the last couple of years. I know we did the reeval[uation] for Kainoa (pseudonym) in 2008 but we just used the old data and used it as current because we didn’t see very much strides when it came to him testing better than usual on regular tests…and teacher made tests…there hasn’t been too much of a change so we kind of left…the current data was basically okay and we didn’t have to test him any more for further evaluation (I. Young, personal communication, January 14, 2010).

I used a purposeful and criterion-based sampling to ensure that data collected would be rich and detailed with information vital to answer the research questions. The participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) self-identified as Hawaiian or part Hawaiian; (b) identified by the Department of Education as having a learning disability; (c) be a prospective first generation college student; and (d) enrolled in 9th-12th grade at *Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina*. Participant demographics are summarized below in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1 Participant Demographics

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Procedures

Institutional Review Board (IRB).

On January 7, 2009, I submitted an application to the University of Hawai‘i - Committee on Human Studies (CHS), University of Hawai‘i at Manoa to request approval to conduct research utilizing the protocols of this study. I received a letter from the UH - CHS on March 23, 2009 informing me that the study had been approved. A copy of the original approval letter can be found in APPENDIX A. I also requested and was approved for a one year extension on December 18, 2009. A copy of the approval memo from UH – CHS dated December 18, 2009, can also be found in APPENDIX A.

Gaining Access

One of the basic tasks of undertaking fieldwork in qualitative research lies in gaining access to a specific organization and ensuring that those associated with it will serve as participants for the study (Shenton & Hayter, 2004). One of the methods used for gaining access is using endorsements from “authorities” (Sheton & Hayter, 2004). Prior to initiating this study, I spoke with one of the school’s founders who provided me with valuable advice:

I think the bigger thing is establishing a sense of trust…knowing who you are…where you come from…why you’re there. We had different folks who were doing graduate level research…. writing their dissertations doing things here…the students seem to respond best to the people they’ve seen around…whether they know, “oh this is aunty”…whether or not she’s Hawaiian…or whatever…she’s been around. They see the other teachers, you know talking and showing respect
for this person...then they are more likely to open up (Name withheld to maintain confidentiality of participants, personal communication May 3, 2007).

After this initial meeting, I continued to lay the groundwork for gaining access to the school and to prospective participants for this study. I met with various school staff (principal, vice principal, counselor, administrative assistant, and various teachers) and shared with each of them my plans for the study and a copy of the study’s abstract. I openly and honestly answered questioned and concerns posed. One question that surfaced was the issue of maintaining confidentiality of the participants. I was able to reassure them that I would use pseudonyms and make every effort to protect the identities of the students.

I also informed the school administration and staff that I would share my findings with them. This concept of “reciprocity” as detailed by Shenton and Hayter (2004) indicated that entry is best ensured when the investigator agrees to share his/her findings with the organization and that participation in the study can be shown to benefit the organization.

I relied on insiders (Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina teachers and staff) to assist me in identifying students who met the study criteria, were willing to participate in interviews, and had their parents’ permission to participate. In particular, Mr. Ikaika Young (pseudonym), the Student Services Coordinator/Certified Special Education Teacher assisted me with the coordination and also served as a key person for entry to attendance at participant IEP meetings.

I drafted a letter that outlined the study, participant requirements, and Consent for Participation (parental form) (APPENDIX B). Early in the Spring 2009 semester, copies of these letters along with the study’s Assent for Participation (student form) (APPENDIX C) were sent to prospective participants who met study criteria and their parents. Out of the six sets of forms, five sets were completed, signed by appropriate parties, and returned to me in May 2009. I was not able to meet with the 5 participants until they returned to school in the Fall 2009 semester. The actual data collection (i.e., interviews, IEP documents, etc.) took place during the Fall 2009 – Spring 2010 semesters as students were out of school during the summer.
Mini Workshops with Small Group Discussions

On May 8, 2009, I conducted workshops for all students (9th-12th grades) in order to avoid singling out those students with special education designation. At this point in the study, I had not yet received signed consent/assent forms from the participants and their parents. I therefore conducted two main sessions: one for a large group of approximately 30 9th and 10th graders and a second workshop for 11th and 12th graders (4 students). The workshops were entitled: (a) “Create Your Own Success Story” (APPENDIX D) and (b) “How Can I Do Everything I Need to Do? – A Lesson in Time Management” (APPENDIX E).

There were two purposes for conducting mini workshops. First, I wanted to provide an opportunity for the students to begin to think about their futures. The “Create Your Own Success Story” allowed students to create collages and drawings on poster boards that reflected their dreams for their futures. The second workshop (on time management concepts) was a topic recommended by one of the teachers due to the needs of several students. The second and perhaps more important reason for conducting these workshops was that I wanted the students (and school staff) to have an opportunity to see me on campus, to interact with me, and hopefully to accept me as an observer/researcher.

I wrote notes to provide me with background on sessions. I observed that during the session with the 11th and 12th graders, a male student came in and immediately announced, “I not going do it!” A few minutes into this session, he appeared to relax and really seemed to enjoy the activity. After completing posters, each student shared what their posters were about. The one student who initially appeared resistant to participating in activity also shared his poster with his class in which he described his future in this way he has a wife and he likes to eat!

Data Collection Methods

Culture cannot be observed directly; in order to understand what people have learned as members of a group, we must first recognize how people think. Individuals learn their culture by making inferences through their observations of what people do (cultural behavior); by examining things people make and use (cultural artifacts); and by listening to what people say (speech messages) (Spradley, 1980). As a researcher, I wanted to study the native Hawaiian culture through the behaviors, artifacts, and voices
of the study’s participants and therefore, my data collection methods followed this same premise. Data collection methods included: (a) individual semi-structured interviews with 5 student participants (4 males and 1 female), (b) observations, (c) interview with Student Services Coordinator, and (d) artifacts. In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss the three data collection methods in detail.

Interviews

The one-on-one interviews took place after school hours and were held on the school grounds at the request of school administration. Meetings took place either in an empty classroom or in the school administrator’s meeting room. Although we did have the option to meet in an open air setting, other students were still on campus and I thought it best for the participant to meet in more private quarters in order to maintain confidentiality. An indoor setting was also preferable to ensure that the interviews were recorded as optimally as possible. In addition, if the interviews were held outdoors, we would be faced with extraneous noises (e.g., voices of students and faculty, motor vehicles, chickens, wind).

The semi-structured open-ended interview format provided the primary method of data collection. This method of research was selected to allow participants to speak freely and to describe their experiences in detail with minimal prompting. I incorporated the “talk-story” discourse pattern as described by Tharp (2000) to provide a more culturally compatible context for the interviews. Particularly true for cultures that share a strong oral tradition, storytelling is a commonly used method of passing on knowledge or sharing an understanding of self or a place and time. “Talking story” may be a more comfortable form of communication (Umemoto, 2001). McDermott et al. (1980) concurred by suggesting that those interested in working with or helping individuals from the native Hawaiian community adopt a low-key, sincere manner, to develop personal contact. Oftentimes simply through “talking story,” concerns and problems will come up through this undirected exchange. Semi-structured interviews fall between “highly structured interviews” where specific questions are predetermined and their order prescribed and “unstructured interviews” where the interviewer has topic areas in mind but has not developed the actual questions or order of questions (Merriam, 2002).
I developed a semi-structured interview guide (APPENDIX D) to seek out specific information from the participants. The guide ensured that all participants were asked the same questions; however the precise wording of the questions for the interviews and their order was not predetermined. One of the tools that I incorporated into the interview process was the use of storyboards to assist the participant in describing their present and future situations. I thought that offering the participants this optional mode (i.e., pictorially) for describing of their hopes, dreams, values might provide the study with another resource of description. The use of the storyboard was culturally appropriate method as students learned through participation. Learning took place by doing and through the process of “talking story.”

The first interviews with the student participants took place during the Fall 2009 semester. Although we met at different sites on the school campus, the participant and researcher were able to meet privately for approximately one hour sessions. Meyer (2003) began each of her interviews with a pule (prayer) and the sharing of food as she had learned that it was considered “good manners, proper protocol, and allowed informants to relax into something that was more familiar to them.” I did not offer a pule as this would be contrived, uncomfortable for both parties, and disrespectful. I did begin each interview with the exchanging of pleasantries and offering and sharing of refreshment. This allowed the student time to acclimate to the situation and hopefully relax.

During these initial interviews, I provided each participant with a white poster board and a variety of colored markers. I asked the student to first write his/her name in the middle of the poster board and to draw a circle around their name. They were then instructed to draw pictures or write descriptions of the people, activities, and things that were important in their lives at present. Our subsequent discussion would be based on this activity. When the participant was finished with the first circle, we discussed what they drew or wrote. I used the interview guide to facilitate this process. This process was iterative (2 more times). After discussing their present situation, I asked the participant to draw a circle around the previous circle and then fill that circle with drawings and/or words of people, activities, things that they would be involved with at the time of their graduation from high school. After discussing the items in the second circle, I asked the
participant to highlight events, people, activities they would like to be involved with at age 21. Upon their completion of this final circle, I asked questions to gain a better understanding of their thought processes during their transition process and asked other pertinent questions that had not been answered previously. Copies of all five of the drawings entitled, “Circles of Dreams” can be found in APPENDICES G - K.

Upon reviewing the transcripts from all the first interviews, there were still questions unanswered. I was able to meet with each participant a second time to not only review their original interviews and ask if they felt they wanted to share further information but also to probe further into specific areas of their transition process. The second interviewed revealed additional information for this study, especially in the area of disability. This topic will be explored further in Chapter 4.

I recorded each interview using a digital tape recorder as well as a cassette tape recorder and personally transcribed on the day that the interview took place. The cassette recorder provided a backup for the primary recording device (digital recorder). This process proved invaluable as on one occasion, the primary recorder malfunctioned. Transcribing each tape on the day that the interview took place was also a good strategy as the discussion was still fresh in my mind facilitating the transcribing process and more importantly, comprehension of the topic at hand.

Observations

I observed the participants both formally and informally: during the mini workshops, at interview sessions, and at IEP meetings. I attended two IEP meetings (for ‘Aukua and Kainoa) after obtaining permission from the participant, his parent, and from appropriate school personnel. The observations allowed me to contextualize ideas that arose out of our interviews and served to ground our conversations. For example, my interviews with Kainoa revealed a young man who loved and respected his adoptive parents but was somewhat ambivalent about his future. These observations were further confirmed through my interaction and observation of Kainoa at his IEP meeting. Details of that interaction are included in the next chapter.

Artifacts

I collected documents on past and present school activities, newsletters, Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs), school reports, etc. The documents provided a
foundation for other data collected throughout this study and supported the study’s findings. Archival data (e.g., IEP document) was also obtained by first asking for participant’s and his/her parent’s permission and then securing institutional permission. I wanted to contact the parents by telephone and by letter in order to facilitate communication however, the school administration preferred that the school staff make initial contact with parents and secure parental permission for student participation in this study.

Data Analysis

According to Spradley (1980), one of the most effective techniques for studying cultural belief systems is for the researcher to immerse themselves as deeply in the culture as possible and then to integrate and organize the amassed information into an rational series of propositions. After collecting data from interviews, observations, participation at IEP meetings, and reviewing artifacts, I utilized categorical aggregation to analyze and interpret data. In this form of data analysis and interpretation, the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge (Creswell, 2007) Following Creswell’s (1998) recommendations, I first reviewed all of the information to get a sense of the data as a whole. I then wrote down my findings in the form of reflective notes and memos and begin summarizing my field notes. It was important that I add a detailed description of the case (i.e., major players, site, and activities) to offer a foundation and background information for studying observations and interviews. As I was transcribing, I wrote methodological notes (vs. analytical notes). For example, I jotted down notes on how I asked a particular question, what I would or should have done differently, and how to follow-up on information and used lessons learned and insights gained for subsequent interviews.

Next, I met with each participant and presented them with a hard copy of their transcripts to review. We discussed both interviews as well as my interpretation of the interview transcripts (i.e., member checks). I wanted to ensure that: (a) The interviews were transcribed accurately and (b) that I had interpreted their words correctly. I searched for larger domains (e.g., family) and attempted to organize members of each domain. I looked closely at the words the participants used and looked for similarities
among dimensions of contrast (represent a more general concept than particular traits associated with a term) for all domains (Spradley, 1980).

I organized and coded the raw data into conceptual categories and searched for themes (Neuman, 1991; Spradley, 1980). Coding is the foundation of whole-text analysis and allowed me as the researcher to make meaning of blocks of texts and looked for prominent categories of information supported by the text (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, Creswell, 2007). During my first review of field notes, archival data (IEP), and transcribed interviews, I used open coding to look for themes and to assign initial labels. My initial labels were broad and included: people, college, discipline, job, money, land, and sense of self.

During my second review of data, I used axial coding to review the data, to provide insight into specific coding categories, and to organize my set of initial codes (Creswell, 2007). I reviewed the categories of open coding and identified one as a central phenomenon. I then returned to the data to determine: (a) what caused the phenomena to occur; (b) what strategies or actions the participants used in response to it; (c) what specific context and intervening conditions (broad context) influenced the strategies; and (d) what consequences resulted from those strategies. I then used selective coding during my final pass at the data (Creswell, 2007). Selective coding involved scanning the data and previous codes to selectively look for cases that best illustrated themes. I made note of similarities and differences in themes (Neuman, 1991) and organized quotes under selected themes.

I then used triangulation to support and corroborate my findings. In triangulation, data is collected from multiple sources to clarify meaning, verify repeatability of an observation or interpretation, or illuminate the research in question (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). A study that uses multiple cases, informants, and more than one data collection technique can greatly strengthen the study’s usefulness for other settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In this study, I compared my observations, notes, and school documents (e.g. Individualized Education Plans) with findings from the individual interviews. I then used cross-case analysis to look for similarities and differences among the cases (Creswell, 2007). The data can be found in tables according to themes in Chapter 4.
Limitations of the Study

Below I will outline some of the limitations to the study:

1. Researcher: I was the primary researcher for this study and responsible for all data collection and analysis. Although I was “invited” to do research here, I was in fact an outsider and challenged with the prospect of getting to know and be accepted by school staff, parents, and study participants.

2. Time and access to participants: The study was time limited; data collection took place over the course of two school semesters. To avoid disruption to the participants’ studies and to promote confidentiality, interviews were scheduled at the close of the school day. Other than receiving a signed consent form from parents, I had no other contact with them. I believe that should I have been given access to parents and students, further data could have enriched this study.

3. Research Site: The study site was unique as the setting was a native Hawaiian charter school on the island of Oahu, Hawai‘i.

4. Sample size: The population of the school is small limiting options for the participants used in this study. Not only is the sample size small but it is also not generalizable to other students with learning disabilities or other students in Hawai‘i’s charter schools.

Meyer (2003) wrote that conducting a research study that involved capturing voice, asking questions, using another’s experiences contradicted the Hawaiian cultural practice. Although, I worked hard to create a comfortable environment for the participants, I realized that this was not truly the “Hawaiian way” of communicating and learning from each other. Conversation was primarily contrived, with most interaction taking place in a formal setting. It would have benefited the study (and the participants) to allow for a more prolonged engagement.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

In this chapter, I present findings from data collected through participant interviews, observations made at IEP meetings and interview sessions, and educational artifacts (IEP reports, storyboards, etc.). I also interviewed Ikaika Young (pseudonym) the Student Services Coordinator (SSC) and special education teacher and have included some of his comments here to provide a back story of the school and participants. The interviews provided the primary data for the study’s research questions and an interview protocol (APPENDIX A) supplied the foundation for the semi-structured participant interviews. The findings addressed the study’s research questions:

- How do native Hawaiian high school students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?
- What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?
- What role does disability play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?
- How does being a first generation college student influence participants’ postsecondary decision-making process?

Research Question #1
How do native Hawaiian students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?

This research question provided the foundation for this study and the three research questions that followed offered the opportunity to pursue breadth and depth to the initial question. In the next section, I included verbatim quotes from the interviews that highlighted how each participant described his/her transition process. In addition to this overarching question, participant responses revealed themes that included “Support from Family and Community” and “Advice to Future Generations.” These themes are in line with the native Hawaiian culture that emphasizes collective welfare over that of the individual. This is evident in the extensive discussion of extended family relationships
and supportive networks (Ka Huaka’i, 2005), the role of family and community and the value placed on the *ohana* was clearly communicated by the study’s participants.

**Research Question #2**

What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

Several themes related to culture were revealed during the study including: Importance of language; the importance of family and community; the sense of place; and passing on knowledge. The role that the Hawaiian culture played in students’ educational and daily living experiences revealed itself in different ways. The value of culture arose in discussions about the students’ love of music and dance (*hula*), love for their ‘āina (land), love of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (their language), and love of *ohana* (family and community). Key Hawaiian words such as *laulima* (to work cooperatively), *kōkua* (to help), and *makawalu* (to have perspective) were voiced by several of the participants in their description of things and people of value to them. I included these key words and their meanings into the data analysis.

Hawaiians believe that humans and the land coexist in a reciprocal relationship and have thus they have a strong connection to their ‘āina (Fermantez, 2007) that stemmed “from centuries of living, cultivating, learning, sharing, stewarding, and dying on the same land” (Ka Huaka’i, 2005, p. 318). In her essay, “Our Own Liberation: Reflection on Hawaiian Epistemology”, Meyer (2001) reported that the notion of ‘aina, referring to the environment, shaped how an individual experienced the world and was the lens through which one viewed cultural epistemology. It was from ‘aina that one gained sustenance, that one grew knowledge, and that one was inspired (Meyer, 2001).

‘Ōlelo. Defined as “language, speech, word, utterance; to speak, say, tell; oral communication,” ‘ōlelo is the root for *mo‘olelo*, Hawaiian stories (oral and written). The overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 and the subsequent banning of the Hawaiian language by the Provisional Government had devastating effects on Hawaiian *mo‘olelo* (Ho‘omanawanui, 2004).

In the Hawaiian culture, relationships were the cornerstone of the Hawaiian experience and shaped knowledge and the individual was viewed in the context of those
relationships with family members (relatives by blood, marriage, and adoption) with the ʻāina, and with the community (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995, Meyer, 2001). Each member of the group has assigned tasks and members collaborate in unit to reach the goals of the group at large (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995). The interdependence of the people “offered opportunities to practice reciprocity, exhibit balance, and develop harmony with land and generosity with others” (Meyer, 2001, p. 134). Many of the participants felt that it was important to pass on one’s knowledge to the next generation. There were however differences in when and how the participants would discuss the concept of future planning with their children. For all of the participants, culture impacted their experiences in school (Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina) as well as in their extracurricular lives.

Research Question #3

What role does disability play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

All study participants attended Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina, a New Century charter school that offered a full inclusion curriculum to all students. A review of the participants’ IEPs for the 2008-2009 school year indicated that each student should be receiving 1750 minutes of special education services per week. As Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina did not have segregated classes for students receiving special education services, “special education services” are provided in the classroom setting by a kākoʻo who oftentimes has some background in special education (I. Young [pseudonym], personal communication, January 14, 2010).

All 5 participants were identified by the State of Hawaiʻi - Department of Education as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and have received special education services prior to their enrollment at Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina. During each of our initial interviews, not one of the participants disclosed that they had a learning disability. They did however discuss disability-related issues scattered throughout each of the first interviews (e.g., having a difficult time reading). It was during our second interviews that the participants were more forthcoming about their academic challenges and backgrounds. This one piece of information may appear insignificant at present but may have significant meaning when these students exit the womb of the IDEA protected high
school setting and enter the world of adult learning environments and employment. In these future experiences, it will be up to these individuals to self disclose their disability to the appropriate parties in order to receive necessary accommodations.

Research Question #4

How does being a first generation college student influence participants’ postsecondary decision-making process?

The literature review revealed that first generation college students are challenged in a number of areas including: lack of knowledge about PSE, financial support, academic preparation, and social and cultural differences. The interviews revealed several emerging themes including influences of family and significant others, role of culture/language, and social economic status/poverty on the postsecondary decision making process of these students. The results of this study are based on a specific population (native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities) at a specific charter school. The results cannot be generalized to all students with learning disabilities, nor to all native Hawaiian students. I have organized this chapter by the ages of the participants and have provided a table at the end of each section that summarizes the responses of each participant.

Kainoa

Kainoa was a 15-year old, male participant of Hawaiian, Samoan, and Portuguese ancestry. This young man was adopted by a relative but still sees his birth mother on occasion. He has 3 biological brothers as well as five non-biological siblings through his adoptive parents. Kainoa was officially diagnosed by the DOE as having a Specific Learning Disability with (per his report) his greatest area of academic difficulty falling in the spelling arena.
Research Question #1

How do native Hawaiian students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?

Description of Transition Process

Kainoa, a freshman, did not have a plan of action for his transition from high school. He was living in the present; his only concern was whatever was occurring on a given day. Perhaps due to his age or lack of maturity, Kainoa did not appear to have put much thought into his future. When asked what he would be doing upon graduation from high school, he offered a number of responses in one sentence: “Maybe go to college, play football or [pause] I don’t know, just find a job.” When asked if he could wish for anything for himself upon graduation, Kainoa stated [he would like to play for the] “NFL, college football.” Later during the same interview, Kainoa was again asked what he would be doing upon graduation from high school. His response did not focus on education or employment but rather on the accolades he hoped to receive if he played college football:

I really want to probably go college [and] play football. That’s like so, at least I can like be on TV playing football and probably announce it when you make tackles and make a long run and you on TV already, you get signatures [sign autographs].

I asked Kainoa to describe the first time he thought about going to college. His response reflected the connection between college and football:

I started planning to not go but my aunty them said you should go if you want to play college football or if you want to make it to the NFL. That’s my highest goal. NFL. But I have to be good. Be up there so.

Advice to Future Generations

When asked what type of advice he would give to younger students, Kainoa replied that he would tell the students to avoid being like him but instead to be humble and open-minded. Almost in the same breath, he also seemed to express his own internal conflict:
Don’t be like me sometimes, big headed or hard headed, try do whatever you like. You don’t care anymore. Sometimes right now, I’m saying I don’t care anymore. But right now, I’m starting to get used to back and forth, back and forth, caring-don’t caring, caring-don’t caring, caring-don’t caring.

Kainoa added that it was important to look for a good role model and to follow their footsteps:

Just follow someone’s footsteps when they are good. If they’re a good student, follow their footsteps than the others’ footsteps, like the kolohe, or the people who not going make good choices, don’t follow their footsteps. Choose the good things.

When asked if there was anything that might interfere with this goal, Kainoa stated:

Right now my laziness. I really want to run but I no like run by myself. I like run with my sister. My sister walks. Like power walks and she makes me run. I’m good running with other people then. And I want her to like take me to lift weights again. Keep me in shape.

When asked to describe his biggest dream or wish Kainoa quickly responded, “I want to be rich!” When asked what he would do with his money, Kainoa stated that he would “Spend it good [on] food. Maybe if I had children buy [things] for your [my] children.”

Research Question #2

What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

Importance of Language

Kainoa valued learning the Hawaiian language and wanted to retain this knowledge. He hoped that his children would learn to speak Hawaiian as their first language:

And I’m trying to learn Hawaiian. I try to keep it up. So like when you learn, you get more knowledge and try to keep it up. So when you have kids and want to put them in Hawaiian school, and maybe speak to them in Hawaiian so when they go
kindergarten they already know part of Hawaiian. Keep learning, learning, learning…I would try to make them like their first language.

Importance of Family and Community

According to Kainoa, as a member of the hula hālau, you are expected to understand your role and accept the rules of your community or be faced with consequences:

You have to like be organized and be on task cuz if you don’t follow the rules or you don’t try or you don’t listen or you don’t do the motions right probably your kumu hula [hula teacher] can kick you out and they just dance with little bit people…

Dancing is a way of communicating and it is expected that one understand how to communicate with others. One will need to “know the motion” (i.e., understand traditions and practices) in order to “know” (or understand) one’s culture. According to Kainoa:

Yeah, every hula and hand motion and feet motion is telling you the story…what’s happening. That’s why some kūpuna (that like grandma, grandpa, old people, your old kūpuna like up in heaven) if they know Hawaiian, they know the motion, if they speak and do the motion, they probably understand what they doing cuz if you’re talking about one story of one mo’o [lizard] in the mountains or kamakani the bird, they would do all that motion.

Also, as a member of the hālau, a dancer must understand the rituals of the community and the principle of respect: “But pretty much when you come late same thing, protocol, chant in and they ask permission…to ask permission to get in and then the kumu them they chant you in…yeah, that’s it…” Although in the quotes shared above, Kainoa spoke specifically about his experiences as a member of his hula hālau, this researcher proposes that the hālau’s protocol provides a parallel to the Hawaiian culture in general; for example, like members of a hālau, as a member the Hawaiian culture, it is important for one to understand the group’s rituals, respect the community, and ask permission “to enter.” According to Kainoa, being Hawaiian was tied to being respectful: “…to be Hawaiian … pretty much [means] to try to show respect … Some Hawaiians are good but all Hawaiians should be good but it’s just choices we make…”
Research Question #3
What role does disability play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

Current Academic Challenges

Kainoa shared that his reading skills would impact his success in college: “I have a hard time reading.” When asked what he thought about his grades, Kainoa acknowledged that he needed to focus on his schoolwork: My grades are kind of low right now…I need to catch it up…Grades, pretty much I don’t know how many “Fs” but I get F, Ds, some A’s and B’s.”

This participant saw the influence of others to be more of a hindrance to his academic future than his grades. When asked if he saw anything getting in the way of him entering and participating in college, his response was simply, “People who I hang out with.” The influence of his peers appeared to be a chronic issue for Kainoa. When asked if he felt there was anything getting in the way of his being able to learn like other students while he was growing up, his response was, “Yeah, people like always teasing me and so…” Kainoa admitted that he would often get into fights due to being teased by other students: “…because some people always tease me about the way I look…Calling me ‘you look like a monkey’ or ‘past time you look like the people when dinosaurs was here.’” When asked what type of things might get in the way of him being able to achieve his goals, he mentioned getting into fights and peer pressure: “Fighting probably…a lot of people smoke cigarettes and stuff…um peer pressure, people who I hang out with.”

Kainoa acknowledged having a problem controlling his impulses. His description of his past actions appeared to be reactive vs. proactive. Perhaps this provides insight into his earlier (perhaps impulsive) responses. In his words,

[I] always act it out…sometimes I choose the wrong choices cuz I don’t know there’s like …sometimes I like my actions is small…I always just do, do, do…every time someone says, ‘do not do that’ I do it…but, now I’m learning …still try to hold my anger in and everything else that or try to be calm, try to be calm but sometimes just do, do and sometimes I don’t.

Asked why he had so much anger, Kainoa responded, “People always like think I might do this, like rumors. So that’s why I hate rumors. Rumors that is not true sometimes.”
Kainoa also refused assistance from his counselor as he felt that he was missing out on a class that he enjoyed: “I don’t have counselor anymore. I don’t visit my counselor.” When asked why he stopped visiting his counselor, Kainoa responded, Um, I don’t know. Every time I was visiting the counselor, I like was falling behind with my work. So that’s why I don’t choose to visit my counselor any more. She said it’s up to your mom so if they like me visit them so I told my mom, “Mom, can you like call off the counselor cuz I’m falling behind with my, my work. Cuz my counselor always pull me out from the same classroom.

In our second interview, Kainoa again reported that he was making the wrong choices and this was potentially impacting his plans for the future. When asked if he was making plans for life after graduation, Kainoa reported,

I don’t know. I just need to catch up with my work now. In the beginning [of the school year] I was fine till I got to one choice. So I’m doing things now to get just my anger and attitude and stuff just is in my way.

IEP Meetings

On March 1, 2010, I attended Kainoa’s IEP meeting. In attendance were his adoptive parents, school administrator, and several school teachers. At the onset of his IEP meeting, Kainoa initially asked if he “had to” stay and when encouraged to do so, he occasionally engaged in discussion. Some of the discussion was probably difficult for him to grasp due to reports of low vocabulary, poor auditory processing skills, and the myriad of acronyms used by the professionals in the meeting. Very few professionals directed their questions to him. In most cases, they talked about him. Topics of discussion included: test scores, current grades in subject, behavioral concerns. There was some effort on the part of two teachers to engage Kainoa in conversation (e.g., looking for answers to poor grades/ lost backpack etc.).

Perception of Special Education Services

While in elementary school, Kainoa attended a full immersion Hawaiian language school. He stated that during those years he was enrolled in all special education classes and described the classes as: “Junk. Failing in your [my] other classes.” The only class he enjoyed was physical education course because “We played games, that’s why.” Although he described his classes negatively, it was surprising that if given a choice, Kainoa would
prefer to return to his previous school and graduate from there because “A lot of teachers here [there] miss me. They want me to come back and play football.” Perhaps this hints at the interpersonal connections and relationships at his past school being more important to Kainoa than the academic experience.

Research Question #4

How does being a first generation college student influence participants’ postsecondary decision-making process?

Role of 1st Generation College Student

All participants in this study were prospective first generation college students. Kainoa was the only participant who had someone from his/her nuclear family (a brother) attend college. Kainoa’s brother’s college experience was interrupted when he went on a mission for his church and upon his return to Hawai‘i, he got married. Kainoa reported that his brother liked college, enjoyed his classes, and made new friends.

Feelings about Going to College

As stated early in this section, Kainoa appeared ambivalent about his plans for the future. He had no set goals but did consider going to college to play football.

Discussion with Parents about Postsecondary Education

Kainoa reported that his parents did not discuss the prospect of a college education nor postsecondary options with him. “They never tell me nothing about that. Not yet.” When asked if he could speculate what they might be telling him if there was a discussion, his response reflected a possibility that he may have to assume more financial responsibilities. “Um, probably things might change and I think that’s it. I have to pay part of the bills now. Maybe when I graduate. They never told me nothing so.”

Po‘okela

Po‘okela was a 14-year old male participant of part-Hawaiian ancestry. The participant is identified by the DOE has having a Specific Learning Disability. He lives with his biological parents and two siblings in the Honolulu area. The participant’s father works in the construction industry and his mother works in the food service field. He is
the middle-child having an older brother (15 years of age) and a younger brother (13 years of age). Both of Poʻokela’s brothers also attend Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina.

Research Question #1

How do native Hawaiian students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?

Poʻokela, a freshman, saw his future tied to his current interests:
I want to get a good job. I’d rather, cuz right now I guess I’m good in mechanical [things]. So I fix motors I guess, cars. But I’m only into smaller motors like chainsaw motors or moped motors. Actually, I picked it up “by doing” and um my dad already knew how to fix like cars and stuff but then um I guess I got him into it too. Then we started learning all together.

Description of Transition Process

Poʻokela first started thinking about going to college when he was very young but became more serious about this prospect and what it would entail when he was a freshman in high school:
I guess my first time was. I don’t know. I used to always think about it when I was small. Like think about how cool it was to go to college and learn what you like doing. But then I really thought about it when I was in maybe this year 9th grade. I was thinking about it. And thinking of the classes I would take and what I would do. Just the fact that it’s in my mind that I’m always thinking about. I don’t know. I guess I just heard my cousin them talking about it and stuff.

Advice to Future Generations

When asked what he would say if he were to give advice to younger students, Poʻokela replied:
I’d probably tell them take advantage I guess. So if I graduate and I’m talking to them, I’d probably tell them how good my life is going and then, tell them what they can make out of theirs. And then tell them what they can do and how badly they can change their life around and get a good education. And then probably I guess just be better for them and their family.
Research Question #2
What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

Importance of Language
Po’okela believed that being Hawaiian was directly tied in to learning and understanding ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) and its culture:
…What it means to be Hawaiian to me I guess is to perpetuate my Hawaiian culture, to know how to at least understand, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, to at least to understand I guess what it means…It’s learning my Hawaiian culture or having it does have an effect in my learning cuz I guess it’ll be like cuz we have a kānawāi [code] in our stuff and it’s laulima and it means to work with many hands or makawalu means to look in different perspective to like look in different ways of learning I guess…pretty much I found that so far…

Importance of Family and Community
Po’okela valued the connection between generations and spoke of his the love he had for his grandmothers: “…they’re pretty important to me because that’s my mom’s and my dad’s mom so I guess it’s kind of good to know where you’re from and your genealogy.” Po‘okela had the support of his parents and valued their advice. Below he articulates his parents’ wishes were for him:
To at least be successful in life, to achieve my goals, what I want, I mean I guess they [parents] want me to just do good and to see me moving in life I guess. ..A good job to me I guess is where you make um enough or um I guess more or like what you need to survive I guess like buy food and stuff, pay for the insurance or whatever…um and a job that you’re actually in to not a job that someone forces you to do and you don’t like it…I guess yeah, something you really want to do in life. I guess they [parents] just want to have me and my brothers to make the decisions in our life and see what route we take and how we do it.
Po’okela related that his parents supported him in his desire to reach his personal goals and that they gave him the freedom to make independent choices.
I mean I guess they [parents] want me to just do good and to see me moving in life I guess…A good job to me I guess is where you make um enough or um I
guess more or like what you need to survive I guess like buy food and stuff…pay for the insurance or whatever…um and a job that you’re actually ‘into’ not a job that someone forces you to do and you don’t like it…I guess…yeah, something you really want to do… in life… I guess they just want to have me and my brothers to make the decisions in our life…and see what route we take and how we do it… I’d like to lead my own path. Go wherever I end up…

Po’okela was the only participant in this study who shared that he saw his peer group as supporting him toward his postsecondary goals. “I guess one thing that would help me [toward my goals] is probably my friends…my friends encouraging me to go to college and graduate I guess…” The love and respect among these friends was mutual.

Sense of Place

One of Po’okela’s dreams was to own property in order to farm and raise animals: I’d like to own … a big land so I can do farming and stuff… like raising animals, planting like vegetables and stuff…we have a um, a kalo [taro] patch… we plant corn, sweet potato, uh eggplant, um all kine… [He points to picture that he has drawn of himself at age 21 years] This, my house…and then um I guess I drew my kalo patches!

Passing on Knowledge

Po’okela who placed a high value in knowing and understanding his Hawaiian culture, here related his hopes for his friends:

…At least to what they get out of school…at least they take it out of school and use it as something …to like maybe like something simple like using um we have a lunch pule [prayer] we do and at least just doing that to tell people that we doing something in our school.

Research Question #3

What role does disability play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?
Current Academic Challenges

At the time of our interview, Po‘okela stated that he had the necessary grade point average and school attendance to get into a college. He acknowledged however, that math continued to be a special challenge for him:

It’s one of my hard areas…where I have hard time in…more like the math…Um, I’m okay with writing papers…I can I mean, I could write a paper if I had to do it for a class project or something…spelling’s okay but not great…

When asked if there was anything else that might get in the way of his being able to graduate from high school or interfere with his plans for a college education, Po‘okela speculated: “Probably playing around with my friends…Getting into trouble.” He did state that he didn’t often get into trouble.

Perception of Special Education Services

While still in elementary school (prior to attending Na Keiki o Ka ‘Āina), Po‘okela was not placed into special education classes but instead had tried unsuccessfully to secure special education services.

When I was in elementary, I was trying to get into special ed for my reading and my writing and but then I didn’t get in to it until I was like 5th grade and then I think I was trying to get into it since I was 2nd grade. But then, they kept telling me that I didn’t need it and when I came to 5th grade, they let me join in and then, just from right there.

He enjoyed being in special education classes: “It was a little bit easier for me. It was better. They [The teachers] would explain it little bit more I guess.”

Research Question #4

How does being a first generation college student influence participants’ postsecondary decision-making process?

Role of 1st Generation College Student.

Neither of Po‘okela’s parents attended college. His father worked in construction and his mother was a waitress. He stated that he did not want to follow in anyone’s footsteps but instead, “I’d like to lead my own path…Go wherever I end up.”
Feelings About Going to College.

In our second interview, Poʻokela again reflected on how he might feel being a first generation college student:

I’d probably feel good about myself that I’m going to college and getting a higher education. And then, I’d just feel good that I’m actually moving in my life. I’m not just staying like not right after high school, I’m going to just work and then come home and do nothing. That way, I know that I can actually do something that I like doing, so that I can work on it.

Discussion with Parents about Postsecondary Education

Poʻokela mentioned that his had parents discussed his future and the prospect of attending college with him. When asked if he remembered a specific time when he and his parents had a discussion about college, he thought that it was during a time when his parents were reviewing his report card: “They probably talk about it when you’re like. When you get your grade report or something. And then I guess they just start talking about it. Where we might end up in life.”

Discussion of Postsecondary Options with Children

In contrast to how his parents spoke to him about college, Poʻokela identified a specific time when he would speak with his children about the prospect of college:

I’d probably start talking to them like middle school. Or like 8th grade going to 9th. And trying to refresh their memory about going to college and stuff. I’d probably tell them that if you want to do something that you really like doing or you want to learn more about it you probably can go to college. I’d probably tell them to just keep that in their minds about college and how good it is. And then if I do go, I’d probably tell them how fun it is from my own experience.
Kekolu

Kekolu was a 15-year old, male participant of part-Hawaiian ancestry. He lives with his parents and his two younger brothers in Honolulu. Kekolu presents as very respectful and polite and willingly engaged in conversation.

Research Question #1
How do native Hawaiian students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?

Description of Transition Process

Kekolu, a junior saw his vocational and academic future in terms of sequential steps: “Well, I think I’m going to college. Mostly you go to college like you graduate, and go to job and you can get more money.” He realized that he needed to master a step before he could move on to the next one. Kekolu had a future goal of working as a professional wrestler. An intermediary goal was to attend college in Las Vegas where his girlfriend recently moved. He seemed to realize that he currently lacked work skills and stated that he could work in the fast food industry: “I can work at McDonalds for now.” Kekolu shared his next steps and tied his ability to secure a future job to gains in maturity and experience:

When I get older I can work like at stores and then I’ll be more experienced at working. And then during this, over here, I can work with my dad. He does glass and I can clean the glass. He said you get big bucks for cleaning glass. And then, like for this one, I pau [finished with] school. I can buy the ticket. Like now and then work some more until the day like, the day like I fly. And when I buy [the ticket], I can work some more and get more money.

Advice to Future Generations

Kekolu stated that he only recently started to seriously consider college as an option, in large part due to the curriculum at Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina:

The first time was this year. Because I’m taking classes PTP. So like people from colleges from outside come into our classes and explain. And I first got interested cuz these 3 people from UH Hilo came down to see us. And then that’s when I
started getting interested cuz how easy it was and how cheap it was. And they was saying that Hilo was cheaper than UH Manoa. The only thing bad about Hilo was they don’t have a football field. That’s why Manoa is so expensive cuz they have the football fields, and the only thing that Hilo has is all the pools. They have a baseball field, volleyball, and a tennis court. But they have no football field.

After listening to these speakers, Kekolu went home and shared what he learned with to his receptive parents:

I came home and I was telling them how much it was to go to Hilo. And then like what they have and what they don’t have. They was like all interested. They was listening to what I had to say.

Research Question #2

What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

Importance of Language

During his interview, Kekolu happily shared with me numerous Hawaiian words and concepts that he believed reflected the values of the Hawaiian people. He seemed to hint that there were several different levels to learning and that one could get to a deeper meaning through persistence and attention:

Makawalu…it means eight eyes…it means different perspectives…you learn all different ways… and laulima is hands on like help together… there’s kōkua …It means we always help each other out…and mahalo…share…and um ku i ka mana…like…strives…like we go up another notch…it’s like you’re…like you’re learning a subject but then you’re learning a totally different subject…like something more higher…as a group…

A number of the kumu (teachers) at Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina speak the Hawaiian language. Kekolu shared about one particular kumu who continued to take classes in the ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) in order to pass his knowledge on to his students. The theme of perpetuating the Hawaiian language is clearly evident in this statement by this participant:
For our *kumu*, he went to school to Kamehameha, and he took language for 4 years
and he said um, but in college like he took his da kine like he took, like he took,
uh I don’t’ know how to say the word. Like he took the um like the point to go to
Hawaiian language cuz he took it for 4 years at school. So he said that um, he’s
still in school for that thing. Like he comes to school and he teaches us. That’s
why he said like, when he comes school like he asks us like how we do every day

**Sense of Place**

Kekolu also reported an affinity with the land. He stated that since attending NL,
he is able to identify native plants and to recount their usage: “I used to go Stevenson I
didn’t know anything about Hawaiian…about the plants, but now since I do I’m in my
house, I have choke Hawaiian plants…I can like see and tell what it is…the use.”

**Passing on Knowledge**

Kekolu stated that he would return to *Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina* to share lessons and reflections
of his own experiences with the students:

If I went to college and I came to talk to the school about it, I’d tell them that I
thought about going college in high school and I planned it and I went through it.
And I would tell them since I went college, I had a choice to go college or not.
And my choice was to go college so if you guys want to go college, you guys can
but if you don’t want to then you guys don’t want to. Yeah, so follow what you
want to do, do what you want to do.

Kekolu believed that it was not necessary for one to be Hawaiian by blood in
order to learn and understand the Hawaiian culture. He too felt that being Hawaiian was
tied to respect:

…But like…for other cultures…like they all can do their culture…but then like if
you’re Japanese and if you’re doing like a Hawaiian culture…like then you show
respect cuz you’re doing like another culture and not yours…like we have a
couple people in our school who are not Hawaiian at all…but they like do hula
and *oli*…even if they’re not Hawaiian, they’re still do it…

**Research Question #3**

What role does disability play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?
Current Academic Challenges

Successful teachers of native Hawaiian students found that educational activities that were most effective with this population were those that were experience-based and set in authentic environments (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005). The research appears to be confirmed by Kekolu’s report of recent changes in curriculum. In our initial interview, Kekolu denied having academic problems and instead attributed challenges with learning a new teaching style. He indicated that science was getting harder than it used to be because the kumu were doing less experiential activities and more book work.

It’s like more hard now…it’s like it got more hard than it was…than it used to be…like for my first year, science was to go out…like into the mountains…like this year we got to stay in class and learn about the earth…yeah, more book [work now].

In our second interview however, Kekolu was more forthcoming about his specific academic challenges. He mentioned that he received special education during his elementary and middle school years.

I think reading and writing was kind of hard for me. You know like how you take the test before to see if you’re like special ed [education] or not? Every time I take the test the test, I have problems in reading and writing so they put me in special classes to improve my writing and reading.

Perception of Special Education Services

Kekolu stated that he suffered from the stigma of being enrolled in special education classes.

When I was in [middle school] I was trying to hide it. I was trying to like hide it so then every day I would hang out with them [students in general education] instead of hanging out with the other kids that would go to special ed. Like in school, they treat me like different than how the other kids, cuz I was in special ed. Cuz like the only three friends I had in school was from the classes in special ed. So I would hang out with them, them three. And then the rest of the kids would just play with the other kids that don’t go to the classes.
Research Question #4
How does being a first generation college student influence participants' postsecondary decision-making process?

Feelings About Going to College
The prospect of going to college was appealing to Kekolu. He realized that he would be the first member of his family to enroll in college and considered this to be an achievement: “If I go, then I’d probably feel good cuz I’d be the first one to be successful in my family. So I’d probably feel good for myself.”

Discussion with Parents about Postsecondary Education
Kekolu mentioned that his parents began speaking to him about college when he was in high school. “I think they ask us because we’re in high school now. We’re almost pau [finished] with school so they ask us what we’re going to do when we grow up.” Although neither of his parents went to college, Kekolu made a connection between their academic background and their desire for him to succeed academically: “They want me to be like a success. Cuz they both never go college yeah so like I told ’em I was going be the first one for go college and they was happy for that.”

In our second interview, Kekolu again mentioned his mother’s wishes for him to pursue his education: “And then like my mom she wants me to go to college. Cuz if I go college I be the first one for go college.” Asked why his mother wanted him to go to college, Kekolu responded, “I think she wants me to succeed in life. Instead of being like a homeless [person] that has no job that has no food, money.” Kekolu mentioned that along with self satisfaction, being a college graduate would allow him to give back to his family.

Discussion of Postsecondary Options with Children
Kekolu mentioned that he would wait until his children were older before bringing up plans for their futures:
Either when they’re 10th grade or when they hit high school. Cuz they would understand more better. Cuz if you ask them like in elementary, they’d just agree with you cuz they wouldn’t know what you’re talking about. So I would wait until they’re like in high school so they’ll know, that they’ll be serious about it. I would
say like if you had the choice, would you go to college? I wouldn’t force them to go to college. If they didn’t want to then they don’t want to.

Role of Socio-economic Status

But if I get a good job then I’ll return the favor to my mom them. Like tell them thanks for helping out, thanks for supporting me. Like for example, if they needed help on the bills. And if I had like a good, good job and had choke money, then I’d give them money to help pay off the bills.

Pu‘uwai

Pu‘uwai was a 16-year old, female of native Hawaiian ancestry. She lived with her mother (mother was separated from Pu‘uwai’s biological father) and was the oldest child with one sister and two brothers. One of Pu‘uwai’s brothers lives with their grandmother on the Big Island of Hawai‘i where he attends a Hawaiian immersion school.

Research Question #1

How do native Hawaiian students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?

Description of Transition Process

Pu‘uwai first started thinking about a college while she was in middle school. We had this thing like in the beginning of the school they would ask you, “What would you like to be when you grow up?” And then they would give a brief description about college. But then no one was paying attention because it wasn’t really important. She did not tell her mother about this experience as she didn’t see the relevance or importance of this information at the time. ‘I didn’t really know what it was that’s why.” Asked if her mother had discussed post graduation plans with her, Pu‘uwai stated, “Oh she has but she’s only talked about the cost and stuff. Nothing, no more.”

Advice to Future Generations

When asked if she had advice to offer younger students, Pu‘uwai’s response again returned to the funding of the education:
I would tell them to like get good grades and focus on school during their first year of high school like freshman and stuff. Cuz then I only learned since last year that they actually look at your freshman grades all the way up for college. When they should have been telling you that in middle school. They only tell you that last minute. To do like extra-curricular activities so you can get scholarships and grants.

Research Question #2

What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

Importance of Language

Pu’uwai shared that learning and understanding the Hawaiian language was an activity that was integrated into the daily lives of her extended family. Her brother was enrolled in an Hawaiian immersion school on the Big Island, cousins spoke to each other in Hawaiian, and her grandmother placed word cards around the house so that all could learn vocabulary.

Sometimes my cousins, they would talk to each other in Hawaiian, to do their homework or would help a family members say this, or to do something, or to ask for something. So I think eventually, everyone could understand…You know at their house, my grandma she puts up (or my aunty) she had this um machine thing that would print out words. And she printed in Hawaiian and in then in English. She also took class and working and my aunty, from her, and they learn from her.

Importance of Family and Community

Perpetuating the Hawaiian culture was a prevalent theme in participant interviews. For Pu’uwai, one was not a true Hawaiian unless they kept their culture alive “I kind of think that you’re not exactly what you say you are…like your nationality…or ethnicity…unless you perpetuate it.” Many participants saw that one of the keys to perpetuating their culture was by learning the Hawaiian language.

Sense of Place

For Pu’uwai, attending Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina provided her with a deeper understanding of her heritage and history.
Before I didn’t know anything about the whole overthrow and everything cuz in the DOE school, they only taught us the American version of how they would come here and work on plantations. I never saw that as interesting cuz that was super boring…before I didn’t even know…I’m so glad I came here cuz it opened my eyes to what I was really learning… and not just the American version.

Research Question #3
What role does disability play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

Current Academic Challenges
Pu’uwai considered herself to be a “good student” and felt that the only thing that would interfere with her being able to participate in college would be funding. During the course of our interview, she did admit to being “distracted” in class.

It’s like…distractions…Sometimes we have outside classes for class and I get distracted…I could pay attention and stare at something else…or look at something…but sometimes it just floats my mind…and then…sometimes I feel like…doing something else so I don’t pay attention…but it’s not on purpose…mmm….no, this is by choice somehow…but…I just don’t realize it sometimes…

Perception of Special Education Services
Pu’uwai was enrolled in special education classes since she was “8 or 10 years old, mainly for math.” She reported that she felt the stigma of being in special education classes and thought that other students felt superior to her and her fellow classmates:

“Well, like I guess the way they think of it is like, ‘They’re stupid, they don’t get anything. We’re smarter than them.’ I think they totally just totally down grade you and just make themselves look smarter.” Pu’uwai initially struggled with these circumstances but was able to resolve her feelings and regain her self esteem through the support of one of her teachers, “My teacher talked to me about it and stuff…She would always tell me it doesn’t matter what other people say about you.”
Research Question #4
How does being a first generation college student influence participants’ postsecondary decision-making process?

Feelings About Going to College
When asked to describe how she felt about being the first person in her family to attend college, Pu'uwai responded: “Overwhelmed. Kind of nervous. Kind of on the confused side.” She indicated that Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina offered classes to help prepare juniors and seniors for college application, however is fearful that she would forget what she learned. “We learned that in our classes here but then if I actually went there I’d probably forget. Cuz all the nervousness or whatever.”

Discussion with Parents about Postsecondary Education
When asked if her mother had brought up the idea of going to college, Pu'uwai responded: “Oh she has but she’s only talked about the cost and stuff. Nothing, no more.” The choice of where to attend college appeared to be based on the mother’s experiences and knowledge. Pu’uwai in fact, did not want to attend a school on the continental US.

My mom wants me to go to the mainland [for college] but I wanna stay here. She said, it’s better over there. She said it’s better there, I don’t know…[Be]cause her friend’s daughter goes up there. In like… I think it’s Arizona and she said I should go up there too.

Role of Socio-economic Status
Pu’uwai admired her hardworking mother (a single parent) and appreciated the effort her mother was making to better the family’s future:
She’s studying right now [insurance course]. She’s trying really hard to do that. She has to take multiple tests. She has my little brother to take care of and he’s a handful too so. And my other brother, and me and my sister.

Pu’uwai saw her future as one beset with financial obstacles that impacted her present and postsecondary choices. Here she contemplates whether or not to remain at Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina: “Part of me says I want to graduate from another school. But then, this school is cool.” Although Pu'uwai considered attending other private schools such as Kamehameha and Punahou, she appeared to come to terms with her lack of options in her
subsequent comment, “I don’t know if I can go to another school because of funding. That’s what my mom says.”

Pu‘uwai did not voice plans to use her future income for personal gain but instead revealed a desire to take care of her family. When asked to speculate on how she would spend a million dollars, Pu‘uwai had a practical application for the money: “We have a big family and we really use it [income] to do other things like provide for your family or get a nice house, and a car to drive.” When asked if there was anything that might get in the way of her being able to reach her goals at the point of her high school graduation and in two years, Pu‘uwai responded: “Probably funding. Yeah, probably all money.”

‘Aukua

‘Aukua, a 17-year old, male of native Hawaiian ancestry and a senior at Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina lived with his extended family (i.e., parents, maternal grandparents, 10-month old sister, and several cousins) in a house in the Honolulu district of O’ahu.

Research Question #1
How do native Hawaiian students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?

Description of Transition Process

College was not something that was discussed in his home in his younger years. ‘Aukua reported that he and his parents first spoke about college “only when I got [started] playing football for high school, then they got to talking to me about college and stuff.” The subject of college arose through the course of discussing his dream. “Cuz I told them my dream was to go NFL and they said in order to go NFL you have to go to college. So I just told them, oh, I like go college. I like play NFL that’s why.” ‘Aukua chose to apply for a junior college on the West Coast upon the recommendation of friends, a cousin who attends that school, and an uncle whom he sees as a mentor. Ikaika Young [pseudonym] (special education teacher) reflected on ‘Aukua’s personal journey:
I think over the last year, me and Brenda [pseudonym] (college counselor) have been pretty much there and part of the reason why ‘Aukua is even looking at that as an option…to go to college and play football. He wasn’t even thinking about that before…He didn’t think it was reality, he didn’t think it was a possibility (I. Young, personal communication, January 14, 2010).

Research Question #2

What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

Importance of Language

‘Aukua felt that “being Hawaiian” meant, “pursuing your kūpuna’s steps…like language [and] hula…” He indicated that it was important that he raise his children to speak Hawaiian as their first language. Interestingly, he stated that it was not necessary that his wife be of Hawaiian ancestry as long as she “can pick it up” [i.e., able to speak Hawaiian].

Importance of Family and Community

Compared to the other participants, ‘Aukua had a unique motivation that was driving his future. His motivation was to care for his family, specifically his mother. ‘Aukua wanted to play football (in the NFL) in order to earn a good salary so that he could take care of his mother and to give her the things she hoped for:

My mom she was praying…she was wishing for all kind new stuffs …like new car…bracelets (laughs). Cuz I’m close to my mom than um my dad…She wants me to pursue my dream of being an NFL player…she wants me to take care of her…

‘Aukua also mentioned that his mother influenced and motivated his focus and pursuit of education in other ways: “[She said] that if I want a girlfriend, I gotta do good in school and if you want to pursue your dream, do good in school, continue school.” She also reinforces the need to focus his efforts to pursue a post secondary education by bringing up challenges his two older brothers faced upon leaving high school:

“Yeah…more cuz my brother…my two brothers they after high school…one dropped out
and got his GED…and the other one he graduated…barely graduated and now he’s having a child…”

‘Aukua saw his grandfather as his role model and appreciated the ways his grandfather worked hard to care for his family and home.

… he’s a retired man – city and county…He used to clean Ala Moana and stuff like that… clean and he’s very hard worker…[he] takes care of my grandma…takes my grandma to doctors… and caring about the house.

Sense of Place

‘Aukua felt that being Hawaiian included the cultivation of taro (i.e., a dietary staple in the traditional Hawaiian diet): “Living Hawaiian [means to] Um…growing kalo [taro]… working in taro patches…”

Research Question #3

What role does disability play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

Current Academic Challenges

‘Aukua has an official diagnosis by the DOE of Specific Learning Disability. ‘Aukua reported that he struggled with reading when was younger and that he still does not like to read. He admitted that his current academic status would interfere with admission into postsecondary institution: “Oh, for university, yeah that is getting in the way: My academics. My grades are not too good and probably my SATs. I don’t know how I did yet.” ‘Aukua stated that he always struggled with reading and writing and that currently his social studies and language arts classes were difficult: “My hardest class is social studies which is moʻolelo [history] and language arts…Cuz language arts, you gotta write plenty papers; essays and stuff and read. I hate reading and moʻolelo.”

IEP Meetings

Attending IEP meetings did not appear to be of high priority for this young man. ‘Aukua stated that he was invited to IEP meetings and attended the meetings if it didn’t interfere with his classes “Or if I gotta um participate in this IEP then I would go to em.” He reported that he felt that the IEP meetings were helping him to address current
problems in school and to make plans for his future: “like what I want to do after school-high school years. Preparedness for after school and helps me with what I’m struggling on in school.”

The SSC invited me to attend and asked me to participate by providing the family with information on vocational rehabilitation and other transition related advice. ‘Aukua did not attend his scheduled IEP on March 12, 2010. I remember that his nonattendance surprised me as he was a senior and would be graduating in 5/10. During the meeting, it was announced that ‘Aukua chose not to attend as he was involved in preparing an offering for school ceremony to be held the following day. All (including parents and Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina staff) did not appear surprised that ‘Aukua was not in attendance but instead appeared to readily accepted this reason for his nonattendance.

In attendance were ‘Aukua’s mother and father, the SSC, and 4 kumu. The senior/junior counselor was also supposed to attend but those in attendance were informed by the SSC that the counselor had not finished preparing for the meeting and would not come in until the meeting’s end.

The IEP committee (sans student) discussed the student’s postsecondary plans (i.e., going to a junior college in California). I made recommendations to the parents and school staff regarding preparing the student for the postsecondary environment (i.e., referring student to vocational rehabilitation, updating testing to identify academic limitations, obtaining documentation of disability, teaching student to advocate for accommodations, etc.). Due to the student’s reading problems, I also recommended that he participate in a literacy program (e.g., Wilson Reading System). I also strongly recommended that the student attend and participate in his IEP meeting as this was truly his decision-making opportunity.

Perception of Special Education Services

‘Aukua remembered that he was enrolled in special education classes while in elementary school however his recollections were limited. “I don’t know. I forget. That was 6th grade. Elementary time.” He did recall that he was enrolled in general education math classes. “I was in some other special ed [education] classes but math was just, cuz I was doing good in math, they switched me to regular math.” During the first interview,
when asked directly if he had been diagnosed with a learning disability, ‘Aukua shook his head “no.”

Research Question #4
How does being a first generation college student influence participants’ postsecondary decision-making process?

Feelings about Going to College
As mentioned earlier, ‘Aukua’s motivation to go to college is based on his desire to care for his parents. When asked how he felt to be the first person in his family to go to college he replied, “Good. Make my mom them happy.” Asked if he could describe how he might feel when he first went to college, Aukua responded, “Scared at first and when I get used to the surrounding then I’ll be happy.” He felt confident that he could “get used to the new environment by “meeting new people…and getting to know the teachers.”

Discussion with Parents about Postsecondary Education
‘Aukua’s parents did not broach the subject of college attendance until he was involved in sports: “only when I got [started] playing football for high school, then they got to talking to me about college and stuff.”

When asked if his parents had specific plans for him after his graduation from high school, ‘Aukua responded that his parents wanted him to go away to college and to avoid possible stumbling blocks. “They said, ‘you going leave for go college.’ And that’s about it. Yeah, they already made my flight and my school stuff.” ‘Aukua indicated that his parents did not want him to become distracted by individuals and events in Hawai‘i.

Yeah [laughs], they like me leave already. [They’re afraid of] my girlfriend and me getting distracted…[My parents want me to] get away from…get off this island…I was planning on graduating and staying on this island for one year work and get money…but they said after I graduate, they going put me on the plane already… [laughs]…They like me leave…too much distraction …girls…um friends.

‘Aukua also mentioned that his father was “kicked out” of several high schools until he finally ended up at [high school in Honolulu. Name of school withheld to
maintain confidentiality. “He got put into [name of school] for ‘ALP’ oh, ‘C’… ‘Assholes Last Chance.’ [laughs] I guess that’s what they call it. But he was getting kicked out and stuff from all the other schools. So that was his last chance.” ‘Aukua’s father may be concerned that his son might make the same mistakes that he did. An older brother is also used to make a point, “He [my father] uses my older brother as an example cuz now he not doing good. He has two kids already.”

Cross Case Analysis

In the above section, I addressed each of the research questions by describing the participants’ experiences on an individual basis. In the following section, I combined information from individual cases and provided a cross-case analysis. This process analyzed data across all cases to identify similarities and differences with the goal of providing further insight into issues concerning the decision making process of native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities (McGuiggan & Lee, 2008). I used tables to address each research question which provided structure to the analysis.

Table 4.1 (shown below) addressed Research Question #1: “How do native Hawaiian students who have been identified as having learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?” and summarized participants’ perspectives on the transition process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1 Participants’ Perspectives of Transition Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kainoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of Transition Process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 revealed that 3 of the 5 participants saw their transition planned tied to the care of their family. Each of the participants could cite a vocational goal but only one...
participant offered a clear plan of action. Three of the five participants viewed the transition process as tied to the care of their family.

The following table (Table 4.2) provided outcomes related to Research Question #2: What role does culture play in the students’ school experiences and daily living?

Table 4.2  The Role of Culture In Students’ School Experiences and Daily Living

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Kainoa</th>
<th>Po‘okela</th>
<th>Kekolu</th>
<th>Pu‘uwai</th>
<th>‘Aukua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Language</td>
<td>Important. Wants children to learn</td>
<td>Important. Tied to perpetuating culture</td>
<td>Important Learning Hawaiian language integrated into family life</td>
<td>Important. Tied to following in kūpuna’s steps</td>
<td>Raise children with Hawaiian as 1st language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and Community</td>
<td>Importance of membership in hula Halau Important to show respect</td>
<td>Important to know where you come from</td>
<td>Important to show respect</td>
<td>Attending NKKA provided deeper understanding heritage and history</td>
<td>Being Hawaiian tied to cultivating kalo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Place</td>
<td>Land ownership and raising crops is important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss Future with Children</td>
<td>Speak with children while they are in middle school</td>
<td>Wait till children are in the 10th grade before discussing their future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing on Knowledge</td>
<td>Would share his life story with younger generation; encourage to get a good education</td>
<td>Would share that he planned for and chose to attend college but that they should follow own path</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2 revealed that culture was important to all 5 participants. All 5 participants noted that learning the Hawaiian language was important to perpetuating their culture and some mentioned the desire to pass on the language to their children. Two of the participants discussed the value they placed on cultivating their own crops (especially kalo/taro). Native Hawaiians lived in a subsistence economy where the quality of their survival was tied to the intimate understanding of nature. The image of ‘ohana [family] comes from the “psychic and spiritual link” to the taro/poi, the staple food of the Hawaiians. By eating taro, Hawaiians promote the continuity of one’s ‘ohana by acknowledging the role of ancestry in food cultivation (Meyer, 2003).

Table 4.3 highlighted participants’ perspectives on disability related issues and addressed Research Question #3: “What role does disability play on the students’ school experiences and daily living?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Diagnosis (per DOE records)</th>
<th>Discussed academic limitations in 1st interview</th>
<th>Stated received SE services (During 2nd interview)</th>
<th>Enrolled in SE</th>
<th>Perspective of special education services</th>
<th>Current academic challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kainoa</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Mainly behavior management-ineffective</td>
<td>Problems with math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Po’okela</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5th/6th grades (tried to get in since 2nd grade)</td>
<td>Positive Experience</td>
<td>Does not like book work; prefers “hands-on” learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kekolu</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Positive Experience</td>
<td>Helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pu’uwait</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>When 8 or 10 yrs. old</td>
<td>Helped</td>
<td>Helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Aukua</td>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Helped</td>
<td>Helped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3 revealed that all of the participants described some form of academic challenge. Three out of the 5 students found special education services to be positive or helpful. Only one participant found that special education services were ineffective. In the environment of a Hawaiian charter school where there was full inclusion of students with special needs, there did not appear to be a stigma for those identified by the DOE as having a learning disability.

Table 4.4 addressed Research Question #4: How does being a first generation college student influence participants’ postsecondary decision-making process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.4 First Generation College Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kainoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of 1st Generation College Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings about going to college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When parents 1st spoke to participant about PSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of SES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4 revealed that participants received different types of feedback and encouragement from their parents. There also does not appear to be a specific point in the students’ lives when postsecondary plans were discussed. Instead discussions on this topic seem to arise within the context of another activity or event (e.g., discussing college prospects when reviewing report cards or playing sports). Three of the five participants raised the issue of monetary resources as impacting their decision making process.

The results expressed in this section revealed that participants are closely tied to their culture, their family, and their land. The implications of having a learning disability in this Hawaiian charter school appear to be negligible. Of more significance is the role of first generation college student in their transition to postsecondary education and employment.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

“…history lives in our current understanding and of consciousness”
(Meyer, 2003, p. 54)

To understand the Hawaiian people of the present, one must first understand their history. Through a review of history one learns of the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, the subsequent oppression of the Hawaiian people, and the implications of past events on the lives of present day Hawaiians. Critical theory provided insight into how students’ educational experiences were connected to racial background (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The Cultural Difference Model (Kawakami 1999, Ogbu, 1992) looked at the undeserved oppression of “involuntary minorities” and attributed underachievement to differences in assumptions, norms, values and behaviors with the dominant culture.

Sociocultural approaches are based on the premise that human behavior takes place in cultural contexts and are mediated by language and other symbol systems. These approaches emphasize the interdependence of social and individual processes in the construction of knowledge (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The sociocultural approach provided the lens through which data for this study was analyzed. The interplay and interdependence among the participants and (a) ‘ohana (family and significant others), (b) ʻāina (land), and (c) cultural elements such as hula and ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i guided the participants’ decision making. These students did not present themselves as “self-governing autonomous individuals” as described in the self-determination literature. Instead, their mannerisms, speech, and choices were reflective of the native Hawaiian culture and were highly influenced by the group: ʻohana (the family); this was a matter of interdependence rather than independence.

It was clear that these participants thrived in the cultural context of this Hawaiian-based charter school. Reflective of the Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education Theoretical model (Ledward et al., 2008) Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina offered a curriculum that provided opportunities for the students to assimilate and enhance the influence of their
Hawaiian identity and culture into their lives. This process helped the students to build a strong ethnic identity and to develop confidence in their abilities (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to add to the existing literature on the postsecondary decision-making process for native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities. To do this, I described and documented the experiences of 5 students in hope of gaining a better understanding of how to support their transition needs as they made decisions for their lives following their high school graduation. I wanted to learn the role culture played in the students’ school experiences and daily living; the role disability played in the students’ school experiences and daily living; and the role first generation college status played on the participants’ postsecondary decision-making process. I learned that culture played the most significant role in the lives, choices, and subsequent decisions of these students.

The impetus for the study developed as I began to document the words of the participants. Through this process, these students have become my kumu, my teachers as together we explored their thought processes, values, concerns, and needs. Through this approach, I have identified emerging themes and made recommendations for professionals in the field of education and rehabilitation (i.e., secondary and postsecondary educators, vocational rehabilitation (VR) and academic counselors, educational administrators) on how to better serve this population.

Emerging Themes

The study revealed that there are actually two postsecondary transitional processes for these students. First, they participate in the normal transitional processes that their peers undertake. They must make decisions (or choose not to) about whether or not to work or pursue a postsecondary education or training upon leaving their secondary environment. They must decide where they will live, how they will support themselves, etc. For this population however, there is a secondary (concurrent) transition process. These students must leave the womb of their culturally based environment (i.e., native Hawaiian charter school) and participate in the “real world” one seemingly void of native Hawaiian traditions and practices.

In the previous chapter, I discussed my findings from interviews, observations at IEP meetings, and artifacts that revealed several emerging themes: influence of family
Theme #1: Influence of Family and Significant Others.

A number of the themes highlighted the value participants placed on family and the influence that one’s family had on their decision making process. For 2 of the 5 participants, college was instead a necessary stepping stone to participate in professional football; a career that would allow the individual to provide for his family. The literature states that in the Hawaiian culture, an individual defines himself or herself by the quality of his or her relationships with family members and the community (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995). This study supports this principle. Often the participants’ answers related to how they could best serve or contribute to their families. For example, ‘Aukua wanted to become a pro football player in order to have the money to “take care of his mother” and buy her “nice things.”

The influence of significant others was also a factor in postsecondary decision making. One participant wanted to attend a college in Las Vegas as his girlfriend recently moved there. Another participant related that his friends encouraged him to pursue postsecondary education.

We know from the literature that parental involvement and college enrollment varied across racial and ethnic groups (Perna & Titus, 2010). According to Ikaika Young (pseudonym), the Student Services Coordinator/Certified Special Education Teacher at Na Keiki o Ka ‘Āina (pseudonym), the parents’ backgrounds affected their expectations for their children:

I think a lot of the parents didn’t go to college. And a lot of the parents don’t expect their children to go to college. But at the same time there is minimal of kids that are wanting to go to college (I. Young, personal communication, January 14, 2010).

Mr. Young stated that there were also some parents who did not support their child’s interest in a college education.
... there are some kids, they want to do something with their lives. When they go home, it’s like [parents ask the child] “why are you thinking about that?” Instead of saying, “why are you thinking about that,” [parents should] help them search for what they want to be and what they want to do.

All the participants in this study would be first generation college students. Many students at Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina will also be the first to represent their families in postsecondary education. Many parents do not have the cultural capital to support such discussions and consideration of this unfamiliar goal may be intimidating to them.

The literature indicated that native Hawaiians fell into the lowest economic group and have the lowest levels of educational achievement in the state (Mokuau & Matsuoka, 1995). A family’s economic situation often has a significant impact on children’s educational outcomes. Students rely on various resources to finance their college education. Most begin by looking at family resources, primarily in the form of income and then choose institutions, housing, etc. based on the resources available to them (King, 2003). Academic achievement is one among several other factors that is impacted by economics for ethnic minority groups (Benham, 2006). For those belonging to families facing financial hardships, the pursuit of postsecondary education may be unfeasible (Ka Huakaʻi, 2005). Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 indicated that:

Youth with disabilities who came from households with different income levels were similar in several aspects of their post-high school experiences...Youth from wealthier families were more likely than their peers to experience several positive outcomes. Those from households with incomes of more than $50,000 were almost twice as likely than their peers from the lowest income households ($25,000 or less) to have enrolled in postsecondary school (57% vs. 30%), to have been employed since leaving high school (81% vs. 66%), and to have been productively engaged in education, employment, or job training since leaving high school (93% vs. 75%) (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, Buckley, & Malouf, 2009). [NLTS2]

The influence of the family’s social economic status was a factor in this study. For one student in particular (Puʻuwai), high school and post high school decisions were directly
tied to her family’s socioeconomic status. This individual felt that her choices were restricted given her family’s limited financial resources.

Several of the participants recognized their kumu as trusted allies. For example, Kainoa felt that he respected and could confide in one of his teachers whenever felt angry or upset. When asked if there was anyone he could be himself with, Kainoa replied, “I can hang out with kumu.” Kekolu admired another kumu who continued to take courses in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian language) in order to bring that knowledge back to the school to share it with the students: “he’s still in school for that thing [learning language]...like he comes to school and he teaches us...”

Theme #2: Influence of Disability on School Experiences and Daily Living

Although some participants described the stigma of being enrolled in special education classes while in elementary school, the role of disability was not a factor for them while they were students at Nā Keiki o Ka ʻĀina. The special education teacher (Ikaika Young, pseudonym) felt that the organization and practices of the charter school provided a more accepting and inclusive environment for students with disabilities. Here, the school population was small and when compared to other State Department of Education campuses, students with disabilities were not singled out as receiving “special education services.” According to Ikaika Young:

I think this school is actually a better atmosphere for kids with disabilities than the regular DOE school. No one knows who the SPED kids are here. There’s not the bullying, there’s not the teasing... and they’re not pulled out for stuff and regular DOE, they pull ‘em out and put ‘em in resource classes and you know who the SPED kids are. It’s almost a better atmosphere ...there’s less for them to worry about...plus it’s such a small place and everybody knows everybody else (I. Young, personal communication, January 14, 2010).

Two of the participants indicated that they had difficulty writing papers (i.e., spelling and composition challenges) and that this activity would pose a problem for them when they went to college. One participant acknowledged that he had problems with math. Academic barriers as a result of an identified learning disability were recognized by a few of the participants. However, disability as a factor in the
postsecondary decision making process did not emerge during these interviews. Not one of the participants mentioned how their present academic challenges affected their future goals. Perhaps this is due in part to the structure of their current learning environment with its highly interactive (hands-on) curriculum and the students’ subsequent success.

Theme #3: The Role of Culture and Language

The Hawaiian language is the window to Hawaiian culture, history, and traditions (Kimura, 1983). Its resurgence in recent decades has extended from early childhood education programs targeting very young learners to graduate education at the university level. According to the 2000 census, the results have been positive, as Hawaiian appears to be the only indigenous language that showed growth in the U.S. (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005). In 2004, Kamehameha Schools conducted a Hawaiian community survey and found that 73.2% of the families surveyed expressed a desire to take classes to learn the Hawaiian language or to speak Hawaiian better. Although very few families reported that Hawaiian was their primary spoken language, many reported some use of the language (52.8%) (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005). The role and value of family is deeply embedded into this culture and has already been shared in detail in Theme #1. Here I will speak more specifically on the role of culture on learning and understanding ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (the Hawaiian language), and on the love of music and dance. In this study at Na Keiki o Ka ‘Āina, all 5 participants spoke of perpetuating their culture through the learning of the Hawaiian language, the understanding of customs and tradition, and the respect for the land.

One participant (Po‘okela) mentioned that learning about his culture and to speak his language was directly tied to “being Hawaiian.” Another participant related that learning the Hawaiian language was integrated into her daily family life with older generations posting Hawaiian words on flashcards throughout the home. All five participants wanted to ensure that future generations would speak and understand ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. Two of the participants mentioned that they wanted their children to be raised speaking Hawaiian as their first language. Without prompting, two of the five participants shared with me Hawaiian words or phrases that were integral to their learning, to their being. Words such as kōkua (to help) and laulima (working cooperatively) provided a strategy for how to live one’s life.
Theme #4: Influence of 1st Generation College Student Status

In the native Hawaiian population, the educational attainment of parents is highly correlated with their children’s educational indicators such as absenteeism, disputes with school representatives, and grades earned (Ka Huaka‘i, 2005).

All five participants would be the first generation of college students in their households. College attendance was not discussed at home until these students were in high school. In 2 of the 5 cases, this discussion arose and was tied to the student’s interest in pursuing football as a career and the family thought that playing football at the college level was an intermediary step toward this goal instead of being goal in and of itself. For 3 of 5 of these students college was not a rite of passage, nor was it a resource solely for educational purposes. These students did not make the connection between gaining knowledge (via an academic institution) to securing a career. Instead, “going to college” was a stepping stone to get to another set of circumstances (i.e., opportunity to be recruited by scouts for professional football or wrestling team).

Not one of the participants knew how to apply for college. ‘Aukua (a senior) and his mother worked closely with school staff to apply for a junior college on the West coast. Although all five participants were diagnosed as having a learning and received prescribed accommodations under their IEPs, not one of them knew that should they pursue a postsecondary education, they would have to self identify as having a disability and seek out accommodations independently.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study are significant to those who serve (e.g., teachers, counselors, administrators, etc.) native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities. The dichotomy and resulting conflict between the collectivist view held by the native Hawaiian culture and the individualist view held by the DOE and other similar entities will need to be systematically taught in undergraduate and graduate education classes at the College of Education. Understanding the learning styles and culture of native Hawaiian children is especially important for those who may be unfamiliar with this culture. As discussed in Chapter 2, the State of Hawai‘i recruits many special education teachers from the continental United States. These individuals who are new to the islands
and the island people may benefit from learning more about the native Hawaiian culture in order to best serve their students. It is imperative to include classes on multicultural issues in the curriculum for new teachers at the University of Hawai‘i and include such lessons at orientation sessions for newly hired teachers for the Department of Education. The literature tells us that native Hawaiians belong to a collectivist culture where individuals tend to forgo individual goals and focus on what they can do for the group, for the family. In the educational setting, we must teach in culturally relevant ways.

Students with disabilities facing transition decisions are often introduced to the concept of “self determination”, a view rooted in individualism and promoted by social service and academic fields (Leake et al., 2004). Native Hawaiian students from the interdependent collectivist culture highly value skills that are other-oriented vs. self-oriented. These students tend to focus on how they can help their family vs. thinking about what they want independent of the family needs and values.

Sheehey (2006) found that the native Hawaiian parents of children with disabilities had a significantly different definition of “involvement” when compared to the legal definition of educational decision-making: (a) talking with teachers, (b) helping in the classroom, and (c) searching for information regarding special education. Parents were subjected to a wide range of feelings: fear, insecurity, frustration, intimidation, determination, satisfaction, and pride. For these parents, “involvement” included a considerable amount of advocacy and when confronted with drafts of completed Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs), the parents resisted involvement in the decision-making process. Incongruencies between the home and school cultures in the areas of the context of the IEP meeting, the skills and behaviors targeted for instruction, and the lack of collaboration at IEP meetings contributed to the parents’ discomfort. As educators, researchers, administrators, and service providers, we need to be aware of who we are and be cognizant of the values we bring to classrooms, meetings, and other interactions with native Hawaiian students and their families.

Meyer (2001) provided a cultural framework for how youth should be educated to prepare them for future challenges:

We surround them with our community, we give them meaningful experiences that highlight their ability to be responsible, intelligent, and kind. We watch for
their gifts, we share assessment to reflect mastery that is accomplished in real
time, not false, we laugh more, plant everything, and harvest the hope of aloha.
We help each other, we listen more, we trust in one another again. We find our
Hawaiian essence reflected in both process and product of our efforts. That is
Hawaiian education, and understanding our Hawaiian epistemology is our
foundation, our *kumupa’a*. So, let it be said and let it be known: We have what we
need. We are who we need” (p. 146).

**Heed the Call**

This study enabled 5 native Hawaiian high school students with learning
disabilities to share their voices on how they make postsecondary decisions. The findings
show that these individuals are very closely tied to their culture and in order for the
individuals to flourish, education should be taught within a cultural context. Meyer
(2003) described her hope and vision for teaching the children of Hawai‘i and provided
this charge to all who serve them:

Now, let us continue to align education so that more and more of us can be
educated in liberating, cultural and sustaining ways. So, the movement of
Hawaiian charter schools, the changes in Kamehameha, the creativity of our hard-
working DOE teachers – all play a role in this change…….We will heal and we
will be educated by ‘āina. We will, once again, be “fed” by the tides, rains and
stories of a place and people made buoyant because this is how culture survives.
This is how children learn best. This is how we all will survive. We will survive
because excellence of being is found in the practice of aloha and that believe it or
not, is an epistemological point. So, let us shape our school lessons by this ideal
and let us shape our lives accordingly (p. 49).

This then is the challenge for all professionals (i.e., secondary teachers, school
counselors, academic advisors, disability specialists, vocational rehabilitation counselors,
college faculty) to heed the call and take an active role in providing culturally appropriate
educational services and instruction to our students.
A Call to Educators

Although the age for the commencement of transition planning was raised to “no later than age 16” in IDEIA 2004, the law very clearly states that planning may begin at a younger age if the IEP team makes such a determination. This point is not only critical to educators at the secondary level but also to parents, students, VR counselors and other advocates of students with disabilities (Madaus & Shaw, 2006). Secondary school personnel must assist students with learning disabilities with gathering information for documentation requirements prior to exiting high schools. Without adequate documentation of disability, the necessary postsecondary accommodations may be delayed for the student affecting his/her performance in their first semester. Another recommendation to students, their parents, and high school personnel is to ensure that the assessment data collected in high school matches the requirements of the postsecondary institutions is that this documentation is updated and comprehensive (i.e., student assessed in senior year) (Madaus & Shaw, 2006). Transitioning students must not only be cognizant of the differences in secondary and postsecondary curricula, schedules, support, and instructor expectations, they must also learn about their rights under IDEIA 2004 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Often contrary to the cultural norms of native Hawaiians and other groups that fall into collectivist cultures, students at the postsecondary level must learn to self advocate for their needed academic accommodations (Shaw et al., 2009; Webb et al., 2008).

Benham (2006) reported that the best alternative pedagogies for the native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations are to facilitate language, cognitive, and psychological development. These instructional methods (e.g., Kamehameha Early Education Program - KEEP) have led to the students’ success in a contextual setting. Basic elements of these methods include:

a. Develop workshops for parents and students that provide information on college access and application and financial aid opportunities. Provide support for the students/parents during this time of exploration and application. For many, this will be the first time that they are applying for postsecondary education and financial assistance.
b. Engage the services and knowledge of elders (kūpuna), cultural experts, and native speakers to build students’ vocabulary and to help students build framework of language (values, uses, applications to modern world);

c. Create a child-centered and holistic teaching model that includes home and family, school community, and the broader community;

d. Develop project based learning opportunities that include individualized lessons within the collective learner setting while linking academic and cultural learning through academic and applicable experiential processes;

e. Build cultural identity and cultural capital by utilizing both culturally specific and pluralistic teaching methods that encourage cultural competence and respect.

The native Hawaiians are a strong, proud, and tenacious people. Although they have experienced many setbacks to their race and culture, they continue to press on for the good of their community. Further research on the native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities is needed to better understand how to meet both home-culture and Western educational needs. This essential task “must not only meet rigorous scientific standards but also honor the wisdom of native/local traditional knowledge” (Benham, 2006, p. 7).

A Call to University and College Administrators

Educators and policymakers are tasked with not only attracting students of diverse backgrounds to higher education but also ensuring their matriculation and retention (Zamani, 2000). Makuakane and Hagedorn (2000) discussed the needs of non-traditional students who require additional support and nurturing. These students do not see “involvement” as them taking the initiative to get assistance, but rather see “involvement” as someone else reaching out to help them. Harbour et al. (2003) suggested that to combat the marginalization of ethnic minority groups, colleges require effective staffing and staff development, courses focusing on diversity and multiculturalism, and teaching practices that are sensitive to the issues of culture and ethnicity.

There is a call to college administrators and faculty to become proactive in their roles as they learn to serve ethnic minority students. Colleges need to provide professional development opportunities to their administrators and faculties to understand how to best work with ethnically diverse students. Educational leaders and policymakers
need a “cohesive approach” to understand and address the needs of these students. Solutions include raising student aspirations, providing academic and career incentives, and securing additional funding (Laden, 2004). Administrators can look to successful programs such as those found at historically black colleges (HBC) and Gear Up (an early intervention and college awareness program) that can provide and promote inclusive and supportive education for this population. We must design culturally appropriate curricula and transition interventions. Administrators should revisit their present training and orientation curricula and place resources into the promotion of culturally appropriate instruction and support of our students.

Colleges need to provide specific programs and supports for their ethnic minority students. Seidman (2005) suggested that colleges develop special programs and activities so that the ethnic minority students will have opportunities to develop a sense of “critical mass” and support systems. Programs could include: the formation of student groups for specific minority groups, holding summer pre-college programs for specific minority groups, establishing multicultural centers, and developing early intervention programs to closely monitor students’ mastery over skills.

Opp (2002) suggested that institutions of higher education (a) tailor financial aid programs and policies; (b) create orientation programs for minority students; (c) created and support tutorial programs; (d) provide intrusive academic counseling programs; (e) develop reporting systems for early identification and tracking of at-risk students, (f) hold cultural workshops and awareness efforts for faculty, staff, and students, (g) develop ethnic studies courses, (h) create of offices in and/or coordinator positions for minority affairs, (i) create multicultural centers; (j) support minority activities; (k) hire more staff of color; and (l) have individuals of color serve on the board of trustees.

Dumas-Hines, Cochran, and Williams (2001) made recommendations for the recruitment and retention of minority faculty and students at institutions of higher learning. Their suggestions included asking administrators to develop a comprehensive strategy for serving minority students and faculty by (a) developing a university-wide philosophy statement that promotes cultural diversity; (b) analyzing the faculty and student composition on campus and establish goals for promoting diversity; (c) conducting research on best practices that promote the recruitment and retention of
ethnically and culturally diverse faculty and students; and (d) developing, implementing, and evaluating a far-reaching plan for recruitment and retention activities that center on encouraging cultural diversity on campus. These authors also provided examples of such practices: forced and academic mentoring, minority mentees, cultural diversity/sensitivity training, etc.

Ogata et al. (2006) reported that providing culturally relevant coursework that connects classroom learning to real-life experiences would improve the retention of native Hawaiian students in higher education. These authors suggested embedding “service learning” (a teaching method that incorporates critical thinking with meaningful community service) into the curriculum. The authors found a successful example of service learning at Kapiolani Community College (a school under the University of Hawai‘i system) where native Hawaiian students, students with special educational needs, and others increased their self esteem and exam scores.

It is unclear if the present initiatives that serve ethnic minority students have sustainability. In addition, in light of the current budget cuts at the state level, college and university programs serving ethnically diverse students are shrinking and/or disappearing. The pressing question then becomes how can we provide culturally appropriate and relevant education to native Hawaiian students? Colleges and universities will be wise to apply for federal and private grants (soft monies) to continue to serve their students. Organizations such as the Kamehameha Schools Bishop Estate continue to have funding that specifically serves students of Hawaiian ancestry. In addition, agencies can collaborate and pool resources (e.g., institutions of higher learning, vocational rehabilitation, private institutions) so that more students can be assisted on limited budgeats. Administrators and financial aid officers at institutions of higher education must also be proactive and look for alternative funding to support their ethnic minority students.

A Call to Teaching Postsecondary Faculty and Counselors

Faculty, counselors, and policy makers must also forge stronger linkages between academic and financial advising. Low-income students must at times make decisions regarding attending class or going to work. A referral to an appropriate resource may assist the
low income student to fully participate in their learning without the distraction of work responsibilities.

To enhance retention, colleges could also focus on developing a more inclusive and meaningful curriculum to which students can relate and empower their students by actively involving them in the learning environment (Seidman, 2005). Programs could include: the formation of student groups for specific minority groups, holding summer pre-college programs for specific minority groups, establishing multicultural centers, and developing early intervention programs to closely monitor students’ mastery over skills. To complement this idea of the need to develop a sense of “critical mass” is the case of the historically Black college (HBC). Historically, HBCs were seen to lack the educational resources to compete with predominantly White institutions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1995). Pascarella and Terenzini (1995) however, found that African American students attending HBCs perceived lower levels of stress, isolation and racism on campus as compared to African Americans enrolled at predominantly White campuses.

Educational equity may be undermined due to pressures for assimilation. Minority students may be admitted to college programs but if the instructor fails to acknowledge the values and belief systems of these students, he/she may challenge their success and prevent them from attaining educational equity (Harbour et al., 2003). Oftentimes, colleges attempt to include minorities by assimilating them into the institutional programs. Martinez Aleman and Salkever (2003) believed that instead of encouraging “assimilation”, institutions of higher education should attempt to create a common experience that encourages a sense of community. In order to create “community”, we don’t have to be “alike.” Harbour et al. (2003) discussed the concept of “assimilation” as a process of absorption. In these situations, individuals from ethnic minority groups are pressured (subtly and otherwise) to accept the dominant culture and subordinate their own cultural identity.

Colleges need to develop other sources of funding to serve this group. In response to waning government support, community colleges need to seek financial resources outside of their existing budgets. Laden (2004) provides a list of foundations (such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) that have expressed interest in providing grants to community colleges for projects such as retention, transfer, and completion rates for emerging majority and low-income students. In line with this, colleges also need to make available more
institutional financial aid, grants and scholarships to directly serve these minority students (Seidman, 2005).

We will continue to see changes in access to and enrollment for ethnic minorities in higher education. Some institutions will seek out students that fit the traditional college student image while others will seek a more diverse clientele to better serve their changing communities (Dey & Hurtado, 1995). Changes must be made to institutional missions and policy and colleges should seek funding sources from the private sector. College administrators and teaching faculty will do well to be prepared to serve a diverse student population. Orientations for faculty and administrators and training on the nuances and learning styles of different cultures will only strengthen the educational experiences for these students and improve their educational outcomes. We must be mindful that we also consider maintaining the rich diversity between colleges and universities as we look toward increasing student body diversity within institutions of higher education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1995).

A Call to Rehabilitation Professionals

Vocational rehabilitation counselors must keep abreast of current federal legislation that supports students with disabilities at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. Counselors need to develop cultural competence and hone their skills in counseling a culturally diverse clientele.

VR counselors need to prepare their clients (i.e., students with disabilities for the postsecondary arena. Unlike the womblike environment of Department of Education in which students are entitled to a free and appropriate education, students who graduate from high school are no longer covered by the rights and privileges afforded them under IDEIA, 2004. Individuals who enroll in postsecondary institutions must now self-identity as being an individual with a disability and are responsible for bringing in documentation of disability to the disability services providers on campus. Students must also self advocate in order to arrange for their own accommodations and supports. According to the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2, 2000), only one-third of postsecondary students with disabilities identified themselves as having a disability and informed PS institutions (Newman et al., 2009).

Vocational rehabilitation personnel need to provide counseling and guidance to support these individuals through their transition process. VR counselors often actively teach
self advocacy skills to their clients to ensure that these students have the appropriate and
current documentation of disability and receive disability-related academic accommodations.
The challenge for VR counselors will be to work with their clients from collectivist cultures
(e.g., native Hawaiians) to determine culturally appropriate ways to secure required
postsecondary accommodations. This will require a continuous dialogue between professional
and student with both players taking on the “teacher” role.

The transition of students with disabilities is well documented since the 1980s. In the
midst of global budget cuts, there is the need for interagency collaboration and the sharing of
resources. It is imperative that federal, state, and private entities work collaboratively, to share
resources, and to develop more effective and efficient ways of serving students with
disabilities.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study indicate that our community could benefit from future
research. Here is a list of recommendations for future research:

1. Utilize an ethnographic approach to study the decision making practices of native
   Hawaiian students with learning disabilities in order to be more culturally
   appropriate. In this way, the researcher can be immersed in the culture and
   perhaps collect more detailed information.

2. Conduct focus groups to collect data related to influences of culture and first
   generation college student status. Focus groups and provide a more culturally
   appropriate environment for these students. My initial reservation was the
   sensitive discussion that may take place around disability issues. Perhaps utilizing
   a focus group first and then conducting 1:1 interviews would allow the students to
   participate in an more socially acceptable setting first in order to get used to the
   researcher and then, participate in a 1:1 discussion.

3. Conduct study with a larger sample. One of the limitations of this study was the
   small sample size and because of this, the outcomes could not be generalized.

4. Conduct a follow-up study with these participants or a longitudinal study of
   graduates from this charter school and perhaps other private and public schools
   serving the native Hawaiian community which might provide us with further
   information on student outcomes (i.e., personal, vocational, etc.) and reflections
of their transition process. I would like to determine whether transition planning led to “successful” employment outcomes for these students.

5. Conduct a follow-up study to identify long-term cultural affiliation of these students to determine whether culture had long-term impact on this sample or whether culture was significant during this time in their lives (i.e., while they were attending a Hawaiian-based charter school).

A New Model?

Below I have included a discourse by Dr. Gay Garland Reed, a professor at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa – College of Education. Here she expressed the possibility that native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities can respect and uphold their ethnic identities and thrive in a culturally appropriate educational setting. Her words offer a paradigm shift and are at the same time motivating and challenging. Perhaps if we (educators, rehabilitation counselors and other service providers) work collaboratively to better understand how to serve the needs of native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities, our students may indeed thrive.

We know that other public schools often ignore, devalue or even try to erase the social and cultural capital that children from non-dominating cultures bring to school in favor of instilling the discourse norms and values of the dominant culture. What if [we] find out that the Hawaiian culture based charter schools are able to tap into the cultural and social capital that the children bring to help them be more "successful" in an academic setting? Perhaps the special context … will be a model for helping children master the dominant culture codes through the avenue of Indigenous values. ..It is also possible that kids who are identified as "learning disabled" may have actually been disabled by the system that could not see and appreciate their abilities. When their own cultural capital and social capital are affirmed in the new setting it may actually enable them to flourish academically. They may not "need" other types of interventions to set them on a path to academic success (Reed, 2010).
Conclusion

*Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina* (The Children of the Land)

As the researcher, I appreciated how they candidly and willingly shared their thoughts and feelings with me. It is now up to us (the administrators, instructors, faculty, support service personnel) to be more culturally educated and responsive, so that we may listen to our children and heed their call. In closing, I would like to return to “Nā Keiki o Ka ‘Āina” (the voices of the participants in this study). Each of them was asked to interpret the following verse by ‘Imaikalani Kalahele:

*If to help us is your wish then stand behind us.*

*Not to the side*

*And not to the front.*

*(Kalahele, 2002, p. 51)*

Here are their words of advice to those who wish to “help.”

**Kainoa**

If someone wants to help us…don’t stand on the side and do nothing, don’t stand in the front and be in our way, be behind us like and follow. Probably, I think that’s what it means. Stay behind us and follow what you’re going to do is help and follow them from behind…

**Po’okela**

I guess if, we wish to help you guys or to help someone to at least stand by them all the way… not just near them or in the back of them I guess just to like help lead the way to a new beginning or something or whatever they’re looking for. I guess it could stand for Hawaiians too. Maybe when they go to I guess chant, they ask people to stand beside me and fight the war or whatever they’re looking to do. I guess, not to be like someone or like or like at least to know that you’re actually with all the way until the end...
Kekolu
I think it means like by stand behind us…like if you stand like in front or on the side. Like for him, like I guess, like he can’t turn it backward like all the knowledge so that’s good to stand behind so all his ‘ike [knowledge] can go to them… I think he doesn’t want people to stand in front of him cuz like they’re like kind of like not listening to him cuz their back is facing him. So like they want his back to face them so that his ‘ike can go to them.

Pu’uwai
I think if you want to help someone…or you wish to help someone, then you should just go and help them but not tell someone to help them or have someone to do it for you …

‘Aukua
That means if you really want to help somebody then stand in the back of them and help them cuz if you on the side you not helping them with whatever they doing and in the front you’re doing the work, not helping the person…

For those of us who are non-native researchers, educators, and service providers, Hawai‘i’s children have provided guidance on how best to “help.” It is now up to us to “listen to their voices.” In closing, I’d like to share the insightful counsel of Kaomeo (2005) who corroborated the voices of the children as she asked non-Natives to listen to the wisdom of her people:

Perhaps the most helpful role that can be assumed by non-Natives who are interested in assisting with Indigenous self-determination efforts—whether one is a classroom teacher faced with the task of teaching Indigenous studies curricula or an educational researcher working in Indigenous education communities—is to work collaboratively with native allies, listen closely to our wisdom as well as our concerns, interrogate unearned power and privilege (including one’s own), and use this privilege to confront oppression and “stand behind” Natives, so our voices can be heard (p. 40).
APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I
Committee on Human Studies

MEMORANDUM

March 23, 2009

TO: Kaahuna Namaka
Principal Investigator
College of Education - Exceptionalities

FROM: William H. Daniel
Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: "Standing Behind" - Listening to the Voices of Native Hawaiian Students with Learning Disabilities in the Transition Process

This acknowledges receipt of your email response received March 13, 2009, to the recommendations made by the Committee on Human Studies during its review of this project at its meeting of January 23, 2009. This information satisfactorily addresses the CHS concerns.

On behalf of the Committee, your project as revised, is granted approval for one year effective January 23, 2009.

In the course of your project, you intend to make changes which may significantly affect the human subjects involved, you should obtain CHS approval prior to implementing these changes. Any unanticipated problems related to your use of human subjects must be promptly reported to the CHS. The CHS may be contacted through its office. This is required so that the CHS can update or revise protective measures for human subjects as may be necessary. In addition, under the University’s Assurance with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the University must report certain situations to the federal government. Examples of these reportable situations include deaths, injuries, adverse reactions or unforeseen risks to human subjects. These reports must be made regardless of the source of funding for your project.

In accordance with the University policy, you are expected to maintain as an essential part of your project records, any records pertaining to the use of humans as subjects in your research. This includes all information or materials conveyed to, and received from, the subjects, as well as any executed forms, data and analysis results. These records must be maintained for at least three years after project completion or termination. If this is a funded project, you should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representatives of the University, State of Hawai‘i, and the federal government.

Please note that the CHS approval cannot exceed one year. If you expect your project to continue beyond this approval period, you must submit continuation applications to the CHS for renewal of CHS approval. CHS approval must be obtained and maintained for the entire term of your project or award.
Please notify this office when your project is completed. We may ask that you provide information regarding your experiences with human subjects and with the CHS review process. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your project. Any subsequent reactivation of the project will require a new CHS application.

Please do not hesitate to contact this office if you have any questions or require assistance. We will be happy to assist you in any way we can.

Thank you for your cooperation and efforts throughout this review process. We wish you success in this endeavor.

[Signature]
Protection of Human Subjects
Assurance Identification/IRB Certification/Declaration of Exemption
(Comm. Rule)

Policy These procedures are set forth to ensure that all human subject research programs are
Conducted in compliance with the Department of Health and Human Services regulations. All
Programs involving human subjects shall be reviewed and approved by the: Protection
of Human Subjects Committee. The Committee may require the submission of
appropriate documentation or the provision of additional information. All research
involving human subjects shall be conducted in accordance with the regulations.
MEMORANDUM

December 16, 2009

To: Andrew L. K. Kam,
Assistant Director

From: Nancy R. King,
Interim Executive Secretary

Subject: CHS #7455 "Standing Behind" - Listening to the Voices of Native Hawaiian Students with Learning Disabilities at the Transition Process

Your project identified above was reviewed and approved for one year by the U.H. Committee on Human Studies (CHS) at its meeting on December 17, 2009. Your certificate is enclosed. This certificate is your record of CHS approval of your study.

Before conducting your project, you intend to make changes which may significantly affect the human subjects involved, you should obtain CHS approval prior to implementing these changes. Any unanticipated problems related to your use of human subjects must be promptly reported to the CHS. The CHS may be contacted through this office. This is required so that the CHS can update or revise protective measures for human subjects as may be necessary. In addition, under the University's Assurance with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, any researchers must report certain situations to the federal government. Examples of these reportable situations include deaths, injuries, adverse reactions or unforeseen risks to human subjects. These reports must be made regardless of the source of funding for your project.

In accordance with the University policy, you are expected to maintain an essential part of your project records, any records pertaining to the use of human subjects in your research. This includes any information or materials collected and received from the subjects, as well as any signed consent forms, data and analysis results. These records must be maintained for at least three years after project completion or termination. If this is a limited project, you should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representatives of the University, State of Hawaii and the federal government.

Please note that the CHS approval period for this project will expire on December 17, 2010. If you expect your project to continue beyond this approval period, you must submit continuation applications to the CHS for renewal of CHS approval. CHS approval must be obtained and maintained for the entire term of your project or award.

Please notify this office when your project is completed. We may ask that you provide documentation regarding your experiences with human subjects and with the CHS review process. Upon notification, we will close out this project.

Please do not hesitate to contact this office if you have any questions or require assistance. We will be happy to assist you in any way we can.

Thank you for your cooperation and efforts throughout this review process. We wish you success in this endeavor.

Enclosure
Protection of Human Subjects
Assurance Identification/IRB Certification/Declaration of Exemption
(Common Rule)

Policy and Office of Grants, Contracts, and Proposals (POCR) has provided

112

1. Name of Federal Department or Agency (do not include application or proposal identification No.)

2. Nature of activity

[ ] GRANT [ ] CONTRACT [ ] COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT [ ] FELLOWSHIP

[ ] OTHER

3. Type of activity

[ ] Scientific

[ ] Others

4. Activity-related information

5. Name(s) of Principal Investigator, Program Director, Fellow, or Other

[ ] Financial Assistance

[ ] Non-Financial Assistance

Katherine Yamamoto

6. Approvals: The Project PI has obtained the following:

7. Acknowledgment: The undersigned for the principal investigator/program director and human subjects investigator/director

8. Nestle's Assurance on Federal Activity

The expiration date: September 12, 2011

IRB Registration No: OCHS090140

9. Assurance on Federal Activity

The expiration date: September 12, 2011

IRB Registration No: OCHS090140

10. Name and Address of Institution

University of Hawaii at Manoa

2444 Dole Street, Bldg. 610

Honolulu, HI 96822

11. Title of Investigator/Program Director/Fellow/Other

12. Authorizing Official

13. Signature

Date

14. Date

15. Title

Executive Secretary

16. Title

Speaker

17. Date

December 18, 2011

18. Title

Executive Director

19. Title

Director

20. Title

Assistant to the President

For review only:

Sponsored by: NIH

The statement for completion purposes is attached.
APPENDIX B
PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Agreement to Allow My Child to Participate in
A Study on Postsecondary Choices

Kathryn Yamamoto
Primary Investigator
(808) 956-5492

This research project is being conducted as a component of my dissertation for a doctoral degree. The purpose of the project is to learn how native Hawaiian students make postsecondary decisions. Participation in the project will consist of:

(a) your child participating in two mini workshops;
(b) your child participating in a short interview with me; and
(c) allowing me to sit in on one Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting and receive a copy of your child’s IEP document.

Mini Workshops:
Your child is invited to participate in two mini workshops. The first workshop is entitled, “Create Your Own Success Story.” This will be a hands-on, interactive, fun activity in which your child will have the opportunity to create their own poster board showing their dreams and hopes for their future. The second workshop is entitled, “How Can I Do Everything that I Need to Do?” and teaches the student lessons on how to identifying priorities and managing their time.

Interviews:
The interview questions will focus on how your child is making his/her post-high school decisions. Each interview will last no longer than 15 minutes. I will tape the interview (audio) and summarize the information into broad categories. I will not include any information that will identify your child in my report. Approximately 6 people will participate in this study.

IEP Meeting:
I would like to sit in on one of your child’s IEP meetings. I will be an observer (not a participant) at this meeting. I am interested in who is attending the meeting, what is being discussed, and the involvement and participation of your child in his/her plans.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. Your child is free to withdraw from participation at any time during the duration of the project with no penalty, or loss of benefit to which he/she would otherwise be entitled. There is little or no risk to those participating in this research project.

Although participating in this research may be of no direct benefit to your child, the results from this project may help educators, counselors, and school administrators to better serve native Hawaiian students.
Research data will be confidential to the extent allowed by law. Agencies with research oversight, such as the UH Committee on Human Studies, have the authority to review research data. All research records will be stored in a locked file in the primary investigators’ office for the duration of the research project. Audio tapes will be destroyed immediately following transcription.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact me (Kathryn Yamamoto, researcher) at (808) 389-xxxx.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UH Committee on Human Studies at (808)956-5007, or uhirb@hawaii.edu

**Parent:**
I have read and understand the above information, and agree to participate in this research project.

_______________________________  _____________________________
Name of Parent (printed)    Name of Student (printed)

_______________________________  _____________________________
Signature of Parent       Date

Copy to parent
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM

Agreement to Participate in
A Study on Postsecondary Choices

Kathryn Yamamoto
Primary Investigator
(808) 956-5492

I am conducting this research project as part of my dissertation for a doctoral degree. The purpose of the project is to learn how native Hawaiian students make decisions about what they would like to do following their high school graduation. Participating in this research may not benefit you directly; however the results from this project may help educators, counselors, and school administrators to better serve native Hawaiian students.

Participation in the project will consist of:
(a) you taking part in two mini workshops;
(b) you agreeing to do a short interview with me; and
(c) allowing me to sit in on one Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting and receive a copy of your IEP document.

Mini Workshops:
You are invited to participate in two mini workshops. The first workshop is entitled, “Create Your Own Success Story.” This will be a hands-on, interactive, fun activity in which you will have the opportunity to create your own poster board showing your dreams and hopes for your future. The second workshop is entitled, “How Can I Do Everything that I Need to Do?” and will teach you lessons on how to figure out what activities, goals, relationships are important to you and how to best manage your time.

Interviews:
The interview questions will focus on how you are deciding on what to do following your graduation from [school name]. The interviews should not last more than 15 minutes. I will tape the interview (audio) and summarize the information into broad categories. I will not include any information that will identify you in my report. Approximately 6 students will participate in this study.

IEP Meeting:
I would like to sit in on one of your IEP meetings. I will be an observer (not participant) at this meeting. I am interested in who is attending the meeting, what is being discussed, and your involvement and participation.

The information I collect will be confidential to the extent allowed by law. Agencies with research oversight, such as the UH Committee on Human Studies, have the authority
to review research data. All research records will be stored in a locked file in the primary
investigators’ office for the duration of the research project. Audio tapes will be
destroyed immediately following transcription. All other research records will be
destroyed upon completion of the project.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw
from participation at any time during the duration of the project with no penalty, or loss
of benefit.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact me (Kathryn
Yamamoto, researcher) at (808) 389-xxx.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact
the UH Committee on Human Studies at (808)956-5007, or uhirb@hawaii.edu

**Participant:**
I have read and understand the above information, and agree to participate in this
research project.

_______________________________  __________________
Name (printed)         Date

_______________________________
Signature

Copy to participant
APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW GUIDE
(Note: the interviews were semi-structured in nature and thus this protocol served only as a guide for the interviewer.)

Post Secondary Process (Research Question: How do native Hawaiian students with learning disabilities describe their postsecondary transition process?)
   1. Do you know what you’d like to do after you graduate from Na Leo o Na Keiki? Would you share that with me?
   2. What things are in place/will be in place to help you to reach your goal(s)?
   3. What things might you need help with?
   4. Who/what will help you with those struggles?

Disability (Research Question: What are the students’ perceptions of the influence of disability on their school experiences and daily living?)
   1. How would you describe yourself as a student?
   2. Do you feel that there is anything that has gotten in the way of your learning process? If so, please describe.

Culture (Research Question: What are the students’ perceptions of the influence of culture in their school experiences and daily living?)
   1. What does it mean to you to be “Hawaiian”?
   2. Do you feel that your culture influences your school experience? Explain.
   3. Do you feel that your culture influences your life outside of school? Explain.
First Generation College Student (What are the students’ perceptions of being a first generation college student on their decision-making process?)

1. Has anyone in your family attended college/university? If so, who?
2. Tell me about their experience in college/at the university?
3. Did they graduate from college/university?
4. Do you feel that the fact that this person attended/graduated from college/university has influenced you in any way? If so, in what way(s)?
5. Has this person ever talked to you about what you want to do after you graduate from high school? Would you tell me about it this discussion?
6. What kind of job does your father have? Mother?
7. What kind of job do you see yourself? (e.g., type of job, full/part-time)
8. How important is salary to you?
APPENDIX E
MINI WORKSHOP I
Create Your Own Success Story

Materials needed: One poster board for each student, old magazines, newspapers, glue sticks, scissors, and assorted markers.

Directions: A big part of living your mission statement and reaching your goals is visualizing yourself already there. For example, you see yourself and your life as you are living your mission statement. One way to do this is to take the time to write/display your own story on yourself ten years from now, doing whatever it is you would like to see yourself doing at that time. Describe (or find pictures) how you got so far, what you did, and what kind of success you have had: success in the business world, in your community, in your personal life, and in your family. This example should help you get started.

John Kea, age 32, is a successful small business owner and runs an auto body shop on the island of Oahu. John started repairing cars for friends and family, and then worked at other auto body shops. He knew he had the business sense and the knowledge to start his own business so he took out a loan and opened a shop in the McCully area. “I knew I could make this business work,” he said. “I thought a lot about the location. The first couple of years were tough, but now I’m making a good profit.” John recently donated $500 to sponsor a youth art contest. “I just want to give back to my community. John lives with his wife Lei and their three school-age children in Makiki.

APPENDIX F
MINI WORKSHOP II
How Can I Do Everything that I Need to Do?
(A Lesson in Time Management)

Materials: One empty glass jar and 3 other jars: one containing large rocks, one containing pebbles, and one containing sand.

Explain to Students: The big rocks are the important activities in our lives; the pebbles represent less important activities, and the sand represents the activities that waste the most time. Most of us focus our attention on the small things in life (dump pebbles into empty jar). Then ask a volunteer to come up and fill the empty glass container with all three materials. Most of the time all three materials will not fit into jar. Then with some guidance from instructor, the volunteer will put the big rocks in empty jar first, then pebbles, and then sand. Instructor may also pour a glass of water into full jar after sand has been put in.

Discuss Analogy. What does this demonstration mean?

Empty Jar = amount of time in a typical week. No matter how powerful, famous, rich, or insignificant any of us is, we all have the same amount of time in a week to get things done. By visualizing our time as the empty container, it can help us to better understand and more importantly better fill our lives with the things that are most important.

Large Rocks = Activities that matter most in our lives and that have the most profound consequences (either good or bad) that result from our completion or non-completion.

Pebbles = the little tasks that are not significant but can add up to something significant. It’s no big deal if we miss one or two of these tasks.

Sand = Represents all the non-essential things that tend to fill up our days and our lives. In this demonstration, it represents wasteful, non-value-producing activities that prevent us from fitting in the large rocks that are meaningful for our lives.

Water = If we were to add the water in this demonstration, that could represent the amount of time we spend sleeping.

Charge for Students to Take Action:
1. Review your values. Update (if necessary) what is important to you. Who is important in your life? What activities are important to you?
2. **Select your goals:** What do you want to focus on this week? Break those goals into “big rocks” that you will put in your schedule. Remember your goals need to reflect on your values in order to have any meaning.

3. **Schedule all the commitments, meetings, appointments, obligations you have no control over.** This will help you to navigate around your other priorities.

4. **Schedule “YOU” time.** Your biggest rock is of course time to yourself so that you can stay healthy and vibrant.

5. **Insert your big rocks.** Block off time enough to get those big rocks out of the way.

6. **Let the pebbles fill the gaps.** Once the big rocks are in place, you can fit in other smaller activities. Realize that you may not be able to fit in all your pebbles in a given week. Since they are “pebbles” and not the big rocks, it’s okay to let them carry over to the next week.

APPENDIX G

Circle of Dreams – Kainoa
APPENDIX H

Circle of Dreams – Poʻokela
APPENDIX I
KEKOLU
APPENDIX J

PUʻUWAI

Puʻuwai
APPENDIX K

Circle of Dreams - ‘Aukua
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